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**From literary to Audiovisual Satire After 9/11: The Case of U.S and the  
Middle East**

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## **Statement of originality**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma on any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis. I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the thesis' conception or in style and presentation is acknowledged.

Abdelhadi Esselami

13/02/2022 II

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## **Dedication**

*All praise be to Allah for granting me the patience, focus, and motivation to carry out this endeavor*

*To my parents who strived to put me on the right path and taught me the importance of education*

*To my inspiring brothers Abdellatif, Abdelkarim, Abdelhalim, and precious sister who always had faith in me*

*To my dear wife who was always by my side*

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## **Abstract**

The central focus of this thesis is to trace the development, mechanisms, aims, and diverse global impacts of post 9/11 political satire from the West to the Middle East. From such standpoint, the thesis explores the diverse implications of Middle Eastern News Parody shows. Since 2011, various Middle Eastern countries have witnessed unprecedented coordination of public reform movements that have steadfastly opposed and spoken out against corruption in a number of Middle Eastern regimes. Prior to this period, significant political and economic regressions had already sparked such protests. Thus, numerous creative works have contributed significantly to popularizing this upsurge; notably, satirical content particularly that found on Egyptian audiovisual media has surely served as a catalyst for change by capturing the attention of an increasing number of individuals from all social strata. The issue is that a substantial portion of contemporary political satire performed by Egyptian comedians is highly imitative of its American counterpart, which ignores regional cultural limits. While it educates audiences about politics, it either fails to inspire a corrective behavior or might incite division and unrest. The purpose of this research is to probe the considerable potency of audiovisual political satire and its diverse implications in the Middle East by appraising the global effects of post-9/11 News Parodies from the U.S and Egypt.

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## **List of Acronyms**

CBS	Columbia Broadcasting System
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CNN	The Cable News Network
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
HBO	Home Box Office
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
LBC	Lebanon Broadcasting Corporation
<i>MBC</i>	Middle East Broadcasting Centre
NBC	The National Broadcasting Company
NFP	National Fascist Party
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USIP	US Institute of Peace
VPN	Virtual Private Networks
WHCAD	White House Correspondents' Association Dinner

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## General introduction

Satire refers to literary works that vindicate wrongful human behaviors, especially committed by the elite, through a mixture of witty ridicule, sarcasm, or irony. The word “satire” derives from its ancient Roman predecessor *Satura*, stemming itself from the Latin adjective *Satur*, which means “full”, or “replete”, precisely describing a ceremonial dish of mixed foods that gives a sense of nuance and diversity. The art form itself, as we know it today, has always posed a tremendous challenge for those who tried to confine it under a universal definition. Since the first attempt to define satire, scholars have not reached a single definition for it.

Satire in politics is a style of political commentary that employs humor, irony, exaggeration, or mockery to expose a political target's apparent corruption, flaws, or incompetence. Satire has been used in politics for millennia. In Ancient Rome and Greece, people employed satire to gain a better knowledge of their civilization. Satire has long been a significant element of political opposition. However, historians frequently overlook or overlook it because it is not deemed serious. Satire has the power to attack the establishment without fear of censorship, which makes it a valuable instrument for criticizing regimes and their ideas.

Since the boundless reach of satire renders it impervious to definition, we can deduce that we are unable to pinpoint satirical instances in all art forms, where it serves as a vehicle for exposing human foolishness, greed, and folly, or bring about change in society by making individuals aware of their own flaws. Other than visceral amusement or corrosive malice, the satirist attempts to achieve ulterior goals. Surely, a satirical work may appear dully bland, and the satirist may seem unjustly prejudiced or sanctimonious, a real satirist must be a humanitarian practitioner and a responsible citizen, even in his or her own subjective portrayal or personal fury.

Since ancient times, satire was primarily employed to teach people about morals and proper behavior via the use of comedy. Greek satire, for instance, satirical style was not only amusing, but also educational.

Satire dates all back to Ancient Greece, when Aristophanes' comedies frequently mocked the gods and the government. With time, satire gained popularity and began to spread throughout Europe. Satire flourished during the Middle Ages, when eminent authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas More, and Jonathan Swift used oblique criticism to attack the Catholic church and European rulers. Chaucer and Jonathan Swift had strong opinions about the social rank and dubious practices of the Church and monarchy that they were unable to express publicly; instead, they used wit, sarcasm, and irony to evade punishment skillfully.

Satire resurfaced with a vengeance in the sixteenth century, intent on making obvious social criticisms. In the final years of Elizabeth's reign, the popularity of satirical writing and widespread disenchantment with the monarchy resulted in an explosion of satire until censorship put an end to the trend. With the progression of the nineteenth century, an increasing number of people began composing satire. The growth of education and the increasing importance of literature were two key factors for this. Britain's increasing industry was a frequent source of ridicule throughout this era.

With the emergence of telecommunications technology in the twentieth century, satire discovered a modern visual medium that would not only offer new artistic resources to satire, but also expand its viewpoint and audience. Today, on a variety of digital channels, mainly on television and the internet, Western political satire in audiovisual media utilizes practically unregulated witty humor as a means of revealing and undermining malicious political activities.

This offers the public an alternate, critical version of the political scene, an aim that a significant portion of traditional news media outlets seems to be implementing.

This is why satire is popular in the current political milieu. The constant shock value of the news gives sufficient fodder for comedians and satirists. One of the key reasons there is more satire today than decades ago is that there are various sources of information available, as opposed to a single source, such as the local newspaper or evening news. The constant shock value of the news gives sufficient fodder for comedians and satirists. With such wealth of content and media outlets, it is easier than before for individuals to find what they are looking for and become loyal readers or viewers. The recent advent of media technology has dramatically expanded political satire audiences, especially as recent satirical programs that are increasingly enjoying prime-time airing, giving them unprecedented popularity although degradingly called “Fake news” or “Alternative Media,” their statistical and economic success has allowed them to go beyond their position of merely criticizing politics, educating the public and condemning traditional media.

Satire has always been a significant mode of political opposition. However, historians frequently overlook or dismiss it because it is deemed trivial. It is strange to find that scholars interested in humor have not analyzed satire sufficiently. There are rare developed, systematic theoretical structure for the study of satirical discourse in linguistic humor research. There are only a few article-length research concentrating on some aspects of satirical humor development and reception. Some scholars try to find out, for example, using a cognitive approach, to what degree readers are aware of authorial motives when they read stories that tend to be satirical. The comparatively abstract essence of satire cannot be accounted for by such partial research, focusing

on particular aspects. In this field of study, the lack of analysis may be partly because analyzing satire has become the exclusive domain of literary critique.

Researchers investigating satirical talk shows have generally focused on the idea that there is a clear line between “real” and “fake” news. Most scholars explore the “primacy effect” and determine that people show different behavior patterns depending on the sequence in which they watch talk shows and *CNN*<sup>1</sup> *Headline News*. Others arranged the opposing terms “mainstream” and simulated news in such a way that “mainstream” may achieve its potential by replicating the equally counter-conventional concept of simulated news with regard to media balancing standards. While preserving the core principles of the split, some academics argue that satirical talk shows are divided between “fake” news and “genuine” news that they deliver through humor.

Conversely, there is some academic evidence cautioning that wading into the binary of “is it or isn’t it” news is not the best way to obtain logical answers. What is almost always considered an inseparable part of these discussions is the label of “fake” news, which has provided the primary frame for conversations about satirical talk shows, both in popular and academic circles. Satirical talk shows are approaching to the forefront of academic interest because scholars discovered that young individuals watching them tend to become more pessimistic about public life. Many field experiments showed those individuals who perceive themselves to be politically incompetent and ineffective become attached to the satirical message satirical talk shows.

The relationship between Middle Easterners and satire is quite an intriguing one since the genre itself, at least in strictly Western terms, is virtually a novelty in the region. Satire had not found its proper place in the Middle East until the inevitable clash between Western and Eastern

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<sup>1</sup> The Cable News Network is a multinational news-based pay television channel headquartered in Atlanta, United States.

cultures during the colonial and postcolonial periods. People in the Middle East underwent a dramatic shift in their cultural values and conventions because of the colonial and postcolonial periods, since the tactics of uprising itself were taken from Western ideology. However, Western norms, especially those connected to media theories and trends, replaced the rich Middle Eastern satirical potential with reproductions of Western satire, even if the cultural and literary infrastructure was strong and might serve to bring forth an entirely new kind of satire.

This thesis aims to be a valuable addition to the research that attempts to analyze political satire in the Middle East in the light of the scarcity of Arab studies in this field. Hence, the main objective of this thesis is to analyze the various mechanisms, effects, and limitations of political satire in contemporary media in the West. From such standpoint, another central focus of this thesis shall be to explore the aims and implications of Middle Eastern satirical shows that adopt the form and content of Western political satirical shows such as *The Daily Show*. Such objective shall be carried out by taking a closer look at Bassem Youssef's *El Bernameg* (The Program) and Youssef Hussein's *Joe Show*. These politically oriented programs received great popularity and covered many of the issues that affected the life of the Egyptian citizen at an important stage that Egypt went through after the 2011 political change, and what accompanied such change. *El Bernameg* and *Joe Show* were forms of expression about the new political demands and trends in Egypt that ushered new prospects for Middle Eastern media as well as new potential ambiguities that need to more academic attention.

This thesis shall focus on answering four main questions:

1. How is satire perceived in the West and the Middle East?



2. How far can Middle Eastern political satire that appeared after 9/11, push cultural and political boundaries without engendering division and unrest in the region?
3. Does the financial dimension of News Parody shows undermine the essence of political satire?
4. Is the high similarity between Western and Middle Eastern political satire a form of cultural hegemony?

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter includes the different definitions, history, and development of satire in the Western World from the classical antiquity to modern times. The second chapter deals with satire in the Middle East. In this chapter, the previously explored conceptualization of satire in the Western World is juxtaposed with its unique perception and limitations in the Middle East. The Third chapter delves into the Middle Eastern experience with media, with a keen focus on televised media since it plays a major role in transmitting both humorous and satirical content. In this chapter, the dominance of certain powerful nations and individuals over media shall pave the way to explore the nature of satirical content found on satellite TV in the Middle East, as well as its convenient limitations, and often-biased focus. In the fourth chapter, the clear impact of 9/11 events on proliferating the preexisting postmodern satire on TV and the internet is analyzed profoundly. Starting from the pioneers of post 9/11 satirical shows, including Jon Stuart and Stephen Colbert, this chapter goes News Parody's severe and boundless criticism of conventional media. The chapter also focuses on the popularity and controversy of similar shows in Egypt, most notably Bassem Youssef and Youssef Hussein.

## **Chapter One: History of Satire in the West**

## 1. Introduction

Satire is one of the oldest art forms that has been used to critique society since the classical antiquity<sup>2</sup>. From the speeches and poems read aloud in formal settings in ancient Greece, to the numerous comedy authors that took use of satire to create canonical works lampooning both politicians and mythology with an equal measure of biting humor and plain obscenity in their movements and gestures. Satire was used to express a humorous message in nearly every genre, including history, epics, dramas, letters, and speeches.

The early beginnings of democracy in the West have overlapped with this enduring art form, as it played a remarkable role in forging and fostering freedom of expression. There were also political and ideological transitions following the rapid and widespread technological modernization that peaked with the industrial revolution that gave birth to idealistic democratic states. Humor is a critical component of satire. Many people use comedy to mock various aspects of life. Comedy writing allows you to express how ludicrous or stupid something is without offending anyone; this is why it is ideal for satirists. Satire takes this concept a step further by mocking those who are not present to defend themselves; this makes it ideal for political criticism, as politics are frequently difficult and emotionally charged subjects that can be taken too seriously if not addressed with a sense of humor.

The art form itself, as we know it today, has always been a major issue for people who tried to put it into a single definition. This is because of two reasons. Firstly, each scholar seems to describe satire by referring to its purpose. For instance, Randall (1974) defines it as “criticism made with the hope ... that there will be reform” (p. 13) and Berger (1997) defines it as “the

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<sup>2</sup> The period of cultural history between the 8th century BC and the 6th century AD centred on the Mediterranean Sea,[note 1] comprising the interlocking civilizations of ancient Greece and ancient Rome known as the Greco-Roman world. (Grinin, 2008)

deliberate use of the comic for purposes of attack” (p. 167). Ashworth (1967, p. 101) describes it as “a joke about serious things within a moral framework. It criticizes and provokes humor at the same time”, stressing the limits of satire and its association with humor.

It is also described as a primary strategy for deflating egos and offering social criticism (Beckson & Ganz, 1989; Kreuz & Roberts, 1993) and as a sort of ridicule, which reveals the subject's weaknesses and undervalues it, focusing on its cultural and social context by examining its connections to historical figures and events. Rosenheim's (1971) definition of satire is similar, as he describes it as “an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historic particulars”. (p. 323)

Secondly, the vast array of techniques that satirists used since classical periods and the complicated historical contexts that compelled it to transform accordingly have all made its fundamental principles ambiguous and open to constant change. According to Christopher Yu (2003), attempting to forge a definition for satire would always result in half-truths and pointless generalizations, while Dustin Griffin (2015) arrives to the conclusion:

satire is in my view is rather an ‘open’ than a ‘closed’ form, both in its formal features (particularly in its reluctance to conclude) and in its more general rhetorical and moral features, in its frequent preference for inquiry, provocation, or playfulness rather than assertion and conclusiveness. (p. 186)

While the boundless reach of satire renders satire impervious to definition, satirical instances can be found in all art forms. G.L. Hendrickson (1971) asserts that different lexical categories derived from the term “satire” are unrelated etymologically, meaning the root word may have no direct relation with its derivations, add to that the concepts of irony, parody, and humor that are often used interchangeably with satire, which only enables us to provide a shallow definition for satire (Hendrickson, 1971).

Samuel Johnson makes a widely applicable distinction between “satire” and “lampoon” in *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) when describing the formal verse satire genre. He identifies satire as a poem in which wickedness or stupidity is censored, and goes further to assume that proper satire is distinguished from a lampoon targeted at a single individual by the generality of the reflections in satire, but they are too often misunderstood.

For the earliest type of satire, known at the time as *Satura*<sup>3</sup>, the ancient Romans provided a description. It was a genre of literature that is very distinct from the understanding of satire today. *Satura* focused more on lecturing than giving tacit humorous social commentary, despite having scant amounts of satire and social criticism; their primary aim was not to provoke social change, but the openness of *Satura* works distinguishes them from being synonymous with the current conception of the genre (LeBoeuf). Pioneers of the genre were Horace, Juvenal, and Menippus who created *Saturae* works that would later determine the classification of satirical works into *Horatian*, *Juvenalian* and *Minnepian* (Müller 92).

Clearly, not all works belonging to the *Satura* genre can be considered “satire” for lacking any of the essential characteristics of satire. While the works of Horace, Juvenal, and Minnipus, when translated, may originally fall under the genre of satire, these works lack irony, implicitness and social critique (LeBoeuf, 2007). In addition, *Satura* works lack the most significant characteristic of satire; which is the audience that only comprised tiny fringe elite Romans instead of appealing to the public; this is most noticeable in the *Satura* of Horace (LeBoeuf). *Satura* is deprived of the central goal of satire that synthesizes these variables, which is critique for improving society (Richlin, 1992).

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<sup>3</sup> A play of a lively character acted on the Roman stage at the end of a serious piece. (Ullman, 1913)

However, some of Roman *Saturae* bore a noticeable resemblance to contemporary satire, and today, the ones that have survived for centuries are subject to academic study. One good example of this is Petronius' *Satyricon* (Late 1st Century). The title itself, as it means “raunchy stories,” is closer in context to satire. Petronius juxtaposes the demeanor of wealthy men with upper-class Roman citizens in one of its parts, *Dinner with Trimalchio* (1895), the audacious criticism of corruption and deception is flagrant, particularly with regard to the ruthless punishment of Emperor Nero to those who oppose him. Tales in *Satyricon*, comparable to Aristophanes’<sup>4</sup> works, display the goodness of nature found in lower-class individuals by submitting them to the rich noblemen's ridicule and mockery, whereas the latter are full of deviousness, greed, brutality and manipulation (LeBoeuf).

It is difficult to find a consensus between Mendell's (1920) definition of satire as bitter invective or Frye's (1969) famous declaration that satire is a type of militant irony and Siegel's (1987) opinion that it is an aesthetic mode of attack, or Connery and Combe's (1995) assertion that it is a way of expression. At first glance, none of these perspectives appear to share any actual points of interaction, save for the form's assertive and communicative personality. Drawing from these different instances, one gets the impression that only a small part of satire's wider aim is explained, leaving plenty of room for debate about what satire is. The term satire necessitates ongoing reconsideration, reformulation, and evaluation (Reilly, 2010). Satire, far from acquiring a calm life in both popular and scholarly discourses, remains one of the most contentious arenas of critical debate.

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<sup>4</sup> A comic playwright or comedy-writer of ancient Athens and a poet of Old Attic Comedy. (Roman & Roman, 2010)

Traditionally, satire serves as a vehicle for exposing human foolishness, greed, and folly, or brings about change in society by making individuals aware of their own flaws. Yet, in reality, most scholars have not reached a consensus on the function and purpose of satire. Despite the fact that agreement on the matter is rare, most scholars agree that satire is either a type of critique that adheres to the greatest moral order or a base form of invective that cultivates destructive, even nihilistic, inclinations in blatant attacks on its targets. Such declarations are too prevalent in broad appraisals of satire's overriding function. Criticism is, in large part, the core of satire's larger purpose (Reilly, 2010). Thus, framing satire as criticism serves a valuable purpose in that it helps us to make preliminary distinctions between what satire is and what it does.

Satire has always had a public role as Patricia Meyer Spacks (1971) states:

Satire has traditionally had a public function, and its public orientation remains. Although the satirist may arraign God and the universe . . . he usually seems to believe – at least to hope – that change is possible. Personal change, in his view, leads to social change; he insists that bad men make bad societies. He shows us ourselves and our world; he demands that we improve both. And he creates a kind of emotion which moves us toward the desire to change. (p. 363)

Satirists frequently differentiate between the styles of two Roman poets; the *Juvenalian*, full of rage and disgust with universal injustice, and the *Horatian*, more mellow and entertained by humanity's follies, but not especially appalled. The columns of Art Buchwald<sup>5</sup>, for example, are characterized by the *Horatian* mood. Yet his quips still have an edge, and he himself says, “Satire is malicious.” (As cited in Freedman, 2008, p.2). To all satirists, the weapon of choice is wit, a cerebral and biting type of humor. According to Freud, Wit is one of the means by which we release our repressed hostilities “By belittling and humbling our enemy, by scorning and ridiculing

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur Buchwald was an American humorist best known for his column in The Washington Post. (Standing, 2007)

him, we indirectly obtain the pleasure of his defeat by the laughter of the third person, the inactive spectator.” (As cited in Freedman, 2008, p.2).

Despite not having a fixed definition, the consensus seems to settle on satire’s ability to inspire critique and striving for the betterment of society. This audacious characteristic of satire had a tremendous impact during the growth, turmoil, and rebuilding of every major civilization. The art form itself has also extended to other genres.

## **2. Satire and Fantasy**

A substance containing criticism or judgment distinguishes all works of satire, prophecy, books of conduct, sermon, and editorials. As Northrop Frye (1968) observes in the *Anatomy of Criticism* in his study of satire: “essential to satire . . . is an object of attack.” (1968, p. 224). What separates satire from the attack or judgment that may appear in an editorial or the like is a second critical feature; “. . . wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd” (1968, p. 224). By using the empirically impossible or doubtful, satire tries to make its critique amusing and succeeds in doing so. An endless host of the fantastic is employed in the realm of satire including the *Lilliputians*<sup>6</sup>, *Brobdingnagians*<sup>7</sup>, and the *Flying Island* of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) among many others (Jemielity, 1992). Freedman (2008) consolidates the aforementioned argument by asserting that satirists may employ fiction for seeking truth but not establishing falsehood. In general, satire uses imagination specifically to create “extraordinary situations for the provoking and testing of a philosophical idea” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 114).

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<sup>6</sup> Early 18th century: from the imaginary country of Lilliput in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, inhabited by people 6 inches (15 cm) tall.

<sup>7</sup> Brobdingnag is a fictional land, which is occupied by giants, in Jonathan Swift's 1726 satirical novel *Gulliver's Travels*. The adjective "Brobdingnagian" has come to describe anything of colossal size.



Satire dramatizes the actual and the ideal in the interest of illustrating the contrast between the two, rather than actually making juxtapositions between fantasy and truth. A significant part of the satirist's style of criticism is the dramatization of the interplay between fantasy and fact, and consequently, between the authentic and inauthentic.

### **3. Satire and comedy**

Comedy generates a sympathetic and identifiable laughter; yet, laughter in any given satirical work is directed at someone, where the joke is produced with enmity, creating a laughter that assumes superiority because that laughter means one does not share in the object of derision. The laughter of humor collectively amuses people, while the laughter of satire is the laughter at the ridiculed, involving teasing, finger pointing, and gloating (Jemielity, 2011).

For instance, in the Hebrew bible, Elijah<sup>8</sup> encounters the priests of Baal, a false god, on a mountaintop. As the priests seek a response from their unresponsive divinity in increasing fury and fever, Elijah offers help sarcastically. Baal, he suggests, may be “engaged,” that is, attending to his physical needs, urinating or defecating, and barely able to respond at once. Therefore, this passage about Elijah must actually have been amusing for the believing *Israelites*<sup>9</sup>, who were contemptuous of the worship of false gods. It was vindicating and simultaneously entertaining. Only Baal's priests and their followers will be offended at the insult; therefore, at the detriment of the non-believer, the joke is informed. Another example may be a married couple’s quarrel in front of a third party. The wife insults her husband in front of a family friend, thus creating the double audience of satire in a nutshell; the target, whose critic (the wife) might sincerely wish for

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<sup>8</sup> According to the Books of Kings in the Hebrew Bible, a prophet and a miracle worker who lived in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Ahab. (Yonge, 1859).

<sup>9</sup> Sons of Israel, a confederation of Iron Age Semitic-speaking tribes of the ancient Near East, who inhabited a part of Canaan during the tribal and monarchic periods. (Finkelstein, 1996)

reformation by her rebuke, and the friend who agrees with the point of view of the wife, The comment from the wife discomfits one listener and amuses another.

Satire, like comedy, focuses on the individual in society, as opposed to the exclusive emphasis on the individual in tragedy and romance. While it may not be done directly, the audience of satirical works are always made aware of the conventions, trends, structures, and theories that operate in any society and very often operate without consciousness on the part of those who live by those norms.

#### **4. Who is the Satirist?**

Satirists have always possessed a vast selection of creative talents and had the ability to operate in starkly different political systems, expressed in a variety of media (Freedman, 2008). Obviously, satirists had their own share of psychological criticism to endure.

Historians reported many stories about callous treatment Jonathan Swift encountered, his depression and his repressed sexuality; and of Mark Twain's harsh criticism of himself: "Byron despised the human race because he despised himself. I feel as Byron did, and for the same reason." (as cited in Freedman, 2008, p.7). Art Buchwald's mother was admitted to a private sanatorium for extreme chronic depression shortly after he was born, and Buchwald himself was treated for depression. When he was asked what he was trying to do with his humor, he responded, "I'm getting even. I am constantly avenging hurts from the past." (As cited in Freedman, p.7).

The Russian satirist Mikhail Zoshchenko was a lonely individual who wrote an autobiography seeking to know the sources of his dissatisfactions. Some critics also read George Orwell's dystopian prospectus of an authoritarian world in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) as the product of his miserable childhood in an oppressive English preparatory school. The oppositional

speaker's ludicrous and helpless appearance has a double edge, for such a person, with no credibility to lose, can more openly express biting critiques of powerful individuals. Many satirists take a more degraded than authoritative approach, as though they borrow the paradoxical license that enables them to exact their ridicule (Keane, 2007).

Other than visceral amusement or corrosive malice, the satirist attempts to achieve ulterior goals. Surely a satire may be dully bland, and the satirist may seem unjustly prejudiced or sanctimonious; or a satire may be vacuously funny, playful, or pointlessly absurd (Quintero, 2011). However, every satirist worthy of a reputation must be more than a participating advocate or a mere entertainer, for a real satirist must be a humanitarian practitioner and a responsible citizen, even in his or her own subjective portrayal or personal fury (Quintero, 2011). Satire cannot operate without a standard to which readers may evaluate their subject. People celebrate with delight what they respect, appreciate or profit from, and censor the immoral with resentment because they have an acquired sense of what the world is like (Quintero, 2011).

Without getting a comparative understanding of what might not be the case, people cannot interpret something as insane, monstrous, perverse, or absurd. There is no way one can assume that there is something wrong with the world without a certain understanding of what the world should be and how it could be righted. In both direct or indirect methods, the satirist attempts to sway us towards an acceptable solution, towards a situation that should be what the satirist believes should be. The satirist is thought to have society's best interests at heart and to pursue change or reformation. It does not really matter if the norm is undeniably correct, but what matters is that the satirist and the reader share the traditional interpretation.

In his recent investigation of the cultural position of the medium, Fredric Bogel (2019) suggests that satire does reveal the satirized object in all its alien difference, but to simply identify

it as different; making a difference by setting up a textual machine or mechanism for producing difference. Bogel considers this mechanism to be part of larger structures that lurk beneath the surface of what was known as the “Augustan wit”<sup>10</sup> and thus as a counterargument to depictions of the late 17th and early 18th centuries as the “Age of Balance.” According to Paulson (1967), the satirist seeks his reader's choices, not mere sentiments; he wishes to stimulate the power of the reader to action, not to waste it in sensory experience.

Overall, in many scholars' view, the satirist's responsibility as that of a watchdog, and no one expects a watchdog to do the double duty of alarming others that the barn is on fire and taking an action against it. Satirists, thus, awaken people to action by exposing falsity, exposing deceit, shattering misleading illusion, and rousing them from their complacency and passivity.

## 5. Types of Satire

It is generally possible to identify satirical literature as either *Horatian*, *Juvenalian*, or *Menippean*. *Horatian* satire is a type of satire that makes use of wit and good humor to accomplish its goal. *Horatian* satire is typically intended to be both informative and aesthetically pleasing, while also providing entertainment. *Horatian* satire usually employs clichés or stock phrases that are prevalent in society. Quintus Horatius Flaccus, or Horace, was the most famous exponent of this writing style. He was a Roman poet who wrote numerous short poems in three separate types in his book *Epistles* (20BC). *Horatian* satire can be used to affect desired changes in children and students by individuals in positions of authority in society, such as parents and teachers.

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<sup>10</sup> A wit in the Augustan Age (Latin literary history, from approximately 43 bc to ad 18) may be a bright social talker, a critic of the arts or of society, or a poet or artist, who applies his wit in mocking, acting as judge, or giving aesthetic pleasure or expressing new truths. (Domingo, 2009)

Additionally, a country's authorities to influence public behavior or to promote ideals thought necessary for society's good can use it.

Horace's first *satura* poem is not as programmatic as his previous works; it does however foretell many of the qualities of the remainder of his hexameter<sup>11</sup> corpus. His works exemplify the conflict between convention and novelty that characterizes much Roman poetry, not only *satura*. Horace favorably recognizes Lucilius' *satura* heritage by producing a relatively *Jevenalian* satire short poem in dactylic hexameter with a relatively informal vocabulary. He employs elements of the Hellenistic prose tirade<sup>12</sup>, which can also be seen in the preserved portions of Lucilius.

On the other hand, he indirectly anticipated his predecessor's overt criticism of the usefulness of *brevitas*<sup>13</sup>. These attacks are targeted at verbose Stoic writers in most of his works, and they also foretell the Horace's political characters in his *satura*. Horace announces and exhibits his satirical approach, which is largely in the tradition of the *spoudaiogeloion*<sup>14</sup> of *diatribe*<sup>15</sup> but is in contrast to Lucilius' expressive invective, which he will openly review in later works. Using popular philosophy as a common platform, he presents the *praecepta vitae beatae* (rules of conduct of the blessed) (Whybrew, 2006).

These *praecepta* are based on various forms of "fines" (limits, self-control, and self-discipline). *Varietas* (variety) is an essential component of *satura* that cannot be adequately demonstrated in a single poem. It is represented by a number of polemic features, including as

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<sup>11</sup> Hexameter, a line of verse containing six feet, usually dactyls (' ~ ~). Dactylic hexameter is the oldest known form of Greek poetry and is the preeminent metre of narrative and didactic poetry in Greek and Latin, in which its position is comparable to that of iambic pentameter in English versification. (Winbolt, 2011)

<sup>12</sup> A long, angry speech of criticism or accusation during the ancient Greek period. (Hall, 2017)

<sup>13</sup> A rhetorical style meaning the expression of an idea by the very minimum of essential words. (Lobur, 2007)

<sup>14</sup> The mixture of serious and comical elements stylistically. (Giangrande, 2019)

<sup>15</sup> A lengthy oration, though often reduced to writing, made in criticism of someone or something, often employing humor, sarcasm, and appeals to emotion. (Clayman, 2007)

animal fable and story. Horace's treatment of the issue of greed, which has enraged critics, also demonstrates *varietas* by presenting several dimensions of the issue (Whybrew). The broader canvas of the entire *libellus*<sup>16</sup> provides evidence of further *varietas* examples (Whybrew).

The *Horatian* satirist's persona is defined mostly by 'autobiographical' elements. In *Horatian* satire, the persona is already a character who participates in informal moral dialogues (Whybrew). On one level, the intended attributes can easily be understood as “brevity and variety” (Morris, 1968). Brevity is a necessity for Horace, and not only an aesthetic whim. Variety is specified in a more complicated way. It is considered in terms of different styles (Brown, 1993).

Furthermore, Horace's *satura*, like his father's, tries to be helpful rather than destructive. Horace's father provided both positive and negative examples for his son's moral instruction. He attempted to prevent his son from engaging in a behavior that would lead to dissatisfaction and unhappiness by naming people as *exempla vitiorum* (examples of faults); these were persons mentioned in a private circumstance depicted between father and son (Brown). They are not subjected to the public attacks that Horace's critic complains to, and that Horace rejects.

Horace emphasizes that he is not looking for a large audience. His *satura* is for a small group of friends, according to the poetic fiction. Horace defines a friend as a person who, along with his own growing maturity, will help to liberate him from his lingering, minor flaws. In reality, the *Horatian* satirist's character is a depiction of a true friend who uses candid criticism to fix flaws: where the core idea of *libertas*, female personification of liberty and personal freedom, emerges once more, is an apt description of Horace's own moral persona in the satires. The concept

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<sup>16</sup> A *libellus* (plural *libelli*) in the Roman Empire was any brief document written on individual pages (as opposed to scrolls or tablets) Cloud & Braund A long, angry speech of criticism or accusation during the ancient Greek period. (Hall, 2017)

of freedom that is pertinent here is the satirist's freedom of speech reinterpreted for *Horatian satura* (Brown). Horace implies that social critique of *satura* is still essential.

The Roman poet Decimus Iunius Iuvenalis, better known as Juvenal, established the genre of *Juvenalian* satire during late first century BC. It is a type of satire with the most edgy, controversial, and memorable works of literature. It has been affected by his harsh edge, with almost scornful, aggressive, and accusing zeal. *Juvenalian* satire is a very popular form of satire. It is intended to educate the public on how corrupt and morally bankrupt certain people are. *Juvenalian* satire is characterized by a great reliance on sarcasm, hyperbole<sup>17</sup>, and irony. Frequently, the target is a person in a position of authority who has committed some type of abuse or criminality. Juvenal's works are not just bitter, but also humorous. Many readers feel that *Juvenalian* satire is an attack on society's moral sensibility. This negative outlook is bolstered by the fact that it is addressed more frequently than any other aspect of life.

Juvenal says that it is difficult not to write satire and almost all of his first attempts, on the part of the Romans, consist of a catalogue of venality, vice, greed, and meanness (Caron, 2019). Looking around that evil city, no human being was able to control his or her tongue, and so the poet urges himself not just to set sail through the satires to proceed, but to be comprehensive, for the times demand it. The Romans viewed Lucilius, who was regaining popularity during Juvenal's time, as the inventor of formal poetic satire, and Juvenal certainly looks back to him as a model in his programmatic first poem. As a result, it is worthwhile to analyze what characteristics the two share (Humphries, 1957). The tone of aggression against named individuals is obviously the most important, which Juvenal emphasizes in most of his works; however, whereas Lucilius attacked

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<sup>17</sup> The use of exaggeration as a rhetorical device or figure of speech. (Claridge, 2010)

living contemporaries of rank and position, Juvenal did not, instead, he used names as exempla in the rhetorical style to give genuine embodiment to the vices which he wished to attack.

In this regard, Juvenal differed from Horace in his attempt to give his satire a more variegated and colorful aesthetic aspect, in order to elevate the emotional temperature beyond *Horatian* equability. *Juvenalian* satire is commonly used to expose the hypocrisy and moral failings of individuals, governments, and other organizations. The irony and sarcasm in this combination are expected to be more pronounced.

Menippean satire tends to focus on an individual defect and/or a specific psychological feature, such as a mental attitude, rather than social norms. Slightly less harsh than *Juvenalian* satire, this form of satire takes its name from the 3rd-century BCE Greek philosopher Menippus and is noticeably more judgmental than its *Horatian* cousin.

W. Scott Blanchard begins his definitive analysis *Menippean* satire of the Renaissance<sup>18</sup> period with a disclaimer, “*Menippean* satire is one of the most difficult genres to identify” (Blanchard 1995, p. 11). Nevertheless, he attempts to provide an approximate definition by considering *Menippean* satire a genre for and about scholars, he says:

Menippean satire is a genre for and about scholars; it is an immensely learned form that is at the same time paradoxically anti-intellectual. If its master of ceremonies is the humanist as wise fool, its audience is a learned community whose members need to be reminded, with Paul, of the depravity of their overreaching intellects, of the limits of human understanding. (Blanchard 1995, p. 14)

Howard Weinbrot (2005) prefers a more precise structured definition because “current theories of *Menippean* satire based on Frye and, largely, Bakhtin allow too many texts at too many times to

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<sup>18</sup> A period in European history marking the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity and covering the 15th and 16th centuries, characterized by an effort to revive and surpass ideas and achievements of classical antiquity. (Carter & Butt, 2005)



be *Menippean*” (2005, p. 296). In addition through a careful analysis of the ancient literature, he finds that “ much of Bakhtin’s theory of the *Menippean* satire is alien to actual events in literary history so far as we can reclaim them” (2005, p. 39). He offers a succinct description that implies *Menippean* satire uses at least two other genres, cultures, historical or cultural times, or changes of voice to oppose a threatening false orthodoxy.

Satire may use one of two tones in different examples; the serious one, in which the angry satirist still fails and grows angrier, or the muted one, in which the threatened angry satirist provides an antidote to the poison he knows remains. Hence, no matter how accurate Weinbrot may be in cutting this vast, trans-generic genre, he admits reasonably that “we can never be precise and never should be rigid when dealing with the products of licentious imagination” (2005, p. 303). As Dustin Griffin notes, contrasting views of the generic roots of satire may be why “most satiric theory, at least since the Renaissance, is polemical, ranging itself against previous practice or claim and attempting to displace it” (Griffin 1994, p. 6).

It should not be shocking to readers of the twenty-first century that such an adaptive genre, rather existentialist in nature. There are numerous varieties of satire. It makes fun of everything from politics to the most basic aspects of human nature through the use of verbal sarcasm, exaggeration, incongruity, and reversal. Each of the three most prevalent varieties of satire has its own unique characteristics and even varies in harshness to some degree. In contrast to those who just want to make light of their subjects, others perceive them as evils that must be fought.

## **6. Phases of Satire**

Frye (1969) distinguishes between two phases or levels of satire. First, the low-level satire asks if, within the admittedly restricted norms of the society at question, a productive existence is possible. Obviously, this non-revolutionary satire does not call for traditions, political, marital,

economic, or whatever, to be overthrown; it seeks a way of living beneficially within certain structures or frameworks, however imperfect they may be. The serious questioning of totalitarian regimes and their egalitarian dreams by Orwell hardly counts as first-phase satire, since it is difficult to accommodate the system; it must be overthrown (Jemielity, 2011).

No replacement of the satirized culture is sought by satire of the low standard. The satire here emphasizes discretion or an unillusioned central character who acknowledges the context's limitations but operates within them perceptively and shrewdly (Jemielity, 2011). Horace does not tell Damasippus, a Roman commander, in *Satires* II and III (c. 30 BC), that he is a fool, that his supposed insight of all being insane is morally worthless without grade differences. His laconic closing comment to the talkative, pseudo-philosopher merely asks the lesser to be saved by the greater lunatic. In the second book of the *Satires*, Horace keeps his wisdom to himself and affirms the probability that, in restricted circumstances, a positive way of living is possible by keeping a lucid view of what is going on. What is suggested is a street savvy that acknowledges the neighborhoods less than-ideal quality but knows how to thrive without leaving.

However, what happens when the mindset of the satirist attacks the very norms themselves because they are useless and have to be discarded? This is Frye's second phase satire, finding no a way of living. with the norms, rather, people challenge them head on (Jemielity, 2011). Any convention, any philosophy, method, doctrine, or trend claims that it has the answers: Capitalism, Marxism, Roman Catholicism, Mormonism, and all ideologies. To illustrate the inadequacy of the theory, the satirist sets the theory against reality. The theorization of the scholars at the Grand Academy of Lagado, where advancement is not the most important commodity, is constantly set against the tragic and ridiculous practical implications of their theorization in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Jemielity, 2011).

Doctor Pangloss, who usually explains everything, becomes increasingly absurd in *Candide* (1759), as he insists on his theory in spite of the tragic standard of his experiences and that of all the others in the story. Further, the myth of true happiness on this planet is debunked in Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759), but he admits that the itch to pursue it will not vanish. The unresolved dialectic of human life still pursues unsatisfied desire; the satirist prefers practice to theory in this sort of satire.

Frye (1969) observes that the traditions of art themselves can be mocked in second-phase parody or irony. The complete title and author identification of *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), over two dozen lines long, is certainly one such case, as is his division of the work into one hundred and twenty-seven chapters of the less than two hundred pages of *Cat 's Cradle* (1963); the chapter classification becomes hilariously meaningless. In challenging whatever conventions are at issue, the satirist, of course, assumes that sensory data to provide a reliable basis upon which to challenge conventions; that we can rely on what we see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. Jemielity further explains this idea:

What if we can't? (rely on sensory data) After all, at this very moment, I am assuming a stationary position. I am not moving. Actually, I am, at a speed so fast I cannot even begin to fathom it, being whirled around in a circle around a circle. From a different perspective, physical stability or immobility is an illusion. Third-phase satire, satire of the high norm, challenges the very bases of our sense perception. It casts doubt on the reliability of sensory experience. (As cited in Quintero, 2011, p. 27)

It casts doubt on the reliability of sensory experience. Such satire repeatedly places us in singularly uncomfortable, threatening situations that force us to see ourselves in ways that overturn conventional experiential associations.

The satirist, of course, believes that sensory evidence offers a valid foundation on which to challenge norms when subjecting them to questioning, and that people can rely on what they

can perceive with their five senses, but he simultaneously wonders what happens if people cannot do so. Or as Thomas Jemielity puts it:

After all, at this very moment, I am assuming a stationary position. I am not moving. Actually, I am, at a speed so fast I cannot even begin to fathom it, being whirled around in a circle around a circle. From a different perspective, physical stability or immobility is an illusion. Third-phase satire, satire of the high norm, challenges the very bases of our sense perception. It casts doubt on the reliability of sensory experience. Such satire repeatedly places us in singularly uncomfortable, threatening situations, situations that force us to see ourselves in ways that overturn conventional experiential associations. (as cited in Quintero, 2011, p. 42)

Kurt Vonnegut is the satirist who has based a great deal of his works on the disturbing assumptions of modern science. *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), intensely fascinated by human concerns about intent and significance by its *Tralfamadorians*<sup>19</sup>, continually undermines the order we presume to preserve our position in the universe (Jemielity). How does one deal with the idea that in what could be more than one world.

Third Phase satire, alternatively known as “Satire of the High norm”, is the irony of the nightmare, where human life is portrayed as a jail, a madhouse, an unexplained imprisonment without the possibility of liberation. In the dystopian victory of the powers of cultural anarchy in the *Dunciad* (1727) of Alexander Pope, in *Mother Night* (1961) of Kurt Vonnegut, or in the *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) of George Orwell, such an image projects horrific destinies that have no end or end in suicide. (Jemielity)

## 7. Origins and History of Satire

Since classical antiquity, satire has undergone complex phases of forgery and transformation. The Greeks created artistic works that encompassed a large number of the

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<sup>19</sup> The aliens who bring Billy (the protagonist) to their planet to exhibit him in a zoo. They also kidnap a 20-year-old actress/porn star named Montana Wildhack so that the two can mate. In many ways, the Tralfamadorians are subtly compared to the Germans.

distinctive features of modern satire although the word had not yet been coined. The most illustrious examples of these are the plays by Aristophanes. He would create a character in most of his works who is oblivious to the events happening around him while being mocked for his views and naiveté by the other characters. Aristophanes and most satirists across history focused on revealing the hypocrisy and maliciousness of humans mainly by juxtaposing the respectable traits seemingly innocent protagonists with the ominous and vile characters

### **7.1. Satire during the Classical Antiquity**

Satire originated in classical antiquity, when it was a vital tool for criticizing the wealthy and powerful. This style of humor gained popularity in Athens as a mode of speech that elicited laughs by mocking people's worst features. Several Renaissance satirists believe that satirical poetry owes its existence to the Greek *Satyr* plays<sup>20</sup>. These tragicomedy plays contained raw and violent language and scenery, as well as open sexuality in dramatic contexts that were designed to transmit the Greek mythology.

As Alvin Kernan (1959) points out “The idea that poetic satire had its origin in a dramatic form distinguished for its viciousness of attack and spoken by rough *satyrs* was the basis for nearly all Elizabethan theories of satire” (as cited in Quintero, p. 6). Throughout the fifth century BC, as Athenian democracy withered under the weight of dictatorship, satire's appeal grew. Aristophanes attacked politicians with acrobatic speeches, poetry, and humor, creating scathing political parodies in which actors insulted their opponents purely through song or physical contact.

Aristophanes and Cratinus were the greatest satirical poets of the fourth century BC, and they elicited laughter from their audiences through the use of mechanical and linguistic devices.

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<sup>20</sup> An ancient Greek form of tragicomedy, similar in spirit to the bawdy satire of burlesque. (Shaw, 2014)

Due to their reputation for biting humor, the literary elite were loud in their condemnation, claiming that they were too intent to be amusing. Satirical poets, given the atmosphere in which they were formed, inevitably extended this approach to written works. Dialogue in the satirical form was also popular, in which two or more characters expressed opposing viewpoints or ideas. When Dionysus was composing his plays, he devised a character called *The Frogs*, who frequently interjected funny critique into his work.

Conversely, Kernan explains that the literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, among others; credits the Roman cultural festivals such as Roman *Saturnalia*<sup>21</sup> as starting points of satire. The Romans, realizing the existence of a new literary genre, were also responsible for creating the formal verse satire known as *Satura* (Quintero, 2011). The term means a mixture of different artistic items and ideas; this was a tradition where satirical poets would blend varying themes, fables, among other popular literary tools and cultural traits, and the end result would seem like a *lanx satura*, a medley of different food items that are arranged artistically.

Quintilian (95 CE) is best known for claiming that satire is entirely Roman, as he claims Roman satire is a novel type of poetry that took on the hexametric<sup>22</sup> meter as its vessel. (Quintero). His pronouncement restricts satire to a few authors of verse poetry who, in the eyes of most scholars, came to constitute the ancient canon of satire. This exclusive group consists of four authors who worked between the second century BCE and the generation following Quintilian's own, Lucilius, Horace, Persius, and Juvenal (Keane, 2007). Quintilian relied on a notion of

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<sup>21</sup> An ancient Roman festival in honour of the god Saturn, held on 17 December of the Julian calendar and later expanded with festivities through to 23 December. (Scheid, 2016)

<sup>22</sup> Hexameter is a metrical line of verses consisting of six feet.

formalism expressed by many ancient critics of the genre. Ancient generic classification underlies technical criteria, such as output context, metrical type, style, and subject matter.

The Roman satirists definitely constitute a unique literary tradition on these formal grounds, and by their own account. They wrote poems that ranged from fifty, to several hundred lines in dactyl hexameter of length. These were gathered in books, and then recited by erudite members of society. A first-person speaker who mocks facets of modern morality and social life usually features in their poetry (Keane). A scrutinized review of Roman verse satire will expose flaws in the formalistic approach. The name of the genre *satura*, “stuffed” suggests that its own essence cannot be summarized. Its supposed founder Lucilius, with only fragments of extant works, obviously dealt with a wide variety of subjects, used several different rhetorical tones, and even varied his metrical scheme (Keane, 2007).

The other common name *Sermo* “chat” implies informality and familiarity between author and reader though satire is a polished poetic and textual work. Even the most complex rhetorical tactics are intended to express emotional reality, such as the tantrums of Juvenal's furious narrator that are designed to convey emotional authenticity (Keane). However, much of the subject matter of satire is rather traditional, repeating the moral themes and examples used in the *diatribe* of street-philosophers of the Greco-Roman period such as the corrupting power of money, the risks of ambition, and the implications of parental actions on children. The genre alternates in terms of political alignment between an oppositional and a conservative, masculine stance; it opposes tyranny and social injustice, but it also criticizes Roman society, class mobility and sexual deviance from foreign influences (Richlin, 1992).

Nevertheless, their combination in a parody of a diatribe style may denote that the speaker has contradictory opinions on social and moral problems. The role of the satirist is contradictory

in other respects, too. In a treacherous legal, social, and political climate, he typically presses the argument that he is writing his verbal assaults as a response to such conditions. Nevertheless, his poetry exhibits his learning and social stability, some of his poems even specifically address and defend his work. Every formal feature of the genre, despite its projection of the image of an outsider, portrays the satirist as an insider. Though odd and contradictory, these generic characteristics are intentionally cultivated, and point to defining episodes in the historical creation of satire (Keane, 2007).

The first user of mocking abuse is a character in Greek literature; it was Thersites in Homer's *Illiad* (8th century BC), who had an illuminating experience. The dispirited Greek army is preparing for an assembly in *Book 2* (c. 750 BC) of Homer's *Iliad*, when the soldier Thersites interrupts to scold the commander Agamemnon. The low status of this man becomes one of his disadvantages; adding to the fact that Thersites is also hideous, a bad orator, and a reputable clown, always saying whatever he felt. However, he is; in contrast, brave enough to criticize Agamemnon<sup>23</sup> for using the army's labor to acquire his own money (Keane, 2007). He gets a swift lecture and a beating from Agamemnon's second in command Odysseus, followed by an embarrassing laughter from the gathered troops, who forget their own troubles despite being grieved, to laugh at Thersites' physical and moral injuries (Keane, 2007).

According to Thalman (1988), while this scene has a particular resonance within the socio-political world and the *Iliad* story, it is also paradigmatic for literary mockery, in that it demonstrates two approaches to mockery that bring about very different outcomes. Thersites' assault and pose are also used in later Greek and Roman "blame" genres. While he focuses on the

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<sup>23</sup> Agamemnon, in Greek legend, king of Mycenae or Argos (northeastern portion of Peloponnese, Greece). (Donlan, 1971)



greed of his target, a moral theme is often present in the Greek *diatribe* and Roman verse satire, he also scorns the soldiers who allow themselves to be abused “You women, not men, of Achaia!” (p. 235).

Thersites' approach is spontaneous, oppositional, and boosted by his ludicrous nature and low status. Yet Thersites soon finds that there is more than one way to express humorous abuse, as he becomes a victim himself. Odysseus uses satire to improve the existing social order. He declares Thersites unfit to condemn the shepherd of the people. The watching soldiers duly repeated the sentiment, and then sealed his critique with physical punishment (Keane, 2007).) In later satiric literature, both the good and ineffective forms of abuse showcased here create their definitive tensions. Although the two modes clash in the Homeric *Iliad*, the ancient comic and satiric tradition gradually intertwines them, a phenomenon that represents their respective usefulness (Keane, 2007).

The oppositional speaker's ludicrous and helpless appearance has a double edge, for such a person, with no credibility to lose, can more openly express sharp critiques of powerful individuals. Many satirists take a more degraded than authoritative approach, as though they borrow the paradoxical license of the lowest individual in the town. However, Odysseus' conservative, deceptive approach still has its appeal, enabling satirists to acquire the allegiance of their readers and nurture their latent willingness to metaphorically strike at already oppressed communities.

Manipulative rhetoric is an important technique for authorship in Greek and Roman satire, in which authors find ways to gain power over their reception. As Odysseus prescribes a correct answer to the attack by Thersites in his own counterattack, so comic and satiric texts should set interpretive expectations in the minds of their readers.

### 7.1.1. Comic Drama.

Comic drama is a subgenre of dramatic literature in which the audience is primarily communicated with through conversation and body language. It has existed for centuries and is widespread across cultures.

In the Greek comic drama of the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE, we can see a similarly abusive authorial portrait in a different formal context. *Old Comedy* is a genre that includes eleven remaining Aristophanes plays and various fragments, and has a famously diverse and specialized obscenity lexicon. The performances featured a padded mask with a prominent phallus, a platform for casual visual jokes that often contributed to general bawdiness.

Comedy, like *Iambography*<sup>24</sup>, imitates certain traditions of Greek fertility in this way, where the more boring aspects of the birth and death cycle were celebrated (Keane, 2007). The same rituals also involved verbal violence exchanges, another hallmark of comedy. Iambic poetry portrays private disagreements, but the comic poet makes his main subject the *Polis*<sup>25</sup> itself. None is spared, while the more influential members of society appear to behave as the blocking characters, and the ordinary types as the protagonists set out on impossible missions to alter their world, the law court, the assembly, school, faith, and theater itself (Keane, 2007).

The *Polis* were trained to laugh at themselves in the comic theater. Certainly, this laughter had no strictly negative purposes; the theatrical exposition of Athens, person by person and institution by institution, may have helped the citizenry cultivate essential political reading skills (Slater, 2002).

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<sup>24</sup> Poetry written in iambs, the term referred to one of the feet of the quantitative meter of classical Greek prosody: a short syllable followed by a long syllable. (Rosen, 1984)

<sup>25</sup> Polis, plural poleis literally means "city" in Greek. (Sakellariou, 1989)

### 7.1.2. *The Didactic Aspect of Ancient Greek Satire.*

Satire was primarily employed in ancient Greece to teach people about morals and proper behavior via the use of comedy. Greek humor's satirical style is distinct from modern comedy. It was not only amusing, but also educational. The author would employ satire to highlight the shortcomings in society that he believed needed to be addressed.

Greek satirists used intentionally awful characters to teach people how not to behave. Additionally, they would employ irony, exaggeration, and sarcasm for comic effect in order to convince their audience that bad behavior is wrong and must be avoided at all costs. Athenian playwrights were constantly named *Didaskaloi* (instructors), a name derived from their mission of teaching the chorus, but also obviously invested with wider significance (Keane, 2007). All the authors at the festivals were vying for prizes, but this agonistic scenario was a foreground theme in comedy, where the dramatic illusion was always broken. This is particularly a characteristic of the *Parabasis*<sup>26</sup>, where the poet asks for the assistance of the judges and discusses play-related political subjects. Aristophanes' strategy of self-promotion is exemplified by the *Parabasis* of *Acharnians* (425 BC), another brilliant anti-war play. The description indicates that the *polis* as a political culture was the background of the poet's work reception, not a mere collective judge of dramatic artistry. The chorus then invests him with heroic qualities in the defense of Aristophanes.

What can be claimed with confidence is that the vital message of humor is that it can make people and judges smarter. Aristophanes may have unexpectedly drawn them and subsequent readers into making a much more profound and significant inference by encouraging his judges to contemplate the issue of his qualifications; that comedy itself is valuable to the city.

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<sup>26</sup> (In ancient Greek comedy) a direct address to the audience, sung or chanted by the chorus on behalf of the author. (Bowie, 1982)

### 7.1.3. *Comic Drama of Second-Century Rome.*

The blend of irreverence and conservatism that characterizes the depiction of domestic life in Roman comedy (McCarthy, 2000) foreshadows the dynamic sociopolitical orientation of satire. Yet Roman comedy also leads to the self-referential discourse of satire by following and nuancing the believed and heroic author figure convention.

The Greek playwright Terence's approach is especially belligerent and manipulative. Terence, like Aristophanes, cultivates the impression of a mistreated artist, indicating that it takes serious consideration to appreciate his work, and solemnly asks for a hearing. The last lines suggest a symbiotic relationship between poet and spectator; the role of the audience as critics bolsters Terence as a playwright (Keane). The poet defends the notion that comic spectatorship has enormous demands. The same diagnostic choice Aristophanes offers his listeners in the *Parabasis* is given to his listeners; either show yourself to be professional critics or to be ungrateful, imperceptive fools. This rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion is used by Aristophanes to persuade the viewers that the exploitation of comics is not only acceptable but also profitable. The author's exploitation of his audience can instead be seen in Terence's tamer comedy as an effort to develop the reputation of comedy as an art that holds more meaning than meets the eye. Further, in their analogous defenses of themselves "*apologiae*", they assert unpopularity and a favorable social task.

The Roman verse satirists also drew on both examples; it is not just their own authorial reputations that were at stake, but their genre's overall reputation and reception. The most significant effect of satire is arguably not to punish its aims or alter the opinions of its audience, but rather to persuade the audience that the genre serves an essential social role (Keane, 2007). Yet the fact that the art of blame encountered new weaknesses in the Roman era steers around

these tantalizing parallels (Keane, 2007). *Old Comedy* projected a violent political portrayal of, and for, that iteration of Athens that filled the seats of the theatre. Aristophanes and his fellow poets, on the one hand, pressed the connection between the political and military grandeur of Athens and, on the other, its promotion of the institution of comedy (Keane, 2007). In comparison, satire was a written text from the beginning, an intricate and allusive one, directed at the comparatively small and elite reading community of Rome, and produced and disseminated with the patronage of private patrons.

Satire was unable to place the *Polis* on the stage for the *Polis*, for both a *Polis* and a stage were missing. Literary satire was not made in an institutional context, such as the dramatic festivals that allowed critical portrayals of society and politics. The development of satiric verse as a heroic performance of civic duty could not be respected. Romans valued the Republic-related freedom of expression (*libertas*), while the satirists claim to be objects of hostility and mistrust. This is not to suggest that, in being bound by constraints of form and decorum, satirical poetry stood out among Roman genres.

Nor should satirists' allegations that their work was rewarded with social ostracism and legal attacks be taken too seriously. Rather, for the poets of satire, constraint is a programmatic theme. The satirists, like their predecessors in the art of blame, incorporated the reception problems into their performances and thus into their generic theory. According to Horace, in the tumultuous thirties BCE, Lucilius was free to attack influential living politicians in the previous century; especially the enemies of his own patrons, which hardly makes satire seem like an exceedingly brave venture (Keane, 2007).

While the satirists often claim to simply represent the world around them, their art reflects a complex combination of literary, philosophical, and rhetorical conventions. It is no wonder that

during the second century BCE, when the empire of Rome was expanding, the genre first took shape, and wealthy Romans became obsessed with the goods and rituals available to them. The “stuffed” genre imitates the consuming passion of culture, as well as the moral debate that formed around the consumption problem (Gowers, 1993).

There is no cast of characters or chorus for Roman satirists to use as mouthpieces for social criticism. Instead, in the first person, they write mostly in the manner of the *Iambographers*, and foster the impression that they simply respond to what they see around them. (Keane, 2007). Persius burst out laughing at the human potential for illusion, and Juvenal introduces his first poem as an act of revenge against those who make him worse, particularly other poets. All these reaction scenarios are artificially created, but their rhetorical intention is to create a picture of the subject matter of satire as contemporary social activity and of the satirist as an observer and a commentator (Keane, 2007)

The later Roman satirists had a specific Roman rhetorical style at their disposal, declamation; the art of producing discourses for hypothetical contexts. Declamatory exercises were a central part of Roman secondary education at the beginning of the first century CE; students wrote speeches that gave guidance to past political leaders and argued on the two sides of a legal dispute (Keane, 2007). The early Satires of Juvenal are delivered by an angry individual, who communicates about the deteriorated state of society in repeated exclamations, rhetorical questions, and overgeneralizations (Keane, 2007).

Quintilian (95 CE) identifies additional forms of satire. He briefly praises the Greek Archilochus<sup>27</sup> poetic style, and also mentions Aristophanes' satirical force and the *Old Comedy*. Aristophanes' comedies provide the earliest assembly of stock characters; the imposter, the self-deceiving braggart, the buffoon, the rustic, and, naturally, the ironist. Menippus, the Cynic philosopher, despite not being mentioned by Quintilian, wrote a collection of *prosimetric*<sup>28</sup> works that were been lost in time (Quintero, 2011). Today, scholars loosely classify generically mixed works as *Varronian* or *Menippean* satire, or, less frequently, as “anatomy.” Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* (55 CE) and Petronius' *Satyrical* (Late first century AD) are two classical examples of *Menippean* satire. This form of indirect satire utilizes narrative, typically through dialogue between fools, knaves, or ironists, to lambaste, mock, or make ironic fun of its satirical target (Quintero).

For Matthew Hodgart (1969), “The essence of the carnival and *Saturnalia* is the glorification of irresponsibility, even to the point of anarchy,” (p. 24) and a magma of demotic transgression poured into the tradition of satire from such festive eruptions, for “...there are strong elements of travesty and anarchistic parody in all good satire” (p. 24).

Although it takes some sort of abuse or mockery to make things satirical, there is no satire without intentional art. For instance, a straightforward, unrestricted offense is not satirical, such as, for instance, “That guy is a SOB!” Using clichéd language to make sarcastic insult, on the other hand, is a bad idea because it will create satirical insults.

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<sup>27</sup> Archilochus was a Greek lyric poet of the Archaic period from the island of Paros. He is celebrated for his versatile and innovative use of poetic meters, and is the earliest known Greek author to compose almost entirely on the theme of his own emotions and experiences. (Swift. 2019)

<sup>28</sup> A poetic composition which exploits a combination of prose (prosa) and verse (metrum); in particular, it is a text composed in alternating segments of prose and verse. It is widely found in Western and Eastern literature. (Johnson, 2013)

#### 7.1.4. *Iambography and Satire.*

*Iambography* is a form of poetry in which the writer writes in iambs, or iambic pentameter. The poem's form requires that it contain at least five lines, each of which should contain ten syllables. Numerous writers employ *Iambography* to describe their emotions or to highlight a particular event in their lives. These poets are descendants of Thersites in literary history, who were employed in a literate civilization, but given mythological status in the Greco-Roman tradition. One of the literary genres practiced in the *poleis* (city-states) of the Aegean region in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE was *Iambography*.

*Iambography* is an art that denotes personal violence in verse, not the angry underdogs' authentic self-expression that possibly originated from bawdy verses recited at fertility ceremonies (Keane). It was performed for artistic evaluation as well as religious celebration in the late Archaic and Classical periods (like drama and choral lyrics) before the whole group. *Iambographers* combine Thersites' hostility with Odysseus' status and abusive technique. In the antiquity, Archilochos' attacks on a man named Lykambes and Hipponax's<sup>29</sup> poetic harassments were not only famous for their skill display, but for their savagery as well, which allegedly led the victims to commit suicide (Keane, 2007).

Not only were the dynamics of comedic mockery and satire in Greek and Roman poetry popular, but satirical poets working with such material followed a set of generic principles and creative procedures. Ancient satirical poets used a variety of techniques to enlist the sympathies

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<sup>29</sup> He was an Ancient Greek iambic poet who composed verses depicting the vulgar side of life in Ionian society. He was celebrated by ancient authors for his malicious wit, and he was reputed to be physically deformed. (Brown, 1997)



of a potential audience and persuade them of the justice of their outrage and the legality of their personal attacks, ranging from archaic iambus through Roman satire.

## **7.2. Satire during the Middle Ages**

Much of satire's subject matter is quite conventional, reiterating moral themes such as money's corrupting power, the dangers of ambition, and the consequences of parental acts on their offspring. During the Middle Ages, satire went through a remarkable development, during which renowned writers such as Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas More, and Jonathan Swift subjected the Catholic church and European monarchies to indirect criticism.

*The Canterbury Tales* (c. 1400) is one of the most studied works by Chaucer, a paragon of medieval literature that focuses in several tales on the inherent hypocrisy of the Catholic Church and the monarchy in England that represent the direct causes during that period that led to the dire living conditions (LeBoeuf). Chaucer had strong views that he could not share publicly about the social status and dubious activities of the Church and monarchy; instead, he relied on wit, satire, and irony to tactfully escape punishment.

Not only did Chaucer escape prosecution, but he also got a generous treatment, both representing King Richard II, Edward III, and Henry IV (Moore & Hulbert, 1913). Another prominent satirist, Sir Thomas More, managed to articulate subtle criticism discreetly in his works, an ability he showed most eloquently in his novel *Utopia* (1515). Most scholars view it as a commentary or criticism of the Catholic Church's malpractices, which More sarcastically addresses in *Book I* (1516) in a satirical manner and finally offers solutions for in *Book II* (Manuel & Manuel, 1979).

Satire resurfaced with a vengeance in the sixteenth century, intent on making obvious social criticisms. In the final years of Elizabeth's reign (1533-1603), the popularity of satirical writing and widespread disenchantment with the monarchy resulted in an explosion of satire until censorship put an end to the trend. With the progression of the sixteenth century, an increasing number of people began composing satire. The growth of education and the increasing importance of literature were two key factors for this. Britain's increasing industry was a frequent source of ridicule throughout this era. This worsened problems for the lower classes, notably with regard to employment opportunities and dire working conditions. Satire, which had a critical role in the early development of the English novel but was mostly abandoned by the mid-nineteenth century, resurfaces in the twentieth century.

The satire of Jonathan Swift remains the genre's all-time example, with canonical works such as *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and *A Modest Proposal* (1729) drawing considerable influence from the infamous clash between England and Ireland in England in the 18th century and the general social and political issues. Swift's works are, to a large degree, genuine pieces of satire that denounce the politics and irrationalities of religious feuds in England, as well as a misanthropy that criticizes the pettiness, aggression, ethnocentrism, stubbornness, and government of humanity by using irony and allegory. By tailoring exaggerated contexts that accentuate the shortcomings in human nature, Swift achieves this objective (Boyle, 2000).

Furthermore, Swift wrote his popular essay *A Modest Proposal* as a reaction to the dehumanization and brutality of the English landlords against the Irish and accusing them of burdening society by having too many children. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Irish were struggling to feed their children in England in the face of crushing poverty, so Swift suggested a satirical solution that was both free, and extremely effective. *A Modest Proposal* starts

with a sympathetic explanation of the horrid living conditions that the Irish were enduring, for which Swift suggests the children be sold to the rich at the age of one year so that they can feed them. Swift says this cure is advantageous to both sides, as parents will raise money for their households, while catering to the rich with a tasty delicacy and a potential source of clothes from children's skins. As Swift seems rather serious and offers scientifically validated claims, the tone of the essay is far from sarcastic, which makes it difficult for unseasoned readers of satire to discern the author's true psyche and intentions.

The unreliability of the role of the narrator observed in Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* (1704), which may at any time confuse readers' awareness of Swift's latent attitude, should not disqualify the work as a satire (Quintero, 2011). Swift's satirical intent may have been simply to demonstrate how contemporary manifestations of scholastic intellectualism can be reduced to absurdity in the playful humanist spirit of Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* (1511) and consistent with his other satire. The thrust of Swift's real science parodies in Gulliver's third voyage may also have been a similar cautionary element (Quintero).

In the 16th century, satire returned with a passion to make direct social criticisms. Giovanni Boccaccio and François Rabelais were two of Europe's greatest satirists of the Renaissance. Satire from the Renaissance also other including Gérard Philipe's *Till Eulenspiegel* (1515), *Reynard the Fox* (Mid-12<sup>th</sup> century), Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff* (1494), Erasmus's *Moriae Encomium* (1509), Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), and *Carajicomedia* (1519). Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarum* (1597–1602), a six-book collection of poetry satires, published in the 1590s, marked the beginning of a new period of satire that included everything from literary trends to corrupt nobles. There had been a few attempts at *Juvenalian* poetic satire before Hall, including Donne's circulating in manuscript form. In the later years of Elizabeth's reign, the popularity of his writing and a national

disillusionment with the monarchy generated an explosion of satire, much of it less aware of classical models than Hall's, until censorship brought the trend to an abrupt halt. (Robert, 2004).

Medieval satire was mostly directed against the wicked behaviors that occurred in the society at the time of writing. Consequently, society was perceived to be composed of set classes with defined functions that form a whole, with specific obligations assigned to specific sects. Aspects of Medieval satire praised the glory and purity of each social class in its ideal form, but they were also utilized as an example of how society had gotten out of control.

### **7.3. Satire during the Nineteenth Century**

Many scholars believe that satire was so effective in the past because it was novel. It was not until after the French Revolution (1789-1799) that satirists were able to exercise their skills openly and widely without fear of repercussions if discovered. As the nineteenth century progressed, an increasing number of people started writing satire. The two primary reasons for this were the expansion of education and the growing significance of literature.

On the one hand, education had grown in prominence in society throughout this period, as many nations began emphasizing the value of education to their populations. Because of this increase in literacy, additional subjects were available for satire. This increased availability of satirical material resulted in an increase in the number of writers seeking to work on it. On the other hand, when literature gained even more popularity, many writers turned to satire as a means of expressing their creative and political beliefs. Satirists discovered that they could use these concepts to assist them garner attention for themselves and their work, as people are naturally curious.

Satire was a significant literary style in the nineteenth century, but it was also a huge influence in changing public opinion. Victorian England (1837- 1901) is frequently portrayed as a time of harsh class boundaries and social conformity, but this rigorous order provided the ideal breeding environment for satirists. The French Revolution introduced novel ideas and philosophies on a religious, sociopolitical, and a cultural level that had not existed previously. These novel concepts were certainly responsible for the development of satire in England during this period. A prominent source of satire during this period was Britain's expanding industrialization. This exacerbated difficulties for the lower classes, particularly in terms of work options. Additionally, there was a great deal of corruption that influenced people's perceptions of society, which is why they were frequently addressed in satirical writing.

Satire is best observed in this period through the works of Jonathan Swift, Laurence Sterne, and Daniel Defoe, but it has also been utilized by Voltaire, Oscar Wilde, and George Orwell. During the Victorian era, satire gained widespread popularity, most notably through novels such as William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848). Satire was employed to attack the government and society throughout the Victorian era. Charles Lamb's *A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig* (1823) is another excellent example of satire from this era, in which he utilizes humor to mock the upper class for their food preoccupation and proclivity for excess.

During the mid-nineteenth century, satirical journals such as *Punch* (1841) and *Fun* (1861) competed for public attention. Gilbert and Sullivan's *Savoy Operas* (Late 19th century), on the other hand, are among the most famous examples of Victorian satire. *Egyptomania*<sup>30</sup> was a factor in the writing of several works of fiction during this period (Brio, 2018), which exploited Ancient

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<sup>30</sup> Egyptomania was the nineteenth-century resurgence of interest in ancient Egypt among Europeans and Americans as a result of Napoleon's Egyptian Campaign. (Brier, 2013)

Egypt as a setting for satire. One example is Edgar Allan Poe and Grant Allen in *Some Words with a Mummy* (1845), which represented Egyptian civilization as having already achieved several Victorian age technological advances (such as steam engines and gas lighting) in order to parody the idea of progress in literature (Dobson,2017). Other works, such as Jane Loudon's *The Mummy!* (1827), poked fun at Victorians' strange preoccupations with death and reincarnation.

The nineteenth century in America saw a period of liberalization of centuries-old social restrictions. The nation became more receptive to differing religious viewpoints and the rising westward expansion. In nineteenth-century America, satire was used not merely to criticize society, but also to make political commentary. Satire in nineteenth-century America stems from the country's vernacular literature. The use of vernacular literature was thought to be one of the earliest manifestations of American satire. This kind of writing is considered unusual since it employs both realism and romanticism to critique society. The authors believed they were trapped in a world of social injustice, enslavement, poverty, and corruption.

Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) is an emblematic work of American satire, where satire plays a major role in deconstructing many practices related to racism, religion and the changing mid-nineteenth century American domestic politics (LeBoeuf, 2007). Twain places the protagonist Huckleberry Finn, an innocent boy, in the racist-infested pre-civil-war American society, following the example of Aristophanes, where he constantly challenges the unreasonable actions of adults around him. The society of Huckleberry treats with contempt his virtuous conduct and fair questions and sometimes harshly rectifies his acts, particularly when he tries to help a runaway slave, for which everyone tells him that he will be condemned to hell. Mark twain also gets credits for giving American satire a new breath; his works have influenced influential satirical fictions that have covered all facets of modern life.

Using satire as a tool of social protest, as well as a means of reinforcing class and imperialist ideals, was common practice in the nineteenth century. Parody was frequently employed in satirical works of this era, often as a means of critiquing literary trends or contemporary ideas. The debates in Britain and the rest of the Western world following the French Revolution were a major source of inspiration for satire in the nineteenth century, which began to take a more serious tone in critique, which would reflect in its development during the twentieth century.

#### **7.4. Satire during The Twentieth Century**

When analyzing the destiny of satire in the twentieth century, it is all too easy to fall prey to questionable literary periodization conventions. One may be tempted to assert that the transition from Victorian to modernist literature results in a fundamental hierarchical shift. Yet, satire, which was crucial in the development of the English novel in the early 1700s but was mostly abandoned by the mid-nineteenth century, resurfaces towards the end of the century. (English, 2012)

The majority of twentieth-century satire is based on examples produced in eighteenth-century Britain, and those examples were diverse to begin with: they included verse satire (heavily influenced by the classics) (Hume, 2007). Additional novelistic satire, prose squibs, lampoons, and genre-defying works, such as Jonathan Swift's *Tale of a Tub* (1704), *Menippean* satire, gained enormous popularity in late twentieth-century criticism. Some American satirical fictions of this period include Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) that satirizes the attempts of humankind to achieve technological enhancement that brings negative results, while George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) uses satire to reveal a communist's follies. In addition, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut blends autobiographical experiences with elements of science fiction and

illusion, where a peculiar satirical story exposed the absurdity of war and its psychological aftermath.

On the visual dimension of satire, there were notable satirical works that made a remarkable impact across time. Despite gaining measurable prominence since ancient civilizations, the art of caricature could only move to the forefront of public appeal with the wake of the twentieth century (Wright & Fairholt, 2014). Thanks to the extraordinary technical innovations and multiplicity of global sociopolitical vicissitudes, as it had the ability to immediately express complex concepts, caricature evolved into an enormously powerful instrument for criticism. Gary Trudeau's *Doonesbury* (1970-present) won most accolades for political caricature, even though there were other prominent caricaturists with remarkably influential works such as Al Hirschfeld, Mort Drucker, and Ralph Steadman. In 1975, this comic strip was the first to win a Pulitzer Prize for Editorial Cartooning and was adapted for television and theatre. The inflammatory content of the comic was considerably powerful, exposing it to opposition movements and prohibition attempts.

#### ***7.4.1. The Psychological Dimensions of Satire***

Sigmund Freud (1991) views the unsayable, restriction and censorship as fundamental components of repression, which are generated within the unconscious. This means that the movement of the primitive communities to more developed societies is associated with the construction of the language in a set of forbidden fields, which from one society to another, are linked to its structure of power. Such restrictions are often seen as aspects of aggression/oppression that require the moment of humor to be freed from their control and to alleviate the subjects.

The condensation and displacement processes of Freud are excellent analytical lenses for the reading of caricatures. Many academics have adequately studied both types, beginning with Freud's *Theory of Humor* (1991), which has posed multiple critiques. In Freud's theory, more



precisely, the first line of attack is the notion of aggressiveness and its relation to laughter and humor in general (Mascha, 2008). According to Freud, humor, is a tool that helps relieve the subject of the cumulative elements of aggressiveness concealed within the unconscious. Bakhtin's concept of comedy as a domain separate from everyday society allows for or even invites social critique, which is paralleled in Sigmund Freud's equally famous psychoanalytic framework for analyzing humor. Freud viewed jokes and humor, particularly “tendentious jokes” and comedy, as being comparable to dreams in that they are governed by and express unconscious impulses, suppressed feelings, and fears. “The pleasure in the case of a tendentious joke, he explained, “arises from a purpose being satisfied whose satisfaction would otherwise not have taken place.” (Freud, 1991, p. 132). Freud, in particular, saw humor as frequently concealing our hostility toward forces, organizations, and individuals in positions of power. (Gray et al, 2009)

Each violent behavior can be clarified by Freud's “disguise theory.” As several scholars have discussed about everyday totalitarian contexts, this relief mechanism is an important analytical method to understand humor in totalitarian regimes. (Obrdlik, 1942, et al.) More specifically, with the function of condensation, Freud's study of the techniques used in the jokes starts illustrating the process of “the formation of a substitute” (Freud, 1991, p. 51). In the humor device, which is what Jean Paul described as “the soul of wit”, the use of condensation and the creation of substitutes create significant brevity. (Jean Paul as cited in Freud 1991, p. 60).

The case of condensation in caricatures is precisely this. Most cartoonists seemed to portray Mussolini with exaggerated features or converted him into a non-human creature; for instance, some of them make his hands resemble tentacles of octopus (see Figure 1). These are all condensation items that play the central and most essential function in order for the caricature to become efficient and humorous. Freud recognizes the significance of condensation as an effective

humor mechanism and its value in terms of shortness or word economy, which makes the joke or caricature efficient. (Freud 1991, p. 77).

Figure 1. The armchair of Palazzo Chigi



La poltrona di Palazzo Chigi: SINTESI DI UN DISCORSO NON PURGATO

The armchair of Palazzo Chigi: synthesis of a non purged discourse

Source: (Mascha, 2008)

Yet since not all sardonic expressions are inherently funny, another component that is required for the emergence of laughter ought to be found. The secret to this is displacement, according to Freud, this lies in the partition of the thought train, the displacement of the physical focus on a subject other than the opening one (Freud 1991, p. 88). Displacement is also a simple technique found by Freud in the dream work, as it is responsible for the puzzling appearance of dreams, which prevents humans' recognizing that they are a continuation of their waking life (Freud 1991). The development of political caricatures that use displacement in order to subtly ridicule the flaws of

the politician or criticize political policies that should have been censored in the case of direct representation lies in the same line of thought.

For instance, Farinacci, Minister of War and National Fascist Party (NFP) secretary is displaced to an Indian person in the *Eminent guests* caricature (see Figure 2). Humor is highly reliant on and intertwined with prohibition.

Thus, censorship and humor work side by side, as displacement is the main factor that can question both, creating an important space for different interpretations according to the levels of aggression hidden in the unconscious. Displacement promotes their release according to the pleasure principle (Mascha, 2008).

Figure 2. Eminent Guests

## **Uspiti illustri: il Principe dei Pellirosse a Roma**



Source: (Mascha, 2008)

For Gramsci (1998), the relationship between prohibition and ridicule is a relationship that can be understood by the position of “contradictory consciousness”. The discourse arising as counter-hegemonic is a discourse involving both the elements of the “old” and the “new”. It is quite helpful for the work of political satire to analyze “passive revolution” and the method of achieving this project as “war of position,” steadily detaching key parts of the opposition (Gramsci, 1998) . The cartoonist is an autonomous intellectual who regularly participates in a passive revolution project in organizing this counter-discourse, aiming at raising political consciousness and making very gradual steps towards what was forbidden and what can be discussed today with those of yesterday and tomorrow. These actions reflect a persistent historical shattering of discursive laws, and the borrowing from the past to the present and future of myths and ideas, and a political satire that consumes them in what might be considered a “passive revolution” (Gramsci).

By recognizing the relationship “of base and superstructure, not as a causal relationship, but rather as organically linked,” Gramsci radicalized the Marxist idea of the historical bloc as he understood it (Martin 1998, p. 82). This was the first groundbreaking argument made by Gramsci's theory against Second International's crude economic determinism<sup>31</sup>. Gramsci mentions the position of reciprocity to define and explain the connection of the elements of the historical bloc. This essential reciprocity between structure and superstructures “is nothing other than a real dialectical process “from his own words. (Gramsci 1998, p. 366).

The superstructure is split into two levels: the political society level, which is the state realm conceived as an institutional apparatus that employs force and the level of civil society, which is the social life realm beyond the non-strictly economic power structure (Martin 1998).

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<sup>31</sup> Economic determinism is a socioeconomic theory that economic relationships (such as being an owner or capitalist, or being a worker or proletarian) are the foundation upon which all other societal and political arrangements in society are based.

Gramsci indicates that these two levels equate, on the one hand, to the position of “hegemony” exercised by the predominant group in society, and, on the other hand, to that of “direct control” or order, articulated via the state and “juridical government” (Gramsci as cited in Bellamy, 1987, p. 126). In other words, Gramsci links the position of hegemony to how control is exerted by the dominant party, and not only to the activities of the proletariat.

To reiterate, people are faced with a symbolic organic foundation throughout the moral and intellectual capacity of the cartoonist, which unifies heterogeneous elements and set of displacements to the formation of a “collective will.” This collective will mock the ascendant force and became a part of popular culture. The community is united against the objective of satire through laughter and humor. The cartoonist can also be seen as the “organic popular intellectual “Gramscian”, who mobilized people with his cartoons and makes this collectivity possible. (Mascha, 2008)

#### ***7.4.1. Satire and Audiovisual Technology***

With the advancement of telecommunications technology, satire discovered a modern visual medium that would not only offer new artistic resources to satire, but also expand its viewpoints and audiences. According to George Test (1991), Satire has come a long way from the clever allegory and royalist defense of monarchy in John Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), he states:

Satire is by no means confined to written forms . . . . .It is found in other art forms from the graphic arts to music to sculpture and even dance. Therefore, works by Gillray, Daumier, Gilbert and Sullivan, Erik Satie, Moussorgsky, sculpture out of the Dada and Pop Art movements, and the dances of the late Myra Kinch and much else must be assimilated into the concept of satire. The mass media teems with satire from such stand-up comics of the 1950s as Mort Sahl and Lenny Bruce (Hendra) to newspaper columnists Art Buchwald and Art Hoppe, from rock music to cartoon strips, and films from around the world too numerous to mention. Despite their ephemeral nature, folk expressions in graffiti, almanacs, office memoranda, and mock festivals ought not to

be excluded from consideration. In many preliterate cultures satire occurs in trickster tales and oral poetry. (Test, 1991, p. 8)

*Beyond the Fringe* (1960), a British comedy stage revue performed in Britain and the U.S.A., is credited with ushering in the successful era of television satire in the 1960s. The latter is directly responsible for inspiring the satirical late-night show *That Was The Week That Was* (1962), which unprecedentedly attacked the government. While it had only been broadcast for two seasons, it presented essential guidance on British television for later satirical shows, including *Not So Much a Programme, More a Way of Life* (1964), *Monty Python* (1969), *Not the Nine O'Clock News* (1979), *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* (1993), and *The Day Today* (1994).

Likewise, on American TV, there have been many satirical series. Following the trend of satire in British style. An American version of *That Was the Week* (1964-1965) on NBC<sup>32</sup>, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* (1967), and *Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M.A.S.H)* (1972) are examples of this. Yet, in cartoon models where satire was specially formed to reach a larger audience, televised American satire shines brighter. *The Simpsons* (1989), *King Of The Hill* (1997), and *Family Guy* (1999) have become highly successful and have drawn diverse audiences. Nevertheless, the most audacious and most divisive satirical show is *South Park* (1997); its serious criticism of religion, politics, and popular culture is unparalleled. According to LeBoeuf (2007), *South Park* has conducted indiscriminate assaults on both liberal and conservative philosophies, which has contributed to regular demonstrations and boycotts, as well as a huge fan base that advocates social criticism.

The new audiovisual form of satire, which not only provided new artistic resources, but also broadened the point of view and target audience of satire during the twentieth century, shall

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<sup>32</sup> The National Broadcasting Company.

witness further development and multiplicity in the following century. Satire flourished during the twenty first century because of the news' constant shock value, comedians and satirists gained plenty of material to work with. When it comes to satire, twenty first century audience had more options than they did in the past, owing to the abundance of information sources available.

Western political satire in audiovisual media used a variety of digital means, the majority of which were television and the internet, to expose and undermine damaging political behaviors through the use of biting humor that is essentially unconstrained. Many traditional media outlets attempted to achieve such goal by presenting an alternate, critical perspective on the convoluted political context.

## 8. Conclusion

Satire is one of the oldest and most utilized literary forms that has always been used to criticize society for the purpose of improvement. Historical writings, epics, dramas, letters, and speeches all employed satire to convey a hilarious point.

The Roman satirists developed a distinct literary tradition on these formal grounds. Themes such as money's corrupting power, ambition's hazards, and the effects of parental deeds on children are frequently repeated in satire. During the Middle Ages, renowned authors employed satire to criticize the Catholic church and European monarchs. They were able to employ humor, sarcasm, and irony to dodge punishment because they had strong feelings about the Church and monarchy.

In the sixteenth century, satire aimed to criticize society, and during last years of the Elizabethan Age, satire proliferated due to its wide appeal and the widespread dissatisfaction with the monarchy, but censorship put an end to it. As the nineteenth century progressed, more people began writing satire. The expansion of education and the prominence of literature were major causes. Throughout this period, Britain's growing industry immensely satirized. This exacerbated

problems for the lower classes, particularly job chances. Satire, which was important in the early development of the English novel but faded by the mid-19th century. Slavery, racism, pollution, drug addiction, and planned obsolescence were all prevalent themes in 20th-century satire, but observers noticed a shift in its origins as satirical responses to these social ills. It was the audience, not the artist, who became the central focus of 20<sup>th</sup> century satire.

As audiovisual satire continue to develop and multiply in the twenty-first century, it had not only supplied new artistic materials but also extended the point of view and target audience of satire. A lot of comedians and satirists were able to make money because of the shock value of the news in the twenty-first century. It is easier to find satire today because there are so many different ways to get information. It uses scathing humor to expose and discredit bad political practices through a variety of digital tools, most of which were TV and the internet. Many traditional media outlets tried to reach this goal by giving an alternative, critical view of the complicated political situation.

Further, with the global proliferation of technology and cultural globalization, satire spread to the Middle East, which, with regard to the historical and cultural particularities of the Middle East, raises crucial questions on the clash between the distinctive features of satire between the West and the Middle East.



## **Chapter Two: History of satire and Media in the Middle East**

## **1. Introduction**

The beginnings of Arab satire are difficult to pin down because it evolved gradually through time and originated in ancient Arabic literature. Satire has a rich history in the Middle East. The Bedouin tribes had a rich oral culture full of humor and storytelling traditions, and this was a sort of oral literature that thrived among them. Satire was once thought to as a tool for social transformation.

Interestingly, it quickly became politicized and was utilized as a tool for exposing hypocrisy, critiquing regimes, and effecting change. Satire has sometimes been used to bring people together by making them laugh. There are many satirical forms of the Arab literary heritage, while satire did not have its proper literary form in Arabic literature, as it was connected to other arts. It essentially provoked ridicule by emphasizing and exaggerating weaknesses to the point that the final satirical product made the original subject a ludicrous magnification (Bouhadjem, 2004). Although there are numerous notable works in prose, Arabs have been mainly inclined to write satire through poetry, which has persisted for most of the precolonial era.

Yet, the fast expanding technological progress had problematized the situation as the Middle East would have to comply with advanced Western media technologies and even adopt similar satirical content in response to both neocolonial and postcolonial issues that plagued the region for a long time.

## **2. A Historical Overview of Arabic Satire**

The relationship between Middle Easterners and satire is quite an intriguing one since the genre itself, at least in strictly Western terms, is virtually a novelty in the region. The use of satire had proliferated in the Middle East during the inevitable clash between Western and Eastern

cultures throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods. In ancient times, the closest literary form to satire was called *Hidjaa*<sup>33</sup>, and while the name and the art form itself imply a verbal attack on individuals and groups using high forms of literary devices, most commonly appearing in poetry, it was quite different from satire in the Western World.

The Arabs would retain such art form across ancient, medieval and even premodern eras, giving it minute tweaks in response to historical and cultural changes, but the Arabs would almost abandon it and veer more towards using satire as a tool for social and political commentary during and after the colonial period. While some owe this to the necessity of using modern tools for modern times, others blame the Middle Easterners' for the ironic fact that they rejected their defining literary and artistic tradition in favor of the colonizers'.

## **2.1. The *Jahiliyyah* (Age Of Ignorance)**

The name "*Jahiliyyah*" was coined by Muslim academics to refer to the pre-Islamic period, also known as "the Age of Ignorance," in which people had polytheistic beliefs. This phrase is taken from the Qur'anic term "*Jahiliyyah*," which can be translated as "ignorance." Muslim scholars use the word to denote a period in their history when they were in a state of intellectual and moral darkness. It was a time when people had no idea what God was or how to conduct their lives effectively. During this time, the Islamic faith emerged, and it assisted people in leading their lives better by teaching them about God.

There is a major difference between the word "satire" in English and its translation to Arabic. The literal translation *Hidjaa* denotes a verbally artistic attack on someone, which was the

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<sup>33</sup> The genre of Arabic satirical poetry was known as *hija*. Biting satirical poetry was dreaded for its power to immortalize its subjects in insulting ways, and could include sexual, scatological, and religiously profane material. (Kennedy, 2012)

case for the majority of its practitioners; poets who wrote in this style *Hidjaa* had based their attacks on everything that contradicts the ideals and virtues of that era. *Hidjaa* served the purpose of serious criticism among ancient Arab tribes during the *Jahiliyyah* era, as poets belonging to rival tribes used it to launch intense verbal attacks on each other.

It was, however, one of the most dangerous forms of poetry; since it concentrated primarily on exaggerating the physical deficiencies of the satirized persons, it could result in fatal retribution against poets (Al Dahhan, 1957). In this style, Hassan Ibn Thabit al Ansari wrote unprecedented *Hidjaa* poetry, with a simple distinctive characteristic of attacking personal characteristics and lineage instead of solely focusing on his opponents' physical attributes (Jundi, 1990).

*Hidjaa* held a great importance for its practitioners and society in general. It contained rules to maintain virtues, and pinpointed the different practices poisoning them. The poet rarely swayed unfavorably or deceived, so they did not tend to exaggerate the verbal characterizations that often lead them to fantasy that keeps them away from the truth. In that sense, *Hidjaa* was not an art for itself, but an instrument that destroys sins, and a ladder raising societies to the heights of virtues. Poets in this era may have come a little closer to the idea of Plato and Aristotle who claimed the aforementioned goals are the most important aims of poetry.

This doctrine of classicism contradicts the doctrine of the Romantics who did not expect material honesty from the poet; rather, they demanded emotional honesty (Attiq, 1982). Many literary scholars believe that real poetry addresses passions, and addressing emotions may provoke different realms, and perhaps the best poetry guides humanity to ideals and values, the pillars of healthy societies. This applies to *Hidjaa* as many of the poets of that era were interested in morals such as courage, generosity, protection of the neighbor, loyalty, help, seeking revenge,... etc. We

note practitioners of *Hidjaa* did not resort to futile verbal altercations, instead, they spoke in a straightforward manner to transmit clear ideas (Attiq).

*Hidjaa* was also a means used by the ancient Arab poet to defend himself, and his tribe with sincere feelings, and bitter cruelty towards his opponents. It had a profound effect on Arabic literature since it expressed the beauty of the artistic image in portraying profound portrayals for mental, physical and moral qualities (Dayf). *Hidjaa* poets essentially wanted to praise their own tribes and protect their honor from all misconducts that may jeopardize their honor.

Personal *Hidjaa* was the origin of this poetic genre, from which various types grew and developed. This was poetry that revolved around a particular person because he has committed a sin, gained a grudge, or simply angered the poet (Ajalan, 1985). This type of *Hidjaa* revolves around several aspects, including the mention of birth defects to ridicule the subject. The goal of *Hidjaa* is to degrade its subject by making it laughing stock for people. So the Arabs were very careful to stick to preserving reputation and morality, honor, and good character, so that they do not fall victim to the mouths of poets. The poets were taking up the satirized subject in terms of appearance and genealogy.

If they wanted to attack the members of a certain tribe for instance, they would resort to mocking their lifestyle tastes. They would also portray the decline of their infatuation with truth or falsehood (Al Dahhan, 1957). This type of *Hidjaa* was a difficult and dangerous poetic art, it may have claimed the lives of people, because Arabs at the time had diverse reactions to offensive mock and ridicule, smiling at times and taking fatal vengeful retaliation at others. The poet tries to link the physical qualities to the moral, represented by the miserable situation that afflicts man in situations of fear or panic. The artistic meaning appears in his work by moving from one image to another associating the colorful psychological portrayal with physical attributes.

An illustrious example of such includes Hassan Ibn Thabit's poetic recount of the escape of al-Harith Ibn Hisham on the battle of Badr<sup>34</sup> showing through his poetry that such qualities crystalize on a person with his disgraceful behavior, his lineage may be authentic, but with his actions, he is disgraced and shamed. The poets of the Islamic Era have taken two directions in their poetic purposes, so unlike the first trend, they took up different topics and themes that distinguished it from the one adopted during the Pre-Islamic Era.

Poets became endowed with religious values, and their poetry was affected accordingly, so their works refrained from many purposes of the *Jahilliyah* Era, and their meanings that follow the path of seduction, and stray away from virtue. So they gave up pride based on the tribal fanaticism, purposeless obscenity, and the *Hidjaa* which transgresses sanctities. Therefore, their *Hidjaa* verses were only written as a response to the attacks of polytheists of *Quraysh*<sup>35</sup> and others before the conquest of *Mecca*, where their sole motive was to protect religion and defend Prophet Mohammed.

Tribal *Hidjaa* revolves around the generalization of verbal attacks on the whole tribe. Ancient Arabs were divided into tribes resembling modern day independent political entities and *Hidjaa* poetry represented a medium of protection and show of strength (Tunji, 1993).

The reasons for tribal satire in *Jahiliyah* and Islam are also many. Most of these reasons cover various topics, including the animosity that emerged between tribes when the conflict between them, which escalated to poetic contrition in the form of *Hidjaa* between poets belonging

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<sup>34</sup> The Battle of Badr was the first large-scale confrontation between Muslims and the Quraysh. More than a thousand men engaged in the battle, which lasted hours and resulted in a decisive Muslim victory. Six years later, the Quraysh in Mecca peacefully surrendered to an army led by Mohammed. military land forces. (Watt, 1956)

<sup>35</sup> They were a grouping of Arab clans that historically inhabited and controlled the city of Mecca and its Ka'ba. The Islamic prophet Muhammad was born into the Hashim clan of the tribe. (Watt, 1986)

to warring tribes. Tribal satire in Arabic poetry is the focus of *Hidjaa*, so the role of the poet is crucial, since he builds the glory of his people using elements of sarcasm, ridicule and mention of birth defects.

## **2.2. Satire During the Dawn of Islam**

With the coming of Islam in the sixth century AD, the art had seen a remarkable recession since Islam strongly opposed all modes of confrontation, a reality that would change soon after *Quraych*, the predominant tribe in *Mecca*, allowed poets to ridicule Prophet Mohammed and Islam's proponents. In the same way, the latter had no option but to retaliate in the same manner, thus consolidating political satire in the region. Hassan Ibn Thabit, a devout convert to Islam, faithfully wrote about the enemies of Muslims (Berkuki, 1983), making a strong return to the satirical scene.

### **2.2.1. Religious *Hidjaa***

The use of *Hidjaa* in the early Islamic world is something that is frequently forgotten. This is not only due to the fact that it is poorly documented, but also because it was not well welcomed by Muslim intellectuals.

In the early Islamic era, satire was used to criticize society and power structures, although Muslim academics were opposed to this practice, it remained widely used throughout history. It was considered immoral and disrespectful by them. When Islam was just starting to gain momentum, *Hidjaa* reflected some aspects of Islamic society that were not yet seen as acceptable. Arabs in the old times did not have a single religious faith deity, so They did not have much religious *Hidjaa*, but Qur'an served as a satirical medium in some of its verses for anyone who deviates from the right and right.

The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will perish. (1) His wealth and gains will not exempt him. (2) He will be plunged in flaming Fire, (3) And his wife, the wood-carrier, (4) Will have upon her neck a halter of palm-fibre. (5)

Surah AL-MASAD

This surah descended from Allah in response to Abu Lahab's<sup>36</sup> transgressions, as the Prophet came to invite his tribesmen to convert to Islam.

In another verse from Surah Al Taubah, Allah warns infidels in a satirical manner saying:

(3) And proclaim a grievous penalty to those who reject Faith.

Surah Al Taubah

Allah promises them a painful torment using the word "proclaim" which in its meaning indicates some delightful promise, but instead, it was used out of context to ridicule the infidels for what they were doing. Satire in Qur'an also appears in prophets' debates with nonbelievers, such as the example of Abraham's confrontation with his people who worship statues after destroying them:

(63)They said, "Art thou the one that did this with our gods, O Abraham?"

(64)He said: "Nay, this was done by - this is their biggest one! ask them, if they can speak intelligently!"

Surah Al-Anbiya

From these examples, we find that satire in the Holy Qur'an revolves between mocking and demeaning the infidels on the tongues of prophets and messengers, and Allah has promised to respond to them in the hereafter by punishing for their wrongdoings. After hearing these verses, Islamic poets such as Hassan Bin Thabet carried the banner of defending Islam and Muslims and stood against everyone who tried to offend Prophet Mohammed and Muslims.

The life of the most prolific defender of Islam using poetry at the time, Hassan Ibn Thabit, represents a mixture of different cultures and civilizations, he lived in the pre-Islamic and Islamic age of *Jahiliyah* when he advocated Prophet Mohammed. He was called the poet of the prophet. The reason why Ibn Thabit's poetry is omnipresent in historical books of biographies, is that it

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<sup>36</sup> A powerful and an infidel merchant who opposed prophet Mohammed's message. (Ibn Hisham, 1955)



recounted a history of events and facts and the movement of society and the spread Islamic *Da'wa*<sup>37</sup> (Berkuki, 1983)

### **2.3. *Hidjaa* During Umayyad and Abbassid eras (750-1258)**

In the medieval Middle East, *Hidjaa* also appeared in the form of poetry, most notably in the works of the two famous poets Jarier and Al-Farazdaq. Al-Jahiz and many other prominent literary figures in the Arab World also introduced a nuanced satire into Arabic prose in the 9th century to address serious subjects related to anthropology, sociology and psychology in a satirical approach (Bosworth, 1976, p. 32).

Poetry was the pride of the Arabs who defended themselves, their tribes and their peoples. In the early days of Islam, *Hidjaa* poetry was one of the clearest forms of ridiculing opponents; it was harsh, violent and bitter, to match the ferocity of life in the desert that does not know mercy. *Hidjaa* remained limited to defending the tribe and mocking enemy tribes until Islam came to turn the satire towards all those who resisted the new religious call. (Rāgib, 1996)

During the Umayyad period (661–750 A.D), the first Islamic caliphate, political *Hidjaa* developed noticeably. The political chaos that followed the rapid spread of Islam gave birth to the *Al-Naqāid poetry*<sup>38</sup> (lampoon poetry), where irony and sarcasm were strongly combined with satirical content, giving it unparalleled popularity. The key pioneers and practitioners of the genre were Djarir, Farazdaq, and Al Akhtal, who turned the various political problems among their respective tribes into captivating subjects for their poetry, taking themes such as meanness, stinginess, and inhospitality as their central themes (Mouawad Abou Aissa et al, 1970).

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<sup>37</sup> The act of inviting or calling people to embrace Islam. (Weidl, 2009)

<sup>38</sup> Umayyad Era poetry consisting in a series of invective poetic jousts, collected as *Al-Naqā'id* ("Flytings"). (Alqarni, 2017)

The art of satire became more widespread at the beginning of the Umayyad caliphate, where Islam spread almost throughout the Arabian Peninsula; as the ruling form shifted from *Shura*<sup>39</sup> to hereditary monarchy, political conflicts and partisan differences between Muslims spread, and satire had known the height of its development. We find Djarir taking women as a fertile material for satire, making fun of the women belonging to Al-Akhtal's tribe, he says:

نساء تغلب لا حلم ولا حسب      ولا جمال ولا دين ولا خفر  
 ما كان يرضى رسول الله دينهم      والطيبان أبو بكر ولا عمر

Taghleb's women have no maturity      or lineage and no beauty or shame  
 The prophet was against their religion      and righteous ones Aboubakr and Omar

(Translated by the author)

Through the two verses, we notice the physical and moral attributes that Djarir viciously attacks, mocking them, as he sees that they do not possess an honorable lineage or beauty, and even the Messenger of Allah, does not approve of their religion. Further, Al-Farazdaq's *Hidjaa* against Djarir was also sharp and well formulated. In many of his poems, Al-Farazdaq mocks him and strips him of his lineage, as he sees, in one of them, that he (Djarir) wishes that his father was (Ghalib) (Fathersdaq's father), instead of (Atiya) and that his tribe was (Kulaiba) instead of (Darm).

The Abbassid Period (750-1258), the third Islamic Caliphate, brought remarkable maturity to all types of Arabic art, and *Hidjaa* was no exception; as it spread to many branches and attracted more public attention, gaining it, among other things, a respectable role. The political and social conditions helped in the emergence of political criticism and social criticism in the form of satire. At the forefront of the satirical poets of this era, we find Ibn al-Rumi who earned the highest rank in the art of *Hidjaa*, and outperformed his peers. In several verses of his poems, he openly makes fun of the governor of Baghdad, as he ridicules the people of al-Tahir, and tells them that no matter how good the morals of their tribe may have amounted to throughout history, their morals are now

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<sup>39</sup> An Arabic word for "consultation". The Quran encourages Muslims to decide their affairs in consultation with each other. The principle of shura can for example take the form of a council or a referendum. (Esposito, 2004)

humiliated, because they can only get praised for what their ancestors achieved. Therefore, al-Tahir, because of their descendants' misconducts, left them with the gloating and shame they are suffering.

Abu Nawas, was another prolific satirical poet whose many works revolved around the character of stinginess, and displayed it in renewed images that provoke laughter. Yet, while all the aforementioned poets had a profound impact in Arabic literature, they remained confined within the constraints of *Hidjaa*, where most of their works seem to be directed at individuals or groups of people.

The tradition of satire in Arabic literature is believed to owe its establishment to al-Jahiz, Al Muqafaa, and Al-Hamadhani, in their illustrious literary depictions that penetrate the depths of the soul and present them in intricate mechanisms mixed with significant implicit sarcasm. (M. Houcine, 1988). Al-Jahiz's insatiable mind, full of humor and sarcasm that encapsulates feelings, phenomena and ideas in his causes and humors, has created an integrated satirical work. Following some of the characteristics of the comedic theater, even though Arabs did not know theatre at the time, his portrayal of one of his nemeses, Ahmed bin Abdul Wahab, contains unprecedented techniques in Arabic literature, combining between the philosopher's mind and the spirit of literature. Therefore, his works had a big and clear impact on the writers of his time. This effect was not limited to his contemporaries, but went beyond that to those who came after him, such as Ibn Qutaiba, Abdullah Bin Al-Muquafaa, and others. (Hafiz, 2005)

*Kalila Wa Dimna*<sup>40</sup>(Kalila And Dimna) (Eighth century) is one of the most outstanding collections of fables in Arabic literature, where the human characteristics and problems of Ibn al-

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<sup>40</sup> Kalila wa-Dimna (Kalila and Dimna) is a widely circulated collection of Oriental fables of Indian origin, composed in Sanskrit, and translated into Arabic in the eighth century by the Persian Ibn al-Muqaffa. (Atil, 1981)

Muqaffaa are anthropomorphized to animals in order to express the chaotic atmosphere of that time. The book is a canonical literary work in the Middle East because it includes various purposes; it is the source of the reformer, the politician, the educator's reference, the ethics evaluator, and the sociological support. In addition, because of combining rhymed prose with poetry, the *Maqamah* art form of the period had acquired notable popularity.

This literary genre consisted of amusing anecdotes, written in an elegant, rhymed prose, which are then placed in a sense of drama or plot that demonstrates the rhetoric, wit, and intelligence of the author. A leading example of the genre is Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma‘arri, whose most popular work *Resalat Al-Ghufran* (The Epistle of Forgiveness) blends profound agony with subtle humor.

This is not to suggest that poetry has receded during this period. Abu Nuass, for example, used his poetry to plead with his people to break away from tradition and old art forms (Faour 1994), while Ibn al-Rumi strongly criticized the era's political repression and economic decline (Bessedj, 1994).

#### **2.4. Middle Eastern During the Colonial Period**

The colonial period in the Middle East is known for many cataclysmic changes. After the discovery of oil, Islamism grew in power, and sectarian strife increased. Arabs used satire to express their views on their own society and critique what they saw as injustices as a result of these circumstances. Instead of just making fun of their colonial overlords, the satirists aimed to make fun of their own cultures, which they believed had become overly reliant on European values.

Therefore, Arabic satire was not just a product of the colonial era, Arab satirists abounded, with some being even more subversive than their Western counterparts. Since they were afraid of

insulting their colonial overlords, the Arab satirists had to exercise self-censorship to avoid being accused of treason. They, for instance, would make fun of Westerners using symbolism or allegory rather than identifying objects or situations directly.

There were numerous instances of political satire criticizing the Western colonization of the Middle East due to the strict censorship practiced during the colonial era, but the few who dared to satirize colonial rule published some highly influential masterpieces. The Egyptian poet Ahmed Shawqi mocks the changes brought on by Lord Cromer <sup>41</sup>and his proposed policies that wrecked the Egyptian political scene in the first and second portions of his *Diwan*<sup>42</sup> *Al Shawqiet* (1925-1930).

Another prominent Egyptian poet at the forefront of scholarly poets was Ibrahim Abdelkader Al-Mazni; his works are strongly inspired by Mark Twain, which he expressed in his early articles. In his stories and essays, the spirits of irony and sarcasm are vibrantly present in two of his most popular works of this period, *Qabd Al-Rih* (Catching the Wind, 1927) and *Sondouq Al-Dunia* (The Box of The World, 1929). By examining the *Diwan* of (*Muzaffar al-Nawab*), literary scholars discovered its abundance of ridicule, and mockery of Egypt's colonial state and calling for revolt and confrontation.

Hafiz Ibrahim, a prolific Egyptian poet, was also renowned for his use of scathing irony and sarcasm; he denounces the stagnation of the Egyptians and calls them to combat colonialism, earning him the title of “The Poet of the Nile” and “The Poet of the People”. Amal Denkel's works also satirized the political situation in Egypt, as he creates a hypothetically sarcastic dialogue

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<sup>41</sup> Evelyn Baring, 1st Earl of Cromer was a British leading advocate of westernization in the Muslim world, stationed in Egypt from 1882 to 1906. (Johnston, 1908)

<sup>42</sup> In Islamic cultures of the Middle East, North Africa, Sicily and South Asia, a *Diwan* is a collection of poems by one author. (Meri, 2018)

between Al Mutanabbi<sup>43</sup> and Kafour Al Ikhchidi<sup>44</sup> about the fate of Khawla, the Arab girl kidnapped by the Romans from Arrija after they slaughtered her brother, he says.

سألني كافور عن حزني  
فقلت إنها تعيش الآن في بيزنطة  
شريدة كالقطة  
تصيح (كافوراه ... كافوراه)  
فصاح في غلامه أن يشتري جارية رومية

Kafor asked me about my grief.  
So I said she now lives in Byzantium.  
Stranded is like a cat.  
Shouting (Oh Kafour...Oh Kafour)  
He shouted at his servant to buy a Roman maid.

(Translated by the author)

The poet speaks on behalf of Al-Mutanabbi who used to make fun of Kafour, who does not do anything to save the Arab girl, so he bought a Roman maid instead. This is a satirical image reflecting the situation in Egypt, which is the Arab girl kidnapped by the Romans; they raped her and no one could protect her.

In prose, Saadallah Wanous authored the play *Al Malik Howa Al Malik* (The King is the King) that embodied the conflict between the ruler and the ruled, where he wants to reveal how the governor exercises the power granted to him through his own concept, as we note that this king wanted to entertain himself using people's hardships. We can see this with in a piece of his play as the king thinks of the danger of keeping the people without a protective ruler:

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<sup>43</sup> Abū al-Ṭayyib Aḥmad ibn Al-Ḥusayn Al-Mutanabbī Al-Kindī from al-Kūfah, Abbasid Caliphate, was a famous ‘Abbāsīd Arab poet at the court of Sayf al-Dawla in Aleppo, and for whom he composed 300 folios of poetry. (Larkin, 2014)

<sup>44</sup> He was one of the slaves of Abyssinia and became the fourth ruler of the Ikhshidid state in Egypt and the Levant. He was the actual ruler of Egypt since 946 AD after the death of Muhammad bin Tughaj and Cavour became the ruler of Egypt in 966 AD, where he ruled and then expanded to the Levant. His rule lasted for 23 years, and he is credited with the survival Ikhshidid state in Egypt. (Brill, 1993)

الملك : صارت فكاهاتهم مموجة ... آه يزداد ضيقي كلما فكرت في أن هذه البلاد لا تستحقني، أريد أن ألهو ... أن ألعب لعبة شرسة ( يتوقف لحظة ) لدي ميل شديد إلى السخرية ,بالضبط هذا ما أحتاجه أن أسخر بعنف وقوة .

The King: Their humor has become corrugated... Oh, I get more frustrated every time I think this country does not deserve me. I want to entertain myself....to play a fierce game (he pauses for a moment) I have a strong tendency to be sarcastic, that's exactly what I need, to mock violently and forcefully.

(Translated by the author)

Satire of the modern era was aimed at correcting society and reforming it from corruption, and was keen to address important issues and deteriorating conditions, so it was more constructive than entertaining and calling on members of society to rise up and be vigilant.

## 2.5. Postcolonial Satire in the Middle East

In the second half of the twentieth century, during the time that became known as the Modern Age, Arabic literature had undergone enormous change. In terms of type and content, a handful of variables led to the birth of new trends in satire. The most prominent reasons for such transition are the effects of colonialism that challenged the Arab identity and, with it, the cultural standards and political characteristics of the Middle East.

Moreover, Arab nations struggled to find healthy positions in a world dominated by Western ideologies and dogmas with the end of formal colonization; the decrepit postcolonial governments were extremely ineffective in rejuvenating the economy and foreign relations. In reality, most of them were governed by either dictatorial or oligarchical regimes that enforced rigid laws and regulations preventing any healthy transfer of power. The synthesis of these circumstances gave rise to some special satirical material that the prohibitions of Arab postcolonial regimes cautiously treaded through (Fouad, 1999).

Examples of which include Nizar el Qabbani's witty works such as his *Diwan al-Qibrit Fi Yadi Wa Doweilatokoum Min Waraq* ( A Match In My Hand, And Your Petty Paper Nations,

1989) where he expresses his profound love and sorrow for his homeland, Syria. In addition to Ibrahim Abdelkader Al Mazni's thorough satirical prose, both fictional and journalistic; some of his most eminent works include a novel entitled *Ibrahim al-Katib* (Ibrahim the writer 1931) and two collections of essays and short stories under the titles *Khuyut al-Ankabut* (Spider Webs, 1935) and *Fi al-tariq* (On the Road, 1937). In these works, Al Mazni criticizes the ambivalent Egyptian identity and the general political unrest in the country.

Similarly, Ahmed Matar is very critical of the brutality, vanity, and passivity of the Arab rulers in many of his *Diwans*, such as *Lafitet* (Signs, 1984-1999), which have led to lamentable conditions for Arab societies. Most of his politically oriented poems reject the deteriorating reality and expose governments, rulers, and colonial policies, so we find him making fun of the regime in his piece *Allahou Aalam* (Allah knows best) when he says:

أيها الناس اتقوا نار جهنم  
لا تسيئوا الظن بالوالي  
فسوء الظن في الشرع محرم  
أيها الناس , أنا في كل أحوالي  
سعيد ومنعم  
ليس لي في الدرب سفاح  
و لا في البيت مآثم  
و دمي غير مباح , وفمي غير مكتمل  
لا تشيعوا أن للوالي يدا في حبس صوتي  
بل أنا يا ناس ألكم  
قلت ما أعلمه عن حالتي  
والله أعلم

O people, fear the flames of hell  
Do not think ill of the governor  
Misconception is forbidden  
O People, I am in all my states  
happy and blessed  
I do not have a thug in my path  
Nor do I have a funeral at my house  
And my blood is sacred,  
and my mouth is not silenced if I do not speak  
Do not rumor that the governor has a hand in suppressing my voice



Since I am deaf, people!  
I said what I know about my condition  
And Allah knows best

(Translated by the author)

Satire here lies in the denial of the governor's ability of committing injustice. Matar denies the harm done to him by admitting it did not take place. Simultaneously, he mocks the media by calling it "means of acquiescence". Matar claims they took part of the unjust governments as he says "Silence is made of gold" which is a word play on an Arabic proverb, turning it into a pun that, in this context, indicates silence in itself is not a good virtue, but instead, it is often rewarded with "gold", rendering it into a blatant insult to the media.

As for his saying "I loved my poverty", it is a sign of satisfaction since he read the Qur'an and focused on Surat al-Masad, in which he mentioned Abu Lahab that symbolizes tyranny by the ruler and his servants over the people. This forced him to remain silent, because reading the Qur'an incites the people against the rulers and thus his words and Qur'an were confiscated. He says in his poem Qillat Adab (Lack Of Manners):

... قرأت في القرآن  
" تبت يدا أبي لهب "  
... فأعلنت وسائل الإذعان  
" إن السكوت من ذهب "  
أحببت فقري... لم أزل اتلوا  
" وتب "  
" ما أغنى عنه ماله وما كسب "  
فصودرت حنجرتي  
بجرم قلة الأدب  
وصودر القرآن  
!لأنه حرصني على الشغب

I read in Quran  
"May the hands of Abu Lahab be damned."  
The means of compliance were announced...  
Silence is golden  
I loved my poverty...I'm still reciting  
"And ruined is he"  
"His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. "

My throat was confiscated  
For the crime of lack of manners  
And the Qur'an was confiscated.  
Because it incited me to riot!

Qillat Adab (Lack Of Manners) (Translated by the author)

Overall, Arab satire of the Modern Age was distinguished by the strategic use of serious criticism which, though maneuvering around the spikes of governmental constraints, could masterfully avoid impairing social, cultural and religious conventions.

### **3. Media and Cultural Dependency in the Middle East**

There is no complete theory that explains cultural colonialism or media dependency but there is a set of important studies and writings that make up in their entirety what scholars call the School Of Dependency in the field of media and culture. This school of thought aims to stand against the Western Capitalist School and the Socialist School of Media.

If the Western School is the oldest intellectual school in the field of theorizing capitalist media, the American school, its newest branch, has flooded the world of Media Library with a lot of studies and research on media and communication sciences in recent years, especially on advertising, public relations and public opinion surveys. However, the French School of Media focused on the history of Journalism and the relationship between social sciences and journalism. While The British School includes many researchers in the field led by Professor Jimmy Halloran who focused on studying media theories and methods, with a keen interest in the issues and problems of communication and media in developing countries. (Abderrahmane, 1978)

The Socialist School of Media is known to be based on Marxist-Leninist theory in its studies and treatment of media issues in socialist countries and the Third World. If the Dependency School in economy has emerged from the heart of the Third World, Media Dependency School has come out of the heart of the American society that represents the pinnacle of capitalist progress,

both in the economy and in the media at the end of the 1960s. (Abderrahmane, 1978) We can trace back its origins with the release of the leading study conducted by professor Herbert Schiller entitled *Mass Communication and The American Empire* (1992) in which he explained the true dimensions of the media empire in The United States and its social and cultural dangers to developing countries.

The School of Media Dependency includes a considerable number of teachers and media researchers most of which do not belong to Third World countries, they represent the radical wing of the Western School of thought. Their interest in issues of media and cultural dependency in the Third World has emerged based on important studies provided by the School of Economic Dependency In Latin America, and some studies provided by the Socialist School in media. (Abderrahmane, 1978) As well as the pioneering studies presented by Professor Schiller on the cultural and media colonialism using the facts and developments of the American experience in the media, and he was keen to highlight their contradictions and dangers to the peoples of the Third World.

In addition to professor Schiller, some of the most prominent writers of dependency in the media and cultural field include Nordenstreng, Tapiofaris (Finland), L. Sokant and Balas Smith (Canada), Raquel Salinas and Lena Baldan (Finland), Warman Islet Aart, Samit Sieblop (France), and Andran van Denna (Vietnam). Further, one of the most prominent scientific bodies interested in studies of media and cultural dependency is the Latin American Institute for Transnational Studies in Mexico that possesses a group of researchers from Latin American countries And some Third World countries.

In addition to the International Centre for Media Studies in France that includes group of social scientists and media researchers who belong to Western countries. It can generally be said

that there are no sharp differences between the trends of the writers of media and cultural dependency despite their different intellectual origins. (Abderrahmane, 1978) They are a mixture of liberal and Marxist currents, yet there is a near consensus among these writers on the level of diagnosis of the essence of cultural media dependency in the Third World. They trace them to historical factors relating to Western colonial domination in addition to the constant attempts of the United States to control Third World cultures and subject it to the global capitalist market.

The U.S uses her huge media capabilities to do that. Local governments create the right cultural climate as well as the social and intellectual conditions to ensure the blending of foreign styles in within cultures and values. Several influences prove such point, the first of which relates America's development and transformation of its own government's propaganda apparatus, mainly comprised of U.S. Cultural Centers in the Third World on the one hand. On the other hand, the U.S promotes modern communication technology to communicate that facilitate cultural domination and even expand subtly within the Third World educational apparatus, as well as the establishment and promotion of American research centers and education systems. (Abderrahmane, 1978)

The contributions presented by Herbert Schiller in the framework of the School of Media and Cultural Dependency need to be discussed in detail. The efforts made by Schiller and his disciples in this field have been to confront that huge flood of writings on the media and its relationship to complementarity and modernization since the end of the Second World War. (Abderrahmane, 1978) Those studies and writings tried to focus on the role and influence that the media can play in educating developing nations urging them to follow the same path taken by the developed countries.

The role of the media is to mobilize these peoples from the traditional lifestyle to modernization, i.e. living according to the Western style by urging them to abandon traditional methods by tempting them to adopt consumptive patterns that afflict advanced Western societies. This stance was adopted by a group of Massachusetts Institute of Technology professors including Daniel Lerner, Frederick Frye, Dathel de Sola Paul and Lucien Bay. They believe that development in Third World countries will only be achieved with an increase of reconstruction and dissemination of education, which will only lead to increased use of the media and to the income levels of individuals, and consequently raising political participation of citizens. This means economic prosperity will change America and its Western allies' perception of developing countries.

In fact, these theorists have tried to impose models of Capitalist development on Third World countries that deepened the latter's dependency on the West, both economically and culturally. Evidently, these peoples became absolutely helpless, constantly waiting for Western aid, whether in an economic or a technological form, or perhaps even ideological, consisting of values and cultures. (Abderrahmane, 1978) This led to the spread of frustration among the peoples of the Third World and pushed them to seek help from UNESCO, since it is a global platform of cultural assistance. As they demanded the establishment of a new power and the foundations of a New World Order to ensure the preservation of their national cultures through equal exchange between their culture and other cultures.

In this context, the intellectual and scientific contributions presented by American professor Herbert Schiller in the field of Media and Cultural Dependency are crucial. Schiller believes that the contemporary global economy seeks to strengthen its control through the global capital alliance, breaking down national barriers and unifying the global market. (Abderrahmane,

1978)The issue on the cultural level is how to employ media and culture in the societies of the world to consolidate its economic dependence by putting its cultural and media potential at the service of global capital and its apparatus and the transformation of the world into a highly interconnected village.

Schiller explains his thoughts on media colonialism by saying that the United States is on a conscious mission using its economic and military organizations and media in order to maintain its economic, political and military superiority. He sees the media as an extension of the American empire that began spreading globally after World War II where it found open space in modern independent Third World governments. He cites the cultural control American television programs through which America has invaded most of the world; some of them are socialist countries that took a defensive position to preserve their cultural identity in the face of the American cultural invasion. (Abderrahmane, 1978)

In 1976, Schiller developed his views on cultural and media colonialism, where he focused on technology and multinational corporations and denounced all forms of Western cultural invasion such as tourism, media technology, training programs and media education curricula. Schiller explains this vision in its new context stating that political decision makers and western politicians and intellectuals have been busy looking for alternatives to ensure continued Western control, and specifically American, on international cultural and economic conditions, ultimately setting their minds on technology as the most convenient alternative.

This technology includes computer networks and satellite systems. These networks broadcast enormous quantities of news and information across transnational circles, and beyond that, they are going to be free from local oversight. This is why the expansion of the global use of information in terms of electronic broadcasting and networks of information banks will have

serious implications on national cultures in the coming years. Henceforth, it becomes clear how technology in general ,and communication technology in particular, does not play a vital role in cultural control but it is already an integral part of this control. (Abderrahmane, 1978)

Schiller pays special attention to multinational companies based in The United States that are characterized by their multiplicity, and global diversity. The U.S depends on satellites and the latest electronic devices in implementing its media policies across continents and countries. Its branches are linked to countries of the Third World in highly complex and interconnected communication networks that eventually flow in the centers of major world capitals. Interestingly, in order for Third World countries to acquire these modern communication devices, they are obliged to put themselves in the service of private companies or government organizations that have strong relations with multinational companies. Schiller does not forget to give an important part of his efforts to study and analyze the role done by U.S. advertising agencies and their branches in the world. He explains the numerous shapes of cultural and media control exercised by the United States either through advertising and related activities such as market and consumer research and public opinion surveys spread across the globe.

Schiller is distinguished from the rest of the proponents of Cultural and Media Dependency by his interest in tourism as one of the effective channels of communication in the field of cultural invasion. According to Schiller, the advice businessmen and financial advisors in the central countries always give to their colleagues is to simply encourage tourism, as a guaranteed source of profits and unexpected revenues. He indicates that tourism plays several roles to serve the capitalist economy and the world as a whole. It brings great profits to the monopolistic<sup>45</sup> companies

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<sup>45</sup> Relating to a person or business that has exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service. (Krugman & Obstfeld, 2008)

that are concentrated in central countries, and they, in turn, strengthen the middle classes in the periphery and help create social segments that derive their existence from the parasitic role that has its members as brokers and service dealers who are skilled in the art of trading in everything. They transform antiquities, customs, traditions, folk arts, clothing and food into goods that can be bought and sold. (Abderrahmane, 1978)

Schiller advocates for a strategy of self-reliance for developing countries in order to foster horizontal collaboration among Third World peoples, thereby building national policies to link them all together. Ultimately, this is implemented in order to break the cycle of cultural dependency, because without any national control over cultural and media conditions in the Third World, national culture will be unable to thrive and prosper, ultimately achieving cultural emancipation in Third World countries.

According to Nordenstreng (2014), this will be possible because of structural contradictions in foreign control structures that will eventually collapse for their own reasons on the one hand. On the other hand, because foreign structural contradictions will eventually collapse for their own reasons apart from the fact that culturally oppressed peoples have maintained their resistance to colonization. Third World countries will then develop experience and skills via their connections and daily activities, which will ultimately assist them in overcoming ideological and cultural division and expressing themselves in different ways that represent their real belonging to their cultural heritage.

As previously stated, the School of Dependency has provided further support for the thesis. There is no single theory of dependency that can be applied universally in either the economic and social worlds or the cultural and media sectors. One can find a wide range of academic articles and studies, but some stand out as exceptional. American scientists like Daniel Lerner, Ethel de Sola



Paul, Lucian Bay and Frederick Fry have tried to resolve the contradiction suffered by the peoples of the Third World.

It boils down to how combining advanced western technology with the preservation of the unity of national cultures shall emancipate Third World countries. Lerner's theory of media and development is the most common and widespread in developing countries (Abderrahmane, 1978). It revolves around highlighting the dangerous role that the media can do in moving developing countries from tradition to modernization. The truth is that what they call "modernization" is basically the introduction of advanced industrial Western financial networks, economic activities, consumer patterns and establishments to developing countries as the only model to follow.

### **3.1. An Overview of Third World Media**

There has been tremendous advances in telecommunication technologies since inventing the printing machine in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This had profound implications on the expansion of communication, in terms of quantity and quality and their accessibility to diverse groups of population has increased significantly.

The national press has played an important role in the national liberation movement in every country from Asia and Africa. The emergence of journalism in the Third World is linked to the growth of the elite patriotism or the vanguards that led the national movements whose activities crystallized in the form of gatherings or party organizations. Newspapers were not published in Asia and Africa just as a reaction to confronting colonial domination, but were also the embodiment of the completeness of the national movements in terms of organization and their ability to confront the colonial authorities with their political and media tools. There is no doubt

that the laws and restrictions imposed by the colonial authorities over the press, in addition to the European control of newspapers, which were issued in most third world countries before independence, convinced the national leaders of the necessity of a national press that expresses the ambitions, pains and problems of people in these countries. Especially since the colonial press was used as a means of perpetuating psychological and intellectual alienation among the national elite, as it was constantly reminding them of their marginal role in their countries or persuading them of the impossibility of achieving independence.

This issue was at the heart of the conflict fought by the Asian and African nationalists in an effort to counter the colonial presence and work on removing its negative effects on social and cultural dissonance. Most of the national leaders who worked in the press at the beginning of their struggle against European colonialism have expressed such concerns. Among them is Tamdy Azbekwe, the Nigerian leader and founder of the *West African Pilot* newspaper, which played a leading role awakening national consciousness in Nigeria. In addition to Mahatma Gandhi<sup>46</sup>, who oversaw the publication of *The Navjivan*, *Young India*, and *Navad Givana* newspapers, which contributed directly to the ignition of the patriotic aspirations among the Indian people and bravely faced all the measures of colonial oppression. The same applies to the *Accra Evening News*, which was headed by Kwame Nkrumah<sup>47</sup> in Ghana. The Third World's national leaders understood the dangerous role played by the press as a tool to support and strengthen the powers of these leaders through the parties they headed that led the patriotic struggle in their country.

This experience had negative ramifications in the post-independence period. Many of these leaders have expanded into the repressive framework of press freedom under the guise of building

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<sup>47</sup> Kwame Nkrumah PC was a Ghanaian politician, political theorist, and revolutionary. He was the first Prime Minister and President of Ghana, having led the Gold Coast to independence from Britain in 1957.

a national state, but with the aim of maintaining their presence in power. The national press in Asia and Africa has not emerged from the colonial press; it initially took on an anti-colonial propaganda character, which had a negative impact on the function of the national press at some point after independence. It has not succeeded in keeping up with the requirements of the new phase and has remained stuck in the pre-independence phase, ignoring its role in building nationalist and democratic ideologies by presenting different perspectives, and this is the challenge Third World press is still facing today.

These means have stretched mass communication to remote areas of the world, as they are no longer limited to the inhabitants of cities and capitals, which led to a fundamental shift in the nature of roles played by the means of communication. Television and social media that spread rapidly in Third World countries where their influence has brought diverse social and cultural changes that still need to be explored and analyzed thoroughly.

### **3.2. Contemporary Middle Eastern Television**

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was content on TV and the internet that was a lot more political, but there were not as many ethnographic studies of how people responded to it. This may have been because of the same restrictions that kept most types of public opinion polling from being done until the early 2000s (Al-Jabri, 2001). In spite of this, there are certain researchers that have a strong interest in the relationship between media and participatory politics in the Middle Eastern region.

In the context of transnational media, their findings shed light on the intricacies of this connection in the Arab world. With the availability of satellite television and the Internet, it was surprising that a modest amount of freedom of expression would lead to political reform. Political

liberalization in Arab governments remained weak and faltered despite some experts celebrating new media in the Arab world's alleged democratic potential, which came as no surprise. A comprehensive examination of the major political events of 2005 would have been impossible without drawing on Arab media coverage to shed light on how and why these events took place in countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, the Levant, Palestine, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, amongst others.

Satellite television is often viewed as either “excellent” or “evil” in terms of its contribution to society. According to a US Institute of Peace (USIP) study, released in 2005, the latter category of judgment was made based on a sense of “objective reality” that the study's authors appeared to depict as fixed and undeniable, not something that depends on who you are and how things appear to you. They state:

Arab audiences watch the news through a prism of individual and collective humiliation and resentment. To cater to those audiences, media portray the distorted reality created by this prism; and to compete with each other, they exaggerate the distortion. [...] To ignore or somehow justify their [i.e. the new satellite channels'] lies and inflammatory reporting as incidental to doing business in their political environment amounts to gross relativism.

The so-called “*CNN* effect” is often used as a metaphor for media impact. It is precisely this question that is at the heart if there is a *CNN* effect; whether or not the media can convince governments to pursue military action in humanitarian situations, thus undermining longstanding norms of non-intervention and state sovereignty (Robinson, 2005).

Nevertheless, it is critical to confront the likelihood that Arab media representations will affect the actions of Arab political leaders. For example, Dale Eickelman (2002) wrote that latest communication media are changing the Arab street into a public forum in which growing numbers of people, and not only a political and economic elite, will have a role in governance and public

concerns. The essence of this observation is that it relates to a say in government, not a say about governance, as its author implies. That is a crucial distinction to make, because most data suggests that Arab ruling elites influence the media in such a way that editorial content is ultimately not attributed to people outside the elite, but to political objectives that reflect patterns of elite ownership and control.

To make the case in point, let us consider the media situation in Saudi Arabia. There are numerous branches of the governing family, each of whose prominent members holds important government roles while simultaneously espousing a distinct vision for the country's future. Due to the lack of electoral mechanisms for legitimizing their policy preferences, they have invested in media operations at home and abroad to assure favorable attention at the national and regional levels for their preferences. (Sakr, 2005)

Many examples of government officials adopting television-friendly behavior that was previously unheard of before the introduction of satellite television and the internet have emerged throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Simple things like responding to media queries that were previously disregarded are good instances of this. *CNN* presenter Hala Gorani, a Syrian-American, told *The Daily Star* in March 2006 that she has found that even in Syria, she can get a government reaction in five minutes, there was a time, she adds, ten years ago when you could obtain one in one week. The interview with Egyptian president Hosni Mu<sup>48</sup>barak, which was broadcast in three parts months before the country's first multi-candidate presidential election campaign in 2005, may represent a more elaborate version.

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<sup>48</sup> Muhammad Hosni El Sayed Mubarak was an Egyptian military and political leader who served as the fourth president of Egypt from 1981 to 2011.

Meyrowitz (1986) provides an explanation for why electronic media, particularly television, have such a dramatic impact on social behavior. According to him, rather than relying on the power of a single television message to influence people's behavior, it was the entire medium of television that rearranged social surroundings. As Meyrowitz (1986) notes, new media change the house and other social spheres into new social contexts, making private behavior and private spaces accessible to the outside world, thereby leading to kinds of connection that were previously confined to situations of near physical proximity.

He suggested that widespread rejection of traditional roles and hierarchies began in the late 1960s among the first generation of Americans to have been exposed to television before learning to read. He received criticism for being media-centric and technologically deterministic, in assigning change to media technology rather than understanding technology's adoption as an expression of power relations. The fact that television, both public and private, has been around in the Arab world since the 1950s and 1960s without introducing new behaviors may seem to justify this criticism. Instead, audiences viewed broadcasting as a mere propaganda engine for the governing elite'.

Nevertheless, Meyrowitz himself argued that societies change in their patterns of access to, and exclusion from, certain situations and social information, and that these patterns are linked to media use. Access patterns in Arab society were transformed by satellite channels that violated taboos, which not only encouraged individuals to get online but also ensured that their awareness of the issue was raised.

### 3.3. Arab and Egyptian Satellite Media

For a long time, Arab media has pushed nation building as a strategy for socioeconomic progress. It was during Gamal Abdel Nasser's <sup>49</sup>reign, when radio and print media were more widely used than television that Arab nation building began to evolve in the media. Boyd (1993) concentrates more on the construction of Egyptian radio channels in order to support Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab plans.

In addition, Boyd says that Nasser used the Arabs' emotional commitment to Arabic language to promote his political ideas in his study of the evolution of broadcasting in the Arab world. Because of Arab disappointment over the 1967 military defeat and Sadat's politically isolated actions (the 1979 peace treaty with Israel), conservative and sometimes extremist trends began to intensify in response to the failure of previous secular regimes after Nasser's pan-Arabism project failed. In response to the defeats that followed the 1967 period, Islamists in the region demanded Arab-Islamic cultural legacy. (Browsers, 2009)

In addition, Hosni Mubarak granted the Muslim Brotherhood permission to carry out religious *Da'wa* as long as they did not challenge the dominant political party, the National Democratic Party. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, *Wahabism*<sup>50</sup> in Saudi Arabia, and the proliferation of Islamist organizations in other Arab nations have led to a type of cultural conservatism in contemporary films and series (Elouardaoui, 2013). Both locally produced and

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<sup>49</sup> Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein was an Egyptian politician who served as the second president of Egypt from 1954 until his death in 1970. Nasser led the 1952 overthrow of the monarchy and introduced far-reaching land reforms the following year.

<sup>50</sup> A term used to refer to the Islamic revivalist and fundamentalist movement within Sunni Islam which is associated with the Hanbali reformist doctrines of the Arabian scholar Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). (Wagemakers,2021)

imported Arab media were required to adhere to the socio-religious redlines set by these pressure groups.

However, a few Arab satellite TV networks have managed to bring to the surface taboo subjects that the regular government channels generally resist. The structure of Arab media has also undergone a fundamental shift in response to the conservative pushback in media content. Plenty of new, independent Arab satellite TV networks appeared in the 1990s, and they quickly rose to prominence. The three primary factors that have led to this transition toward privatization and transnationalism are the frequent political changes, the flow of capital, and the rise of conservative religious attitudes (Elouardaoui,2013). One theory put up by Naomi Sakr (2007) is that the rise in Arab exiles and expatriates living in other countries led Arab media leaders to launch satellite TV channels out of concern that their nationals would be drawn to competing satellite channels.

In a dual-product model, in which advertising revenue is used to fund content creation, television owners provide programs to viewers as a means of supplying viewers to advertisers, in the sense that audiences represent a potential market for products that are advertised during commercial breaks during the show's broadcast. The privately owned Lebanon Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) is frequently mentioned in comparisons of prominent television channels as being the most market-oriented and keen on producing money. A similar concept was pursued by the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (*MBC*), which broadcasted in the Middle East and North Africa.

The expansion of television stations that occurred beginning in 2000 resulted in an even greater blurring of goals, as well as more sophisticated combinations of patronal and market ties that underpin the sources of funding. The Egyptian government's participation in Nilesat, the firm



founded to provide Egypt with its own transmission platform as an alternative to the pan-Arab, but Saudi-dominated Arabsat fleet, played a role in the company's expansion and diversification. Nilesat's financial statements revealed a significant increase in revenue during the first four years following the introduction of Nilesat 101 in 1998.

With the deployment of Nilesat 102 in August 2000, the combined capacity of the two satellites increased to over 230 digital channel capacity. Nilesat's business received a timely government boost because of a reform in Egyptian broadcasting legislation. They were able to operate completely by satellite from a designated free zone adjacent to Media Production City and the Nilesat earth station, which was open to both Egyptian and international private broadcasters.

Rather than being critical of the function that private and transnational television channels play in increasing political consciousness, Rinnawi (2006) believes that they play a very constructive role. According to Rinnawi, *MBC* has a strong news casting structure, which allows it to provide exclusive coverage of politically sensitive issues that are typically ignored by other Arab television stations. He also praises the structure of *MBC* for adopting *CNN*'s news casting format, which allows it to provide exclusive coverage of politically sensitive issues that are usually ignored by other Arab television stations.

As the second most important all-news station in the Arab world, Al Walid al Ibrahim, the late King Fahd's son-in-law and heir to the Saudi throne, founded *Al-Arabiya* in 2003. In contrast to *Aljazeera*, *Al-Arabiya* has taken a more moderate stance in its coverage of political conflicts in Arab countries than the latter. For example, during its coverage of the Iraqi war, *Al-Arabiya* demonstrated less support for Saddam's regime than *Aljazeera*, resulting in *Aljazeera* being more popular in Iraq.

### **3.4. Media Theories and postmodern satire**

One might wonder, in light of the rapid proliferation of Arab satellite TV channels, if the shift toward privatization, transnationalism, and liberalization in Arab media has only led to the emergence of commercial entertainment programs and religious channels with an ideological focus, without affecting the issues of social development and democracy. Over the past decades, there have been many theories that explained the relationship between the intellectual purposes of media content and social change in the Middle East.

#### ***3.4.1. Teleological Theory***

According to this theory, which governs the conduct of morality as it relates to the results produced, the theory is referred to as the theory of results. This theory tries to assess the solidity of the results and whether they actually work or not in the end (Suleimen, 2012). It was divided into two branches. The selfishness oriented branch emphasizes doing things for the good of the individual who makes the decision, while whichever option is most advantageous to the decision-maker is called “principal”. Proponents of this theory use the best long-term benefits to assess the ethical quality of the theory, including gauging the validity of the work, including the assessment of whether doing this work will help individuals succeed for the long run at the expense of other options, then this is the type of work that should be done. This theory is not concerned with resolving conflicts between the varied selfish interests of individuals. The second branch, interest orientation, aims to look for the work that is best for as many people as possible. Jeremy Bentham (1747-1833) is considered the most important philosopher of this branch, he describes this branch as a philosophy aimed at achieving as much assistance as possible for as many people as possible. Bentham portrays the human being as a creature that is governed by the conflicting forces of

happiness and pain. Bentham sees happiness in a quantitative senses by applying his theory, some economists for instance believe that happiness is multiplied by free competition in economy.

### ***3.4.2. Critical theory: Frankfurt School of Thought***

German critical theory was a major figure in the postmodern era after having mostly fallen out of favor. In the early 1930s, at Frankfurt School, the idea was first presented and elaborated. It exists in a variety of fields and knowledge areas, such as philosophy, sociology, politics, and the arts, and is seen in criticism. Thus, the Frankfurt School theory has shifted from Marxist revolutionary ideas to ideas developed under Max Horkheimer, where philosophy was focused more on philosophy than on history and the economy as it was before, and therefore the critical theory was aimed at undermining bourgeois culture and consumer capitalism.

The aim of critical theory is to reform society on all levels, including the personal and social spheres. The ultimate goal is to liberate all human beings. Another critical update of Marxist and radical theories <sup>51</sup>was added to the mix (Bottomore, 2002). A distinction can be made between two periods in Critical Theory or the Frankfurt School: The Pioneering Period from the 1930s to the Late 1970s under Horkheimer, Marcuse, Adorno, and Fromm. As well as the period of renewal from the beginning of the seventies to the eighties of the last century, which is the period of Alfred Schmidt, Klaus Ove, and Albert Filmer. The new Critical theory of postmodernism has retained its special interest in the critique of the philosophy of the social sciences and ideologies.

Critical theory was used by the pioneers of the Frankfurt School in their criticism to direct naive realism; Critical theory means criticism of the Hegelian system; A critique of political

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<sup>51</sup> In the Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx posited that profits were wages stolen from laborers by those who controlled the means of production. The solution to the problem of exploitation, Marx held, was a workers' revolution. With this understanding, Marx penned the words that set socialism on a radical path.

economy and polemical criticism. This theory aims to establish a multi-source and principled social theory, such as the use of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and reliance on empirical research. In other words, critical theory is an overreach of Kantian theory, Hegelian idealism, and Marxist dialectic; it is a repudiation of reality and criticism to society in a negative and positive way. Criticizing the contradictions of society is not negative; it is a positive act in the Frankfurt school perspective. The concept of "critical theory" is linked to Horkheimer's Book, *Traditional theory and Critical Theory* (1937). Horkheimer collected all the perceptions of Frankfurt school, both theoretical and applied, as well as all their proposals to save and correct literature. Therefore, Critical Theory transcends positivist theories that rejected reflexive contemplation as a method of dealing with the subject matter.

Media and the rest of society have a codependent relationship, and what the media put out there by broadcasting or publishing keeps the entire social system in balance. On the one hand, Critical Theory proposes that media is used by the powerful to affect society and to promote the status quo. Critical theory, thus, studies the expansion of popular culture and the media circumstances because it believes that bourgeois culture, which elevates the masses' tastes, does not reflect the reality of how people are shaped by society.

On the other hand, researchers have pointed out that critical theories often come to choose certain social problems such as studying the sources of these problems and the location of their issues and providing its proposed recommendations and solutions. The relationship between the media and mass culture is the cradle of critical theories in relation to various social problems; so many questions are asked on the ideal social role of the media and discussing the role and motivations of professionals in these means of mass communication, professional standards, social

responsibilities and other ideas and issues (Al Mouchakba, 2014). Overall, critical theory is a Marxist reading of society; A critique of the scientific theory and the situation that neglected man, history, society and morals. Hence, critical theory works on enlightening people rationally and mentally and criticize alienation in capitalist society, as well as condemning the idea of mechanistic alienation and suppression. This theory is based in its reading of literature and art on the concepts of Classical Marxist criticism or Modified Marxism in Habermas' theory<sup>52</sup> (Egelton, 1986).

This theory is related to the current research in that it provides a positive and negative perspective on society and reality. Instead of being viewed negatively, inconsistencies in society are viewed as a positive act by the Frankfurt School, with the purpose of enlightening and transforming an intellectually and mentally devoted person through the social and ideological deconstruction of society. This is just what Bassem Youcef does; he provides critique and analysis on the political scene, allowing the audience to explore the various facets of political concerns and come to their own judgments.

Satellite media was the first and most important aspect of human life entering the stage of globalization in which the distances between countries and human societies faded with their different civilizations and cultures. This is in addition to the traditional role of the media, which continued during the satellite media phase, consisting of saving the strategies of states and their conflicting policies in the face of each other, which expanded under this satellite revolution. Arab satellite media entered the houses of a large number of citizens, giving them access to foreign satellite channels, which constituted a challenge to Arab satellite channels to keep up and an

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<sup>52</sup> Habermas's theory of communicative action rests on the idea that social order ultimately depends on the capacity of actors to recognize the intersubjective validity of the different claims on which social cooperation depends. (Baxter, 2011)

intense attack on Arab cultures and values, and perhaps the most affected, were the children and young people.

### ***3.4.3. The Theory of Social Responsibility***

Al Sayed and Saadawi's Study (2013) on the elite's tendencies towards the controversies of Egyptian satellite channels' coverage of the constitution crisis, settled on the weak commitment of Egyptian satellite channels to media ethics. Samar Ezzedine's Study (2011), also aimed to determine ethical and professional standards of publication in the Egyptian newspapers regarding medical issues, and the extent to which media experts follow the rules and their credibility.

The most important results were that most authors of various types of media were not subjected to legal or disciplinary sanctions because of their journalistic misconduct in the medical press, which indicates that medical journalism does not involve professional journalistic risks. The study also found that journalists that cover medical issues in Egyptian national press institutions are not interested in garnering excitement and achieving fame as much as they are interested in providing honest medical information to readers, which gives an optimal model for meaningful journalism, but at the same time, overlooks aspects of responsible entities' failure in undertaking more careful supervision.

Shekhar, in a study published in (2010), wants to arrive at an integrated understanding of media ethics through two perspectives, one Eastern and the other Western. The study dealt with ethical philosophies, from East and West in order to judge ethical and immoral practices by analyzing media practitioners' conducts in places like India and some Western countries. Shekhar concludes that Eastern and Western philosophies are a fundamental source derived from many principles and foundations of journalism. Shekhar's main point is that the standards of Eastern media are solid enough to enable the region to stand alone without having to rely so extensively

on Western standards, rather, media in the East has always had a strong foundation from which the West itself may have drawn many of its current conventions.

If the focus on media ethics is predominant in Middle Eastern countries, it is because the Middle Eastern social fabric is interlaced with moral mores that cannot be shaken easily. Linda Gorett (2008) discusses the challenges of professional journalism in Ugandan talk shows, in her study that extends to the situation in developing countries. Gorett posits that Uganda's greatest concern for moral values for the public is the laws that restrict the practice of media, and that these values are not limited to applying them only to journalists but also to talk show programs as well. Gorett's discrimination between traditional journalism and its "less formal" branch, talk shows, is based on the unnecessary of applying scrutinizing ethical standards that govern conventional media on seemingly harmless programs such as talk shows.

Hazem Anwar al-Banna's study (2008) on the ethics of media in private Arab satellite channels as seen by the Egyptian public shows that private Arab satellite channels offer a low degree of commitment to media ethics in general. On the same note, Shakuntala & Herman's study (2007) about rewriting the ethics of international media in the post-colonial era concluded that inherent values affect the decision makers in the world of media and journalists alike, and this, in turn, affects their decision-making. This means the post-colonial conditions of peoples will affect the values of everyone involved in media, including their moral decisions. The fact that Arabs are becoming more involved in public life and are engaging in critical and open discussion of regional political and social issues cannot be separated from the role that *Aljazeera* and other private satellite channels have played in encouraging a diversity of viewpoints and adapting more transparent coverage of sensitive regional issues.

Because of the high rates of illiteracy and restricted accessibility of modern technology to residents throughout the Arab world, other variables highlighted by Lynch (2006), such as the expanding number of independent newspapers and news websites, are only of modest significance. More crucially, Lynch does not go into detail about the consequences of the close ties that exist between television broadcasters and Arab governing families on the degree of neutrality that the channels maintain in their news coverage. This particular argument is one of the primary reasons why private and more liberal television channels in the region have failed to contribute to significant social progress or genuine political liberalization in the region in any significant way. Following their inception in 2005, the *Rotana* channels began airing advertising for the company's new movie channel, which featured one of the industry's most renowned and controversial music video stars, the seductive Lebanese pop singer Hayfa Wahbi, as the face of the new channel's launch.

The advertisement, which was set to the music of one of Hayfa's most recent hits, "*Hayat Qalbi*" (Life of My Heart), juxtaposed images of Egyptian film legends such as Nadia Lutfi and Hind Rustum from the country's golden age with shots of Hayfa batting her eyes seductively and proclaiming, "*Rotana Cinema: Mish Hati'dar Tighammid Aynayk!*" (*Rotana Cinema* : You will not be able to close your eyes" Students at Alexandria University organized a protest against the spread of risqué music videos and the satellite channels that broadcast them, according to the news website *Albawaba.com*, which reported the incident in March 2005.

When Egyptian students demonstrated against the immorality of *Rotana's* entertainment channels, they were continuing a long tradition of Egyptian reformers who have spoken out against the immorality of mass-mediated images. In addition to the question of the morality of images, these debates have centered on a wide range of issues that are distinctively contemporary, such as



the role that new visual art and entertainment genres might play in cultivating cultured audiences, preserving cultural identity, and furthering civilization's progress. Throughout Egypt, a plethora of (mostly negative) critique on the content of music videos has erupted due to the proliferation of music television on pan-Arab satellite broadcasting over the past decade.

This commentary has come from a diverse range of intellectual positions, religious and political commitments, as well as from Egyptian audiences, critics, and artists. Owing to the proliferation of private commercial television productions with Islamic themes since the introduction of transnational satellite television broadcasting in the Arab world in the late 1990s, formally retired male and female media personalities have had numerous opportunities to reactivate their careers. This time, they did it by appearing in Islamic-appropriate clothing as preachers, hosts of religiously oriented shows, and other religiously themed programs on satellite television.

Growing numbers of filmmakers, actors and actresses, both veiled and non-veiled, in Egypt's film industry are refusing to visually depict sexually explicit scenes, appear in provocative clothing, or represent immoral characters, citing ethical and moral concerns. A shift in post-1967 Islamic Revival thinking toward viewing the entertainment industry as an arena for the refashioning of religious and ethical norms, particularly those pertaining to the female body and sexuality, has been identified as the "clean cinema" trend.

Clean media content is not restricted to explicit appearance, but extends to regulating the satirical content as well. There is great academic interest from Western universities and institutes on the effects of satirical television programs on the public, especially the youth. This shows the importance of these programs as a medium that can contribute to criticizing the social, political and media reality in a way that is attractive in terms of presentation adding to its popularity,

especially since they sometimes tackle many issues and topics that fall within the framework of public interest (Shekhar, 2010). However, they did not receive enough academic attention in Middle Eastern countries, which is perhaps due to the recency of this type of television programs in the region, which sometimes made it controversial to some audiences and the elite, especially regarding their moral and professional aspects.

In order to tackle the issue more adequately, the theory of Social Responsibility of the media, which is based on the balance between freedom and responsibility, can provide a more precise analysis. This theory added to the principles of the liberal media system some intriguing principles. It highlights the need for the self-commitment of the media to the set of ethical charters aimed at balancing freedom of information and the interest of society. The theory also focuses on three main dimensions, the first of which is related to the functions to be performed by the media, the second dimension relates to performance standards, and the third dimension relates to professional values to be taken into account in media work (Abdeldjeffar, 2003).

The ethics of Social Responsibility are attributed to the Hutchins Communication Committee for the Study of Media in America because of its scientific efforts in 1947. The committee recommended media workers and communication to make decisions that serve the community, and called on the new media to strengthen their social responsibilities and not just their freedom. The theory of social responsibility has been criticized, primarily in terms of limiting media freedom, and giving governments the justification to interfere in media affairs under the slogan of maintaining social responsibility for the media (Abdeldjeffar, 2003). Chahin (2003) adds that there is no freedom of the press if the press does not have the right to be irresponsible, and that the media must be free even if this leads to being irresponsible. Such academics believe that the concept of press freedom conflicts with the concept of press responsibility.

It is a common perception that technology is a natural method that can be used in all societies and under all systems to serve different purposes. This idea is complemented by the fact that the free flow of news and information promotes the same content, which is the right of everyone taking part in this flow. Yet, realistically, the flow is practiced in a one-sided vertical direction and goes from north to south for the benefit of the advanced industrial countries. The problem of developing countries also arises in their failure to choose the appropriate technology for its needs, resources and cultural background. This leads to another important fact, which is that the responsibility lies on the scientific institutions that contribute to decision-making regarding the importation of technology (Al Mour, 2015).

As a result, the majority of scientists and scientific research in the Third World are dependent on foreign research facilities, at the very least on an intellectual level. Clearly, foreign ownership of newspapers in developing nations, the flow of corporate-controlled advertising, the reliance on imported technology, as well as the training of media professionals in foreign broadcasting practices, all contribute to the development of the global media landscape.

### **3.5. Comedy on Middle Eastern TV**

Comedy drama contents on Arab television is substantial and presented in a way that provokes smile and laughter through irony in an exaggerated way. These works have addressed the political and economic situation, especially on the Palestinian issue and Iraq along with Egyptian concerns (Mustafa, 2006).

Some bold artistic productions on T.V. were getting closer to problematic issues such as terrorism, fundamentalism, sectarianism, political corruption and the reflections of all this on the society in general. The Egyptian comedy on T.V. suffers the same problem that plights the Arab

comedy. Generally, it inclines towards clowning and fabricate attitudes that do not amount to profound social criticism (Mustafa, 2006). Some successful works with strictly financial aims include *بكية و زغلول* (1986) (Bekeisa and Zaghoul), and *للرجال فقط* (1964) Just for men a *منكرات* (1994) (Diaries of Wanis).

Television is the most prominent media because it has a profound impact on political, social and cultural aspects in Middle Eastern countries. With the tremendous development in the television culture industry, the intensity of viewing increased and expanded its circle until it became at the top of the means of communication. A considerable number of comedic television shows have recently appeared in the Middle East, which are based on criticism of the political, social and media reality, and work on exposing the facts and highlighting them to transfer information to the public in a simple way, far from the stereotypes of traditional media.

The Middle Eastern comedic experience evolved in the 1970s and 1980s, especially with Darid Lahham, Nihad Qalai and Yasser al-Azma, whose work began to offer some kind of criticism, both political and social. They reviewed the aspects of life in Syria and the Middle East. In total, examples of purposeful comedic works on TV made up a moderate percentage of total Syrian T.V.

In a study conducted in 2015, Al Mour aimed to gauge the levels the extent of satirical TV. shows' adherence to ethical and professional standards of the media. The study used findings from a sample from the general public and the academic elite specialized in the field of media. The study embarked, in its theoretical framework, from data provided by the theory of Social Responsibility. To achieve its goals, the researcher used the media survey method and relied on a sample of 400 (single and available samples) from the academic elite specialized in media.

Table 1 shows the differences between the general audience and the elite in the degree of watching Satirical T.V. programs.(Al Mour, 2015)

Table 1

The degree of satirical television shows viewership by the public and the academic elite.

Frequency of watching satirical T.V.	General population		Academic elite		Total	
	Num	%	Num	%	Num	%
<b>Always</b>	214	53.5	67	67	281	56.2
<b>Sometimes</b>	162	40.5	33	33	195	39
<b>Never</b>	24	6	0	0	24	4.8
<b>Total</b>	400	100	100	100	400	100

Source: (Al Mour, 2015)

It is clear that 53.5% of the public sample always watch satirical TV shows, and 40.5% of them said they sometimes watch them. While 67% of the academic elite watch them on a regular basis, and 33% of them watch them less frequently. Therefore, 100% of academics come into contact with satirical shows with varying degrees of frequency, and there is a small percentage (6%) of the sample who do not watch them at all. This demonstrates that these programs are highly watched by both the public and the academic elite. This indicates the awareness of all the sample of the public and elite of the importance of this type of programs.

With regard to the professionalism and ethics of programs, the results also showed that there was agreement from the audience sample on many points. First, the satirical television programs have a pre-arranged agenda that shapes the presented topics to serve the objectives of the broadcasting T.V. channel. They also agreed that it relies on exaggeration in its treatment of events and aim to mobilize the crowds in its treatment of topics and issues. They also agreed that the professionalism and ethics of the presentation of these programs are mainly limited to hosting guests that support their point of view. Most informants also agreed that presenters of these

programs use symbols, phrases and signs that affect public decency and the intellectual trends of the channel are predominant across all episodes of the programs.

In terms of professional ethics of photography and directing, a large portion of the sample agreed that the programs use image techniques that can offend political figures in society. A high percentage of them also thought the programs sometimes manipulates T.V. images to deceive viewers. The study concluded that most participants agreed on two negative dimensions of social responsibility ethics in satirical television programs. They concur that such programs work to confuse public opinion and achieve a split between different audience groups, while they publicly offend some personalities and tarnish their reputation by inciting hatred against them.

An important concept in any discussion of the media and politics is the concept of the *Public Sphere*<sup>53</sup>, which has been often referred to in the literature on new Arab media. Recent scholarly debate has focused on the extent to which the public sphere notion is compatible with recent developments in the Arab media scene. It is important to analyze how much critical, rational, and inclusive public argumentation transcends status and tradition in defining the public's interest and motivating political action because of the *Public Sphere* theory. Public discourse is defined by Marc Lynch (2006) as regular, continuing, unscripted debates before a participating audience about problems vital to many people in his recent work on pan-Arab television talk shows. Dyala Hamzah (2005), who focuses on Egyptian media, because there are layers of public discourse that never touch with one other in the country, concludes a lack of Arab public opinion and an Arab transnational *Public Sphere*.

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<sup>53</sup> The public sphere is an area in social life where individuals can come together to freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action. (Overland, 2018).

Public sphere theory emphasizes the importance of regulation, which has been overlooked in Arab media studies thus far. As Nicholas Garnham (2000) has noted, much of the appeal of the public sphere approach resides in its attention to the essential institutional foundations for realizing citizen rights to free expression and discussion. Oliver Hahn (2007) takes account of how institutions affect transcultural communication. He analyzes how the concept of the public sphere may be used as a tool for analyzing trends not only in Arab media but also in Arab–European exchanges in times of crisis by drawing on research into changes in communicative space throughout Eastern and Western Europe. Meanwhile, he highlights the importance of a journalist's possible role as interpreter and the dominant impact of larger political institutions and power relations on the media's functioning as intermediaries of public communication.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Arab satire originated in ancient Arabic literature evolved gradually over time. Arab satire has a long history dating from the Bedouin tribes who enjoyed a thriving oral culture filled with humorous storytelling traditions. Despite the abundance of outstanding prose works, Arabs have tended to satirize through poetry.

*Hidjaa*, the Arabic equivalent of Western satire, was highly valued by its practitioners and society. It listed the ways to maintain virtues and the misconduct that poisoned them. Early Islamic satire criticized society and power institutions, despite Muslim scholars' opposition. In the medieval Arab culture, satirical poetry addressed important issues such as anthropology, sociology, and psychology. An introspective development of Arabs satire occurred during the Middle Eastern colonial period, when it was utilized to communicate people's perspectives on their own society and criticize perceived injustices. By mocking their colonial masters, they tried to

mock their own cultures, which they claimed had become unduly reliant on European values. After the end of formal colonization,

Arab nations struggled to establish healthy places in a world dominated by Western ideals and dogmas. This spawned humorous material that skirted the prohibitions of Arab postcolonial regimes. The digital revolution has led to new modes of communication in various Middle Eastern and North African countries. Postmodern media production overuses irony, satire, and parody, making it difficult to discriminate between true and misleading information sources. For the first time in history, the Middle East's colonial and post-colonial situations spawned a complex interrelationship of the aforementioned variables.

On the Middle Eastern socio-political arena, censorship and the consequences of blindly copying Western media practices are hot topics. This begs the question, what if the Middle Eastern satire was an exact replica of its Western counterpart and demanded as much freedom of speech as the amount given in the West?



**Chapter Three: Postmodern Satire, Media, and Free Speech in the  
East and the West**

## **1. Introduction**

The advancement of audiovisual satirical media has played a major role in attracting massive numbers of audiences across the globe over the last two decades. A large majority of literature indicates that alternative media outlets have proven to be more credible and influential than conventional ones; the former have attracted enormous masses of different age groups to politics, both raising awareness and inspiring disillusionment in political structures and conventional news media, particularly with the latter's limited emphasis on significant events. If satirists are prophets and idealists at times, they are artists as well, even if they hide their art. For example, Michael Moore's satirical films, including *Roger & Me* (1989), *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), and *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), are masterfully executed fake documentaries that use radical juxtaposition, visual metaphor, ironic debunking, selective compression for dramatic effect, a carefully placed narrator, and other techniques commonly used through the eye of a camera (Quintero, 2011). Unlike the literary realism and thorough plausibility of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Moore's inventive cinematography and editing, and the investigative character of his work, establish a cinematic realism.

## **2. Television from Comedy to Postmodern Satire**

There was a time when satire and political satire were scarce on television, but this is no longer the case. Even in the early days of television, satire was a relatively new concept. It is not like soap operas, quiz shows, and sitcoms, which evolved from network radio through early television to the network era and beyond, when they had to adjust to changing production methods and industrial imperatives. Instead, post 9/11 T.V. is the result of a convergence of viewer preferences, altering programming strategies, and the progressive expansion of satiric and parodic television in different media.

It was common practice for television comedians to turn to parody to help them get through the long hours of production in the 1950s. Those parodies, on the other hand, were primarily aimed at mocking the cinema and television industries. Network executives once feared this type of comedy because they worried that the lines might not be understood by the public. (Gray et al, 2009). Historian Stephen Kercher (2006) designates 1962 as the highpoint of what he calls “liberal satire”, a year in the midst of the storied American *Camelot*<sup>54</sup>. Even with the corporate liberals in power, satire crested after developing an audience first as dissident, underground humor during the Truman and Eisenhower years (1945-1961), then packaged as popular entertainment and made available for popular audiences through magazines, comedy albums, theater companies, and the occasional toned-down TV appearance (Kercher).

Setting aside news coverage, television programming in the 1960s was known for obliviousness to the tremendous social tensions and upheavals occurring. The executives of network television were in the business of appealing to as many people as possible, while offending as few advertisers as possible. However, explicit social satire did not qualify as mainstream entertainment, especially in the face of public riots and an unpopular war in Vietnam (Gray et al, 2009). We may interpret the television networks' reluctance during the 1960s to push satire as a popular kind of television comedy as an admission that humor with a political message could insult consumers, alienate advertisers, and undermine network economics.

Of course, the networks' propensity to view socially significant content as suitable fuel for television plots, particularly comedies, shifted dramatically in 1970. That was the year *CBS*<sup>55</sup> axed

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<sup>54</sup> Camelot is a castle and court associated with the legendary King Arthur. Absent in the early Arthurian material, Camelot first appeared in 12th-century French romances and, since the Lancelot-Grail cycle, eventually came to be described as the fantastic capital of Arthur's realm and a symbol of the Arthurian world. (Wolfgang, 1991)

<sup>55</sup> Columbia Broadcasting System.

its lucrative but lower-middle-class comedy , such as *The Beverly Hillbillies* (1962-1969), to make room for more socially relevant programs aimed to entice advertisers' desired upmarket audiences back to television.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the television industry appeared to tolerate satire as long as it was wrapped in classic sitcom tropes or stayed on the periphery of late-night television. While sitcoms such as *Good Times* (1974-1979) and *Maude* (1972-1978) are examples, they withered in the Reagan 1980s while neo-traditional domestic sitcoms such as *Family Ties* (1982-1989), *Diff'rent Strokes* (1978-1985), and *Growing Pains* (1985-1992) recycled themes and imparted lessons about growing up. On the periphery, though, television was experimenting with ways to appeal to smaller audiences through more avant-garde humor. *Saturday Night Live* (1975-present), particularly in its early years, was a form of television comedy created by a new generation for those growing up in the 1960s societal upheaval. The show channeled that cultural expertise into late-night political and social satire.

To accompany George H. W. Bush's prolongation of the Reagan years , the late 1980s gave the world *The Simpsons* (1989-present). Almost every television genre has been parodied at least once in this show, with the news, advertisements, and, most notably, the classic family sitcom taking the brunt of the parody. *The Simpsons* promised irreverence and a willingness to challenge television conventions, but rarely delivered explicit and cutting-edge political satire.

The changes in television comedy forthcoming in the post-network era could be seen most clearly through the launch of the cable channel *Comedy Central* (1991) and its strategy of using political humor and satire as a means of branding itself (Jones, 2010). The post-network era's developments in television comedy are most evident in the emergence of the cable channel *Comedy Central* and its goal of defining itself through political humor and satire. In 1993, the network

launched *Politically Incorrect* (1993-2002), a satirical political roundtable discussion show. The show earned critical acclaim, expanded cable system carriage, and established the network's corporate identity. The show, which was hosted by comedian Bill Maher and featured an odd assortment of celebrities, authors, musicians, comedians, and politicians, quickly established itself as the network's flagship program by fusing serious and humorous political discussions into a hybrid entertainment-political talk show.

Since the premiere of *Politically Incorrect*, *Comedy Central* has recognized that satirical treatment of politics is central to its identity, and as documented in this volume, the network has been the only television network to have developed the most comprehensive satirical treatment of state and society. *The Daily Show* (1996), *South Park* (1997), *That's My Bush!* (2001), *Chappelle's Show* (2003-2006), *The Colbert Report* (2005), and *Lil' Bush* (2007-2008) have all been featured on the show. The immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks was a moment when television comedy, and particularly sarcastic comedy, garnered a lot of attention, and hence was seen to matter). Suddenly, it was deemed impolite for television comedians to deliver topical jokes, and the prominent late-night comics David Letterman, Jay Leno, and others chose to become somber for a few weeks. Bill Maher's show was later canceled owing to comments he made in the early aftermath of the attacks that were judged unacceptable. Dennis Miller appears to have lost his satirical instincts and departed from his Home Box Office (HBO) show *Dennis Miller Live* (1994-2002).

Post 9/11 audiovisual satirical media, originating from the postmodern school of thought, has articulated the fears and mistrust of the public through witty satire and masterfully executed sarcasm and irony. The events of 9/11 revealed the true state of Western democracy and its deceptive, misinformed leaders who, right after the attacks, immediately waged a war against the

Middle East. As pointed out by McClennen and Maisel “Not only was it a low point in terms of the integrity of our government, it was also a low point in media coverage of politics as news increasingly turned toward spectacle and hype over information and critical thought”. (2014, p. 6).

News Media, the supposed providers of information and clarifiers of ambiguities engaged in evasive maneuvers around facts and bombarded the audiences with irrelevant, and often, false information “...the news media has become increasingly disconnected from information, so much so that satire has become a source of information rather than just a critic of it”. (McClennen & Maisel, 2014, p. 7). It was, therefore, only understandable that people moved to consuming satirical material that treated significant events with more seriousness and uncensored critique, providing cathartic outlets to the confused masses thus educating them adequately. In 2007, the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press conducted a report that reported that in terms of success, Jon Stewart, host of the satirical show *The Daily Show*, ranked higher than news anchors Peter Jennings and Wolf Blitzer. According to McClennen and Maisel (2014), for the first time in American history, a satirical comedian (Jon Stewart) was competing with a journalist (McClennen & Maisel, 2014).

A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center for People & the Press (2007) has shown that satirical news programs such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* have become the key news outlets for the younger generation (eighteen to twenty-nine). These results are also in line with earlier studies published by Pew (2004) and the National Annenberg Election Survey of the University of Pennsylvania (2004). Dannagal Goldthwaite Young identifies the findings of the Annenberg survey by noting “Daily Show viewers [as having] higher campaign knowledge than national news viewers and newspaper readers – even when education, party identification,

following politics, watching cable news, receiving campaign information online, age, and gender are taken into consideration” (As cited in Reilly, 2010, p. 10)

News parodies and satires are identified using different words, some with greater success than others. These include Critical Journalism (Delli Carpini & Williams, 2001), Soft News (Baum, 2003), Infotainment (Stockwell, 2004), Political Journalism (Baym, 2005), Political Comedy (Larris, 2005), Late Night Comedy (Jones, 2005), Satirical Journalism (Lockyer, 2006), Mock News (Brewer & Marquardt, 2007), Faux News (Saltzman, 2007), news parody (Boler, 2008; Druick, 2009), Fake News (Gettings, 2007; Day, 2009), News Comedy (Jenkins, 2009), and Satire News (Jones & Baym, 2010). Each phrase highlights a particular perspective of the form; some scholars quickly recognize satire and comedy as the focal points of interest, others as the political essence of their criticism (s). In both academic and public discourse, the word that has created the most prominence is fake news. (Reilly, 2010)

In several news outlets, including podcasts, vlogs, and live streaming, political satire has a predominant presence, which has contributed enormously to expanding the amount of people consuming satire; but such transformations are not always worthy of praise. As Duffy & Page (2013) explain; because satirists based their content on mocking the personality and physical appearances of the presidential candidates rather than their political agenda, they increased their relatability to the public in an effort to make their shows more desirable as satire inevitably humanizes them. Such politicians seem to be aware of such effects, which is why many of them seem to purposely indulge satirists with their desired content, or “put on a certain type of

performance when appearing publicly” (Noelle, 2018, p. 19). As Noelle also points out, Donald Trump<sup>56</sup> has proved to be one of the most vivid examples of this, and he adds:

At first, specifically in the early days of the election when Trump was just one of over a dozen candidates, his antics were the sort of material that a comic would kill for. However, as the crowded debate stage thinned out, and Trump was the only one left standing entering the general election, some satirists got wise to the fact that Trump could not be “joked” about in the same way that candidates had in years past. Many writers tried to put their finger on what exactly it was that caused even some of the most biting comic material to bounce off of him. (Noelle, 2018, p. 22)

In addition, many American newspapers, including *The New Yorker*, *Time*, and *New York*, claimed that Trump was resistant to satire; while at the beginning of the elections, Trump stood out as the ideal target for ridicule and mockery, which would otherwise bring him off the race right there and there, he not only prevailed, he won the elections. Other scholarly speculations suggest that hype-seeking politicians like Donald Trump and Boris Johnson<sup>57</sup> are well mindful of their weaknesses' appealing power, or maybe even purposely produce some lampoon-worthy actions in some cases to ascend to their goals on the political ladder. It should be remembered that the problematic conduct of Trump in public and policy making could be an extension of his reality T.V alter ego; the latter had been the star of *The Apprentice* (2004- present), a reality T.V show that during its first season gathered a peak number of up to 20.7 million viewers (Brooks and Marsh, 2007).

According to Lannucci (2015/2016), Boris Johnson also profits from a "mutualistic" relationship with satire; the latter has often been related to controversial actions that gained him considerable media attention, ultimately helping him fulfill his political ambitions. In the other

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<sup>56</sup> Donald John Trump (born June 14, 1946) is an American politician, media personality, and businessman who served as the 45th president of the United States from 2017 to 2021.

<sup>57</sup> Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson is a British politician serving as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Conservative Party and has been since 2019.



side of this symbiosis, in order to reach more viewers, satirical material in audiovisual media had to reduce the standards, as it mainly prioritizes throwing light on the outer appearances, mannerism, and personality of politicians over the way they handle politics (Lannucci).

When approached from the political participation point of view of the people, one can discern the difference between satirical material before and after 9/11. As seen above, a large number of political satires before 9/11, and some of the early satirical shows after 9/11, such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, targeted sophisticated viewers, or rather helped to make their viewers more sophisticated, with more in-depth critique of politics, enabling them to behave and react in some way. This is alarmingly absent in a large amount of recent political satire, which focuses mainly on educating audiences about current political dilemmas, but presents no realistic solutions and, in most instances, implicitly discourages them from taking any action.

The humorous intent in satire encourages audiences to be more vigilant and process political knowledge more effectively, but because of the discounting cue<sup>58</sup>, they are unable to make any realistic use of it; a subconscious awareness that the entire material is a mere joke that cannot be seriously dealt with (Nabi et al, 2007). Fielding also holds similar views and goes on to posit that the key byproducts of satire are cynicism and apathy, which ultimately weaken the attitudes of people towards politics (Fielding, 2012).

### **3. Satire and Serious Political Work**

Recent studies (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006, Baym & Jones, 2012) of the effects of political satire have shown that political satire has an effect on political participation. In fact, this

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<sup>58</sup> Any disclaimer or reason leading you to doubt the credibility of the message's source is a discounting cue. These cues make you skeptical about the ad's message, and you consequently won't allow it to seriously persuade you. (Schul & Mazursky, 1990)

research has shown that exposure to satire of a political nature makes people feel bad; people who watch late-night comedy shows are more likely to get involved in politics because of the conversations and online interaction that happen when people make fun of politics.

As Jeffrey Jones (2005) argues in his book on political talk shows, *Entertaining Politics: New Political Television and Civic Culture* (2005), critical analyses of “fake news” (Jones’ terminology) have emerged mainly due to “a fundamental change in political communication in America” (p. 7). Although entertainment television has historically veered away from the serious area of politics, politics has become an integral part of entertainment programming (only rarely addressing political themes and subjects). This move, Jones argues, has been crucial in blurring the boundaries between serious and entertaining discourse(s), putting politics at the heart of new debates about the role and meaning of entertainment in civic culture firmly.

In Jones’ view, this conjoining of popular culture and politics, that he considers entertaining politics, has actual relevance for democracy. Primarily, because these texts provide opportunities for cultural creators and viewers to picture politics differently, to present politics in creative ways, and to spread critical positions, opinions, and ideologies that are not always found in mainstream news media. The position of the Fourth Estate<sup>59</sup> has never been more critical in maintaining democratic values in a mass media environment dominated by elites, elected officials, spin-doctors, lobbyists, public relations specialists, and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs).

The failure of the news media to perform this position has intensified a burgeoning culture of public media critique, guided by the efforts of blogs, political analysts, non-governmental organizations, networked social movements, activists, and citizen journalists. These actors are now

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<sup>59</sup> The term Fourth Estate or fourth power refers to the press and news media both in explicit capacity of advocacy and implicit ability to frame political issues. (Hampton, 2010)

needed in the public sphere to ensure that the public interest is served. Political communication and media scholars have labeled this facet of media criticism the *Fifth Estate*, the watchdog of the (so-called) watchdog press. Within the context of popular media criticism, political satirists play an important role in the circulation of discourse that has often escaped the notice and/or scrutiny of mainstream news media.

In 2004, Jon Stewart appeared on *CNN's* political debate program, *Crossfire* (1985-2005), to explain why he thought the show was hurting America. Stewart explains why fake talk shows like *Crossfire* are essentially undermining the structure of public debate and conversation. According to Stewart, in addition to the slanted, untruthful, and deceptive political coverage of current events, the hosts are actively involved with both politicians and the corporate structures that govern them, assisting them in articulating their ideologies without critically analyzing the integrity or veracity of their positions. On top of the several Emmys and Peabody Awards for *The Daily Show's* election coverage in 2000 and 2004, Stewart also received the Television Critics Association Award for “Outstanding Achievement in News and Information for his work on *The Daily Show*”. (Gray et al, 2009)

Figure 3: Jon Stewart's 2004 appearance on CNN's Crossfire with millions



Source: (Gray, et al 2009)

Further, perhaps Stephen Colbert's address at the 2006 White House Correspondents' Association Dinner (WHCAD) gets near to conveying the kind of bold media criticism that characterized Stewart's *Crossfire* appearance. Colbert delivered his criticism in full character, as a parody of an ideologically conservative, hyperactive, self-important right-wing media commentator. Colbert stated his argument quite evidently: both the President and the press had disappointed the citizens, and as a result, the integrity of the country's top positions and institutions had been seriously harmed.

Critics said the speech was just devoid of humor, yet, because of its rapid spread on social media, it is clear that this speech resonated with an even larger audience at home. We learn a lot about the condition of television humor, politics, and reporting in the first decade of the twenty

first century from this single event. It is a testament to the popularity of satirical television shows: being humorous and clever sells and is a powerful magnet for viewers. Because of the viral nature of the clip, it shows how quickly satire may spread, as well as how quickly technology has made it possible for satire to go viral. The irony that satirical TV often says what the press is afraid to say, proving itself a more critical interrogator of politicians, was emphasized by Colbert's daring as the comedian in a room full of politicians and journalists. (Gray et al, 2009)

Parody is often utilized in combination with satire in today's satirical television shows. As a result, *The Daily Show's* soundtrack, set design, and top-corner insert images mirror the look and feel of traditional news broadcasts. Typical satirical parodies of political speeches, debates, and other forms of political discourse are parodies. When parody critiques debates or news for bad performance and for being more like a glossy show, it is intrinsically poking fun of the political process and people's inclination to accept the status quo as it is. News parody serves as an important portrayal of a broader shift in the construction and organization of contemporary journalism: parodic depictions of the news, through their repeated questioning of journalistic codes and conventions, illustrate in many aspects a pervasive and continuous reappraisal of journalism. Whereas a traditional news story may provide information in accordance with a set of instantly recognizable journalistic criteria (decorum, seriousness, and purported neutrality), a given news parody has significantly more leeway to tell a story in a variety of ways. Without being bound by traditional journalism's codes and ethics, the parodist can use humor, wit, and ironic posturing to depict the staging of emblematic victories over dominant institutions through the ridicule of public figures, politicians, and the absurdity of postmodern global consumer culture. He would also find new ways of introducing politically delicate ,and even at times, offensive material to the public (Reilly, 2010).

*The Yes Men* (2008), for instance, would work with a number of other activist organizations to construct a full-fledged spoof of the *New York Times*. The fake newspaper, which was circulated across major American cities in the aftermath of the November 2008 election, is yet another significant moment in the expression of media critique. The fake *New York Times* was such a major event that the Library of Congress later requested permission to archive it as an event of great significance to the history of the United States (Reilly, 2010). Rather than simply highlighting the flaws of both newsmakers and newsgatherers, the fake *New York Times* gives a utopian picture of contemporary journalism and politics as they will be practiced in the near future. The newspaper is filled with stories about the end of the Iraq War, universal health care, economic change, and other socially progressive issues. *The Yes Men* take a harsh critical posture against the institution, while also making intelligent recommendations for how the *New York Times* should improve its flaws. *The Yes Men*, like Stewart and Colbert, provide a relevant diagnostic critique of an elite news industry in the hopes of not just improving their institutional behaviors, but also proposing new options to generating and delivering news.

If the justification for the much frowned upon and mourned departure of Jon Stewart from *The Daily Show* was real, he would not be the first comedian in recent years to enter serious politics. Jimmy Morales, a television comedian with absolutely no prior experience in politics, was elected President of Guatemala in October 2015, Francisco Everardo Oliveira Silva, a veritable clown, was elected to the National Congress in Brazil in 2010 (Klumbyte 2014). Moreover, John Gnarr, an Icelandic comedian became mayor of Reykjavik upon winning the 2010 council elections for his “*Best Party*” (Boyer 2013), as well as Italian comedian Beppe Grillo, whose *Five Star Movement* received more votes than any other party in the 2012 Italian parliamentary elections (Mol'e 2013), and Lithuanian showman Arūnas Valinskas and supporters of the *National*

*Resurrection Party*, who amassed 15 percent of the 2008 parliamentary votes and finished second (Klumbyté, 2014). Without forgetting the recent Luka Maksimovi'c's , a young man from a small Serbian town, entry to the presidential election race at the last moment by managing to gather ample support signatures in an extremely short time; he is best known for portraying the parodic picture of a crooked politician under the name of Ljubiša Preletačević Beli. He received almost 10 percent of the votes in the April 2017 elections, taking the third overall spot.

A broad body of research on political humor has been devoted to humor in politics through academic fields seeking to quantitatively evaluate the effect of the humorous discourses and actions of politicians on public opinion and the attitudes of their audiences (e.g. Baumgartner & Morris 2006, Bippus 2007). There is a strong division in politics between serious and humorous modes (Mulkay, 1988) and presumes, that humor "is not to be taken seriously" (Tsakona & Popa, 2011, p. 11). Classical thinkers such as Huizinga (1955) have already challenged this distinction, who cautioned that the contrast between play and seriousness proves to be neither conclusive nor fixed, and Bakhtin (1984), who denied that humor and laughter are not legitimate. In political advocacy, social movements, and demonstrations, the extensive mobilization of satire and parody indicates that humor "has re-emerged as an innovative political instrument in the 21st century" (Klumbyté, 2014, p. 473). It can therefore no longer be interpreted as merely a sharp critique on politics and as its "ludic companion" (Boyer 2013, pp. 276-77). Rather, it became politics itself, occupying the very practice of politics performatively. (Boyer, 2013; Smith & Voth 2002, p. 124)

Political narratives in the "lates" and "posts" have a key property of *Hypernormalization*<sup>60</sup>. There are many reasons for this, such as the concentration of corporate media ownership, the

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<sup>60</sup> Yurchak coined the term "hypernormalization" in his 2005 book *Everything was Forever, Until it was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. The term refers to a mechanism in which political discourse becomes so formulaic, clichéd, and ritualized that it becomes "an end in itself". (Yurchak, 2006, p. 50)

uncritical repetition of media material, the fusion and overlap between media and political genres, the overabundance of public space with political and media discourses, the dissemination in global economies, and the intertwining of politics with media (Ashley 2014, Boyer & Yurchak 2010, Campus 2010, Coleman et al. 2009, Fieschi & Heywood 2004, Jones 2010). Those in desperate need of an alternative are drawn to language that is able to communicate outside of the confines of established performative frames.

This is when satire received a lot of political significance. When Bakhtin's influence was brought to bear on psychology, the term “humor” became an important one that was associated with power and politics. Inconsistencies within the social sphere and the political subject's own reluctance to take a stand against the target of their criticism can be dealt with through the use of comedy, which is ambiguous. “Often, authors will expend significant energy explaining and justifying complex terminological distinctions that are bound to crumble at the first close examination” (p. 166), as linguist Salvatore Attardo (2001) notes. Classifications tend to remove ambiguity and uncertainty, but they can also introduce new layers of ambiguity and ambiguity. Classes and epistemic clarity for humor will reveal that the positions of those who laugh, in whose presence they do so and why, as well as those who are mocked and how they are humiliated all seem clear and set, but in most cases, humor may have more than one purpose.

Ambiguity also stems from the way the media and politics function in the media spectacle's contemporary environment. They also lead to unusual interactions between politicians and satirists: while satirists are constantly talking about serious political problems, assumed the role of politicians and journalists, politicians “have to be entertainers in order to win” (Tanner 2011, p.

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*HyperNormalisation* is also a 2016 BBC documentary by British filmmaker Adam Curtis. It argues that governments, financiers, and technological utopians have, since the 1970s, given up on the complex "real world" and built a simpler "fake world" run by corporations and kept stable by politicians.



92). In reality, satire aimed at insulting politicians can work in their favor (Gray et al, 2009). As Higgle (2015) points out in the case of Australia, “politicians have increasingly sought to engage with satirists in a playful manner, even willingly satirizing themselves” (p. 64). In addition, their comedic impersonations are profoundly affecting how viewers view politicians. The political character of comedy is usually measured by its ability to cause political reform and destabilize relations of power. For understanding the political potential of humor or lack thereof, the binaries of reform versus the status quo and dominance versus resistance remain crucial.

Schutz (1977), for instance, stresses the capacity of humor to contribute to social cohesion by neutralizing violence, preparing consensus members, and thereby holding communities away from extremes. If satire is seen as capable of leading to political transition, in those parodic views in which discursive distortion or interference is minimal, the incongruity between what politics is and what it is expected or imagined to be, proper politics, is most freely exposed. In such situations, the satirical interference draws the attention of the audience not to the mimetic nature of the spoof itself, but to the mimetic nature of politics itself and the *hypernormalization* of popular political discourse. In one of the *Saturday Night Live* shows in September 2008, Tina Fey, imitating Sarah Palin, the Republican Party candidate for U.S. Vice President in the 2008 election, repeated the argument Palin gave in an interview almost verbatim. The parodic effect was attained by mere repetition due to Palin's content-empty argument. The mimetic nature of real politics is also expressed in mass media titles that frequently warn readers that their texts talk about real events and comments, however parodic and farcical they might sound, and are not taken from parodic news sites (Petrovi'c 2015).

In such social situations, the discursive approach that seems especially efficient has been referred to as *over-identification*, where the mode of political discourse is targeted; its

repetitiveness, its ritualization and its performativity, resulting in subversive affirmation, also called “imitative exaggeration” (Arns & Sasse 2015). The way that *over-identification* functions is highly marked by uncertainty and depends on it. Mimetic practices, such as *stiob*<sup>61</sup> in late Soviet socialism, require "such a degree of over-identification with the object, individual, or concept to which it was directed that it was often impossible to tell whether it was a form of sincere support, subtle ridicule, or a peculiar mixture of the two" (Yurchak 2006, p. 250).

In 1991, Sergei Sholokhov, host of the famous Leningrad Television Channel 5 program *Piatoe koleso* (The Fifth Wheel) (1973), introduced Sergey Kuryokhin<sup>62</sup>, who, in a serious scholarly tone over the course of an hour, provided rich evidence for the claim that Vladimir Ilich Lenin, the leader of the *October Revolution*<sup>63</sup> (Nov 7, 1917-Nov 8, 1917), was a mushroom. Sholokhov and Kuryokhin offered no explanation at the end of the episode, whether this was a joke or a serious program, leaving millions of audience members lost and confused as the announcement was broadcast on Soviet television, and involved the central figure of Soviet socialist ideology, whose ridicule was a taboo; many considered it plausible and gave it some credibility. (Yurchak 2011, p. 309).

In America today, critics of Colbert and Stewart have either questioned satire's ability to engage citizens or suggested that comedy may only lead viewers to feel superior to those around them, which removes them from the political process. Though satire has a long and illustrious history in literature, dating back to Horace and Juvenal and to Twain, satire's role as an expression

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<sup>61</sup> A Russian genre of ironic but ostensibly earnest parody associated with the Soviet era. (Boyer & Yurchak, 2010)

<sup>62</sup> He was a Russian composer, pianist, music director, experimental artist, film actor and writer, based in St. Petersburg, Russia. (Carr et al , 2004)

<sup>63</sup> Officially known as the Great October Socialist Revolution under the Soviet Union, also known as the Bolshevik Revolution, was a revolution in Russia led by the Bolshevik Party of Vladimir Lenin that was instrumental in the larger Russian Revolution of 1917–1923. (Samaan, 2013)

of social and political critique has been far more precarious in television. A lack of satire on television is mostly due to political economy and the unique demands it sets on authors and audiences alike, particularly in the American context (Jones, 2009). The underutilization of satire has been detrimental to a more involved public, as satire encourages the audience to do the same kind of scrutiny. Satire and television have a complicated connection, and this is where the first snag arises. When it comes to television, networks and producers, and perhaps even audiences, generally expect satire to be funny, as a form of “comedy” that should have the same textual features like jokes and produce the same audience reactions such as laughter, as a sitcom or variety show or perhaps even a satirical documentary.

The safer and more conservative option given by sitcoms has been preferred by entertainment programming that deals with social or political concerns. As Michael Mulkey (1988) points out, sitcoms tend to be safe and predictable, whereas satire tends to be more unpredictable. This is why satire found a more comfortable home in postmodern media, and surprisingly, not on Western TV only, but also in the Middle East.

#### **4. Postmodern Media in the Middle East**

Due to the sheer rise of the digital media, new problems and opportunities have arisen. It has leveled the hierarchies of communication and reconfigured the relationship between the authorities and the wider public in society. Anyone can now participate in public discourse thanks to a wide range of modern technology.

Thus, despite how it may appear, there is an increasing threat to freedom of speech. Recent years have seen a growth in the usage of postmodern media in the Middle East by governments

and private enterprises alike. Traditional media remains quite popular, particularly on the internet. Reiterating the relevance of traditional media is critical for the Middle East's development. It strengthens the Middle East's ties to the rest of the world. Numerous critics of postmodern media assert that it is detrimental to the Middle East on an intellectual level.

This has been challenged to be untrue through extensive research, while others believe even though postmodern media might be perplexing at times, it remains critical for molding the Middle Eastern ideologies. In several nations throughout the Middle East, the digital revolution has resulted in the emergence of new forms of communication. Irony, satire, and parody are all overused methods in postmodern media production, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between real and false information sources. As a result of the expanding diversity of media ownership and the globalization of the media market, the evolution of media throughout the postmodern era has come to be defined by the increasing diversity of media ownership.

Television, for instance, has post-modern qualities such as celebrating pictures at the expense of the word, thus replacing emotional gratification with of persuasion; ultimately sticking to entertainment at the expense of conveying meaning. Postmodern values are ubiquitous in everyday television since it is based on the image, after all one picture is better than a thousand words, and the image is vivid and tangible and may have one single meaning or a number of symbolic meanings (Hamdi, 2006). Marshall McLuhan's (1976) reverberating concept "the medium is the message" must be referred to here, which addressed the media and its impact on societies and predicted the relationship between media content and media technology. McLuhan maintains that means of media are languages in their own right, with their own structures and grammatical systems, and that they can be studied as such.

McLuhan felt that different media platforms have an effect in the sense that they constantly modify and reshape how individuals, societies, and civilizations perceive and understand the world (Tomlinson, 1999). Nevertheless, this view has been criticized as some critics questioned his claim about the “global village” concept and the questionable far-reaching experiences that television brings us. This criticism is mainly directed at McLuhan’s community failure to reach the perfect picture of a community with face-to-face communication that evokes all ideas about the morally and emotionally binding characteristics of the second society compared to the first.

Contrary to what McLuhan asserts, television only provides a visible feedback, and the images it displays are closely separate from all the other senses where the viewer sits to see it comfortable in his own home, separated from the pain, heat and smell of what is actually going on (Tomlinson, 1999). All these effects help keep the viewer away from the scenes he sees and finally fall into the unconscious belief that events on television are taking place in a theater of human activity far away. This amplifies the repulsive effect by the fact that the television screen narrows the images to the visual quality itself only and exhibits the ugly scenery with the entertainment shows on that same rectangle of puffed glass.

Notwithstanding, his speculations about the ability of audiovisual media to involve people morally and emotionally in the lives of others who are far from them are arguably valid. Television comedy, for example should take into account, among other considerations, that it should not provoke the feelings or traditions of this or that segment of the audience and not offend their social and moral values in order to satisfy public taste. Moreover, comedy on television is especially challenging because some comedians may be judged poorly only due to the lack of real-time interaction with the audience, as opposed to an impeccable performance by the same comedian on theater.

It has been possible to witness a structural shift in crisis communication in the globally networked mass media since the 9/11 suicide attacks on U.S targets and the subsequent U.S-led campaigns against so-called “rogue states” in an uneven war setting. Even Western satellite television giants like BBC World and *CNN International* now face competition from Arab-based rivals, notably *Al-Arabiya* in the United Arab Emirates and *Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel* in Qatar's capital city of Doha (Qatar). Several of the newer Arab satellite stations have gained Western news organizations' trust as dependable and legitimate outside sources since the 2003 U.S-led invasion of Iraq. The level to which they quote and repurpose video from these stations is clear. Western and Arab broadcasters' collaboration agreements are also implied in their cooperation.

In light of these trends, it appears that U.S and European broadcasters are losing their global monopoly on reporting on Middle Eastern crises. Changes like this in international relations could have a significant impact on the general populace.

## **5. Media and Freedom of Expression between the West and Middle East**

It is nearly impossible to delve into the issue of Western style satire in the Middle East without engaging in a thorough discussion about the varied perceptions of freedom of speech between the West and Middle East.

Most definitions of freedom of opinion and expression provided by Western researchers and specialists in the field of media, especially in the political media, imply that it includes a set of rights that entitle the individual and the media institution to carry out media work. These rights include freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of ownership of the means of communication, and freedom of participation in politics, freedom of assembly, and freedom to practice publishing and distribution, and a guarantee of legal protection for media professionals. All These rights are based on the liberal philosophical foundation prevalent in Western societies.

With respect to liberal discourse, there is a strong predisposition in favor of unrestrained speech, which is manifested in the notion of a “right” to free expression. There is no simple way to compare the costs and advantages of speech; rather, the “right” to free expression should take precedence above any assessment of usefulness. As a result, we must respect this privilege even when something offends people’s sensibilities or violates their moral principles. Freedom of expression, as Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. believes, is “not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought of those we hate” (As cited in Soutphommasane, 2006).

Freedom of expression has been justified by a number of related principles concerning autonomy and truth, as well as the appropriate boundaries of state action and authority. It is most likely correct to state that these threads come together to form the doctrine of free expression established by John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty* (1859). He wrote a chapter entitled “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion” that is still considered the canonical statement of a liberal view of free speech nearly a hundred and fifty years after it was written. No discussion of the subject would be complete without mentioning Mill's stipulation that unpopular thoughts should be spoken without restriction:

If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind...there ought to exist the fullest liberty of professing and discussing, as a matter of ethical conviction, any doctrine, however immoral it may be considered that we should have 'absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral or theological.

(Mill, 1859, pg.14)

In Mill's opinion, the key justification for not suppressing an idea is the possibility that we are wrong about the truth. We may be blocking the expression of an opinion that in the future may be proven to be correct if we censor what we perceive as erroneous. Rather than being important only

because it allowed for the discovery of truth, Mill believed that freedom of expression was essential for people to create their own unique personalities as they progressed through life. The individual must rely on his or her own observations, thinking, and judgment in order to arrive at life-altering judgments.

According to liberals advocating free expression, the Millian view argues that any restriction on people's ability to express themselves will undermine their right to be self-governing agents. When governments repress freedom of expression, irrespective of the justification, an individual will unavoidably lose some degree of his or her autonomy. The right to hear his fellow citizens' arguments is forfeited, and he is denied the opportunity to speak either for or against it. Most importantly, he no longer has the ability to exercise sovereign decision-making in determining what to believe and weighing the relative importance of various reasons for action.

The concept of freedom of expression seems relatively boundless in the West. This has reflected in most Western sociopolitical practices. Despite raising some controversy lately, freedom of expression is both a popular demand and flagrant manifestation of Western societies. Yet, this is not the case in the Middle East, where freedom of expression has mostly been met with major cultural conflicts and ambivalence.

### **5.1. Freedom of Speech in the Middle East**

In the Middle East, many countries have strict restrictions on free speech. For example, in Saudi Arabia, citizens are not allowed to share their thoughts on social media or in public without prior approval from the government. ("Saudi Arabia: Freedom on the net 2021 country report," 2021)

The government has also banned anything that goes against Islamic law. Based on this standpoint, the concept of freedom of opinion, in its western perception, is not mentioned in the



*Qur'an* or in the *Sunnah*<sup>64</sup> in the Islamic vision, whether in its explicit and implicit meaning. There are many distinct cultures, faiths, and languages to be found in the Middle East, which makes it unique. Finding common ground for one unified free speech rule can be challenging in light of all of these divergent viewpoints and circumstances. There are numerous limits on freedom of expression in the Middle East.

Many factors play a role in this, including religious and cultural norms, government censorship, and apprehension about possible punishment from the authorities. Among the most pressing issues facing governments in the Middle East is the use of censorship to restrict freedom of expression on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. As a result, many citizens have turned to Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) or other techniques to get around these prohibitions. The first point to make is that freedom of expression is not explicitly guaranteed in any of the constitutions of the countries of the Middle Eastern region.

There are a few exceptions to this rule, but they are rare and infrequent. There are no clear legal protections of free expression in the region due to the absence of a constitutional right to freedom of expression there. There have been numerous limits placed on what people can say or do in public, both inside their own countries and on a global scale as a result of this.

## **5.2. Limitations of Freedom of Speech and Satire**

In contemporary and historical free speech conflicts and debates, the purported confrontation between the “Liberal West” and Islam has been one of the most prominent focal points.

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<sup>64</sup> In Islam, Sunnah are the traditions and practices of the Islamic prophet, Muhammad, that constitute a model for Muslims to follow. The sunnah is what all the Muslims of Muhammad's time evidently saw and followed and passed on to the next generations. (Brown, 1999)

Freedom of speech has two basic principles; the prohibition of hurting others without a valid justification and the fostering of tolerance for others. Any strategies for exercising this privilege must take full account of the fact that they are not harmful or disrespectful. Despite the growing interconnectedness, diversity remains inevitable and multiculturalism is accepted by a democratic society (Cohen-Almagor, 2006). However, Cohen-Almagor (2001) has also argued previously that freedom of expression is a moral obligation. If it causes harm to others, regardless of whether it is only humor or not, any form of speech should include limits. Cohen-Almagor separates them into two sections based on the works of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) and Joel Feinberg's *Offense to Others* (1985). The classifications are physical damage and psychological crime. In the former, he argued, "Any speech that instigates... to cause physical harm to certain people or groups should be restricted" (2001, p. 7). Although his reasoning for the latter is:

when the content and/or manner of a certain speech is/are designed to cause a psychological offence to a certain target group, and the objective circumstances are such that make the target group inescapably exposed to that offence, then the speech in question has to be restricted. (Almagor, 2001, p. 22)

This is to suggest that one can determine the correctness and the wrongness of the action by considering its consequences. Assuming that the morality of the action depends on the consequences that it is likely to create. Since we are supposed to judge before acting, one must consider the possible consequences of one's acts, given the particular circumstances of the case (Mill, 1859, p. 386). There is also legal obligation rather than moral responsibility. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) validate the value of limits on freedom of speech. Article 19 Section 3 (1976) of the ICCPR states that the freedom of expression:

...carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary: (a) for respect of the rights or reputations of others; (b) for the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.

Article 20 Section 1 (1976) disallows all propaganda for war “Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law. 2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.” While Section 2 prohibits any promotion of national, racial or religious hatred, which signifies incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence “Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.” Article 29 of the UDHR (1948) points out that such limitations are essential in respect of rights, the equality of others, moral obligation and public order “So far, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has concentrated on rights that every person has simply by virtue of being born human. Now Article 29 says the corollary of rights is duties. We all have a duty to other people, and we should protect their rights and freedoms.” Even the most progressive democratic countries have rules on limits on freedom of expression that fall into the definition of hate speech and are compatible with international law.

The United States Supreme Court found that provisions of the New York Education Law authorizing a censor to restrict commercial screenings of a motion picture film deemed “sacrilegious” were a restraint on freedom of expression and thus violated the First Amendment<sup>65</sup> Of the American constitution. The United Kingdom eliminated the blasphemy prohibitions in England and Wales in 2008 with the enactment of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act of 2008. Thomas Aikenhead, a twenty-year-old Scotsman, was the last person to be hung for

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<sup>65</sup> The First Amendment guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and the right to petition. It forbids Congress from both promoting one religion over others and also restricting an individual’s religious practices.

blasphemy in 1697. He was tried for questioning the veracity of the Old Testament and the legitimacy of Christ's miracles, stating in conversation that theology was a rhapsody of ill-invented fiction, patched together partly from philosophers' spiritual theories, and partly from poetical narratives and lavish chimeras; that he ridiculed the holy scriptures, naming the Old Testament “Ezra's fables”, an allusion to Aesop's Fables.<sup>66</sup>

According to James Matkin (2015), blasphemy is an offense of no victims. That is to say, unless people believe their God is capable of harming people's feelings, blasphemy laws, prosecutes people merely for offending a term or an idea. Matkin adds that criminal law was created to protect people, it is not supposed to protect ideas or philosophies. Blasphemy laws, he says, have been used to prosecute minorities, infringing on free expression and religious rights. As a result, blasphemy laws are used to violate rather than enforce human rights. Conversely, Hedges (2015) states:

Many of the freedoms and the basis of civil society in much of the globe today depends upon this, and in part owes itself to a legacy of the European Enlightenment. I would stop short, though, of calling freedom of speech an “absolute”...Indeed, as the legal practices of different jurisdictions indicate, to curtail “absolute” freedom is necessary for the good management of civil society while even advocates of free speech – except in hyperbole – do not see it as an absolute (p. 4)

Hedges also assumes that most members of Western communities recognize absolute freedom of expression is not appropriate, such as mocking the Holocaust/ Shoah<sup>67</sup>, which diminishes the pain and death of millions, or making rape jokes, which can cause offence and mental trauma to those who have endured this crime, or even maintain a culture of male superiority and exploitation.

However, there are variations between what is and is not permitted. For example, while Holocaust

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<sup>66</sup> Aesop's Fables, or the Aesopica, is a collection of fables credited to Aesop, a slave and storyteller believed to have lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 564 BCE. (McGovern, 1990)

<sup>67</sup> The genocide of European Jews during World War II. Between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered some six million Jews across German-occupied Europe. (Hilberg, 2003)

denial is permitted in the United States, it is not permitted in Canada or the United Kingdom. Hate speech and incitement to violence are both prohibited. Nonetheless, based on the work of Downs and Cowan (2012), the distinctions between hate speech and other modes of speech are not always explicit or universally accepted. Admittedly, psychological research suggests that people's views of what is appropriate are affected by both their political opinions and their gender.

Considering the boundless reach of absolute freedom of expression whereby people do not have the right not to be offended, "militant atheists" such as Richard Dawkins<sup>68</sup> and Christopher Hitchens<sup>69</sup> wish to assert that religion is the root of the world's ills and the biggest evil confronting humanity, they can then make a compelling argument against any offended religious sensibilities. If people of faith can accuse atheism of causing global issues, aggravating atheists, the latter may respond to that as well. However, the freedom to offend is not absolute; the Holocaust and rape jokes illustrate where this right intersects with offence. Anyone who makes rape jokes in front of a victim of that crime with the goal of deliberately taunting or upsetting them has, according to common sense, exceeded the line of what is appropriate. We may then assume that legal jurisdictions vary, and any personal judgment in this matter bears no more weight than that of any other citizen, this is an issue that warrants extensive public discussion. Hedges (2015) explores the limits of offensive cartoons with regard to freedom of speech, he says:

What do we make of examples like the *Charlie Hebdo* cover(s), and the Jyllens-Post cartoons? In terms of freedom of speech, I have no hesitation in saying that those who did so had the right to publish these. In terms of the right to mock and offend, I again believe that no boundary was crossed in terms of what was done here if considered in abstract.

(p. 3)

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<sup>68</sup> Richard Dawkins is a British evolutionary biologist and author. He is an emeritus fellow of New College, Oxford, and was Professor for Public Understanding of Science in the University of Oxford from 1995 to 2008. An atheist, he is well known for his criticism of creationism and intelligent design.

<sup>69</sup> Christopher Eric Hitchens was a British-American author, journalist, orator and columnist. He wrote, co-wrote, edited or co-edited over 30 books, including five of essays on culture, politics and literature.

He then challenges this perception against legal claims. Hedges says this perception may not reflect legal jurisdiction, and adds that many Western citizens have greatly exaggerated notions of how much freedom of speech exists. Since we do not live in the abstract, rather, we live in the context of the early twenty-first century. In this regard, an argument can be made that these should not have been published, entirely consistent with free speech and without resorting to fear to avoid such ramifications.

Within the post-colonial global environment, those areas classified as Muslim-majority have frequently been the victims of centuries of colonial oppression and continue to suffer the scars. Numerous ongoing hostilities in various regions of the Middle East, to say nothing of elsewhere, for example, in Syria and Iraq, have their origins in part in the sometimes-arbitrary borders and maps left behind by previous colonial masters. Indeed, during the last few centuries, many people in Muslim countries have been oppressed and denigrated by what has been loosely referred to as “the West”. Cultural imperialism must be included in this framework of military, political, and financial colonialism. The European and American colonial projects frequently demeaned and belittled the cultures, traditions, and communities they encountered throughout the world.

It is unquestionably true that private persons are not directly accountable for colonialism in any form today; indeed, they may be champions for its abolition. Nonetheless, we live in a cultural setting in which none of us can be considered fully innocent, and in which we must exist and live within a larger sociocultural structure. After extolling the virtues of the European Enlightenment, one negative result has been an uncontrolled and misplaced emphasis on the individual as personal arbiter and free agent. Popular mythology asserts that people are alone

responsible for their own beliefs, accountable only to themselves, and creators of their ideology and deeds. The ego becomes the primary focus of reasoning, determining, and deliberating, in opposition to a world that may seek to control it. Meanwhile, true autonomy and self-actualization are inherent in individualism and self-determination. This myth, however, has been decisively debunked by contemporary philosophy, feminist theory, and, undoubtedly, some common sense. The notion originate that the illusion of a free-self, the autonomous “I”, that makes its own free choices and decisions originated from the society.

People cannot become aware of any concept until it is transmitted to them through their social upbringing. Any sense of unadulterated personal choice and liberty is erroneous. Humans are shaped in great part by their environment, which includes peer groups, access to knowledge, and the gatekeepers who interpret and process that knowledge for them before they ingest and reason. Thus, families, friends, societies, and the media all mold every single human being. Personal autonomy proponents frequently forget the plain fact that absolute autonomy is unattainable and that people are, at the core, social beings.

This is not to argue that they must adhere to their society's social norms and ideas. Indeed, it is the very value of free speech that enables people to question and discuss these norms and our indoctrination; however, irrespective of how hard they strive, they will never be free of that conditioning. Additionally, as social beings, they are always part of a larger community and so accountable to the virtues that define them as human. Just as hate speech and bigotry are not universally recognized characteristics, people must also live in connection to the larger society. Thus, this initial critique of the argument that free individual agents are not responsible for colonialism or neo-colonialism does not negate the notion that they must labor and act in relation to modern geopolitical and social variables.

People are always told that free speech is the foundation of democracy, civilized society, and all that is good and great about human society, culture, and politics. As a result, free speech stories and arguments have become practically indistinguishable from parodies in recent years, such as when extensively published tenured academics with regular columns in major newspapers represent themselves as mute victims of political correctness and other social injustices. According to Leaker (2020), a wide spectrum of political groups, organizations, institutions, and public figures, including politicians, journalists, and media celebrities, academics, and professional trolls are using free speech as an ideological weapon.

The author goes on to say many of these public personalities have used free speech to legitimize and explain their controversial, attention-seeking conduct and utterances, with great success. In the name of freedom from political correctness and the liberty to offend, some have built successful careers and even a presidency on the use of divisive and racist speech against immigrants. Many free speech arguments, invoking the concept of free expression, tend to rely on speculative or hypothetical predictions about how things might be different if there were no robust free speech legislation. This prohibits examination of the consequences of speech, such as what occurs when hate speech, for example, is given a platform and is legitimized, from being considered.

Provocative maxims that are accepted as absolute truths should be viewed with caution for a variety of reasons. Voltaire's willingness to be killed in the name of defending others' right to free expression, for example, was something the French philosopher never said himself, according to historical records. As E. Beatrice Hall pointed out in a 1906 book on Voltaire's contemporaries, when a concept is pushed to its logical extremes, the entire concept begins to seem ludicrous. She wonders who would be so adamant about losing their own life in order to safeguard the right of



another to express their belief in toxic teaching. No rational liberal would declare himself willing to give his life so that a Nazi might march through a demonstration without being disrupted, as this would be unthinkable.

In other words, freedom of speech is not freedom from repercussions, and it seems everyone is against censorship – except for those few instances where it is absolutely necessary. Filmmaker Håvard Fossum tackles the topic of freedom of speech in *Meet The Censors* (2020) by having Iranian ayatollahs, Indian film censors and a German office charged with countering online hate speech define their work and their social role. The outcome is a witty, thought-provoking, and alarming documentary that looks at censorship and freedom of expression in a remarkably complex way.

From the Kafkaesque social media office in Germany to the military headquarters in South Sudan, to talk with the Iranian Ayatollah and Chinese news editors. The Norwegian filmmaker Håvard Fossum follows the censors' everyday working lives intimately. The film provides a rare glimpse into the manner in which knowledge is regulated, with unprecedented access to a hidden world, from the Communist Party in Beijing to the halls of power in Washington. Hearing the term censorship makes us cringe, but is it a concept that is misunderstood? If the censors have one thing in common, it is that they are all persuaded that they are working for a good cause.

He wonders if people may have misunderstood the censors in *Meet the Censors*: maybe their motives are real. Filmmaker Håvard Fossum wonders if a bit of state censorship is not so bad after all, beginning with a violent neo-Nazi protest in Sweden. The trained anthropologist explores bouquet of infamous regimes to test the idea: he meets some of Iran's most influential clergy and political hardliners; talks with aspiring internet police party members in China, and the Beijing

news editors determine the stories that need to be buried. Havards contrasts East to West when he takes his cameras inside the Federal Ministry of Justice in Germany.

The Secretary of State and his political advisors are planning for a new legislation to take effect, one that is intended to curb hate speech online. Havards shows how the blood-smelling press and perplexed Facebook-users are trying to make them understand the good in the law. Although liberalists warn of "Stasi methods" reminiscent of Communist East Germany's censorship, opponents on the left accuse private corporations of outsourcing work that should be carried out by judicial bodies. Further, in a confidential building in Bonn, the state legal counsel of forty-two psychologists (to help the experts cope with the consequences of looking at potentially upsetting images) try to make sense of a legislative system in which huge headaches are generated by vague definitions such as defamation and awareness of what is satire.

And perhaps more difficult is finding out exactly when they are going to use the power they have been given to fine social media platforms up to 50 million Euros for failing to eliminate hate speech. The concept is being tested even more seriously in the U.S.A. The chilling effect of mass surveillance and chasing down whistleblowers are exposed in an attempt to find out how much freedom of expression is given up to preserve national security and protect the economy. Just as disturbing is discovering how legislative instruments are used to silence climate scientists by politicians closely linked to energy firms. Scholars like Miklós Haraszti, Richard Burt and Robert Darnton argue that censorship is difficult to uphold, and that it may even be seen as an intellectual career.

The documentary concludes that there are real reasons to wish to eliminate polarizing, hateful, or destabilizing talk, and that censors may react similarly to how most people do when they are worried. Although censorship appears unjustifiably severe at times, it has been shown to

be unsuccessful in increasing society's safety and has significantly undermined people's ability to discuss sensitive matters with one another in the majority of circumstances.

### *5.2.1. The Case of Charlie Hebdo*

Freedom of expression has been used as the most important liberal democratic right to protect the West from the barbarians alleged to be waiting at, climbing over, and blowing up, the gates of the Western world. Popular Western thought indicates the failure to preserve free speech would result in the global spread of totalitarian Islamic authority, *Sharia law*, and the extinction of civilization as we know it, according to the prevailing narrative.

There is an abundance of satirical content that ridicules religion in the U.S, and Islam was not exempted from satirists' jokes. Yet, due to the shortage of intense retaliatory actions on the part of those affiliated with Islam in the United States, the right to free expression in satire can be better examined by referring to *Charlie Hebdo* events that took place in France, and the conclusions can be extrapolated to the U.S and the Western World. In this framework, Western satirists and cartoonists' current depictions of the Prophet Muhammad contribute to a narrative of cultural subjugation and might be viewed as a continuation of the colonial enterprise. Demeaning Islam and Muslims in the cause of preserving Western global hegemony demonstrates a lack of regard for others.

The release of *Charlie Hebdo's* Prophet Muhammad cartoons dates back to 2006 when he published a cartoon originally published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllandsposten*. It was reacted with anger by the Muslims who considered it offensive. The cartoons reappeared in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015, when the shooting took place. In 2011, *Charlie Hebdo's* headquarters in Paris was bombed by fire after a cartoon of Prophet Muhammad entitled "Charia Hebdo" was published in

2015. The most horrific disaster occurred on 7 January 2015. Two brothers killed twelve people who worked for *Charlie Hebdo*, including the five cartoonists.

In the wake of the tragedy of January 7, *Charlie Hebdo* describes itself as an irresponsible newspaper. The word "irresponsible" itself could be perceived as a belief in no censorship, despite how controversial the material is because it wants to reveal truth. It means that *Charlie Hebdo* does not want to be held accountable if any people feel insulted. However, those who are opposing these claims is the assumption that *Charlie Hebdo* has crossed the fine line between being guilty of the crime and being barbarous one too often (Jalil 2015).

While the cartoons can be justified as expressions of free speech theory, people's lives are shaped by their political and social environments. The right to offend and the right to free expression are not absolutes. To say that the drawings are permissible but illegitimate in the current context is not inconsistent. The comments and reactions of Pope Francis<sup>70</sup> certainly further this point. As a response to the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, Pope Francis has praised freedom of expression, but has also highlighted its boundaries. According to the Pope, people's faiths must be respected and not ridiculed, according to the pontiff's words. He told reporters that if his assistant cursed his mother, he should be ready for a punch.

A survey conducted by the French weekly newspaper *Le Journal du Dimanche* in 2015 reveals that 42% of French agree that *Charlie Hebdo* should not have released the cartoons, considering that many Muslims considered the illustrations offensive (Linshi, 2015). Others go further by accusing the newspaper of breeding Islamophobia (Gaffey, 2015). France has struggled to reconcile secularism and religion. The 1985 French Constitution, on the one hand, states that it

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<sup>70</sup> Pope Francis is the head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State since 2013.

recognizes all religious values and ensures their peaceful co-existence. On the other hand, on 15 March 2004, France invoked a new law banning any clothing or other apparel indicating religious worship in school. The legislation that prohibits headscarves and burqas in public places was implemented in 2010 (Khan, 2014). The European Court of Human Rights has upheld the decision (ECHR). They say that wearing headscarves in public areas could undermine social cohesion (Ware, 2014). It is the deterioration of multiculturalism, rather than promoting peaceful coexistence, that violates human rights and supports prejudices, thus endangering democracy.

Like all media outlets, *Charlie Hebdo*, with its satire, has the ability to impact readers. Thus, whatever the material is, it can influence the views of people about the world. It was not widely read prior to the attack and only about 60,000 copies were circulated. Nevertheless, it did set an unparalleled record of selling 5 million copies after the attack (Chazan, 2015). This demonstrates how strong their effect on individuals is. In an interview with *Time Magazine*, *Charlie Hebdo's* publisher, Gerard Biard, said that the newspaper advocates religious freedom, but God should be a private figure and never be political, in other words, it seeks to kill religious symbolism in the public domain (Linshi, 2015).

Yet, to grasp the plight of Muslims, the publication of the Prophet Muhammad by *Charlie Hebdo* should not be entitled to the security of freedom of speech and must therefore be restricted. It is not possible to define the motive as a hate speech. While, according to the Muslim majority, the cartoons are outrageous, it is the circumstances under which Muslims have been in France for so long and the position that makes this newspaper irreverent. Despair and persistent injustice make these individuals more inclined to violence and, when it comes to crime, more sensitive than normal individuals. *Charlie Hebdo* seems to give little attention to the fact that there are oppressed

Muslims in France, and the possibility that the stereotype and its substance and manner appear to maintain discrimination thus causing Muslims more psychological harm.

Further, in monumental sculpture, the extremely rare depictions of Prophet Muhammad are particularly likely to be offensive to Muslims, as the statue is the classical type of idols, and the foundation of Islamic prohibitions is fear of any hint of idolatry. On any subject, Islamic art has almost always avoided sculptures. Another statue of the Prophet Muhammad was taken from a courthouse in New York City in 1955 after the ambassadors of Indonesia, Pakistan, and Egypt insisted that it be relocated. For Muslims, the statue is a classical sort of idol, and the cornerstone of Islamic prohibitions is a fear that any hint of idolatry has been eradicated.

Sculptures have nearly always been avoided in Islamic art, regardless of the subject matter (Khan, 2014). The German news magazine *Der Spiegel* published a photo of the “Moral Apostles”, Prophet Muhammad, Prophet Jesus, Confucius, and Immanuel Kant. The magazine faced demonstrations, petitions and threats in the following weeks against the release of the portrait of the Prophet Muhammad on a T.V. show, a Turkish T.V. channel, transmitted the contact information of the editor who received regular calls (“*Spiegel*”, 2000). In 2002, Italian police confirmed that a group of people had been disrupted while trying to ruin a church in Bologna containing a fresco from the 15th century depicting a portrait of the Prophet Muhammad. (As cited in Khan, 2014)

In the 2001 *South Park* “Super Best Friends” episode, Prophet Muhammad appeared, yet his character was later deleted from the 2006 “Cartoon Wars” episode and the 2010 “200” and “201” episodes due to scandals in the European newspaper about Prophet Muhammad cartoons. Prophet Muhammad was portrayed twice in a cartoon in 2005 in an episode of *30 Days* (2008) with Morgan Spurlock, titled “Muslims and America,” describing the history of the Islamic faith,

yet there has been no uproar about this. In the same year, the Danish Jyllands-Posten newspaper released a series of editorial cartoons, several of which portrayed the Prophet Muhammad. The newspaper later released a series of editorial cartoons, many of which portrayed Prophet Muhammad.

Via mass demonstrations and by spreading awareness of the release of the cartoons, Danish Muslim organizations sparked an uproar in late 2005 and early 2006. It was not necessarily the representation of Prophet Muhammad that was offensive, according to John Woods, Islamic history professor at the University of Chicago, but the suggestion that Prophet Muhammad was somehow a terrorist supporter (as cited in Khan, 2014). It also ignores the propensity to receive more physical abuse from these persons, not just being spit on by those who are against Muslims and immigrants while they find more reason to hate them. Freedom of speech comes with moral and legal obligation (Folia); they should not use satire as a shield to back away from the impact of their behavior whenever and wherever satirists exercise their right to expression, notably if they get a monetary advantage from it.

Muslims are most likely the group of people who are targeted the most frequently and most aggressively by free speech activists and radicals. In the context of Islam and Muslims, free speech is frequently invoked, from Geert Wilders to Tommy Robinson, from New Atheists to certain liberal feminists, from the mainstream media to conspiracy theory websites, and even from Western government officials. It is particularly used as a means of promoting the very liberal values that are simultaneously denied to Muslims (Leaker, 2020).

The Racialization of "Others" is central to liberalism's self-conception, and Islamophobic discourses that depict Muslims as members of an ideologically primitive horde contribute to the creation and reinforcement of the liberal idea that a rational Western subject is capable of thinking,

choosing, and speaking freely. It is via the invocation of free speech in regard to Islam that Wendy Brown describes a “civilizational discourse”. This concept has been used as a means of distinguishing between societies that are considered civilized and those that are considered uncivilized or barbaric. Perhaps nowhere was this more evident than in the response to the *Charlie Hebdo* shooting, which saw the use and invocation of free speech as a civilizational discourse. Several media outlets interpreted the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* as an attack on freedom of expression. This was an interpretation or framing that should be understood as an iteration of George W. Bush's declaration in his address to the nation in 2001 that 9/11 was an “attack on freedom itself” by “enemies of freedom” who “hate our freedoms, our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other”.

While Islam is a significant religious body on a global scale, in France and many other countries of the Western world, it is a minority religion, the religion of what is frequently an oppressed and subjugated minority (Hedges, 2015). Numerous Muslims are members of social and ethnic groups that are disadvantaged socially due to a lack of education, opportunity, and other factors (Hedges, 2015). The fact that the perpetrators of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks were slum dwellers, and members of France's impoverished underclass raised a serious question of whether this was a religious or a social crime. For Algerian Muslims living in France, the cartoons would have been another evidence of the ongoing denigration of their culture, race, religion, and values. The right to mock the powerful does not imply the right to denigrate and stereotype members in society's lower levels.

The cartoons may maintain a culture and attitude of cultural colonialism, contributing to both the notion that this is acceptable and, more crucially, the perception that this ongoing colonialism is occurring among many groups and locations; as a result, people must be aware of



how their words, images, and ideas are received and experienced by others. Additionally, one of the justifications for free speech is frequently a defense of individual autonomy and freedom of expression. The fact that the caricature represents one community, not a critique of the powerful cannot be disregarded.

## **6. Conclusion**

In the last two decades, the development of audiovisual satirical media has played a significant role in drawing large audiences from all over the world. Many studies show that alternative media outlets are more credible and influential than conventional ones; the latter have attracted enormous masses of different age groups to politics, both raising awareness and inspiring disillusionment in political structures and conventional news media, particularly with the latter's limited emphasis on significant events. There has been a convergence of viewer preferences, changes in programming methods, and the gradual expansion of satiric and parodic television across various media.

Because it matters, satire must be protected; however, when the substance of the speech, the manner in which the speech is practiced, the intention of the speaker, and the circumstances where it takes place cause physical or psychological damage to others. It should not be allowed exist with impunity. Satire has the ability to affect people, hence satirists must be held liable. Satire continues to be one of the vital tools of free expression, but limitations must be set such that it is not exploited or used as a shield for bigotry and racial hate.

## **Chapter Four: Implications of Western Political Satire in the Middle East**

## **1. Introduction**

Satire remained extremely controversial even with its immense popularity and appeal. As free speech and disobedience gained considerable momentum, sensitive religious and cultural matters seem to be getting closer to being central targets for satire. Satirical talk shows on Arabic television became immensely popular during the first and second decades of the twenty first century, where public figures, government leaders, and conservative social norms were made fun of to uncover systemic corruption. Many satirical TV shows on TV became political in nature, mocking various members of the ruling class through various forms. These broadcasts also satirize cultural standards of society by showing how people may remain socially active even in the face of obstacles such as societal restrictions for women.

## **2. General Shortcomings of Satire**

Satire requires two conditions to achieve its full potential. If a vital argument, prophecy, satire, or editorial speaks to a dual audience, it also speaks with two efficacy criteria; the rhetorical and the historical. A friend of the wife, who laughs at the insults aimed at the husband of her friend, has no way of knowing how effective the chastisement of her friend would be, and what would the consequence of the insult in reality or in history be. She laughs because she loves the vocabulary capacity of the censorship and how rhetorically it is made (Jemieli, 2011).

Thus, effectiveness can be both rhetorical and historical. For example, the Hebrew prophets, measured by the latter, had been monumental failures. Not a single disaster was avoided which they threatened (Jemieli, 2011). Although, the same can be said for most satire's historical effectiveness. Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729) has not softened Irish poverty. It should be regarded as a disappointment if the potato famine in Ireland a century later is any

indication. The concluding note from Alexander Pope to *Dialog II* (1738) “Ridicule was become as unsafe as it was ineffectual.”, attempts to abandon satire because it is useless.

The ancient readers of satirical works may have known rhetorical techniques, but there is little certainty if that obvious artificiality affected the understanding of the aims of satire. Anderson's (1982) moral critique begins to appear disingenuous when it is apparent that a satirist, an observation that forms a refrain in his powerful essays on the satirical persona, appropriates rhetorical and poetic techniques. Nevertheless, the rhetorical element of satire may sometimes seem to overshadow its moral content, making itself a parody of moralistic discourse. However, rhetoric is just a synchronization mechanism of a complex output. Since person-based interpretations opened up Roman satire to a deeper literature study (Keane, 2011). New theoretical methods have been developed by academics to the content of satirical *diatribes* and their cultural entanglements, and thus to satirical theory itself. (Keane)

In addition, the public sphere may not be the only context in which satire has political ramifications. It also plays an important part in the manner in which daily life cultivates democracy and spiritual values (Das, 2012, Klumbytè, 2014, O'Neill 2010, Zigon, 2010) and leads to “everyday forms of resistance” beyond the *Public Sphere* and offstage (Goldstein 2013, p. 8; Ortner 1995). The results of everyday jokes are no less marked by ambiguity than those of political satire closely connected to the media sphere.

They convey strong political criticism and question what is now normalized and mandatory (Krefting 2014, p. 2), but they may also normalize exclusionary, biased political views and ideologies (Davies 1990, Hill 2008, Kuipers & Maniouchka 2001). The multisided critique of humor, nuanced placement, and inconsistent effects are also seen as hindering the political importance of humor. Researchers also note that political humor is ready to attack everything,

instills a cynical superiority complex, and that it does not constitute any sort of substantive political discourse. (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006)

It is also generally known that satire is a strong tool in the hands of the marginalized in oppressive regimes and an instrument that is deeply feared by the rulers of those systems (Berger 1996; Combs & Nimmo 1996; Freedman 2012; Hasner 1952; Haugerud et al. 2012, p. 169, 2013a; Kowsar 2012). However, it has never been the weapon of the weak solely (Scott 1985) and should not be minimized to the subversive and resistive (Gal 1995; Mbembe 1992). Humor is often used by political regimes as an important way of manipulating people (La Bo'etie 1975, Oushakine 2012), and it is also difficult in practice to differentiate between rebellious and disciplinary forms of humor. (Billig 2005, p. 7).

Mediatized political commentary occurs inside the media industry in the form of late-night shows, TV dramas, and news satire blogs and is heavily reliant on mainstream media regimes (which it criticizes). Gray et al (2009) stress the need to market satire and parody; they are, for many, concurrently a form of political advocacy and a form of labor marked by labor relations comparable to those of any other modern private sector. Such relationships then become the focus of the self-mocking criticism of humorists. A national/ethnic/cultural approach to humor and its political implications has also been used in research on the topic (Fry, 1976); humor is considered as playing an essential role in certain ethnic groups, considering their histories, as being more vulnerable to the use of humor and parody.

Anthropological studies that have demonstrated the ability of political satire to provoke people to reconsider political cultures and their moral foundations suffer from a tendency to romanticize and homogenize those who laugh and fail to take the complexities of the cultures in question into account. The generalization of positive opinions by researchers on cultures that resist

or condemn by humor fits into the significant and refreshing current of “anthropologies of the good” (Ortner 2016, p. 58). However, these generalizations also ignore questions of power and injustice (Haugerud, 2013).

Elsewhere, on the basis of fostering cynicism and inciting apathy in its audiences, satirical fake news was dismissed; more precisely, its agents were accused of appropriating the genre in the sole interest of generating revenue. Hart and Hartelius (2007) claim in a particularly inflammatory article that Jon Stewart, the longtime host of *The Daily Show* “makes cynicism attractive [... and] profitable.” As they state:

[Stewart] saps his audience’s sense of political possibility even as he helps AT&T sell its wares. Stewart urges them to steer clear of conventional politics and to do so while steering a Nissan. Mr. Stewart is especially attractive to young people, so his website offers them portable cynicism in the form of CDs, DVDs, clothes, books, and collectibles. Stewart knows there’s money to be made in cynicism. (p. 263)

Satire is frequently portrayed and/or interpreted as a destructive force. A cursory examination of the adjectives and words used to define satire will provide a clearer understanding of how its destructive powers are made explicit. Elliott's (1961) concise list of the most regularly used phrases is instructive; “satire, we say, may be cutting, blistering, biting, killing, stinging, stabbing, scorching, searing, burning, withering, flaying, annihilating; satires are sharp, barbed, poisonous, malignant, deadly, vitriolic, and so on”. (p. 28)

One of the most intriguing parts of understanding satire as both constructive and destructive forms of speech is the way satirists invoke one objective while carrying out another. For example, satirists from the late sixteenth to the late eighteenth centuries claimed that the goal of satire was high-minded and usually socially desirable intellectual and moral reform, but they were also known to take part in something rather distinct (Connery and Combe, 1995). Connery and Combe further argue that the satirists of the time were brutal, even violent, in their attacks on people,

things, or institutions that irritated them. They claim that satirists excel at demolition projects, implying that even the most venomous critique may and does spread under the guise of moral, social, political, and intellectual reform. However, in most cases, satire that takes the form of a specific attack, is essentially independent of moral intent, and continues to develop its own values (Knight, 2004).

Since all satire focuses on its own demolition projects and/or follows its own internal logic or system of values, one must consider what such acts and viewpoints say about its broader implications. The notion that destructive satire might be understood to bring forth opposing aims, demonstrating itself to be both conservative and revolutionary, is central to this subject. According to Griffin (2015), there is no difference between conservative and revolutionary satire in that both genres censure, attack, and ridicule, while demonstrating their intellect, humorously investigate a matter, stir or confront complacency.

Griffin's stance could help to show all of the commonalities between various forms of satirical discourse (attack, wit, play, provocation), but it is worth mentioning that the spirit of invective that informs much contemporary satire can also encourage less-than-civil forms of discourse. These are described in David Denby's (2009) book *Snark*, where he describes them as “the bad kind of invective – low, teasing, snide, condescending, knowing” (p.1) which appear at the forefront of internet conversation. Denby sees these debates as detrimental kinds of communication that have the potential to alter the tone of public dialogue. Recognizing satire's ability to both praise and question opposing ideas through condemnation, ridicule, and invective, it is beneficial to discuss its constructive qualities.

The tension between destructive and constructive satire is eloquently articulated by Paul Lewis in (2006) when he reflects on the divisive role humor plays in the articulation of American political discourse:

Humor can help us cope with problems or deny them, inform or misinform, express our most living and most hateful feelings, embrace and attack, draw us to other people who share our values or fallaciously convince us that they do when they don't. Beyond this, a joke can highlight a point or blow smoke on it, call attention to a problem or cover it up. Especially at times when what we're joking about is important, the good news about humor (that it is absorbing, delightful, relaxing, and dismissive) is frequently also the bad news. (p. 7-8)

Taking on this dichotomy head on, Lewis contends that both humor and satire yield surprising, and sometimes contradictory effects. Satire invites a certain amount of disorder and unrest. As Kernan (1965) notes, satire advances toward the production of chaos, mobs, on all dimensions and in all facets of life. Satire causes disorder, provokes enmity, and incites conflict while simultaneously stimulating and shutting down public and private discourses, all the while making apparent Kernan's notion of satire as a messy form of cultural practice. Despite its intricacy, satire remains a useful cultural practice that confronts the dominant, naturalized, common sense beliefs that saturate contemporary culture; discourses of privilege that often go unchecked. In a 1946 article for *Life* magazine, the curmudgeonly trenchant Evelyn Waugh (1983) stated,

Satire is a matter of period. It flourishes in a stable society and presupposes homogeneous moral standards—the early Roman Empire and eighteenth-century Europe. It is aimed at inconsistency and hypocrisy. It exposes polite cruelty and folly by exposing them. It seeks to produce shame. All this has no place in the Century of the Common Man where vice no longer pays lip service to virtue. The artist's only service to the disintegrated society of today is to create little independent systems of order of his own. (p. 304)

Satire does not only require a stable set of ideals against which to measure behavior, it also necessitates engagement; both the satirist and the audience must believe that things might change. If this is not the case, satire becomes self-referential, undermining faith in any form of endeavor other than critique.



The postmodern world is shallow, and television serves as a mediator between us and reality. Television programs self-referentially quote other television programs' products, weakening the seriousness of meaning in contemporary society and reducing everything to mere pastiche. Television shows such as *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* satirize the blending of the real and the virtual, the political and the parodic, but they do so within the mediated space of television, undermining the seriousness of their critique, as all pastiche does.

If an audience finds the satire amusing, it can only become another mediated gesture that can be quoted and referenced itself. While the mainstream media pays close attention to Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart's "fake" news, and politicians constantly ask to appear on their shows, this makes for fantastically amusing comedy, it devalues both the politicians and the satire, rendering all into one giant meta-joke. Colbert mocks the values of those who believe that they have true agency and autonomy if they are consumers and products of commercial television. He began his debut show by making a direct appeal to the audience:

This show is not about me. No, this program is dedicated to you, the heroes. And who are the heroes? The people who watch this show, average hard-working Americans. You're not the elites. You're not the country club crowd. I know for a fact my country club would never let you in. You're the folks who say something has to be done. And you're doing something. You're watching TV.  
(Colbert Report, episode 1).

If this were truly successful social and political satire, viewers would have to switch off their television sets. This highlights the underlying difficulty of televised social and political comedy. It is the best satire that exposes the mediated reality of television itself and its manipulation of a consumer audience that mixes passive consumption with agency and action. Most political satire on TV amusingly "safeguards the current social relations by the 'fuzzying' of politics . . . its engagement is directed at legitimizing the interests of big business and the strategies of nonengagement" (Wilkie, 2002, p. 606).

A show like *Crossfire* (1982 -2005) is Stewart's favorite form of *infoganda*<sup>71</sup> because it is participating in techniques of non-engagement that anesthetize viewers and substitute spectacle for critical inquiry. On that broadcast, he appears to have realized that satire cannot alter anything, and while he stays funny, he abandons his cynical stance to appeal with Tucker Carlson and Paul Begala, hosts of *Crossfire*, to be responsible journalists. *Crossfire* is a departure from Stewart's daily satire, in which he plainly and without irony condemns the media for abandoning their responsibility.

What is striking is that Stewart abandons humor to strongly make his point about journalists practicing “theater” instead of trying to deliver reasoned, rational analysis of issues that have genuine effects for millions of people. Tucker Carlson was dismissed from *CNN* shortly after Stewart appeared on *Crossfire*, and *Crossfire* itself was canceled. According to the *New York Times*, *CNN* President Jonathan Klein directly referred to Jon Stewart's criticism of the show; he agreed that the political rant are “hurting America,” and added “I agree whole-heartedly with Jon Stewart’s overall premise” (As cited in Fisher, 2005).

The fact that Stewart's non-ironic critique had such an impact may be an indication of the satiric mode's ambivalence and the limits of its usefulness. According to Freud (1990) “We are not in a position to distinguish by our feeling what part of the pleasure arises from the sources of their technique and what part from those of their purpose. Thus, strictly speaking, we do not know what we are laughing at” (p. 121). It may be difficult for a satirist to harness the power of laughter if the audience is not always aware of what they are laughing at.

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<sup>71</sup> Infoganda is a term describing dramatic or literary work that contains both elements of an infomercial and propaganda. (Nunberg, 2010)

Humor, according to Sigmund Freud (1990), is a respite from the rigors of logic because it is an openness to alternative interpretations of meaning and value. As an attack on vice that uses comedic tactics, satire must be ambivalent since it enjoys both humor and the moral conviction that comes with societal critique. Its effectiveness as a catalyst for quick change is therefore uncertain; nonetheless, its ambivalence may prove to be its most valuable quality (Colletta, 2006).

In a world when moral certainty is lethal, citizens must be more consciously and critically engaged in order to protect themselves and their communities. As a result, their primary source of information is a medium in which topics are simplified and sold as a product in a battle for ratings. By employing irony, satire can challenge its audience in unexpected ways since it distorts their understanding of the world around them.

### **3. Western Satire in the Middle East**

Academics gave the political joke in Egypt an advanced place in psychological operations over rumors and some other means, considering that the joke in a country like Egypt travels at lightning speed and the sharper and wittier it is the vaster area it covers. It sneaks laughing into every house and office stopping at no barrier, it is even heard by the governor the subject of "ridicule"; where he greets it with genuine laughter or pretends to do so, and he cannot ban it publicly. The political joke is always anonymous; no one knows who launched it. Although the fingers always point at the opponent behind it and who has an agenda in spreading it.

The political circumstance is not limited to political humor but goes beyond to literature through the satirical political theater, humorous poetry and harsh political caricature, which often expresses a particular reality. Writing on the subject of the political situation in the Arab East is not an easy task. Finding an Arab ruler who becomes the subject of humor or criticism and accepts this joke no matter how hard it is, is indeed a rare case. Former Egyptian president Gamal Abdel

Nasser confirmed in the early 1960s in a speech at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo that a specialized team was working on producing and disseminating political jokes that were hostile to him and his regime and broadcasting them among the public

The Arabs did not know political joke in the familiar sense of the word in the era of *Jahiliyyah* or in the time of the *Caliphates*. However, it began to appear in some form or another since the time of the Umayyads and reached an apparent extent in the time of the Abbasids, especially during the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid (786–809). Juha's <sup>72</sup> anecdotes, even if he was a fictional character, are not devoid of criticism of the ruler, or his style of ruling. There are many anecdotes that were narrated about the Caliph Harun Al-Rasheed and his close friend and poet, Abu Nawas, which shows the patience of the Caliph in front of the stinging jokes of the Abbasid poet. This situation is more common in the world of politics, where a nation is more likely borrow humor from another nation or intends to transfer it from one occasion to another. Documenting it is an almost impossible task, it must be noted that many political jokes came from the West and that the Arabs adapted them in the thirties and forties from Western Europe. While they took a significant amount of Eastern European satire during the seventies and eighties, this reflects the Arab region's distaste for the socialist policies that were imported during that period.

There is a great wealth of humorous literature in the history of the Arabs, and the Arab literary heritage is full of books of anecdotes, from the *Anecdotes of Doctors* to the *Anecdotes of Fols*, as well as the *Anecdotes of Judges* and others. However, with the abundance of humorous literature, only a handful is political in nature; among a hundred social or literary jokes, one can only find a few of them venturing into the field of politics. Considering the authoritarian nature of the Middle Ages' rulers, the anecdotes and ridicule of the princes in the era of the Islamic *Caliphate*

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<sup>72</sup> Juha, the “wise fool” of Arabic folklore, offers a playful escape from reality, while also communicating societal values. Juha is well known and beloved throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

were not at the level of boldness reached in modern time. The reported proportions of jokes told by the mad men and simple people, who do not realize the consequences of the slip of their tongues, made these princes and rulers dismiss punishing them. There has been a lot of inference and distortion or what some call modernization, and these anecdotes abounded in the last phase of the Ottoman Empire because of the corruption witnessed at the time in the Middle East.

People whispered jokes that were critical of the Sultans in coffee shops and different meeting areas. The jokes were not told by multiple “heroes” as they are today, instead, only *Juha* was the hero of most of these tales. It is noteworthy that the Sultan, the Caliph in the Middle Ages, was replaced by the King in the days of the Ottomans.

#### **4. Corrective or Destructive Effect of Political Satire**

Many researchers in this field agree that political humor (critical political humor) has a corrective effect as it unites public opinion towards an issue and thus provokes positive reactions. The ruler would notice follies in his performance, which the advisers dare not mention to him.

In this regard, one of Egypt's ambassadors in France revealed the keenness of president Gamal Abdel Nasser, and then President Sadat, to hear the latest jokes told about them personally, their ministers, or their regimes. In essence, the political joke is actually a form of complaint that was put in a funny manner allowing it to reach the governor's ear at record speed. The Lebanese artist's Shoshwa theater, for example, was a reason to repair more than one road and to fix hundreds of holes, and *Masrah Assaa Al Achira* (10 o'clock theater) that started in Lebanon in 1987, does not miss the opportunity to criticize any politician. Further examples include *Wassim Tabbara Theater* and the Syrian artist Darid Laham and others, which played a major role in alerting their respective governments' policies on various sociopolitical issues that caused much misery to citizens and political theater.

Despite the positive impact of the political circumstance on correcting the courses of government, it should not be exaggerated as a powerful or decisive weapon in the face of injustice and tyranny. People do not make jokes on their rulers to kill them or overthrow them, but to relieve their suppression as a first end, and to send soft signals to sullen rulers. The political situation is generated by a stressful situation that makes people want to escape from reality into the stress-relieving realm of jokes. Yet, it must be noted this process would not come to existence without at least a minimum of freedom that would trigger the political situation in some form. The joke indeed has an unknown source, yet it is true that after a few days of its ushering, it reaches the ears of millions.

In the Middle East, satirical literature had an important role in the field of reform and correcting the distortion of power, highlighting the corruption of the administration by showing the rulers' mistakes and failures, and shaking the public's confidence in him and his tools. The rulers have known throughout the ages that their hegemony which was their first deterrent weapon against those who dare oppose them, was at the same time, the first target of their opponents. Since their primary concern was to maintain this hegemony at all costs, even if they adopted the harshest methods of violence, would ironically increase people's desire to be exposed to this hegemony, rendering the whole matter into a vicious circle.

It is true that some criticism is destructive and fatal especially when humor is a method of personal insult and slander and when it tarnishes people's reputations, but the response of the masses to this type of criticism has magnified its stature. Although it was never up to the expectations of its progenitors and satirical political literature that took many forms and varied methods encompassing poetry, essay, theater, song... etc, it has solely expressed the opinions of its creators who saw themselves expressing people's opinions either directly through explicit

exposition and sarcasm, or as puns by ironic hinting, which does not make people laugh at any time, but is more bitter, richer, and more enduring; this is the finest form of satire. This is what occurred in the satirical press; some of them used poetry, both popular and classical, and there is a type of satire that comes in the form of a tale or the indirect novel and leaves the mission of deducing the meaning to the people.

In Lebanon, Egypt, and some Arab countries, the theatre was an important source of expression. The plays of a sharply critical nature were performed in front of a large audience. Among them is the comedy theater, which is based on a real-life story, as in the plays of Darid Lahham and the Shusho and Hassan Aladdin. These theatres have relied on imitating political leaders in form, voice, and expression in an apparent caricature form.

Although humor and laughter have innumerable benefits, exaggerating them is evidence of bad taste, and a refrain from the seriousness required to build society and humanity. Humor cannot replace seriousness and vice versa. As the Arab idiom goes “لكل مقام مقال” (Every context has its proper discourse), meaning both satire and seriousness should be used in their proper contexts. In Aristotle’s *Mediating Theory*, seems to offer a suitable moderation for the clash between seriousness and humor, he considers a humorous person as one who does not exaggerate in his joking. Further, al-Jahiz, a pioneer of Arab satirical writing that should not be overlooked even though it was not political, authored *Al-Boukhalaa* (The Misers) that came to be known as one of the finest works in satirical literature, which affects a large segment of people living anywhere and all the time. In one of the most eloquent segments of the book, he wrote, someone was asked “Who is the bravest man in the world?” One of the cheap people replied, “He is the one who hears the teeth of others biting his food and his bitterness does not explode”.

## **5. Post 9/11 Satire in the Middle East**

For a long time, Arab countries have been consumers of Western goods, whether material or ideological, pursuing the same pattern by creating talk shows that were nearly identical to their Western counterparts (*The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*), the most prominent of which were *Joe Show* (2013-present) and *El Bernameg* (*The Program*, 2011-2014).

During the Arab Spring, Bassem Youssef and many other burgeoning Arab satirists gained peak traction and subjected Arab governments to ruthless mockery and criticism for accusations of corruption and authoritarianism. Stewart points out that global resonance was found in *The Daily Show*, showing that even American news parody could find viewers in countries such as Somalia or Iran that are obviously non-democratic and highly conservative.

However, only scant literature discusses the downsides of Western-style audiovisual satire blindly adapting, where democratic ideals such as freedom of expression and secularity are in line with the acutely subversive satirical discourse. (Baym and Jones, 2012)

### **5.1. Audio-visual Satire in Egypt**

Satire was the only outlet for the Arab society in the face of a bitter reality and its contradictions, especially with the failure of Arab rulers to solve the issues of the Arab citizen. It was the result of crises and the prevailing contradictions and paradoxes.

The connection of Egyptian society to satire is so ancient that some historians date it back to the ancient Pharaonic writings that appeared in 1600 BC, which were making fun of enemies and portraying them on walls of temples in the form of mice (Mour, 2015). Since then, satire has been used for stinging criticism by the peoples to their autocrats in many forms ranging from humor, T.V. and Radio programs, all sorts of publications, songs, theatre and press writings



consisting of satirical articles as well as satirical caricatures that played an important role in building Egyptian society and guiding the Egyptian public opinion (Al Labban).

In a study conducted by the Regional Center for Strategic Studies (As cited in Mour, 2015), the researchers stated that there are several factors that led to the spread of political satire in Egypt, the most important of which are:

### ***5.1.1. Revolutionary Mood***

Revolutions are a fertile environment for the spread of political satire in general, especially if the revolution is seeking change peacefully. Perhaps the fact that the January 25 revolution<sup>73</sup> was described as “The laughing revolution” is linked in one respect to its peacefulness and spontaneity, especially with The increase of satirical slogans in different fields, and the similarly increased satirical slogans during the June 30 revolution<sup>74</sup>. There is no doubt that this political satire, as deep as it was, represented an expression of an immense desire of people to achieve their primary goal of overthrowing the existing regime. (Al Mour, 2015)

### ***5.1.2. The Nature of the Egyptian Character***

Egyptians have become famous throughout history by making jokes in the most dire times, with the aim of addressing the plights of reality, or to exert pressure on the ruling authority to achieve the desired change. Whenever these negative aspects of reality are ignored, satire is back to be more stinging than ever. Egyptian satire has reflected part of this character by presenting satirical remedies for political issues. Some examples of such include *Afarit Masr Aljadia* (Egypt's

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<sup>73</sup> The 2011 Egyptian revolution, also known as the 25 January revolution began on 25 January 2011 and spread across Egypt. The date was set by various youth groups to coincide with the annual Egyptian "Police holiday" as a statement against increasing police brutality during the last few years of Hosni Mubarak's presidency. (Teijgeler, 2013)

<sup>74</sup> The 30 June protests occurred in Egypt on 30 June 2013, marking the one-year anniversary of Mohamed Morsi's inauguration as president. The events ended with the 2013 Egyptian coup d'état after mass protests across Egypt demanding the immediate resignation of the president. (El-Ghobashy, 2011).

New Goblins) (1967), *Takharif* ( Misrepresentations) (1988), and *Al Zaim* (The Leader) (1993), these were all bold plays that criticized the dictatorial nature of the government.

### ***5.1.3. The Proliferation of Modern Media and Social Networking Sites***

This is one of the most important reasons that enabled young people and broad sectors of society to express their opinions sarcastically, especially with the failure of political parties in Egyptian society in terms of giving the youth a space free expression. (Al Mour, 2015)

The political developments in Egypt between 2011 and 2015 have seen the country change significantly, and throughout this time, there have been multiple shifts in power. When the citizens of Egypt, frustrated with rising crime levels, the declining economy, and increasing food shortages, gathered to demand an end to Mubarak's dictatorship, they chose to call out to the nation to rise up on January 25, 2011. The revolution did not stop until Mubarak resigned on February 11, 2011. Once the military assumed control, they remained in power until the election of a new president. On June 30, President Mohamed Morsi<sup>75</sup> took over as the head of the republic. According to media reports, media professionals, analysts, and politicians, an astonishingly large proportion of the Egyptian people were disappointed with the rule of Mohamed Morsi (Al Mour, 2015), which was characterized by a single party's dominance, that used the new constitution to manipulate the populace, and employed reactionary and sectarian ideas. The protest began on June 30, 2013, and lasted until July 3, 2013, when the Egyptian military forces refused to enforce President Morsi's authority. Media's influence on the political structure was clear; due to the events that transpired in Egypt before and after the revolution of January 25, 2011, there have been numerous satirical political programs that have attempted to address and analyze political and social issues in a

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<sup>75</sup> He was an Egyptian politician and engineer who served as the fifth president of Egypt, from 30 June 2012 to 3 July 2013

sarcastic manner, and the political content of these programs differs from that of other conventional programs, as these political programs played an important role in influencing public opinion.

Certainly, the prime examples of satirical Middle Eastern shows that assume the form of Western-style news parodies take place in Egypt, of which Bassem Youssef's *Al-Bernameg* is by far the most eloquent. Bassem Youssef was a cardiac surgeon who stepped into *Tahrir Square* with his video camera during the Egyptian insurrection of 2011, before attracting international attention and receiving the epithet "The Egyptian Jon Stuart." Youssef also broadcasted a Youtube show called *B+* (2011), which received 5 million hits and widespread popularity among the Egyptian and global audiences. The success of Youssef increased exponentially with his TV show *Al-Bernameg*, a satirical news spoof that bears an incredible resemblance to Jon Stuart's *The Daily Show* in both props and content, attracting Youssef about 40 million viewers, over a third of the population of Egypt, a figure that could be multiplied considering worldwide viewership (Hall, 2019).

Both Jon Stuart and Bassem Youssef attended each other's shows in a gesture of mutual appreciation and celebration of their huge success, with Youssef appearing twice on *The Daily Show*, while Stewart attended Youssef's show in May 2013. Stuart also supported Youssef on his show following his indictment for insulting President Morsi and Islam (Gordon, 2016). As he won the International Press Freedom Prize, Youssef's achievements were met with prestigious awards, and he was nominated by *Time* magazine among the 100 most influential people in 2013.

Egypt seemed to have opened a new chapter of democratic life with the rise of Mohammed Morsi, where satire would flourish in compliance with the newly gained freedoms. Yet, soon after the establishment of Morsi's government, due to the immense ethnic and religious diversity in the country, numerous multidimensional confusions began to emerge rapidly, eventually leading to

inevitable clashes. Morsi's reaction to Youssef's unrestricted criticism, which intensified with each episode, is the most interesting of which, appearing as if Youssef was taunting the limits of his trade. Freedman (2008) foresees the ominous potential of satirizing people in power when he says, "Power breeds corruption. It also invites ridicule. The ridicule often provokes retaliation from the powerful (p.1). The political orientation of Youssef is undeniably secular (Gordon 37), and having a country leader relying on faith for legislature and potential constitutional amendments will essentially represent an appetizing subject for satire. Without any reservation, in a live show presented by *Enigma* magazine in 2016, entitled *An Evening With Bassem Youssef*, Youssef said "you can't speak about politics, so I started to speak about God". The tactics of Youssef to achieve such an end consisted of accusing the demonstrators of being outsiders, state enemies, spies, Zionists, and sexually motivated, and continuing to say "...this is an indirect license to kill. It is fine to kill them; they are disposable... because they are infidels, because they are against the country, because they are against Islam". This is not to suggest that Youssef is directly responsible for sparking the uprisings against the new government, but he definitely spoke against it and supported the return of people to *Tahrir* Square, which directly led to the involvement of the army. (Kalil, 2016).

Youssef seems to have come to the conclusion that while satire seeks to inform people of the very repulsive political features, some sort of political activism is not encouraged (Hall, June 19 , 2019). He is saddened by the fact that the most popular result of his work was complacency; as political satire only creates instantaneous amusement that is only accompanied by indifference (Hall, June 19 , 2019). Youssef says in a solidifying claim to his perspectives that satire in the U.S. did not deter Trump from coming to power as "People don't win elections with satire...satire doesn't change things. People change things." (2019). While Youssef seems to have set his future

thoughts on his personal growth abroad, he poses almost rhetorical concerns about the future of drowning Egypt and having little hope for the near horizon, one can only question the future of satire in the country. On the other hand, Youssef Hussein, host of the *Joe Show*, enjoys the comfort of recording his show outside Egypt, despite his unique provocative material that echoed the pangs of post-Morsi Egypt, with virtually little chance of facing any damaging retaliatory acts.

Although Youssef himself had expressed disappointment in his works' governmental and public response, the authenticity of his content cannot be dismissed, including its loyalty to the post-9/11 dauntless Western satire. Whereas other Egyptian satirists have firmly taken the same direction as Youssef, *Joe Show* can even argue that Youssef has exceeded the statistical success of Youssef in terms of audience and global attention, we cannot ignore the essence that defines a decent satirical work, namely taunting all kinds of boundaries. It is worth noting that since the beginning of the Egyptian uprising in 2011, during the presidency of Mohammed Morsi and Abdelattah al-Sissi<sup>76</sup>, Youssef had been vigorously promoting limits on freedom of speech, meaning he had defied a pre-revolutionary authoritarian rule, a supposedly theocratic regime, and a military *coup d'état*, none of which would naturally take Youssef 's content lightly.

Although both shows seek to polemicize the Egyptian government, an interesting question surrounding the relationship between satire and Arab countries is addressed by the contradictions between the conditions under which they came to be and how they affect Egypt and the Middle East. *El Bernameg* and *Joe Show* delivered their message irrevocably, most of the attentive viewers of the shows should be equipped with the awareness of those particularities that made a large

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<sup>76</sup> Abdel Fattah Saeed Hussein Khalil el-Sisi is a retired military officer and Egyptian politician who has served as the sixth and current president of Egypt since 2014. From 2019 to 2020, he also served as chairperson of the African Union.

number of Arab governments incompetent, but the lack of visible citizen response might simply be due to the fact this form of satire rarely provides rational solutions.

Considering these works from an “imitation” point of view, one should not neglect the possibility that certain Western satirical material might be simply incompatible with Arab societies in their attempt to be faithful to the original. This is evident in *El Bernameg*, where Youssef announced that his sole aim was to push limits, a stunt that he had eloquently demonstrated during the presidency of Morsi.

## **6. From Satellite Media to Postmodern Talk Shows**

In an attempt to keep up, the Arab media entered the world of influencing the viewer, and satellite channels emerged. Their purpose was broadcasting western stations that are open to the Arab public. Some channels were launched to express different political and intellectual trends. While others began imitating western broadcasting aspects, most of these were in the field of news, movies, and music. This led to adopting improvisational techniques and a general decrease of production quality to the extent that the reality of the situation of the Arab media can be described as Djamil (2012) states that the progress of communication in the Middle East has preceded social, political and economic progress. In other words, the Arab media has witnessed growth, but not development.

Satellite media has a major role in creating the public opinion, especially in the recent years, which witnessed several crises in the Arab countries. According to Ismail (2012), political issues are ranked first in satellite channels, as talk shows are at the heart of the political communication process, at the center of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled, and they performs the function of justifying this relationship. Therefore, the process of political communication will occur easily, if it is insulated from external influences.

Talk shows contribute to enriching the social, political, economic and religious debate about various issues. The dialogues constitute a reliable reference in some issues affecting large segments of society. As a media template, a dialogue is defined as a conversation with a goal, meaning that the interviewer conducts the dialogue for a specific goal, the framework for reaching certain objectives. Since a dialogue is a conversation, it means that there is more than one person, perhaps two or three people communicating, or there is one person who is directly communicating with the public. This is the case of talk shows, which entail a dialogue between the broadcaster and the guest or broadcaster, and the audience on a specific topic of interest to society, this dialogue is based on interaction according to media standards.

In June 2012, John Stuart invited Youssef to appear on his show *The Daily Show*, for a lengthy interview. Commenting on Youssef's show, *El Bernameg*, Stuart says, "I know a few things about humor, but your show is special, and you're creative, it's a smart program that's been executed successfully". This satirical show has received local, regional and international media hype as it was the first of its kind in the Middle East. *Bloomberg* wrote that Bassem Youssef's satirical twisted jokes were huge success in the new Egyptian media world. The few series he started on the YouTube website after the fall of President Hosni Mubarak, gaining millions of views, turned into a new form of programs ready to invade the largest TV market in the Middle East. His program was considered one of the most important satirical political programs in the Egyptian arena, or perhaps the most important in the Arab arena as a whole. (Bloomberg.com, 2014)

Hani Sabra, an Egyptian analyst with The Yurasia Political Research Group says, "I'm thinking What he is doing now is a completely daring act that makes fun of the military leadership in Egypt and mocks all politicians, I think this was not allowed under Mubarak's rule

(Eurasiagroup, 2014). Because of this type of free speech programs, the questioning of Bassem Youssef and charges he received for insulting religion, president Morsi, and spreading false news, have riled local and Arab public opinion. For example, the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir* quoted Heba Mireef, director of Human Rights Watch in Egypt saying, “The investigation with Youssef represents the most serious insult to freedom of expression since The Muslim Brotherhood took office in Egypt this year”. As indicated by reports published by the *Washington Post*, *The Independent*, *The New York Times*, and *The Financial Times*, the accusations against Youssef insulting the Islamic religion and President Mohamed Morsi, aim to silence Morsi’s critics. [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com),2015

The American reaction to Bassem Youssef’s legal issues with the Egyptian government consisted of Washington accusing the Egyptian authorities of restraining freedom of speech. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Victoria Nuland stated to *Russia Today* “We have concerns about stifling freedom of expression in Egypt.” Nuland also told reporters that the case along with recent arrest warrants against other political activists are evidence of a worrying trend of increasing restrictions on the freedom of expression. Nuland believes the Egyptian government appears to be investigating these issues, while it is slow or not move at all to investigate the attack on the demonstrators in front of the presidential palace as well as other cases of excessive violence committed by security forces. According to Nuland, there does not appear to be equal application of justice here, and the United States will continue to press for respect for human rights in Egypt. ([www.rt.com](http://www.rt.com),2014)

In contrast, the situation of Youssef has piqued the curiosity of every worldwide media outlet. It was written in *The Guardian* that the trial of satirical journalist Bassem Youssef had raised concerns about freedom of expression in Egypt, and that this move was a sign that Morsi's



Islamist-led presidential regime, which was prepared to take yet another step toward authoritarianism against the opposition. (www.theguardian.com,2014)

Satirical television programs broadcast in Egypt during the 25 January Revolution sparked widespread controversy among both the public and the elite. Several of them defended such programs, viewing them as a sort of criticism that could result in performance improvement. Others claimed they had exceeded the line of freedom since they occasionally violate Egyptian society's public morals through the use of unsuitable language that violates media and society ethics. This is because media ethics are agreed upon and codified in numerous media charters controlling the profession's activity.

These ideals are encapsulated in the concept of “responsible media freedom.” If media freedom is a requirement for practicing the profession when viewed through the lens of freedom of opinion and speech, media responsibility is at the heart of the power of media freedom, expected not it to misuse it to undermine the profession's essential ethics. In this regard, the findings of the Social Responsibility Theory indicate that media play a critical role in society by both protecting the social fabric and openly expressing the views of the public. As a result, these methods must be morally dedicated to raising and discussing critical social issues, and social responsibility compels the media to consider the customs, traditions, and sensitivities of a specific society in addition to safeguarding the community's integrity and cultural foundations.

Although Youssef has disassociated himself from his past career on Egyptian T.V. he still, to a looser degree, does some stand up comedy to significantly smaller audiences around the United States. He says his main focus now is on helping people, something he rigorously accomplishes through healthy life style counseling on various social media outlets.

By comparison, Jon Stuart seems to have a firmer tie with his former experience on satirical television. It is true that he has adopted a more serious tone when addressing sensitive topics, but the spirit of the cynical satirists has never vanished. Juxtaposing both of Youssef and Stuart's post-stardom lifestyle reveals some interesting contrasts. Stuart seems to be closer to the classical definition of the satirist who takes his audience on a journey to question the status quo, no matter how sensitive the topic may be, something that recurring characters in both classical, medieval, and modern satires would do. From Aristophanes, Gulliver, to Stuart, the seemingly oblivious, yet excessively critical character, or persona in Stuart's case, dismantles dogmas and puts every pressing matter, especially those jeopardizing the democratic process, at the forefront of the situation.

Youssef, being exceedingly imitative to Stuart, succeeds in bringing Middle Eastern, and more focally Egyptian, issues to millions of loyal viewers, whether they liked him or not. Despite the fact that Youssef had been preceded by numerous boundary-pushing comedians, his "fake news" style coupled with his daring attitude made him stand out, and perhaps even might have put him behind bars indefinitely.

This is why Stuart's appearance was well-timed, as it came to provide long sought after answers to mass disillusionment and confusion both at the U.S. and abroad. It would have been expected that Stuart, would assume a central position in dealing with the affairs plighting the American political scene, and despite his leftists leanings from the onset, he seemed to have done a remarkable job in conveying the really important news. His influence on media and the politics is unquestionable; numerous similar shows would sprout and follow his example. Youssef was one of such, and though he appeared in a relatively different setting, his enchantment with Stuart was evident. It is true Youssef gained his fame on the internet, but it was on T.V. where he shined.

In terms of thinking about its ideals, satire is strongly reliant on the crossing of borders in the conveyance of critique. A pattern is broken (social, political, moral, ethical, or religious), and a logical gap is disclosed, revealing a fault in the organization or structure of some frequently held principles, beliefs, or values. The satirist's willingness to challenge and criticize society standards enables a broader practice of questioning the “foolish certainty” that dominant ideologies provide (Griffin, 1994). Knight (2004) makes grander claims about satire's ideological underpinnings, claiming that it has the ability to effect a slow moral reawakening, a reassertion of positive society and individual principles. Despite these good affirmations, they admit that satire openly supports social change efforts, but it fails to deliver on its reform promises.

When one studies some of the factors that promote humor, one gets the notion that satire develops during periods of severe or authoritarian rule. To be sure, constraints on free inquiry and criticism, as well as tougher censorship environments, breed a sarcastic and satirical disposition. According to Linda Hutcheon (2000), “The increased cultural homogeneity in the ‘global village’ has increased the range of parodic forms available for use” (p. 44). According to Hutcheon, the same logic applies to popular culture's satirical and caustic forms. When satire transcends cultural or historical bounds, its interpretations are determined by the context in which it is received. What defines satire in one historical time or culture may not transfer effectively in another (Bohnert, 1995). How effectively would Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, or George Orwell's *1984* translate in Czarist Russia, postwar Germany, or Chairman Mao's People's Republic of China?

Stand-up comedians have taken on the filming medium of documentary. Bill Maher and Chris Rock both thought that using the format improved their voice. Ahmed Ahmed, the Egyptian-American comic whose documentary *Just Like Us* (2011) is an admirable if flimsy call for bigger

spirits and thicker skins, and the most recent to cross the threshold. It has been reconfigured from a comedy that takes place in the Middle East into an analysis of American bias and Arabian mores. In the film, Mr. Ahmed sets out to establish that comedy can cross cultural boundaries, aided by a rotating cast of foreign comics whose incapacity to create yuk-worthy moments threatens to undermine the film's objective. Yet, *Just Like Us* bounces from Dubai to Egypt with depressing repetitiveness and superficiality, pushed along by Ahmed's dull narration and home-movie production values. Snippets of information about sexism and the perils of performing in censorship-prone places, in Saudi Arabia, for example, where comedians must refer to themselves as “consultants”, reveal simply the difficulty of being funny without the crutches of sex, politics, or religion.

This film dispels the widely held belief that Arabs have no sense of humor, while in fact they laugh and are “just like Westerners”. This documentary stars Egyptian-American comedian Ahmed Ahmed, as well as a slew of critically regarded worldwide stand-up comics. It embodies their purpose of reintroducing socially significant themes to the world in order to develop cultural bridges in this age of increasing tolerance, understanding, and acceptance. With over 20,000 individuals in attendance, the documentary covers four Middle Eastern countries, highlighting the cultures of Dubai, Lebanon, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

Contemporary stand-up comedy has the tremendous capacity to bring respite, motivate a younger generation, break down barriers, and serve as a platform for cross-cultural conversation. This art form is very new to the Middle East, and older generations did not have the opportunity to appreciate it. However, as Ahmed and his fellow comedians begin a project, *Just Like Us* picks up a little, focusing on the stress of doing comedy shows in countries where they have never been

done before or are subject to oppressive regulations. Before any comedians stands on stage in Dubai, Ahmed warns them to avoid discussing politics or religion, to avoid vulgarity, and to conduct the event as if it were a late-night talk show appearance. Every single one of them, even Ahmed, disobeyed that command, including female comedian Whitney Cummings, whose mere presence on stage is enough of a provocation.

Unlike its Western counterpart, the advent of media technologies coupled with the colonial as well as the post-colonial situation in the Middle East sprouted an entangled interrelation between the aforementioned elements. While humorous and satirical content in the Middle Eastern literary canon aimed at generating laughter and social critique at best, the adoption of new means of disseminating various forms of information, interlaced with postmodern theory primarily fosters subversive ends that do not pay much attention to the means. This would run at odds with the conservative nature of most Middle Eastern societies.

Therefore, questions of censorship and the repercussions of blind imitation of Western style media practices come at the forefront of the Middle Eastern sociopolitical scene. A brief overview of the conception, development, and reception of satirical content in the Middle East across history, as well as the overwhelming proliferation of media technologies in the region shall demonstrate the most notable distinctions and between it and its Western counterpart, provide a clear picture of the audiovisual satire in the Middle East.

*Barlaman Achaab* (2020) (Parliament of the People) is a community television program launched in 2020 on al-Jazeera's online platforms and posted on YouTube. Its main aim is to form a popular parliament elected by the public and people to represent the real concerns of the Arab world, especially the issues of Arab youth. Twelve previously elected participants from 11 of the

22 Arab countries are currently participating in the program, with participants elected to five constituencies and divided into three committees. The program consists of 16 episodes. The Kuwaiti media parliament is headed by Shoaib Rashid.

On the sixth episode of season one, aired in September, 2020, Youcef Hussein, the presenter of *Joe Show*, was questioned on the content of the shows as well as the reported contradictions carried out by Hussein that might reveal an ulterior agenda behind the show. *Joe show's* host, Youcef Hussein, was questioned on whether the show aimed to raise awareness in the Arab World, the youth in specific, or if it was a brainwashing tool that seeks to influence the minds of the young people who are looking for a parallel media that voices their concerns. Hussein replied that he was not a politician and he only wants freedom and prosperity in the Arab World. When questioned about the content of show, that mainly concentrated on stereotyping in performance that made his analyzing technique predictable, if not generic, manner in which you analyze the topics, including the gestures and commentary predictable, he said the show is trendy, and in order to keep up with the latest events, led him to work till late hours to provide an up-to-date show.

While this was a case in point, given the financial aims of the producers and the TV channel on which the show was broadcasted, yet, his reasoning becomes ambiguous when questioned about the sexually and linguistically explicit content. Namely, Hussein justifies his clearly audacious content by stating that the topics he tackles need to be portrayed as faithful to reality as possible in order to have a more meaningful impact on youth. While Hussein seems to deliver a seemingly valid point, it remains more relatable to Western style satire, and no matter how noble his aims

may be, the manner in which his content is presented needs to respect the ethical responsibility that governs Middle Eastern media.

In order to show the financial aims of talk shows like Joe Show, Hussein was asked about Arab nations' normalization of relationships with Israel. Hussein condemned UAE for taking such step, while leaving out Qatar, the country from which his show is broadcasted. Clearly, this seems like an attempt to demonize certain people, institutions, or governments (UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia), whether they deserve it or not, while trying to portray others, Qatar and Turkey, as Utopian societies.

On the second episode of season two, Members of the parliament questioned the Egyptian satirical journalist Bassem Youssef, the members chose Parliament Speaker Shoaib Rashid to take over the interrogation. The interrogation was focused on Youssef's career in Media, which Shoaib began to discuss its various stages in Egypt and abroad, and then his positions in various major and important issues, such as the assassination of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the break-up of the fourth sit-in during the Egyptian revolution, and other important events. To all these questions, Youssef defended himself by saying he was not an activist, and only presented a satirical show that focused on criticizing the regime, which in turn, put an end to the shows and threatened his freedom. Youssef's claims can only be described as contradictory and confusing; as demonstrated in the preceding chapters, satire always had a noble aim of ridiculing for improving, no matter the means it may take up to exact its harsh criticism. While Youssef admits he was hosting a satirical show, he distances himself from the rectifying mission. He adds that he does not care about Middle Eastern politics anymore, and while he still works on comedy, he does not deal with Middle Eastern matters anymore.

It would have made sense if Youssef stood with principles, and perhaps even carry on the show abroad Egypt, if change was his pursuit. On the contrary, while Youssef regards his experience with pride and joy, yet he also describes it as "mere comedy" that never amounted to more than that. He strictly denies being an activist and repeatedly tells reporters he never wanted to be a role model, or the voice of the people.

## **7. Conclusion**

When considering the fact that most Middle Eastern countries, including the ones with the least restrictive governments, are still wary of cultural constraints when dealing with any form of art forms that are displayed publicly, the serious implications of satirical shows need to be placed at the forefront of important matter.

*El Bernamegand* and its counterparts in the Middle East do not only criticize for the purpose of improving, but keep pushing boundaries that exceed governmental oppressive practices into generally accepted cultural norms. Many academic and political figures advocate people like Bassem Youssef and go further to defend freedom of speech in the Middle East, and disregard the region's sensitivity towards such concept. This is because the rapid changes that inflicted the Middle East grant people enough time to settle on fixed identities and norms that would enable them to be open and understanding to new concepts. Moreover, given their cultural particularities, perhaps Middle Easterners do not need any new, not to mention "Western" interpretations of Freedom of Speech. If this Western notion is not entirely accepted in the Middle East, then its imposition is certainly an infringement on people's freedom of choice as well. Bassem Youssef and Youssef Hussein definitely have millions of fans from all social strata, but that does not mean everyone should accept his content as the sublime truth.



It is true he, as any notable satirist, stood against an oppressive regime and kept defying them in the name of making Egypt, and perhaps all the Middle East a better place, but if the cost of such endeavor is the loss of the cultural traits that make up the Middle Eastern identity, or even spark internal turmoil, that would certainly not be worthwhile.

## **General Conclusion**

Satire is defined as an art form that brings up human vices and follies to contempt and derision. It is an attack on or criticism of any foolishness or vice in the guise of stinging comedy, and it is also a critique of what an author perceives as hazardous religious, political, moral, or societal standards. Satire varies from the comedy in that comedy elicits laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire employs laughter as a weapon, and against a butt existing beyond the work itself.

The early beginnings of democracy in the West have overlapped with satire, as it played a remarkable role in forging and fostering freedom of expression. There were also political and ideological transitions following the rapid and widespread technological modernization that peaked with the industrial revolution that gave birth to idealistic democratic states. Although it dates back to Greek and Roman times, satire became most popular during the Enlightenment, that Age of Reason in which it was believed that foolishness might be cured by utilizing art as a mirror to reflect society. Trusting in the reason and rationality of humanity, artists reasoned that when people saw their defects amplified in a distorted reflection, they could realize the silliness of their own behavior and subsequently correct that propensity in themselves. Satire is therefore a hopeful genre; it indicates progress and the betterment of society, and it suggests that the arts can light the road of progress.

With the emergence of telecommunications technology in the twentieth century, satire discovered a modern visual medium that would not only offer new artistic resources to satire, but also expand its viewpoint and audience. This is why satire thrives in the current political milieu. The constant shock value of the news gives sufficient fodder for comedians and satirists. One of

the key reasons we see more satire today than decades ago is that there are various sources of information available, as opposed to a single source, such as the local newspaper or evening news. Today, , Western political satire in audiovisual media utilizes practically unregulated witty humor as a means of revealing and undermining malicious political activities on a variety of digital channels, mainly on television and the internet. This offers the public an alternate, critical version of the political scene, an aim that a significant portion of traditional news media outlets seems to be implementing.

Modern satire has been criticized for being overly self-congratulatory and arrogant. Satirists have become more of a control mechanism for the opinions of their audience members than a catalyst for change since its inception in the 19th century. Satire criticism is driven by the postmodernist assumption that society has completely erased any single concept of truth. In response to this criticism, satirical writers have employed a kind of humor known as absurdist comedy. During the past few years, satire has been less common in the media. As a result of postmodernism's critique of society and culture, this decline may be traced back when it comes to critiquing society, postmodernism employs a mixture of irony and exaggeration, whereas satire uses comedy and scorn. There are some who claim that postmodernists are “too educated” for comedy, and consequently, satire has lost its attraction.

Conversely, the relationship between Middle Easterners and satire is quite an intriguing one since the genre itself, at least in strictly Western terms, is virtually a novelty in the region. Satire had not found its proper place in the Middle East until the inevitable clash between Western and Eastern cultures during the colonial and postcolonial periods. The colonial period in the Middle East was known for many cataclysmic changes. After the discovery of oil, Islamism grew

in power, and sectarian strife increased, Arabs used satire to express their views on their own society. Instead of just making fun of their colonial overlords, the satirists aimed to make fun of their own cultures, which they believed had become overly reliant on European values.

In the second half of the twentieth century, during the time that became known as the Modern Age, Arab literature had undergone enormous change. In terms of type and content, a handful of variables led to the birth of new trends in satire. The most prominent reasons for such transition are the effects of colonialism that challenged the Arab identity and, with it, the cultural standards and political characteristics of the Middle East. Moreover, Arab nations struggled to find healthy positions in a world dominated by Western ideologies and dogmas with the end of formal colonization.

Owing to the immense changes brought by colonial and postcolonial periods, people in the Middle East witnessed an overwhelming transformation that defied their clinging to cultural ideals and norms, since the modes of upsurge themselves were adapted from Western ideologies. While the cultural and literary infrastructure were strong and could serve to bring forth an entirely unique form of satire, much like what happened between Greek and Roman satire, the rate at which Western norms, most visibly, those related to media theories and trends substituted the rich Middle Eastern satirical potential with replicas to Western satire. Perhaps, this would not have called for great intellectual attention if it remained in the realm of traditional T.V, yet when postmodern school of thought, a virtual opposite to predominating Middle Eastern ideologies, especially those stemming from religious thought, gives rise to astonishingly similar satirical shows to the ones in the West, should be subject to a serious academic analysis.

In terms of topic selection, presentation, and audacity, Stuart and Youssef are virtually indistinguishable, yet, the underlying circumstances through which both satirists put their shows beg some serious attention. Stuart, on the one hand, was following a long Western tradition, which entailed that freedom of expression, and the boundless questioning of authority are rights that strengthen the government and makes sure everyone is doing his job adequately. This is a process that made sense for centuries during the formation of, and thereof flourishing of most Western states.

On the other hand, if we consider the unique history of humor and censorship in the Middle East, it would not be hard to identify the follies of Western style satire, both literary and audiovisual in the region. In spite of leaving a bright career in medicine behind, Youssef said he felt the need to join his brothers and sisters on the *Tahrir* square to be an active agent of change in Egypt, and his appalling popularity is proof that people were ready for a fresh revolutionary perspective.

Additionally, if we approach the topic from a financial standpoint, the superficiality and self-interest aspect become vividly apparent. Ironically, satirists, in the classical sense at least, became such powerful defenders of the people and democracy because they practically had nothing to gain after heavily criticizing the politics and society of their respective eras. This is what made satire a powerful tool in the hands of the ordinary people, the criticism was harshly honest and purposeful. Post 9/11 satire was following those ideals for a considerable amount of time; it came after the public had lost trust in the supposed conveyors of truth, the conventional media, who fell prey to different political lobbies and swayed the public opinion from important matters.

While Stuart's show was broadcasted on T.V. with little to no internet coverage in its early beginnings, it has reached millions of people across the globe. This gave the broadcasting companies the chance to cash in huge profits in different forms of advertisements, something that would later on increase with the show's slow transition into the internet. So while Stuart may have appeared as the classical exemplar of a satirist who risks his own life, in Stuart's case his career, and earn little to nothing for his endeavor, the rewards were enormous, and the ones granting such profits, most likely the leftist lobbies may have been behind Stuart's areas of interests while presenting the show. This might be a normal aspect of conventional media, where the diversity of content on public television is primarily devoted to portraying a good image for the government, and even circulate propaganda.

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## Glossary

**Al-Naqā'id poetry** Umayyad Era poetry consisting in a series of invective poetic jousts, collected as *Al-Naqā'id* ("Flytings").

**Apologiae** Analogous defenses

**Brobdingnagians** Brobdingnag is a fictional land, which is occupied by giants, in Jonathan Swift's 1726 satirical novel *Gulliver's Travels*. The adjective "Brobdingnagian" has come to describe anything of colossal size.

**Diatribes** A lengthy oration, though often reduced to writing, made in criticism of someone or something, often employing humor, sarcasm, and appeals to emotion.

**Didaskaloi** Instructors

**Fifth Estate** Groupings of outlier viewpoints in contemporary society, and is most associated with bloggers, journalists publishing in non-mainstream media outlets, and the social media or "social license".

**Fourth Estate** The term Fourth Estate or fourth power refers to the press and news media both in explicit capacity of advocacy and implicit ability to frame political issues.

**Hidjaa** The genre of Arabic satirical poetry was known as *hija*. Biting satirical poetry was dreaded for its power to immortalize its subjects in insulting ways, and could include sexual, scatological, and religiously profane material.

**Hyperbole** The use of exaggeration as a rhetorical device or figure of speech.

**Hypernormalization** Yurchak coined the term "hypernormalization" in his 2005 book *Everything was Forever, Until it was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. The term refers to a mechanism in which political discourse becomes so formulaic, clichéd, and ritualized that it becomes "an end in itself"

**Iambography** Poetry written in iambs, the term referred to one of the feet of the quantitative meter of classical Greek prosody: a short syllable followed by a long syllable.

**Infoganda** A term describing dramatic or literary work that contains both elements of an infomercial and propaganda.

**Libertas** Female personification of liberty and personal freedom in Ancient Roman theology.

**Lilliputians** Early 18th century: from the imaginary country of Lilliput in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, inhabited by people 6 inches

**Maqamah** An Arabic prosimetric literary genre which alternates the Arabic rhymed prose known as *Saj'* with intervals of poetry in which rhetorical extravagance is conspicuous.

**Monopolistic** Relating to a person or business that has exclusive possession or control of the supply of or trade in a commodity or service.

**Parabasis** (In Ancient Greek comedy) a direct address to the audience, sung or chanted by the chorus on behalf of the author.

**Polis** Polis, plural poleis literally means "city" in Greek.

**Prosimetric** A poetic composition which exploits a combination of prose (prosa) and verse (metrum); in particular, it is a text composed in alternating segments of prose and verse. It is widely found in Western and Eastern literature.

**Public Sphere** The public sphere is an area in social life where individuals can come together to freely discuss and identify societal problems, and through that discussion influence political action.

**Satura** An early, crude form of satire that appeared in Ancient Rome.

**Saturnalia** An ancient Roman festival in honour of the god Saturn, held on 17 December of the Julian calendar and later expanded with festivities through to 23 December.

**Satyr** An ancient Greek form of tragicomedy, similar in spirit to the bawdy satire of burlesque.

**Sermo** The speech of the common people, at Rome and in the provinces, which later became the basis of the modern Romance languages.

**Stiob** A Russian genre of ironic but ostensibly earnest parody associated with the Soviet era.

**Sunnah** In Islam, Sunnah are the traditions and practices of the Islamic prophet, Muhammad, that constitute a model for Muslims to follow. The sunnah is what all the Muslims of Muhammad's time evidently saw and followed and passed on to the next generations.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

An Egyptian late nineteenth century political caricature



· L'INONDATION DE L'ÉGYPTE ·

*John Bull ayant fait rompre les digues du Nil, échappe seul avec son bulin*

تفسير الرسم  
انظروا ايها الاخوان ابناء القاهرة وما  
حل بالاراضي الطاهرة، التي طالما كانت  
للسفاهة تحت. ثم اصحت اليوم سيئته  
ان فرجوا اليوم الملاعين، يجزئوا غدا  
اذا قلع الله اعيينهم اجمعين. ثم يفتحوا  
حياره يدعون بالكثور والويل.

Source: (Ettmüller 2012)

## Appendix 2

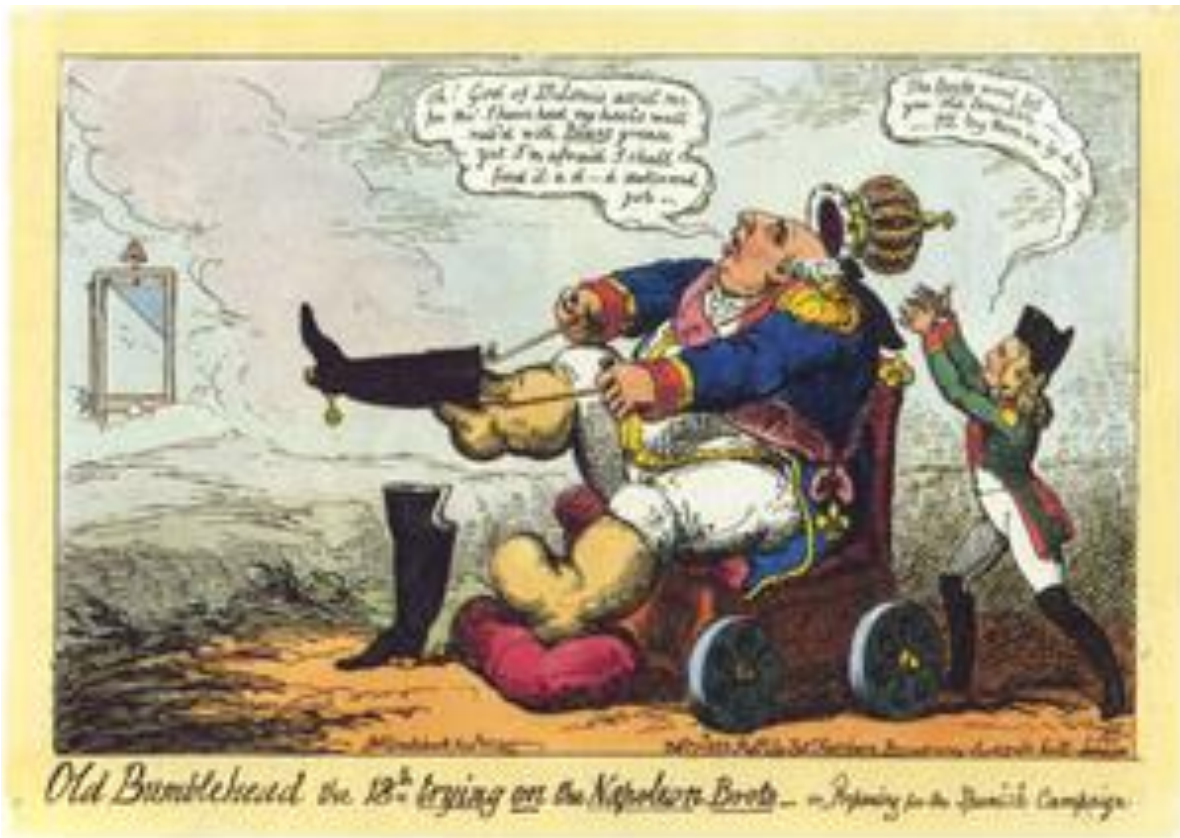
Al-Zaeem is a political satirical play consisting of nine scenes.



Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjCYkGrBU1E&ab\\_channel=AdelEmam-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjCYkGrBU1E&ab_channel=AdelEmam-)

### Appendix 3

George Cruikshank (1792–1878) was one of the first to pioneer the genre of political cartoons. In this 1823 depiction, the French monarch Louis XVIII fails to fit into Napoleon's boots as his crown falls from his head.



Source: (Jones, 2009)



**Appendix 4**

**A scene from Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* (2002)**



Source: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-michael-moore-bowling-for-columbine-2002-31138544.html>

## Abstract

The central focus of this thesis is to trace the development, mechanisms, aims, and diverse global impacts of post 9/11 political satire from the West to the Middle East. From such standpoint, the thesis explores the diverse implications of Middle Eastern News Parody shows. Since 2011, various Middle Eastern countries have witnessed unprecedented coordination of public reform movements that have steadfastly opposed and spoken out against corruption in a number of Middle Eastern regimes. Prior to this period, significant political and economic regressions had already sparked such protests. Thus, numerous creative works have contributed significantly to popularizing this upsurge; notably, satirical content particularly that found on Egyptian audiovisual media has surely served as a catalyst for change by capturing the attention of an increasing number of individuals from all social strata. The issue is that a substantial portion of contemporary political satire performed by Egyptian comedians is highly imitative of its American counterpart, which ignores regional cultural limits. While it educates audiences about politics, it either fails to inspire a corrective behavior or might incite division and unrest. The purpose of this research is to probe the considerable potency of audiovisual political satire and its diverse implications in the Middle East by appraising the global effects of post-9/11 News Parodies from the U.S and Egypt.

**Keywords:** Audiovisual- Media- 9/11- Middle East- Satire

## ملخص

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تحليل دور السخرية السياسية في المجال السمعي البصري بعد 11 سبتمبر في تأجيج الاحتجاجات في العديد من البلدان العربية. منذ عام 2011، شهدت مختلف دول الشرق الأوسط تنسيقاً غير مسبوق لحركات تدعوا لإصلاح عام ومعارضة الفساد في عدد من أنظمة الشرق الأوسط. قبل هذه الفترة، كان هناك احتجاجات تبعت الانتكاسات السياسية والاقتصادية الكبيرة في المنطقة. وهكذا، ساهمت العديد من الأعمال الإبداعية بشكل كبير في تعميم هذه الانتفاضة؛ ومن الجدير بالذكر أن المحتوى الساخر، ولا سيما الذي يوجد في وسائط الإعلام السمعية البصرية، كان بالتأكيد عاملاً محفزاً للتغيير من خلال جذب انتباه عدد متزايد من الأفراد من جميع الطبقات الاجتماعية. والمسألة المطروحة هي أن جزءاً كبيراً من السخرية السياسية المعاصرة التي تشاهد على المنصات الرقمية في الشرق الأوسط يقلد إلى حد كبير نظيره الأمريكي، الذي يتجاهل الحدود الثقافية الإقليمية. وفي حين أنه يعلم الجماهير حول السياسة، إلا أنه لا يرقى إلى إلهامهم للانخراط في سلوك تصحيحي من شأنه أن يكون له تأثير إيجابي ملموس. الغرض من هذا البحث هو دراسة الفعالية الكبيرة للهجاء السياسي السمعي البصري المعاصر وآثاره المتنوعة في الشرق الأوسط.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** السمعي البصري- الإعلام- 11/9- الشرق الأوسط- الهجاء

## Résumé

Le but de cette thèse est d'analyser comment la satire politique audiovisuelle suite aux évènements du 11 septembre a alimenté les protestations dans de nombreux pays Arabes. Depuis l'an 2011, divers pays du Moyen-Orient ont été témoins d'un ensemble de mouvements de réforme publique qui se sont fermement opposés et se sont prononcés contre la corruption dans un certain nombre de régimes du Moyen-Orient. Avant cette période, d'importantes régressions politiques et économiques avaient déjà suscité de telles protestations. Ainsi, de nombreuses créations ont largement contribué à populariser cet essor ; Notamment, le contenu satirique, en particulier celui que l'on trouve dans les médias audiovisuels, a sûrement servi de catalyseur de changement en captant l'attention d'un nombre croissant d'individus de toutes les couches sociales. Le problème est qu'une partie substantielle de la satire politique contemporaine vue sur les plateformes numériques au Moyen-Orient est très imitative de ses homologues américains, qui ignorent les limites culturelles régionales. Bien qu'il éduque le public sur la politique, il ne l'incite pas à adopter une conduite corrective qui aurait un impact positif tangible. Le but de cette recherche est d'examiner la puissance considérable de la satire politique audiovisuelle contemporaine et ses diverses implications au Moyen-Orient.

**Mots clés :** Audiovisuel- Médias- 9/11- Moyen-Orient- Satire