



JUVENALIAN SATIRE AND MORAL OUTRAGE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE: FROM SWIFT TO ORWELL

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Abstract

The article is devoted to an analysis of the Juvenalian tradition of satire in English literature of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, based on the works of Jonathan Swift and George Orwell. Juvenalian satire is examined as a form of literary expression grounded in moral indignation, invective, and the exposure of social vices. The article traces the evolution of this tradition from the Enlightenment context of the early eighteenth century to the politically engaged prose of the twentieth century. Special attention is given to artistic strategies, the rhetoric of indignation, and the ethical stance of the satirist, as well as to the transformation of the addressee of satirical discourse.

Keywords: Juvenalian satire, moral indignation, English literature, Swift, Orwell, social criticism, invective.

Аннотация:

Статья посвящена анализу ювеналовской традиции сатиры в английской литературе XVIII-XX веков на материале произведений Джонатан Свифт и Джордж Оруэлл. Ювеналовская сатира рассматривается как форма литературного высказывания, основанная на моральном негодовании, инвективе и обличении общественных пороков. В статье прослеживается эволюция этой традиции от просветительского контекста начала XVIII века к политически ангажированной прозе XX века. Особое внимание уделяется художественным стратегиям, риторике негодования и этической позиции сатирика, а также трансформации адресата сатирического высказывания.



Ключевые слова: ювеналовская сатира, моральное негодование, английская литература, Свифт, Оруэлл, социальная критика, инвектива.

Introduction

Satire as a literary genre has for centuries performed the function of social and moral regulation. Among its varieties, Juvenalian satire occupies a special place, tracing its origins to the poetry of the ancient Roman satirist Juvenal. Unlike Horatian satire, which tends toward irony and gentle moral instruction, the Juvenalian model is characterized by sharpness, anger, and an uncompromising attitude toward social evil. Its driving force is the author's moral indignation, which perceives the vices of society not as an occasion for amusement, but as a source of ethical outrage.

In English literature, Juvenalian satire found particularly fertile ground for development. From the Enlightenment to the totalitarian catastrophes of the twentieth century, it served as an effective means of reflecting on crises of morality, power, and language. The aim of the present article is to trace how the tradition of Juvenalian satire is realized and transformed in the works of Jonathan Swift and George Orwell, and to identify both the persistent and the evolving elements of moral indignation as an aesthetic and philosophical principle.

Juvenalian satire originates in the culture of late Rome in the first and second centuries CE. Juvenal's satires constitute a harsh denunciation of Rome's moral decline, corruption, hypocrisy, and the degradation of social institutions. The authorial position in these texts is overtly moralistic. The satirist assumes the role of a judge whose indignation is justified by universal ethical norms.

The key features of Juvenalian satire include:

- a high degree of emotional intensity;
- the use of hyperbole and grotesque imagery;
- an invective mode of discourse;
- a focus on exposing systemic rather than isolated vices;
- the author's conviction in his own moral rightness.

Equally important is the understanding of satire as a form of moral action. The Juvenalian satirist does not seek reconciliation with reality. His aim is to shock, to provoke outrage, and thereby to awaken the reader's moral consciousness.



***Modern American Journal of Linguistics,
Education, and Pedagogy***

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 2, Issue 2, February, 2026

Website: usajournals.org

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Moral indignation in satire is not reducible to mere emotion. It performs a structuring function, determining tone, the choice of artistic devices, and the logic of argumentation. Within the Juvenalian tradition, indignation emerges as a response to the discrepancy between what ought to be and what is.

The aesthetics of indignation presuppose a rejection of neutral narration. The author deliberately transgresses the boundaries of propriety, employing shocking images and radical assumptions. This is less an artistic provocation than an ethical demand. The reader is invited not simply to evaluate what is depicted, but to adopt a moral stance.

In English literature, this model proved especially in demand during periods of social and political crisis. Satire becomes a space in which literature assumes functions that have been lost or weakened in public discourse.

The work of Jonathan Swift represents one of the peaks of the English satirical tradition. His texts combine the rationalism of the Enlightenment with a deeply pessimistic view of human nature. Swift is convinced that human reason, when deprived of a moral foundation, becomes an instrument of destruction.

The most striking example of Juvenalian satire in Swift's work is the pamphlet *A Modest Proposal*. Using the form of economic reasoning, the author proposes solving the problem of Irish poverty through cannibalism. The hyperbolic cruelty of this idea serves as an expression of extreme moral indignation toward English colonial policy and the indifference of the ruling elites.

Swift's satire is built on a strategy of feigned agreement with vice. The author speaks in the language of those he condemns, pushing their logic to the point of absurdity. This brings him close to the Juvenalian tradition, in which exposure is achieved through demonstrating the moral collapse of a system from within.

It is important to note that Swift's indignation is directed not only at social institutions, but at humanity as such. In *Gulliver's Travels*, humankind appears as a species prone to cruelty, folly, and self-deception. Here, Juvenalian invective acquires an anthropological dimension.

Between Swift and Orwell lies a long period during which the Juvenalian tradition does not disappear but undergoes partial transformation. In the Victorian era, satire is often softened, giving way to the social novel and moralistic prose. Nevertheless, elements of Juvenalian indignation persist in the works of authors



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such as Carlyle or the later Dickens, particularly in their critique of industrial society.

A significant change during this period is the expansion of the reading audience. Satire increasingly addresses not a narrow circle of educated elites, but a mass readership. This shift affects language, making it more direct and journalistic in tone. At the same time, the fundamental conflict between moral ideal and social reality remains unchanged.

In the work of George Orwell, the Juvenalian tradition acquires a new resonance, shaped by the experience of totalitarianism, war, and ideological manipulation. Orwell perceives the world as a space of systemic falsehood, in which language is used to suppress thought.

The novels *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* are satirical allegories grounded in profound moral indignation. Unlike Swift, Orwell resorts less frequently to grotesque hyperbole. His satire is dark and restrained, which only intensifies the sense of hopelessness.

The Juvenalian element is manifested in the uncompromising nature of Orwell's authorial stance. He offers no consolation and does not believe in automatic progress. His indignation is directed against mechanisms of power that destroy human dignity. Language becomes a particularly important object of satire, transformed into an instrument of ideological violence.

Orwell's satire is also distinguished by a change in the figure of the addressee. Whereas Swift addresses society from the position of an external observer, Orwell writes as a participant and witness to catastrophe. His indignation has an existential character and is tied to the author's sense of personal responsibility.

A comparison of Swift and Orwell makes it possible to identify both continuity and divergence in their respective realizations of Juvenalian satire.

Common features:

- an orientation toward systemic critique;
- the use of satire as a form of moral judgment;
- a pessimistic view of human nature;
- a firm belief in the ethical function of literature.



Differences:

- in Swift, grotesque imagery and the ironic mask prevail, whereas in Orwell documentary rigor dominates;
- Swift operates within the framework of Enlightenment discourse, while Orwell writes in the context of political catastrophe;
- in Swift, indignation often takes the form of intellectual provocation, whereas in Orwell it assumes the form of moral testimony.

Thus, the Juvenalian tradition proves to be flexible and capable of adapting to different historical conditions without losing its ethical sharpness.

Juvenalian satire in English literature represents a stable tradition grounded in moral indignation as a form of aesthetic and ethical expression. From Jonathan Swift to George Orwell, it retains its primary function: the exposure of social evil and resistance to the normalization of vice.

Evolving alongside historical context, Juvenalian satire demonstrates literature's capacity to serve as a space of moral resistance. In periods when other forms of criticism prove insufficient or are suppressed, radical satirical invective becomes a means of preserving the ethical dimension of human experience.

The prospects for further research are connected with the analysis of the Juvenalian tradition in contemporary English-language literature and media, where moral indignation once again gains relevance in conditions of global crises and information saturation.

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