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# THE TREATMENT OF SOCIAL SATIRE – A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RADOJE DOMANOVIĆ'S *LAND OF TRIBULATION* AND JONATHAN SWIFT'S *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS*

## Abstract

The paper will deal with the comparative analysis of societies and their flaws in Radoje Domanović's *Land of Tribulation* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Since both of these authors explored the satirical side of their nations and the deficiencies of Serbian and British people, through their comparative analysis the paper will aim to conclude that these flaws are an intrinsic part of every society, regardless of a nation or geographical area, and that satire has always been a whip employed as a remedy against them.

**Key words:** satire, Swift, Domanović, analysis, *Land of Tribulation*, *Gulliver's Travels*

## 1. Introduction

Social satire or satire is often defined as “a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn<sup>1</sup>.” According to McFarlane, Northrop Frye in his article *The Nature of Satire* notes “two things that

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/satire>, accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

are essential to satire: ‘one is wit or humor, the other an object of attack’, the humor being ‘founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd’ (McFarlane 2011: 154). Northrop Frye defines satire “as poetry assuming a special function of analysis, that is, of breaking up the various social constructs that impede the free movement of society, as a militant irony” (McFarlane 2011: 159–160). Satire, according to Northrop Frye, “implies a moral or social comparison between what it presents and a standard of normality assumed to be in the reader’s mind” (McFarlane 2011: 160). In his literary study *Domanovićev smijeh*<sup>2</sup>, Goran Maksimović states that “readers often envy a satirist because of his fearlessness or, at least, impertinence they lack” (Maksimović 2000: 91). According to Rabb, “the satiric text engages the reader in the quest for hidden meanings that are revealed or concealed through mechanisms of irony, and through the appeal of sharing in scandalous disclosures” (Rabb 2007: 178). In his work *Osobenosti Domanovićeve satirične proze/pripovetke*<sup>3</sup>, Dimitrije Vučenov states the following about satire:

A satire without an “echo<sup>4</sup>” is useless; it is a complete failure, a wild shot. A satire performs a revalorization of the existing values, the ways of thinking, it seeks a re-evaluation of the established, propagated, “statutory” values and the examination of the relations between the proclaimed values and their realizations, between words and actions. A satire performs those above in a special, exceptional, peculiar way, by apparently attributing a value to the worthless, morality to the immoral, and sublimity to the banal, while, as a matter of fact, it (satire) disperses doubt, expresses skepticism, disbelief, or denial<sup>5</sup>. (Vučenov 2009: 37–46)

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<sup>2</sup> Eng. *Domanović’s Laughter*.

<sup>3</sup> Eng. *The peculiarities of Domanović’s satirical prose/short story*.

<sup>4</sup> Without being understood by its audience.

<sup>5</sup> All quotes from the works of Serbian scholars in the paper have been translated by the author of the paper. „Satira bez odjeka besmisljena je; ona je potpun promašaj, pucanj u prazno. Ona vrši jednu naročitu vrstu revalorizacije postojećih odnosa, načina mišljenja, traži preocjenjivanje postojećih, promovisanih, ’ozakonjenih’ vrednosti ili ispitivanje odnosa između proklamovanih vrednosti i njihovih realizacija, između reči i dela. Ona to čini na poseban, izuzetan, samo njoj svojstven način, i to tako što nevrednom tobože priznaje vrednost, što nemoralnom tobože priznaje da je moralno, a banalnom da je uzvišeno, dok u stvari seje sumnju, izražava skepsu, neverovanje ili poricanje” (Vučenov 2009: 37–46).

The corpus for our research will consist of *Sabrana dela Radoja Domanovića: knjiga druga*<sup>6</sup> by Radoje Domanović and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. The theoretical framework will include *Satire and Secrecy in English Literature from 1650–1750* by M. A. Rabb, *The Origins of Gulliver's Travels* by I. Ehrenpreis, *Political History in the 18th Century of Gulliver's Travels* by L. P. Neisya, *Osobenosti Domanovićeve satirične proze/pripovetke*<sup>7</sup> and *O Domanovićevoj satiri*<sup>8</sup> by Dimitrije Vučenov and *Kulturna istorija Srba: predavanja*<sup>9</sup> by Jovan Deretić.

Both authors, Domanović and Swift, employed satire in their works to address social problems in their respective countries. The political, economic, and cultural situation in their countries is also of great importance when it comes to the use of social satire in the works of Domanović and Swift, particularly in *Land of Tribulation* and *Gulliver's Travels*. According to Dimitrije Vučenov in his work *O Domanovićevoj satiri*:

The bigger part of Domanović's satirical works – and that is something that may be encountered in the writing of the world-known satirists – is inspired by the sociopolitical circumstances and situation represented through naïve and simple narration of the events which, at first sight, do not bear similarities with the ones at which satirical blade and sting is aimed.<sup>10</sup> (Vučenov 1964: 7)

In the context of the aforementioned, "Domanović's works could be compared with the satirical literary achievements of the satirists such as Jonathan Swift and Mark Twain"<sup>11</sup> (Vučenov 1964: 7). Another point of similarity between the writing of Radoje Domanović and that of Jonathan Swift or Mark Twain is, according to Vučenov, "writing along two cultural

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<sup>6</sup> Eng. *The Collected works of Radoje Domanović*, book II.

<sup>7</sup> Eng. *The peculiarities of Domanović's satirical prose/short story*.

<sup>8</sup> Eng. *About Domanović's satire*.

<sup>9</sup> Eng. *The history of Serbian culture: lectures*.

<sup>10</sup> „Veći broj njegovih satiričnih dela – a to susrećemo i u delima mnogih satiričara svetskog glasa – inspirisan je društveno-političkim prilikama i stanjem, a pripovedački zaodenu u naoko naivno i jednostavno pričanje događaja koji kao da nemaju bliže veze s predmetom na koji je usmerena satiričarska oštrica i žaoka” (Vučenov 1964: 7).

<sup>11</sup> „U tom pogledu njegovo delo može se porediti, na primer, sa satiričarskim književnim ostvarenjima Džonatana Svifta i Marka Tvena” (Vučenov 1964: 7).

horizontals, on two levels of readers' receptivity"<sup>12</sup> (Vučenov 1964: 8): namely, for the audience that perceive some hidden meaning(s) beneath an apparently naïve and simple narrative, and the audience that understand the narrative in a literal sense. Domanović (like Swift) employed his satire for specific purposes, to paint the political, social, and cultural climate of a specific country, during a specific historical period. However, Domanović (like Swift) ended up creating something universal and always present, or, in the words of Vučenov:

The fact that makes Domanović (thematically) similar to the great, world satirists is that his satires were inspired by the feelings that were both his and general. Through the representation of his time, Domanović gave not only the representation of human relations and characters in contemporary society and during specific historical situations, but also the representation of something permanently human and social, something not applicable only to a certain geographical area, or the historically determined human and social circumstance<sup>13</sup>. (Vučenov 1964: 12)

However, despite the similarities in their respective writings, there is no reason to assume that Domanović, being younger than Swift, was influenced by him. On the contrary, Bogdan Popović, a literary critic and a university professor, a contemporary of Domanović and his close friend (the fact that implies that he knew him well), in his work *Alegorična satirična priča*<sup>14</sup>, states the following:

It is interesting to note this too – Bogdan Popović says at the beginning of his work – that Mr. Domanović, as it seems, was not familiar with the previous models of that literary genre (satire) in foreign literature, with neither Swift nor Voltaire, even less so with Lucian, Rabelais, or Cevede. The stated fact might be

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<sup>12</sup> „Swiftov kontakt s čitalačkom publikom koji se odvija u dve kulturne horizontale, na dva stepena čitalačke prijemivosti” (Vučenov 1964).

<sup>13</sup> „Ono čime se Domanović kao satiričar približio velikim satiričarima svetskog glasa bilo je i to što su se njegove satire rađale iz osećanja koja su bila i opšta i njegova, što je slikajući svoje vreme ocrtavao ne samo ljudske odnose i karaktere u savremenom društvu i konkretnoj istorijskoj situaciji nego i ono trajnije ljudsko i društveno, koje se ne odnosi samo na jednu geografski lokalizovanu i vremenom odredjenu ljudsku i društvenu situaciju” (Vučenov 1964: 12).

<sup>14</sup> Eng. *Allegorical satirical story*.

considered to be his (Domanović's) mistake since it is obvious that he could have learned something from them; however, his unfamiliarity with the previous models testifies to his natural gift for this literary genre<sup>15</sup>. (Vučenov 1964: 9)

Besides Popović, according to Vučenov, Domanović's originality was also confirmed by "Jovan Skerlić<sup>16</sup>, Jaša Prodanović<sup>17</sup>, Milan Grol<sup>18</sup>, Todor Popović, Milorad Mitrović, and others who were intimately acquainted with him. Some of them were almost every day in his company, conversed with him about politics and literature, came to his home, and had an opportunity to get an insight into his reading, especially when it came to his familiarity with the famous world satirists"<sup>19</sup> (Vučenov 1964: 10). Vučenov likewise states that Domanović did not know any foreign language until 1903 when he was awarded a scholarship and spent one year in Munich. Erih Koš (1985: 103) in his work *Satira i satiričari*<sup>20</sup> likewise states: "Neither he (Domanović) nor the majority of his literary colleagues, will ever travel nor will they see anything, with the exception of his (Domanović's) pointless and desperate one-year stay in Munich, at the very end of his literary career and the end of his life"<sup>21</sup>. However, by that period he had already written all of his famous works, so Domanović's

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<sup>15</sup> „Zanimljivo je pomenuti još i to – kaže već na početku ovog svog rada Bogdan Popović – da g. Domanović, kako izgleda, nije poznavao ranije obrasce toga roda u stranoj književnosti, ni Svifta ni Voltera, a još manje Lukijana, Rablea i Keveda. Ovo bi mu se, dabome, moglo upisati i u pogrešku, jer je jasno da je on na tim obrascima imao šta da nauči; ali je, s druge strane, i nov dokaz o tome da g. Domanović ima za ovu vrstu književnosti pravog i samoniklog dara” (Vučenov 1964: 9).

<sup>16</sup> a Serbian writer and literary critic.

<sup>17</sup> a Serbian politician and writer.

<sup>18</sup> a Serbian literary critic, historian and politician.

<sup>19</sup> „Ni posle, kada je pripremao kasnija izdanja svoje studije, Bodan Popović nije izmenio svoje mišljenje, a nisu ga korigovali ni Jovan Skerlić, Jaša Prodanović, Milan Grol, Todor Popović, Milorad Mitrović i drugi koji su bili intimniji poznanici i prijatelji s ovim našim satiričarem. Neki od njih godinama su bivali skoro svakodnevno s Domanovićem, vodeći razgovore o politici i književnosti, dolazili u njegov dom, i imali prilike da se upoznaju s njegovom lektinom i posebno s njegovim poznavanjem velikih svetskih satiričara” (Vučenov 1964: 10).

<sup>20</sup> Eng. *The satire and the satirists*.

<sup>21</sup> „Ni on (Domanović), kao ni veći deo njegovih književnih kolega, nikud neće putovati i ništa neće videti, izuzimajući besmisleno i očajničko jednogodišnje prebivanje u Minhenu, na samom kraju njegove književne karijere i na završetku njegovoga života” (Koš 1985: 104).

originality and spontaneity remain indisputable (see Vučenov 1964: 12). It is also important to note a few things about cultural and social climate of Serbia (Belgrade, to be precise) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Namely, according to Vučenov, during that period there originated the so-called “bohemian style” or “bohemianism” under whose influence were many Serbian writers and poets:

The writers and poets in Belgrade, or Serbia in general, during the second half of the nineteenth century “grew” primarily and predominantly from the native soil and native roots, from the patriarchal way and conditions of life. Their bohemianism, unlike that in the West, did not represent a way of resistance to society, in the name of absolute freedom of a person who considers himself spiritually superior to his surroundings. They were still too patriarchal for that. Their resistance (of the Serbian writers and poets), though they were still not aware of that, was directed against an urban way of life, political reaction, and against the police-governed and dictatorial country that was destroying patriarchal life relations, habits and customs. Likewise, they were spontaneously and perhaps subconsciously opposed to the introduction of the European literary and aesthetic standards in Serbian literature. Those were the writers naturally gifted, talented, but without the genuine, wider or more profound literary culture; the writers of great insight, perception and intelligence, however of narrow horizons and intellectual interests, without a deeper insight into European or world culture. (...) This bohemianism emphasized as its *credo* in the first place the raw, spontaneous, or nature-given talent of an artist, while on the other hand, it belittled education, knowledge, and cultivation of talent. It was against the criterion of exquisiteness of literary taste in opposition to the elementary creative power of an artist<sup>22</sup>. (Vučenov 1964: 11–12)

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<sup>22</sup> „Pisci i pesnici u Beogradu, i Srbiji uopšte, tokom druge polovine XIX veka rasli su prvenstveno i pretežno iz domaćeg tla i domaćih korena, iz patrijarhalnog načina i uslova života. Njihova boemija, za razliku od one na Zapadu, nije predstavljala jedan vid otpora društvu u ime zahteva za apsolutnom slobodom ličnosti, koja sebe u duhovnoj sferi oseća nadmoćnijom od sredine. I suviše su još bili patrijarhalni. Njihov otpor, mada oni toga nisu uvek bili svesni, javljao se protiv urbanizovanog vida života, protiv političke reakcije i na policijskoj stezi organizovane države koja je razarala patrijarhalne životne

The fact that Radoje Domanović belonged to this unofficial literary circle represents yet another proof of his originality and singularity in creating his (satirical) literary works, in addition to the aforementioned assertion of Bogdan Popović that he, Domanović, was neither familiar with the foreign literature nor versed in foreign languages (French, English or Latin) in which some of the most famous satirical works had been written.

## **2. The background of Domanović and Swift’s writing – political, cultural and social circumstances**

Radoje Domanović created his works during the very turbulent times of Serbian history, at the turn of the nineteenth century, during the reign of Alexander I of Serbia (Aleksandar Obrenović). The period of Alexander’s reign, namely from 1889 to 1903 was ended by the assassination of him and his wife Draga Mašin by the revolutionaries. Domanović employed such a political and social climate as an inspiration for the most of his satirical works. According to Živanović, “at the beginning of his writing career, he (Domanović) did also write a few humorous stories, but the main body of his satirical work only appeared after he came into conflict with the regime, which led to him being fired from his teaching post and moving to Belgrade in 1898” (Živanović 2020: 48). Vanja Jonović in the paper *Politička i socijalna satira u delima Radoja Domanovića*<sup>23</sup> states that “Domanović found an inexhaustible source for his (satirical) works in the distorted political reality of Serbia at the end of the nineteenth century. It was a time of the complete devaluation of democracy, totalitarianism and suppression of basic

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odnose, navike i običaje. Isto tako, oni su se spontano i možda nesvesno opirali unošenju evropskih književnih i estetičkih merila u srpsku književnost. Jer su to bili pisci prirodno obdareni, talentovani, ali bez prave, šire i dublje književne kulture; velike bistrine, okretne i pronicljive inteligencije, ali uskih horizonata i intelektualnih interesovanja, bez širokih vidika u evropskoj i svetskoj kulturi. (...) Ali isto tako ona je isticala kao svoj *credo* na prvom mestu sirovi, spontani ili od prirode dati umetnikov talenat, a potcenjivala obrazovanost, znanje, kultivisanje talenta. Bila je protiv kriterijuma istančanog ukusa, kome je nasuprot stavljala elementarnu stvaralačku snagu umetnikovu” (Vučenov 1964: 11–12).

<sup>23</sup> Eng. *Political and social satire in the works of Radoje Domanović*.

human freedoms”<sup>24</sup> (Jonović 2019: 36). Jovan Deretić in his book *Kulturna istorija Srba: predavanja* states the following about Domanović:

By bringing the situation in the narrative to absurdity, Domanović in his satirical-allegorical short stories represented the negative sides of the contemporary society: bureaucratic formality, degradation of the authentic values, subservient behavior of his fellow citizens, slave mentality (*Land of Tribulation, Danga, The Leader, The Dead sea*, etc.), while in the best of the aforementioned, *The Leader*, Domanović told the story about the collective obsession of the people with the leader who brings them to destruction. Influenced by the literary tradition of the nineteenth century, Domanović is, in the light of his satirical visions, a writer of the twentieth century<sup>25</sup> (Deretić 2005: 221).

According to Jonović, “the relevant characteristic of the political life of that time was a rapid shift of the governments and the formation of the new ones. The crux of Domanović’s satires became the harsh criticism of the political reality during the reign of Obrenović dynasty”<sup>26</sup> (Jonović 2019: 36). Gligorić, according to Jonović, states that “the satire of Domanović devastates the reign of Obrenović dynasty, it represents that reign in the form of caricature, it stigmatizes it, mocks it, travesties it, abandoning it to the judgment of people, mocked, deprived of its nobility and splendor”<sup>27</sup> (Jonović 2019: 36). Domanović in his satires paints a very morose picture of contemporary Serbia: there is a lot of corruption, profligacy, idleness of the officials, tyranny, destitution of the majority and wealth of the few.

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<sup>24</sup> „Neiscrpan izvor za svoja dela nalazio je u izobličenoj političkoj stvarnosti Srbije s kraja XIX veka. Bilo je to vreme potpunog srozavanja demokratije, uspostavljanja neprikosnovene vlasti dvora i gušenja osnovnih ljudskih sloboda” (Jonović 2019: 36).

<sup>25</sup> „Postupkom dovođenja do apsurdna Domanović je u satirično-alegoričnim pripovetkama prikazao negativne strane modernog društva: birokratski formalizam, degradaciju autentičnih vrednosti, podaničko vaspitanje, ropski mentalitet (*Stradija, Danga, Vodja, Mrtvo more* i dr.), a u najboljoj od njih, *Vodji*, ispričao je priču o kolektivnoj opsesiji vođjom koji vodi u pogibiju. Ponikao iz tradicije XIX veka on je po svojim satiričnim vizijama uistinu pisac XX veka” (Deretić 2005: 221).

<sup>26</sup> „Relevantna odlika tadašnjeg političkog života bila je brza smena vlada i postavljanje novih kabineta. Idejno jezgro Domanovićevih satira postaje oštra kritika stvarnosti za vreme dinastije Obrenović” (Jonović 2019: 36).

<sup>27</sup> „Domanovićeva satira razara vlast dinastije Obrenovića, ilustruje u karikaturi tu vlast, žigoše je, persiflira, parodira, predaje je ismejanu, lišenu maske i sjaja, sudu naroda” (Jonović 2019: 36).



Jonathan Swift employed satire in *Gulliver's Travels* to address numerous contemporary problems that existed in his country: corruption and moral degradation of the society, the pursuit of unnecessary scientific progress, profligacy, adultery and lechery, the social and political structure of Britain (through the words of Lilliputian and Brobdingnagan ruler), poltroonery, advocacy, etc. First published in 1726, *Gulliver's Travels*, according to Fernandes, are “full of political and literary allusions”:

In part one, Lilliput represents England, whereas Blefuscu is France. The Lilliputian treasurer Flimnap stands for Swift's old enemy Sir Robert Walpole, chief minister of England from 1715 to 1717 and from 1721 to 1742. Gulliver represents, for most of the time, Swift's personal friend Lord Bolingbroke, who was ungratefully accused of high treason in 1715, after playing a major role in the settlement of peace with France some years before. Similarly, in part three, “A voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Glubbdubdrib, Luggnagg, and Japan”, the episode of the Lindalinian rebellion is an allegory of the successful Irish resistance to the poor quality of a new coinage of copper half-pence (1722–1725). (Fernandes 2001: 93)

Carruthers, according to Neisya, in his book *Politics and Markets in the English Financial Revolution* states that “Jonathan Swift was the most influential political commentator of his time, in both England and Ireland” (Neisya 2018: 45). In writing *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift was in large measure inspired by the contemporary<sup>28</sup> political situation. According to Ehrenpreis (1957: 881), “part I of *Gulliver* is largely an allegory of English political history from 1708 to 1715, and in this allegory Gulliver stands largely for Bolingbroke, the secretary of state from 1710 to 1714.” Thus, Gulliver's quenching the fire which consumed the Lilliputian royal palace with his urine is often interpreted as “the Treaty of Utrecht, ending the War of the Spanish Succession” (Ehrenpreis 1957: 883), the Treaty being Lord Bolingbroke's responsibility. Further, Gulliver's visit to Blefuscu and his subsequent escape there has been interpreted as Bolingbroke's escape to France in 1715, where he remained in exile until 1723” (Ehrenpreis 1957: 883). “A Voyage to Lilliput” stands likewise for the harsh criticism of English politicians. Namely, according to Neisya, “the Lilliputian emperor, out of mercy, plans to blind and starve Gulliver – a direct reference to

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<sup>28</sup> The word “contemporary” has been employed in the text as a reference to Swift's time.

George's treatment of captured Jacobites, whom he executed – after parliament had called him the most merciful and lenient" (Neisya 2018: 52). Another political reference in "A Voyage to Lilliput" is "the distinct split of political views of the Tories and Whigs" (Neisya 2018: 48) in the image of Tramecksan(s) and Slamecksan(s), "the two struggling parties in the Lilliputian empire, (named after) the high and low heels of their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves" (Swift 2020: 51).

When it comes to the second part, "A Voyage to Brobdingnag", there are numerous allusions to the people from Swift's circle. Namely, according to Ehrenpreis:

Swift's memory of Sir William Temple provided the outline for the King of Brobdingnag. [...] The child Stella, or Esther Johnson, has a similar relationship with the girl giantess, Glumdalclitch, and of course, Swift knew Stella as a child while they were both living with Temple. Lady Temple, or Dorothy Osborne, is naturally associated with a queen since she was the intimate friend of Queen Mary, whose death narrowly preceded her own. (Ehrenpreis 1957: 885–886)

Swift held Sir William Temple in high regard and considered him a paragon of virtue to the extent that, when Temple died, Swift wrote that "with him [died] all that was good and amiable among men" (Ehrenpreis 1957: 887). What is more, Fernandes states that "the Brobdingnagians are more likely to represent Swift's ideal beings" (Fernandes 2001: 92), whereas Neisya considers the Brobdingnagians "the epitome of moral giants" (Neisya 2018: 52) besides being the actual ones. According to Koš (1985: 150), Gulliver's travels both to Lilliput and Brobdingnag represent a warning to humanity:

The hostile, suspicious attitude of the little people, and mercifulness and caresses of the big ones can cause similar consequences and the same pain. The malice and the suspicion of the little people may be dangerous, but one should be aware of the intimacy of the big ones, who may even involuntarily, by their embrace, squash a man or break him, letting him fall from a height to which they raised him<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> „Neprijateljsko, sumnjičavo držanje malih ljudi i milošta i zagrljaji velikih izazivaju slične posledice i isti bol. Opasna je zloba i podozrivost malih, ali se treba čuvati i prisnosti velikih, koji i nehотиčno, čak i svojim zagrljajem, mogu da zdrobe čoveka ili da ga razbiju, ispuštajući ga sa visine do koje su ga izdigli" (Koš 1985: 150).

The third part of *Gulliver’s Travels*, “A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbudrib, and Japan” has often been interpreted in the light of Swift’s criticism of the pursuit of unnecessary scientific progress. On a number of occasions he proclaimed “the uselessness of all learning not directed to some practical end” (Fernandes 2001: 98). Swift created the characters of the King of Laputa and the Laputans on the basis of the Reverend Thomas Sheridan, Swift’s long-term friend (see Ehrenpreis 1957: 895). Namely, “in letters, poems, and other papers, Swift continually bewailed Sheridan’s absent-mindedness, his inability to listen carefully during conversations, his irresponsibility and forgetfulness, his neglect of the essential business of life in favour of peripheral occupations” (Ehrenpreis 1957: 896). Swift provides a similar description of the Laputans in his novel: “[...] It seems the minds of these people are so taken up with intense speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the discourses of others, without being roused by some external taction upon the organs of speech and hearing” (Swift 2020: 199). Compared with the description of Sheridan in Swift’s letter, the analogy is more than obvious.

Lastly, “A Voyage to Houyhnhnmland” is often interpreted in terms of Swift’s criticism of deistic philosophy<sup>30</sup>, which was prevalent at Swift’s time. Ehrenpreis states that,

The inexhaustible benevolence of the Houyhnhnms sounds, even prima facie, like a parody of such antecedents of deism as the Earl of Shaftesbury, who says, “To deserve the name of good or virtuous, a creature must have all his inclinations and affections, his dispositions of mind and temper, suitable, and agreeing with the good of his kind... this affection of a creature toward the good of the species or common nature is... proper and natural to him. (Ehrenpreis 1957: 890).

Likewise, Fernandes asserts that “Swift’s attack is on the philosophic optimists of that time, with their unrealistic faith in progress and reason”,

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<sup>30</sup> “Deism, an unorthodox religious attitude that found expression among a group of English writers beginning with Edward Herbert in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and ending with Henry St. John, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Bolingbroke, in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In general, Deism refers to what can be called natural religion, the acceptance of a certain body of religious knowledge that is inborn in every person or that can be acquired by the use of reason and rejection of religious knowledge when it is acquired through either revelation or the teaching of any church.” <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Deism>>, accessed: 18<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

the fact that might be said to be in accordance with Wedel<sup>31</sup> (1926) and Case's<sup>32</sup> (1945) interpretation of "Yahoos and Houyhnhnms representing two extremes between which human behaviour may range" (Fernandes 2001: 101).

### **3. Land of tribulation and Gulliver's Travels – a comparative analysis**

Both Domanović and Swift place their narratives in some fictional, distant country, whereas their countries (Serbia/Britain) are only alluded to, though every reader is more than aware of the existence of the real country behind this fictional one. According to Jonović:

The placement of a certain narrative in an unknown, distant country allows for a distance between reality and the world represented in the narrative. [...] Myth and reality occur as the opposites, but through the course of the story they merge into a single vision. By doing that it is possible to reveal the negative sides of social phenomena and characters in an ironic, covert way.<sup>33</sup> (Jonović 2019: 45)

Consequently, Swift places his narratives in different, fictional countries, Lilliput, Brobdingnag, Laputa, or the Land of the Houyhnhnms, whereas Domanović uses the fictional country Land of Tribulation for the setting of his narrative.

Another point of similarity between the writing of Domanović and Swift is that both of them claim to have come into possession of the narrative they are about to recount, i.e. it is not their story. Domanović claims to have accidentally found a book of the events he is about to give an account of, while Swift attributes the authorship of the story to "his ancient and intimate friend, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver" (Swift 2020: 2). For the purposes

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<sup>31</sup> Wedel, T. O. (1926), "On the Philosophical Background of *Gulliver's Travels*", *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 23, pp. 434–450.

<sup>32</sup> Case, A. E. (1945), *Four Essays on Gulliver's Travels*, Peter Smith.

<sup>33</sup> „Smeštanjem radnje u nepoznatu zemlju ostvarena je prividna distanca između realnosti i sveta prikazanog u delima. [...] Mit i realnost javljaju se kao suprotnosti, ali se kroz priču slivaju u jednu viziju. Njome se ironično i u zavijenoj formi otkrivaju loše strane društvenih pojava i ličnosti” (Jonović 2019: 45).

of the paper, we will compare the excerpts taken from Domanović’s and Swift’s respective works which attest to the aforementioned analogy:

I read a strange story in an old book; only God knows how I got this book from some ridiculous period, in which there were lots of liberal laws, yet there was no freedom; they gave speeches and wrote books about the economy, yet nobody sowed the fields; the whole country was flooded with moral lessons, yet there was no morality; there was an attic full of logic in every house, yet there was no common sense; at every step they talked about savings and the prosperity of the country, yet they recklessly wasted money, any loan shark or rascal could buy himself the title of “great national patriot” for just a few piasters.<sup>34</sup> (Držajić 2017: 134)

The author of these Travels, Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, is my ancient and intimate friend; there is likewise some relation between us on the mother’s side. About three years ago, Mr. Gulliver growing weary of the concourse of curious people coming to him at his house in Redriff, made a small purchase of land, with a convenient house, near Newark, in Nottinghamshire, his native country; where he now lives retired, yet in good esteem among his neighbors. [...] Before he quit Redriff, he left custody of the following papers in my hands, with the liberty to dispose of them as I should think fit. (Swift 2020: 2)

Poltroonery of the officials is something that Domanović and Swift mock in their works. In Domanović’s *Land of Tribulation* there are delegations coming to the Minister of Finance to congratulate him on the “successful blister surgery”:

Clerks... a deputation of clerks from government offices, with their chief at the head, were at the Finance Minister’s office yesterday at four o’clock in the afternoon to congratulate him on the successful completion of his operation. The Minister received them kindly and warm-heartedly, and on that occasion the chief clerk gave a touching speech on behalf of all the officials of his ministry, and the Minister thanked everyone for this rare display of concern and their sincere feelings. (Držajić 2017: 169)

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<sup>34</sup> A unit of currency.

Domanović's short story *Danga* provides another example of the said poltroonery. According to Jonović, "flattering the people in power is described most blatantly in the image of the subjects feeling proud of being ridden by the government representatives. In their subservience to the government, they know no bounds; they proudly wear the mask as a sign of their obedience, and the sign of their being someone's property"<sup>35</sup> (Jonović 2019: 41). Swift mocks the poltroonery of the officials in "A Voyage to Lilliput", in the scene where the potential candidates compete for vacant position at the court by "dancing on the rope" for the King:

This diversion is only practiced by those persons who are candidates for great employment, and high favor at court. They are trained in this art from their youth and are not always of noble birth, or liberal education. When a great office is vacant, either by death or disgrace (which often happens) five or six of those candidates petition the emperor to entertain his majesty and the court with a dance on the rope; and whoever jumps the highest, without falling, succeeds in the office. Very often the chief ministers themselves are commanded to show their skill and to convince the emperor that they have not lost their faculty. Flimnap, the treasurer, is allowed to cut a caper on the straight rope, at least an inch higher than any other lord in the whole empire. I have seen him do the summerset several times together, upon a trencher fixed on a rope which is no thicker than a common packthread in England. My friend Reldresal, principal secretary for private affairs, is, in my opinion, if I am not partial, the second after the treasurer; the rest of the great officers are much upon a par. (Swift 2020: 39)

Swift provides a criticism of the politicians' treachery and fickleness, their readiness to do everything for the power. Neisya states that "Swift's model for Flimnap was Robert Walpole, the leader of the Whigs and England's first prime minister in the modern sense. Walpole was an extremely wily politician, as Swift shows, by making Flimnap the most dexterous of the rope dancers. Reldresal, the second most dexterous of the rope dancers,

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<sup>35</sup> „Dodvoravanje moćnicima najslikovitije je opisano slikom podanika kojima je čast da ih jašu predstavnici vlasti. Kao najviša ljudska vrednost ističe se čin jahanja od strane predstavnika zakona. U svojoj poniznosti pred vlašću, narod ne zna za granice; sa ponosom nose žig kao znak poslušnosti, ali i kao znak da su nečija svojina” (Jonović 2019: 41).

probably represents Viscount Townshend or Lord Carteret" (see Neisya 2018: 51).

Another point of similarity between Domanović's and Swift's respective works is the criticism of totalitarian regimes. Namely, in Domanović's *Land of Tribulation* the Minister of War uses the army not to defend the country against the attack of the Anuts, but to protect the current regime against the dissatisfaction of the people with it, something revealed to the narrator in his conversation with the Minister:

My dear sir, you are not fully informed. The main thing here is not to preserve the country, but to maintain the government for as long as possible. The last cabinet survived for a month, and we've been here for two or three weeks, so we cannot allow ourselves to fall so shamefully! Our position has been shaken constantly, and, of course, we must employ all means at our disposal to stay in power as long as possible. [...] Therefore, because of these surprises, festivities and conspiracies, the army is always necessary to maintain our internal affairs. This is a minor thing, my dear sir, that people are dying there; but for me the main thing is to resolve more important matters, more beneficial for the country than the stupid idea of fighting with the Anutti. (Držajić 2017: 177–178)

Swift in the second part of his *Travels*, "A Voyage to Brobdingnag", criticizes the mercenary standing army in Gulliver's country (England) through the words of the King of Brobdingnag, the implication of whose speech is that the best protection against the strife, internal or from the outside, is the solidarity of the people who are satisfied with the government of their country:

He wondered to hear me talk of such chargeable and expensive wars; that certainly we must be a quarrelsome people, or live among very bad neighbours, and that our generals must needs be richer than our kings. He asked, what business we had out of our own islands, unless upon the score of trade, or treaty, or to defend the coasts with our fleet? Above all, he was amazed to hear me talk of a mercenary standing army, in the midst of peace, and among a free people. He said, "if we were governed by our own consent, in the persons of our representatives, he could not imagine of whom we were afraid, or against whom we were to

fight; and would hear my opinion, whether a private man's house might not be better defended by himself, his children, and family, than by half-a-dozen rascals, picked up at a venture in the streets for small wages, who might get a hundred times more by cutting their throats? (Swift 2020: 162–163)

The indicator of an unjust and corrupted government, is its striving to remain in power at all costs, sometimes even using the army against its own people. However, whereas Domanović criticizes the country where the police, as an extended arm of the government, choose the representatives of the people instead of the people themselves, Swift goes one step further, condemning England's avarice and expansionism.

The decorations given to the people for nonsensical feats are another point of similarity between Domanović's *Land of Tribulation* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. In Domanović's *Land of Tribulation* citizens get medals for not committing theft:

One told me that he was given a medal by his minister for rare merits and sacrifice for his fatherland, because he handled a lot of state money for a whole year, and, in the review, they found only two thousand less than there should have been in the cash register. 'He was righteous,' they said, 'because he could have ruined everything, but his generosity and patriotism didn't allow him to do so'. (Držajić 2017: 140)

Jović (2018), according to Jonović, states that "the court was being very forthcoming with giving out the decorations, to gain people's support and trust. The motif of decorations further emphasizes the absurd value system in the scenes of distorting the logical truths"<sup>36</sup> (Jonović 2019: 41). Similarly, Swift employs the motif of the "silken threads" to indicate the degraded value system:

There is likewise another diversion, which is only shown before the emperor and empress, and first minister, upon particular occasions. The emperor lays on the table three fine silken threads of six inches long; one is blue, the other red, and the third green. These threads are proposed as prizes for those persons

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<sup>36</sup> „U cilju pridobijanja simpatija i poverenja građana, dvor je 'šakom i kapom' delio i odlikovanja. Motivom ordenja naglašen je apurdan sistem vrednosti u scenama izokretanja logičnih istina" (Jonović 2019: 41).



whom the emperor has a mind to distinguish by a peculiar mark of his favour. The ceremony is performed in his majesty's great chamber of state, where the candidates are to undergo a trial of dexterity very different from the former, and such as I have not observed the least resemblance of in any other country of the new or old world. The emperor holds a stick in his hands, both ends parallel to the horizon, while the candidates advancing, one by one, sometimes leap over the stick, sometimes creep under it, backward and forward, several times, according as the stick is advanced or depressed. Sometimes the emperor holds one end of the stick, and his first minister the other; sometimes the minister has it entirely to himself. Whoever performs his part with most agility, and holds out the longest in leaping and creeping, is rewarded with the blue-colored silk; the red is given to the next, and the green to the third, which they all wear twice round about the middle; and you see few great persons about this court who are not adorned with one of these girdles. (Swift 2020: 40)

The only difference between Domanović's and Swift's reward system is that, in Land of Tribulation, the medals are unrestrictedly given out to everyone, while in Swift's Lilliput those silken threads are reserved only for "the great persons about the court".

One of the further points of similarity between *Land of Tribulation* and *The Gulliver's Travels* is a constant threat of the invasion by an enemy: in Land of Tribulation this is an enemy tribe called the Anuts, whereas in Swift's Lilliput Blefuscu, the neighbouring island nation, performs the role of an enemy.

The pursuit of the unnecessary scientific progress is another point of similarity between Domanović's and Swift's respective works. According to Jonović, "the motif of a 'quasi-scientist' is particularly emphasized in the prose of Radoje Domanović. Since such people enjoyed an enormous protection of the ruling regime, the motif of quasi-scientists stands not only for the condition of education, but for the dictatorial regime that threatened and prevented any progress"<sup>37</sup> (Jonović 2019: 33). Jonović further states that "through the representation of the scientists that discover the already

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<sup>37</sup> „Motiv 'lažnih' naučnika posebno je došao do izražaja u prozi Radoja Domanovića. S obzirom na to da su takvi ljudi najveću zaštitu imali u vladajućem režimu, motivom kvazinaučnika oslikano je ne samo stanje u obrazovanju, već i diktatorski režim koji je ugrožavao i onemogućavao svaki napredak”.

discovered philological truths (in the Ministry of Education), the author points to the obvious distraction from the existing problems of the Ministry of Education. By making a lot of fuss about language and style, the heads of the Ministry try to cover up the poverty of the teachers”<sup>38</sup> (Jonović 2019: 38–39).

In the third part of his *Gulliver’s Travels*, “A Voyage to Laputa, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg, Glubbudrib, and Japan”, Swift criticizes the pursuit of scientific progress through the representation of the narrator’s visit to the grand academy of Lagado and its scholars:

[...] I went into another chamber, but was ready to hasten back, being almost overcome with a horrible stink. [...] The projector of this cell was the most ancient student of the academy; his face and beard were of a pale yellow; his hands and clothes daubed over with filth. [...] His employment, from his first coming into the academy, was an operation to reduce human excrement to its original food, by separating the several parts, removing the tincture which it receives from the gall, making the odour exhale, and scumming off the saliva. [...] There was a most ingenious architect, who had contrived a new method for building houses, by beginning at the roof, and working downward to the foundation; which he justified to me, by the like practice of those two prudent insects, the bee and the spider. (Swift 2020: 225)

Unlike Domanović who implies that the excessive insistence on philology at the Ministry of Education is just a way of distracting attention from the major problem (i.e. the destitution of the teachers), Swift more likely provides the criticism of the aforementioned “uselessness of all learning not directed to some practical ends”.

According to Vučenov, “[e]ven if Domanović did not turn the citizens of Stradija into physical Lilliputians, he turned them into moral ones. His (Domanović’s) *Land of Tribulation* could consequently be entitled *The Lilliput*, and the adventures of his heroes: *Among the Lilliputians*”<sup>39</sup> (Vučenov

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<sup>38</sup> „Slikom naučnika koji proučavaju već otkrivene jezičke istine ukazano je na pokušaj skretanja pažnje sa tekućih problema prosvete. Dižući puno prašine oko jezika i stila, čelnici ministarstva prikrivaju siromaštvo do kog su dovedeni nastavnici” (Jonović 2019: 38–39).

<sup>39</sup> „Ako i nije od njih, kao Džonatan Swift, načinio fizičke Lilibutance, on ih je stvarno učinio moralnim Lilibutantcima. Njegova *Stradija* mogla bi se isto tako zvati i *Lilibut*, a doživljaji njegovih junaka: *Među Lilibutantcima*” (Vučenov 1964: 16).

1964: 16). Though of normal stature, the midgets of Domanović’s *Land of Tribulation* prove to have more detrimental consequences, permeating through all the pores of the society and being present everywhere, regardless of a historical period or geographical area for that matter.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Satire has often been defined as “a literary work holding up human vices to ridicule or scorn”. Northrop Frye (McFarlane 2011: 154) claims that “two things are essential for satire: wit or humour and an object of attack” and that “satire implies a moral or social comparison between what it presents and a standard of normality in the reader’s mind”. A satiric text engages the reader in the quest for hidden meanings, revealed or concealed through different literary mechanisms. A satirist is simultaneously an object of both admiration and envy: the readers admire his courage, but they nevertheless envy him because of his fearlessness or impertinence to attack, the qualities they do not possess.

Both Domanović and Swift employ social satire to address social, cultural, and political problems that existed in their respective countries. Despite some similarities between the writings of Domanović and Swift, there is no reason to assume that Domanović was influenced by Swift. Domanović was not versed in any foreign language (except for German during the year he spent in Munich in 1903, when he had already written all of his great works), and he belonged to an unofficial literary circle characterized by bohemian style or bohemianism. This literary circle emphasized the raw, spontaneous, or nature-given talent of an artist while belittling education, knowledge, the exquisiteness of literary taste, and the cultivation of talent. The fact that Domanović belonged to this circle was yet another proof of his originality and singularity. In the paper, we have proven that the writings of Domanović and Swift, two authors separated by space and time, show considerable similarities. These similarities testify to the quality of the satire as a universal remedy against the deficiencies and the corruption of society.

Due to the nature and the scope of the paper, only selected points of similarity between these two satirical works have been enlisted. Some possible, future research might provide a more thorough analysis of the similarities in the corpus of these two satirical works or an analysis that

will include a corpus of the research consisting of Domanović's and Swift's other works (besides *Land of Tribulation* and *Gulliver's Travels*), or even a comparative analysis (of a wider scope) that will include the complete body of literature of these two authors as a corpus for the research.

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