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The Liberating Forces of Satire

"The Liberating Forces of Satire" is partly a continuation of Dr. Zekavat's previous research on satire that attempted to explain its discursive interactions and its role in the construction of subjects' identities.

Recently, the unprecedented expansion of social networks and virtual space as well as the diversity of media of expression have greatly diversified and diffused satire. Many studies illustrate or presume its numerous impacts and benefits, but its political and ethical bearings have proved to be contentious.

This research project attempts to show that satire can have political and ethical consequences as a liberating force for ethnic, gender and class minorities depending on the contexts that produce and receive it. Its contributions will be two-folded: besides shedding a new light on the socio-political subtleties of satire, it will also convey how contextualizing literary theories can pioneer new perspectives in understanding the dynamics of interpretation.

Race and ethnicity studies, gender studies, Marxism and environmental humanities will be employed within the general framework of comparative literary and cultural studies to examine and explain how ethnic, sexist and classist satires can be politically and ethically liberating in different contexts. A diversity of works and media across eastern and western cultures and traditions will be investigated in order to provide an opportunity for a genuinely intercultural, non-Eurocentric and comparative study.

Besides its implications for policy makers, this project hopes to engage humanities research results in everyday life experiences and aims to give voice to marginalized groups, hence facilitate intercultural mutual understanding. In other words, it hopes to find ways through which satire can be employed to further political causes pertinent to contemporary topics including minorities, immigration and environmentalism. Explicating the ethical and political consequences of satire across cultures will make it possible to employ it as a liberating strategy to give voice to the marginalized, hence to improve their statuses and safely resolve societal and political tensions.

A special issue of the European Journal of Humour Research (EJHR) on "The Contingent Dynamics of Political Humor," guest-edited with Professor Sammy Basu, and a book project that investigates how critical environmentalism can be promoted through satire and humor as adaptive cultural devices, with Tabea Scheel, are already conceived within this research project.

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