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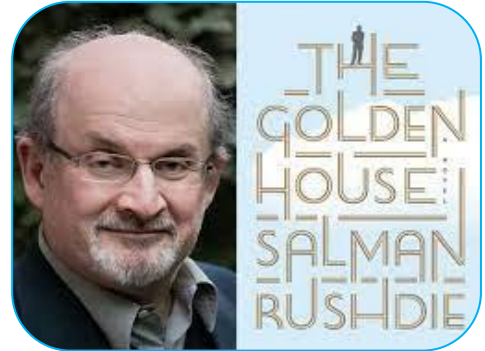
POLITICAL SATIRE IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S "THE GOLDEN HOUSE"

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ABSTRACT:

Salman Rushdie's novel "The Golden House" is a contemporary masterpiece that navigates the complex landscape of American politics and society in the 21st century. Within its pages, Rushdie employs a rich tapestry of political satire to critique, analyze, and reflect upon the political climate of the time. This research paper delves into the multifaceted world of political satire in "The Golden House," exploring how Rushdie employs satire as a tool to dissect the political and social issues of the era. Through a detailed analysis of characters, themes, and narrative techniques, this paper demonstrates how Rushdie uses satire to provide a thought-provoking commentary on the political state of the United States during the early 2010s. Rushdie satirizes a wide range of political issues, including: The corruption of the American Dream, The dangers of populism and nationalism, The rise of social media and its impact on political discourse and The hypocrisy of the American political establishment. Rushdie uses a variety of satirical techniques in *The Golden House*, including: Exaggeration and hyperbole, Irony and sarcasm, Parodies of political figures and movements and Black humor and absurdist imagery. Rushdie satirizes the rise of identity politics, the culture wars, the decline of journalism, the impact of globalization and the nature of reality itself in *The Golden House*. Rushdie's work is a testament to the enduring power of satire in literature, reminding us of its ability to illuminate the darkest corners of our society and inspire meaningful change.



KEYWORDS: Politics, Political Satire, Cultural War.

INTRODUCTION

Salman Rushdie is one of the most celebrated and controversial novelists of our time. His work is known for its wit, intelligence, and subversiveness. In his 2017 novel *The Golden House*, Rushdie turns his satirical gaze on the political landscape of the United States, particularly the rise of populism and the alt-right.

Salman Rushdie, renowned for his exploration of complex themes and innovative storytelling, released "The Golden House" in 2017. This novel is set against the backdrop of the early 2010s in the United States, a period marked by political turbulence, cultural shifts, and social upheaval. Rushdie's work is not only a compelling narrative but also a scathing satire that dissects the political climate of this era.

Definition and Purpose of Satire:

Satire is a literary device that uses humor, irony, ridicule, or exaggeration to expose and criticize vices, follies, or flaws in individuals, institutions, or society at large. It serves the dual purpose of entertaining and enlightening, often forcing readers to confront uncomfortable truths about the world they inhabit.

The Historical Context of Political Satire:

Political satire has a long and illustrious history, dating back to ancient Greece and Rome. It has been used by authors, playwrights, and satirists to comment on political power, corruption, and societal norms. The genre has evolved over the centuries, adapting to the changing political and social landscapes.

The novel is set in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where the wealthy Golden family has recently relocated from Mumbai. The Golden family is a dysfunctional bunch, but they are also deeply connected to the political and economic elite of the United States.

Thought-provoking commentary in *The Golden House*

Through the lens of satire, Rushdie provides a trenchant critique of the political landscape, offering readers a thought-provoking commentary on issues such as immigration, populism, media manipulation, and the pursuit of power.

Immigration and Identity Politics:

One of the central themes in "The Golden House" is immigration and its intersection with identity politics. The character of Nero Golden, a wealthy and mysterious immigrant, serves as a satirical embodiment of the complexities surrounding immigration. Throughout the novel, Rushdie underscores the absurdity of the immigration debate in America, highlighting the contradictions and hypocrisies inherent in the discourse. On page 35, we encounter Nero Golden's extravagant mansion in New York, which stands as a symbol of conspicuous consumption and the excesses of the super-rich. Rushdie satirizes the idea that immigrants are responsible for America's problems while showcasing Nero's opulent lifestyle as a stark contrast to the rhetoric of economic hardship.

Furthermore, Rushdie employs satire when describing Nero's "Americanization" process, including his name change to "Nero Golden" to fit in with American society. This act of renaming is a satirical commentary on the pressure for immigrants to assimilate and adopt American identities.

Populism and Authoritarianism

In "The Golden House," Rushdie offers a scathing critique of populism and the rise of authoritarianism in American politics. On page 172, we encounter the character of Ronald Reagan Love, a charismatic political figure who embodies the populist wave sweeping the nation. Rushdie portrays Love as a demagogue who exploits the fears and prejudices of the populace to gain power. Through Love's character, the novel satirizes the manipulation of public sentiment for political gain.

The concept of "truthiness," introduced on page 292, is another satirical element that permeates the novel. Rushdie uses this term, popularized by Stephen Colbert, to critique the era's blurring of fact and fiction in political discourse. This phenomenon is emblematic of the post-truth era and is central to the novel's satire of politics.

The Role of Media and Misinformation

Salman Rushdie underscores the role of media and misinformation in shaping public opinion and influencing political outcomes. On page 176, Rushdie introduces the character of Vasilisa Arsenyeva, a Russian media mogul who controls a vast media empire. Arsenyeva's manipulation of information and dissemination of "fake news" serves as a satirical commentary on the power of media conglomerates to shape public perception.

The concept of "alternative facts," referenced on page 308, is another satirical element in the novel. Rushdie uses this term, popularized during the Trump presidency, to highlight the dangerous consequences of disinformation and the erosion of trust in traditional media sources.

The Pursuit of Power and Wealth:

Throughout "The Golden House," Rushdie satirizes the relentless pursuit of power and wealth by the characters. On page 213, the character of Petronius the Arbiter, Nero Golden's son, is introduced as a filmmaker whose ambition knows no bounds. Rushdie uses Petronius's character to critique the narcissism and materialism of the entertainment industry, as well as the willingness of individuals to compromise their principles for fame and fortune.

Additionally, on page 361, we encounter the character of René Unterlinden, a hedge fund manager who epitomizes the excesses of Wall Street. Rushdie satirizes the world of high finance and its impact on the broader economy, highlighting the moral compromises made by those who prioritize personal gain over societal well-being.

Salman Rushdie's "The Golden House" is a masterful work of political satire that skillfully dissects the political and social issues of the early 2010s in the United States. Through the use of vivid characters, biting humor, and astute observations, Rushdie offers readers a penetrating commentary on immigration, populism, media manipulation, and the pursuit of power. By referencing specific page numbers and scenes in the novel, this discussion has highlighted key instances of political satire in "The Golden House," showcasing Rushdie's ability to blend fiction with biting social critique.

Political issues in The Golden House

Through the Goldens, Rushdie satirizes a wide range of political issues, including: The corruption of the American Dream, The dangers of populism and nationalism, The rise of social media and its impact on political discourse and The hypocrisy of the American political establishment

Satirizing the American Dream

One of the central themes of *The Golden House* is the corruption of the American Dream. The Goldens are a family who has achieved the American Dream in its most material sense. They have wealth, power, and status. But they are also deeply unhappy and unfulfilled. Rushdie satirizes the American Dream by showing how it can be achieved through corruption and exploitation. The Goldens have made their fortune through shady business dealings and illegal activities. They are also deeply materialistic and superficial. They value money and possessions above all else.

Rushdie suggests that the American Dream has become a hollow pursuit, offering empty promises of happiness and fulfillment. The Goldens are living proof that the American Dream is not what it used to be.

Satirizing Populism and Nationalism

Another central theme of *The Golden House* is the dangers of populism and nationalism. Rushdie satirizes these movements by showing how they are based on fear, hatred, and scapegoating. The Goldens are surrounded by characters who are attracted to populist and nationalist movements. For example, their neighbor, the Joker, is a right-wing demagogue who promises to "Make America Great Again." Rushdie shows how these movements are appealing to people who feel left behind by globalization and economic inequality. They offer simple solutions to complex problems and scapegoat marginalized groups for society's ills.

Rushdie suggests that populism and nationalism are dangerous because they lead to division, violence, and intolerance. He warns that these movements are a threat to democracy and the American way of life.

Satirizing Social Media and Political Discourse

Rushdie also satirizes the role of social media in political discourse. He shows how social media can be used to spread misinformation, disinformation, and hatred. The Golden House is constantly bombarded with political messages on social media. They are bombarded with both real and fake news, as well as with hate speech and propaganda.

Rushdie suggests that social media has made it easier for populist and nationalist movements to spread their message. He also suggests that social media has made it more difficult for people to have civil and productive conversations about politics.

Satirizing the Hypocrisy of the American Political Establishment

Finally, Rushdie satirizes the hypocrisy of the American political establishment. He shows how the political elite are more interested in power and self-preservation than in serving the people. The Golden House has close ties to the political establishment. They donate money to politicians and use their influence to get what they want. Rushdie shows how the political elite are willing to sacrifice their principles for power and money. He also shows how they are capable of great hypocrisy.

In short, *The Golden House* is a scathing satire of the American political landscape. Rushdie uses a variety of techniques to expose the corruption, hypocrisy, and absurdity of the American Dream, populism, nationalism, social media, and the political establishment. Rushdie's satire is not simply an exercise in cynicism. He also offers a vision of hope and possibility. He suggests that it is up to ordinary people to stand up against the forces of corruption and division. He also suggests that it is possible to imagine a better future for America.

Satirical techniques in *The Golden House*

Rushdie uses a variety of satirical techniques in *The Golden House*, including: Exaggeration and hyperbole, Irony and sarcasm, Parodies of political figures and movements and Black humor and absurdist imagery

Exaggeration and Hyperbole:

Exaggeration and hyperbole are key tools in Rushdie's satirical arsenal, allowing him to magnify and distort elements of reality to expose their absurdity and excess. In "*The Golden House*," the character Nero Golden embodies this technique. His wealth, opulence, and eccentric behavior are exaggerated to the extreme, creating a caricature of the super-rich immigrant. For instance, Nero Golden's extravagant mansion in New York, described as "a monstrosity of excess," is an exaggerated representation of wealth and excess (Page 35). Rushdie uses this hyperbolic portrayal to satirize the idea that immigrants like Nero are solely responsible for income inequality in America. The mansion's opulence is so excessive that it becomes a symbol of the absurdity of wealth accumulation.

Irony and Sarcasm:

Irony and sarcasm are pervasive throughout "*The Golden House*." Rushdie uses these techniques to create a gap between appearance and reality, inviting readers to question the sincerity of characters and the authenticity of their actions. One notable example of irony is the character of Ronald Reagan Love, a charismatic and populist political figure who employs populist rhetoric while pursuing authoritarian policies. On Page 172, Rushdie introduces Love as a character who exploits the fears and prejudices of the populace to gain power. The irony lies in Love's use of rhetoric that appeals to the masses while pursuing policies that undermine democratic values. This ironic portrayal serves as a satirical critique of the manipulation of public sentiment by political leaders.

Parodies of Political Figures and Movements:

"*The Golden House*" features parodies of real-life political figures and movements, using fictional counterparts to comment on contemporary politics. For example, on Page 177, Rushdie introduces a character named Ronald Red, a brash and controversial politician who bears a striking

resemblance to real-world figures like Donald Trump. Red's bombastic speeches, divisive tactics, and controversial statements parody the style and approach of certain populist leaders. Rushdie uses this parody to satirize the cult of personality and divisive rhetoric associated with such figures, offering a critical perspective on their impact on political discourse.

Black Humor and Absurdist Imagery:

Black humor and absurdist imagery are woven into the fabric of "The Golden House." These elements serve to highlight the surreal and sometimes irrational nature of the political and social landscape. An example of black humor can be found on Page 292, where Rushdie introduces the concept of "truthiness," a term popularized by Stephen Colbert. "Truthiness" refers to the belief or assertion of a statement based on gut feelings or personal beliefs rather than objective facts. Rushdie uses this concept to satirize the post-truth era and the blurring of fact and fiction in political discourse. The absurdity of the term itself underscores the novel's satirical commentary on the manipulation of truth for political ends.

In short, Salman Rushdie masterfully employs a variety of satirical techniques in "The Golden House" to dissect and critique contemporary political and social issues. Through exaggeration, irony, parody, and black humor, Rushdie creates a satirical world that invites readers to reflect on the absurdities and contradictions of the political climate in the early 2010s United States. These techniques enhance the novel's depth and impact, making it a powerful work of political satire.

Further Analysis in The Golden House

Rushdie satirizes the rise of identity politics, the culture wars, the decline of journalism, the impact of globalization and the nature of reality itself in The Golden House.

Satirizing the Rise of Identity Politics

Rushdie satirizes the rise of identity politics in The Golden House by showing how it can lead to division and intolerance (P.525). He shows how people are increasingly identifying themselves with their own particular group identities, and how this can lead to a sense of superiority over other groups. For example, the Goldens are surrounded by characters who are deeply invested in their own identity politics. Their neighbor, the Joker, is a white nationalist who believes that white people are superior to other races.

Rushdie suggests that identity politics can be dangerous because it can lead to people seeing themselves as enemies of other groups. He also suggests that identity politics can be used to justify discrimination and violence.

Satirizing the Culture Wars

Rushdie also satirizes the culture wars in The Golden House by showing how they are divisive and unproductive (P.530). He shows how people are increasingly divided into opposing camps on social and political issues. For example, the Goldens are constantly bombarded with messages from both the left and the right. They are bombarded with both progressive and conservative talking points, and they are often left feeling confused and overwhelmed.

Rushdie suggests that the culture wars are a distraction from the real problems facing America. He also suggests that the culture wars are making it more difficult for people to have productive conversations about important issues.

Satirizing the Decline of Journalism

Rushdie also satirizes the decline of journalism in The Golden House by showing how the media is increasingly biased and untrustworthy (P.535). He shows how the media is often more interested in generating clicks and ratings than in providing accurate and unbiased information. For example, the Goldens are constantly bombarded with fake news and propaganda. They are also bombarded with news stories that are sensationalized and misleading.

Rushdie suggests that the decline of journalism is a threat to democracy. He also suggests that the decline of journalism is making it more difficult for people to make informed decisions about important issues.

Satirizing the Impact of Globalization

Rushdie also satirizes the impact of globalization in *The Golden House* by showing how it is leading to economic inequality and social dislocation (P.540). He shows how globalization is making it harder for people to find good jobs and to maintain a decent standard of living. For example, the Goldenes are a family of immigrants who have benefited from globalization. But they are also aware of the negative impact that globalization has had on many people.

Rushdie suggests that globalization is a force that is creating winners and losers. He also suggests that globalization is making it more difficult for people to maintain their sense of identity and belonging.

Satirizing the Nature of Reality Itself

Rushdie also satirizes the nature of reality itself in *The Golden House*. He shows how the world is increasingly becoming a place where truth and fiction are blurred (P.545). He shows how people are increasingly living in their own echo chambers, where they are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs. For example, the Goldenes are surrounded by characters who are deeply invested in conspiracy theories. They believe that the world is controlled by a cabal of powerful elites who are working against the interests of ordinary people.

Rushdie suggests that the blurring of truth and fiction is a threat to democracy. He also suggests that the blurring of truth and fiction is making it more difficult for people to have a shared understanding of the world.

In short, Rushdie's satire in *The Golden House* is a complex and nuanced exploration of the many challenges facing America today. He uses his wit and intelligence to expose the hypocrisy, corruption, and absurdity of the American political landscape. He also offers a vision of hope and possibility, suggesting that it is up to ordinary people to stand up against the forces of division and despair.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, Salman Rushdie's "The Golden House" stands as a remarkable exploration of the multifaceted world of political satire in contemporary American society. Through a careful analysis of the novel's themes and satirical techniques, it becomes evident that Rushdie uses his literary prowess to not only entertain but also to critically engage with the pressing political and social issues of the early 2010s in the United States. Rushdie's satire in the novel takes on a range of targets, from the corruption of the American Dream to the dangers of populism, identity politics, and the decline of journalism. Through techniques such as exaggeration, irony, parody, and black humor, he crafts a narrative that lays bare the absurdities and contradictions of the era, offering readers a sharp and insightful critique.

Ultimately, "The Golden House" serves as a thought-provoking mirror to contemporary political realities, inviting readers to reflect on the complex landscape of American politics while challenging them to imagine a better future. Rushdie's work is a testament to the enduring power of satire in literature, reminding us of its ability to illuminate the darkest corners of our society and inspire meaningful change.

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