Under the Influence of Satire

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Introduction

This thesis compares and contrasts the two plays, *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* by George Bernard Shaw, based on their political agendas through the literary form of satire; they are greatly influenced by the time period in which they lived, and express themselves through the female characters in their plays. Insight and further understanding of each play will be provided, and it will be demonstrated how the authors had a goal of starting specific conversations amongst their audiences. Though these conversations differ, Aristophanes and Shaw demonstrate the ability to politically and intellectually enlighten their audiences through pleasure.

Aristophanes was a native of Greece during the first century B.C.E., and witnessed the cruel occurrences of the Peloponnesian War and the challenge to Greece’s political stability. In his play *Lysistrata* he took the idea of war and molded it into a battle of the sexes. The main idea of the play is that the women of Greece, both Athenians and Spartans, are seeking to end the war, and in order to do so they hold a sex strike. The sex strike is used as a way to intrigue the audience through humor and risqué references; the use of satire is amplified when he uses women as the dominant characters. The women hold the power in the play, and this makes the Athenian audience uneasy. This uneasiness is what Aristophanes wants to accomplish, and he puts the audience in a vulnerable state. *Lysistrata* is meant to warn the people of Greece; what he is warning against and how he goes about it will be further understood when the play is examined.
George Bernard Shaw was influenced by the harsh realities of the nineteenth century Industrial Revolution in England. He was able to show the consequences of these realities in the play *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*. This play represents the evolution of mankind, and it promotes an intellectually strong and focused individual. The two main characters are a mother and daughter; they represent the past and future through their various life experiences. The mother, who appears to be a respectable woman of society, is subject to criticism because of her past and present career as a part owner of various brothels across Europe. Once her daughter is told of this profession, she is appalled. What the daughter ultimately chooses to do about this situation is what Shaw views as the future of society. Shaw incorporates comedy into the play to introduce a new kind of women, and to prove that everyone has a purpose in society. Shaw is ultimately welcoming the future, and challenges the audience to do the same. Further elaboration on the details of the play will be presented, and a clear understanding of the future that Shaw promotes will be examined.

Aristophanes and Shaw display their characters as strong and compelling, and allow the audience, whether the audience is watching the play or reading it, to make their own judgments on each character. Aristophanes and Shaw are dependent on the audience to be interactive. These plays allow the audience to think not just while the play is being presented, but to share their thoughts outside of the theatre. If the audience, whether outraged or delighted, communicate their ideas among society there is potential for change. These plays are meant to make the viewer laugh, and also to put them into a state of helplessness. When using satire the author uses the audience’s insecurities to get the overall point across. These two plays allow the audience to be captured by comedy and witty remarks, and with that come ideas that lead to truth.
In this next section, a background of Aristophanes and George Bernard Shaw will be presented. Because they were so influenced by their surroundings in Athens and London, it is important to have further understanding of their life in order to understand their literature. These authors use their own life experiences and opinions to appeal to their audiences, and a closer look at their personal views will help tie together the meaning behind their plays, *Lysistrata* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

**Aristophanes**

Aristophanes was born sometime between 450 and 445 B.C.E. in Athens, Greece. During his upbringing Athens was the leading power in Greece. Aristophanes was born into a wealthy family, and acquired a very good education, focusing his studies on philosophy. In many ways Aristophanes is a man of mystery; there is little known about his life and personal political views. The only way to decode Aristophanes is through his writings. He constantly used his plays to push limits and poke fun at the governing body of Athens. He seemed to thrive on testing influential leaders’ patience through his use of political satire.

Aristophanes felt very strongly about Athens, and he truly loved the city; this allowed him to have a personal connection with his audience through his literature. His plays seem to reveal that he favored aristocracy and discouraged democracy. In many ways Aristophanes was not very open to change. The Peloponnesian War was something that he focused on within several of his writings such as, *The Knights, The Peace, The Wasps, and Lysistrata*. Aristophanes seemed to be very worried about the consequences that the war could bring. His conservative ideas allowed him to see the war as a threat, and he sought to publicly demonstrate his concerns through his plays.
The Peloponnesian War brought defeat upon the Athenians, and Aristophanes had to hold his tongue when the Spartan government occupied Athens.\(^1\) He was very clever about when he could write his controversial plays and when he couldn’t. He continued to show his love for Athens throughout his life and died in his beloved city sometime between 385-380 B.C.E. Aristophanes was a brilliant mind of the first century B.C.E.; he turned his ideas into art, and used satire to intrigue the audience by presenting a comedic atmosphere. His ideas and technique are still idolized today, and prove to be influential to the understanding of early literature.

**George Bernard Shaw**

The playwright George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1856. He himself describes his upbringing as a “devil of a childhood”. He came from a modest home that was broken from the inside. His father, George Carr Shaw, was a clerk by day and alcoholic by night. His mother, Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly Shaw, was a singer, who spent most of her time focusing on music and not her family. Later in Shaw’s life his mother decided to move to London with her voice instructor, George Vandaleur Lee. Shaw stayed behind with his father in Ireland, and with no money to pursue college he went into the workforce. Several years later he moved to London with his mother, and began his career in the arts.

As Shaw started to establish himself in London, he also found a new political interest that would change his life. He was introduced to the writings of Karl Marx, who was influential in guiding Shaw socially and politically. Shaw later became a member of the Fabian Society; this was a socialist society that strived for a democratic socialist state within Britain. Shaw proved to

be a loyal member to the society by voicing his views publicly through writings and social gatherings. Shaw incorporated many of his socialist views into his plays, and allowed his audience to see the potential of the future. Though Shaw was very influential in nineteenth and twentieth century society, he was also criticized by many. G.K. Chesterton criticizes Shaw for defending his arguments with just force, and argues that Shaw forbids men to abide by a strict moral law.\(^2\) Chesterton believes that Shaw does not see reality, and in doing so he is comparing humanity to something that is inhuman.\(^3\)

Shaw used his plays to criticize British society, and thrived off of the differentiation between social classes that took place during the Victorian and Edwardian time periods. A new movement during Shaw’s time was women’s rights. Shaw used women as main characters in several of his plays such as *Mrs. Warren’s Profession, Pygmalion, Major Barbara, and Man and Superman*. He had socialist interpretation of women, as he viewed them as an equal. He preached that everyone had a role in society. At a National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies meeting he is quoted as saying: “I deny that any social problem will ever be solved unless women have their due share in getting it solved. Let us get this obstacle of the political slavery of women out of the way and then we shall see all set to work on the problems- both sexes together with a will”.\(^4\) Women admired Shaw’s initiative towards the cause and he had many offers to speak at rallies and meetings.\(^5\)


\(^3\) Chesterton, *George Bernard Shaw*, 23.

The women in Shaw’s life were plentiful. Over the course of his life he had many affairs, and in some cases could have been labeled as a home-wrecker. He was pursued by many women—actresses, artists, and intellectuals. From women like Eleanor Marx to Ellen Terry, Shaw did not always practice what he preached when it came to the opposite sex; he had many encounters with women that overpowered his teachings on women. Shaw discouraged marriage and did not believe in love. Shaw was intrigued by homosexuality. He admired the homosexual poet and reformer, Edward Carpenter, and believed that his homosexuality led to his source of genius. He did eventually marry Charlotte Payne-Townsend against his will. For Shaw the marriage was not based on love, but as necessity. Their marriage was never consummated, and Charlotte was more of a home nurse than a wife to Shaw.

Women were very important to his art. Women held very influential roles within his plays and allowed him to flexibly use satire to promote political change. To Shaw women were capable of making great contributions; he wanted to explore that idea, and make it appealing to others. Shaw “created the most powerful female characters on the English stage since Shakespeare”, and because of this, a large portion of his audience were females. Shaw supports strong independent women, and shows his support in his play, *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*. Women prove to be a very interesting category to Shaw, and he allows them to help him artistically while also casting light on the realities of the twentieth century.

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5 Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 19
6 Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 12
7 Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 17
8 Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 17
9 Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 16
10 Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, 17
Satire is the literary form that appears in the plays *Lysistrata* and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*. Further elaboration of what satire is and how it can be used in many ways within literature will be further elaborated on in this next section. Satire is how Aristophanes and Shaw kept their audience coming back, and in their own ways they demonstrated the effect that satire can have on society.

**Satire**

Satire is a literary genre “of a specific kind, in which vice, follies, stupidities, and abuses etc., are held up to ridicule and contempt”. The idea of satire is to attack through ridicule by any medium. This genre allows an author to be creative, and gives them the freedom to poke fun at many different areas of society. Satire allows the author to make a personal connection with his audience through insecurities; these insecurities lead the audience to understand truths that they may or may not have been aware of. A satirist uses laughter to find humor in someone else’s misfortunes or even our own misfortunes. The irony of satire is that the audience is indirectly laughing at themselves. By degrading the characters and placing them in altered worlds, the author is putting his audience in a vulnerable position. A satirist holds his audience’s attention through pleasure; pleasure is promoted by comparing and contrasting idea. Through wit and cleverness the author allows these ideas to shine light on the harsh realities of human existence.

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The basis of satire rests upon an understanding of man himself.\textsuperscript{15} Man is weak, and the satirist highlights his faults; desires, pressures, and pleasures are just a few temptations that an author could use to ridicule his audience. Pointing out flaws through a sense of humor is what makes satire so brilliant; the satirist puts the individual down and makes him a victim by reducing his dignity and stature.\textsuperscript{16} While being victimized themselves, the members of the audience are more open to the truth by becoming aware of surrounding realities. These realities are presented through ridicule, and demonstrate a state of mind that is critical and aggressive. The author must utilize his character to interactive with his audience, and the audience must be committed to the author’s work in order for satire to become true art.\textsuperscript{17}

Many satirists choose to poke fun at politics. This is an area that provides some of the most pressing problems, and is relatable to all members of society.\textsuperscript{18} Public affairs seem to capture audiences, and allow them to explore their current surroundings. Political satire is thought of as being the most influential version of satire, as it influences public behavior.\textsuperscript{19} Satire promotes reform in many ways, and allows the audience to be more motivated towards change. “Political Satire needs a measure of freedom”, this statement allows the influence of large cities and the use of sophistication to be incorporated into the writing.\textsuperscript{20} This freedom is demonstrated through the limitless bounds that the author produces within his work. A satirist should know the limits of his surrounding society when appealing to his audience, but has the freedom to exercise his personal views however he pleases. The audience must also be knowledgeable about politics, and have an idea of their social surroundings.

\textsuperscript{15} Hodgart, Satire: Origins and Principles, 10.
\textsuperscript{16} Hodgart, Satire: Origins and Principles, 115.
\textsuperscript{17} Hodgart, Satire: Origins and Principles, 11.
\textsuperscript{18} Hodgart, Satire: Origins and Principles, 33.
\textsuperscript{19} Hodgart, Satire: Origins and Principles, 33.
\textsuperscript{20} Hodgart, Satire: Origins and Principles, 33.
Satire can be compared and contrasted with comedy; the genres assist one another in some respects, but they differ in their ends. Comedy presents an atmosphere that falls in between romance and realities of social nature, while satire dramatically points out realities through unrealistic scenarios. The goal of comedy is to establish a ‘good form’; wittiness and intelligence guide comedy and allow “a style of living” to be presented. Comedy differs from satire in that it accepts rules; satire strives to go against rules and norms. Satire proves to be a harsher form of comedy, where limits are pushed. The differences and similarities between satire and comedy allow both forms of literature to use one another in order to promote the larger purposes of authors such as Aristophanes and George Bernard Shaw.

Aristophanes gives an early example of satire. He not only attacks people, customs, and society, but he also creates a world that could be described as a dream world. He manipulates the real world, and creates characters that go against norms in order for his audience to see the realities of Greek society. He cleverly combined his traditional values with the extreme limitless possibilities of satire. Aristophanes relates to the common man, and has a great understanding of human nature. He can see through people, and acts on their uncertainties; as a writer he created a “realm of fantasy” that not only mocks society, but also himself. Aristophanes is credited with providing a joyous criticism of life to his audience, and showing that there are no boundaries in free speech.

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The construction of his plays is crucial to the understanding of his intent. He provides various demonstrations of connected, episodes and breaks them up with chorus interludes.\(^\text{28}\) The chorus acts as a break in between points; the chorus interacts with the audience, and involves them in the understanding of the play. As his writings may be confusing, difficult, and obscure, he provides the perfect construction of great satire.\(^\text{29}\)

Aristophanes used Old Comedy to promote his brilliant works of satire. Old Comedy was a harsh and radical form of comedy that was made popular by Aristophanes. He used politics to guide his use of satire; he also incorporated Old Comedy in order to “project that vision of Athens that filled theatre seats”.\(^\text{30}\) He found a connection between Athens politics and military, and linked it to comedy.\(^\text{31}\) Aristophanes rivaled against the ideas of the democracy and pushed limits regarding politics and government. After Athens was no longer a democratic society, Old Comedy seemed to become extinct and is now a literary study.\(^\text{32}\)

Aristophanes allows his audience to be intrigued by his dramatic and extreme plots; these plots are meant to warn his audience, especially in his play \textit{Lysistrata}. Aristophanes promotes tradition and conservatism; he wants tradition to stay as a constant. Aristophanes use of satire incorporates politics, comedy, and revaluation in order to see truth and understand Greek society.

In contrast, Shaw saw the problem of his time as being too devoted to tradition.\(^\text{33}\) He wanted to promote social change, and he demonstrated this throughout many of his plays; Shaw

\(^{30}\) Quintero, Ruben Ed. \textit{A Companion to Satire}. (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2007) 40.  
\(^{31}\) Quintero, \textit{A Companion to Satire}, 40.  
\(^{32}\) Quintero. \textit{A Companion to Satire}, 40.  
\(^{33}\) Quintero. \textit{A Companion to Satire}, 463.
saw the future from a socialist viewpoint, and welcomed it. His use of political satire encouraged the formation of a new society.

Shaw incorporated satire into his plays by presenting the audience with comedic plots. These plots are full of ideas, and provide the audience with the pleasure of laughter that causes them to think. Shaw saw his art as being didactic. He wanted to be able to teach through his plays, and allow the audience to understand what requirements needed to be met in order to have a prosperous future. He felt that his audience should be prepared for the future and challenges them to embrace it. Shaw forms his use of satire around ideas, mostly pertaining to politics.

Shaw in many ways exploits the ideas of his time, and cleverly criticizes the traditions of capitalism, industry, and government through satire. He voices many of his ideas through his plays, but does so in a comedic way. Shaw pushes limits that are risqué for the time. His use of comedy and political satire promote an enthusiastic atmosphere amongst the audience; they can be entertained during the play through laughter, but compelled to partake in conversation. Shaw wants his audience to react to his plays with extreme attitudes because this is what he believes will promote change. He uses satire to show the options and opportunities that society could have, and encourages his audience to embrace the future.

A woman being used in satire is a demonstration of her inferiority. Satirists use women in their works to show that they are being ruled over. The paradox is that women seem to naturally hold so much power, but the laws of men restrict them in society. Women hold sex as

34 Quintero. A Companion to Satire, 463.
35 Quintero. A Companion to Satire, 40.
a weapon against the empowerment of man. Satirists see this influential power that women hold, and use it to demonstrate utopian or anti-utopian ideas. An author of satire will create fantasy worlds in order to let his audience clearly see his argument. A way to create a setting that will engross an audience is to put them into extreme circumstances. Women with any form of power or authority are humorous to an audience, but also fill them with the emotions such as distress and rage. These mixed emotions promote the realities of human nature.

Women are seen as the root of development.\textsuperscript{37} Sin and redemption came into the world because of women; these two ideas being carried out through Eve and the Virgin Mary.\textsuperscript{38} Eve was ridiculed as what is wrong with women, and Mary was credited with her moral excellence. Even though the Virgin Mary birthed the son of God, and promoted the morals, ethics, and faith she cannot overcome the wrong doings of eve. This allows women to be looked down upon in many writings of literature. Satirists see the paradox that women go through, and use it within their writings not to promote equality but to demonstrate a parallel universe. Aristophanes and George Bernard Shaw both use women to support their works of satire; they have a great interest in the opposite sex, as they include them as main characters in their works \textit{Lysistrata} and \textit{Mrs. Warren’s Profession}.

\textbf{Lysistrata}

The play \textit{Lysistrata} was first performed in Greece during the Peloponnesian War. Aristophanes cleverly uses political satire and comedy to entertain his audience, while also informing them. The women of Greece want to stop the war; Lysistrata, the main character, comes up with the idea to hold a sex strike. Aristophanes is putting his audience into an inverted

\textsuperscript{38} Hodgart, \textit{Satire: Origins and Principles}, 87
world where women hold positions of power. The characters of the play interact with the audience, and allow Aristophanes to voice his own opinion on the war, and warn the audience about what could result.

The first theme that emerges in this play is a make love not war attitude. The women of Greece are devastated by the Peloponnesian War, and feel that they should contribute to its demise. Their ultimate goal is to gain peace between Athens and Sparta. Peace between these two rivals is something that is of a fantasy world. This fantasy world is only amplified by the idea of women holding a sex strike to combat the war, and succeeding. When the idea of a sex strike is introduced, the women are appalled by the idea; they don’t think that such an event is possible, but then soon realized that if they unite as one they could be triumphant.

In their attempt to combat the war, the women struggle at first, but it is the men who get frustrated and give into their temptations. The men, having underestimated the women, give into their desires and negotiate with the women. The women triumph over the men through non-combat tactics, and the sex strike proves to be successful. Aristophanes is comparing the war between Athens and Sparta to the war between the men and women of Greece; he is arguing that “The restoration of sexual relations between men and women equals the restoration between the warring states”. This theme is the most apparent within the play, but there is more to it than that. Aristophanes creates a world that is wickedly inverted, but yet allows his audience to see truth.


This anti-utopia that Aristophanes creates is radical in that Greece is being taken over by women. The idea of “Greece saved by women” is something that would have been laughable in Greece during Aristophanes time. This role reversal between the men and women allow the women to become soldiers, seize the Acropolis, arm themselves, and control the treasury. These aspects are what men possess, and in the play they no longer serve as a gap between the two sexes. The women feel that war is just as much a concern to them as it is to the men fighting in it. The women indirectly seem to start the war through reproduction, and feel that it is their civil duty to end it. Therefore their power is reached through their natural instincts, as mothers and civil servants.

The conflict between men and women is seen very clearly through the choruses of the old men and of the old women. They are in direct conflict throughout the play, but are the first to reconcile their differences. The two sides claim that they are doing their civil duties to the city, but are contributing in different ways. The men are preoccupied with combat while the women are infatuated by history and purpose. The women represent strength and tolerance, while the men demonstrate weakness and impatience. The conflict between opposing sides is later reconciled when the women, by outwitting the men, appeal to peace. During negotiation the men open their eyes to the truth that peace is an attractive idea, and that unity between enemies can be possible.

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In this upside down world Aristophanes uses the women of Greece to show that they have done what the men have failed to do. The men of Greece had not reached peace, the women did. By uniting the women of Athens and Sparta they found peace. The women organized their own democratic government through domestic means. Household duties are what the women are most familiar with, and that is how Lysistrata implements her political regime. Lysistrata is a strong character that is intelligent and masculine. She is the spokesperson of the women, and cleverly outsmarts the men of Greece in her search for peace. She cleverly outwits the Magistrate by explaining to him that the household is a political system. She uses threading wool as an example of this. She proposes that the wool must be joined together in order to be strong and united. Weaving is a household chore that is closely connected to the women of Greece, and used within the play to weave together political matters.

The most intriguing idea that this play presents is that sex seems to hold more power than honor, virtue, and glory. These three traits are what Athenians and Spartans thrived off of during the time of Aristophanes. War only amplified these traits, and through combat a man could demonstrate all three characteristics. Honor, virtue, and glory are what started conflict and ended it; war defended ones honor through virtue, in order to triumph. The idea of sex being able to trump all is absurd, and is exactly what Aristophanes wanted to present to his audience. He is promoting the idea that the men of Greece have neglected their political freedoms, and have done so voluntarily during the sex strike.

The scene in the play of Myrrchine and her husband demonstrate how desperate the men were. Cinesias is blind to reality as he tries to tempt Myrrchine to come outside of the Acropolis

by bringing their child with him; he does not even think about the fact that Myrrchine would not only break the rules of the sex strike, but that she never have intercourse in front of her child. Myrrchine uses her newfound power to see his weakness and leaves him in his height of arousal and frustration. Sex is seen in the play as destroying the traits in which make Greek people who they are. This decaying of the traditional Greek man is a concern to Aristophanes and he warns against giving into temptations and desires as they will promote social change.

Lysistrata shows a form of patriotism that discourages violence as a problem solver, and empowers the use of wisdom. In this play it’s apparent that she is very adamant about stopping and discouraging the war. Throughout Lysistrata the women continuously point out that the men are not around and continue to fight man against man in battle. Promoting the idea that while the men are fighting in battle the women are uniting; war seems to be seen as a distraction to Aristophanes, and where there is distraction there is always the potential of a new alliance of power arising.

Lysistrata is blanketed with a comedic satire that allows the audience to be captivated by its vulgar and erotic intrigue. As the play progresses it is apparent that there is an underlining plot developing; this plot embodies the views of Aristophanes. Also it demonstrates his constant use of warning the people of Greece that change is not only detrimental, but can occur at times when it is least expected.

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49 Beale, “Fantasy and Plot in Lysistrata”, 68.
Mrs. Warren’s Profession

*Mrs. Warren’s Profession* is one of George Bernard Shaw’s most didactic plays. This play demonstrates the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Lifestyles were changed, and the eagerness to obtain capital or wealth guided many people’s ambitions. *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* presents three very distinct themes: prostitution is by fault of society not the woman, prostitutes were forced into their profession by social deprivation and in spite of its controversial content, there is moral value to the play. These themes show Shaw’s intention by preparing the audience to welcome the future through his comedic appeal on controversial topics such as prostitution.

Shaw uses this play to combat the luxuries of capitalism and to showcases realities and responsibilities of the twentieth century. Charles A. Berst interprets Shaw’s intent through understanding each theme that the play presents. Higher classes in society feed off the lower class, and use their vulnerability to subdue them to pleasures and forms of capital. Sir George Crofts is an example of this; he is a manipulator, who believes that money and social standing can get him whatever he desires. He uses the lower class to fuel his desire for wealth and does not have any remorse for those that he leaves behind. Sir Crofts is seen as a villain to Shaw, and is an example of corruption within society.

The unattractive issue within the play is prostitution. Shaw really underlines the idea that it is not the fault of the women to be captivated by the temptations of one of the oldest


52 Refer to Shaw’s play *Pygmalion* to see another play incorporating prostitution
occupations. He uses *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* to demonstrate that society is as much to blame as the woman is. Berst mentions that “prostitution is caused by the underpaying, undervalue, and overworking of women”.

This is referring to the unfavorable career choices that women had in the Victorian time period. Her options were to work in the harsh conditions of the factory, to marry into a higher social class, or to be independent through prostitution as a form of income. Mrs. Warren is Shaw’s example of this. She knew her options and chose the most lucrative one in order to better herself and her social standing. Her choice to partake in the running of several brothels later on in life shows that she has become captivated by the treasures of capitalism. She knows that she had a choice and she understands that she could leave her occupation, but the money and extravagance have her mind made up.

Ironically the play shows a sense of purity and economic responsibility. Through all of the negative and controversial ideas that are a part of this play Shaw provides motive to enlighten and reform. Vivie, Mrs. Warren’s Daughter, is the representation of moral good. She is a strong independent individual who grows over the course of the play. Shaw is reinterpreting himself within Vivie, as they both share several traits relating to socialist views and tendencies. Vivie is constantly tempted and tested by her social surroundings, but as she realizes the truth of corruption around her she decides to cut herself off from everyone close to her. This decision is one that is very brave and almost noble; Vivie views her work in actuarial calculations to be more rewarding than social interaction. When submerged into her work she is unaware of the outside surroundings, and is improving herself intellectually. Vivie struggles with her ignorance, and by exploring her ignorance she ultimately progresses.

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54 Berst, *Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama*, 5.
Vivie is presented with many offers and temptations. Shaw used marriage as a way to tempt Vivie. Frank Gardner and Sir George Crofts offer her a marriage proposal, and she turns them both down. Frank represents a norm for large families that are involved in the church.\textsuperscript{57} Shaw uses religion to show that “the world is dragging the church behind it”.\textsuperscript{58} Vivie is an individual who has surpassed religion through intellect and because of this turns down Franks offer.\textsuperscript{59} Sir Crofts also offers Vivie a very lucrative marriage proposal. In return for marriage he would make sure that she was taken care of financially and would be rewarded with high social class; he also promised that she would be financially set after his passing. Vivie seemed to be more appalled by this offer than tempted, and turned him down. There is a third offer which Vivie’s mother presents, and that is an independent life that would be financially secure. She also refuses this offer and embarks on her own form of independence where she relies solely on herself.

The next temptation that Shaw uses to lure Vivie is presented by Mr. Praed; he is a gentleman who appreciates the arts. He offers Vivie to come with him to study the arts, as he thinks that it would be a way for her to grow and see society in a new light. Vivie finds Praed the most appealing as he is sort of a father figure to her. Praed sees nature and appreciates the beauty of it as a true reality, while Vivie sees society through corruption, and art only covers up corruption.\textsuperscript{60} Praed does not coerce Vivie or bribe her to take an interest in the arts, but gives her the choice. This choice is one that Vivie does not want to indulge in, but declines Praed in a respectful way.

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\item[\textsuperscript{57}] Berst, \textit{Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama}, 7.
\item[\textsuperscript{58}] Berst, \textit{Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama}, 8.
\item[\textsuperscript{59}] Berst, \textit{Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama}, 7.
\item[\textsuperscript{60}] Berst, \textit{Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama}, 9.
\end{itemize}
The final and most influential struggle that Vivie undergoes is the struggle between her mother and her. Vivie chooses to disconnect ties to her mother after she finds out about her career as part owner of a variety of brothels. In the second act Vivie feels sympathy for her mother tells her of the harsh times of her younger years. Shaw is using this struggle to show Vivie’s devotion to her moral well being. Vivie is a hero in Shaw’s eyes; she is the future. Shaw demonstrates that she is what all beings should embody; whether male or female, all people have a purpose within society to Shaw.

Shaw uses *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* to present his audience with a new idea. Vivie leaving her counterparts behind is a representation of the new individual. Shaw’s use of a woman to signify this big idea adds to the comedic structure, but also adds a progressive appeal to Shaw himself. He saw women as being very useful to society and that all people must be equals in order to focus on improving society. Shaw is joyously welcoming the future and this new individual; he is allowing his audience to be introduced to this idea and to go out and promote it.

**Conclusion**

Aristophanes and George Bernard Shaw show truth through understanding their audience as well as themselves. Aristophanes is one of the most brilliant satirists, with his phenomenal understanding of the human person. Shaw through his clever use of comedy to empower the people of England shows him as a great progressive thinker. These two authors embody forms of literature that give pleasure to their audience. They not only emotionally captivate their audience, but also promote truth through the most inappropriate and antagonizing ways.
*Lysistrata* and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* demonstrate worlds that were topsy-turvy, twisted, and inverted. Their main characters were women, who were the strength, intelligence, and soul of the plays. This idea was very bold and discouraged. The plays tend to ideas that are unflattering, but prove necessary points. *Lysistrata* is warning Athens of the encroachment of outside powers or political regimes, and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* is welcoming a new future that presents an evolved and independent individual. These plays embody the great problems of their time. By showing the audience that information does not have to be presented in a serious or dramatic social setting, they are demonstrating that laughter can bring upon just as much thought as lecture.

Each time that Aristophanes or Shaw presents an inappropriate gesture or laughable interlude it is on purpose. When laughing at something, whether a verbally or through action, it is likely that what was funny will be remembered. That is the cleverness of satire. Laughter is the motive to get people thinking, and allows the author to build a connection with his audience. This sense of pleasure enlightened the audience, because by enjoying the humor of the plays allows the audience to be more open to the overall point.

These plays, even though they were humorous, contained very controversial ideas. Women taking over power in Greece and a prostitute holding social and independent power are not ideas that were widely accepted, but were instead ridiculed. The only way for the audience to not be offended by these ideas is to make fun of them. This is exactly what Aristophanes and Shaw set out to do. It’s implied that the purpose of each play is to be more than just making fun; these characters are used as a tool to promote political agendas, by going against the social norms of their time.
When creating their female characters the authors gave them male traits; this was to give an understanding of how women could hold so much power, by being like a man. Both plays revolve around the women, and not only show the power they have but how they put this power into action. When the authors presented the dilemmas in their plays they were very big topics of the time. *Lysistrata* tackled the issues and consequences of war; *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* scrutinized society by looking at prostitution and its flaw. Both of these ideas were something that Athens and England were very familiar with, and had knowledge of. Therefore they really hit home hard when Aristophanes and Shaw implemented them into their plays.

The political agendas of these plays are what lay underneath the laughter and controversial topics. Aristophanes is discouraging democracy in Greece, while also implementing the idea that Athens and Sparta must unite in order to strengthen Greece. Even though the women of Greece seem to represent a democratic government, they do unite Athens and Sparta. Aristophanes is only warning in his play, and not presenting a way of preventing this from happening or how to solve it. He is simply taking what he knows about the people of Greece and about himself, and demonstrating what could happen. Shaw is arguing that a more self sufficient, intelligent, and strong willed individual is what society of England in the twentieth century needs. He sees the future through a socialist perspective, and shows a lot of himself in the main character Vivie. Through his argument of how society has corrupted its citizens, he shows that there is hope for a prosperous future.

The audience is the most important component of these plays. They allow the plays to be presented, and take with them the truths that the authors promote. The audience decides if the author was right or wrong; they also start conversation within society. The politics in these plays are familiar their audience; therefore their audience can socially talk about the plays to anyone in
the surrounding community. Conversing is meant to generate ideas, and those ideas bring debate. Aristophanes and Shaw knew that they could not change society, but could inform them of what could potentially happen. These plays were not meant to be seen and forgotten, but rather to be remembered and implemented into daily life.

*Lysistrata* discourages change and *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* promotes change. Through brilliance, cleverness, and wittiness Aristophanes and Shaw wrote their plays to represent themselves and their societies. Their implementation of humor through satire and comedy allow the audience to enjoy themselves. Being able to combine, controversy, politics, laughter, and pleasure into one setting takes great skill. These authors possessed this skill, and changed the literature and social views of their time. As their works continue to impact the arts and society, and be interpreted and examined in various different ways, it will always be clear that these authors were devoted to their work. This devotion evolved through experience, and on their way to finding the truth, they felt it was necessary to motivate their audience to search for is as well.
Bibliography


