

**KASDI MERBAH UNIVERSITY-OUARGLA**

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Submitted by: Boucetta Aicha

Nebbah Ahlem Mounira

# **Social Satire in Bernard Shaw's Play *Widower's Houses***

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President: Benzoukh Halima

Supervision: Dr. Bousbai Abdelaziz

Examiner: Saadoune Farida

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## **Dedication**

To the sun shine of my heart, my dear mother.

To the reason of my life, my dear father

To my soul mate, my dear sister and her small family.

To my hero, my brother and his small family.

To the young gentleman my brother.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Bousbai Abdelaziz for guiding us in this research and being patient with us.

Special thanks for my sister who has being ALWAYS with me my sweet heart Hanna, my dear Souhila and Tarek for helping me and being my second family in Ouragla. To my sweetest Khaoula my micro teacher.

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## **Dedication**

I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to my parents, the best and great persons who blessed me with the ability to make my dream become true, my lovely father and my beloved mother, thank you for enlightening my way.

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## Abstract

This study is an attempt to analyze the play of George Bernard Shaw *Widower's Houses* in order to explore the class conflict used in the British society and their effects. It seeks to investigate the major theme, social satire in Bernard Shaw's play *Widower's Houses* and the extent of portraying social struggles between the bourgeoisie and the proletarian in the British society through his characters. *Widowers Houses* has been considered as a critique of the whole society that makes the rich exploiting the poor in harsh and awful way. In order to demonstrate the class system as well as human depravity, tainted money and greed, used by the bourgeoisies against the proletarian, we have opted for using a descriptive analytical method in analyzing the first and the second acts of the play applying the Marxist theory that deals with the class relations, social conflict, and other ideological issues. In this work we have found that Shaw succeeded in criticizing his society using humour in a witty way. Shaw caused a change to the British society by clarifying the greed and human depravity that was used by the bourgeoisie against the proletarian in addition to their tainted money that was exploited from the working class.

**Keywords:** social struggles, Bourgeoisie, Proletarian, class system, human depravity, tainted money, greed, social satire, Widowers' Houses.

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

Drama is a form of literature written in style that would allow for stage performance. It is found almost in every civilized society, in order to serve a wide variety of positions in community; also it may serve didactic purposes as the morality plays did in the Middle age, 19<sup>th</sup> Century melodramas, and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century discussion plays of George Bernard Shaw.

Drama is considered as the widest ranging art; it is a way of seeing life rather than representing it. The plays can satirize society, or illuminate human weaknesses in a gentle way; they can divine the limitations and the greatness of humans in tragedy, or probe the human mind in modern naturalistic playwriting.

The process of reading a play is not uncomplicated as the reader/audience may think it is; in fact, it is a more complex procedure. Writers build their literary text-play- out of many central components, including stage, characters and content. The literary analysis involves examining these components, which allows the reader/audience discovers in different parts of the literary works, clues that help to understand the whole. The placement and types of these clues differ from one author to another depending on his style and the purpose that the writer wants to reach.

While dealing with any phenomenon in literature particularly in drama, the writer should be specific and treats his subject in a smart way such as George Bernard Shaw the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925, he is an Irish playwright after working as journalist then musical and theater critic, he stated as a novelist and decided to write plays in order to illustrate his criticism of the English stage.

George Bernard Shaw is famous by using satire in his works, he loved to provide hid audience or reader with the absurdity of the conventional way of thinking in a witty way and this was his success secret. His satires ranged widely over various subjects such as physicians and their power over life and death, education, religion, the bottle of sexes, paradise and hell.

The prefaces to many of his plays, besides being models of a wonderful prose style, are often funnier than the plays themselves. His plays were classified into *unpleasant* and *pleasant* play.

*Plays Unpleasant* was the rubric of his first three plays: *Widowers Houses*, *The Philanderer* and *Ms. Warren's Profession*.

*Widowers' Houses* is Shaw's first play published in 1892 by the Independent Theater Society. In this play, Shaw used social satire to express various ideas and criticisms toward the British society, but in a witty and sarcastic way, where he conveyed his message to his audiences/readers of social conflicts, tainted money and human depravity.

As readers, we cannot understand Shaw's transmitted message to the British society at that time directly, unless we analyze his implicit ideas that are covered by humor and sarcasm, also we need to see it via a socialist's point of view, and examine to what extent does Shaw succeed in criticizing his society through his play *Widower's houses*.

*Widowers Houses* is a play in which Shaw uses satire in a smart method, he utilized social satire to criticize the British society and deals with the corruption without being spotted by the government; thus, satire makes people uncomfortable—shame, anger, guilty and anxious but in an implicit and funny way.

In this current study we are investigating and discussing social satire in Bernard Shaw's play *Widowers Houses*, for this end the following questions are raised:

- 1- How did Shaw express social conflict through his characters in the play?
- 2- To what extent did Shaw succeed in using social satire to criticize his society through *Widower's Houses*?

One of the proposed hypotheses is that Shaw used the garden and library in the play as a setting to show the high class of the bourgeoisie's family. Thus, Shaw used them in the whole stages of the play and in Sartorius's houses, since Sartorius is from the bourgeoisie's family. So he may use it to express certain satiric hints about the high classes' life because he is famous by using the satire in his plays especially in socialist subjects.

The second hypothesis is that Bernard Shaw has succeeded in criticizing the British society through *Widower's Houses* by depicting the greed, human depravity and tainted money.

In *Widowers' Houses*, Shaw attacked the society virulently by using social satire in expressing the greed of Sartorius, exploitation, his tainted money, the class system, and love. This play fascinated by some critics and refused by others, it had not been showed in Britain it was not accepted from the government, may be because they knew that this play will open huge debates and could explode the revolution against the bourgeois.

However, after that they allow it to be showed in the British theatres, so this would mean that Shaw has succeeded in criticizing the British society.

Since this study explores social satire which is concerned with the social classes and their problems, and in order to prove the above hypotheses and answer the research questions we opted for the Marxist theory.

The Marxist theory deals with the idea that social life is based upon the conflicts of interest; the most important in these conflicts is that between the bourgeoisie and the proletarian. Also, for the Marxists the social class is used to demonstrate How and Why societies change as well as the class conflict clarifies a process of the changes come about from oppositions of social classes; in addition to its handle with the political theories. The Marxist theory is mainly concerned with the understanding of the social structures.

The objectives behind the analysis of Bernard Shaw's play is firstly, to illustrate the use of human depravity, tainted money and greed in the play and how did Shaw express them in a natural way, as well as discover Shaw's secret beyond having this particular style of writing in drama and use of satire in all his works.

Secondly, investigate the use of garden of library and garden as a setting in the whole play, searching for the reason of choosing library and garden specifically while he was able to use other setting as a beautiful palace or something that reflects the high class life.

Finally, discuss the class system used in the play in order to reach Shaw's passion in proposing the social phenomenon's special the struggle classes.

The present study comprises of three chapters organized as follows: the first chapter is elaborative literature review in which we have demonstrated various terms that are related to this study, such as satire. Besides, it introduces the importance of the theoretical concepts such as the implication of satire, elements of satire and its types. The second chapter consists

of needed elements that support our analysis and prove it such as the social context, satire in *Widowers' Houses* and the used of irony in Shaw's play. Coming to the last chapter which is the analytical part, it encompasses the analysis of some representative passages with the use of a relevance-theoretical framework.

**Chapter One**  
**Satire in Literature**

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- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Definitions of Satire**
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# Chapter One: Literature Review

## 1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to tackle issues related to a specific kind of writing that gains great importance in the late Victorian Age, which is satire and its use in literature. Some tentative definitions of various writers and critics in addition to the colorful type of satire and its elements are included.

## 2. Definitions of Satire

According to Hodgart (2010, p.7) “satire is a literary genre of a specific kind, in which vice, follies, stupidities and abuses, etc. are held up to ridicule and contempt”.

It is clear from the above quote that the use of satire in literature is not only done to embellish the language, but also to criticize a given society in an indirect and harsh way.

Moreover, Hodgart (ibid) stresses the fact that the impact of satire is in its power of creating self-criticism on the behalf of the audience, i.e “the irony of satire is that the audience are indirectly laughing at themselves”.

Essentially, satire means in Cash’s terms (2007) send-up; and traditionally, it is a form of comedy or serious drama.

Today, satire is defined in different ways. Fletcher (1987, ix ) sees satire as “ verbal aggression in which some aspects of historical reality is exposed to ridicule”. The previous definition seems to be general and holding a blanket meaning, thus Palmeri quoted in le Boeuf, (2007, p.9) states that “satire narrative whose indirectly through parodic alteration of celebratory forms, established discourse and dogmatic pronouncement”.

Perhaps one of the most operational definitions of satire is Swift’s .Satire is defined by Swift (Cuddon, 2001, p.780) “as a sort of glass where in beholders do generally discover every body’s face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it”.

It is clear from the above mentioned definition that satire reflects human imperfection.

According to Bedford Glossary. ( Critical and Literary Terms satire) is “ A literary genre that uses irony, wit and sometimes sarcasm to expose humanity’s vices and foibles, giving impetus to change or reform through ridicule ( Murfin ,2008, p.357 ).



The first part of the definition contains our concern which is how the satirist seeks change through irony and sarcasm. We shall discuss the latter in the section of elements of satire.

Furthermore, satire is conceived by some critics as a combination of corrective intention and artistic tool of applying such a correction. Thrall, Etal (1960, p. 436) reasonably define satire as “ A literary manner which blends a critical attitude with humour and wit to the end that human institution or humanity maybe improved the true satirist is conscious of the frailty of institution of man’s devising and attempts through laughter not so much to tear them down as to inspire a remodeling”.

We can deduce from the quote that satire is more constructive than destructive.

It is also “a literary composition, in verse or prose, in which human folly and vice are held to scorn derision, or ridicule.” Ultimately, satire is a literary genre comprising such composition.

In parallel, Merriam- Webster dictionary provides a simple definition of satire; “away of using humor to show that someone or something is foolish, weak, bad, etc; humor that shows the weaknesses or bad qualities of a person, government and society.” It is also a book, movie, etc. that uses satire”.

If one wants to expand the previous definitions we may blend the nature of satire with its aims and devices so that to present satire as a literary work spotting light on human vices and follies to ridicule or correct using wit, irony, or sarcasm.

### **3. Historical Background of Satire**

The concept of satire is not a new one; it is in fact, a phenomenon that accompanied the human since the early ages.

Thematically, *Lysistrata* by Aristophane written during the first century B.C is a good demonstration of political satire. It shows how women can have the power to end war waged by men. The play is a kind of warning Greek people about the threats of Peloponnesion war on his beloved city Athena (Demattio, 2013, p.12)

The play is considered satirical since it shows the inversed roles of men and women in the Greek society; women have decided to separate their husbands and go on strike to end the war. So, held position of power and such a position is even more powerful than men’s position in war, women of both cities, Athena and Sparta represent strength and tolerance contrary to men who represent weakness and intolerance and this is the irony.

As an independent literary genre, the ancient Roman were the first to define satire as “Satura”. Though Romans and Modern satirists use the same term “satire” their views are different: The first are the ancient Greek legacy contains a plenty of satirical works namely those of Aristophane in which he criticises Athenian society, government, and foreign policy especially that he lived in a period of wars. During the Roman period satire works were named after the Horatian and Juvenalian. (Le Boeuf , p.4)

As we move on from the Romans to the European in the Middle ages satire has developed more, the *Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer is a good illustration of satire that depicts the negative aspects of the Catholic Church and the English government. The tales criticize the hypocritic characters. Another example of satire at that period is *Utopia* (1515) by Mr. Thomas More that implicitly voices More’s opinions putting him away from punishment, censorship and unpublished. (ibid, p. 6-7)

*Gullivers Travels* by Jonathan Swift (1726) as well as *a modest proposal* (1729) are good examples of modern satire. Surprisingly, satire effects decreased during the 20<sup>th</sup> century due to the industrial growth and political change after the Two World Wars.

In fact, satire works swing between ancient and modern eras shifting from lecturing, harsh criticism towards more humorist tools, from literary genre to another, targeting a given category or all categories. Over the thousands of years, satire has been used in a various and particular methods.

Humor peens to the most frequent tool used by Aristophan, Chaucer, More, Swift, Bernard Shaw and almost everyone in the Modern and Victorian period. (Le Boeuf, p. 8)

#### **4. The Aims of Satire**

Since satire is a specific way of addressing the audience, it is logical that it has some functions and aims. First, satire ridicules individuals and communities by targeting their weaknesses and problems. Second, satire dramatically states realities via unrealistic plots (Hodgart, 2010). Third, satire tends to break all the norms and rules of society.

Furthermore, satire is positively used to seek political and social change, the satirist as a committed person who believes that social change could only happen when personal change takes place, he insists that bad men make bad society. He shows us ourselves and our world, he demands that we improve both social and political changes, and he creates a kind of emotion which moves us toward the desire to change.

Moreover, Quintero (2006) asserts that satirical effect and power could not be effective by just stating what is wrong, ridiculous, weak or foolish, but by stating what should be right, good, or moral or how something wrong could be right.

“The satirist either explicitly or implicitly tries to sway us toward an ideal alternative, toward a condition of what a satirist believes should be, it is assumed that the satirist has our best interests at heart and seeks improvement or reformation” (ibid) .

It is clear now that the satirist is seeking improvement and correctness in society but this remains relative since the reforming ideas are generated from the satirist own point of view.

Successful satirists do not only entertain and spot the weaknesses of mankind, but they try to change and reform it.

Satirists consider themselves as constructive critics. Harris (1990, p. 01) illustrates the role of the satirists by swift’s affirmation of his purpose in his “verses on the death of Dr.Swift by being corrective.

“As with a moral view design  
To cure the vices of mankind:  
His vein, ironically grave,  
Expos’d the fool, and lash’d the knave  
Yet, malice never was his aim:  
He lash’d the vice but spar’d the name  
His satyr point at no defect.  
But what all mortals may correct”

(chap II , 313-16.459-64) (Harris.1990, p1)

In the above verses, Swift argues that satirists do not seek to do harm or damage by their ridicule, but rather they seek to create or make a degree of social change through wit.

In many times, the satirist finds himself in need to clarify his aim in order to escape legal punishment and political anger.

## **5. Elements of Satire**

As a genre, satire has different elements and can be found in novels, plays, movies and television shows. Thus, satire cannot be clearly distinguished in one category; it occurs as continuous line of thought and therefore of forms.

In fact, there is a wide range of varieties of satirical elements which are considered as comical devices we may list the most common ones as follows:

### **5.1. Paradox**

It means using contradictory expression not because the writer is not logical or irrational, but to maximize the effect on the reader or the audience by contrast.

The reality can be perceived from different sides by different writers. That is why skillful writers can use different methods to correct and readjust the flaws of the society.

So here, contradictions in society are reflected in the style of the satirist and uses a paradoxical statement just to rebel against a hypocritical society that went away from ethics of criticized acts.

A good example of using language paradoxically is Dryden "Absalom and Achitophel" part II (593-594): "The city, to reward his pious hate against his master, chose him magistrate". (Haaris, 1990, p.04)

Here the poet shows that hatred cannot be used for good purpose. The words "pious" and "hate" do not fit together, and this is the paradox.

According to Cuddon (1976, 634), paradox "was merely a view which contradicted accepted opinion". He adds "in modern times, George Bernard Shaw "an incorrigible paradoxes of the more iconoclastic kind".

He uses paradox like a comedian who has discovered an almost inexhaustible source of humour, and in his hands the device becomes a stunt in verbal and conceptual acrobatics.

On the other hand, paradox is closely tied to antithesis and oxymoron (from Greek pointedly foolish), for example, "my shining night or my sweet pain".

## 5.2. Hyperbole

For emphasis Cuddon (1976, p.406) hyperbole is common satirical device in drama, namely during the Tudor and Jacobean drama, Cuddon (ibid) suggests that: “It is an essential part of burlesque”, Burlesque being a literary dramatic or other imitation which ridicules a subject by imitating him. Example of hyperbole and exaggeration from daily use of language is: “I have not seen you for ages”.

Caricature is another form of exaggeration of a physical feature or trait .Consequently, the use of exaggeration is a characterization technique used as a weapon of social and political satire. (ibid). “*Gulliver Travels*” is a good sample of exaggeration when the king states “I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives, to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth (Chapter 2, p6).

## 5.3. Meiosis

Meiosis is making shocking statements seen natural or common, meiosis is the opposite of exaggeration .It cannot be influential in case of great corruption or deviation from ethics and virtues.

By illustration, Swifts ( A Tale of a Tub, ch IX year 1696- 1699) “ Last week I saw a woman flay’d, and you will hardly believe, how much it altered her person for the wors”. Here, Swift could not support the brutality of the woman, so he did not put much emphasis on her.

Another way of diminution or ridiculous cases are for instance describing a very fat person as tiny one or describing him as the least loser person in the house.

## 5.4. Irony

Irony is one of the most powerful satirical devices since it expresses in words which hold the contradictory meaning; still irony is not as harsh as sarcasm.

Let us define irony first, and then examine sarcasm according to Cuddon (2003). Irony is derived from Greek which means dissimulation i.e. delivering slippery speech and intending indirect meaning.

“The term irony did not come into general use until late in 17<sup>th</sup> Century, or early in 18<sup>th</sup> Century, though at this period irony, as a mode of thinking, feeling, and expression, was beginning to attain a high degree of sophistication. Curiously enough, Dryden appears to have

used the term only once, but then there had been a number of other well tried and homely words which had served for the idea of the ironical words like *fleer, gibe, jeer, mock, rail* such words suggest the rough and readiness of abuse and invective” (ibid, p. 427).

Through English history, the concept of irony has been developed by a set of writers such as Dryden, Swift, Pope, and Johnson. Manifestation of the comic spirit of irony has risen in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in Germany.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, all forms and techniques of irony were used. Concerning irony, there is no definition to cover all its aspects, but let us examine what some definitions

“Irony is a term used to refer to unscrupulous trickery” (Thomson, 1926).

Moreover Quiatillian (Lee and Katz, 1998, p.2) claims that an ironist task is to state what is false to show the truth of an opposing idea (translation in 1959, VII vi, p.54). Simpson (2004, p.46) points out that “Irony is situated in the space between what you say and what you mean, as embodied in an utterance like “you are a fine friend!” When says to someone who has just let you down”.

Harris (1990, p.7) admits that irony is the overriding and guiding principle behind satire, and is everywhere apparent in it, it is the necessary means of aggressing.

Marghalani (2008, p.305) agrees with Sampson’s view of irony, he sees irony as “the effect produced when a reader sees that there is a gap between the words that are being said and the real significance of those words. There are different kinds of gaps. The gap between words and truth occurs when something the reader knows mistaken is said, a second type of gap or discrepancy, between the words and meaning”.

So, irony is a matter of contradictions that are not necessarily clearly stated, but could be understood by the reader.

### ***Types of Irony***

Irony is classified into three main types verbal irony, dramatic and situational irony.

**a. Verbal Irony:** According to Cuddon (ibid) “Verbal irony involves saying what one does not mean”. So, the ironist inverses the meaning of his verbal language (speech), for example, what a cold day! Claim a very hot weather.

**b. Situational Irony:** it essentially depends on the gap between the purpose of writing and the results of such a use, eg: the shoemaker that walks with bare feet. What the audience expects is totally the opposite of what the situation provokes. Cuddon (ibid) explains in details what occurs in situational irony”.

“When a man is laughing uproariously at the misfortune of another even while the same misfortune, is happening to him”.

Through the pervious illustration one can deduce how irony as a mode of expression can reflect bitterness in sweet words, laughing at a joke that underneath hides a harsh reality. Other kinds or irony could be comic irony that deals with misfortunes as results of fate.

### **c. Dramatic Irony**

The audience knows more than the actors, the words and actions add more meaningfulness to the expressions. This can create intense suspense of humour. It is commonly found in plays, movies and theater. For instance, in a scary movie the character walks into a house and the audience knows the killer in the house.

### **d. Socratic Irony**

It was a famous teaching method named after Socrates. It is widely used at prestigious colleges and universities on the undergraduate level, where the critical minds use it to pretend ignorance in order to take advantage over a rivalry to act as an ignorant to elicit knowledge from the other part.

## **5.5. Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is a form of praise in the clothes of insult. The word sarcasm is traced back to the Greek (sarcazein).

According to Webster’s, third new international dictionary ( Etal, 1961), sarcasm is “to speak bitterly as so to tear flesh like dogs”.

It is clear from the above quote that sarcasm is ill – natured and one who uses it tries to put his addressee down. It contains sharply mocking remarks. The effect of sarcasm draws on its bitterness though it may or may not be ironical.

Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) distinguish between irony and sarcasm. Unlike irony, sarcasm has negative meaning all the time and is targeting one specific victim to be the subject of

ridicule, for example, you are in a shop and the assistant wasn't helping. You say you have been so helpful. Thank you so much!

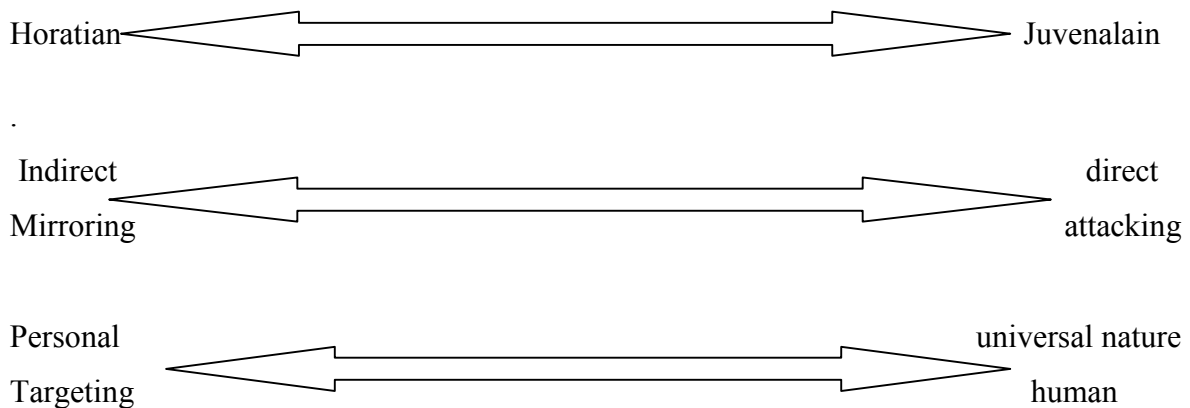
Historically, sarcasm did not gain as much attention as other elements of figurative language. psychological literature seems to ignore sarcasm and when explored, it usually used interchangeably with irony. (Gibbs, 1994) cited in Lee and Katz, 1998).

## 6. Types of Satire

Satire can be divided into two main types the indirect satire and the formal one. The indirect satire the characters themselves made fun of the addressed situation whereas in the formal satire the writers use usually a person who speaks directly to the character or the reader, and if it is more gentle and try to change the situation is a Horatian satire, also there is the angry and harsh satire which is known as a Juvenalian.

Horatian satire: It is named after Horace the poet and characterized by good intention, peaceful tranquil sense of humour about human errors. It is mirroring the failure of the humans which could find its source in the imperfection of the human nature. It is known as "telling the truth with a smile" (Pogreba).

Juvenalian Satire: It is named after the Roman poet Juvenal and featured by harsh sarcasm, criticizing irony, pessimism, attacking tone. It is more criticizing than humouristic.



**Figure (1): Satire Continuum**

In fact, satire types could not be split apart but best illustrated in the form of a continuum that represents overlapped satirical ways.

Departing from satire definition, elements, and methods one can notice that satire is humorous criticism of a given society. Social satire particularly focuses on aspects of that



society itself. Social satire is not new; it originates from the ancient Greeks and Romans and still a popular venue for social criticism in modern times. Social satire has a didactic purpose and may therefore demand a kind of agreement between the writer and his audience.

The application of satiric method can be quite broad because satire itself is more of an attitude or stand, than a genre or type of literature. Hoas declares that “it is not bounded by form and structure but exists as an approach to a situation which can be presented in any of the literary forms”(Harris, 1990, p.02).

Elements of satire can display the tone and mood of the literary works either as praising mood or blaming mood.

## **7. Conclusion**

This chapter introduced some of the basic principles, elements, types and aims of satire.

Although some snapshots of enormous forms of satire are afforded, it is worth demonstrating, how techniques and elements in stylistics are well suited to the explanation of the social satire.

We can say that there are some key theoretical principles that reinforce the language of satire, the first of which is humoristic use of language involving wit, verbal irony and paradox. The second set of principles is the application of the humoristic language at a given level of language a linguistic structure, i. e. phonological, graphological, syntactical and semantical levels.

All in all, all the aforementioned stylistic devices apply more generally to any situation in which there is a mismatch between what is said and what is meant.

**Chapter Two**  
**Shaw's Satire**

## **Contents**

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Social Context**
- 3. Satire in *Widowers' Houses***
- 4. Conclusion**

## Chapter Two: Shaw's Satire

### 1. Introduction

The playwright George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1856. He describes his nurture as a "devil of a childhood". He lived in a modest home broken from the inside, his father, George Carr Shaw, was a clerk by morning and alcoholic by night his mother Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly Shaw, was a singer who spend her time focusing on the music not on her family.

They were living in an awful little kennel, he was neglected by his mother on the time that she should provide him with love, even his father was not a model of a good father he admitted "I knew very little about her" because she did not concern herself with him, he tried several times to attract her attention but he could not succeed.

His childhood was miserable bulling, but Bessie (Lucinda) his mother was not bullied her husband was eldest than her; man twice her age, alcoholic and irresponsible father she was neither a mother nor a wife. Shaw wrote ten letters of his adults in a day, his mother was placed in a carpet of filial loyalty even she was seeing him as a tacky little male animal with all prospects of his father's thinness.

Shaw said that the fact that he was still alive at 78.5% probably owed largely to her (Bessie's) complete neglect of him during his infancy as he confided to Marie Stopes

"...it used to be a common saying among Dublin doctors in my youth that most women killed their first child by their maternal care...motherhood is not every woman's vocation".(Holroyd. N. D).

As an example his sister" Elinor Agnes" nicknamed 'Yuupy' died from the goiter because she wilted under her mother's slight attention on her and the extra carefulness. However, Shaw was lucky for being neglected by his mother, this neglecting save him from death.

He was introduced to the writings of Karl Marx, who was the influential in Shaw's socially and politically. Shaw later became a member of the Fabian Society; this was a socialist society that strived for a democratic socialist state with Britain. Shaw developed a wide knowledge of music art, and literature as a result of his mother's influence and his visits to the National Gallery of Ireland (Woodfield,1991).

Bernard Shaw used his plays to criticize the British society, and flourishing the differentiation between social classes that took place during the Victorian period, in addition to the movement of women's rights. Shaw used satire and women in several of his plays such as *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Pygmalion*, *Widower's Houses*, *Major Barbara* and *Man and Superman*.

## **2. Social Context**

During the Victorian age, Britain becomes a predominantly urban society unique in the world history of which the implication were enormous, the English society changed a lot.

Victorian cities were characterized by large industrial area and an incredible density of population. In spite of the interest of the administration and its engagement, the cities continued to be over crowded, dirty and insane.

Its population increased rapidly through the nineteenth century, in part due to the industrial wealth but social conditions were poor; the birth rate increased, the death rate doubled, many were under nourished. Causes of death were related to the seasons; in winter the cold causes death, but in summer, water borne diseases were the reason. In particular cholera which was the result of poor almost nonexistent sanitary in urban areas. (Carroll & Wheeler, 2014).

However, the bourgeoisie were exploiting the proletarians in awful ways and methods. Due to the industrialization people were exodus onto the cities searching for better life conditions, so that the skilled and unskilled people were looking for employment but the

stipends were low and the life conditions were too hard, this led to the emergence of child labour; children had to work for long hours under difficult conditions in order to help their families (Sakirasci, 2010).

Since the workers wanted to live near to their working because it is a time consuming, the housing became scant and expensive too; therefore, the workers preferred the slum-housing as Kellow Chesney had described in his book “The Victorian Underworld”

“ Hideous slums, some of them acres wide, some no more than crannies of obscure misery, make up a substantial part of the, metropolis...In big, once handsome houses, thirty or more people of all ages may inhabit a single room,”(p. 16).

The more awfulness was the homeless children, they were living with their families in desperate places in stables, factories, bakeries or understories, but also numerous children were living in London’s streets. In addition, they were stealing for having there snack that protect them from being famine or death, but they were considered as threats to society and something had to be done to preserve them, Cecil Frances Alexandra had demonstrated the society’s attitude toward the poor clearly in her publish

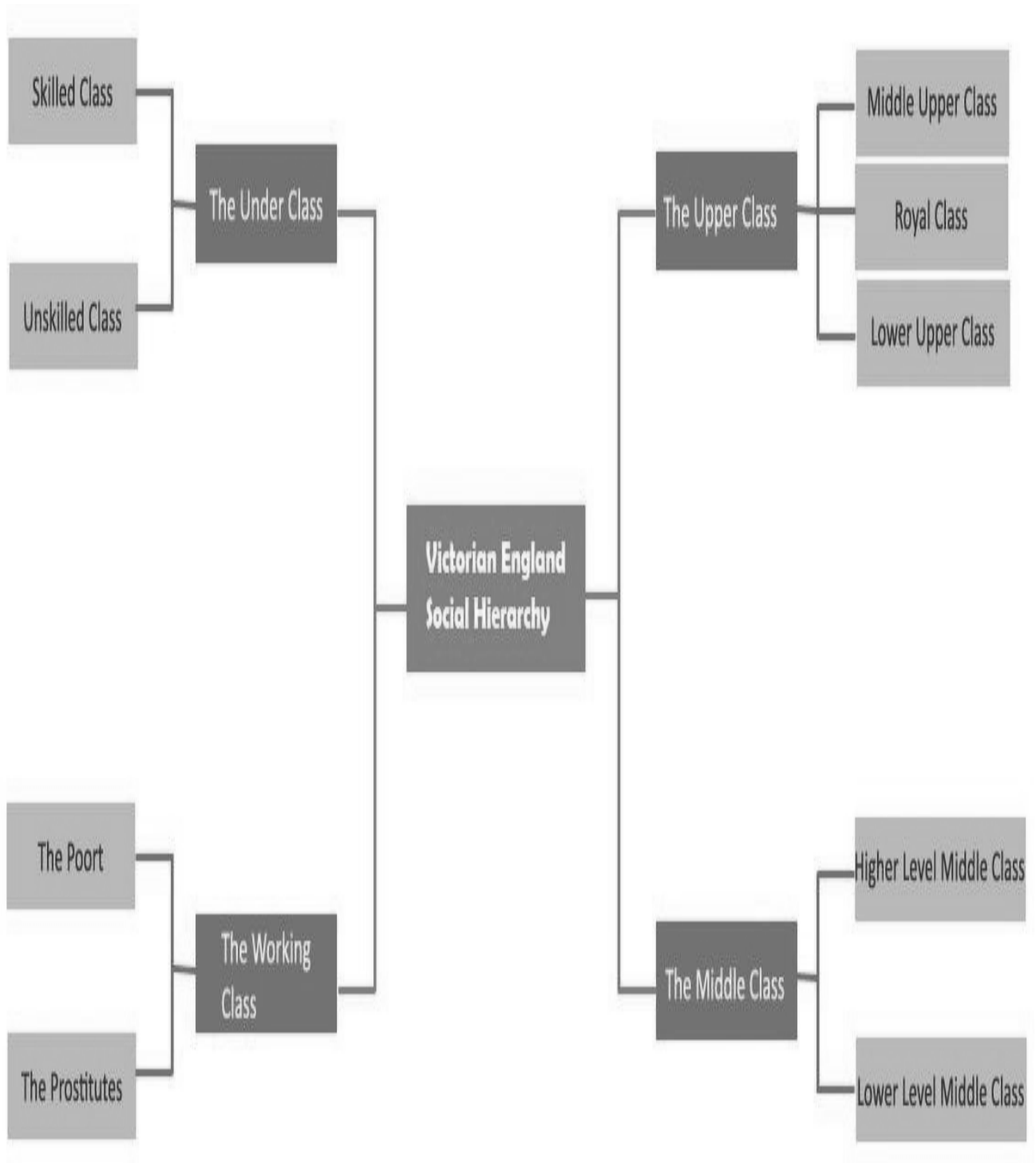
“The rich man in his castle,  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them, high and lowly,  
And order’d their estate” (ibib,p.22, 1-4).

Elizabeth Gaskell describes the suffering of the working classes in her novel *Mary Barton* “We don’t want the daintiest, we just need to shut our hungry by any food, we don’t want their grand houses, we just need a roof to coverage us from rains, snow and storm....I ... and

not alone to coverage us, but the hopeless ones they climb to us in storms and ask with their eyes, why... Why we brought into the world to suffer”.

The Victorian period was a complicated era characterized by the strength, progress and social problems such as poverty, injustice and greed. That is why the Victorians felt that society was going deficiently to the worst and should be changed and spared in a clever way, this affected the author’s writings such as Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens and Bernard Shaw, who had wrote a lot about the social problems.

The figure below introduces the various social classes of the Victorian periode, which according to this classes the society was devided and classified.



**Figure (2): The Victorain Social Classes**



The Victorian classes are classified into four different classes and each class is divided into subclasses:

First, The Upper Class is the high level consisting of the Royal class which includes the bourgeoisie family, then the Middle Upper Class in which the high families are there, after that the Lower Upper Class was the last one in the high class families. Second, the Middle which is considered as high class because it follows the principles of the first class, also it was divided into High Level Middle Class and The Lower Level Middle Class. Third, was the Under Class divided into Skilled and Unskilled Class. Finally, the Working Class where the Poor and the Prostitutes were the last class of the Victorian society.

### **3. Satire in Widowers Houses**

*Widowers Houses* (1892) one of Shaw's unpleasant plays, was the first play of George Bernard Shaw. It was originally first written by William Archer and titled *Rhinegold*, in fact it was inspired from the *Das Kapital* but that modified by Shaw himself.

"*Widowers' Houses*" begins as a boy meets a girl in a romantic way. Blanche Sartorius is the spoiled and the beautiful daughter of a rich realtor whose formidable fortune has been made from milking poor renters in his sub-standard houses. Harry Trench, an idealistic young doctor, has blindly loved Blanche until he discovers the déclassé source of her father's wealth.

Fearless but still affected, Harry asks Blanche if they could live on his modest income because of his father's dirty money. Blanche rejects the specter of Middle Class life and things seem headed for an unhappy ending. But the play really gets down to business with Trench's realization that his prospective bride's income derives from her father's profits as a slum landlord, In a conventional comedy, the young couple would renounce tainted money and live happily ever after.

The characters in this play — including the young lovers — are more pragmatic than heroic, and so Shaw cleverly manages a happy ending but with a sharply ironic twist; also we are treated to a hilarious satire on the garrulous social climbers of the economic upper-classes.

In *Widowers Houses* Shaw used Trench's discovery to open a debate about the harsh exploitation of the poor and the workers class and glimpse that even the high-minded idealists may be involved in a corrupt system. Sartorius's claim that the poor cannot be helped, "however much you may sympathise with them" also strikes a chillingly topical note in the climate of today. Sartorius himself is the svelte apologists for unrestrained capitalism.

Whereas Blanche a sign of Shaw's lifelong charm with dominating strong-willed women. Shaw's skill lies in his ability to attack the system ironically without turning its promoters into blooming villains.

In *Widowers Houses*, Shaw turns melodrama on its head. The tainted money of the father does not oppose the lovers' marriage; Blanche does not abandon her wealth for her love to Trench, also he abandons his principles the young hero in favour of accommodation with reality.

Shaw criticized the social evil of landlordism through Sartorius, who does not apologies for his awful treatment of the proletarian, even he sees himself as a sort of public supporter protecting the poor from being cold and making the roofs over their heads. Sartorius claims that he does not repair his properties because they destroy any improvement in the houses and waste his money actually they were using them due to their needs and poverty.(ibid).

Bernard Shaw in this play elicits the British society in which the wealth of the bourgeoisie is extracted as a rent from the proletarian and the rich strives to keep poor and helpless. The

high class as well as the middle won in the conflict while the working class is lost in this society.

Shaw uses this play to showcase the higher classes in society nourish the lower class proletarian and use their sensitivity to subdue them to pleasures. Mr. Sartorius is the example; he believes that money and social standing can provide his daughter with the best conditions of life and education and provide her perfect knight from the high class. He uses the lower class to fuel his desire for wealth. Sir Sartorius is seen as a rascal to Shaw, and is an example of corruption within society.

Bernard Shaw uses *Widowers' Houses* to depict that the British society is lambaste.

Ironically, Shaw wanted to show the sense and the role of purity and economic responsibility in the society and their effect by the play, through the entire debits and controversial ideas that are a part of this play Shaw provides motive to advise, enlighten and reform. Dr. Harry Trench was the representation of moral good, but he was not strong enough to stop this dirty business.

The situation, the tone, and even the setting in the first act all contribute to the anticipation of a polite Robertsonian comedy of class-crossed lovers-or even a Gilbertian farce, about the variations of romance in money. Even in Shaw's technical control of comic dialogue at the begging of the play between Trench and Cokane about the appearance and the personality of the high class it includes implicit irony (Innes, 2004).

Also, the development and the tone of comedy in the second act depraved by melodrama, in other words ironic interface between melodrama and life seems fully as central to this play as the comparable interface between melodrama and history.

#### **4. Conclusion**

George Bernard Shaw one of the most brilliant master wits in literature, while reading one of his works we get amused and constantly smiling or laughing, but at the same time horrified.

Shaw uses satire to address his audience to a particular problem, thus satire has been delineated as “a work or manner that blends a censorious attitude with humour and wit for improving human institution or humanity”. In other words, the satire was used to explain a certain phenomenon in society in a humorous way that makes the audience laugh, but implicitly guide them to the truth and laughing at themselves indirectly .

Also satirists lead to change the unacceptable addressed situation, it is the secret of Shaw that kept their audiences coming back and each time they demonstrate by themselves the effect that satire can bring change and develop the society.

Bernard Shaw aimed at rendering the social and political systems as he saw them not as he likes to see them, Shaw once stated that he is not a dramatist in general, but a specialist in heretical and immoral plays. The public’s opinion about Shaw was gained by his patient fight in order to force the public to review morals. He respect particularly the wrong reaction as well as the Christian doctrines, also he writes his plays to convert his opinion to the nation by these way. (Holroyd. N. D).

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Analytical Corps of *Widowers' Houses***

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**2. Sampling**

**3. Description and Analysis of the Corpus**

**3.1 Act I**

**3.2 Act II**

**4. Conclusion**

## **Chapter Three:**

### **Corpus Analysis: Social Satire in Shaw's Play *Widower's Houses***

#### **1. Introduction**

This study is meant to assess the hypothesis previously stated in terms of using irony and sarcasm as satirical devices in Shaw's "Widowers Houses"

This chapter provides a description of the corpus and the sampling techniques, as well as the analysis and interpretation of some extracts to explore elements of satire in Shaw's play '*Widowers' Houses*'.

#### **2. Sampling**

Being a corpus-based study, the analysis of the play is said to be reliable and valid if it takes the third as sample. So 30% of the corpus can be taken as reflective account for social satire in Shaw's play. In this practical part the descriptive analytical method is opted for within a Marxist theoretical framework.

#### **3. Description and Analysis of the Corpus**

"Widowers Houses"(1892) the first play written by G.B.Shaw. *Widower's Houses* is a satirical attack directed at the social evils of slum landlordism. The play as Shaw stated, is a "grotesquely realistic exposure of slum landlordism." He demonstrates the dirty attitude and merciless indifference to the suffering of the working class on the part of the bourgeoisie and their greed for additional money resulted in the decline of the poor. It is the double standards of the whole social system. Thus, in this chapter we are going to analyze the use of garden and library as a setting in the play; in addition, to the greed, tainted money, human depravity and social classes in *Widowers Houses* using the Marxist theory which deals with the social conflict and political ideas.

*Widowers' Houses* is typically ironic in almost all its elements: setting, characters, themes, names and dialogues. Shaw builds up his dramatic climax in a particular way so that to realistically criticize a shifting capitalist society. Let us examine some extracts from the play that represent the use of irony.

### 3.1 Act I

First and foremost, setting seems to occupy an important space in Shaw's plays among which "Widowers Houses".

*"In the garden restaurant of a hotel at Remagen on the Rhine, on a fine afternoon in August in the eighteen- eighties. Looking down the Rhine towards Bann, the gate leading from the garden to the riverside is seen on the right .The hotel is on the left.*

*It has a wooden annexe with an entrance marked table d' Hotel. A waiter is in attendance"* (W.H, Act I, 01).

The opening lines of Act I show a fantastic climate with no storms, fog , or clouds. Everyone knows that Britain is a foggy country with oppressive weather conditions, which is not what Shaw emphasizes in his comedies.

Gounaridou (2010: 34) explains the selection of fine weather by Shaw as follows: "This is not coincidental, but rather an essential part of Shaw's satiric statement. Shaw takes pains to present a surface, in a lovely garden, with delightful weather pleasant, tranquil, and almost, an "idyllic" world".

In addition to space physical setting, time and dates are indicative enough in the quote "the eighteen- eighties"; a significant period in English history at all levels: social, economic, religion and political.

The nature of the setting shows that the characters are tourists in a foreign country; what comes later as attitudes of English people in a foreign country is a source of meaning depicted from such a setting.

Secondly, characters are ironically introduced and developed in the play .

*" ... Dr .Harry Trench, is about 24 , stoutly built , thick in the neck, close – cropped and Black in the hair, with undignified medical- student manners, frank, hasty, rather boyish.*



*The other...cokans is older...ill- nourished, scanty- haired gwtle-men with affected manners; fidgety, touchy, and constitutionally ridiculous in uncompassionate eyes” (ibid)*

The description of the two characters shows their contradictions. The first impression the reader can get from every character is different: Trench seems noble, educated, childish; Cokane seems wiser, older, and more caring. When the two characters start a conversation, everything turns to be ironic and deceiving.

*“Cokane: the seat is all dusty .These foreigners are deplorably unclean in their habits”*

*“Trench: never mind, it don’t matter, old chappie, Buck up Billy, buck up .Enjoy yourself.”*

*“Cokane: (scandalized) .In the name of common decency, Harry, will you remember that you are a gentleman and not a costar on Hampstead. Of heath on Bank holiday? Would you dream of behaving like this in London?*

*Trench: oh, not! I’ve come abroad to enjoy myself.*

*Cokane: Trench either you travel as a gentleman or you travel alone .This is what makes Englishmen unpopular on the continent .look at our appearance” (ibid, 02).*

The topic of the conversation is centered around appearance. English people used to be still are obsessed with their look especially those from the upper class.

Paradox here is that Trench, who is supposed to be a gentleman since he is well- educated (medical student) and young, is careless and does not pay attention to his look; whereas Cokane, who ambitiously looks forward to becoming a noble, sticks to the rules of the upper class.

Through Cokane’s speech and manners Shaw wants to show the hypocrisy and selfishness of people; this fake society which judges people by the way they look even if they do not have morals or values. In fact, this might be one of the clearest effects of industrialization.

Cokane is more careful and wants to gain respect by stating: *“how are they to know that you are well connected if you do not show it by your manners” ( ibid)*

Here again fake society is reflected through the attentive way people follow in their attitudes. In other instances , Trench addresses Cokane by his nick name “ Billy” instead of his official name , the fact that irritated Cokane who keeps emphasizing on social class and proper conduct “ Tact” is in fact Cokane’ s favorite word.

*“There shall be no difficulty of money: you shall entertain as much as you please: I will guarantee all that. But I must have a guarantee on my side that she will be received on equal terms by your family” ( ibid.8 ) .*

Here the dialogue between Sartorius and Trench shows the greed of both parts .everyone wants to get richer and connected to a “noble family” whatever the source of money. This is ironical since Trench has seen Blanche for a very short period of time and was eager to marry her quickly .On the other hand, Sartorius does not pay attention to the behavior of Trench regarding his daughter since he is going to add some fortune to him by marrying his daughter .

The same idea of greed is reinforced in the following quote by Trench

*“If you dwell on his being well off and Blanche an only child, Aunt Maria will be satisfied.” (Ibid)*

The reaction of Cokane reflects how serious relationships can fade in front of greed which is ironical too.

*“I am not moral, Trench .At least I am not a moralist: that is the expression I should have used moral, but not a moralist .if you are going to get money with your wife, doesn't it concern your family to know how that money was made?” (ibid).*

### **3.1 Act II**

Coming to the second act, we notice that it shares the same value with the first one.

Eventually in Bernard Shaw's play *Widowers Houses* the second act, Shaw used the library of the villa as a setting of the stage:

*“In the library of a handsome appointed villa at Surbiton on a sunny forenoon in September. Sartorius is busy at a writing table, littered with business letters. The fireplace, decorated for summer, is close behind him: the window is in the opposite wall. Between the table and the window Blanche, in her prettiest frock, sits reading *The Queen*. The door, painted, like all the woodwork, in the blackest shade of red, with brass fittings and moulded posts and pediment, is in the middle. All the walls are lined with shelves of smartly tooled books, fittings into their places like bricks. A library ladder stands in the corner”. (ibid, 10)*

Bernard Shaw describes the bourgeoisie's library and gives us a hit of their life, the situation of Sartorius working on his business letters, Blanche reading her book "The Queen", even the decoration of the library in tiny details; colors, lights and windows.

In this act Shaw seems as he is describing the stage of the play naturally, but implicitly, he is criticising the life of the bourgeoisie's family and their high life style satirically in the British society, at the time where the poor are living in harsh conditions, in addition to the suffering of poverty, famine, and child labour.

Like Sartorius situation, his library is well built, organized and consists of the whole goods and conditions, in order to encourage his daughter Blanche to enrich her knowledge, develop her skills and abilities, whereas the working class children did not have even the chance to go to schools and having their primary educations. It is a huge irony in the behavior and the logic, because the cultivate individual should be honest and self-judgment, but Shaw explained this point in ironic way.

From Sartorius's point of view, the expansive library there, and the unread books are for Blanche means the irony and hypocrisy of the situation is present. While the reader of the play text may forget the stage of library and the books, but for the audience it is there the stage and cannot ignore, it is a contradiction. A performance of the play elicits the irony of incongruity between the setting and the symbol of western civilization, education and culture especially by the performance of Blanche.

The use of garden in the first act of the play presents the same reason of library is, a powerful revelation of the hypocrisy attitudes in the British society.

Furthermore, Shaw symbolizes the greed by Sartorius voracity to money in a various ways, like Sartorius's discharged of his collecting rents Lickcheese; because he spent twenty four shilling of repairing in the houses

*LICKCHEESE: ...and because I charged him four-and-twenty shillin' to mend a staircase that three woman have been hurt on, and that would have got him prosecuted for manslaughter if it had been let go much longer, he gives me the sack.....(ibid, 13).*

Shaw used sarcasm by Lickchesse's speech, i. e, he preferred the twenty four shilling and lose his collector, in other words, he chooses the money and released his worker who has a family to take care of.

Other example of greed is when the collector told Trench about the source of Blanche's father money:

*LICKCHEESE: He has nothing else, sir; and he shows his sense in it, too. Even few pounds he could scrape together he bought old houses with houses that you wouldn't hardly look at without holding your nose... (ibid, 14).*

Sartorius did not care about the sufferance of the tenants or even being a little bit kindly with them, he was totally harsh with them even his collector discharged him the same with the slum-landlordism and the exploiting of the poor in the British society. As some critics noted that capitalism is the best of all the economic systems, whereas poverty and its outcome are inescapable and the landlords are miserable and helpless to adjust the society.

Since the result is clear so it is better for them to be in the upper class by any way in order to avoid being poor and exploited in the society.

Also Shaw is utilizing Sartorius's source of money to express ironically that the bourgeoisie's wealth is coming from illegal ways and sources.

On the other hand, tainted money is also symbolized by Sartorius at the beginning of the second chapter, but after the discovery of Trench, that he is involved in this dirty business, it becomes the comment factor between them, but Sartorius was more avaricious in loving his money.

*SARTORIUS (pitying his innocence)....But I really cannot spend pound after pound in repairs for them to pull down, when I can barely get them to pay me four a room, which is the recognized fair London rent.....(ibid, 18).*

As Cokane said "the love of money is the roof of all evil" (14), Sartorius did not accept to pay a pound in repairing the houses for the poor hesitating from losing his money for a pauper.

*SARTORIUS (forcibly): Yes: a mortgage on my property. When I, to use your own words, screw, and bully, and driving these people to pay what they have freely undertaken to pay me, I cannot touch one penny of the money they give me until I have first paid your<sup>700</sup> out of it. What Lickcheese did for me, I do for you. He and I are alike intermediaries: you are the principal. It is because of the risks I run through the poverty of my tenants that you exact*

*interest from me at the monstrous and exorbitant rate of seven per cent, forcing me to exact the uttermost farthing in my turn from tenants..... (ibid, 19).*

Tainted money is the same as the greed; they are the source of social conflict, the exploitation of the proletariat, and the contempt of the working classes in addition to made mockery of them. As Sartorius said “these poor people do not know how to live in proper dwellings”, for him the appearance are for a prime importance particularly for his daughter, from another sight, we see that Sartorius has been included in this circle in order to reach his purpose and realizes his daughter’s dreams.

Shaw wants to make the readers/audiences understand that every high class individual is living in the poor exploitation even he was against this dirty business in a witty and sarcastic way.

Tainted money and greed are implicated under the Human depravity in the play in addition to clear sights of corruption and immorality of the individuals in the play such as:

*SARTORIUS:....Now look here, Mr Lickchesse! This is the third time this year that you have brought me a bill of over a pound for repairs. I have warned you repeatedly against dealing with these tenement houses as if they were mansions in a West-End square. I have had occasion to warn you too against discussing my affairs with strangers. You have chosen to disregard my wishes. You are dis-charged. (ibid, 12).*

Sartorius discharged his collector due to the needed servicing in the houses for the third time on a year; he did not respect his situation in doing his best to collect the rents from poorless and helpless persons. Especially when taking money from a hungry poor child who doesn’t have what to eat but it is his work and he is obliged to gather the money in order to feed his children also:

*LICKCHEESE: ...Hardly a penny of that but there was a hungry child crying for the bread it would have bought. But I got it for him screwed and worried and bullied it out of them. I look here, gentlemen: I’m pretty seasoned to work; but there is money there that I couldn’t have taken if it hadn’t been for the thought of my own children depending on me for giving him satisfaction....(ibid, 13)*

Actually it’s a harsh work you have to gather money from pauper persons, but Sartorius doesn’t care about all this the significant for him is the money without any humanity as Lickchesse report to Trench:

*LICKCHESSE: .....Do you suppose that he sacked me because I was too hard? Not a bit on it: it was because I wasn't hard enough. (ibid, 13).*

Sartorius was renting miserable houses and stalls to the working class a nonhuman place for living; they mock the poor by putting them in such places:

*LICKCHESSE: ....Every few hundred ponds he could scrape together he bought old houses with houses you wouldn't hardly look at without holding your nose. (ibid, 14)*

Trench is being educated through a series of discovery, while the audiences are presented with the dramatized lectures on morality and economics of slum landlordism in their society.

Bernard Shaw has considered the play as a work of art concerned with the human depravity more than the traditional comedy. From the quotes above, Shaw seems like he is depicting his childhood where he was living in devilish houses and moving from one to another, he is transmitting the message that his life was miserable due to this kind of dirty business and propagandist, who corrupted the society and bring those social problems.

Shaw in the above statements wants to demonstrate paradoxically that the bourgeoisies thought that they are independent by themselves and they are the headers of the society but actually they are not. How can they be considered as leaders while they are snatching a teeny amount of money from a destitute man having children to feed, they should be the example of the society, what does this amount of money decrease from your huge account, at the same time it can save a soul of a poor child. Shaw by using this witty way of the guilty situation made his readers/audiences feeling shame.

Although the play also includes the phenomenon on social class and it was clearly mentioned in Blanche's relation with her maid, she treated her in an awful way by shouting and screaming in her face in addition of beating her such as:

*BLANCHE (seizing her by the hair and throat) stop that noise, I tell you, unless you want me to kill you. (ibid, 20).*

Blanche stretched her by her hair and crave because she was in temper anger or due to the fear of being beat like in:

*THE PARLOR MAID Lickchesse has gone, looking dreadful (she breaks off with a stifled cry as Blanche's fingers tighten furiously on her) (ibid, 20).*

The maid according to Blanche is her slave; she can do whatever she wants on her, love her in a minute and beat her in another. Her social class made her believe that the other classes are additional and can be ignored and neglected.

Actually she is her father's daughter, he said that *these poor people do not know how to live in the proper dwellings (ibid, 18)*. As if the poor and the proletariat don't have the right to live in a clean and organized place they are borne to live in poverty their whole lives.

Also, Sartorius promised his daughter to live in a high condition *...you will be richer than your husband...* (*ibid, 21*). He is teaching his daughter that the life is money that is the fruits of his speech.

In particular, Blanche is the spoiled product of the most rotten form that the exploitation picks: slum landlordism. Her egoistic nature and rejection to recognize the social and economic conditions on which her wealth and luxury are based reflect the inhumanity and crime of the society ironically.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this chapter we have attempted to apply the Marxist Theory in Shaw's use of social satire, in his play *Widowers' Houses*. The use of satire by Bernard Shaw it is not just a matter of using a style. Shaw admired satire style because it conveys the writer's idea in a witty and smart way.

By analyzing Shaw's play *Widowers' Houses*, it is noticed that the play criticizes the British society unconsciously and explaining the use of sarcasm and irony by Shaw in various parts of the play. The first and the second acts explore the human depravity that was practicing in a multiple methods by the Bourgeoisies against the proletarians. Shaw clarifies that the greed of the high class families as the money was the only source of happiness for them which they want to gather it in a harsh and awful way. He also explained that tainted money was the major source of the wealthiest families of the British society which made them believe that they are leaders. Also Shaw prefers the use of garden as a setting in the play to criticize the

high class in a witty way and attract the audience to the stage and make them reach the struggle between the logical mind thinking and real life of the bourgeoisies.



## **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

In the present work, we attempted to demonstrate how Shaw depicted his society by criticizing it through *Widowers' Houses* using satire as social art. To accomplish this aim, we paved the ground through literature review. In this context, the former covers definitions of satire, its historical background, elements of satire, moving to the types of satire, and finally we close the chapter with the implication of satire since satire has functions and aims to create political and social changes.

The second chapter is concerned with the social context of the Victorian period. Then we dealt with satire in *Widowers' Houses* and discussed irony in it.

The work is finishing by proving that social satire is a fascinating way of looking at society in order to discuss sensitive social problems.

An interesting observation in Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* is that it takes notice of the new changes in the English society; changes that are particularly represented in the various social problems and which Shaw has succeeded to express and criticize. In this way, Shaw is considered a realist dramatist that used the stage as a platform for social propaganda.

It is known that irony was used from the early history, but the novelty of use by Shaw lies in the themes tackled in a creative way in the sense that his plays swing between human feelings and circumstances.

The search for truth is considered by Shaw as the closest way of human communication. Hence, his early plays (unpleasant) among which *Widowers' Houses* are a good example to show that dramatic art and social reform are two faces of the same coin; the pen proved to be mightier than the sword.

Stylistically speaking, Shaw succeeded in addressing slum landlordism but without real evolution of the dramatic events. Furthermore, Shaw has dealt with the themes in wit and humour instead of tragedy and hostile mood. i.e., he presented the cruelty of landlords without trying directly to attack them.

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## Résumé

Cette étude est une tentative d'analyser la pièce de théâtre afin d'explorer le conflit de classes et son effet dans la pièce de théâtre de Bernard Shaw *Widowers' Houses*, dans le but d'enquêter sur le thème principal utilisé dans la pièce de 'Bernard Shaw' et la mesure de dépeindre les luttes sociales entre la bourgeoisie et le prolétariat à travers ses personnages. *Widowers' Houses* à été considéré comme une critique de la société tout entière qui rend les riches exploiter les pauvres. Afin de démontrer le system de classe, ainsi que le dépravation humaine, l'argent corrompu et de la cupidité, nous avons opté pour l'utilisation descriptive analytique méthode a l'aide de la théorie Marxiste qui traite des rapports de classe, les conflits sociaux et d'autres problèmes idéologiques.

**Mots-clés:** luttes sociales, Bourgeoisie, système prolétarien de classe, la dépravation humaine, l'argent sale, la cupidité, *Widowers' Houses*, la satire sociale.