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Swift and Stewart: The Societal Background and Influence of Satirists in Turbulent Times

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Swift and Stewart: The Societal Background and Influence of Satirists in Turbulent Times

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
In
English
American Literature

by
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Abstract

In this paper, I consider the success of Jonathan Swift's *The Drapier's Letters* and Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* in changing the political climate of the world around them. By analyzing the political background of America in the 2000s and the Irish reaction to William Woods' patent in the 1720s, I prove the influence of Stewart and Swift's satire. I then analyze the specific tactics each employs in order to achieve an audience and influence change, concluding by comparing the similar tactics that each use, including persona, irony, and humor as a veil of serious intent.

Keywords: Satire, Jonathan Swift, Jon Stewart, *The Drapier's Letters*, *The Daily Show*, comparison, modern satire, irony, persona

As a genre, satire is multi-layered. It can have different elements or humor; it can be found in novels, plays, and movies. With as much variety as the genre offers, however, a lynchpin in the definition of satire is that it has to highlight errors and folly. According to the Bedford Glossary of 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 357). Satire is designed to ridicule these mistakes in a humorous manner, masking the point with entertainment value. The end of the definition is the focus for my thesis: “giving impetus to change or reform.” Satire often aims to improve society by highlighting its flaws, and successful satire inspires actual changes to improve society. It does this by suggesting an alternative to the current method of action, or by implying another way of thinking through ridicule and insult. Successful satire can be seen as a form of activism; it calls for changes by highlighting flaws and suggesting how society can repair those flaws.

The satirist often faces great risk when he or she calls for action. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry on satire, successful satire is created when the satirist does not back down from that risk: “The 20th-century American critic Kenneth Burke summed up this paradoxical aspect of satire’s relation with the law by suggesting that the most inventive satire is produced when the satirist knowingly takes serious risks and is not sure whether he will be acclaimed or punished” (Elliot). Facing this risk does more than just prove a satirist’s courage; it also shows how strongly the satirist believes in his cause. By knowingly facing a risk, a satirist reveals that he is serious, and that he places great importance in the point he is trying to make. When a satirist attempts to change the world around him even in the face of legal risk and can still make a societal impact, he has created successful satire.

Although they are separated by several hundred years, Jonathan Swift and Jonathan Stewart both embody characteristics of successful satirists. They satirized not only to entertain and to highlight the mistakes of mankind, but to attempt to reform as well. In doing so, both Swift and Stewart faced risks to their career, and Swift was accused of treason several times. Despite this, both satirists were able to make an impact on the world around them. Swift and Stewart's satire changed the political environment around them. Swift's *The Drapier's Letters* convinced the people of Ireland to boycott against a coin patent that would have hurt their country, and subsequently the patent was withdrawn. Jonathan Stewart's brand of humor mixed with politics on his television program *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* has grown in ratings and success over the past decade, and according to several studies has increased political knowledge in *The Daily Show's* young viewers. These examples show that both Jonathan Swift and Jon Stewart's intent to reform as satirists has been carried out successfully.

After establishing the success of their satire, I will examine why their satire is so successful. In order to do this, I will focus on the tactics each uses and compare them to one another. A tactic that makes both satirists successful is the persona they display in their satire. Under the pseudonym of M.B. Drapier, Swift posits himself as an everyman of Ireland, which helped his words resonate with the Irish people. This persona gives him the freedom to attack William Wood, the maker of the patent, and the British government, as just another Irish person who believed he was being mistreated. Another reason Swift's satire is successful is that he does not attack the patent and then present his own solution to the problem. Swift's intent to reform is implied rather than expressly stated; this is once again due to the persona he created. He does not write as an elite, well-learned man who knows how to solve the problem, but as a shopkeeper who is simply frustrated with the patent because of the negative impact on his shop, and as a

result wants to fight it. Adopting such a persona is central to the satire's effectiveness, and it is a persona Jon Stewart employs as well. Stewart does not fashion himself as an actual political expert; he is merely a newscaster, reporting the news in the world and acting as confused and outraged by it as the audience is. Stewart went to college at William & Mary and has all the makings of a well-educated intellectual; however, he does not reveal this to the audience, and attempts to hide this through his words and actions. He does this to maintain his role as a normal person who reports and reacts. Although he is accused of having a liberal agenda, Stewart attacks members on both sides of the political spectrum with equal enthusiasm and frequency. It is this persona that resonates with his audience, and it helps make his program a source for both entertainment and political news among his viewership. Lastly, I will examine the content of their satire, how each satirist uses humor as a tactic for both entertainment value and to thinly veil a more serious intent to reform under it.

An examination the societal and political climate around both satirists shows the risks and obstacles each had to encounter on their way to making successful satire. In the early 18th century, when Swift began his rise to prominence, there was a considerable risk of treason for anyone who spoke against the king. Although the definition of high treason only covered conspiracy to kill the king, being seen as disloyal to the throne was an offense punishable by death. In the century leading up to Swift's time, executions were common practice. As a prominent satirist, Jonathan Swift faced accusations of treason, and to avoid legal repercussions had to use a pseudonym when writing *The Drapier's Letters*, a series of pamphlets that protested the patent of making a privatized coin. According to Jeanne Clegg's article "Swift on False Witness," the idea of treason was not foreign to Swift; his brand of satire had him always in danger of being accused: "For at least two years after the Hanoverian succession then,

Swift lived under threat of evidence of treason being laid against him or demanded of him” (Clegg 465). However, the *Drapier’s Letters* attacked the crown for allowing the patent, and this made him a wanted man. In his book *Jonathan Swift and Ireland*, Oliver Ferguson examines the reactions of John Carteret, the Lord Lieutenant of Dublin, to Swift’s letters:

According to Middleton, Carteret was first shown a copy on October 23/ Four days later, the lord lieutenant called the Privy Council in a special meeting, read “some few of the many exceptionable passages” in the *Letter*, and made it clear that he regarded it as treasonable. After having much discussion, a majority of the Council voted to have Harding arrested for printing the *Letter* and to issue a proclamation offering a reward of £300 to anyone who should discover the Drapier’s identity. (Ferguson 115)

Swift’s attempts to highlight the flaws of the patent – and by association the government that was backing the patent – caused a backlash against him that could have cost him his life as well as implicated the printer involved with the project.

Although now the legal threat of treason has disappeared, Jon Stewart faces daily scrutiny and negative attention from his targets. As *The Daily Show* has become more successful, Stewart has felt increasing pressure to become more involved in American politics. As Damien Cave wrote in a 2004 *New York Times* article,

Whether he likes it or not, Mr. Stewart's mix of news and satire has become so successful that the comedian is suddenly being criticized for not questioning his guests with Tim Russert-like intensity...Some critics insist that the size of Mr. Stewart's audience should force him to take a more serious approach (Cave)

With the show's boom in popularity over the past decade, Jon Stewart walks a delicate line between political pundit and comedian, a line that could damage Stewart's credibility and consequently his show's ratings. According to an article in *USA Today* written the same year, Olivia Barker speculates that "as the comic increasingly plays the role of critic, some media watchers say Stewart risks becoming the kind of overexposed personality he so mercilessly skewers four nights a week" (Barker). In 2009, Tucker Carlson appeared on CNN's "Reliable Sources" and blasted Jon Stewart for his merciless interview of Jim Cramer. Carlson said of Stewart: "In the end, Jon Stewart is a partisan hack." In an article in the *Huffington Post* covering the video, Nicholas Graham quoted Carlson as saying, "Look, Jon Stewart is a political player. He's a partisan. He is speaking on behalf of the Democratic Party. And in so doing, becoming, I think -- I mean, he's smart, he's talented, but he's becoming so self-serious and sanctimonious, that it's just a matter of time before it becomes unfunny" (Graham). This result that Carlson predicts would be disastrous for Stewart's career; if Stewart loses the humor in his show, especially when carried by a network called Comedy Central, he would likely lose his spot on their nightly rotation.

An example of what happens when a political reporter crosses lines can be found in the case of Keith Olbermann. Olbermann's career at MSNBC was defined by his penchant to cross the line between reporter and partisan activist. Olbermann blatantly crossed that line in November of 2010, when he donated to several Democratic candidates before the 2010 elections. According to a *Huffington Post* article by Danny Shea, the result was disastrous to his career: "MSNBC has suspended star anchor Keith Olbermann following the news that he had donated to three Democratic candidates this election cycle" (Shea). In the following months, Olbermann lost his job with MSNBC, largely because of the scandal created by his donations and subsequent

suspensions. By violating the line between reporter and political activist, Keith Olbermann lost his job. Jonathan Stewart faces much of the same criticism that Olbermann did concerning his partisanship. While Jonathan Stewart does not face the same threats against his life that Swift did, several critics speculate Stewart's television career may suffer as he continues his brand of satirical journalism.

Despite these threats to their careers – and to Swift's life – both satirists have another thing in common: their satire caused change in the world around them. Swift's impact in Ireland is clearly seen in the case of William Wood's privatized coin patent. Oliver Ferguson writes that "On July 12, 1722, William Wood, an English iron dealer, was granted a patent to coin 360 tons of copper for Ireland to the value of £100,800" (Ferguson 84). This decision was met with reluctance in Ireland. Ferguson outlines why Ireland was opposed to the idea of a privatized coin: "The underlying cause for Ireland's dissatisfaction with the patent was the absence of a national mint" (85). Ireland was upset that it was not allowed to mint its own money, and that they were subjected to a copper coin which proved their dependent status (Ferguson 85). In addition to these political reasons, there were economic reasons to oppose the patent as well. The patent that was approved was valued at over one hundred thousand pounds. As Ireland's total currency was approximately four hundred thousand pounds, the money "authorized by Wood's grant thus amounted to one-fourth of all the money in the kingdom" (Ferguson 85). Another issue that Ireland had with the patent is it created a large profit for Wood while threatening to deplete the value of Ireland's gold and silver. The combination of these problems were similar: it represented the debasing of Irish currency. As a result, Ireland would face further dependence on England for financial needs. With all of these problems surrounding the patent, Jonathan Swift

stepped in, put on the cloak of Irish shopkeeper, M.B. Drapier, and went to work on changing what he thought was an insult to his country and a threat to their financial stability.

Sophie Smith devotes a chapter to Swift's time in Ireland in her book *Dean Swift*, and she paraphrases the message of Swift's first letter, then reports its effect on the country:

“These bloodsuckers will suck all the good money out of the country...You will all be undone if you be so foolish and wicked as to take this cursed coin...By the law of England, according to my Lord Coke, no subject can be forced to take any money but of lawful metal, i.e. of silver and gold; therefore, my friends, stand to it one and all, refuse this filthy trash. It is no reason to rebel against Mr. Wood.”

The effect of this pamphlet was instantaneous. From Cork to Londonderry, from Galway to Dublin, Ireland was in a blaze. (Smith 270)

From the first letter, Swift makes his position on the patent clear, and he urges his people to rally against the patent.

Although the fourth letter pushed Swift dangerously close to being arrested for treason, he was still able to write three more letters under the Drapier pseudonym. And by that time, it was already clear that Swift's intention was being realized: “Swift had so firmly established the Drapier as a symbol of resistance against Wood's coin that in the popular mind betrayal of the Drapier was betrayal of Ireland” (Ferguson 123). Swift's persona had become the representation of not only Ireland's cause against William Wood's coin patent, but also Ireland's struggle for independence from England. This unity was found not only in the commercial class of Ireland, but in the justice system as well. The jury that was constructed to decide on the case of John Harding, Swift's publisher, found out that the case was not just about printing a letter. Swift made another pamphlet, this time anonymously, called *Seasonable Advice*, which instructed the

jurors that “if they brought in a true bill against Harding, their decision would be universally interpreted as an indictment of the opposition to the halfpence” (Ferguson 126). Swift’s message to the jurors was clear: this was about the patent, and the country had firmly aligned itself against it.

With the country behind him, the result of Swift’s satire is clear: before Swift published his final letter, Wood withdrew his patent to make the coin. There were several elements that factored into Wood’s decision, but Swift’s letters were among the forefront, according to Ferguson:

The defeat of Wood’s patent was a personal triumph for Swift. While it is true that he could have done little had not the Irish executive stood firm in its determination to break the patent, it is also true that official action alone could not have welded the Irish into a unanimous front of resistance. *The Drapier’s Letters*, more than any other single effort, achieved this miracle. (Ferguson 136)

Swift’s letters were designed to highlight the flaws of Wood’s patent, and as a result he unified the Irish people against it and caused it to be withdrawn. It is clear the effect Swift’s satire had on not only Irish money, but on the people of Ireland and their relationship with England: “The people united; Wood gave up his patent; and never again did the English government grant an individual the right to coin money for Ireland” (Ferguson 137).

The Drapier’s Letters did more than lead to the withdrawal of the patent; they also turned Swift into a national hero. Even while Swift was writing the letters under his pseudonym, he was becoming recognized as the representative of Irish liberty. Something that is important to understand is that, although Swift was writing anonymously, there was little doubt by public figures, including Walpole and Lord Lieutenant Carteret, who was actually writing the letters.

However, this did not mean they could haul Swift to jail, despite the charge of treason. As Sophie Smith writes, Swift was already protected by his relationship with the Irish people: “There was no doubt of the authorship, but the Government dared not touch Swift. He was the idol of the people” (Smith 274). Smith also cites a placard that was written soon after Carteret offered a reward for the Drapier’s identity: “And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the Lord liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not” (Smith 274). It is clear that, although he wrote under a pseudonym, Swift was recognized and fervently appreciated for his work against the patent.

When the patent was withdrawn, Swift’s heroic status only grew with the Irish people. He was given medals and his birthday was celebrated as a national holiday (Smith 275). Although he ended his political writing career five years after publishing the letters, his work and impact on Ireland has lasted to this day: “The one thing needful was to give Ireland a high standard to maintain, and this he did. At the same time he won for himself a place in the affection of the Irish people, such that they looked on him as the savior of their country and the biggest benefactor of their people ever known” (Smith 283). Jonathan Swift wrote to highlight the flaws of William Wood’s patent, and in doing so he made two distinct changes. One was immediate and direct: the patent was withdrawn. But the other was gradual and indirect: he inspired the Irish people to stand up against the oppression of England.

It is slightly harder to prove Jon Stewart’s impact on the world of politics. *The Daily Show* markets itself as a fake news show, openly admitting that they do not take themselves seriously. Despite this, Jon Stewart has come to the forefront of the political news spectrum. According to an article in *The Guardian*, Jon Stewart is more than just a television celebrity:

“While The Daily Show routinely calls itself the ‘most trusted name in fake news’, Stewart is winning praise for real journalism in challenging the financial news network's hype that fed the credit boom” (Anderson). Yet *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* is aired on Comedy Central, a network that is better known for crude cartoons than political information. In fact, when Jon Stewart was a guest on Tucker Carlson’s show *Crossfire* in 2004, he captured the difference between the perceptions of his news versus more conventional news programs when he told Carlson, “You're on CNN. The show that leads into me is puppets making crank phone calls” (“Jon Stewart’s America”). Jon Stewart realizes that his network does not have the same political firepower as the other major networks.

However, despite the credibility of Comedy Central, Jon Stewart is still able to create a political message that reaches an audience. As Jon Stewart’s “fake news program” becomes more popular, the political influence on its audience grows. It seemed that there was a trend arising that more and more people were turning to Comedy Central late at night not just to be entertained, but to learn more about the political world as well. Jody Baumgartner, a political science professor from East Carolina University, noticed this trend and conducted a study titled “*The Daily Show* Effect: Candidate Evaluations, Efficacy, and American Youth.” The study was conducted to examine the effects of *The Daily Show* on viewers regarding political knowledge and understanding. Baumgartner’s study shows several indications that Jon Stewart’s program is taken seriously as a source of political information. One reason is the attention the show gets from people currently in the political sphere. After listing the multiple awards *The Daily Show* has won, Baumgartner examines the effects of its popularity: “Reflecting this popularity, a wide array of political powerhouses as well as presidential hopefuls have appeared on the show as guests. On September 16, 2003, John Edwards announced his candidacy on Stewart’s show,

making good on a promise that Stewart would be the first person he told about his presidential intentions” (Baumgartner 343-4). Baumgartner goes on to list several other political candidates who have appeared on the show, including Dennis Kucinich, Joseph Lieberman, Howard Dean and John Kerry (Baumgartner 344). The 2008 Election also featured candidates John McCain and eventual President Barack Obama. Having a candidate announce his intention to run for the highest political office in America on *The Daily Show* gives the show political credibility, as does hosting several candidates running for President.

If the candidates are mindful that appearing on *The Daily Show* could help their chances politically, they also understand that appearing on the show – or rather being targeted on the show – could also harm their chances. This is very clear in the case of Bobby Jindal, the current governor of Louisiana. Although the Republicans had just lost the White House in 2008, hope was not lost in the party. In December 2008, Andrew Romano wrote an article for *Newsweek* about what Bobby Jindal represented. The title of the article was “Their Own Obama,” and it focused on the governor’s potential to become the next President of the United States: “There are plenty of rising stars in the GOP. But in the wake of Barack Obama's victory on Nov. 4, none has attracted as much speculation, curiosity and unapologetic hype as Jindal” (Romano). In fact, Rush Limbaugh even compared him to Reagan. Although Jindal claims in the article that he did not intend to run for President, the article was slanted to give readers the idea that he might, or at least he would be open for a Vice President nomination. There are several comparisons to Obama throughout the article: “So it's no surprise that ‘many prominent members of the GOP,’ as the Post noted, already consider Jindal their ‘own version of Obama’—the charismatic, nonwhite, Ivy League change agent destined to revitalize his party” (Romano). The article is respectful and in some cases reverential to Jindal, framing him as the “future of the GOP.”

Riding this wave of support and hype, Bobby Jindal was selected to give the Republican response to Obama's inauguration speech. He delivered a speech that was criticized for its simplicity, but nowhere was it blasted more than on *The Daily Show's* February 25, 2009 episode. This clip fully captures the essence of Jon Stewart's satire. While showing clips of the speech, Stewart openly mocks the governor and explains why his speech is so ridiculous. After playing Jindal's opening line wishing America a "Happy Mardi Gras," Stewart stared at the camera for several seconds before saying, "What the ____ was that." He then compared the way Jindal entered the room to a Mr. Rogers episode. Stewart then mocked Jindal for talking to the country like they were children, and answering Jindal's claim that "Americans can do anything!" with an overenthusiastic reply: "Can we have candy for dinner?" Throughout the four minute clip, Stewart attacks Jindal's speech patterns and content.

Jindal's credibility took a hit as a result of the speech and subsequent mocking from *The Daily Show*. The clamoring for his nomination eventually stopped, and he was dismissed by his own party, according to Tom Leonard's article "Bobby Jindal Profile: The Answer to Barack Obama?": "'Insane', 'amateurish' and 'a flop', said the critics, and that was just the conservatives" (Leonard). It is also interesting to point out that the article asks the same question that the *Newsweek* article did about Jindal's relation to Obama, and answers it rather emphatically: "Do the comparisons with Mr. Obama go any further? On the basis of Mr Jindal's speech - a hackneyed, folksy message about big, bad government delivered straight off autocue in the cheesy tones of a personal claims lawyer who insists on doing his own commercials - many are saying 'No'" (Leonard). Thanks to the ridiculous picture of Jindal drawn by Stewart, he lost the political reputation he was working so hard to achieve.

Jon Stewart's influence on his audience can be found especially in a particular age group. As Baumgartner's study found out about the audience that primarily watches *The Daily Show*: "they are young. Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 years watch the program more than any other age group" (Baumgartner 344). The study also found that this age group has not watched *The Daily Show* as a supplement to other news, but as a replacement. The study found some significant statistics regarding young viewers and Jon Stewart's show:

A full 25% reported that they pay no attention at all to hard news. Significantly, only 23% of regular *Daily Show* viewers report that they followed "hard news" closely. Finally, although *The Daily Show* is not intended to be a legitimate news source, over half (54%) of young adults in this age group reported that they got at least some news about the 2004 presidential campaign from comedy programs such as *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live*. Only 15% of Americans over the age of 45 years reported learning something about the campaign from the same sources. (Pew Research Center, 2004a) (Baumgartner 344)

This study shows that not only are young viewers paying more attention to *The Daily Show* and less attention to legitimate news programs, but they are also gleaning political knowledge from the show.

Baumgartner's study concludes with the position that "The Daily Show Effect" can have a detrimental effect on young viewers. His theory is that it will raise cynicism for world leaders and cause a downturn in voters, especially in this demographic. Baumgartner posits that this cynicism would be harmful for the then-upcoming election in 2008:

But it does have significance for 2008, when there will be no incumbent in the race and a high probability that the sitting vice president will not run...If young

Americans learn about these candidates via Jon Stewart, it is possible that unfavorable perceptions of both parties' nominees could form...Ultimately, negative perceptions of candidates could have participation implications by keeping more youth from the polls. (Baumgartner 362)

It is true that the satire of Jon Stewart can affect the minds of viewers. However, that does not necessarily mean that voter turnout will suffer as a result. And as the 2008 elections showed, this was not the case.

With Baumgartner's statistics about the young viewer's relationship with *The Daily Show* in mind, it is interesting to look at the voting demographics from the years 2000 to 2008. According to the United States Census, 50.7 percent of the 18-24 age demographic were registered in the 2000 election, but only 36.1 percent actually voted. By 2008, the number of registered voters in that same demographic increased to 58.5 percent. However, the percentage of actual voters increased to 48.5, more than twelve points (census.gov). The disparity in those ratios shows that not only are there more voters in that age group, but that more young people are feeling compelled to vote. Despite Baumgartner's fears that cynicism will keep young viewers from voting, this demographic has made a large jump in the polls over the past decade. While it does not necessarily prove that *The Daily Show* is the reason behind the increase in young voters, it is important to note that young people follow his show more than other demographics, and that they are also voting more since the show has risen in popularity.

Popularity is the key term here. Since Jon Stewart took over anchor duties from Craig Kilborn in 1999, the show has become exceedingly popular. Besides the obvious point that the show has to be popular to provoke statistical studies on it, *The Daily Show* continually does well in the ratings battle. As a fake news show that runs in a late night slot, Jon Stewart faces ratings

competition from not only programming from basic networks such as *The Tonight Show* and *The Late Show with David Letterman*; he also has to face off against news networks that run 24-hour content such as Fox News and CNN. In addition, *The Daily Show* competes against local news in many regions of the country. Despite these obstacles, *The Daily Show* performs strongly in ratings, even without a lead-up to an election. So far in the year 2011, the show's ratings have increased dramatically, according to Comedy Central's press release written by Steve Albani:

“The Daily Show with Jon Stewart” continued to be the top destination for young viewers during the month of May as the COMEDY CENTRAL series finished as the #1 late night talk show among Persons 18-49, Persons 18-34, Persons 18-24, Men 18-34 and Men 18-24 across all of television, both broadcast and cable.

(Albani)

In the press release, Albani covers both the age groups that watched *The Daily Show* most as well as how much the show has increased year to year: “Versus May 2010, ‘The Daily Show’ grew an astounding +19% in total viewers, with incredible double-digit ratings growth across all key demos” (Albani). These ratings confirm the findings of the study done by Baumgartner: that *The Daily Show* is popular with young viewers.

The study, the ratings report, and the census reports on voting do not mean much by themselves, but when combined they show interesting results. More young people are watching *The Daily Show* than any other late-night show or news outlet, and they are getting their political information mostly from Jon Stewart. More young people are voting now than they were ten years ago. Analyzing these reports show that Jon Stewart's nightly shows – which are marketed as “fake news” and contain sarcastic, ironic, and satirical content – are being put in the same category as informative news programs, and are actually winning the battle for ratings and

transfer of information. Jon Stewart has helped to bring a new voice to the political spectrum, and judging from the statistics, people are listening.

Both Jonathan Swift and Jon Stewart satirize their respective cultures, and in the process they create change. The impact of their satire can be seen from the results they produced. Having shown the success, I find it important to analyze the work of both satirists to find exactly why their satire is so successful. By examining *The Drapier's Letters* and *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, it is apparent that, much like their success in changing the world around them, there are similarities in their satire. Particularly, each creates a persona to help deliver their message to the audience they intend to educate. Also, each uses humor and irony not simply as a form of entertainment, but to veil the points that they wish to make about the political world around them.

It is important to recognize exactly why Swift's *Letters* were so successful in bringing about change. As referenced earlier, Oliver Ferguson admitted that Swift's work alone would not have changed anything; instead, it was the combination of his work and the unification of the Irish people against the patent that forced Wood to withdraw it. Therefore, examining the way the Irish people banded together to boycott the patent will show part of the reason Swift's satire is successful. That reason, as evidenced in *The Drapier's Letters*, is the persona Swift creates. Writing the letters under a pseudonym does two similar but distinct things: it separates him from his fame and consequently his infamy as a colonial British man; and it framed him as an everyman for Irish people to identify with and get behind.

The first benefit of the pseudonym is necessary because Jonathan Swift was known for his complicated relationship with Ireland. In an article titled "Swift and the Anglo-Irish Tradition," J.C. Beckett writes that Swift fully identified himself as an Englishman, although that

“attitude, however, could not alter the fact that he was Irish by birth and upbringing” (Beckett 152). This attitude left him in the middle of the two countries, resentful of England while wishing to remain separate from Ireland, as Beckett continues: “Though Ireland was to be Swift’s home for the rest of his life, and though he strongly supported the ‘Irish interest,’ as against the ‘English interest,’ in public affairs, his outlook remained essentially that of a colonial, aggressively determined to hold himself aloof from the despised ‘natives’ and resentful of any assumed superiority on the part of the mother country” (Beckett 152). While the article continues to focus on the effect his upbringing had on Swift, it is important to consider how Irish citizens reacted to him. Although he is one of their own, his condescending attitude towards them could have the citizens of Ireland prejudiced against anything that he wrote. Writing as an unknown draper from Dublin made sure that the people he was trying to rally would listen to him.

The second benefit of the pseudonym is more important, and is ultimately what caused Ireland to get behind the Drapier. As a shopkeeper who openly defied the patent, M.B. Drapier was represented to the Irish people as just another person like them who was tired of British control. As Beckett writes, the choice of persona is important because of Swift’s intended audience: “This choice of a Dublin shopkeeper as the persona through whom to express his views is admirably suited to the initial appeal, which is directed primarily to the commercial classes” (Beckett 157). Swift was not only stating his case for the upper class members of Irish society; he was trying to spread his word to the merchants of Ireland. That is why, in his first letter, he uses examples of businessmen such as shopkeepers “and other tradesmen” to show exactly who he is trying to call to action.

The reason that the persona works so well is that Swift knows his audience. As previously stated, he targets the commercial class. He knows that the commercial class of Ireland

is the class that will be most affected by a privatized coin, so he appeals to them. Since his persona is a shopkeeper, he knows exactly what he is doing when he claims his course of action:

For my own part, I am already resolved what to do; I have a pretty good shop of Irish stuffs and silks, and instead of taking Mr. Wood's bad copper, I intend to truck with my neighbours the butchers, and bakers, and brewers, and the rest, goods for goods, and the little gold and silver I have, I will keep by me like my heart's blood till better times, or till I am just ready to starve, and then I will buy Mr. Wood's money as my father did the brass money in K. James's time, who could buy ten pound of it with a guinea, and I hope to get as much for a pistole, and so purchase bread from those who will be such fools as to sell it me. (Swift 18-19)

By outlining his course of action as a shopkeeper, Swift is using his persona to show the commercial class of Ireland that they have other options outside of William Woods' coin. He is also working on developing a sense of unity between himself and the other workers, which is a tactic that helps develop trust and respect for the anonymous author. By knowing who to target, Swift can appeal to them and pass on his message.

Much of the Drapier's rhetorical strength lies in his emotional appeal. The persona helps him create this by giving him the opportunity to unite Ireland under the same ideas and principles. To this end, he uses words that invoke outrage and sympathy. In the first letter, he describes the coin as "trash" and accepting the patent as "manifest destruction." Although he spends the first letters mainly giving a logical approach to rejecting the patent, his words become more fervent in the later letters. He creates a sense of unity with the people of Ireland when he reports the common perception of their country: "We know very well that the Lords Lieutenants

for several years past have not thought this kingdom worthy the honour of their residence, longer than was absolutely necessary for the King's business" (Swift 105). By showing the governors' low opinion of Ireland, Swift is attempting to galvanize his people into feeling resentment for Lord Lieutenant Carteret. He elaborates this further when he gives a point that has "swelled" in his breast:

Those who come over hither to us from England, and some weak people among ourselves, whenever in discourse we make mention of liberty and property, shake their heads, and tell us, that Ireland is a "depending kingdom," as if they would seem, by this phrase, to intend that the people of Ireland is in some state of slavery or dependence different from those of England. (Swift 113)

The key to Swift's satire here is that he, as an Irish man, is explaining things that all Irish people have faced. The case of the patent was merely a smaller example of the problem between Ireland and England, and by acknowledging that Swift is able to unify the people against the patent, and by that measure against England.

Swift's letters begin with an appeal to reason. He cites the reasons that he believes the patent will hurt Irish currency, and does so in a fairly straightforward manner: "the shopkeeper or victualler, or any other tradesman has no more to do, than to demand ten times the price of his goods, if it is to be paid in Wood's money; for example, twenty-pence of that money for a quart of ale, and so in all things else, and not part with his goods till he gets the money" (Swift 17). Swift examines the effect of the coin from an economic standpoint first. However, by the fourth letter, Swift is using different reasons for the Irish people to stand up against the patent. The fourth letter, titled "A Letter to the Whole People of Ireland," Swift calls for the Irish people to resist the patent to show that they will not be oppressed by England. It is in this letter that Swift's

appeals grow more political. Swift attempts to both inspire and call the Irish people to action when he says, “The remedy is wholly in your own hands, and therefore I have digressed a little in order to refresh and continue that spirit so seasonably raised amongst you, and to let you see that by the laws of GOD, of NATURE, of NATIONS, and of your own COUNTRY, you ARE and OUGHT to be as FREE a people as your brethren in England” (Swift 115). He is no longer talking about why he thinks the coin is a bad idea for Ireland’s economics. He is invoking in Irish citizens a sense of nationalism, hoping they will band together against England and assert their resistance to the patent in the name of Ireland. Carole Fabricant, in her article “Speaking for the Irish Nation: The Drapier, the Bishop, and the Problems of Colonial Representation,” sees the fourth letter “as a document that articulates the interests of a broad spectrum of Irish society and that invokes a conception of nationhood considerably more comprehensive than these sectarian constructions would indicate” (Fabricant 337). The themes of liberty and freedom are heavily expressed in the fourth letter, calling to the people of Ireland to band together to fight the patent. It was this letter that gained him the most attention from his opposition, as the Lord Lieutenant offered a reward for his identity ten days after the letter was published (Ferguson 115).

Compared to some of Swift’s other work, *The Drapier’s Letters* is more straightforward and less satirical. As evidenced above, Swift relies on his working-man persona and emotional appeals to convince Ireland of the dangers of William Woods’ patent. But Swift’s calling card is his humor and irony, and the *Letters* are peppered with Swift’s attempt to use levity and entertainment to make his points. Although Irvin Ehrenpreis does not specifically refer to *The Drapier’s Letters* in his article “Swift and Satire,” he establishes Swift’s relationship with the tactical device of irony: “Swift’s simple irony is plain enough. He writes the opposite of what he

means, in a tone which indicates the real intention. But he can also be ironic about an irony” (Ehrenpreis 309). Ehrenpreis goes on to show how many levels of irony Swift uses in his example about *Gulliver’s Travels*. The Ehrenpreis article is important because it shows how Swift can use irony in different ways, which is also evident in the first letter by Drapier, *To the Shop-Keepers, Tradesmen, Farmers, and Common-People of Ireland*. As Herbert Davis writes in his book *The Satire of Jonathan Swift*, the persona of the Drapier himself is ironic: “his Dublin audience was a simple one...so he translates his argument into the plain unlearned speech that might be supposed to be the voice of a linen draper of Dublin. Yet through the mask he is careful that you should, if you are clever enough, recognize who is speaking” (Davis 68). Swift uses language that fits his persona of a shopkeeper; however, he uses rhetoric and references that show a higher education and language. The Drapier seems rather well versed in law for a simple shopkeeper, even referencing a book called *The Mirror of Justice*, and reciting specific statutes to support his claims: “This is further manifest from the statute of the ninth year of Edward the 3d. chap. 3. which enacts, ‘That no sterling halfpenny or farthing be molten for to make vessel, nor any other thing by the goldsmiths, nor others, upon forfeiture of the money so molten’ (or melted)” (Swift 23). Davis says that the tone is obviously Swift’s, and that his proposal in the first letter is a mirror of one he proposed in Dublin years before: “He began his campaign with a Proposal for the universal use of Irish Manufacture, in clothes, and furniture of Houses, etc., utterly rejecting and renouncing everything wearable that comes from England” (Davis 65). Davis contends that even though Swift uses a persona, he willingly leaves enough clues to the true identity of the Drapier. That in itself is a dual layer of irony. The language and tactics of a simple shopkeeper betray his identity, but these tactics were intentional so that attentive readers would realize that it was Swift writing it. Swift’s uses both his persona and the heightened

language that betrays the persona for the same reason: to raise credibility with the Irish people. He assumes the role of a draper because that gives him credibility with the merchants, but he uses knowledge of law to project himself as a well-informed draper, which would give people more reason to listen to him. Being able to project this intention through different methods is what makes Swift's irony successful: he is using language out of place for the persona he is adopting, but uses them both in conjunction to deliver his message in a way that it will be easily and readily accepted.

Another of Swift's satirical tactics that works well is his invective, according to Ehrenpreis. It is not simply that Swift insults his targets; once again, his tactic is more complex: "While name-calling as such is sufficiently effective, Swift has an extraordinary ability to fuse many invectives by means of an image or symbol, a sharp, detailed vignette which summarizes vividly a mass of insults" (Ehrenpreis 310). Davis highlights a section of the third letter which he calls "Swift's best invective against Mr. Wood and indirectly against Mr. Walpole" (Davis 69):

And he defied the Armies of the Living God. Goliath's Conditions of Combat were likewise the same with those of Wood. If he prevail against us, then shall we be his Servants: But if it happen that I prevail over him, I renounce the other part of the Condition, he shall never be a Servant of Mine, for I do not think him fit to be Trusted in any Honest Man's Shop. (Swift 91)

This layer of insults against William Wood is an effective mode of satire because it is entertaining, but also because it paints a picture of Wood as an untrustworthy figure bent on using his coin as a way to subjugate the Irish people. He is able to use this perception of Wood to align the people of Ireland against him. Another reason the invective is a key to successful satire is how it reflects on the people Swift is trying to reach. The implication of Wood not being

trusted “in any Honest Man’s Shop” is that the Irish people are honest people. Swift also uses the biblical reference to imply to his readers that God is on their side, and he will help them in their fight against Wood’s patent. Swift does not merely insult Wood. He uses his invective to compliment his readers. The Irish people agreed with Swift’s characterization of Wood while also understanding that The Drapier was calling them good, honest people who had God’s backing on this matter. This is an example of successful satire, because it made his readers more likely to listen and respond to his cries of opposition.

Without humor and irony, *The Drapier’s Letters* would be merely an economic pamphlet. However, Swift uses humor to make his readers laugh while also using it as a way to mock William Wood. According to Swift, days before the fourth letter was released, Wood threatened that he would make the Irish people “swallow his coin in fire-balls” (Swift 119). Swift takes this preposterous threat and makes it even more so:

As to "swallowing these halfpence in fire-balls," it is a story equally improbable. For to execute this operation the whole stock of Mr. Wood's coin and metal must be melted down and moulded into hollow balls with wild-fire, no bigger than a reasonable throat can be able to swallow. Now the metal he hath prepared, and already coined will amount at least fifty millions of halfpence to be swallowed by a million and a half of people; so that allowing two halfpence to each ball, there will be about seventeen balls of wild-fire a-piece to be swallowed by every person in this kingdom, and to administer this dose, there cannot be conveniently fewer than fifty thousand operators, allowing one operator to every thirty, which, considering the squeamishness of some stomachs and the peevishness of young children, is but reasonable. (Swift 120)

By logically breaking down a point that was made clearly as a figure of speech, Swift does two things: he makes his readers laugh, and he paints William Wood as a cruel and mockable man. There is irony in this literal breakdown: both Swift and his readers understand that Wood did not mean for his threat to be taken literally. However, by pretending to take him literally, it makes Wood appear untrustworthy and endears Swift to his readers, whom he has let in on the joke. This irony is an example of why entertainment and humor creates successful satire. Swift's readers are finding pleasure in his literal breakdown of Wood's words, and this causes them to associate pleasure with their current political position, which in this case is opposing Wood and the patent. Also, by letting his readers in on the joke, Swift causes them to identify with his positions and side with him. By using irony, invective, and humor, he is able to make the pamphlets an enjoyable experience for readers while also instructing them the dangers of the patent. And by creating a persona and making emotional appeals, he was able to unite the people of Ireland. Throughout the letters, Swift makes appeals in different ways: financially, emotionally, humorously, and logically, he thoroughly argues against the patent, and this is why his satire works.

Like Swift's, Jon Stewart's satire depends on many different tactics. Stewart also uses irony, invective, and self-deprecation to create a product that his audience can identify with. Also like Swift, Jon Stewart's persona is very important to his satire for many of the same reasons Swift's is. Firstly, Jon Stewart appears as a normal newscaster who seems as outraged by the political world as his audience is. This is important, because the persona of a newscaster commands trust. People trust their newscasters to deliver the news every day, and Stewart uses this trust to state his position. Part of the way he does this is by making his audience laugh. Because he makes jokes about the follies and mistakes of political figures, his audience finds it

easier to accept his opinion thanks to his humor. In his article “Jon Stewart and the New Public Intellectual,” Terrance MacMullan establishes how Jon Stewart has become a beloved figure while also covering the obstacles he has had to overcome to achieve that respect. According to MacMullan,

Anyone who’s watched his show or read the book knows that he’s both very funny and exceptionally intelligent. However, a careful look at his work reveals more – a public intellectual who fosters critical thinking across an enormous audience and who defends democratic principles from erosion by partisan punditry and the government’s apparent disregard for genuine debate.

(MacMullan 57)

This depiction of Stewart is the reason that his satire is successful: he is funny and also cognizant of the political spectrum, and communicates both of those aspects well. However MacMullan believes that Stewart’s opinion on politics is not the dominant reason that he gets so much attention: “Stewart doesn’t expect people to listen to him simply because he offers a cogent critique of the government and the media. Instead, he uses a wide range of tools, especially irony, to make his audience think while they laugh” (MacMullan 57-8). MacMullan is pointing out that Jon Stewart’s persona is a tactic that he uses to gain a wider audience to speak his opinions. Stewart’s beloved persona helps him create successful satire; because the audience trusts and likes him, they are more open to listening to and adopting his positions.

Like Swift, Stewart walks a fine line between speaking like an elite member of society and casting himself as a regular man like his audience. A tactic that Stewart uses often is creating a façade of confusion. For example, during the 2008 elections, he played two video clips of Fox News Analyst Karl Rove. One of them was Rove praising Sarah Palin, newly chosen Vice

Presidential candidate, for being mayor of the second largest city in Alaska, a city with a population of only 9,000 people. The second clip was Rove blasting potential Vice Presidential candidate Tim Cain for being mayor of Richmond, Arizona, which Karl Rove criticized as “the 105th biggest city in America” and “not a big town,” despite having a population of 200,000 people. After playing the clips side by side, Jon Stewart looks out at the audience for several seconds with feigned confusion as the audience clapped and laughed. Then, Stewart declared, “It appears Karl Rove is bitterly divided on the experience issue.” Stewart’s tactic is clear here: he is not confused at all by Rove’s statements. However, by pretending to be confused, he creates a humorous situation and also endears himself to his viewing audience, who can understand how confusing Rove’s conflicting messages were. Jon Stewart could easily have followed the video clips with a monologue about how contradictory and hypocritical Rove is, but instead he opts for acting confused, which fits in with the everyday man persona he wishes to create. MacMullan calls this persona the “public intellectual.” While establishing this title, MacMullan dramatizes the American mindset towards what he calls the “elite” class, calling smart people “elitist eggheads” and claiming that “We Americans distrust smart people” (MacMullan 58-9). While MacMullan is purposefully oversimplifying this point, the fact remains that Jon Stewart attempts to distance himself from the personas that usually dominate political news such as Keith Olbermann and Bill O’Reilly. He uses humor to do this, mostly by using irony. But what sets Stewart apart from other political pundits is how he mixes his ironic humor with political criticism: “*The Daily Show* satisfies a desire among Americans...for critical commentary. The greatest irony of the show is that even though Stewart isn’t a news anchor...they’re still able to exceed, in many respects and for a fraction of the cost, the quality of news shows produced by real journalists” (MacMullan 62). Stewart isn’t merely a political critic, but also a comic. And he

isn't merely a funny-man, but a man with astute political observations, which makes him appealing to a wide audience. This audience sees that he is more than just a political talking head, that he is a commentator who reacts to the news the same way that his audience does. This develops a trust in him that allows the audience to accept his positions as truthful.

Another part of Jon Stewart's appeal is that he spreads his satire out fairly equally. Despite Tucker Carlson's accusation that Stewart is a "partisan hack," Stewart does not only attack the right. In a study done by Xiaoxia Cao called "The Daily Show and Perceptions of Government," she lists several instances where Stewart highlighted the folly of Democratic politicians:

On October 16, 2006, for example, Jon Stewart mocked a corruption scandal involving Democratic Senator Harry Reid. More recently, Stewart ridiculed a possible corruption case involving Democratic Congresswoman Jane Harman of California, the Democratic leader of the House of Representative Nancy Pelosi, and an Israeli lobbyist in an April 28, 2009 edition of "Your Government Not at Work." (Cao 8)

More notably, Jon Stewart has recently targeted President Obama's re-election campaign video. While Obama is a member of the liberal side that Stewart is accused of blatantly supporting, Stewart openly mocks the President for the lack of inspiration in the video, particularly the Americans he used in the video, who used phrases like "things on the table that still need to be addressed" and "I don't agree with Barack Obama." Stewart laughed at Obama's choice in testimonials: "Those are the best supporters you can find for your opening campaign?...How did we go from 'Yes We Can' to 'You know, whatever'?" (McGlynn) The fact that Stewart dishes out humor at the expense of both parties makes him accessible to a larger audience. More

importantly, it builds more trust between Stewart and his audience. Because he is able to mock both sides of the political divide, audience is more likely to trust him and his positions rather than write him off as a partisan player.

Both his bi-partisan critiques and penchant for using humor suggests that Stewart, like Swift, knows his audience. This knowledge is what his persona is based on. While Stewart might not be keenly aware of Jody Baumgartner's study, he is certainly aware that the majority of his audience are younger adults who do not consistently tune into CNN, CNBC, or Fox News for their political information. Therefore, he realizes that it is his duty to his audience to keep the balance between information and humor, to balance the sketches made for entertainment with the political nuggets designed to make the audience think. To do this, Stewart uses strategies that other news stations cannot, according to Jason Zinser's article "The Good, The Bad, and *The Daily Show*": "Through sarcasm, cynicism, parody, and irony, the show can impart a kind of information inappropriate and unavailable to conventional news outlets" (Zinser 47). Stewart realizes that his audience is seeking a style of news that is unavailable elsewhere, so he gives it to them with irony and over-the-top humor. Stewart understands that his audience does not typically look elsewhere for political information, so by making it accessible and catering to his young audience with humor, he is able to connect with them and still relay his position.

As with Swift, Stewart's satire is rooted in irony. Like Swift's, Stewart's irony is based in his persona. In the article "Stewart and Socrates: Speaking Truth to Power," Judith Barad defines Stewart's irony as "Socratic": "As Socrates' reputation grew, it became difficult to convince other people to converse with him. So he behaved as a humble inquirer claiming to need instruction from an expert. Stewart, of course, adopts a similar pose on *The Daily Show*" (Barad 77). This is the persona that Stewart projects as a newscaster. He interviews people to get

information, but also interjects his opinions during the interview. An example of this is when he interviewed Jim Cramer in 2009. Stewart acts the role of the interviewer, inviting him to the show to explain comments he had made about CNBC's Rick Santelli. However, Stewart does more than just interview him:

Cramer: The show [Cramer's show Mad Money] has evolved as the market got tougher.

Stewart: I think evolved might be a strong word – mutated. (*The Daily Show* 3/12/09)

The irony with this interview, and with most of Stewart's interviews, is that he is posing as the newscaster while also interjecting his ideas and thoughts into the interview. Like Swift's mask of the Drapier being slightly uncovered, Stewart is playing the role of a newscaster and political pundit at the same time: acting ignorant of an issue and masking a debate as an interview.

This irony helps Stewart's satire work. According to Barad, irony does more than just entertain audiences: "Irony helps to keep their audiences alert, actively listening, and critically thinking. It also keeps people aware that things may not always been what they seem" (Barad 79). If Jon Stewart's only intention was to make his audience laugh, he would be successful enough. But what makes his show more dynamic is that by using irony along with humor, he is making his audience think, which leads to informed decisions and actions. Like Swift's satire, he is creating a bond with his audience that encourages trust and being a part of the group who "gets" the irony of certain political situations. This synthesis of Stewart's intentions is what makes his satire successful. Barad captures this synthesis when she examines the power of Stewart's combined irony and humor: "People appreciate the use of ironic humor to make such a point. Why? It's simply more enjoyable to use the mind in an active way rather than passively

absorb information. Irony requires the mind to be active since it makes us ‘read between the lines.’ Enjoyment also makes the message more likely to stick” (Barad 79). At the end of the day, Stewart’s satire is successful because it causes his audience to actively participate in the show, to pay attention to his main points, and to retain the information to become more knowledgeable people.

In addition to the persona he projects, the content of Stewart’s shows is what makes his satire so successful. As the Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms states, “Satire may generate laughter but essentially has a moral purpose” (Murfin 357). Throughout his show, Jon Stewart is able to weave the elements of comedy and morality interchangeably, making his viewers laugh but also making a point about the political spectrum and the world we live in. In the aforementioned segment covering Bobby Jindal, Jon Stewart uses humor to entertain his audience, but behind this humor are serious points about the credibility of this man. The beginning of the segment shows news clips from several different sources touting Bobby Jindal as a strong up-and-comer in the Republican party. This brief ten-second clip is essentially a summary of the *Newsweek* article, with the reporters saying he was “very popular,” “a rising star,” and “being talked about for a possible run at the white house.” As soon as he establishes this, Jon Stewart undermines it by calling Jindal “The GOP’s very own Shia LaBeouf.” By comparing Jindal to the actor from the Transformers, Stewart cracks a joke at Jindal’s expense; however, he’s also pointing out the folly of the news reporters for getting behind Jindal as “a rising star” when he had not yet developed a resume on the national scale. In addition, Stewart chooses the actor Shia LaBeouf very carefully. He could have chosen any up-and-coming actor, but he chose LaBeouf because his claim to fame is being in a movie where the special effects-created machines are more important to the story than he is. LaBeouf’s name carries a

connotation that makes his name more mockable than other young actors, and Stewart uses this to clearly depict how Bobby Jindal's hype should be perceived. Once the audience sees Jindal's speech, they realize that not only is Jindal mockable, but so are the news reporters who have elevated his status.

Another tactic that Stewart uses in the segment, called "Bobby Jindal's Republican Response," is making himself appear ridiculous. After showing the clip where Bobby Jindal says, "Americans can do anything!" Stewart drops the news reporter façade for a moment and brings out a product called Baconnaise. "Americans can do anything, and I mean anything – like, say, the same great taste of bacon and mayonnaise in Baconnaise lite." Then, with the audience groaning, he brings out another product called Pancakes & Sausage, then dips the Pancake in the Baconnaise Lite and shoves the entire thing in his mouth in a grotesque display that ends in his audience cheering wildly. It may be unclear as to how this fits in a news report about Bobby Jindal, but Jon Stewart is actually employing a clever tactic. By stuffing his face with a disgusting product such as Baconnaise, Stewart is reminding his audience that they are watching a fake news show rather than a real news show. It maintains the balance between humor and political reporting. In addition, Stewart is taking one more shot at Bobby Jindal: by appearing ridiculous himself, he makes Bobby Jindal look even more ridiculous. This segment is quite similar to Swift's literal breakdown of Wood's "swallowing fire-balls" threat. The actual act of being overly literal was a ridiculous act by Swift; however, by doing so he ended up making Wood look ridiculous for first using the term. Similarly, Stewart eating a sausage pancake dog with Baconnaise is a ridiculous act, but it creates an effect: when someone who does this on television is mocking Jindal, and making good points, it makes Jindal look all the more ridiculous.

It is this blend of humor and intent to reform that makes Jon Stewart so powerful. In the appearance on *Crossfire*, Jon Stewart faced one of his biggest critics: Tucker Carlson, besides the quote in the beginning of this paper, had opposed Jon Stewart on several points leading up to his appearance on the show in 2004. During this interview, Carlson mocks Stewart, asking him to “be funny,” and calls him John Kerry’s “butt boy” (“Jon Stewart’s America”). Stewart’s reaction to these criticisms is consistent with his persona on the show: he made jokes while also making serious pleas to Carlson to use *Crossfire* as a show to help change the political world, not ruin it. Earlier, when Carlson calls him Kerry’s butt boy, Stewart’s response is quick and humorously deflecting: “I was absolutely his butt boy. I was so far -- you would not believe what he ate two weeks ago” (“Jon Stewart’s America”). He also joked that as he was interviewing Kerry, he was giving him a foot massage. These answers elicited laughs and deflected the accusation. However, less than a minute later Stewart was making legitimate points about CNN’s program: “You know, the interesting thing I have is, you have a responsibility to the public discourse, and you fail miserably,” Stewart says, adding, “You know, because we need what you do. This is such a great opportunity you have here to actually get politicians off of their marketing and strategy.” Mixing it up even further, Jon Stewart later tells Tucker Carlson, “You’re as big a dick on your show as you are on any show.” When he makes legitimate points about the state of the show, he is using logic and reason. But by following it up with low, non-intellectual language, he is establishing his persona further and making his audience agree with his position as they laugh at his jokes.

The follow-up to his appearance on *Crossfire* also shows Stewart’s effect on politics. Three months after his appearance on the show, CNN pulled *Crossfire* from its lineup and

Tucker Carlson left the station. When being interviewed about the decision to cancel the show, CNN President Jonathan Klein directly referenced Jon Stewart:

Mr. Klein specifically cited the criticism that the comedian Jon Stewart leveled at “Crossfire” when he was a guest on the program during the presidential campaign. Mr. Stewart said that ranting partisan political shows on cable were “hurting America.” Mr. Klein said last night, “I agree wholeheartedly with Jon Stewart's overall premise.” (Carter)

Jon Stewart’s political influence was so strong that his appearance and pleadings to Tucker Carlson were heard and answered by the president of the company, and while *Crossfire* didn’t heed Stewart’s warnings, it is obvious that CNN did. Jon Stewart spoke, and the people listened.

Stewart, like Swift, projects a persona in his satire. While Stewart does not use a pseudonym as Swift did, he uses this persona to make his points more effective. He becomes a face that American viewers can trust because he has the same outrage when the government missteps, regardless of political affiliation. With that trust, he is able to give them knowledge they might not have received otherwise, because the humor and irony in his show draws crowds that do not tune into other high profile news programs. As a result, his audience listens to his points, develops vital critical thinking skills, and uses them to judge what they see in the political world around them. Stewart’s satire works because he teaches young viewers how to approach the political spectrum cautiously and cynically.

Jonathan Swift and Jon Stewart are capable of many things in their respective media. Swift can make irony that is so deep and complicated that only the cleverest readers can follow it. Jon Stewart can somehow turn eating a mixture of bacon and mayonnaise into an insult of a political candidate. Something they both do, however, is create a bond with their audience which

yields specific results. In Swift's case, it was banding together as a country to reject a patent that would have destroyed Ireland financially and create a further dependence on England. For Stewart, it is by educating young viewers on political information and teaching critical thinking skills that help them make informed decisions in the political landscape. They do this by creating a persona that appeals with their audience, and using humor and irony to keep them entertained as they make legitimate points that are geared towards change. While satire is a widely used tactic, the intent to reform is realized in Jonathan Swift and Jon Stewart, as their works have entertained and influenced the world around them.

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