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**Shaw and Superman: The development of a dramatic structure
to serve the presentation of an intellectual concept**

**Berg, Fredric Robert, Ph.D.
City University of New York, 1990**

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SHAW AND SUPERMAN

The Development of a Dramatic Structure
to Serve the Presentation of
an Intellectual Concept

by

FREDRIC BERG

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1990

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
1 <u>WIDOWERS' HOUSES</u>	10
2 <u>THE PHILANDERER</u>	40
3 <u>MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION</u>	55
4 <u>ARMS AND THE MAN</u>	84
5 <u>CANDIDA</u>	99
6 <u>THE MAN OF DESTINY</u>	130
7 <u>YOU NEVER CAN TELL</u>	135
8 <u>THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE</u>	142
9 <u>CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA</u>	158
10 <u>CAPTAIN BRASSBOUND'S CONVERSION</u>	175
11 <u>MAN AND SUPERMAN</u>	187
AFTERWORD	210
BIBLIOGRAPHY	214

INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this dissertation to examine sequentially the dramatic structure of eleven of the first twelve plays of Bernard Shaw: Widowers' Houses, The Philanderer, Mrs. Warren's Profession, Arms and the Man, Candida, The Man of Destiny, You Never Can Tell, The Devil's Disciple, Caesar and Cleopatra, Captain Brassbound's Conversion and Man and Superman. (Or, to use Shaw's own groupings, The Unpleasant Plays, The Pleasant Plays, The Plays for Puritans and Man and Superman). In addition, I intend to look briefly at Major Barbara to sum up my discussion of the structure of all these plays.

I have omitted any discussion of The Admirable Bashville, the play that immediately proceeds Man and Superman, for three reasons. First, the play is an adaptation by Shaw of his novel Cashel Byron's Profession, and hence the material was originally structured for the novel and not the stage. Accordingly, any discussion of this play must deal with the exigencies of adaptation, which are not within the purview of these pages. Second, since the novel precedes any of the plays, its structure is out of the sequence of development that normally proceeds in a playwright's work. Finally, and with an admittedly personal bias, this play is really not a play at all, but rather a piece of doggerel composed by Shaw to protect the novel from copyright infringement by others hoping to capitalize on his (by then) famous name.

The idea of sequential development of a playwright's use of structure is at the heart of my argument, which is:

1. That throughout these eleven early plays, Shaw was defining and then refining a characteristic structure, which, although expressed and described by critics in many different ways, I shall refer to as the Shavian triangle of three characteristically opposing points of view: the Superman, the Devil and the Object.

2. That Shaw, in these plays, was exploring how this structure could be best utilized to express a developing idea, that of the Superman; and was attempting to present this idea not abstractly, as a philosophical or literary conceit, but as an active dramatic character functioning within a framework of dramatic conflict best served by this structure.

3. That this idea of the Superman was not fixed during the approximately ten-year span in which he wrote these plays, but rather was in a condition of metamorphosis that was to continue throughout Shaw's life and playwriting career, well past the period dealt with in this dissertation.

4. That during this period, Shaw never truly achieved this end; that he never was totally successful in expressing his concept of the Superman dramatically upon the stage.

5. That it was because of this inability that he began to turn, beginning with Man and Superman, to new dramatic structures, a pursuit he would continue for the rest of his career in his persistent quest to dramatically portray the Superman on the stage. (He would, however, at times return to this older structure, but still with mostly mixed results.)

6. That whereas Shaw pursued and never quite achieved this dramatic portrayal of the Superman, he was able from the very start of his

playwriting career to successfully portray in viable dramatic terms the antagonist necessary for, and worthy of, the successful portrayal of the Superman. This character I shall refer to as the Devil, following Shaw in Man and Superman.

7. Finally, that one can trace, find and examine in the structure of each of these plays what Shaw learned as a dramatic craftsman from each of the preceding plays; and that having learned from structural problems he confronted as he progressed, he periodically went back to rework these problems and thus one can see certain of these plays as extensions of earlier work.

When I refer to the characters of the Superman and the Devil, I do not mean them as popularly understood. I am not using the term Superman in the Nietzschean sense, nor the term Devil in the Miltonic sense. Rather, I mean them as the personification on stage of the basic conflict in all of Shaw's work: the battle between the defender of the old, the status quo, the easy, the conventional; and the attacker of "what is," the advocate of the new, the different, the difficult, the unconventional. Although it was not until Man and Superman that Shaw assigned the defender the role of Devil and the attacker that of Superman, I am carrying these terms backward and applying them to characters and attitudes found from his first play onward.¹

This should not be taken to mean that these roles were fully developed from the beginning. At first, Shaw portrayed this conflict as

¹ Shaw designated the defender an "idealist" and the attacker a "realist;" however, these terms have assumed other popular meanings beyond my definition. (Bernard Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism, (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1913), pp. 18-28.)

nothing more than a battle of conventional and unconventional social behavior, a reflection of his position as an Irish outsider in London society. His own unconventionality was very often behavior either forced upon him by financial shortcomings (the benefits of vegetarianism, the advantage of wearing one suit for six years); or by emotional shortcomings (the scars left by his relationship with his mother and its effect on his subsequent relations with women, the triangular marital relationship he learned at home and repeatedly attempted to duplicate with friends). Gradually, through his life and his plays, this blossomed outward beyond simple social behavior to a philosophy of the function of the human race at the service of the life force; a philosophy in which the terms Superman and Devil would come to assume their commonly understood Nietzschean and Miltonic senses. But for the plays I will be discussing, unless I state otherwise, these terms are to be read with the more basic and limited meaning I have just ascribed to them.

Nor am I attempting to suggest that Shaw's pursuit of a dramatic embodiment of this Superman was his only concern in the development of the dramatic structures of these plays. Martin Meisel, in his book Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theatre, has shown how much Shaw's selection and use of structure in his playwriting were in reaction to the accepted conventions of the theatre of his boyhood and young maturity: the theatre Shaw so ably captured for us in his dramatic criticism.¹ However, any critic, like Meisel, who ties Shaw too closely to the conventions of the nineteenth century theatre must first acknowledge Shaw as the master, and

¹ Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963; reprint ed., New York: Proscenium Publishers, Inc., First Limelight Edition, 1984).

not the servant, of that theatre's form: intimately familiar with all its possibilities and choosing those which served his ends. Furthermore, to tie Shaw too closely to this theatre is to reduce him to topicality (or anti-topicality in his case) and make him as irrelevant and unviable as most of that theatre is today; a status which, for Shaw, is obviously untenable.

Similarly, one can never lose sight of how Shaw used his structure to serve his polemical ends (although I believe that too many critics focus on Shaw's polemics at the expense of everything else). Finally, as will become apparent as this dissertation continues, it is not possible to successfully argue that the quest for this viable Superman was a major factor in the structure of all eleven plays, much less the entire Shavian canon. All I am attempting to prove is that this quest is apparent, can be traced, did affect Shaw's structure through these early plays and that this effect can be both seen and shown.

The reason I have chosen to stop after Man and Superman is that the ten earlier plays all utilize the traditional forms and structures of the nineteenth century theatre. Man and Superman is the first major turning point for Shaw, the play in which he begins to move away from the traditional nineteenth century theatre and towards the new forms and freedoms of the twentieth century theatre which he would help pioneer. The play's Act Three dream sequence, known as Don Juan in Hell, is the first great example of the new form for which Shaw is possibly most famous: the Discussion Play, in which ideas take the place of plot. Furthermore, Don Juan in Hell expresses a new concept of the Shavian

Superman, which differentiates Shaw's subsequent plays from his previous ones.

Prior to this, his most successful presentations of this character had been the recognizable historical Supermen, Napoleon and Caesar, both of whom dominate their plays due to the lack of an adequate Devil opponent. But while Shaw could recognize the character when he saw him in history and make an audience recognize him too, he continually had difficulty in creating and placing his own fictional Superman before an audience. On the other hand, he had been able to create and effectively present his Devil from his first play onward, but had difficulty placing a worthy Devil in opposition to an historical Superman.

Don Juan in Hell signals Shaw's realization that these characters were incompatible with the traditional structures of the nineteenth century theatre. After Man and Superman, Shaw began to experiment with other dramatic forms and structures, a practice that would continue for the rest of his life with varying degrees of success. In addition, he began to place more emphasis on how the human race might create the Superman than on who or what the Superman himself might be. In effect, he passed the buck to us, saying: "I can't create him in the theatre, so you'll have to do it in the real world." However, the philosophical implications of Shaw's Superman are beyond the scope of this work.

What is within the scope of this work, and what I am attempting, is an analysis of Shavian structure (form) rather than Shavian ideas (content). This is rarely done. In so doing, I am not suggesting that Shaw's craftsmanship is such that it transcends the wit, the irony, the discussion, the satire, the politics, the "meat" if you will of Shavian

drama. (I am aware, however, that such an approach as this can become somewhat reductionary, stripping the "meat" away so as to expose the skeleton. Therefore, in an attempt to "flesh out" my discussion of these plays, I will bring to bear how other aspects of Shaw's dramaturgy impact upon his structures.) But I do suggest that with such an intensive spotlight as is shone by critics on these "meaty" aspects, the sheer craft of dramatic structure as developed, practiced and indeed perfected by Bernard Shaw is often overlooked. And, when dealt with, it is quickly dismissed as functional at best and deficient at worst: a mere borrowing from the nineteenth century theatre, placed entirely at the service of the play's content.

For example, one of the few full-length works on Shavian structure is Bernard Dukore's 1973 study Bernard Shaw, Playwright: Aspects of Shavian Drama.¹ Although Dukore does examine some structural elements he considers unique to Shaw (the detachable first act prologue, the removable central scene), his primary approach is to compare Shaw's use of basic structural components (the scene-a-faire, reversals, coincidence) with that of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. Moreover, he arranges the plays by contextual categories (Discussion Plays, Absurd and Existential Plays, Socialist Tracts and Parables), rather than examining the chronological development of Shaw's structure. Perhaps the best discussion of Shavian structure is found in Eric Bentley's essay "The Making of a Dramatist," which is included in the

¹ Bernard F. Dukore, Bernard Shaw, Playwright: Aspects of Shavian Drama, (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1973).

more recent editions of his pioneering study Bernard Shaw.¹ But Bentley devotes only eleven of the essay's twenty-four pages to his discussion of structure, and can therefore only skim the surface (albeit brilliantly) of two plays.

One further point about approaching Shaw's plays from the point of view of their structure. Most Shavian criticism is content-oriented, allowing Shaw himself the role of chief critic by giving authority to the prefaces, letters, essays and other numerous writings by which Shaw attempted to control the response to his plays. The problem in permitting Shaw the dual role of artist and critic is that it allows him to set the criteria and outline the debate over his own works and then gives him a large, if not the largest, voice in their interpretation and value. By approaching Shaw as both playwright and critic we give him both the first and last word. Since I am examining his work as an artist, I am banishing the critic and will let the plays speak for themselves. Time has removed much of Shaw's power to shock, now we must remove much of his power to control.

Accordingly, it is not my intention to refer extensively to Shaw's outside writings. This will be an examination of the play scripts in and for themselves. While I recognize that it is impossible to approach them in a vacuum, I shall endeavor to keep outside references to a bare minimum. Any discussion of Shaw's ideas that occurs within these pages will be framed to refer the content to the structure, not the other way around. While I am interested here in Shaw's idea of the Superman, I am

¹ Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw, (Norwalk, Ct.: New Directions Books, 1947; reprint ed., New York: Proscenium Publishers, Inc., First Limelight Edition, 1985), pp. 160-183.

interested only in how he presented it dramatically; for the purposes of this volume, I am neutral on the question of its value as an idea, its relationship to other similar ideas, or even its continuing viability or lack thereof today. I am perfectly willing to enter into debates and discussions with other critics, but only over structural questions, and to be honest, there is not a large body of such work to debate.

As Shaw and his world recede in time, the specific political, social and economic content of his plays speak less and less vividly to us. It is time to rethink Shaw in a more generic manner, as less a contemporary critic and more a philosopher. When one begins to examine the plays in a more generic, philosophical fashion, the specifics can recede while such concepts as the Superman and Devil, and the structure devised to sustain them, can come to the fore.

CHAPTER 1

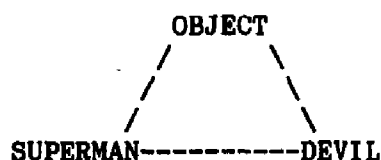
WIDOWERS' HOUSES

Any examination of the structure of this play must begin with a discussion of its collaborative origins. The specific history is recounted by Shaw in his introduction to the Independent Theatre Edition of the play (1893), and by his collaborator, William Archer, in his review of the Independent Theatre's two performances of the play in The World, December 14, 1892. In brief, Archer's original play, entitled Rhinegold (hence the German setting in Act One), provided Shaw with the basic situation played out in Act One and the first half of Act Two of Widowers' Houses. For Archer, this was to be the entire play, which would culminate in the hero's rejecting the tainted money of his prospective father-in-law and, in a highly dramatic flourish, throwing said money from the balcony into the waiting Rhine below: Rhine gold.

This is an old and time-honored triangular structure, pitting an unworldly young idealist against a corrupt and corrupting older realist, with the actions of each tempered by his feelings for the older man's daughter.¹ Although it was here provided by Archer, it proved to be well suited to Shaw's developing view of a Superman/Devil dichotomy and he would return to it in various guises again and again. While its most familiar Shavian form is this father/daughter/suitor relationship, it can also take the form of two suitors (of either sex) fighting over the same beloved.

¹ I am not using these terms as Shaw uses them in The Quintessence of Ibsenism, but rather as they are popularly understood.

This triangular structure, opposing the Superman and Devil in conflict over a third character whom I call the Object, results in the dramatic structure I am positing in this thesis: the Shavian triangle. Whereas the contextual positions of the Superman and Devil are fixed, this Object, the third corner of the triangle, is the variable which makes for the uniqueness of each Shavian play. Accordingly, for the Shavian triangle to work it is necessary to locate the Object at the apex. Moreover, as the Superman is moving to supplant the Devil, he should be at the left corner and the Devil at the right. Thus the triangle is diagrammed:

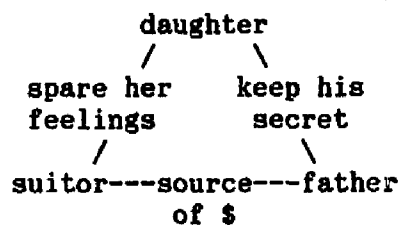


These concepts were not fully developed in any of the Unpleasant Plays; and although Shaw would introduce some elements of the Superman into this play, Archer's structure forced them into a different corner of the triangle.

In Archer's triangle, the young hero wishes to marry the older man's daughter, but is repelled when he accidentally learns the tainted source of his prospective father-in-law's wealth. Thus, the conflict for our hero is twofold. First, he must make the moral choice of acquiescing in the older man's corruption or renouncing it: should he take any of his father-in-law's money? In the nineteenth century theatre from which Archer took his scenario, the answer to this had always been obvious and the conflict non-existent: he must reject the money. Second, in so doing he must somehow prevent his choice from either hurting his beloved or

driving her away; he must prevent her finding out why he rejects her father's money, while at the same time convincing her to do the same. In this he is actually fighting the father's battle as well, for although the father is willing to profit from his corruption, he strongly desires to shield his daughter from the knowledge that she too is profiting. Should she be too curious, or should she place too much value on money this might prove to be a tricky, perhaps impossible, task for our hero. But, again, in nineteenth century theatre the conflict is non-existent. The only acceptable ending is that love conquers all, and the heroine will gladly and unquestioningly follow our hero's lead and reject her father's (and by all rights her own) money.

This is a standard situation in nineteenth century drama, and Archer (in his review) acknowledged having lifted it from the French playwright Augier. It provides for a basic triangular structure:



in which the daughter is a passive figure and the conflict/action for both male figures is to continue to keep her ignorant of any unpleasantness in the world that might touch her. Similarly, the hero is a totally active figure fighting on all three fronts; and ironically, in order for the hero to prevail in his conflicts, the innocent daughter must lose in hers: she must be kept ignorant and poor. Thus, even the villain, her father, is allowed one more victory than is allowed the heroine, although it is the hero who wins it for him.

Archer and Shaw intended to follow the lead of their idol, Henrik Ibsen, who used the stock situations of the Well-Made Play to draw his audiences into confronting issues rarely dealt with in the theatre. They proposed to fill in the generic "tainted source of the father's income" with the specific "money earned from the rental of tenement or slum housing," thereby utilizing Shaw's extensive knowledge of these practices gained when employed as a youthful clerk in a Dublin landlord's office. Thus the play was to be an expose of the practices of slum landlords, juxtaposed against the romance of an opponent of these practices with the daughter of one of its foremost practitioners.

For Archer, as the play's lessons would invariably lead to the rejection of the tainted money and the uniting of the lovers, the play would have the same happy ending as its source material. At least, this was Archer's agenda, and the specific situations and characters he provided Shaw led most naturally to this result. But Shaw had his own agenda, and structurally Widowers' Houses became a house divided against itself.

Shaw's agenda was simple: he wished not only to reform the world, but its theatre as well. (At times he seems to have placed equal weight on both campaigns.) Unlike Ibsen (and Archer), he not only wanted to revitalize the stock situations of the nineteenth century theatre with dramatic new issues and material, he also wanted to turn those stock situations on their heads. As a social critic, he understood that while Archer's ending provided a moral victory for the hero, as long as the tenement housing still stood there was more money to replace that thrown into the Rhine. This often-used structure, in which a social issue is

reduced to a personal conflict, allows the members of the audience to feel that the hero's victory negates their responsibility to deal with and correct the underlying inequity being portrayed. Shaw was much more interested in confounding the audience's smug expectations (brought on by years of attendance at stock theatrical exercises) and forcing them to think about, if not act upon, the issues he presented. As a dramatist he understood that by following the stock conventions of Archer's situations through to their stock conclusions, he would be creating a theatre drained of all tensions: a theatre that an audience could attend on automatic pilot, safe in the surety that there would be nothing new they might miss. Shaw wanted to recreate the conflicts in Archer's triangle so that there was some doubt as to who would prevail, thereby compelling the audience's attention both to the plot and the issues.

Furthermore, Shaw was interested in arranging a specific conflict in his plays, the Superman/Devil conflict: change versus tradition, unconventional versus conventional, something new versus the status quo. While one might think that Archer had provided such a conflict for Shaw, the young hero of Widowers' Houses is actually a man of convention, the convention of the nineteenth century theatre, and the view of the world he presents does not fulfil Shaw's need.

None of this fit into the structure Archer had provided. In addition, there was yet another part to Shaw's agenda, for Shaw wished to deal in comedy rather than tragedy; and comedy, with its origin in the fertility rite, remains a form which demands the uniting of the lovers to fulfill its purpose. Hence, Shaw had to manipulate a happy ending to his situation, while rejecting the easy course to such an ending that Archer

had provided. Thus, Shaw was trapped between the rock of Archer's old fashioned theatrical structure and the hard place of the competing claims of his own intention to turn that structure and its theatre on its ear, his desire to engineer a confrontation between convention and unconventionality, and his need to provide the happy ending required by the comedic form.

Shaw attacked Archer's old-fashioned structure with an old-fashioned dramatic technique: the action of the play is constantly propelled by the raising of expectations in a series of stock nineteenth century situations followed by the confounding of those expectations. Thus, a young man and woman, Harry Trench and Blanche Sartorius, appear to be casually thrown together when they meet while traveling. When Trench's companion, William de Burgh Cokane, maneuvers her father offstage, we expect a scene of first wooing. Instead, we discover that all this has taken place already and she is now at the point of pushing him to set a date. The fact that she is the aggressor further confounds our expectations.

Sartorius, the father, returns, catching the two in an embrace. He maneuvers his daughter off stage and we (and Trench) expect a scene in which the father will strongly express his disapproval of the proposed union. Instead, we discover that he has no objections, and, to further confound our expectations, it is not that he disapproves of the young man but rather is concerned that the young man's family will disapprove of his daughter. He therefore proposes that Trench write a letter to his family, inviting their approval or disapproval of the proposed marriage. We naturally assume that this reaction will be central to the continued

plot. Instead we discover that the family has no objections and this information is delivered to us so rapidly and in such an off-hand fashion that we immediately understand its total unimportance.

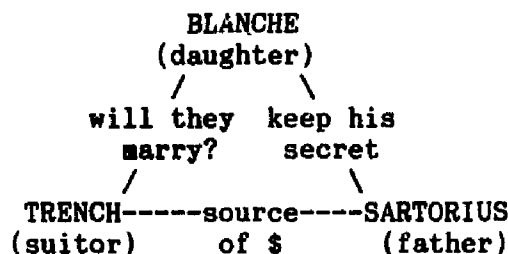
However, we (and Trench) then learn that there are good reasons for the family to object, reasons involving the source of Sartorius's wealth. Trench confronts his love and, without revealing the secret so as to spare her feeling toward her father, insists they must live on love and his income only. We expect true young lovers to put love above all else and so expect her to agree. Instead, she refuses to live without money and, to further confound our expectations, finds this suggestion so ludicrous that she decides he could only be using it as an excuse to throw her over and so she breaks off the engagement.

Trench now confronts his prospective father-in-law with his knowledge of the tainted source of the older man's wealth. We expect the young man to storm out of the house (with or without his beloved), thereby maintaining his honor and purity. Instead, Sartorius calmly informs our young hero that his income derives from the same tainted source; and to further confound our expectations, our erstwhile hero doesn't renounce his tainted income but quietly accepts his situation and tries to get the father to patch things up with the girl, which we naturally expect he will do. Instead, she is insistent that the engagement remain broken off. By this point, only the end of Act Two, our expectations are so confounded we have no idea what to expect in Act Three, which is just as well, because an entirely new situation is brought in by a character we thought had been dismissed from the action and consigned to poverty and despair. Instead, we find that this

character, Lickcheese, has risen to a position of such command and influence that he is able to serve as a deus ex machina, and finally fulfill some of our expectations, thereby bringing the plot to a "happy" conclusion.

Unfortunately, Shaw confounds our greatest expectation, that the hero will act heroically. Shaw's mistake here is using Archer's original structure, rather than throwing that off the balcony and starting over. But once he has done so, he is trapped with the stereotypical roles that go with this stereotypical structure. He must have a hero, but for any of these characters to behave heroically he must resort to the very situations he is rejecting.

To make the young suitor heroic requires meeting rather than confounding our expectations, and the same is true of the daughter, whom we would expect to renounce her inheritance if its source came to light. A change of heart on the part of the father would not only be unbelievable, but would undercut the nominal hero and heroine by underlining their passive behavior in the face of moral outrage. Thus Shaw is stuck with an unheroic hero, a staple of the twentieth century theatre he helped to create, but never a viable option for him. It was necessary for him to reestablish his hero as worthy of his audience's sympathy, and he does so by redefining the conflict on the suitor/daughter leg of the triangle:



Traditionally, the conflict between the suitor and the daughter revolved around sparing her feelings. But Shaw has confounded our expectations by having the daughter reject the suitor outright, placing not her sensibilities but their whole union in doubt. Since Trench has lost his battle with Sartorius, the one we expected him to win and are disappointed in him for not winning, Shaw turns our attention to the conflict between Trench and Blanche. It is here that he will reestablish Trench as heroic in our eyes, which he does at the expense of Blanche by portraying her as a spoiled, temper-driven shrew. This actually makes us feel sorry for poor, mooning Trench, and we root for him to tame his shrew and win the victory in love he has been too weak to win in morality.

Unfortunately, having done this, Shaw still finds himself in conflict with his multi-faceted intentions. Trench, by confounding our expectations, behaves in a negative way; Blanche, by doing the same, behaves in a positive, or unconventional way. Even within the confines of Archer's material and structure, Shaw has given us hints that Blanche is a rather forward-looking and freethinking young woman with an unconventional view of life. In the first-act wooing scene she is the pursuer, more resolute and forward than Trench. She speaks first, as she did on the boat; and she also mentions marriage first. She initiates the physical contact by taking his hand; she even starts to curse. The stage directions tell us that she is controlling him, and to emphasize her superiority her stage directions are more detailed. The scene is virtually a parody of Victorian love scenes with the woman pursuing the man, an action that was to become a hallmark of the Shavian new woman.

But this action of pursuit was not new to Shaw's new woman; it's as old as Rosalind in As You Like It. Rather, it is in the second-act when Trench asks her to renounce her father's money that Blanche Sartorius becomes the first Shavian new woman; expressing sentiments Shaw does not pursue or even stress but which mark her nonetheless as an embryonic Superman. Her clear-eyed, realistic understanding of the need for money are fairly obvious and on the surface, as this is her prime motivation in the scene. But there are also the lines "Papa will never consent to my being absolutely dependent on you; and I don't like the idea of it myself" (italics mine), and "I am too proud to owe anything to you;" as well as her suggestion (twice) that her father will be giving the money to her and not to Trench.¹ Of course, these have to vie with behavior which makes her look spoiled and petty; for example, the only excuse she offers for needing her father's money is "housekeeping" (1:84). Similarly, she refuses to be treated like a child, but announces this in a childish display of temper; then calls him "dearest boy" (1:84, italics mine). Still, on balance she expresses a much less conventional outlook than her fiance does.

In the end, though, any sympathy for her is undercut by her jumping to the wrong, and highly unfair, conclusion about Trench's motivations. But even here, Shaw throws in, or away, an idea of the new woman: "thats so like a man - to try to put the woman in the wrong" (1:87). The net effect is to focus the audience's sympathies on Trench, who is vainly

¹ All quotes are from The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw: Collected Plays with Their Prefaces, ed. Dan H. Laurence, 6 vols., (London: Max Reinhart, The Bodley Head, 1970), hereafter cited in the text. These are from 1:85,86. Note also that I have kept Shaw's idiosyncratic spellings.

trying to spare the delicate sensibilities of the woman he loves while maintaining his honor and who ends up being wrongly accused by her of caddish behavior.

The cost of establishing these sympathies, this reworking of the suitor/daughter leg of the triangle, is the manipulation of Archer's original structure far past what it can support. In any triangular structure, the range of possible dramatic conflicts is reduced by one-third for each conflict whose resolution is obvious. The Shavian necessity of the comedic happy ending always makes for one obvious resolution, placing great weight on the other two legs to carry the dramatic tension. Here, we know that the Sartorius/Trench conflict will be won by Sartorius. The fact that he, and everyone else, dominates Trench in Act One gives us no faith in Harry's staying power or his competence in such a battle. Even though Trench's defeat occurs only half way through the play, and even though it confounds all our expectations of heroic behavior, we still expect that in the Act Three rematch the results will be the same. (Yes, we expect an Act Three rematch.)

As for the Trench/Blanche conflict, although it might appear that Trench has won in the final scene, she is getting everything she wants: Trench as a husband, plus her father's money (which, by the way, will now be a little more respectable). Since she has manipulated him in all their previous scenes we have been expecting this. Therefore, although the reason for the final scene is to try to salvage some victory for Trench in the audience's eyes, it is a bogus victory and only serves to

make the play even more "unpleasant." Shaw does not dwell on this, and wraps the play up rapidly to forestall this realization.

What is missing is the conflict on the third leg of the triangle, Blanche versus Sartorius, an even more glaring loss because this would pit her as Superman in conflict with her father as Devil. But here again Shaw is a prisoner in Archer's house, for the structure and situation prevent this conflict from developing. What could it be? Blanche rejecting her father after she learns the source of the money? That simply recapitulates Archer's old-fashioned ending, albeit with the heroine rather than the hero storming out. Blanche rejecting Trench and her father and going off to live on her own? When Shaw reworked this situation two plays later, in Mrs. Warren's Profession, he would build towards this very ending by keeping the focus, from the beginning, on the daughter. But here Archer has focused such attention on Trench from the beginning that the audience needs some catharsis in the form of a victory for their hero, and since it can't come in business, it must come in love. Which means it must come at the expense of the embryonic Superman character. When we finally come to the scene in Act Three when Sartorius realizes Blanche has read the bluebook and now knows his secret, the scene which should be the Superman/Devil heart of the play, we get instead a rapid and unresolved scene with contradictory behavior and changing motivations.

Sartorius's initial reaction is unexpected. Unlike his scene with Trench, he doesn't attempt to defend himself but immediately goes on the attack; accusing her of being no better than himself: "One would suppose, to read this, that we are the most grasping, grinding, heartless pair in

the world, you and I" (1:110). Perhaps he realizes that she is more clear-eyed about the world and that he can't hope to beguile her the way he could Trench. Still, considering he has spent all this time and effort to protect her tender sensibilities, one might expect some effort to spare them. She, on the other hand, first takes up his old arguments, blaming and rebuking the poor for being so; then changes tack with another dose of the Shavian new woman, responding that she's been raised to feel that way, can't be blamed for therefore feeling so, and would have hated him if he'd raised her with lower rather than raised expectations. Her attitude seems to be "how dare they soil my life," whereas his is "yes, we profit at their expense, but they do have a hard time of it." The net result of all this is that they can agree that neither of them is to blame, and ironically, the scene shows the Devil at his most sympathetic and appealing (with his memories of his mother and his defense of his own past poverty), while the potential Superman's attitude simply reenforces her growing lack of appeal. There is no real conflict, certainly not on a Superman/Devil level, and this relationship and the play remain unresolved and "unpleasant."

There is a second, equally serious structural problem that results from Shaw's manipulation. Archer's structure led logically and naturally to the confrontation between Sartorius and Trench. Trench was to renounce Sartorius's money and throw it into the Rhine; curtain, end of play. Thus we are prepared for this scene to be the emotional high point of the play, the great catharsis. Shaw, instead, springs an unexpected surprise on us. Not that Trench's income is also tainted, for this has been hinted at earlier. Rather, the shock to the audience is Trench's

acceptance of his situation. We have been anticipating Archer's ending and now we get Shaw's. It's brilliant stagecraft and this confounding of our expectations works extremely well; in truth it works too well. It's so explosive that everything after this is somewhat anti-climactic. This wouldn't matter if, as Archer intended, this were the end, or near the end, of the play. But Shaw continues the play into a third act which many critics have complained is extraneous.

The third act really isn't necessary to resolve the dramatic conflict between Blanche and Trench. The scene where she comes in and finds him kissing her picture could be played at the end of Act Two. But Shaw understands that we are not yet ready to see the morally deficient Trench further rewarded, and he needs the third act to attempt to rehabilitate him. In addition, he wants the third act to make further points about slum landlording and how it can be further dressed up to look respectable, so he has to leave Trench and Blanche unresolved. Therefore, for Shaw's purposes the act isn't extraneous, but it certainly is anti-climactic.¹

Given this structural hole, Shaw covers it over rather artfully. The Trench/Blanche conflict is introduced just before the Trench/Sartorius conflict is effectively resolved for good, thereby indicating the play is far from over. Furthermore, having established Sartorius's superiority over Trench, and the fact that Trench is just going to accede to the situation, Shaw now reminds us that Sartorius cannot control Blanche and thus can't order the marriage: hence the sudden display of

¹ For that matter, is Act One extraneous? Couldn't everything there be dealt with in one or two speeches at the beginning of Act Two?

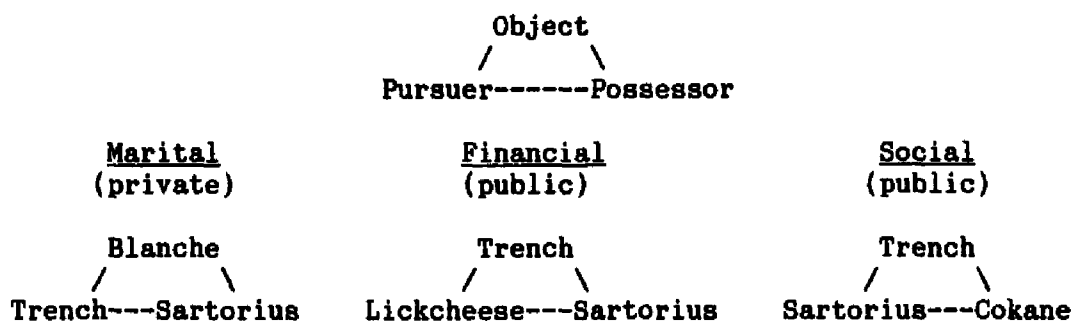
tact to the maid, from a man who has been tactless with everyone to this point. In addition, the remainder of Act Two is played out hurriedly, so that we pass right by the Blanche/Sartorius side of the reworked triangle (where the marriage rather than her sensibilities is at issue). But this is also an early climax, occurring at the end of Act Two, rather than at the end of the play; it's over almost before we realize it's happening, and, rather than resolving the conflicts of the play, it serves to prolong them. Finally, there is the extremely brief Act Two curtain scene ("hi, she doesn't want to marry you, goodbye"), which serves both to establish Blanche as the cause of the remaining conflict and to dash any hopes that the play can be resolved here. Thus, extraneous or not, Shaw has carried us over to his third act where his artfulness continues.

He has structured the third act to comment on the second act by duplicating its structure but not its action. Both acts open with Sartorius and Blanche alone on stage, but their respective positions of power have been reversed. Lickcheese enters and Blanche goes out, but her reaction to him is markedly different. Sartorius and Lickcheese discuss business, but again, the power positions are reversed. Trench and Cokane enter together, but their relationship too has changed and this time they are not friends. In addition, each act contains a major scene between Blanche and Trench but with a different outcome as well as a reversal of power positions. Each also has a major scene between Sartorius and Trench in which Sartorius reveals a financial connection between the two, but in the third act Trench rejects furthering the financial connection. Each act has a brief final scene: in Act Two, this scene is unable to resolve Trench's conflict with Blanche, who continues

to reject him; in Act Three, the scene allows for Trench to resolve his final conflict with Sartorius and thus conclude the play. And in each act, it is Cokane who has the last word.

There is one final duplication between these two acts, but the action and the outcome are both times the same: Sartorius twice leaves something on stage that can give his secret away; first Lickcheese, then the bluebook. Both Trench and Blanche, after some revulsion, accept the information and refuse to change their lives because of it. The continued rift between them does not stem from Trench's learning the secret, but rather from her misunderstanding his reasons and giving way to her temper. Indeed, after he has accepted the situation of the secret he is quite ready to resume the engagement. The fact that Shaw must revert to an action as contrived as this illustrates just how far was the gulf between Archer's structure and Shaw's intentions.

There are actually three sets of triangular relationships in the play. The first is the marital triangle so far discussed, the second is a financial or business triangle and the third a social one. Trench and Sartorius figure in all three relationships with the third corner changing in each. The two public triangles (business and social) are all male, with Trench the desired object; only in the private or marital triangle is Blanche the object. These three triangles are:



The social triangle, the only one in which Sartorius does not appear in the right-hand or Devil corner, is played out almost at once, before we even know who these characters are. The other two triangles, with Sartorius in his proper position, aren't resolved until the end of the play; the financial triangle isn't even introduced until Act Three. Note that the pursuer/Superman, whoever he is, is always the victor.

Widowers' Houses is Shaw's only biblical title and is taken from the Gospels of Saint Mark:

"Beware of the scribes, which love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplace, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts: Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; these shall receive greater damnation." Mark VII:38-40

Although it reflects Sartorius's marital state (he draws his name from the Latin for "long clothing," sartor resartus), the title also suggests an incompleteness about his houses, for a widower's house is a wifeless house. (It's also a heartbreak house, as Shaw would refer to a subsequent widower's house.) And just as the houses he lives in are incomplete, so too are the tenement houses from which he derives his living.

As he will so often do in his plays, Shaw uses the movement of time and locale to develop plot and character. The locales go from external foreign, a German garden restaurant; to internal semi-foreign, a house in England, but not yet in London; to internal domestic, Sartorius's London house, his actual residence. The first act is set outdoors, and we see the public Sartorius, the exterior man who is "foreign" to his true nature. (The specific foreign country is unimportant; Shaw inherited the German locale from Archer.) The rest of the play, when we see the true

or native interior of Sartorius, is set indoors in his own houses both rented and owned. Thus, the play moves further inward with each act, deeper into the widower's house. (Inadvertently, this also parallels the authorship. Act One was structured by Archer, Act Two is half and half, Act Three is all Shaw.) Similarly, the time moves from Summer, August; to Fall, September; to Winter, January (not named but indicated in the dialogue). This parallels both the movement from exterior to interior and from warmth to coldness, illustrated visually by a fire burning in the last act. It also omits the season of hope, Spring.

Shaw expands on this process in the openings of each act. Act One, the only act not set in one of the widower's houses, is the only act that doesn't open with Sartorius on stage. In this public place we begin with the more open characters Trench and Cokane; with Cokane, the character most at home in public, acting as host. His, and the act's, first line is a public statement: the ordering of two beers. In the two acts set in the widower's houses, Sartorius is the host; onstage from the rise of the curtain with his hostess/daughter. Appropriately, his opening lines are intimate: "Blanche" (1:72), and (progressively more so), "Blanche, my love" (1:101).

Beyond the already discussed structural aspects of the three main characters lie other facets. The name Trench, while obviously a pun on his being a surgeon, possibly derives from Sir Frederick Trench (1775-1859), a Tory M.P. and urban planner who planned the improvement of the Thames embankment; possibly he too profited in the manner described in Act Three. Although it is necessary that Trench not be in either law or

business, so as to justify his naivete, it is telling that Shaw's first hero, naive, ineffectual and a little stupid, is a doctor.

Throughout the second half of the play, while Shaw is undercutting Blanche to gain audience sympathy for the unheroic Trench, he is also attempting to make Trench more attractive. For example, in the final business confrontation in Act Three, Harry exhibits a newfound business acumen coupled with a newfound honesty which make him not as hypocritical as his three confederates. At the same time he remains humorous, being one act behind the others who have moved past business concerns to (pseudo) humanitarianism. The net effect of both is to make him seem childish, hence sympathetic. Similarly, by putting what are by now the audience's sentiments toward Cokane into Trench's mouth, Shaw makes him our spokesman and we are reminded that he is, after all, our ostensible hero. Moreover, he attacks Cokane in such a childish way (their argument sounds like nothing so much as "so's your old man") that we are reminded that he and Cokane are basically children here, and as such can never be quite as foul as Sartorius and Lickcheese. All of which works at this moment to rekindle our dwindled sympathies towards Trench, which sets up his victory in the next scene as a happy ending.¹

This next scene, the final scene between Blanche and Trench, is The Taming of the Shrew in miniature. It is a scene of humiliation for her, but by a long suffering suitor suddenly grown wise and not by a newly arrived, imaginative Petruchio. It is simply not prepared for that Harry

¹ What Shaw doesn't let Trench realize (and it doesn't take a genius to do so) is that if Sartorius can drop him, Trench can drop Sartorius; find another tenement property to invest in and even blow the whistle on his former partners. It's too bad he doesn't, because this hints at a Superman ending.

Trench, prize dolt, should suddenly become so sure, so knowing in the ways of handling women. While it accomplishes its aim of a happy ending for our rehabilitated hero, it is unbelievable.

The name Blanche, while meaning white in French, also means to scald quickly, which could refer to her tongue or her temper. In counterpoint to Trench's rehabilitation, Shaw works very hard to undercut Blanche. For example, near the beginning of Act Two Lickcheese enters as Blanche is leaving. The stage directions state that he is polite but she is "contemptuous" (1:73), yet in the third act they are old friends and she is asking after the family; thus she is made to look hypocritical, only having to do with him when he's well off. Similarly, at the end of Act Two there is a hint that she is overacting: "she can hear nothing but her own voice and does not notice them" (1:99). When Trench enters, she is caught in her excess and forced by her pride to send him away. In any event, it is certainly her headstrong assumptions that break off the engagement.

The single strongest stroke of undercutting is the scene with her maid near the end of Act Two. This is one of the most commented-upon scenes in Shaw, but the comments are often diametrically opposed. Some critics cite it in response to the frequently leveled charge that Shaw is sexless, and it is an intensely erotic, physical and passionate scene, even if the passion is rather violent. Others, looking at the violence rather than the passion, see a scene hinting not only at sado-masochism but also lesbianism (both extremely bold subjects even for Shaw in his time) and hurl a charge of sexism and misogyny at the playwright. Either way, Blanche comes out of it looking worse than horrendous. She almost

throttles the poor girl; pulls her hair and strangles her; abuses her verbally and physically; while the maid keeps pouring out protestations of love and begs her not to send her away. And then the poor girl announces that this has happened before (!): "you'll be sorry: you always are. Remember how dreadfully my head was cut last time?" (1:97, italics mine). It's a wonder an audience doesn't begin to question its desire for a happy ending if it involves uniting such a woman with poor, innocent Trench.

Even as Shaw tears Blanche down, he is at war with himself. Sartorius refers to her "strong character and her physical courage, which is greater than that of most men" (1:89), a counterstroke which again hints at her Superman potential in the play. Shaw is so sympathetic to her needs and desires that he cannot help but portray them as justifiable and logical in their own right, even as he portrays her behavior as abominable.¹

Indicative of Shaw's dramatic genius, even here in his first play, is the delightful character touch that Sartorius, the landlord, never knocks. The most interesting thing Shaw does with this character occurs in Act Three, and it serves as a complement to his rehabilitation of Trench and undercutting of Blanche: throughout the act, Shaw humanizes Sartorius for us. This humanization fits in with Shaw's attempts to get us to focus on Trench's love life as a substitute area for him to be seen heroically; if we are to see his marriage to Blanche as a victory, her father must be made an acceptable father-in-law and his villainy muted.

¹ There is a reverse alliteration in her first name and Trench's last, as both end with the same sound (nch). When they marry, she will be Blanche Trench. Is this Shaw's final punishment for her?

Compare how Blanche handles Sartorius in the first scene of Act Three with how he handled her in the same scene in the previous act. She has become more dominant. He adds the endearment "my love" as a form of special pleading. He is flexible, indeed he counsels it as a policy; she is unyielding. He tries to tease her by claiming illness, but she not only sees right through his teasing, as she did in Act Two, this time she tells him so. She walks out on him, he doesn't dismiss her. She is the bully, he the submissive victim. As if to underscore this point, Shaw immediately gives him a brief, humanizing monologue; by giving us his honest doubts and fears, Shaw invites us to sympathize.

The process continues in Sartorius's dealings with Lickcheese. His former underling dominates him in their first encounter in this act, squelching him with humor ("Well?" "Quite well ... thankee" (1:104)), and forcing him to constantly give way to emotional outbursts. Later, in a brilliant bit of stagecraft, there is a brief exchange with Lickcheese over smoking in which Shaw both illustrates Lickcheese's newfound superiority, then reminds us of Blanche's as well. The net result is that Sartorius comes off dominated by both of them in one small exchange. Along with his workings in the plot, one of the reasons for the return of Lickcheese in Act Three is to take some of the onus from Sartorius. Lastly, there is the suddenly revealed charity of Sartorius, who has been carrying Trench so as not to harm him financially. None of this is to suggest that we are now meant to see Sartorius as a benign or powerless figure. Merely that the edges have been softened, that there is now some other character on stage more villainous than our hero's prospective father-in-law.

If Shaw was hampered by Archer's structure in his creation of the major characters, he was unimpeded in his creation of the minor ones. Cokane's main function is to provide humor, but he has other functions which change as the play progresses. In Act One (Archer's material) his main function is to advance the plot: through conversations with him we gain the necessary exposition about Trench, Sartorius and the situation. He is also a participant in the action: he arranges the meeting between Trench and Sartorius which allows the action to commence; he is the one who is to write the tactful letter that is so important only in this act. Finally, he serves physically to accompany Sartorius to the church, allowing the first act scene between Trench and Blanche to be played.

In the second and third acts (primarily Shaw's), his plot functionality is gradually superseded by Lickcheese, and he tends to become less a real character and more a cartoon. In these acts another function comes to the fore. Shaw uses him to focus the discussions, to keep the scenes from becoming mere shouting matches and to lead the conversations into areas where decorum might prevent them from going (always in the name of decorum). As it is important for the plot development that Trench be rash and impulsive, without Cokane there would be some very short scenes where key long ones now stand. It is he who insists that Trench listen to Lickcheese, allowing the revelations to come out. It is he who calms down both Trench and Sartorius in their confrontation scene, allowing this climactic scene to happen. In Act Three he reenforces the idea that Trench is basically an innocent in these business dealings by engaging with him in the childish insult match of "you are a fool ... you are a damned fool" (1:113). All of this he

does humorously and always in the name of tact, while his baser motives are always blatant. Certainly these scenes could have been written to take place without him, but he adds an element of logic and character consistency to the behavior which is what sets Shaw above the situation that Archer has handed him. And when necessary, as at the end of Act Two, Shaw very cleverly reverses Cokane's role as conciliator. Rather than pushing prudence and discussion, he instantly gets angry and, as there is now no one to moderate, Trench finally storms out and the curtain can fall. And still there is humor, for one gets the impression that Cokane is most upset because he'll now have to look elsewhere for lunch, not because the lovers aren't reconciled.

For all his talk of social graces, his vaunted tact is basically used to cover up social shortcomings, and he himself seems to be for sale to anyone who can keep him in society. In this way, he functions as an indicator of who is in the ascendancy at any point. First he serves Trench, then Sartorius, finally Lickcheese; the perfect barometer of social (read monetary) acceptability; one of the "scribes" who St. Mark tells us will receive the "greater damnation."

His name is most likely derived from the thirteenth century poem The Land of Cockayne. The similarity to the drug probably has more resonance to our ears than to Shaw's, but it does provides a humorous pun when Trench says "Perhaps I should introduce ... Cokane to you, Sartorius?" (1:52)). The first name seems a nod (friendly or otherwise) at Shaw's collaborator; while de Burgh is both Dutch (meaning of the town), as well as Norman (i.e. English aristocratic), and brings to mind Lady Catherine de Burge in Jane Austin's Pride and Prejudice. What is

most amazing about him, revealed in a very offhand way by Lickcheese in Act Three, is that he is married!

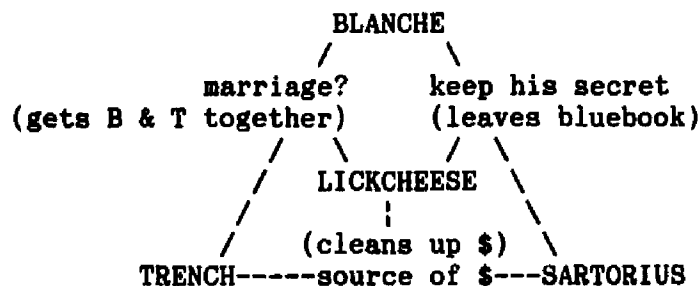
Lickcheese, certainly Shaw's most Dickensian name, also changes in function as the play progresses.¹ In Archer's material (through the middle of Act Two) he is purely a plot device, the messenger who brings the bad news. Once he has accomplished this necessary function, he is shunted off stage, never (we assume) to appear again. Suddenly, in Shaw's own third act, he is resurrected and brought to equal prominence with the three main characters. There are two functions he is fulfilling here: one of character, one of plot.

His character function has been discussed before: he takes some of the onus away from Sartorius. The action to accomplish this runs all through the third act, where Lickcheese has taken command. It is his plan; he calls the meeting, chairs it, settles all arguments, has the final say. His behavior can be ruthless and unsentimental, but that is exactly the approach needed to resolve the impasse between the lovers. At the final curtain, it is he who leads his two business partners off, taking one on each arm as a drunken sailor might take his two floozies.

For the plot, he serves as nothing less than the *deus ex machina*, resolving all the plot strands left dangling by our confounded expectations. He has the plan that cleans up Sartorius's money; brings the bluebook and leaves it lying out where Blanche can find it; maneuvers the lovers together; provides employment for Cokane; and makes Sartorius

¹ Equally Dickensian are the name of his company, "The North Thames Iced Mutton Depot Company" (compare it with "The United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company" in Nicholas Nickleby); and Sartorius' and Lickcheese's cynical use of their children as justification to take advantage of the children of others.

look good in our eyes. In short, he singlehandedly arranges and partakes of the happy ending. As such, he actually functions inside the triangle:



The final character is the maid, whose only function is to be abused so as to undercut Blanche and build up Trench. All the servants in this play are abused, and this misuse of power is a reflection of a strong undercurrent of sexual sado-masochism which runs through the play. It is introduced immediately in Cokane's opening speech with the reference to the "finest collection of instruments of torture in the world" (1:47). It is portrayed in the peremptory, albeit funny, manner in which the porter carries the packages from table to table. It is present in the first scene of Act Two, where Sartorius toys with his daughter's feelings, teasing her by holding back the news of Trench's imminent arrival while he himself is unaware that she is in turn toying with him: having carried on a "clandestine correspondence" (1:78), she already knows he is coming and is wearing her "prettiest frock" (1:72). And it is most striking in the aforementioned scene between Blanche and her maid. But as stated before, that scene is functional, as is a scene between Sartorius and the maid which occurs just before, and which is illustrative of Shaw's craftsmanship.

Despite Shaw and Archer's intention to attack slum landlording, the only reasoned and rational argument presented in the confrontational

scene between Trench and Sartorius is on the side of the landlords. Ineffectual Trench must argue for the tenants and all of his arguments are easily turned aside by the smoother, more worldly and more practiced Sartorius. This is also indicative of how Shaw is constrained by Archer's structure; there is no character available to effectively argue the other side, a situation Shaw will never allow to arise in his subsequent, self-plotted plays. Here, he must guard against the possibility that Sartorius' unchallenged arguments will appear so reasoned, so smoothly presented, that some of the audience might be seduced into agreeing with them. Thus Sartorius, in the next scene, bullies the maid; reminding us that this is not the enlightened voice of conservative reason we've just heard, but a man of violent temper, capable of true cruelty to those weaker than him. By undercutting him personally, Shaw undercuts his arguments.

Besides the confounding of expectations, there are two other dramatic techniques Shaw uses to good advantage in this play. The first is the technique of anticipation. For a minor example of this, consider Lickcheese's entrance in Act Three. The fact that he is coming back into the play at all is a surprise, but in addition he is coming back in style. Why have the maid introduce him and then have us wait a few lines for his entrance; why not have him burst upon us in his new sartorial splendor? (Note that the maid introduces the new, fine Lickcheese; the old one had to let himself in.) Because Shaw understands that anticipation, even if only drawn out for a few lines, is preferable to surprise, which only lasts the one instant of shock.

There is also a more important use of this technique. In Act One, when Sartorius, without going into the specifics, reveals that he is in real estate, he goes on to tell us that Trench and his aunt are his mortgage holders. Thus, when Sartorius informs Trench that he too is a slum landlord, we aren't shocked as we've anticipated this turn of events, thanks to Lickcheese. But Shaw has also set us up to anticipate another turn of events, one he does not intend to give us: Trench renouncing his income from slum landlording. This makes Sartorius' revelation of Trench's complicity more powerful because the shock is one of character (Trench not renouncing the income because he's too weak), rather than arbitrary plot device (which is what the surprise revelation of this information here would be). This serves to focus the scene on Trench rather than Sartorius; which is also true of the earlier scene in which Lickcheese tells Trench (and us) exactly what is the source of Sartorius's income. Shaw knows that by this point this information is anti-climactic, and structures the scene not to expose Sartorius's profession, but rather Trench's naivete and inability to grasp what Lickcheese is telling him. This illustrates Trench's character in three ways. First, it establishes why he doesn't know how his income is derived; second, it explains why he didn't even suspect that this could be the source of Sartorius's income, not an unlikely suspicion to have about a man who is so secretive about his real estate holdings; and finally, it forces Lickcheese to have to spell it out so that even the slowest member of the audience will get it. In both scenes, the focus is on our hero, even if he doesn't behave like one.

The second dramatic technique is abruptness, a technique that expedites the confounding of our expectations. For example, the first few scenes in Act Two play rather fast. The curtain has no sooner risen than we, and Blanche, are hastily (and a little sadistically) informed that the letter she has been waiting for, the letter which is to decide her future happiness, is to arrive so shortly that it's probably halfway through the mail slot. But before this can happen, Lickcheese enters and in a no-nonsense way begins his business dealings with Sartorius. This business transaction between Sartorius and Lickcheese is also abrupt, but in an entertaining way, because Shaw knows the practical details of landlording. Very quickly we learn about inspectors, whom they report to, whom they don't (vestrymen), the cost of repairs, the excuse not to repair (firewood), the interference of the clergy, all the while never coming right out and saying exactly what it is Lickcheese and Sartorius are involved in. (The terms "slum" and "tenement" are never used.) Finally, Trench enters waving the letters which in the first act were so important, announces their content and they are never heard from again.

The reason for all this abruptness is obvious. Shaw knows that we want to know the secret source of Sartorius' money; knows we've probably guessed it during intermission; and wants to get past it so it doesn't distract us from the rest of the action. In addition, he knows that we are no more interested in the letters than he is and that we have no objection to his abruptly discarding them now.

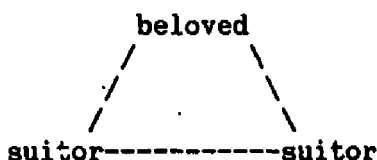
Finally, one brilliant piece of physical stagecraft Shaw employs. After Trench and Cokane inform Sartorius of the contents of the letter, the three men remain briefly onstage conversing about social concerns;

trivialities such as Aunt Maria and Uncle Harry and whose house we'll get married in. But, at the same time, the audience is absorbing the truth about Sartorius's income and watching Lickcheese upstage counting out the ill-gotten money from the poor that will pay for the wedding. The resulting tableau serves notice that even in this, his first play, a master of the theatre was at work.

CHAPTER 2

THE PHILANDERER

In Widowers' Houses, Shaw's revisionist agenda came into conflict with Archer's traditional structure; for his second play, Shaw was free to choose his own structure to serve his ends. While The Philanderer has fathers, daughters and suitors galore (two of each, with a spare daughter floating around the edges), Shaw chose not to use the traditional father/daughter/suitor triangle, but rather an equally traditional two-suitor triangle in which two members of one sex compete for the affections of one member of the opposite sex, the beloved:



While featuring the same three components, the two-suitor triangle in this play differs from that of later plays such as Arms and the Man and Candida; there the two suitors are rivals for the affection of the same beloved and consequently the action flows back to the center from each end:

SUITOR --> BELOVED <-- SUITOR

In The Philanderer, the lone representative of one sex serves as both a suitor and a beloved, and all action flows in one direction:

SUITOR --> BELOVED/SUITOR --> BELOVED

One of the limitations of these triangles is that the middle character can pair up with only one of the competing suitors, resulting in one happy couple and one unhappy rejected suitor. When using this

structure for melodrama, the rejected suitor is also the villain and his unhappy isolation is deserved. Here, in order to meet comedy's dual needs (fertility and happy ending), Shaw introduces another member of the single character's sex and allows for two happy couples at the final curtain: he squares the triangle.¹

To introduce the specifics of the play into this model, a woman, Julia Craven, is chasing a man, Leonard Charteris, who is in turn chasing another woman, Grace Tranfield, who is open to reciprocating Charteris's advances only when he has solved the problem of Julia:

JULIA --> CHARTERIS --> GRACE

In order to do so, and resolve this imbalance, Charteris introduces the idea of Julia's marrying Dr. Percy Paramore, and thereby squares the triangle:

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      CHARTERIS --> GRACE
      |
      X
      |
      JULIA <--- PARAMORE

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However, it is obvious that the finale of this play does not provide the two happy couples indicated by this diagram. The expediency of marrying Julia to Dr. Paramore is not an attempt at arranging true happiness for her, but simply a means of removing any hope on her part of marrying Charteris. Moreover, his desire to marry Grace arises less out of true love and affection than sheer self-preservation: by threatening to do so, he hopes to be able to make clear to Julia what he has been unable to convince her of by words alone; he does not want to marry her.

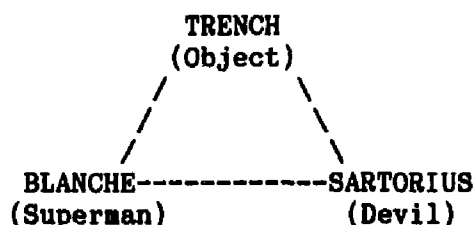
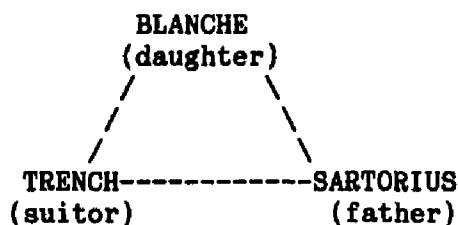
¹ It is also possible that all three characters end unhappily (a more popular ending as the twentieth century progressed), and one could argue that Shaw has done this here.

Finally, when Grace discerns this motivation and realizes that she would be the only partner in their marriage who brings love to their relationship, she decides that she doesn't want to marry Charteris, for to do so would give him too much power over her. Consequently, what Shaw arranges in squaring the triangle is one couple with a happy man (Paramore) and an unhappy woman (Julia), which must be judged as an unhappy couple; and two happy singles (Charteris and Grace). Thus, Shaw doesn't square the triangle so much as burst it wide open.¹

This result is in line with Shaw's agenda of turning upside down the conventions of the nineteenth century theatre, and he has once again confounded our expectations.² But in so doing, he has again brought a traditional structure into conflict with the Superman/Devil agenda toward which he was moving. In Widowers' Houses, Shaw, whose sympathies always lie with the Superman, was forced to undermine Blanche because the traditional structure provided by Archer mandated the audience's sympathies for Trench, the traditional hero. This resulted in a conflict between the needs of the play's Shavian triangle and its traditional generational triangle:

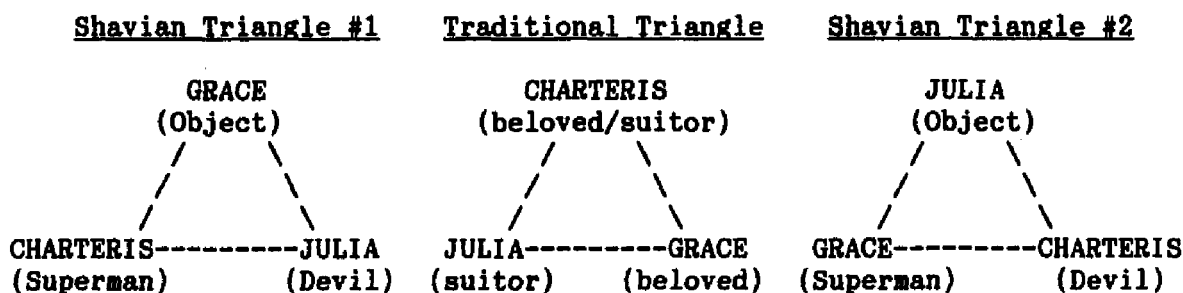
¹ In an abandoned fourth act, set three years later, Shaw reconstitutes the square. Paramore, grown tired of Julia, wishes to divorce her so as to marry Grace, who reciprocates his affection. Julia agrees and attempts to coerce Charteris into marriage by threatening never to see him again if he does not. But she proves too weak to carry out her threat, and at the curtain they are back together on his terms: she will remarry (what matters whom?) and he will come and philander.

² However, this is just about the only time in the play when he does so: when we hear that Julia's father has a terminal disease, we expect either a misdiagnosis or a miracle cure and aren't disappointed.

Shavian TriangleTraditional Triangle

Only Sartorius holds the same position in both triangles, while the traditional positions for Blanche and Trench conflict with their Shavian positions. This same conflict exists in The Philanderer, and is visible when the play's Shavian triangle is compared to its traditional, two-suitor triangle. A simple examination of the dynamics of the play shows that Charteris, because of his initiation of and dominance in the action, must hold one of the two active positions: either Superman or Devil. This same importance in the action must place Julia in the triangle; however, her lack of true belief in the new ideas of Ibsen and her malleability by others preclude positioning her as the Superman: she is not the representative of the new or unconventional. Nor is Paramore, who can therefore enter the triangle only as the Devil; but he is so easily manipulated by Charteris that there is hardly any interesting dramatic conflict between them, which, along with his lack of prominence in the play, mitigates against his appearing at all. Grace, although also losing prominence after the first act, is the more likely third candidate because of her place in the traditional triangle; however her rationality and true belief in the new ideas preclude her being the Devil. (Owing to their lack of prominence in the play's central dramatic action, neither of the fathers nor Sylvia can be considered for a position in the Shavian triangle.)

Accordingly, there are not one but two possible Shavian triangles in The Philanderer; however, neither meshes with the traditional structural triangle Shaw has chosen:



and again, one aspect of Shaw's agenda is in conflict with another.

These two Shavian triangles together illustrate how Shaw attempts to shift the roles of Superman and Devil in the third act. Triangle number one shows the Superman/Devil conflict as it unfolds in the first two acts; triangle number two diagrams the results of the sudden shifting of character perceptions that occurs in Act Three. In the first act, our sympathies are directed towards Charteris, who is patiently and considerately trying to make the best of a bad situation which Julia has forced upon him. He speaks moderately while she is hysterical; he uses force only after she first attempts to attack Grace. As the scene progresses, he continues to gallantly attempt to save her from making a bigger fool of herself. He is rather cold and intellectual in the face of her passionate pain, but she keeps conceding his points and acknowledging that she does hold those views: making him appear less dispassionate and her more hypocritical.

This is our first impression of Charteris and he is rather appealing: his modest appraisal of himself ("Am I ... handsome ... well dressed ... charm[ing] ... gallant ... Certainly not" (1:143)),

contrasts with his actual wit, charm and gallant concern for this woman who has apparently made his life hell. Even his gibes that could appear cruel are mitigated by humor: "That window is at the back of the building. I shall pass out at the front ..." (1:153). Moreover, having given us this positive first impression of Charteris, Shaw allows him to give us our first, and strongest, impression of Julia. His description introduces her, even before she comes on stage, as being unreasonable and unrealistic; when she enters and behaves in this fashion, as well as being childish, spoiled and petty, it is further validation of his point of view, which underlines his trustworthiness and reinforces our sympathy for him.

It also undercuts any sympathy for her, and her behavior throughout the act reinforces these feelings. Her hysterics could portray her as honestly wronged if they appeared the result of true and honest feelings; but she continually undermines herself and instead appears hypocritical. She attacks the very book she recommended, just to take a cheap shot at Grace; she tells him to go, then throws herself in front of him; she turns her hysterics on and off in reaction to his off-stage progress down the stairs; and finally, when he announces her father is coming, she drops her hysterics altogether and coolly carries off the charade with the piano. The net result of this behavior is to place our sympathies with Charteris; and these sympathies, coupled with the fact that he is so obviously the unconventional character, the Ibsenite realist fallen among the Ibsenite philistines who make up the Ibsen club, clearly mark him as the play's Superman. Julia, whose unsympathetic and conventional

behavior threatens our Superman's future happiness, is therefore the Devil.

Although Shaw takes steps to weaken these perceptions in Act Two, the damage to them is only slight; and at the same time, the behavior which engendered them continues well into the act. As late as the scene between Grace and Julia, a confrontation mandated by Julia's continued impulsive and childish behavior, she is still behaving in a highly unsympathetic fashion. She is insulting, lying and nasty to Grace; and when this behavior fails, the best she can come up with is "you creature with no figure" (1:203). That she is behaving in this fashion to Grace, whose contrasting behavior continues to engender sympathy, also reinforces dislike of Julia.¹ Equally late in the act, Charteris is gallantly and generously offering Paramore a financial loan when he misunderstands the cause of the doctor's dilemma.

The structural problem with this triangle is in not adequately providing for Grace, who is a weak Object. Charteris and Julia are not fighting over her per se. Julia is attempting to influence Grace to behave like an old-fashioned woman and give Charteris up, but Grace appears to have a greater influence on Julia than the other way around; this would at least account for Julia's newfound self-awareness in Act Three. Charteris isn't attempting to influence Grace, who already shares

¹ Is Grace acting as Charteris's agent here? If he is trying to make Julia jealous, it would be easiest to have Grace in on the plot; they could have arranged it during lunch. Her calm reaction when Julia leaves for Paramore's might indicate that she has expected this result. On the other hand, his aside about women loving to talk to doctors and their not discussing how well their plan has worked when they are alone together, argues against their being in collusion. While this has no real bearing on Charteris, it would hurt an audience's perception of Grace if played that she had helped Charteris to trap Julia.

his ideas, but instead manipulate her; and again, she gets the better of it, forcing him to turn to Dr. Paramore.

However, in the third act this Shavian triangle ceases to function. Grace replaces Charteris as the voice of unconventional Ibsenite realism and becomes the Superman: the proponent of new attitudes and lifestyles for women, and unlike Blanche, attracted but ultimately immune to the Devil's influence. Charteris is now exposed as the Devil: the false prophet of Ibsenism, seeming to promote new attitudes towards women while actually using them as playthings. Julia becomes the object they are fighting over, and it is thus easier to sympathize with her and be repelled by her impending marriage which would be a victory for the Devil. There is even a hint of a future victory for the Superman through education, now that Julia has enough self-awareness to be educated by Grace. Unfortunately, this is a different play than the one we have been watching for the first two acts.

Beyond the poor mechanics of this structural shift, there is the question: does it work? In order to confound our expectations, Shaw is attempting to radically shift our sympathies away from the character where they have all along resided, Charteris, and on to another character heretofore basically unsympathetic, Julia. Although this is possible (Ibsen did much the same thing in A Doll House), the inherent qualities of Shaw's Superman and Devil are so strong they can not be suddenly and radically shifted elsewhere. This more than simply confounds our expectations: it discomforts and ultimately confuses the audience, which is being asked to shift both their sympathies and their focus as her fate rather than his honesty becomes the dominant issue. The underlying

structural problem is not whether Shaw has adequately prepared his audience for this shift; he hasn't, but it was not possible he could have in any case. Shaw is now working at cross purposes with himself, rather than Archer; and the better he handles the Superman's and Devil's transformation in Act Three, the greater the play's structure is unpleasant.¹

How successful is this transformation; is it possible to believe that Julia suddenly displays wisdom and insight into her situation that is inconsistent with her previously exhibited character? She has given no indication that she understands how people see her, nor has she given any indication that she dislikes being spoiled and pampered. Her behavior continues rude and selfish toward her defender, the new Superman Grace, whom she calls a "coldblooded, cowardly creature" (1:216). Moreover, has Julia earned the audience's sympathy or is it only deflected to her now that Charteris stands isolated and Grace has swung openly to her side. It's hard to feel sorry for a character who is doing such a good job of it herself. Shaw's final passive stage direction (nobody "does" anything, the characters simply "realize" something) is indicative of how weakly he has accomplished Julia's transformation. While it is possible for actors to achieve the effect of total surprise and consternation at the end of Gogol's The Inspector General, these are

¹ Why did Shaw attempt such a radical shift? One possibility is autobiographical. Realizing that those who knew him would recognize him in Charteris and Jenny Patterson in Julia, and gallantly wanting to avoid making her look a fool, he shifted gears and took the unsympathetic role upon himself; or, not wanting to appear ungallant by presenting a private incident in which she looks a fool, he manipulated the play to present himself as the one at fault. Either way, Shaw, ungallantly made public the private embarrassment of a former lover while looking gallant himself.

active emotions which project outward; realization, on the other hand, is an inward perception, not visible to anyone except ourselves. To externalize feeling "for the first time the presence of a keen sorrow" (1:227), the actors would have to resort to something akin to the cliché of thinking on stage: mouth ajar, eyes open wide, chin being scratched.

At the same time, Shaw refuses to go all the way with his new Devil. While showing us Charteris's insensitivity and callousness towards Julia, he continues to mitigate our growing dislike for the character. At the height of her rage at him, she grabs him by the lapels and shakes him with a gesture "half of rage, half of tenderness ... like a tigress to her cub" (1:220). She sees his mitigating childishness and so do we; if the woman whom he has wronged still feels tender toward him, how can we not feel the same?

Beyond this, is marriage to Paramore so terrible a fate for Julia? After all, he loves her for the very qualities she most prizes in herself: her beauty and her heart, by which she obviously means her emotionality. Despite what she says in Act Three, her continuing behavior indicates that she is very happy being a spoiled and pampered child/woman: exactly what she will continue to be as the wife of Percy Paramore, a well-to-do doctor who wants only to continue to spoil and pamper her. This might be a tragic fate for some women (Grace, to use an immediate example), but nothing in Julia indicates that she aspires to or needs anything more. Julia is not the right victim to make the argument against a woman entering into a marriage in which she will be treated as a doll-like wife; in fact, she undercuts it.

As for her professions that marriage to Charteris will somehow redeem her, what would she get from marriage to Charteris? He won't baby her, for there is room for only one baby in any relationship and Charteris by sheer force of personality will claim that position for himself; she isn't his intellectual equal and hasn't any desire to be; worst of all, she hasn't the defenses to fight back against his constant gibes and cruelty, all delivered under the guise of Ibsenite honesty. She would be the worst type of battered wife, one who couldn't even show her bruises.

Some critics, Martin Meisel among them, associate Julia with Blanche; seeing both as extensions of the same character type, the "dark" lady of the nineteenth century theatre.¹ These critics focus on the outward similarities between the two ladies: the hysterics, the theatrics, the selfishness, the fact that both are the spoiled and pampered daughters of bachelor fathers. However, with her attitudes of the Shavian new woman, Blanche can more properly be seen as a spiritual sister to Grace. Blanche as Superman has too much Julia; Grace as Superman doesn't carry the Julia baggage but isn't dominant enough in the play. Vivie Warren would prove to be the resolution of these problems, striking the right balance of sympathy and unconventionality which Shaw achieves by muting the hysterics associated with the nineteenth century dark lady (although even Vivie is capable of the theatrical gesture with the rifle).

The play's straightforward title also works on a level of irony: the character is a philanderer, making love without serious intentions;

¹ Meisel, Shaw and, p. 29.

the playwright, while seeming to write a play without serious intentions, is actually deadly serious. If we credit the autobiographical implications, then Shaw is a philanderer in love, but not in art.

While the play's time frame is neo-classical, taking place in less than twenty-four hours, the movement of locations, Grace's drawing room to the Ibsen Club Library to Dr. Paramore's reception room, is typically Shavian. All are "public" rooms, and the movement is from the most private: a public room in a private house; to the semi-private: a public room in a private club; to the most public: a room open to all in a doctor's public office. This mirrors the philanderer's increased exposure to the public as the play progresses.

In a similar vein, each room is dressed with a specific work of art. The Act One drawing room holds a bust of Shakespeare, a sign that we are in the world of popular theatrical conventions: Shakespeare presides over a domestic room, a room of the commonplace. The bust of Ibsen in Act Two also establishes a theatrical world, but one less conventional: Ibsen, in contrast, presides over the library, a room of ideas. By forcing this comparison of Shakespeare and Ibsen, Shaw is elevating the Norwegian to the Bard's level, a daring idea in 1893. In Act Three, instead of a statue (a conventional representation), Paramore's waiting room contains a painting: Rembrandt's School of Anatomy. Stanley Weintraub, in his book The Unexpected Shaw, sees this painting as simply functional, something for Charteris to pretend to be absorbed in so as to avoid Julia; as such, any painting would do and this

one seems a logical choice for its locale.¹ But when seen as a continuum with the two statues, the painting takes on a deeper significance: we are leaving the world of theatrical convention for a world of attempted theatrical reality. Rather than the conventional theatrical ending, Shaw will provide a realistic anatomy lesson as he dissects the philanderer on stage before our eyes.

Shaw's character names are again symbolic and humorous. Leonard Charteris has lion-like hair and beard and is a "charter" member in the Ibsen Club; Percy Paramore's name has the same alliteration as the more formal "Percival Paramour."² Joseph Cuthbertson draws his saintly "Cuthbert" from his model, the real life critic Clement Scott (and, as both Cuthbert and Clement were seventh century English saints, the connection of critics to saints is a Shavian joke in itself).³ Craven is hardly the most apt name for a military leader; while Sylvia, though nicknamed "silly," is actually a fairly wise child and the only character other than Grace who sees through Charteris. Julia is a variation on Juliet, the most famous tragic heroine of Shakespeare, Shaw's patron saint of old-fashioned theatre; while Grace Tranfield echoes grace and tranquility.

¹ Stanley Weintraub, The Unexpected Shaw: Biographical Approaches to G.B.S. and His Work, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1982), p. 64.

² Percival is Parsifal, the gallant knight who recovered the holy grail; but Parsifal was also a holy fool, wise through compassion, who succeeded in spite of and not because of himself. This is also relevant to Joey Percival, in Misalliance, whose name often leads to his character being misinterpreted.

³ Critics, by and large, don't like either of Shaw's plays that spoof critics: this and Fanny's First Play.

There is some interesting, and seldom repeated, Shavian dramaturgy here, such as the repeated use of repeated dialogue. Charteris has a speech continually repeating the phrase "our view" (1:147), and Craven one which consistently comes back to the words "always here" (1:171). Shaw also uses physical humor to good effect: the detailed chases between Julia and Charteris, and later between Charteris and Paramore, physically mirror the intellectual and emotional action of those moments; while Charteris's inability to sit in a chair (he is constantly described as dangling from one piece of furniture or another) expresses both his childishness, and his dangling romantic situation. The funniest piece of physical humor occurs when all the characters go off stage for lunch, and "the library remains unoccupied for ten minutes" (1:186).

Another technique Shaw uses is harder to grasp: a sense of the characters being aware of themselves as characters in a play. Charteris sums up all of the action of Act One as a stage comedy, as though he knew that he was not living in the real world, but a stage world; when the two fathers discuss changes in their world, they also sound like character types trying to find their place in a new drama which doesn't include them. This is of a piece with the earlier discussed use of art to locate the play in both a theatrical and a real world; and very much a part of Shaw's attempts to promote Ibsenism, both in life and on stage. Later, this technique would come to be associated with Pirandello, but he wouldn't write his first play for another decade and here it is in Shaw.

In 1930, Shaw wrote a brief introduction in which he rejected the play on the grounds that the satire was dated. While some of the specifics are, the generic satire in the play is still funny.

Cuthbertson's argument for joining the club (you can eat there when you wish to dine with the family and eat at home when you wish to dine alone) is a priceless summing up of both the extremes of the young adherents of any ideological behavior, as well as the contortions of an older generation trying to adapt to the new. Although Ibsenism is no longer in vogue, the play is very topical for today's trendy lifestyles.

Finally, no other early Shavian play is so obviously a laboratory for themes later reworked into other plays. The idea of marriage as a trap is a central issue in Getting Married; the foolishness and insensitivity of doctors provides much of the humor in The Doctor's Dilemma; Charteris remark that he "fled only to be pursued" (1:143) is the first statement of a basic motif of Shavian romance, the woman as pursuer, most visible in Man and Superman; and the situation of an older man "experimenting" on a younger woman who then feels used and abandoned, is the core of Pygmalion, which may be a reworking of this play. Even if the play itself isn't popular, many of its themes, situations, and even character types would later prove so when reworked into future Shavian plays.

CHAPTER 3

MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION

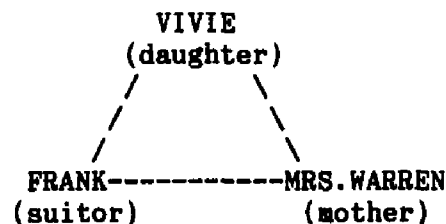
It was not until his third play that Shaw arranged a dramatic confrontation between characters representing the Superman and Devil points of view. He did so by returning to the generational triangle of Widowers' Houses, but shifting the focus from the suitor to the daughter. Archer's structure, by focusing on Trench from the play's beginning, had made a victory for this character a necessary catharsis for the audience. To fulfill his agenda, Shaw could arrange such a victory only in love, and only at the expense of Blanche, his potential Superman. Furthermore, to make this lover's victory palatable it was also necessary to soften the hero's prospective father-in-law, Sartorius, the Devil. When this shrewish Superman and humanized Devil finally engaged in confrontation, it proved to be both unrecognizable and unsatisfying.

In Mrs. Warren's Profession, Shaw takes a number of steps to achieve this desired shift of focus. He introduces the Superman/daughter, Vivie Warren, first, and establishes her as the play's sympathetic character by discarding the negative aspects of Blanche: temper, impulsiveness and passion. Whereas Blanche is introduced to us through the comments of her father, Shaw allows Vivie to introduce herself as she meets the architect, Praed. Meeting her as a character forestalls seeing her as a convention, "The Victorian Daughter," while Praed, whom Shaw himself describes as "conventionally unconventional" (1:252), gives the audience a point of reference for her truly unconventional or Superman qualities.

Conversely, Shaw introduces the suitor, Frank Gardner, late in the first act, by which point we have already met him through the comments of others; making him first a convention, "The Juvenile Suitor," and then a character. In addition, as the play progresses Shaw introduces a second suitor, Sir George Crofts, who, although never a serious possibility, serves to further undercut Frank's position. Crofts also helps to strengthen the parental focus on the Devil, Mrs. Warren, taking upon himself much of the onus of the villainy inherent in the play's social issue, prostitution. This saves Shaw the necessity of softening our perceptions of the parent to serve any cathartic need.

However, while this shift of focus is successful in arranging the desired dramatic confrontation, it also underlines the dramatic shortcomings of the daughter as Superman. In the traditional generational triangle the daughter occupies the passive position, while the other two corners, parent and suitor, engage in active conflict over her future; in the Shavian triangle the Superman and Devil occupy the active positions, in conflict over the passive Object. Can we find the Superman/Devil conflict within any of the traditional triangles in this play?

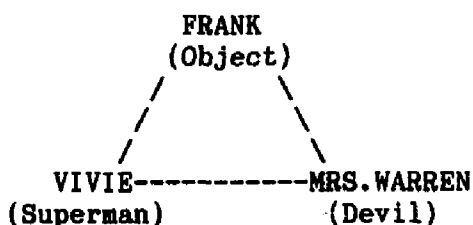
The main generational triangle in the play is:



and while there is conflict between Frank and Mrs. Warren over Vivie's future, there is also a mutuality of interest. Frank wants to marry

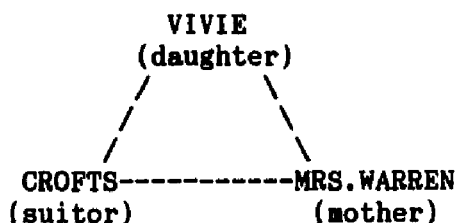
Vivie for her mother's money; Mrs. Warren wants Vivie to marry Frank for his father's money. It isn't until Mrs. Warren finds out that Frank is to be cut off without a shilling that she turns against the marriage. At this point there is still some conflict, until Frank finds out that Vivie is going to reject her mother's tainted money anyway, after which he is no longer interested in marrying her. (Although he phrases his rejection in a brilliantly hypocritical way so as to make it seem he is doing her a favor by bowing out; which, in truth, he is.) However, neither mother's nor suitor's desires or rejections of Frank's proposed union with Vivie are the source of any real dramatic tension. Rather than waiting passively for her mother and/or her suitor to decide her future, the daughter herself makes it absolutely clear that she will do what she wants. The question of Vivie's marriage to Frank, while running through the play, is never its central issue, and this generational triangle is not its central structure.

Nor is it the Shavian triangle we are looking for:



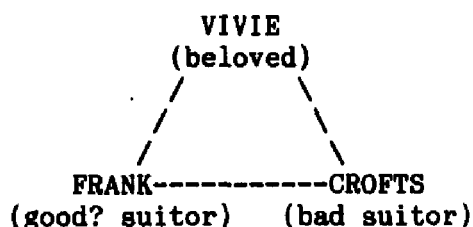
Vivie and her mother are not fighting over Frank, who is always an adherent of the Devil's philosophy of easy conventionality.

The second mother/daughter/suitor triangle (one hesitates to call it a generational triangle) is:



This triangle is even weaker than the first, for neither Vivie nor Mrs. Warren is in the least open to Crofts as suitor, nor can he be seen as the Object of a Superman/Devil conflict. Crofts as suitor lessens the importance of Frank, and provides motivation for his functional role as the messenger who brings the bad news (that Mrs. Warren is still working at her profession).

There is also a two suitor triangle, although it is questionable if there really is a good suitor here:



or

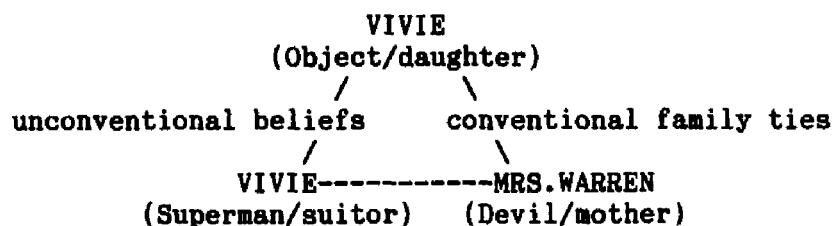
FRANK --> VIVIE <-- CROFTS

However, as Mrs. Warren does not appear in this triangle, it is fruitless to look for the Superman/Devil conflict here. Nor can it be said that this triangle is even remotely the central action in the play. The action diagrammed in all three of these traditional triangles exists mostly in the minds of the two suitors, and is never in the realm of possibility to the one constant character in all, the daughter.

Thus, while we can account for both the Superman and the Devil in this play, we cannot find a traditional triangle in which to place them.

It is obvious that for all the other characters in the traditional triangles, Vivie is the object they are seeking to influence. Whether to win her favor as daughter or lover, Vivie is the battleground for the play's action. However, it is equally obvious that Vivie herself is an active participant upon that battleground. Moreover, if Vivie is to be cast as Object, it is virtually impossible to find any other character to fill the Superman position; no other character in the play expresses anything approaching the Superman point of view.

Therefore, we must look beyond the traditional triangles in this play. Rather than a conflict between the Superman and Devil over a third party Object, the Shavian triangle in Mrs. Warren's Profession has the Superman in conflict with the Devil over the Superman herself. Rather than a conflict between the suitor and the parent over the daughter, the daughter is in conflict with her mother over herself. Vivie holds both positions in the triangle: she is both Superman/suitor and Object/daughter and the conflict is between her unconventionality and the pull of conventional family ties:

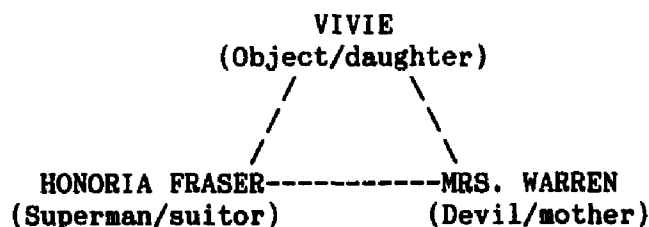


Only by placing Vivie in two corners can we satisfactorily combine the dynamics of both the traditional and Shavian triangles.

However, despite arranging a confrontation between the Superman and Devil, Shaw, by not providing a separate Object has lessened the suspense of this confrontation. Whereas a traditional three-character triangle

allows for an external conflict which is easily dramatized, this two-character triangle must result in an internal conflict for the character who appears twice. While it is possible for an internal struggle to provide great drama (both Hamlet and Othello utilize this structure), it is necessary that the two pulls be of equal weight. In Vivie's internal conflict, the pull of unconventionality so outweighs the pull of conventional family ties, and Vivie is so aggressively the Superman in Act One that it is obvious the battle is over and unconventionality has already won. There is no chance for Mrs. Warren, and hence no real tension.

Because Vivie is so committedly a Superman at the play's beginning, perhaps the real Superman/Devil conflict occurred before the play began. There is one triangle which combines Vivie as Shavian Object and traditional daughter, and contains a Superman/suitor to engage the Devil/mother, Mrs. Warren. Vivie herself describes it in the opening scene:



It is perhaps one of the great losses in Shaw that we are never introduced to the estimable Honoria Fraser.

Given this weakness in the play's structure, Shaw attempts to bolster Mrs. Warren's side of the conflict. He arranges not one but two confrontations between the Superman and the Devil, allowing Mrs. Warren a temporary and unconvincing victory at the end of Act Two. This has the

effect of making her seem more powerful, and the conflict between the Superman and Devil seem greater than it is. Unfortunately, as some critics have pointed out, this can also give the second half of the play an air of redundancy, particularly if one is focusing primarily on prostitution as the major thematic thrust. It also requires that Shaw provide an unconvincing motivation for Vivie to force the second confrontation. At no time in their first scene does Mrs. Warren in any way indicate that she has given up her profession; yet Shaw is reduced to having Vivie appear to believe this and to be horror-stricken when Crofts informs her otherwise.

Shaw also provides dramatic tension by raising a number of plot issues which seem to be of greater import to both the characters and the play than they actually prove to be. In Widowers' Houses, the question of the letter to Trench's aunt enabled Shaw to divert our attention from the real issue, the source of Sartorius' income; when no longer needed it was instantly disposed of, to the relief of both the playwright and his audience. In Mrs. Warren's Profession, Shaw provides two such plot issues to divert us from the main question of the play's early action: what is Mrs. Warren's secret profession? But unlike his first play, Shaw has learned how to make these issues integral to the play's theme, and thus not intrusive on the play's action.

The first issue is the question of Vivie's paternity, which is never resolved.¹ As Vivie is struggling with the competing pulls of her

¹ There is little evidence to support Crofts' assertion that the Reverend Gardner is Vivie's father. In Act One, Crofts himself is adamant that he doesn't know who Vivie's father is, even speculating that he may be. In Act Two, Mrs. Warren, the only one who could know for sure, is equally adamant with Reverend Gardner that he is not Vivie's

own desires for an unconventional life and those of the conventions of family ties, this issue of unresolved paternity goes to the heart of the play. If your mother is a whore, how can you ever know for certain who your father is; how can you know who your brothers (and/or sisters) are; how can you ever hope to marry? And since your mother is to blame for your situation, how strong can your family ties be? Not knowing who your father is gives you the freedom to be your own parent. Deprived of a father and siblings due to her prostitute mother, Vivie rejects her mother as well and insures the isolation necessary for her chosen unconventionality. Not only isn't she anybody's child, she has avowed that she won't be any man's wife, insuring that she also won't be any child's mother. The last time we see her in the play she is totally alone, even temporarily bereft of the immediate comfort of friends. (Her only two, Honoria Fraser and Praed, are both away traveling.) Not only is she isolated, but she has made herself invulnerable to the pain of being rejected by those she loves.¹

father. Given Mrs. Warren's concern for Vivie's respectability, its unbelievable that she would push her daughter into a possibly incestuous marriage and we must take her at her word; as we must when she assures Vivie that none of the men present are her father. Consequently, we can assume that Crofts is acting to hurt Vivie for her rejection of his marriage proposal, while also attempting to remove Frank from Vivie's romantic consideration.

¹ There are obvious autobiographical overtones here, and Shaw is ruminating on his own uncertain paternity. Literally, there was a question as to whether Vandeleur Lee wasn't his real father; figuratively, the question is not who is the biological father but who serves as the father figure. Bernard Shaw, as he often stated in later life, had three father figures in his youth: George Carr Shaw, George Vandeleur Lee, and his uncle, Walter Gurly. As he was uncertain who his real father was, Shaw had no qualms about fathering his own public persona, the notorious GBS.

This is Shaw's most autobiographical play about his childhood, featuring his first and strongest mother character and being the only

The second plot issue Shaw introduces is Vivie's romantic future, which dominates the traditional triangles discussed earlier. Unlike the paternity issue, this is resolved and the resolution provides a good portion of the play's dramatic action. But it provides weak dramatic tension, and Shaw needs three traditional triangles to help keep it going.

In addition to these two plot issues introduced early in the play, Shaw, after having revealed Mrs. Warren's secret, brings in a third plot issue to carry the play into the last act: the question of incest in the relationship of Vivie and Frank. While this does go to the issue of paternity and hence is integral to the play, neither of the two characters seems to take it very seriously, and, in light of its source, neither should we. As with the issue of Trench's aunt's consent, it is

play with neither father nor father figure. This is one reason why it is better than Shaw's first two plays: he stopped hiding his rage behind his father's trousers, as it were, and finally dealt directly with his mother (whose relationship with Vandeleur Lee may account for Mrs. Warren being a whore). Moreover, in casting himself as a Victorian daughter, Shaw is expressing his powerlessness in dealing with his parents. Vivie's description of her childhood relationship with her mother mirrors Shaw's, except that Bessie Shaw was in the same house (!); and her rejection of her mother is Shaw's own fantasy of revenging himself on his. "I want my daughter. I've a right to you" (1:354), can also be read, "I want my mother. I've a right to you." This is why some of the overt dramatic sexuality seems to have gone out of Shaw after this play: having dealt with the sexual frustrations inherent in his mother's rejection, the need to do so is lessened in his subsequent plays. Still, how can anybody who could put such a naked cry onstage be accused of being passionless?

Shaw also uses both his parent's names here: Frank's offstage sisters, Georgina and Bessie, share their names with Shaw's parents; and George, the name of Shaw's first outright villain (Crofts), is also the first name of both his father and Vandeleur Lee, as well as his own rejected first name. (He used the name only four more times: Mrs. George in Getting Married, the voice of woman; George Kemp in Blanco Posnet, a fair judge in spite of himself; George Fox in In Good King Charles' Golden Days, historical founder of the Quakers; and George Fitztollemache in Passion, Poison and Petrification, a cuckold who murders his rival!)

immediately dropped as soon as the audience has returned from the intermission. It also allows Shaw to contrast society's attitude toward prostitution, a sexual action which society implicitly condones even though it harms women by taking economic advantage of them, with society's attitude toward incest, a sexual action society explicitly rejects even though, according to Shaw, it harms no one.¹

Because these sexual themes and issues are so titillating, it is all too easy to see the play strictly as a social issue drama on the theme of prostitution.² But the social and economic concerns around this issue are only the play's surface layer, and beneath them is an issue that runs through much of Shaw's work: the parent/child relationship. Mrs. Warren and the older men spend considerable time discussing and planning Vivie's future, and a good deal of humor is derived from their certainty as to their assumptions about her desires, assumptions that are always wrong. Vivie has assumed responsibility for her own future, and this revolt of the young was a coming fact of life in Victorian society at that time.

Underlying these layers is the conflict between conventionality and unconventionality, the Superman/Devil conflict. Convention in this play takes the form of family ties, or the ties of any close relationship; while Vivie's unconventionality is portrayed as renunciation of the messy

¹ Shaw, The Quintessence, pp. 1-3.

² In fact, one can argue that the prostitution issue overwhelms the play, stealing the true focus from the argument between convention and unconvention. After this, Shaw never again wrote a social issue, or as he called it, "bluebook" play, which tends to obscure his true intentions. Instead, he turned to broad themes: poverty rather than slum landlords, social status rather than prostitution.

snarles of relationships and a retreat into the sterile order of a career as an actuary.¹ But the play is also concerned with the appearance of convention and unconventionality. Mrs. Warren, despite her success in an unconventional profession is a conventional person at heart. Vivie, despite a conventional job (an actuary is a clerk) is a truly unconventional person. When these two face off against each other, Shaw finally has arranged his Superman/Devil conflict on stage.

These three different layers of meaning extend to the play's title. On the surface, the word "profession" refers to prostitution, Mrs. Warren's means of earning a living. (It also illustrates the lengths Shaw must go to avoid mentioning the forbidden word.) On the play's second level, the word expresses the job Mrs. Warren must confront during the course of the play's action, her profession of mother. But on the play's deepest level, the word "profession" means the act of openly declaring a belief. In this sense, Mrs. Warren's profession occurs in Act Four when she says "From this time forth, so help me Heaven in my last hour, I'll do wrong and nothing but wrong. And I'll prosper on it" (1:355). And Shaw's profession is Vivie's response: "Yes: it's better to choose your line and go through with it. If I had been you, mother, I might have done as you did: but I would not have lived one life and believed in another" (1:355). The Superman has converted the Devil.

¹ There is a Byronesque quality to Vivie's retreat from the world, but not the Byron one would ordinarily associate with Shaw. She is not the humorous, lucky innocent of Don Juan, but rather the somber, disillusioned brooder of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: "I have not loved the world, nor the world me - but let us part fair foes" (Canto III, verse 114).

"Living one life while believing in another," expresses another theme of this play, hypocrisy. It is the genius of Shaw that perhaps the only non-hypocritical act of Mrs. Warren's life was also her only unconventional act: her original decision to go into prostitution rather than work herself to death at a respectable trade. Elsewhere, her hypocrisy colors all she does. She never for a moment expresses any concern as to what effect her revelation has had on her heretofore innocent child. Having just told Vivie that her mother is a whore, her father is unknown and her financial well being rests on taking advantage of the illicit and immoral activities of other young women, Mrs. Warren's only worry about Vivie is that she not stand in the draft. Her real concern is that these revelations don't have an adverse effect upon her own physical and emotional well being: "you'll be good to your poor old mother for it, won't you?" (1:316). After having earlier rebuked Crofts for wanting to buy Vivie the way their customers buy the whores ("So it's come to that with you, George, like all the other worn-out old creatures!" (1:303)), in Act Four she tries to buy Vivie with the same inducements she uses to buy the girls into whoredom: "So that's how it's done, is it? You must have said all that to many a woman, mother, to have it so pat" (1:350).

But it's not only the Devil who is guilty of hypocrisy. In her final confrontation with her mother, Vivie's main complaint is that Mrs. Warren has still not given up her profession, even though Vivie was never given any reason to believe she had. She denounces the idle rich, proclaiming that she doesn't want to live a useless life, then hypocritically insists that her mother do just that by giving up her

business and living on its assets; as if there's a difference in Mrs. Warren's living on money earned previously or currently, money earned either way by taking advantage of the work and debasement of others. Moreover, why shouldn't Mrs. Warren work at what she's best at; Vivie does? This hypocritical sense of outrage at her mother undercuts Vivie as Superman in the major Superman/Devil confrontation scene, which is an example of how the surface social issue can overwhelm the deeper issues in the play. Mrs. Warren's remaining in her business is not Vivie's real complaint; it's that although her mother began with an unconventional approach to whoring (it's better than working yourself to death at a respectable trade), she now continues in the profession for purely conventional reasons: the financial security it offers, the pleasure she derives from it, and the fact that it is all she is truly suited for.

In addition to the hypocrisy of both the Superman and the Devil, Shaw provides a background triad of hypocrisy to expand upon this theme: Crofts, the hypocritical businessman, involved in an illegal business in which he is nothing more than a panderer; Gardner, the hypocritical clergyman, whose immoral past almost comes to light; Praed, the hypocritical artist, a dilettante more in love with the idea of art than its creation. (He also hypocritically talks a good show of unconventionality which his conventional behavior repeatedly belies.) They are all examples of "living one life and believing in another."

The main hypocrisy in the play is sexual; all the characters have a touch of it. For Mrs. Warren and Crofts, it's their line of business; for Reverend Gardner, it's his hell-raising youth; for Frank, it's his flirtatiousness, which even leads him to flirt with a woman whom he knows

to be both his potential mother-in-law and his father's former mistress, and a woman who flirts right back with her potential son-in-law! For Vivie, there is an element of sexual hypocrisy in her affectations which deny her sex, such as her cigars and her crushing handshake.¹ And for Praed, an effeminate middle-aged bachelor, there is a hint of suppressed homosexuality, expressed in the lines "a handsome woman needs some friends who are not ... on that footing with her ... her own beauty would become a torment to her if she could not escape from it occasionally" (1:285). This implies an asexual relationship between a straight woman and a gay man, while also explaining how Praed could not know Mrs. Warren's profession (which, even so, is incredible). The same hint of hidden homosexuality exists around Frank, who is described as having "romantic admiration" (1:304) for Praed. Shaw is again implying that these practices, like incest, are not as harmful as prostitution, but society hypocritically treats them so.²

These sexual references extend to the older generation's names. All of the men's names refer to working the land, with the concurrent image of planting their seed: Gardner is obvious, praedial means occupying land, and a croft is a small garden or farm. Both of Mrs.

¹ Shaw gets considerable mileage out of this handshake, first with Praed, then with Crofts, then having them comment upon it to each other to cap the joke. It is basically a joke, although it underscores Vivie's social indifference: she wants to do the unconventional for a woman and shake a man's hand, but she doesn't know how hard to do it and goes overboard. (The alternative is that she deliberately shakes hands with the intent of hurting, but there is nothing in her character to suggest this sadistic edge.)

² One can take this to extremes: Crofts is often referred to using "dog" imagery, but I don't think Shaw intends to raise the specter of bestiality.

Warren's names have animal references associated with sexual imagery. Kitty is both a reference to the cat, a symbol of feminine sexuality, as well as being a term for money; and thereby contains all of Mrs. Warren's profession in one word. (It is also short for Katherine, which ironically means "pure.") Similarly, a warren is both a crowded tenement, as well as a place where rabbits breed (a rodent notorious for its indulgence in the sexual act); thereby combining both where she came from and how she got out. (Her professional name, Vavasour, means vassal.) On the other hand, the names of the younger generation seem devoid of sexual imagery. Frank's name appears to be meant ironically; while Vivie, short for Vivian (Merlin's mistress, the lady of the lake), is a variation on "vivi," the latin prefix meaning living or alive. (Even Honoria Fraser's name is thematic, as well as being a Shavian joke: the first name is obviously "honor" or "honesty," while Fraser was the family name of Lord Lovit, the last British peer to be executed for high treason (1747) and well known in England for cowardice and duplicity.)

As he uses the character's professions to illustrate hypocrisy, and their names to depict sexual imagery, Shaw utilizes other techniques to develop the conflict between convention and unconventionality. This conflict is immediately drawn in the first scene between Vivie and Praed. The architect introduces the idea of unconventionality by describing himself so, but she has already introduced it through her behavior. The curtain rises on Vivie, lying on a hammock, reading a book. A stranger appears at the garden gate and inquires if this is Mrs. Alison's cottage. It is obvious that the stranger is looking for this place and possibly looking for Vivie, the current occupant. (At a minimum, if he is looking

for Mrs. Alison, it would only be polite to take a message.) But Vivie simply takes the question at face value, replies that this is indeed Mrs. Alison's, and "resumes her work" (1:273). Her unconventional attitude is that if the stranger wished to make contact with her, rather than Mrs. Alison's cottage, he should have asked after her. Although this might at first appear to be mere rudeness on her part, as the scene progresses we see that she simply is not interested in the social graces, in what may be termed conventional behavior. She is straightforward and honest, unconcerned with her appearance (she continues to wear the tools of her trade, the chatelaine, throughout the scene) and very obviously not the dutiful daughter. She rejects his attempts at chauvinism, insists on fetching his chair, and there's that crushing handshake. She even rather unconventionally inquires if she has been behaving unconventionally.

He, on the other hand, while talking on about being unconventional, behaves with perfectly conventional social behavior. He is chauvinistic, and gives every indication of being scandalized by her unconventionality. Shaw is playing on our expectations, our conventions. Praed is an artist and we expect him to be unconventional; but it's a facade, a role with him. She, on the other hand, is an actuary, a clerk and we expect her to be conventional; but with Vivie, her unconventionality isn't a posture, it's who she is.

Because she is so complex a character, Shaw takes greater pains to introduce Vivie than he did Blanche in Widowers' Houses. Although Vivie's behavior immediately draws our attention, we are uncertain at first how to interpret it. Rather than being revealed through a two sided conversation, she basically introduces and explains herself to

Praed, and by extension to us. But this also expresses her unconventionality, for here is a young woman opening up to a man who is in truth a total stranger; not the conventional behavior of a proper young Victorian woman.

Shaw also draws on the techniques of the nineteenth century theatre to illustrate this conflict. He allows the Devil a victory in the first Superman/Devil confrontation, achieved in part by Mrs. Warren's use of a nineteenth century literary and theatrical convention: her wrenching description of her impoverished childhood. Sartorius used this convention with Blanche, and it carried the day and the play; here, the victory achieved is only temporary. Shaw then uses a rhetorical convention to express this victory: after Vivie has fallen under her mother's influence, she adopts her mother's sentimentality. At the end of Act Two, Vivie twice calls her mother "dear" (1:316). When we next see her in Act Three, Frank immediately remarks on the change in her: "She's gone sentimental, by God!" (1:321). Later, there is her clichéd line, "Must she be deserted by all the world ... has she no right to live?" (1:324). Finally, this conventional sentimentality culminates in the gesture with the rifle. At the very moment when she is renouncing the conventional and declaring herself ready to live forever in the house of un convention (which, if you didn't know, is located at 67 Chancery Lane), Vivie resorts to possibly the hoariest nineteenth century convention Shaw can utilize.

Partially, this is a renunciation of her mother's sentimental conventionality by resorting to so grandiose and broad an example of the genre; partially it is theatrical catharsis. But it is also an ironic

nod to Shaw's source material: Maupassant's novel Yvette, in which the daughter of a courtesan learns the truth about her mother's profession and does kill herself. He is also spoofing the well known nineteenth century theatrical convention that if you bring a gun on stage, you have to use it; so Vivie does, but not in the way we might expect.

Shaw underscores this use of sentimentality to represent convention in two ways. First, Vivie herself comments upon it in the final act: "I was sentimental for one moment in my life" (1:343); second, he sets the third act in the rectory garden, the church being the home of convention. This is the only act in the play not set in Vivie's domain. The first two acts are in a rented cottage, temporarily hers; the last act is in her office, her true home. In Act Three she is on foreign ground, where, ironically, her mother the prostitute is more at home than she is.¹

As always, Shaw makes other uses of the movement of time and locale. There is a classical unity to the first three acts, moving from Wednesday afternoon to Wednesday evening to Thursday morning and all set in the countryside of Surrey. This separates them from the fourth act, set two days later in the city, in which the true issues of the play are finally joined and decided. In addition, the locales follow the pattern of outside/inside/outside/inside; and the two inside acts (Two and Four) feature the confrontations between Vivie and Mrs. Warren, while the two outside acts (One and Three) barely feature Mrs. Warren at all. While

¹ To further underscore this, Mrs. Warren goes off to tour the church itself; while Vivie goes no further than the Rectory garden. (This is the second time in three plays that Shaw resorts to the device of touring an offstage church to remove a character from the stage; both times he is removing the parent to allow a scene between the daughter and the suitor.)

this provides for visual variety, it also suggests that her arguments can't stand up to the light of day. Both outside acts are set in gardens walled off from, but beside, an onstage road; visualizing the idea of temporary stops along the journey which Vivie is making to true unconventionality.

Vivie's unconventionality was unheard of in the theatre Shaw was writing for, and it was possible his audience would misconstrue her responses and find her not only rude, but a caricature of the new woman: unsentimental, ruthless, single-minded, a cigar-smoking, sexless workaholic. To prevent this, Shaw takes a number of steps to keep her a sympathetic character. Unlike Blanche Sartorius and Julia Craven, Vivie Warren is Shaw's first heroine without any overwhelming emotional passion driving her; and she is never shrewish, willful, temperamental or cruel, all traits which made both Blanche and Julia unsympathetic. But Shaw understands that the lack of any passion can appear equally unsympathetic; to forestall this, Vivie twice brings up the idea of suicide (an act which in Victorian England was driven only by passion, and not, as was later possible, also by existential despair). First, when expressing her revulsion at the wasted lives of her mother and her mother's friends: "If I thought that I was like that - that I was going to be a waster ... I'd open an artery and bleed to death without one moment's hesitation" (1:300); second, and more memorably, when she "seizes the muzzle and pulls it round against her breast," saying "Fire now, you may" (1:333). Vivie is not at either time seriously suicidal, but her allusions express passion.

Shaw takes advantage of another nineteenth century theatre convention to reinforce Vivie's passion and our sympathies for her just before she is at her cruelest in the play: the injunction against saying certain words on stage. Obviously she can not say the word that describes her mother, but Shaw portrays her as so pained by even the mere thought of the word that she must rush offstage to compose herself. Although this removes her from the stage so Praed and Frank can talk about her, this intense level of distress helps make her sympathetic to an audience which is about to see her unyieldingly reject her mother for fairly selfish reasons.

As this distress gains her sympathy, so too does her constant naivete in even the simplest aspects of interpersonal relationships. She naively believes that her mother has ended her relationship with her brothels, even though Mrs. Warren says nothing to indicate this. (Why does Vivie think her mother still travels if not to keep tabs on her brothels?) She naively believes that Crofts wants to marry her only to put her to work in one of the brothels: "it would have been a convenient weapon to break me in with" (1:330)). And what other than naivete could lead to this exchange in Act Two? After Vivie's totally calm first response to Mrs. Warren's revelation (a response which may or may not be feigned), her mother lashes out at her and cries, "what sort of a woman are you?" (1:308). Vivie's cool and honest response is, "The sort the world is mostly made of, I should hope" (1:308, italics mine). Vivie's ignorance of the world is appalling if she thinks most women are like her, and would be so blasé about discovering that their paternity, as well as their mother's morality, are so in doubt.

Shaw also portrays Vivie sympathetically by contrasting her with the other characters, using more than name imagery to draw distinctions between the generations. Both Frank and Vivie, the younger generation, are fairly open about themselves: who they are, what they want, why they do what they do. (Frank is even fairly open, except with Vivie, about wanting to marry for money.) The older generation, on the other hand, all have a guilty secret to hide, except for Praed who stands somewhere in between.¹ There are also differences between Vivie and Frank. She is straightforwardly devious, as in the seating arrangements for dinner; everybody knows she is maneuvering to be left alone with Frank, but in such an open and logical way that no one can argue against her arrangements. Frank, on the other hand, knows how to go deviously behind someone's back, as he does when he deludes his father about Praed's social position or when he tricks Mrs. Warren into closing the dining room door by opening the front door. Similarly, Vivie rejects her mother's tainted money forthrightly on principle, whereas Frank does so only after he has realized that Vivie's rejection precludes his obtaining any of Mrs. Warren's money anyway.

Vivie and Frank also differ in temperament and outlook. She is interested in content, he in form; but we never see her seriously interested in him romantically. It is as if she is playing house with him, engaging in a childish game of "mommy and daddy" and playing at being older, married and in love. Emotions to Vivie are frightening, and manageable only if taken down to a child's level. The dialogue and

¹ The fact that the other older characters have a guilty secret is another reason for proposing Praed's homosexuality. What sets him apart is that the specifics of his secret are open to speculation.

attitudes expressed in Vivie and Frank's love scenes compare with those of Giovanni and Annabella in John Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, where incest is also treated as a grown up game by two "children." (There is also one striking similarity between Vivie and Frank: both summon their parent onstage with an abrupt and peremptory "you're wanted" (1:291); and the parents instantly respond with no complaint for the brusqueness of the summons!)

Vivie can also be contrasted with a previous Shavian daughter and with a future one. When confronted with the fact that she too has profited from her parent's tainted money, Vivie condemns herself and ultimately rejects her inheritance; unlike Blanche, who, when her father points out that she also has profited, responds in a rather self-serving way and at no point ever considers rejecting the money. This illustrates an expansion of the theme of Widowers' Houses: what does one do about exploitation, not how does one make the best of the situation.

On the other hand, compare Vivie's rejection of her mother's money with Barbara Undershaft's acceptance of her father's money to use for her own purposes, and against his, in Major Barbara. Unlike Barbara, Vivie can't see the ironic success open to her by taking this approach. (Of course, to be fair, Vivie doesn't have Adolphus Cusins at her side either.) Shaw hasn't yet leavened his Superman with humor; that will come in the next play. Nor has he yet developed the concept of the life force and thus Vivie has no awareness of the later need of the Shavian Superman to serve a greater interest than mere self. But within the narrow range of her self interest, she successfully rejects all convention, parents her own persona, always retains our sympathies

(although she can be a little-off putting in her certainty) and is happy at the play's end. Vivie Warren is the first successfully realized Shavian Superman, and not surprisingly Mrs. Warren's Profession is generally considered Shaw's first successfully realized play.

On the other hand, her mother, Kitty Warren, is only one in an already developing line of Shavian Devils, and not really one of the better ones. Not only is she weakened by the play's structure, she is also weakened by her unattractive behavior. The only time she is appealing is when recounting her non-hypocritical entrance into prostitution; but she does so in an unattractive, self-pitying way: "I always got the worst of it from Liz; and now I suppose it'll be the same with you" (1:316). Any good will she gains in recounting her background, or expressing the courage and determination that carried her so far from it, is lost by her indifference to her effect upon Vivie. Despite the weakness in the play's structure, Shaw might have engendered more dramatic tension simply by giving us something in this Devil to make her likable.

Perhaps to illustrate her conventionality, Shaw brings her on with a nineteenth century convention, the delayed entrance. Just as Praed begins to tell Vivie something about her mother, enter Mrs. Warren.¹ Ironically, our first impression is of absolute unconventionality; there is no lady-like social grace about her. She insults Praed ("gumption" here means sense, not spunk), bosses Vivie but shows her no affection,

¹ I am absolutely at a loss as to what Praed is about to tell Vivie. That she is illegitimate? That her mother is a whore? Does he know Mrs. Warren's profession or doesn't he? And would he take it upon himself to tell her in either case? But it makes for a funny moment on the stage.

and insults Crofts ("I forgot you" she says (1:281), somewhat dismissively). However, because too much exposure will make her secret obvious she is almost immediately thereafter ducking off for tea or dinner or church touring, and, except for Act Two which she does dominate, she is very much a guest in the play which bears her name. Shaw knows that to extend the play he must minimize the time Vivie and Mrs. Warren are alone on stage together; as soon (or in truth, as late) as he allows this to happen, the secret of Mrs. Warren's profession must come out. This raises an interesting question: is this the first time mother and daughter have ever been alone? They treat each other in such a confrontational fashion that had they been alone together previously, the secret would have already come out. But, has the twenty-two year old Vivie never been alone before with her mother? Either way, the credibility of this crucial scene is weakened.

Shaw also undercuts Kitty Warren in the middle of her big scene (the revelation of her past) because he can not resist a political point. "It can't be right, Vivie," she says, "that there shouldn't be better opportunities for women" (1:314). This sudden concern on the part of this heretofore selfish woman for the injustices done her entire sex is Shaw talking, and not Mrs. Warren; feminism rings false in her mouth.

The suitor is often the major role in a Shavian play, but Frank Gardner is only a supporting part. His most interesting use occurs in the "baby talk" scene in Act Three. On one level, this scene is a reminder that these two are children, nowhere near as jaded or sordid as their parents. But just as Mrs. Warren is trying to seduce Vivie from unconventionality to a grown-up conventionality, Frank is trying to

seduce her to a childish conventionality and is another drain on her strength. He tries to take her both back to childhood and forward to motherhood, neither of which are the right states for an emerging Superman; and part of the parent/child aspect is that Vivie must also free herself of these bonds: she can't play the dutiful daughter, the babyish bride or the doting mother. To underscore this need for total freedom, immediately following this scene Crofts presents Vivie with the opportunity to be a wealthy child/bride. (He continually stresses how much older he is.) But the price of this, or any other marriage is too high, and the only refuge is at 67 Chancery Lane. By cautioning Vivie against her mother as a person, rather than as a whore, Frank also warns us not to put too much emphasis on the social issue; while reminding us that the battle between Superman and Devil isn't over: "Circumstances or no circumstances, Viv, you won't be able to stand your mother" (1:323, perhaps the pivotal line in the play).¹

Along with his previously mentioned uses, Praed serves as the first act confidante, as did Cokane in Widowers' Houses. First with Vivie, then with Mrs. Warren, Crofts and Frank, we are introduced to each character through him. However, unlike Cokane, this function doesn't change as the play progresses; nor does he take on any humorous overtones. After being onstage for virtually all of the expository first

¹ Just as Vivie serving as her own father has autobiographical overtones, so does the relationship of Frank and his father, the first father/son relationship Shaw portrays on stage. (Trench is very carefully made to be a nephew.) As with Shaw and his father, the roles are reversed: the son is the more mature and realistic of the two. Shaw also called his father "the Gov'nor."

act, Praed all but disappears in Acts Two and Three. When he reemerges in the fourth act, he is again being used as a confidant.¹

Despite his protestations to the contrary, it is unbelievable that Praed does not know that his close friend Kitty Warren is a brothel keeper. In his Act One conversation with Crofts, he states that "I have nothing to do with that side of Mrs. Warren's life ... she has never spoken to me about it ... I have never spoken to her about it" (1:285). Then how does he know there even is another side to her life; what else could he think it is; why else would a middle-class Victorian Englishwoman be secretively traveling around Europe? Unlike Vivie, he is a man of the world, and it is not unimaginable that in the circles in which he travels he would have come into contact with one of Mrs. Warren's patrons. Equally unbelievable is Frank's Act Four protestations that he does not know his prospective mother-in-law's profession. Who but a prostitute would play along and flirt back in such a bold fashion, as Mrs. Warren does in Act Two? To what else can Frank be referring when he calls her "that wicked old devil, up to every villainy under the sun" (1:321), in Act Three; a line addressed to Praed and not questioned in the least? And although it is understandable why each expresses ignorance to Vivie of her mother's profession, why the charade of ignorance between them in Act Four?

Finally, Praed's line in Act One: "You were born old, I was born a boy" (1:286), foreshadows a similar sentiment expressed by Bentley

¹ In his Shaw seminar at the City University of New York (Spring, 1985), Albert Bermel suggested that Praed may be Vivie's father, accounting for the simpatico relationship between them and providing a more than functional reason for his being in the play. If so, then like Shaw's own father he's a stranger in what should be his own house.

Summerhays to Johnny Tarlton in the much later Misalliance. Praed is an early rendering of a continuing Shavian character, the adolescent adult: Octavius Robinson in Man and Superman, Hector Hushabye in Heartbreak House. When wedded with the Superman, this character becomes the adult adolescent: the aforementioned Bentley, Eugene Marchbanks in Candida.

Although he would appear to be like Sartorius, Crofts' bluff and bluster don't command the way the earlier slum landlord's did. In part, this is because these people know who and what he is, whereas Sartorius was a stranger both to Trench and Cokane and to us. More importantly, Mrs. Warren is like Lickcheese come back in Act Three, the servant who has risen to master; and Crofts is like Sartorius in that same act, now subservient but thinking he is still the boss. As this relationship is in place from the beginning, Shaw can separate the parent/child conflict from the outrage over social issues which can all be directed at Crofts. He isn't constrained by tender feelings toward his child, nor is it necessary for Shaw to soften him to make him an acceptable father-in-law; thus Shaw can present his social commentary, condemn the villain, and still keep the domestic conflict separate.

Vivie, the only character who does not at first know who Crofts is, is instantly antagonistic to him even before she has any reason to be. Her behavior is so hostile that one wonders why Crofts is so smitten by her: sexual attraction; the excitement of not knowing if she's his daughter; a way to gain greater control over Mrs. Warren? Partly it's all of these, but Crofts's interest in Vivie also gives Shaw an opening for his economic discourse on the evils of capitalism and the exploitation of workers. Today this discourse appears intrusive, a

distraction from the important issues of the play; but for Shaw the polemicist, this was an important issue in the play.

Reverend Samuel Gardner never gets beyond being a conventional theatrical type. Structurally, he has two functions. His presence gives Mrs. Warren a reason to state emphatically that Vivie and Frank are not brother and sister, giving us the needed perspective on Crofts' later assertion; and he completes the triad of business, artistic and religious hypocrisy. He also serves to provide a good deal of the play's humor, feeding straight lines to his son and setting up the joke about the twenty-year old letters which concludes Act One. (Here, Shaw introduces and disposes a seemingly important letter before the intermission.) This Act One ending is a twist on the convention of long-lost lovers; Shaw used a different ironic twist on the same convention in The Philanderer, where the long-lost friends had been rivals and the winner didn't even love the girl and now they were fathers of rivals neither of whom truly loves the man.

Finally, Shaw utilizes two other interesting dramatic techniques. In Act Two, he seems to be anticipating cinema by juxtaposing seemingly unrelated dialogue, a technique common in the work of Orson Welles and Robert Altman. At the end of the opening scene, Mrs. Warren, discussing Frank's self-assurance, wonders out loud, "I don't know where you got it. Not from your father, anyhow" (1:294). Frank does not answer, but Crofts, entering from off stage says in response to an unheard remark by Reverend Gardner, "The gipsies, I suppose?" (1:294), providing a cross-cut comic response to Mrs. Warren's question. This play also marks Shaw's first use of the annoying habit of not assigning a name to a

character's lines until the name is used in the dialogue, a technique he would increasingly utilize in his published play scripts. Here, Shaw uses it for all but Mrs. Warren and Crofts. This is a device exclusively intended for the reader, as it is confusing for an actor not to know immediately which lines are his by character name designation.

Mrs. Warren's Profession is Shaw's last "bluebook" play, and the last of the three he designated "Unpleasant;" a term of equal reference to their content or their structures. While he has yet to satisfactorily dramatize his Shavian or Superman/Devil triangle, he has successfully contrived the confrontation between the two points of view. All he has left to add is the third corner of the triangle, the Object, to provide proper dramatic conflict and tension.

Yet it is also true that this Superman/Devil confrontation is still lacking a crucial Shavian element, humor. Mrs. Warren's Profession is unmistakably a comedy (even though the ending does not serve comedy's fertility origins), but the two scenes between Vivie and her mother are noticeably serious and somber, with little comic relief. This may in part be attributed to the fact that this material mines some of Shaw's own autobiographical angst; but it is also the case that these English settings demand of Shaw a surface realism which intrudes upon his own humorous intentions. As if to free himself, Shaw's next play turns away from England and the specific realities of the English family; although Shaw's characters, like Shakespeare's, are almost always his contemporary Englishmen no matter where or when the play is set. By journeying to a never-never-land of Ruritania-like fantasy, Shaw is able to incorporate humor into the other developing traits of his emerging Superman.

CHAPTER 4

ARMS AND THE MAN

In two of Shaw's first three plays, the Superman/Devil confrontations have been dramatically framed as battles over disposition of property carrying a profound social or personal burden. In Widowers' Houses, the slum properties in question not only provide the livelihood for the main characters, but also supply, however meagerly, shelter for the poor who inhabit them. In Mrs. Warren's Profession, the property over which Vivie Warren and her mother are battling is the young lady's own future life and lifestyle. Although Shaw attempts to inject humor into each of these battles, the sheer gravity of their subjects militates against its effect.

In Arms and the Man, the battle between Superman and Devil also comes down to property, yet the impact is considerably less life-threatening. This battle is not drawn over livelihood or shelter or one's own destiny; instead, the climactic battle of the Superman and the Devil unfolds as follows:

BLUNTSCHLI: How many tablecloths have you?

SERGIUS: How the deuce do I know?

BLUNTSCHLI: Have you four thousand?

SERGIUS: No.

BLUNTSCHLI: I have. I have nine thousand six hundred pairs of sheets and blankets, with two thousand four hundred eider-down quilts. I have ten thousand knives and forks, and the same quantity of dessert spoons. I have three hundred servants. I have six palatial establishments, besides two livery stables, a tea gardens, and a private house ... Shew me any man in Bulgaria that can offer as much! (1:470-471).

Obviously, much of the humor here derives from sheer excess: the amounts of property being flaunted are not those of a personal household

but of six hotels. But rather than weigh down this interchange, or any other in the play, with references to the deprivation of these items from the poor, Shaw allows them to float on the frivolous excesses of the rich which has always been the domain of the comedy of manners.

For the purposes of the Shavian triangle, this advancement into the realm of pure comedy divorced from the underpinnings of weighty social issues is Shaw's primary achievement in Arms and the Man. Although military heroism and glory were still relevant issues in Shaw's day, they differed from the concerns of his earlier plays. First, their universality was limited: the type of military heroism embodied in leading a cavalry charge (however foolhardy) was open to only a handful of upper-class officers, as the play acknowledges. Second, unlike slum housing or the clash of the conventional and unconventional, military glory was not new on the stage. Although Shaw was breaking new ground by satirizing it so ruthlessly, the issue was already becoming a cliché when portrayed in straight dramatic terms. Third, while the other two issues remained relevant, new weapons and technology (whose possible social effects Shaw would later explore in Major Barbara) were already making this type of heroism obsolete.

Thus, while this play can be seen as a step backwards from Shaw's agenda of using the theatre as a social and political pulpit, it can also be seen that this infusion of humor into the Shavian Superman enabled Shaw to consolidate the means of expressing and dispensing his message, making the message itself stronger in subsequent plays. For the character of Bluntschli, the Swiss mercenary soldier who carries

chocolate rather than cartridges into battle, appears to be the first Shavian Superman as we know him today.

But appearances can be deceptive. Bluntschli is only unconventional when compared to the Bulgarians (vulgarians?) who make up the rest of the cast. His primary claim to the title Superman lies in his conduct of his chosen profession: his vision of military glory is the rather prosaic vision of survival. His chocolates, the most famous Shavian touch in the entire play, are usually cited as the epitome of both character and playwright's unconventional, commonsense approach to the waging of war. But delightful as this notion of being a chocolate cream soldier is, cartridges are more valuable to a soldier than candy (or any other food), a truth continually proved by the reality of what real soldiers carry into battle.¹ Besides, what is so unconventional about a soldier whose primary motivation in war is survival; on what military "front" would this behavior appear unconventional? Even his devotion to survival is suspect: when he realizes that his being captured will compromise Raina, he is ready to sacrifice his survival for her honor. Finally, even he admits the truth: that he is that most conventional of all men, a romantic who "climbed the balcony of this house when a man of sense would have dived into the nearest cellar" (1:468).

On the other hand, Bluntschli's rival in love and philosophy, Major Sergius Saranoff, is a follower of conventional military glory revealed

¹ Why can't he carry both cartridges and candy; has he no other pockets? Contrary to Bentley's claim that Shaw poses problems as "both/and" rather than "either/or," Shaw is perfectly willing to forgo the logic of "both/and" for the humor of "either/or." (Bentley, Shaw, p.40.)

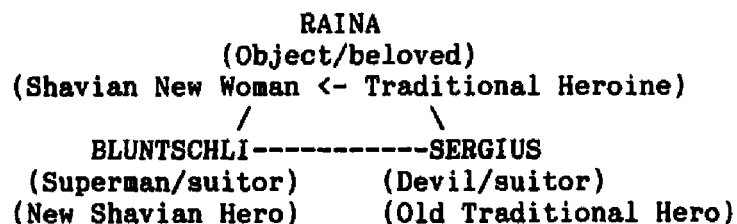
to be an officer willing to pay the pension of any enlisted man brave enough "to spit in my face for insulting him" (1:443). This Shavian Devil, who appears to be a man of strict (and outworn) social convention, is further revealed to be willing to do the unconventional: marry a servant girl out of true love and passion. Sergius, so uncomfortable with himself, his motives, his attitudes and even his desires, proves to be as elusive a Devil as Bluntschli is a Superman, and only Raina actually fulfills her role of Object. It is her maturation, dramatized in her move from Sergius to Bluntschli, that is the true drama of the play; and not the debate between Bluntschli's and Sergius's rival views of military conduct. Unlike Shaw's previous plays, the problem is not finding the components of the Shavian triangle, but finding the issue or context in which this triangle functions. For in the context of military heroism and glory, as well as in their other behavior, the terms Superman and Devil do not truly apply to Bluntschli and Sergius.

To find the true Superman/Devil issue in this play, it is necessary to step outside the proscenium arch; to take these characters not on their own terms but as representative characters of the new drama Shaw was creating and the old drama he was opposing. It is only in this battle of the theatres (old and new) that one can find the military "front" on which Bluntschli can be seen as unconventional.

Compare Bluntschli to the hero of a traditional military drama, such as Henry V or The Prince of Homburg. Physically, he is not tall and handsome, but rather "of middling stature and undistinguished appearance" (1:395). He is not a officer born to the rank, but a commoner who has worked his way up. He is not a man fighting for love of country and

patriotism, but a mercenary, a "professional soldier ... [who] joined the Serbs because they came first on the road from Switzerland" (1:400). And unlike the traditional dramatic military hero, he is not reckless with his life or the lives of his men in pursuit of honor and glory. Rather, he is clear-eyed about his simple objective, staying alive, and acutely aware of how chance can have a greater effect than heroism on the outcome of any military endeavor. In short, he is truly unconventional only when compared not with a real military hero, but rather with the traditional theatrical version, such as Sergius Saranoff.

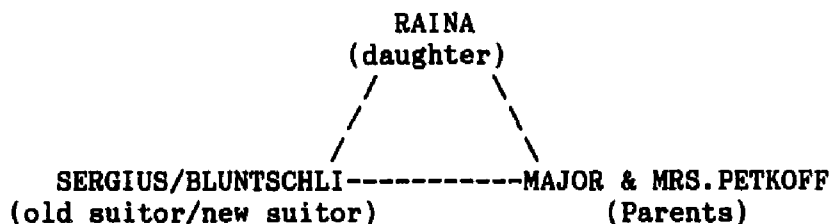
Sergius is the representative of theatrical conventionality, the traditional hero of "Byron and Puskhin, and ... the opera" (1:292), engaged in a losing battle with the theatrically unconventional Bluntschli, the new Shavian hero/Superman.¹ The Object over which they are battling, Raina, is the traditional heroine whose growth into a Shavian new woman marks the progress of their battle. Thus, the war Shaw is portraying here is not that between nations, but his own war with the London theatre of the eighteen-nineties; a theatre which, incidentally, rejected his first three plays. He has taken one of that theatre's favorite stock situations, and one of its primary heroes, and defeated both by turning them inside out:



¹ Shaw even brings in the opera: Raina espouses the ideals of Ernani, the romantic who kills himself for honor; Bluntschli responds with Faust, the scholar who sells his soul for knowledge.

Consequently, the play is deliberately and excessively theatrical. Shaw's basic dramatic technique is to bring on stage numerous traditional theatrical conventions and then immediately twist them. Bluntschli brandishes a revolver in Act One, but the suspense soon turns not on who will fire it but on who will sit on it. Act Two opens with the servants talking, but instead of the traditional exposition about the master and mistress, these servants reveal themselves. Moreover, while they announce that they know a lot of secrets, the only one they reveal is the one we've already guessed: Raina is smitten with Bluntschli. Later, Bluntschli and Raina engage in a highly dexterous maneuver to retrieve a picture hidden in her father's coat, only to learn that he's already seen the picture. And, of course, the picture has an inscription (the next best thing to a letter), which her father has read, but misunderstood (mistaking Sergius for the chocolate cream soldier.)

To further underscore his attack on traditional theatrical conventions, Shaw provides both a generational triangle and two two-suitor triangles in Arms and the Man. But the generational triangle has relatively little impact upon the play, and it's extremely crowded:



The wishes of her parents aren't a major consideration for Raina, and, except for a momentary objection raised at the end (possibly to introduce the property battle referred to earlier), neither parent seems to have any objections to her marrying either suitor. Both parents never rise

above being stock theatrical figures, the dominating mother and the henpecked father, and are always tangential to the central action of the play.

The main traditional triangle is one of the two-suitor triangles, which also encompasses the Shavian triangle:

BLUNTSCHLI --> RAINA <-- SERGIUS
(new suitor) (beloved) (old suitor)

Shaw resolves this triangle by squaring it, introducing Louka:

BLUNTSCHLI <--> RAINA
 |
 X
 |
LOUKA <-----> SERGIUS

However, in contrast to The Philanderer, where Shaw squared his romantic triangle by introducing an unattached fourth party, Louka serves as the apex of the second two-suitor triangle:

 LOUKA
 (beloved)
 / \
SERGIUS-----NICOLA
(new suitor) (old suitor)

Although this second triangle mirrors the first, this is more than just the servants providing a mirroring sub-plot for the main plot of upper-class romance. The two plots are not resolved separately, but merge into one resolution:

 RAINA LOUKA
 / \
BLUNTSCHLI-----SERGIUS-----NICOLA

The main plot, or Raina triangle, has new money supplanting old, the middle class supplanting the upper. The sub-plot, or Louka triangle,

has the upper class "supplanting" the servant class. Raina is brought down a class while Louka is brought up so they can meet in the middle. (Actually, in Bulgaria, Louka is now higher than Raina: Louka is the wife of a nobleman, Raina the wife of a hotelkeeper, no matter how rich.¹)

This second triangle also illustrates one of the contradictions in Shaw's war with the traditional theatre. Although he must attack the traditional hero in order to promote his new creation, Shaw still retains a great affection for this character; and in this sub-plot triangle, Sergius is the Superman. While Nicola's realistic attitude may appear to be unconventional, he is really the soul of caution and convention; he merely understands his place. Sergius, by courting and marrying beneath himself in a stratified society, is taking the risk, doing the unconventional.

This second triangle also serves as a model for a triangular structure which will soon become a major part of Shaw's dramaturgy. The focal character for understanding this new structure is not Sergius, but Nicola. While this is clearly a two-suitor triangle, and Nicola is plainly the losing suitor for Louka's hand, this second triangle also carries a suggestion of the generational triangle. Nicola is not only old enough to be Louka's father, but his feelings towards her appear to be more parental than romantic. He constantly instructs her in lady-like behavior and speaks of her as both a potential financial boon and burden, much as a father might a daughter. When, in Act Three, he tells

¹ In his previous play, "hotelkeeper" was a euphemism for brothel owner; so well understood that it was not used in polite society. Here, it is a title of distinction for Bluntschli. Perhaps Shaw, with an eye toward future travel, is trying to make amends to his future hosts.

her that if she were "just a little less of a fool and Sergius just a little more of one, you might come to be one of my grandest customers, instead of only being my wife and costing me money" (1:452), he sounds like Alfred P. Doolittle trying to "sell" his daughter to Henry Higgins.

In Arms and the Man, the merging of these two basic traditional triangles, the generational and the two-suitor, occurs in the sub-plot triangle. But this merged triangle will become dominant in such future plays as Caesar and Cleopatra, The Doctor's Dilemma, Pygmalion, and Heartbreak House. It features the character of the romantic father figure: the dispassionate suitor who pays court more for the role of tutor than lover; the character whose sexual and physical attraction is less important to the heroine than his intellectual and instructional abilities.¹

Although the merger of these two functions is most obvious in Nicola, it is also present in Bluntschli, the new Shavian hero/Superman. As Louka aptly observes in Act Three, "he has not much heart, that Swiss" (1:450). While the comparison of the dispassionate, intellectual, common-sensical Bluntschli with the passionate, emotional, reckless Sergius is the crux of Shaw's battle with the traditional theatre and the play's primary thematic purpose, one can also see in Bluntschli's dispassionate wooing of Raina a fatherly approach to the young woman, whom he mistakenly believes to be young enough to be his daughter. (He is thirty-five and mistakes her for seventeen; eighteen-year-old fathers have never been uncommon.)

¹ This introduction of a father figure can be seen as growing out of Shaw's previously discussed concerns over his own paternity.

In his insightful study, George Bernard Shaw, Arthur Ganz observes:

They are to be happily engaged by the end of the play, but there is little of the erotic here. Bluntschli begins as, in effect, a wise parent firmly enlightening a child who does not understand the realities of the world ... But as his fatigue grows and as Raina resolves to help him, their roles are to a considerable degree reversed. Bluntschli becomes less able to cope and more childlike ... [while] Raina, who has already been described as stooping over the disheartened Bluntschli 'almost maternally' ... at the end of the act protects him as if he were an exhausted child who had been put to bed. (*Italics mine.*)¹

To carry Ganz's analysis one step further, note how Shaw defines the two parental roles: Bluntschli, the father, is instructive; Raina, the mother, is protective.

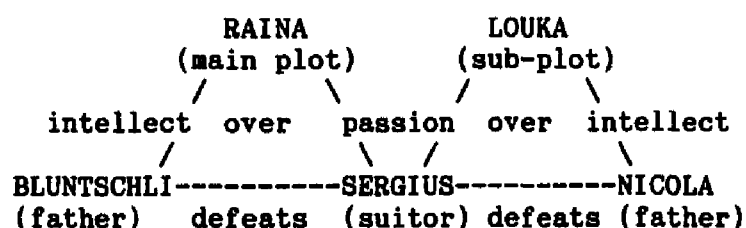
In contrast to Bluntschli and Nicola, there is no sense of wise fatherly enlightenment in the way Sergius approaches Louka: he is passionate, physical, uncertain of himself and his motives. He woos her not only with words, but, rare for a Shavian character, he woos her physically; first leaving a bruise on her arm, then claiming her for his wife by the physical act of laying his hands upon her. And in further contrast to the other relationships, it is she who is instructive, lecturing him on "true courage" (1:454), and informing him that Raina will marry Bluntschli.² Whereas Raina is amenable to Bluntschli's instruction, and even glad to put aside her "noble attitude and thrilling voice" (1:447), Louka rejects Nicola's counsel, proclaiming "I must

¹ Arthur Ganz, George Bernard Shaw, Grove Press Modern Dramatists, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1983), pp. 101-102.

² In Act Two she tells him, "Miss Raina will marry him, whether he likes it or not" (1:428). This intimation of the woman as predator is a foreshadowing of Ann Whitfield and Jack Tanner in Man and Superman.

behave in my own way. You take all the courage out of me with your cold-blooded wisdom" (1:452).¹

In the Louka triangle, Sergius, the suitor, has won the "daughter" away from Nicola, the father; in the Raina triangle, the opposite is true: Bluntschli, the father, has won the "daughter" away from Sergius, the suitor. Shaw is not only promoting his new hero over the traditional one, but also a new intellectual romance over the old passionate kind:



To those who would accuse him of being sexless, he might respond "damn right and glad to be so."

The brilliantly ambiguous title is from Virgil's Aeneid: Arma Virumque, "Arms I sing, and the man." "Arms" can refer to the weapons Bluntschli carries into battle against the Bulgarians (his gun and his chocolates); the weapon he carries into the battle of the sexes with Raina (the realities with which he counters her illusions); the coat of arms indicating Sergius's nobility; the arms over the door of one of Bluntschli's hotels; the coat with arms in which the picture is hidden; or even the actual physical appendages such as that of Louka's which Sergius bruises, or the ones Sergius lays on Louka resulting in their marriage. Similarly, the "man" of the title could be one of the self-

¹ There is a delicious Shavian irony here. Despite the fact that Bluntschli and Raina's relationship is dispassionate, one can in truth say that he has spent the night in her bed; which is more than can be said about the more passionate Sergius and Louka.

professed "half dozen Sergiuses" (1:426); or one of the three Bluntschli's in the play: the realistic soldier, the chocolate cream soldier and the fool for love. (Or the title could even refer to the playwright himself: a man armed with humor and irony battling the traditions of an old-fashioned theatre that rejects his plays.)

Physically, the locale moves from interior to exterior to interior: from upstairs bedroom, to outside garden, to downstairs library; a continual coming down to earth (reality). This is also a reversal of the usual romantic comedy, which would start in the library and move to its conclusion in the bedroom, but it is appropriate in Bluntschli's courtship of Raina. In addition, the play moves from evening to morning to afternoon, which should give it a classical unity of time. But there is a four month gap between the night and the two parts of the day. (We only hear about Sergius in the romantic night time, we actually see him in the cold light of day.) Thus, the first act is isolated (as was the last act of Mrs Warren's Profession) by time and, to a lesser degree, distance (it's the only one that is set upstairs.)¹

Accordingly, much of the second act is expository, introducing both characters we met only briefly in the first act (Catherine and Louka) and characters we only heard of (Sergius, Petkoff, and Nicola). Because it must keep stopping for belated character introductions and plot expositions, the second act is open to the charge that it is not up to the fast, funny and unconventional first act. However, this helps

¹ Nowhere else does Shaw use a promised setting to set up and deliver a joke as he does with the Petkoff's library. It is as if he intends to replace the old convention of the gun with a new convention of the Shavian theatre: never mention a library in the first act unless you intend to show it before the play's end.

Shaw achieve the "pleasant play" effect he desires. Except for Bluntschli's unmasking as a romantic, there will be no second or third-act surprises, as in the previous plays. We are free to delight in how Shaw does the expected, and he continually does just that.¹

Raina's parents, as already stated, are stock theatrical figures, and their names merely illustrate their clichéd natures: Catherine (the Great?), the dominating mother; and Paul (Greek for small) Petkoff, her henpecked spouse.² Nicola's name, a variation of Nicholas, is that of the devil ("old Nick"), while Louka's name is all her own. As he is cautious, she is courageous and insolent: when the man she knows Raina is truly in love with returns in Act Two, Louka tauntingly brings his card in to her mistress not on the salver, but tucked in her own bosom.

Raina's name is the first word of the play. Because the name is not easily placeable (as Marie, Hedda or Sophia might be), this immediately establishes the locale as foreign, but not one we are used to being in. It is questionable why Shaw so undercuts her with the first act satire of Bulgarian civility. While this does go to the question of why Bluntschli thinks she is seventeen rather than twenty-three, it also raises the question of why, if she is twenty-three and has traveled, she

¹ For example, compare this mother/daughter relationship to that of the previous play. Here, the mother is concerned with her daughter's current and future well being, the daughter is actively seeking guidance on life and romance. But, as did Kitty Warren, Catherine Petkoff also cautions her daughter to come in out of the draft.

² This is the first Shavian household to have both parents, a rare occurrence. In the full length plays, it will happen again only in Candida (where we never see the children), You Never Can Tell and Major Barbara (where the parents are separated), Getting Married, Misalliance, Back to Methuselah, The Apple Cart and On the Rocks; and there is a six parent household in The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles.

doesn't know just what a fool she is making of herself. Shaw also uses her to poke fun at his craft, when Catherine describe how Raina always knows when to make an entrance: "she listens for it" (1:421). In the same fashion, Bluntschli's ability to move the troops jokingly echoes his creator's ability to move his characters; while his name speaks for itself.

The pivotal character, in whom both triangle meet, is Sergius Saranoff. Sergius, the name of a series of Popes, suggests surging forward; and underscores the contradictions in this character who proclaims, "I never apologize" (1:458), yet ends up doing just that. (As for the last name, Shaw once joked that he Balkanized the play by adding "off" to the ends of all the names.¹) As was his Devil predecessor, Kitty Warren, Sergius is given a nineteenth century entrance: he is the last character to appear. We have been prepared to find him humorous, and he doesn't disappoint; but, at the same time, Shaw treats him sympathetically. In his scenes with Louka, Sergius is an appealing figure: uncertain of his motives and desires, and stumbling to say and do the right thing. This is the first instance in Shaw of a man's being redeemed by love, which Shaw defines as being made more realistic. Unlike Harry Trench or Percy Paramore, who are getting women they can worship, Sergius is getting a woman who will throw cold water in his face whenever he tries to exalt her. (The same is true of Raina, who is also getting a man who can prick her balloon; both heroic idealists must marry beneath themselves to be saved.) Finally, as with the two fathers

¹ Maurice Valency, The Cart and the Trumpet: The Plays of George Bernard Shaw, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 106. Valency cites the Pall Mall Budget (London), 19 April, 1894.

in The Philanderer, there is a foretaste of Pirandello about Sergius. He also seems a character aware of himself as a traditional theatrical type; a character questioning if he still wants to be that type; and if not, searching for his place in the new theatre.¹

The most significant aspect of all these characters is that they are not labeled as Englishmen. Although Shaw's characters are always his contemporary Englishmen, by passing these off as foreigners he frees his audience to laugh at "them" (the Bulgarians) rather than at "us" (the English). Thus, rather than attacking his audience, he is inviting it to laugh with him. This alone could spell the difference between an audience finding a play "pleasant" or "unpleasant." In addition, Shaw himself, by leaving behind the immediacy of contemporary England and its problems, freed his sense of humor. This, combined with a newly discovered structure and character, provided him with new arms to wage his theatrical battles.

¹ Shaw often referred to Sergius as his "Hamlet", the most famous character of the traditional theatre Shaw is rebelling against. But if Sergius is the traditional theatrical hero, then Bluntschli is the traditional friend of the hero; Enobarbus to Sergius's Antony, the voice of reason who is not heeded. The Shavian twist is that here he prevails, and everyone survives.

CHAPTER 5

CANDIDA

Thus far, at least one character in each play has obviously been either conventional or unconventional, and the Superman or Devil has been easily placed in the Shavian triangle. In Widower's Houses, Sartorius was the obvious Devil, though Archer's structure kept Blanche from being the Superman. In The Philanderer, although there are ultimately two Shavian triangles, the Superman and Devil in each is apparent. In Mrs. Warren's Profession, the Devil is also obvious, but not so Vivie's dual roles as Superman and Object. And in Arms and the Man, both the Devil and Superman are apparent, but their context is not. The fact that the Devil has so far been more obvious than the Superman demonstrates that Shaw found the Devil easier to create.

In Candida, there is no one character who is obviously conventional or unconventional, and no obvious corner of the Shavian triangle from which to begin examining the Superman/Devil conflict. Thus far, each play has been approached by first discussing the structure and components of the Shavian triangle; then attempting to superimpose that triangle upon a traditional theatrical triangle; and finally turning to an examination of the characters as they serve the conflict between convention and unconventionality in the play. Now, it will be necessary to reverse this procedure: to begin with the three major characters, Candida, Morell and Marchbanks, and then to examine each possible triangle both traditionally and as a Shavian triangle. In so doing, it

will become apparent that there are three credible Shavian triangles, and each will be discussed in detail.

First, it is necessary to determine the context in which to discuss the Superman, Devil and Object. Previously, there has been a recognizable issue through which to compare the ideas of conventional and unconventional behavior; even when this has proved to be only on the surface, as was prostitution in Mrs. Warren's Profession, it has at least provided a point of entry. In Candida, there is no one issue as easy to define as slum housing or military glory, which is the underlying reason why this play is so hard to come to terms with.

Ironically, the best approach to this problem of context is to set aside the play's differences with Shaw's previous theatrical work and instead examine its similarities. All of Shaw's first five plays fall within the genre of domestic comedy: the portrayal of either courtship, the roots of marriage; domesticity, the actual marriage; or parenthood, the results of marriage. Whereas the previous plays dealt with either courtship or parenthood (or both), Candida is Shaw's first domestic comedy to deal exclusively with domesticity. Although one could argue that the play deals with Marchbanks's courtship of Candida, this courtship is interesting dramatically only as it impinges on the existing marriage of Candida and James Morell. Likewise, although one can argue that the relationship of Candida to Morell is more parental than spousal, it is so by mutual choice and not biological fact. Domestically speaking they are husband and wife: only the second married couple Shaw has portrayed on stage and the first to have primacy in the dramatic action.

(The only previous married couple in a Shavian play were the Petkoffs, who proved to be peripheral to the action of Arms and the Man.¹)

Since the play deals with a threat to this domesticity, its context could be the traditional theatrical conflict between idealized and realistic love. Idealized love would seem to be represented by the poetic fantasy of the suitor, Marchbanks, but Morell's love proves to be more idealized; not just a poetic fantasy, but a misconception of the actual dynamics of a real, existing relationship. In contrast, Candida represents realistic love; and the play's climax is her teaching the two men how to be realistic not about love itself, but about their specific needs for it.

Beyond this traditional conflict, there is a second approach to the love portrayed in this play: to consider it less as traditional theatre and more as modern psychology, which this play was among the first in the modern theatre to do. This approach also posits two forms of love; the first "spousal" love, or love between two partners of equal strengths. In this love relationship, either partner may be stronger or weaker at any given time, but this is ever-changing and the relationship keeps balancing out. Are there any spousal relationships in the play? Morell would so describe his relationship with Candida, but the action of the play proves him to be self-deluding. Is this the relationship that would exist between Candida and Marchbanks? No, because part of his poetic

¹ In fact, Candida and The Devil's Disciple are Shaw's only full-length domestic plays that focus on the marital relationship. His subsequent domestic plays are concerned either with courtship (Man and Superman, Getting Married); parenthood, or the parent/child relationship (Misalliance, Fanny's First Play); or a combination of the two (You Never Can Tell, Major Barbara, Pygmalion, Heartbreak House).

fantasy places her in the mother's role. There are no examples of spousal love in this play.

Instead, there are only examples of "parental" love: love between two unchanging parties, one always stronger and the other always weaker. This is so in Morell's relationship with his secretary, Proserpine Garnett. Her silent love for him (Prossy's complaint) is less that of a wife for a husband and more that of child for an all-powerful parent; or even of a suppliant for her God. And Morell, in his need to validate his illusion of his relationship with his real wife, encourages this adoration. (In an asexual way, the same is true of Morell's relationship with Lexy Mill.)

The play's most vivid examples of this type of love relationship are those involving the title character. The unveiling of her parental relationship with her husband is the central action of the play; but she has the same relationship with her own biological father, who confesses that his "ouse aint worth livin in since you left it" (1:533), and asks her to "come round" (1:533) and see to the organization of his household, much as a mother might see to the bachelor dwellings of her grown son. As in the relationship of Frank Gardner and his father, she is constantly the more mature, more responsible, more parent-like; while the actual parent is childish, dependent and usually in need of counsel.

Since all love relationships portrayed in this play are parental, the issue in Candida is not only domestic love, but domestic power; the conflict is that of strength and weakness as expressed in marital needs. The currency of this domestic power, the measure of who controls each relationship, is the willingness of one party to face up to the truth.

The parent, or stronger figure is always the one who understands the truth about that specific relationship. (The one exception being Morell and Prossy, where both are deluded.)

In addition, all of the characters except Candida are forced to confront a truth about themselves. For the minor characters, this happens early in the play: Prossy that she is in love with Morell and jealous of Candida; Lexy that he idolizes Morell and has borrowed his ideas and physicality from his idol; and Burgess that he is a scoundrel, doing the moral thing only for his own selfish interests. These awakenings prepare us for the end of the play, when the two male principals must confront the truth about themselves: who they really are, what they really want, and what their lives are really about.

Candida, on the other hand, does not appear to face any moment of realization that reverses her view of herself. There are two possible reasons, each offering a different view of the character. One, that she is so in touch with the truth about herself and so open to reality that she never needs to face any contrary truth; she is instead always facing the small truths before they can add up to anything large. The alternative is that she is always deluding herself and consequently, like Charteris in The Philanderer, never faces the truth about herself, only others.

Thus, the crux of the contextual problem in Candida is that the play deals with two issues, love and truth; and each character can appear both conventional or unconventional depending upon which issue is being considered. Take the character of the Reverend James Mavor Morell. One way to see the play is as the stripping away of his illusions. The play

begins with his presiding over a surrogate version of what he believes to be his own happy household. Prossy is the stand-in for the idealized wife that he believes Candida to be: a helpmate, worshipful of him for his "strength ... honesty ... ability and ... authority" (1:591); the qualities he believes he offers Candida. Whereas his wife knows better, Prossy would accept these joyfully. Although Morell believes his marriage to be spousal, if he could see it as parental he would be the husband/father and Candida the wife/daughter. (He would have this relationship if married to Prossy; what he would not have is a happily functioning household, for Prossy is obviously not the domestic engineer that Candida is.) Lexy is the stand-in for the idealized surrogate son that Morell believes Marchbanks to be: worshipful, ready to learn from the wiser, older man's experience. The action of the play is that the two real holders of these positions strip all his illusions away. The final member of this idealized family is Burgess, the bad father/husband who contrasts with Morell's good father/husband. As Morell is supportive and caring to his stand-in family, Burgess is immediately antagonistic to both Prossy and Lexy. Furthermore, as Morell is "father" to Lexy and "husband" to Prossy, so is he also "son" to Burgess, but there is an important difference in this relationship which underlines the reality exposed at the play's conclusion. Unlike the surrogate nature of the other two relationships, Burgess is, in fact, Morell's father-in-law and has actual paternal ties to him. This is the only relationship in which Morell is not stripped of any illusions for it is the only relationship in which he does not think himself to be someone (husband or father) he's not. Here he's exactly who he proves to be, a son.

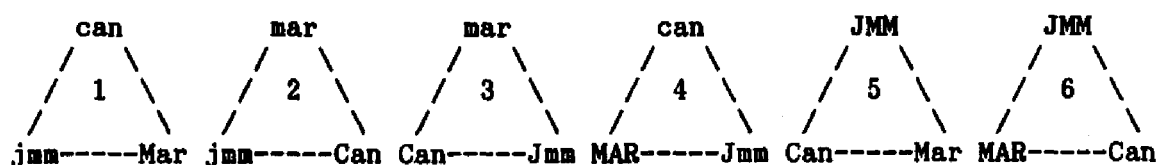
Because he is so unrealistic, and his view of his world so illusory, Morell can not be the Superman in this play. He can, however, ably fill either of the two remaining roles in the triangle, depending upon which context is used. He can easily be the Devil, the defender of the status quo, if the status quo is his own unrealistic view of his household. In the genre of domestic comedy, self-delusion is the conventional approach to life. But, because it is his illusions which are stripped away, because he moves from a state of deception to a state of illumination, he is strongest as the Object, converting from falsehood to truth.

On the other hand, Object is the weakest role for his rival, Eugene Marchbanks, who actively instigates the crisis that is the play's action. Rather than Morell attempting to influence Marchbanks, it is the other way around. The married couple are not fighting over him; neither gains him as a convert; and at the final curtain they let him go off to his own secret victory. Marchbanks can, however, ably fill either remaining role. As the proponent of truth, his attempt to disillusion Morell make him the Superman; for adherence to truth is always an unconventional policy. But his love for Candida is as illusory as Morell's; and unconventional only because he is able to free himself from it while his rival needs step by step instructions to arrive at the truth. In a battle of love, the poetical, romantic Marchbanks is the Devil; defender and proponent of the traditional idea of romantic love that Shaw is attempting to supplant.

The character hardest to place in these dual contexts is Candida. Is she Titian's Virgin Mother or Beatrice Webb's "sentimental

prostitute?"¹ Is she the Superman, Bluntschli's figurative sister, an unconventional Shavian realist battling the romantic illusions of the two men? Or is she the Devil, the conventional purveyor of illusion, the foe of reality and the defender of the status quo? Or is she merely the Object, the battleground for the two men, each of whom would claim her romantically? While this last is her position in the most obvious traditional triangle Shaw is using, she is the most active participant in the play's denouement.

These three main characters yield six possible Shavian triangles, shown here as judged weakest to strongest:

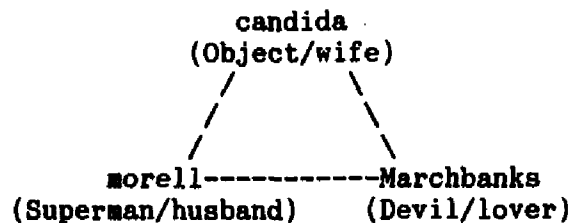


Both Morell (JMM) and Marchbanks (MAR) have a strongest position (boldface); a weakest position (lower case); and a position valid in one context only (upper and lower case). Candida (CAN), weakest as Object, can be either Superman or Devil depending on the context.

Accordingly, the first three triangles are each too weak to be the Shavian triangle; while the second three are each credible within differing interpretations of the play. However, it will be helpful to an understanding of the dynamics of the Shavian triangle to examine, for this play only, all six possible Shavian triangles, beginning with the three weak ones.

¹ The Titian painting is Eugene's gift to the household; Beatrice Webb's description is cited in Michael Holroyd, Bernard Shaw: Volume I, The Search For Love, 1856-1898, (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 316. While many critics quote Webb, I've found none who specifies the source.

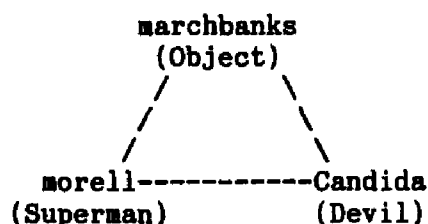
Triangle number one:



is a traditional triangular structure from the genre of domestic comedy, and given Shaw's agenda of challenging such theatre, it is the one most easily discarded.¹ In this triangle, the romantically foolish wife, unappreciative of her stolid and conventional husband, falls for the romantic and unconventional lover. However, as the point of the traditional genre was to celebrate the conventions of hearth and home offered by the husband, the lover proves less attractive than he appears, while the husband is shown to possess resources of character which make him far more attractive. In Candida, the three main characters are all deliberate perversions of these traditional roles. Whereas, the traditional wife is foolishly romantic, Shaw's Candida is practical and realistic. The traditional husband is prosaic on the surface, but with hidden strengths; while the lover is traditionally all surface, with a hidden interior that proves to be weak (and often villainous). Here, the hidden strengths belong to the lover, Marchbanks; and it is the husband, Morell, who is all surface with a weak interior, hardly the traits of an unconventional Superman.

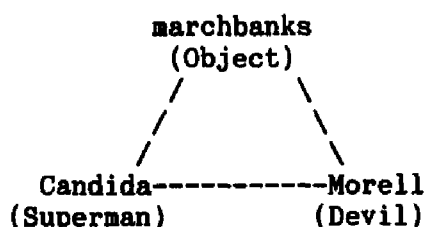
Triangle number two:

¹ Meisel, Shaw and, pp. 224-233, contains a more thorough discussion of both this genre and Candida as an example thereof.



sees the play as the married couple in conflict over the young interloper. This triangle does not have traditional antecedents, being instead a modern, psychological triangle in which two parents fight to influence a child; which is not the action of this play. The self-deluding Morell is not an unconventional Superman, Marchbanks is too active to be the Object, and this triangle is also easily discarded.

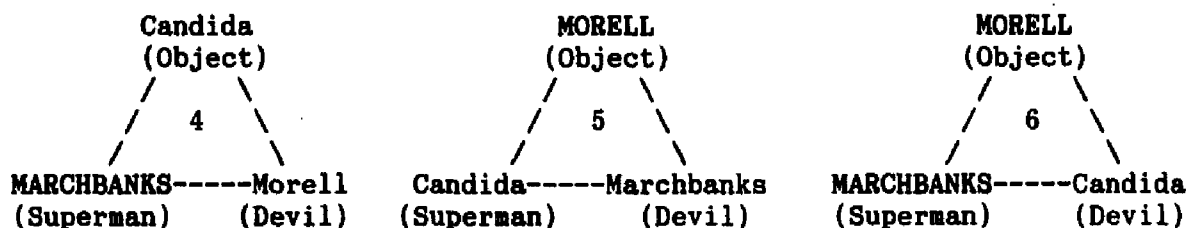
Triangle number three:



while suffering from the same lack of traditional reference, is more credible than triangle number two. Candida is a plausible Superman, whose realistic approach to domestic love is unconventional; and Morell is also plausible as the Devil, with his conventional self-deluding approach to domesticity, his misunderstanding of how his own marriage works, and his believing himself to be the source of strength in both. The weakness of this triangle is, again, Marchbanks as the Object. One might argue that Candida persuades him to be more realistic about love, but not that Morell was trying to persuade him to be unrealistic. At best, this triangle describes the situation before the curtain rises.

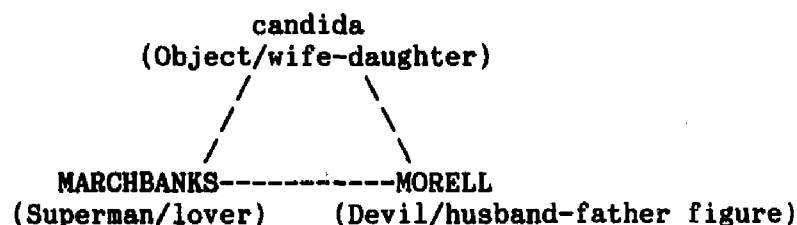
Having discarded all triangles containing either Morell as Superman or Marchbanks as Object, the three remaining triangles are all

credible as Shavian triangles. In two, Marchbanks is the Superman, and in two, Morell is the object, the strongest positions for each. Only Candida still occurs in each position, and each character appears once as the Devil:



However, the two strongest triangles have Morell as the Object; in either context, the true conflict in the play is over him.

Triangle number four:



takes the play at face value, acknowledging the previously mentioned triangle of domestic comedy, as well as Shaw's perversions of that triangle's traditional roles. It combines both the traditional triangles so far considered, the two-suitor and the generational triangle; and includes the new Shavian character of the father figure, first introduced in Arms and the Man. As such, this is one of the few father/daughter/suitor triangles in which the father wins, exposing the major weakness of this triangle.¹ The reality is not that Candida looks up to Morell as a

¹ It is also Shaw's first play to use the two suitor structure and not square the triangle to resolve the conflict; by not doing so, Shaw returns to the unattached Superman of Mrs. Warren's Profession.

father figure, but that he looks up to her as his mother figure.¹ This reinforces her primacy over him in the play's action, and makes her far more compelling in either of the active roles of Superman or Devil; while his dependence underscores his strength in the least active role of Object. (He can be the Devil here, but only in the context of truth.)

It is also hard to take the play at face value and to believe that Candida only makes up her mind between the two at the moment it appears to happen in Act Three. There are a number of indications early in this Act that she has already made up her mind and is aware of what is coming. (Whether this is seen as conscious or unconscious knowledge depends upon your interpretation of the character.) She is indifferent to Eugene's poetry, and her body language establishes that she is not sexually available to him; not only is the poker held up like a sword, but it is also a symbol of hearth and home and therefore Morell.² (The fact that

¹ Strong as Candida is as a mother figure, she is not very credible as a mother. Her impulse to abandon her family for Marchbanks echoes Shaw's mother, who left her children to bestow her maternal love on a man. Nor is Morell a credible father. "Who will be father to her children" (1:580, italics mine), he asks; aren't they his children too? One has to wonder, because at no time after his wife's return does he even ask after Jimmy's and Fluffy's health. (The latter name is particularly apt, for the children are primarily treated as pets.)

As the children were not in the original script, but only added later, quite possibly Shaw realized that it would be strange for the Morells to have been married for any length of time and not had children. Moreover, the children are obviously a plot device: the excuse for Candida and Marchbanks to have been away so he can have fallen in love with her. But other than this show of motherly concern (going away), neither she nor Morell ever gives any indication that the children enter into their thinking; and given this need to include them, Shaw's treatment of them undercuts the characters' credibility.

² It's phallic symbolism, obvious to us, was not intended by Shaw. The play predates the earliest English translation of Freud by some 15 years and follows only a year after the publication of the first of the "Studies in Hysteria" in an Austrian medical journal of limited circulation. Even given Shaw's breadth of knowledge, it appears the

Eugene doesn't see this simply underscores his naivete, rather than her indecision.) Her invitation to "come and sit down on the hearth-rug and talk moonshine" (1:573), is followed by "as you usually do," indicating that this is a regular occurrence, and not one she takes seriously; she has no fear or self-consciousness about his talking love to her. And, unlike her husband or Prossy, she has a ready answer for anything he can say: "that happiness is the answer to your prayer. Do you want anything more?" (1:575). All of which gives every indication that she is playing with him ("I'm sure you feel a great grown-up wicked deceiver" (1:574)) and is not seriously considering leaving her husband.

Moreover, the auction itself is a game that "mama" is playing with the "children." She warns Eugene that he is going to learn a lesson; she is stern with James, until he breaks down, at which point she resolves any doubts with the line "my boy shall not be worried" (1:581). After the bids are sealed and the choice is made, mama takes her charges firmly in hand by saying, "Let us sit and talk comfortably over it like three friends" (1:591), a line which has the misfortune to scream out "Author's Message!" She is always in control of the situation, always knows where she is going and there is no real fight over her. Accordingly, the dramatic action demands that she be one of the two active characters, Superman or Devil.

Marchbanks' position in this triangle, Superman, is his strongest, particularly in the context of bringing hidden truths into the open. But ironically, he is blind to the truth about his own love, making him

symbolism owes more to the Morte D'Arthur than to psychology.

reminiscent of Bluntschli.¹ This triangle continues the conflict between Shaw's new unconventional Superman and the traditional hero as Devil begun in Arms and the Man. In Candida, Shaw returns to a London setting and transposes the traditional hero/Devil from one genre to another: from Sergius, hero of the romantic, military play, to Morell, hero of the Well-Made Social-Issue Play. As with Sergius, the key to Morell is self-delusion; but Morell has his doubts introduced in the course of the play, while we never know if Sergius has always had his doubts or if they are the result of the battle action he has just seen.

Also compatible are Marchbanks and Bluntschli, each more aware of the truth of his external than his internal world. Just as Bluntschli's realism defeats Sergius in a war of combat, so Marchbanks's realism defeats Morell in their war of words; but each proves a novice in the war of the sexes in which he finds himself engaged. While Bluntschli was honest about life but a fool about emotions, Marchbanks is honest about emotions but a fool about life; and as Bluntschli depicted a movement from the traditional hero to the more realistic Shavian Superman/hero, Marchbanks depicts a movement to a more insightful Shavian Superman/hero.

However, Marchbanks also shares Bluntschli's major weakness as Superman: some of the apparent truths he utters are similar to Bluntschli's pronouncements about carrying chocolates rather than cartridges; they sound truer than they are. In their Act One confrontation, "Morell's gaze wavers for the first time," when Eugene

¹ Even after he sees that Candida is torturing Morell, he still persists in his idealized vision of her: "He sits down on the sofa like a man witnessing a tragedy ... 'It is your cruelty. I hate cruelty. It is a horrible thing to see one person make another suffer'" (1:567).

asks him "Do you think that the things people make fools of themselves about are any less real and true than the things they behave sensibly about?" (1:541). As that line is written, the answer is "no;" the reality is "... any less real and true to them." This is not semantics, but the distinction between objective and subjective reality. Eugene's belief that Candida loves him is true only to him. It says more about Morell's insecurities and delusions than about Marchbanks's truth that Morell's whole house of cards instantly begins to collapse here; the more secure Candida can easily deflect Eugene's arguments with objective and practical reality.

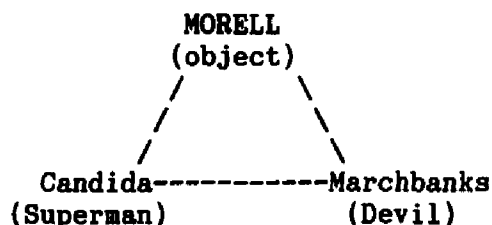
Similarly, in his second act discussion with the love-lorn Prossy, Eugene cries out, "I see the affection I am longing for given to dogs, cats and pet birds" (1:549). Is this really the affection he is longing for? The affection given to dogs, cats and pet birds is simply the most extreme version of parental love: love between a stronger and a weaker party. This is exactly the love he is getting from Candida, who treats him like a stray pet; as a Shavian Superman, he should be able to recognize this.

This is the preferred triangle for those who see the three characters in the terminology of The Quintessence of Ibsenism: a realist (Marchbanks), an idealist (Morell) and a philistine (Candida). The best presentation of this argument is found in Arthur H. Nethercot's Men and Supermen: The Shavian Portrait Gallery, in the section of the opening chapter entitled "The Truth about Candida."¹ This is also an Oedipal

¹ Arthur H. Nethercot, Men and Superman: The Shavian Portrait Gallery (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1954), pp. 7-17.

triangle, with the (surrogate) son battling the father for the mother; but again, the play predates the first publication of Freud in English.

Triangle number five:



has no traditional antecedent. It takes the most positive view of Candida: the voice of Shavian realism fighting the twin voices of romantic illusion, Morell and Marchbanks. In his book, Bernard Shaw: the Darker Side, Arnold Silver maintains that Shaw is propounding a philosophy which:

... regarded the human creature as good, his natural appetites worthy of cultivation rather than repression, his brain an instrument for satisfying his emotions and his will. The material world and the people in it, though no doubt in need of betterment, were precious for what they already were and not for what they might become ... This idealism of cherishing the real had to struggle against a more familiar idealism, rooted in Platonism and Christianity, which measured man against a standard of spiritual perfection and found him defective ...

Captain Bluntschli and Candida Morell, each of them blunt and candid, are twin ... "realists" ... confronted by old style idealists ... [who] attitudinize in a noble vein.... Raina and Sergius dupe themselves into viewing war heroically, just as Marchbanks views marriage and as Morell views his mission to preach divine truth. Raina's horror when told the facts of war is equalled by Marchbanks's when told of the scrubbing brushes and sliced onions that mark the prosaic domestic world. Practical, earthy, and independent-minded, Bluntschli and Candida (the hotel-keeper's son and the factory owner's daughter) manage the over-grown children among whom they find themselves, even as they nurture in them a sense of reality ... When Candida drives the truth home to her husband that his dependence on her is far greater than hers on him, he is delighted to find that she still loves him. Both Raina and Morell discover, once they stop claiming impossible virtues, "that the affections of their friends, wives and sweethearts for them is not a reasoned tribute to their virtues but a human impulse towards their very selves," as Shaw generalized elsewhere. It is Candida's occasional impatience at her husband's self-delusions that prompts her to tell him the truth

roundly ... Both realists share with their creator the desire to implant a truer faith, and a cherishing of life as it is, in the minds of the misled idealists around them.¹

Further support, but along different lines, for seeing *Candida* as the Superman is provided by Maurice Valency, who, in his excellent study *The Cart and the Trumpet: the Plays of Bernard Shaw*, proposes *Candida* as an early example of the life force:

She is a mother by vocation, sexually uncommitted to any man, and bound by no law other than her will in which is resident a higher will, which is divine. It is possible, accordingly, to consider *Candida* a precursor of *Man and Superman*. At its core is the evolutionary theory, as yet inchoate, which was to become the fundamental in all Shaw's later work ...

... The real question is not which of the two men needs her the most, but which of them she most needs in order best to fulfill herself as woman. It is her destiny to be a mother and to raise children. From this viewpoint Marchbanks seems useless. The man for her is Morell, and this entails some sacrifice on her part.

... Since Morell is capable of playing the father as well as the son, he is ideally suited for marriage. Marchbanks is capable of neither role ... His function in the domestic triangle is primarily disruptive. He has no real desire to become *Candida*'s husband. He wishes only to deprive Morell of his wife.²

In *Candida* the central figure of the mother takes the place that Raina occupied in the plot-design of the earlier play. But where Raina had to choose between a romantic realist and a realistic romantic, *Candida* is given the choice, in Marchbanks's words, between "a wretched little nervous disease" and a "pig-headed parson." Neither is a worthy mate for so illustrious a figure. She deserves nothing short of divinity. Evidently that is what she looked for in Morell, and her dissatisfaction with him is based on the discovery, made long ago, that in him she has, not a father, but another child.³

¹ Arnold Silver, *Bernard Shaw: The Darker Side* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1982), pp. 84-85. The quote from Shaw appears in the essay "A Dramatic Realist to His Critics," which was written shortly after the first performance of *Arms and the Man* (April 21, 1894) and published in *The New Review* 11 (September 1894): 56-73.

² Valency, *The Cart*, p. 122. I do not agree that Marchbanks' motivation is purely malicious.

³ Ibid., p. 126.

While much of this is credible, there are points to question. If, as Silver says, Candida desires, to "implant a ... cherishing of life as it is," why has she allowed her husband to continue to believe his delusions as to the true nature of their relationship? She enlightens him on the subject only when forced to do so by Marchbanks's declaration of love. Can a Shavian Superman be someone who creates and perpetuates a household built on illusions and unfaced truths? Similarly, did marriage to Morell entail, as Valency claims, "some sacrifice on her part;" did she marry Morell seeking "divinity?" This assumes that Candida wanted more from Morell when she married him than she ultimately got; that she believed him to be the man he believes himself to be, and that, after realizing the "truth" about him, she continued her marriage, in effect, "for the sake of the children." (All of which shows a lack of prescience which is also not the mark of a realistic Shavian Superman.) Rather, her trenchantly accurate description of his childhood home indicates that she knew exactly who she was marrying; and she gives every indication of having wanted a husband whom she could mother. By marrying Morell, she simply duplicated her childhood household and her relationship to her father. As for the unworthiness of her choice between "a nervous little disease ... and a pig-headed parson" (1:580), this is seeing Candida through Eugene's unrealistic eyes. The neutral observer might reframe the question: "why should so insightful a poet and so compelling a public speaker come to blows over a scrub-brush-worshipping bourgeoisie,

incapable of understanding or appreciating the poetry or philosophy of either?"¹ Beauty, as always, is in the eye of the beholder.

Despite these exceptions, a valid case can be made for Candida as the Superman; but which of the two "unworthy, self-deluding idealists" is the Devil and which the Object? Marchbanks' weakness as Object has already been discussed; can the case be made for Marchbanks as Devil and Morell as Object? Morell as Object is easy: it's his strongest position because he is revealed to be so dependent upon Candida and so vulnerable to Marchbanks. In this triangle, the conflict is between his ready acceptance of Marchbanks' analysis of his marriage, which is revealed to be the deluded view of the Devil; and his own faith in the constancy of his wife, the realistic Shavian Superman. Accordingly, as Silver points out, he isn't embarrassed by her revelation of how the house actually runs; instead he's grateful she still loves him despite his failures as a husband.

Casting Marchbanks as the Devil is easiest in the context of love. One approach to this is to see Candida as Shaw's personal response to William Butler Yeats's one-act fantasy The Land of Heart's Desire, which was performed as the curtain raiser during the initial production of Arms and the Man. Yeats's play is the complete antithesis of Shaw's work: a traditionally romantic Irish housewife must choose between her husband, prosaic and commonplace; and a lover, a wondering fairy child:

... on the one side the dreary rounds of domesticity, as life "moves out of a red flare of dreams/Into a common light of common hours," and on the other side the perilous delights of an escapist world of dance and song, which may fulfill her secret desires but at the cost

¹ She informs Morell "with serious vexation" that "my own particular pet scrubbing brush has been used for blackleading" (1:557).

of premature death. Nevertheless ... the delights of the escapist world, as Yeats makes us feel them, outweigh its perils.¹

Shaw's response is the firmly realistic *Candida*, who rejects Marchbanks' attempt to woo her to an unrealistic romantic liaison the perils of which she is firmly aware: a liaison which would prove to be the equivalent of death for a Shavian realist. This returns the triangle to its domestic comedy origins, but places the wife in the active role of fighting for the sanctity of the threatened marriage.

It is harder, but not impossible, to posit Marchbanks as the Devil within the context of truth. While he may appear in this context to be invulnerably unconventional, the same weakness that undercut him as Superman exists here: some of his truths are questionable; even when he is at his most appealingly truthful, as in the scene between him and Miss Proserpine Garnett. That we should find Eugene at his most appealing here is deliberate. Shaw is aware that his behavior to Morell in the previous scene can appear malicious and cruel, despite the truth of what he has said; after all, Morell has rescued Marchbanks from the embankment, opened up the shelter and comforts of his home to the friendless young man, and trusted him to accompany his wife and sick children to the country for an extended period. (This careful protection of his audience's sympathies for Eugene is similar to Shaw's care in introducing Vivie Warren.) Thus, this scene gives us Eugene's truthfulness against the contrast of Prossy's self-delusion; and as we've no reason to root for Prossy's romantic self-interest and no reason to find Eugene beholden to her, we can see his truthfulness as neither

¹ Silver, *Shaw: The Darker*, p. 89. For a fuller comparison of Yeats's play with Shaw's work, see pp. 88-96.

harmful nor hurtful, but constructive. In addition, he can appear at his cleverest against the unimaginative and humorless Prossy; the only other character with as little a sense of humor as Eugene's, a failing that militates against him as Superman, but not as Devil. Moreover, Shaw next brings on Burgess, whose deliberately cruel treatment of Prossy reinforces Eugene's sympathetic attempts at understanding.¹

Therefore, at this moment, we are inclined to be most receptive to his truthful insights on love; and his cry of anguish for the unloved and lonely is very moving.² But it also comes from the heart and not the head, and the shyness to which he attributes it is hardly a hallmark of the two previous, fully realized Shavian Supermen: Vivie and Bluntschli. (Even the failed Supermen, Blanche Sartorius and Leonard Charteris, cannot be said to be shy.) Beyond this, his clear-eyed truthfulness on the subject of love includes his already discussed comparison of his need for love to that of stray pets; and the two all-encompassing statements that "wicked people don't need love" (1:549), and "you can't love goodness" (1:552), which if true would certainly not leave many to partake of "all the love in the world" (1:549). He also announces that "there are so few love affairs in the world" (1:548), a highly debatable proposition that Miss Garnett doesn't challenge in the least.

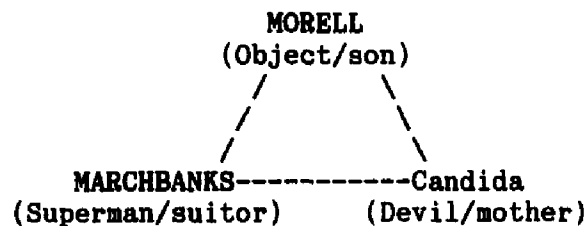
Shaw, aware as ever of the trap he could be entering, has loaded the deck here: having Marchbanks expound his ideas on love to Prossy who

¹ These two scenes, with Marchbanks's and Burgess's contrasting behaviors to Prossy, culminate in Morell's line "isn't that exactly like Prossy? She's so frank" (1:555), which quickly contrasts Morell's and Marchbanks's understanding of Prossy in particular and women in general.

² It is also a precursor of Finch M'Comas's plea for the unloved and unlovable in You Never Can Tell.

cannot even begin to respond to his debatable points. Later, in the third act, he will come up against Candida, whose realism is more than equal to that task. Although Marchbanks's truthfulness can be questioned, it is mostly in the area of love. He is a conventional romantic, placing his women on a pedestal, and as self-deluding as Morell: he believes his vision of Candida, and believes she wants more than the suffocating (to him) domesticity she has with Morell. However, if he is less than realistic about himself, he comes closer to the truth in his vision of Morell; it is the truth about Candida which constantly eludes him.

Finally, triangle number six:



This the strongest of the six possible triangles, with both Marchbanks and Morell in their strongest positions, and Candida not in her weaker position as Object. It is a variation on the traditional generational triangle, but the family roles are gender reversed (mother for father, son for daughter) without a corresponding reversal of gender for the suitor. This doesn't imply any homoerotic connotations for this triangle, but rather is more of Shaw's deliberate perversion of the traditional roles of husband, wife and lover in the domestic comedy triangle discussed earlier.

Having Morell as Object establishes the context as truth, which is

a highly subjective area (both within and about this play).¹ While each character believes that his view is true, only Candida and Marchbanks have hold of objective reality as well; the difference between them is what each chooses to do with that knowledge. In the context of truth, Marchbanks is the strongest Superman: attempting to bring truth into a situation of deception. While some of his truths are questionable, this can be a function of (and, dramaturgically, a justification for) his youth. His truths can grow and change, and he comes to understand the reality of both his and Morell's romantic needs.

Candida, in contrast, is the Devil: promoting and practicing deception in the name of Morell's best interests. Is she also aware of the undercurrent of self-serving manipulation that runs through their marriage, resulting from her deceptions and his consequential self-delusion? Out of many examples indicating she does, most telling is an apparently innocent line near the end of Act One; early enough in the action to establish that her awareness is ongoing throughout the play and probably before.

Marchbanks, in confronting Morell with the truth about his marriage, has broken down the larger man's defenses; reducing Morell to throttling his opponent in frustration. Suddenly Candida re-enters:

Are you going Eugene? [Looking more observantly at him.] Well, dear me, just look at you, going out into the street in that state! You are a poet, certainly. Look at him, James! [She takes him by the

¹ How subjective is its truth? Consider these two statements from two of the most distinguished Shavian scholars:

"Marchbanks, though a poorly drawn character, is always an effective stage role ..." - Bentley, Shaw, p. 176.

"... for all his charm as a character ... nobody has been able to play Marchbanks convincingly save Granville-Barker, and few have been able to play him at all." - Valency, The Cart, p. 134.

coat, and brings him forward, shewing him to Morell.] Look at his collar! look at his tie! look at his hair! One would think someone had been throttling you. (1:546, italics mine.)

As indeed, someone has; and our awareness of this makes the line funny. But behind the joke, there is a reality here. Candida, everyone tells us, is mistress of her household; observant of and in touch with all that happens there. She has a mother's eye for watching out for her children, no matter what their ages. When she left these two alone together a few moments ago, she knew exactly what state Eugene's clothing was in; now she comes back to find him disheveled. Her instant analysis of the situation is absolutely right: Eugene Marchbanks is not the sort of man who suddenly engages in physical exercise. The only explanation for his dishevelment is that someone has been throttling him; and the only other person in the room who could have done so is, of course, Morell.

But does she confront either man with her awareness? No. Does she attempt to find out what could have upset her husband and provoked such a violent response? (Remember, later in Act Three she is adamant that "my boy must not be upset.") No again. She intuitively knows that Eugene Marchbanks drove James Mavor Morell to physical violence by confronting him with the fact that he, Marchbanks, is in love with Morell's wife; a fact, by the way, of which she is not ignorant. Furthermore, as she knows the truth about her husband, she must also know how easy it would be for Marchbanks to shake Morell's confidence that she does love him and not the boy; yet she does not move to reassure her husband. Instead, although she could clearly see that he was leaving, she now insists that Marchbanks stay for lunch, which will obviously continue to upset Morell.

And she takes him off with her to set the table, leaving "her boy" not only upset, but unconsolated.

There are only two possible inferences from this contradictory behavior in so steadfast a character. The first is she shares her husband's doubts; that she isn't certain which one she will choose. While this is more interesting dramatically, it isn't credible for the character she is finally revealed to be. This is her household; she has worked all these years to create it in the exact image she wants and she has no reason to give it up. She doesn't desire the life Eugene offers; she is too much the practical realist to want the impractical romanticism he would provide. While she doesn't mind being put on a pedestal, she wants to be worshiped in her way, not his.

The alternative is that she enjoys her power; which, given her control of their relationship and his dependence, is far more credible. As in any relationship built upon strength and weakness, there is an undertone of selfish manipulation in this marriage. Although this is obviously not a regular exercise on her part, for some undisclosed reason she now finds it necessary to remind him who is in charge.¹ Could she be more frightened of Prossy than she lets on? More probably, she feels a true attraction to Marchbanks, but not so great she would give up all for

¹ One of Lexy's functions in the play is to illustrate that Candida doesn't regularly use young men to make Morell jealous; if so, she could use Lexy, who is already a little in love with her but is no threat because he worships his rival, Morell.

him. For whatever reason, she will now reinforce Morell's dependence upon her; letting his discomfort continue until late in the evening.¹

This triangle contradicts the popular view that Candida opts to stay with Morell and rejects Marchbanks; substituting the idea that it is Morell who opts to stay with Candida. Consider his response to her long speech describing his relationship with his mother, sisters and wife. As Bentley says, she "has chosen to let her husband discover his shame," and it is hard to conceive a more demeaning speech.² She is telling him that he is an ineffectual, overgrown child; and that she, like his mother before her, has maintained his household on the illusion of his competence. And what does he do? He falls on his knees and thanks her for doing so: "What I am you have made me," he gratefully blubbers (1:593)! He even appears relieved that the burden of living up to the lie is now off his back.

This slavish dependence upon her underscores his position as Object. The play dramatizes the moment when Morell, under the influence of Marchbanks's unconventional insistence on truth, can free himself from Candida's household of easy, conventional self deception and claim his "true" place in the political/social wars he is professing to wage. But she reclaims him and the moment passes. Or does it? Could the secret in the poet's heart be Marchbanks' awareness that having opened the window

¹ There are other examples of this manipulation: her confessing to Morell her responsive feelings to Eugene's need for love; her provoking Morell into leaving her alone with Eugene (he is intent on staying home, until she piques him with: "they'll be too busy looking at James to notice you" (1:569, *italics mine*)).

² Bentley, Shaw, p. 178.

in Morell's mind just a crack, it can not be re-shut.¹ Will Marchbanks's ideas and realities continue to grow in Morell's mind; how long before this "doll" slams the door of the doll house forever?²

But the final word on this triangle must be this perceptive comment by Eric Bentley:

What is it that this play has always projected in the theatre, and can always be counted on to project again? The charm of *Candida*. This is a reality so immediate and all-pervasive that it is hard for any other element in the play to make headway against it. Leading actresses know this, and hearing their director speak of *Candida*'s essential badness, can afford to smile a *Candida* smile, strong in the

¹ Or could the secret be that, like David's wife, he now despises them both in his heart. *Candida*'s final pronouncement on Eugene is, "He has learned to live without happiness" (1:593); if happiness is what *Candida* offers Morell, it's no wonder Marchbanks can't wait to escape into the night.

² The Ibsen pedigree of this play is strong. Besides *A Doll House*, with its gender roles here reversed, comparisons can be made to: *The Lady From the Sea*, with its climax of the romantic wife/heroine choosing between a prosaic husband and an exotic lover (a weak comparison, as *Candida* never entertains a real choice); and *The Wild Duck*, in which a "family friend" attempts to force truth into a family founded on illusion (which proves disastrous in Ibsen, but open to interpretation in Shaw.)

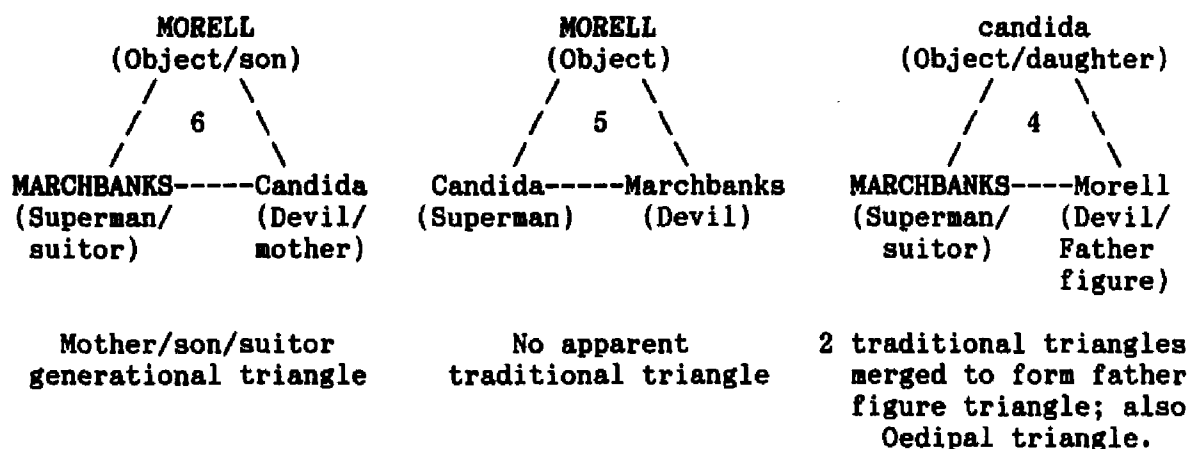
Eric Bentley has also pointed out that the ending leads the play into the realm of Strindberg, whom he nominates as the only playwright who

could have written the sequel to it. The cruelty of the heroine - merely implicit in the present play - would have to come to the surface in any continuation of the story. *Candida* has chosen to let her husband discover his shame; she, as well as he, will have to take the consequences. (Bentley, Shaw, p. 178.)

There are two other dubious comparisons: Shakespeare's *Othello*, in which a wife must also confront her husband's sexual jealousy (in Shakespeare, the wife cannot handle the situation and suffers disastrous results; in Shaw, whatever one may think of the results, there is no question that *Candida* can handle both her husband and the situation); and Moliere's *Tartuffe*, where another husband, blind to the effects of his wife's charms upon other men, brings an exotic, charismatic stranger into his house and is blithely unaware as the stranger, under the guise of doing what is best for the husband, tries to supplant his position with his wife.

knowledge that there is nothing a director can do about this badness, once that smile has been displayed on the stage as well as off.¹

To summarize, here are the three credible Shavian triangles:



This is Shaw's first play to adhere to the classical unities: there are no sub-plots; the duration of the action is less than twenty-four hours (the acts move from morning to afternoon to evening); the setting remains the same.² However, the single setting goes from being Morell's office during the day to being Candida's office at night; and, as the play moves from day to night (light to dark), the truth is revealed (going from dark to light). In compensation for this claustrophobic single setting, Shaw makes frequent references to the outside environment; beginning with the long, Dickensian introduction to Morell's East End parsonage, which borrows its technique of zooming ever inward from Bleak House. (This lengthy introduction also celebrates Shaw's return to a London setting; despite his claim to extensive research, it's doubtful Shaw could have provided such a detailed

¹ Ibid., p.176.

² Only four other full-length Shavian plays utilize one setting: Getting Married, Misalliance, On The Rocks, and Shaw's next play, The Man of Destiny, which is actually a long one-act.

description of what was just outside Major Petkoff's door in Bulgaria.) These extensive descriptions will become more prevalent in the plays, as in his introduction of Hector Malone Jr. in Man and Superman. Note also that Act One opens with Morell and Prossy on love, Act Two opens with Prossy and Marchbanks on love, Act Three opens with Marchbanks and Candida on love, and the play closes with Candida and Morell in love, thereby completing the circle.

Morell's given name, James, means "supplanter;" a term more apt for Marchbanks. His surname, beyond the obvious play on "moral," has two other highly appropriate meanings: a morel is a mushroom, a fungus which grows best when left in the dark; and also a poison of the black nightshade family. Candida's name evokes candy, candid and Candide, thereby providing fodder for almost any interpretation.¹ Although she is portrayed in all three possible female relationships, daughter, wife and mother, we only see her in the latter role with surrogate children. She is given a delayed, nineteenth-century entrance, and is already on stage before we are aware of her.² Her first line is a command to Morell, ("Say yes, James" (1:532)), a command he doesn't obey; it's also a

¹ Silver suggests autobiographical similarities to Shaw's mother's name, Lucinda: each has three syllables, seven letters, the "da" ending, and the similar root meanings for "lucid" and "candid." (Silver, Shaw: The Darker, p. 102.) I find this somewhat akin to playing Beatles' records backward to hear cryptic, hidden messages.

² The entire play is an artful series of delays, with characters coming on to forestall the major confrontations; why else bring on the three minor characters in the final act? Shaw also withholds Candida as much as possible from the first two acts because too much exposure will give her away, making it obvious who she is and whom she will choose. Therefore, the play aptly sub-titled "a mystery;" a genre which withholds vital information from the reader, parceling it out in dribs and drabs called clues.

motherly, smoothing over command, as if to say, "you two boys (her father and husband) make nice." Even more of a delayed entrance is given to Eugene Marchbanks, whose given name is Greek for "well-born", and whose surname conjures up movement (progress), Spring (beginning), wealth (of insight and awareness), and border (both as in living on the edge, and the homophonic "boarder," his position in this household.) Up to the point of Candida's entrance, Shaw has given no hint of Eugene's existence; then very quickly he brings him onstage and tells us he's been there for a while. This keeps us off-balance: without knowledge of Eugene, the plot line is unclear.

The three minor characters mirror the three main characters, giving them depth and reference: Burgess, the selfish capitalist, mirrors the Christian Socialist, Morell; Lexy Mill, the follower and idolizer, mirrors the unconventional and independent Eugene; Prossy, repressed and unrequited, mirrors the motherly and overly-loved Candida. Burgess, Shaw's first attempt at writing phonetic dialogue, serves a number of dramatic and thematic functions; as did the similarly named William de Burgh Cokane. First, expository: he's not called in three years and must be brought up to date (although he is so dependent upon his daughter that it is hard to believe he can stay away for three days, much less three years); afterward, comic relief: misunderstanding the state of the other's mental health (all the characters whom he thinks are crazy are the characters who are in love). He also serves to complete a real, on-stage father/daughter relationship which can be confusing, as they share neither temperament nor outlook; which again illustrates that one's biological father is less influential than one's father figure. (Burgess

is also the butt of a very funny line which can get lost in the early exposition: Morell, after extolling Candida's virtues to Lexy, admonishes him to "get a wife like my Candida," to which Lexy replies, "I forgot, your father-in-law is coming" (1:522); unfortunately, even a wife like Candida comes with a family.)

Alexander (Lexy) Mill's name combines a lexicon and a grinding machine, qualities we can only infer as Prossy's description of him is more detailed than his presence onstage. Proserpine, with its origins in Greek myth, is about as far from her character as possible, although the nickname Prossy echoes the very accurate "prissy;" closer to the mark is Garnett, a gem stone used as an abrasive. The only connection these two have is their mutual admiration for Morell, which illustrates that his idealized family exists only in connection to him; in contrast, his "real" family, Candida and Marchbanks (his surrogate son), have their own relationship.

Although there are a number of reasons for the multiplicity of triangles in this play, most pertinent to the Shavian triangle is that Shaw's idea of the Superman is now beginning to expand; he is moving beyond the simple aspects of unconventionality and personal need. Marchbanks as Superman continues an idea introduced in Arms and the Man: using one's Superman qualities to assist another human being; Candida as Superman introduces the element of the life force: using one's Superman qualities in service to all humanity. In his next play Shaw will pull back from this expansion, instead pursuing the Superman in its recognizable, historical form.

CHAPTER 6

THE MAN OF DESTINY

The Man of Destiny is Shaw's first dramatic portrayal of a historical Superman, but it is not possible to construct a Shavian triangle which expresses its dramatic action. While Napoleon is easily placed as the Superman, it is hard to locate a viable Devil or Object among the remaining three characters.¹

For example, although the Lieutenant is a minor character in the action, he can philosophically be cast as the Devil, the defender of selfish convention. But he is so broadly drawn that it is hard to take him seriously as a representative of the social and political old guard which Napoleon must defeat to fulfill his destiny; there is no dramatic tension when these two square off. He has also been compared to Sergius Saranoff, the vainglorious military man, but this only focuses on surface similarities. He has none of the former's depth, and is instead in the comic tradition of the theatrical fop.²

¹ It's hardly surprising that Shaw's first historical Superman is Napoleon. Shaw was born in 1856, only thirty-five years after the French Superman died. He was very much a product of the intellectual, economic, social and political thought of the nineteenth century, much of which was a legacy of, and reaction to, Napoleon. Even at the time the play was written (1895), the French conqueror was still an immediate and real presence in England as he was in the rest of Europe: the personification of the newly emerging idea of the Superman in both the Nietzschean and Shavian senses, as well as the great English national villain. Shaw, most probably aware that he was risking giving great offense to his audience by portraying Napoleon sympathetically and heroically, took care to include Napoleon's speech on the English national character to assuage his audience, reminding them that they did beat the Frenchman, and why.

² See Charles A. Berst, "The Man of Destiny: Shaw, Napoleon, and the Theatre of Life," in Alfred Turco, ed., Shaw: The Neglected Plays, The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies, Stanley Weintraub, general ed., Vol.

Also traditional is the character of the landlord, Giuseppe. He is in a line from Cokane to Praed to Burgess: the comic foil who serves for exposition. He and Napoleon set up the situation; call attention to the Lieutenant's mission and his lateness; and introduce the Lady, discussing who she might be and why she is there. While he is capable of realistic (in the Shavian sense) repartee with Napoleon, he also proves to be afraid of ghosts, and such superstitions are hardly the hallmark of either the Superman or the Devil.

This leaves only two characters, Napoleon and the Lady, to populate the three corners of the Shavian triangle. But unlike Vivie, in Mrs. Warren's Profession, neither of these characters is wavering in their viewpoint, and there is no internal conflict to enable one character to fill two corners. Moreover, neither of these characters is the Devil,

7, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), p. 91. This recent essay is one of the few criticisms that deals with the play itself, going beyond discussing how it came to be written and upon whom the leading character is based. As such, I found it interesting and useful, especially in discussing the use of "role-playing" in the play and relating it to a theme of "life as theatre." Berst also raises the interesting point that the lady is the humane one, in that she attempts and succeeds in rescuing the Lieutenant's career; whereas Napoleon dismisses the man as "not worth the gun powder it would cost to have him shot" (1:646), and is ready to sacrifice him to his (Napoleon's) own selfish ends. One could argue from this that she is the Superman, selflessly valuing life, while he is the Devil, hypocritically and self-servingly discarding it. But I think Berst is taking Napoleon's words too seriously here; besides, Napoleon is right in his assessment of the Lieutenant.

As with most criticism of the play (such as the chapter in R. N. Roy's George Bernard Shaw's Historical Plays (Delhi: Macmillan of India Limited, 1976), pp. 11-23), Berst's essay is least interesting and useful when he attempts to establish the historical accuracy of Shaw's Napoleon, and refute critics who either accept Shaw at his word that the character is modeled on Richard Mansfield or who accept the obvious that it is Shaw himself. As if it mattered whether this was an historical Napoleon, rather than being an artistic rendition. Shaw is using Napoleon as a Superman archetype to serve his, rather than history's, ends.

the defender of the conventional. Napoleon can be dismissed from this role out of hand. His one Devil-like quality, his selfishness, is also a function of the Superman: what is best for him is best for us because he is best for us. Besides, why write a play to illustrate an historical Superman, then cast him as the Devil? On the other hand, the Lady, as Napoleon's prime opponent, would appear to be the best candidate, and a weak case can be made for her as the defender of conventional marital ties. But she also shares the realism and selflessness of the Superman, whom she is defending by attempting to spare Napoleon humiliation. Although their immediate goals are in conflict, the two appear to be long-range allies; and the strong hint that they are going upstairs together after the final curtain is perhaps the strongest argument against casting her as the Devil, the Superman's implacable foe.

This mating marks the initial steps towards the final marriage of the Superman (in service to itself), and the female life force (in service to humanity), which will be further examined in Man and Superman, Major Barbara and Misalliance, among others. Here the two characters meet, spar, and go their separate ways; there is no marriage. But she is fighting to protect his marriage and therefore serving to perpetuate the species. There is also the hint that his mating with her, as carrier of these ideas, is more important than protecting his marriage to his lawful mate, Josephine.

This continues the pairing Shaw has been experimenting with in the last two plays: Bluntschli and Raina, Marchbanks and Candida. But he has removed the third character (Sergius, Morell) and the focus isn't on sexual complications, but on the interplay of the two components of the

Superman/life force marriage. This mating of the Superman and the life force is one of the prime connecting threads of The Pleasant Plays, along with the Superman/Devil conflicts. In this play, for the first time, they go upstairs together; unlike the sexless, almost father/daughter mating of Bluntschli and Raina or the unconsummated affair of Candida and Marchbanks, who goes off alone. Napoleon and the Lady are the first couple in Shaw who give the impression that when they hit the hay together, sparks will fly.

This play also marks three other Shavian "firsts." This is Shaw's first use of the one-act structure, which he would increasingly utilize for the rest of his career.¹ The play also contains the first hint of Shaw's fatalism at the possibility of achieving the Superman in the world. Here stands the young Napoleon, the man of destiny, his whole future and the whole world before him and yet his last comment upon himself is, "... what beats a man first, beats him last" (1:659); this acknowledgement that he will in the end lose is striking both for the character and his author. The final "first" is the Lady herself. She is a "masculine female," descended from Blanche Sartorius and Vivie Warren, but she is the first example of Shaw's most successful device for dramatizing this character: the military female, who actually wears a military uniform and conducts a military campaign, albeit on the

¹ Two reasons Shaw turned to this shorter structure were the lack of time at his disposal to deal at length with every idea and issue he wished to dramatize; and his developing interest in alternate and new dramatic forms and structures, which will lead to his creation of the Discussion Play (Don Juan in Hell, Getting Married, Misalliance), and his experiments with pre-Absurdism (The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, Too True To Be Good).

battlefield of "amore." Later military females include Cleopatra, Major Barbara, Great Catherine, Annajanska, and, of course, Saint Joan.¹

Shaw, in a detailed, introductory essay that cinemagraphically zooms in on Napoleon, provides us with his best description of the Superman to date: "original observer," "prodigious powers of work," "clear realistic knowledge of human nature" (1:607), "imaginative without illusions and creative without religion, loyalty, patriotism or any of the common ideals," "having a keen dramatic faculty ... [and] the arts of the actor and stage manager" (1:608). Tellingly, Shaw then goes on in terms which can only be called autobiographical: "Poverty, ill-luck, the shifts of impecunious shabby-gentility, repeated failures as a would be author, humiliation as a rebuffed time server ..." (1:608).

Finally, two lines of dialogue deserve comment. The Lieutenant's speech beginning, "Do you mean to say you're not your brother ..." (1:624), is worthy of the best of Groucho Marx; it's also another example of Shaw's pre-Absurdism. Later in the play, Napoleon's question, "Are you one of those women who like to be beaten black and blue?" (1:643), is a rather bold statement of sexual masochism, as well as an echo of *Blanche and the Maid in Widowers' Houses*.

¹ Biologically, the woman is necessary to give birth to the baby; and, as Shaw would never entertain the idea that the father could nurture the child, she is also necessary to mother it. If the man is necessary at all, it's to impart the Superman ideas and qualities. But if the woman could carry both the child and the superman qualities, the man would only be breeding stock: implanting the seed (possibly artificially) then being of no further use. Thus, the hermaphrodite (the masculine female or the feminine male) who could impregnate itself would be ideal; and there would be no messy sex, an important consideration for Shaw.

CHAPTER 7

YOU NEVER CAN TELL

If the establishment of the Shavian triangle in The Man of Destiny suffers from a scarcity of characters, the opposite would seem to hold true for You Never Can Tell. Shaw's longest and most populous play to date, it appears to present a surplus of potential Supermen, Devils and Objects, and hence no shortage of resulting possible Shavian triangles. But none of this potential is fulfilled; there is no true Superman and/or Devil in this play, and, as with The Man of Destiny, no true Shavian triangle. This shouldn't be surprising because this is a play of reconciliation, hardly the ending for these enemies; their battle is too important to Shaw for either to compromise.

Because it portrays the "pleasant" coming together of estranged families and quarreling lovers, the play is very much on the surface. (This is not meant to imply that The Pleasant Plays are superficial, but that Shaw allows us the option of seeing them so.) The dark side of Shavian social concerns is mostly muted, and Shaw does not, as in previous plays, force us to deal with them if we choose not to. The strongest hint is child abuse: Crampton's behavior, and the often mentioned bullwhip, which drove his wife and children away. But this is artfully and carefully set in the long ago. He is already a lonely man looking for the reconciliation which the play portrays and, since we see the grown children, we know that his violence harmed only him.

Beyond this thematic objection, the characters themselves do not fulfill the needs of Supermen or Devils. All the possible

representatives of either position are soft, easily swayed characters, who tend to move to the middle, the place of reconciliation. For example, it is hard to see Valentine, a hopeless romantic who falls in love at first sight, squanders his money on grand gestures such as tipping the waiter, and refuses a free meal because he is concerned with the social situation of his hosts, as an unconventional, free-thinking Superman. Nor can Gloria be seen as a continuation of the Blanche Sartorius/Vivie Warren line of female Supermen. Her unconventionality is actually quite conventional, being inherited from her mother; unlike Blanche or Vivie, she has not been taught to think for herself, but rather to think as her mother does. Equally unSupermanlike, she is deathly serious, lacking the self awareness and humor which excuses so much of her siblings' behavior; and she appears to have inherited her temperament from her conventional father and is quick to react without thinking first. Both Valentine and Gloria, while appearing to be unconventional lovers, are actually the souls of convention: they hide their romantic pasts, get jealous, tease and lead each other on, and in general behave like conventional lovers in a seaside romantic play. This clash between professed and actual behavior is a source of much of their humor, but it is not the material of Shavian Supermen.

Both the potential Devils prove equally weak. Crampton, the more obvious, never effectively defends his philosophy and is overwhelmed and converted in the end; while Mrs. Clandon, clinging to outworn beliefs and still thinking herself in the forefront of radical thought, is too

foolish a character to be an effective Devil.¹ Both these parents are too easily dominated by their non-Supermen children, and there is no real conflict on the order of Blanche and Sartorius or Vivie and Kitty Warren.

The dynamics of this formulation can be seen in the most apparent generational Shavian triangle: Valentine as Superman/suitor, Mrs. Clandon as Devil/parent, and Gloria as Object/daughter. This grouping moves to the forefront in Act Three when Valentine and Mrs. Clandon first discuss his intentions, then Gloria bursts in upon them. Valentine is the closest to being a Superman here: he is almost always in control of the situation and can be flustered only momentarily. Similarly, Gloria, unsure of herself and torn between her attraction to Valentine and her belief in her mother's teaching, is very much an Object. But Mrs. Clandon hardly seems Devilish. She is unassured in her position ("little as I understand these matters" (1:748)), and later concedes to the Superman that "I am always willing to learn" (1:749). Nor is this whole play in miniature. The characters' behavior here is not reflective of their overall behavior, and the issue Valentine and Mrs. Clandon spar over (how "old-fashioned" men learn to court "new-fangled" women) is too trivial a Superman/Devil conflict to take this seriously as a Shavian triangle.

The two most interesting candidates for Superman status stand outside of any possible Shavian triangle: William (Walter) Boon and his son, Walter (Boon) Bohun, Jr. It is the waiter who brings about the

¹ Crampton's inflexibility is the product of his upbringing (the nuts and the soap); again, Shaw is obliquely hinting at the issue of child abuse, but also suggesting it is repetitive from generation to generation, a theory not current in 1897.

reconciliations: gently prodding over here, artfully smoothing over there, always in the right place with the right word. Yet it is hard to see him in conflict with anyone, unless one sees his equanimity in conflict with the other characters' universal agitation. This is why William is so winning in this play and why he stands out: he is the only one who tends not to hurt someone each time he opens his mouth, who deliberately tries to avoid hurting or riding roughshod over others. But it is hard to see his basic counsel of patience and passivity as the hallmark of the Superman. An easier case can be made for his son the solicitor: a blunt but honest realist, immediately able to cut through to the truth of the matter and always letting you know who's in charge. But he's not on stage long enough to qualify as a Superman; instead, he's the *deus ex machina*, not integral to the plot but the source of its resolution.

It is interesting to compare the two philosophically. The older man's philosophy, "you never can tell," sets causation outside of you, in the hands of a general and somewhat capricious fate; rendering you basically passive, "waiting" for events, and William is proud of being a "waiter." Conversely, the younger man's basic belief, "you think this, but it's actually that," sets causation inside you, in your lack of understanding of yourself; allowing you to control events if you actively search out or "solicit" your true feelings, and the son is a successful "solicitor."

This dichotomy may account for Shaw's placing the play's big speech, the plea for love for those who are unlovable (1:761-2) in the mouth of Finch M'Comas, a character who otherwise seems incapable of

feeling, much less expressing, such sentiments. Finding love in one's heart for the unlovable is far too active for William's philosophy, but is at the same time more passive and accepting than Walter's philosophy would allow. M'Comas, the older lawyer, bridges the gap, expressing a philosophy of "you think you can't find it in your heart to love this man, but you never can tell."

Philosophically, this play can also be seen as pre-existential, a very odd philosophy for its author at this time. Both philosophies ("you never can tell" and "you think this but it's actually that") indicate a sense of neither having, nor being able to achieve, control over one's life; of simply being at the mercy of either exterior circumstance or interior confusion. However, neither the Superman nor the Devil is merely "at the mercy," and perhaps this is why these philosophies are given to, and so much attention is focused on, the normally peripheral servant characters. (On a simpler note, the William/Walter subplot contrasts nicely to the main plot. The Crampton family has children who are ashamed to be the children of their father, whereas William is a father who is abashed to be the father of his successful son.)

As noted earlier, the play's approach and concerns are basically surface. Unlike Candida and The Man of Destiny, You Never Can Tell plunges right into its action after only a short introduction; there is no "establishing shot" effect and no essay-like discussion of the English seaside, English tourists on holiday, dentistry, or anything else. Similarly, the play's humor is also on the surface: every cliched expectation is set up and then fulfilled. The torturous yet obvious plot expectations (that Crampton will be the long-lost father, that Bohun will

be William's son) are so outlandish as to be almost spoofs on the genre. Even the ending spoofs the play's beginning: the newly married man is also abandoned by his family, albeit only temporarily. These surface concerns are best expressed not in William's utterance of the title, but Dolly's summation of the action: "The matter's settled; and Valentine's done for. And we're missing all the dances" (1:793, italics mine).

Dolly not only knows what's really important, but she is the only one who honestly doesn't think she will but she won't: she won't and knows it.

Finally, it is possible to see this, Shaw's most pleasant play, as a reworking of elements in each of The Unpleasant Plays as if a corrective of their unpleasantness. Valentine and Gloria's final scene together harks back to the last scene between Trench and Blanche; but, there is greater complexity in these characters, resulting in the scene not insulting the woman. (There is also a similarity between Blanche and Gloria, both of whom go too far in playing hard to get and almost drive their young men away.) Valentine, also a philanderer, is much more pleasant and likeable than Charteris; as is Gloria compared to Julia. Our perceptions of each woman change for the better during the course of each play; but whereas Julia's transformation was clumsy and arbitrary, Gloria's is prepared for: first in a conciliatory meeting with her father at the beginning of Act Four, then in the moment when she considerably helps William in his one moment of embarrassment, ironically by treating him like a waiter and ordering coffee.

Lastly, not only do this play and Mrs Warren's Profession both portray mother-dominated families (Shaw's only two), they also share a family dining scene (and both in the second act of a four act structure).

But the previous play's theme of estrangement was expressed by there not being enough room at the table; here, in keeping with the theme of reconciliation, there is more than enough room no matter how many new guests turn up.¹

¹ As in Mrs. Warren's Profession, this mother-dominated family strikes strong autobiographical chords. However, whereas the earlier play appears a stinging rebuke of his mother, this play seems to signal a reconciliation on Shaw's part toward both parents; shown here as already estranged and reconciled with the help of M'comas, a "friend" of the family who also was a rejected suitor. He could be Vandeleur Lee, or Shaw himself: his mother's suitor not for sexual love, but for the maternal love she denied him. This rejected suitor is given the main speech of reconciliation, a speech begging love for his unlovable yet victorious rival; which terms could describe any of the original Shavian triangle: Bessie, George Carr or Sonny (Shaw's boyhood nickname). Also autobiographical could be the humor Shaw culls from the behavior and lack of manners of the two young Clandons; their utter guilelessness and honesty seems a self-spoof of the young Shaw.

CHAPTER 8

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE

In his pioneering study Bernard Shaw, Eric Bentley points out the surface similarities between The Devil's Disciple and Candida:

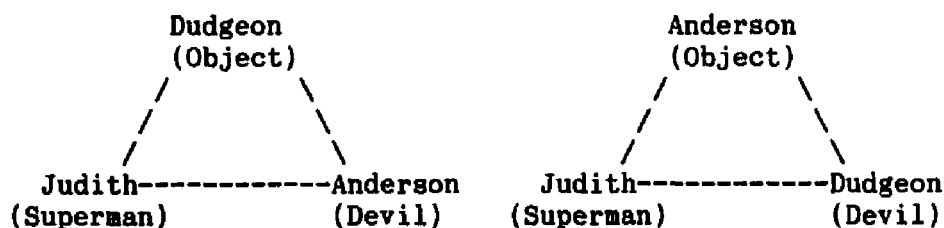
In both plays we see an apparently idyllic Christian home broken into by an eccentric outsider. In both plays the result of the encounter is that one of the three people is utterly disillusioned (Morell, Judith), one is 'educated' in the sense of being enabled to see that his true nature is not what he thought it was (Marchbanks, Anderson), and one operates as a catalyst (Candida, Dudgeon), effecting change without being changed, this last character being eponymous. The duplication does not extend to psychology. In the earlier play the wife is the catalyst, in the later play the outsider. The protagonists are Candida and Dick Dudgeon, the antagonists Eugene Marchbanks and Judith, and the two parsons are, so to say, victims of the clash. There is no common moral, except that each man should act according to the law of his own nature. Judith learns that she is really a wife, not an Isolde, Eugene learns that he can stand alone and is not a Tristan. As for the two parsons, Shaw uses both his favorite processes: one is disillusioned, the other is converted.¹

This also expresses the similarities in the Shavian triangle in both plays. In The Devil's Disciple, the same three characters (parson/husband, wife, rebel/interloper) are again open to different placements in the triangle, resulting in the same set of six triangles as in Candida. But it is not necessary to delve deeply into each triangle here. Possibly because Shaw is writing a melodrama, the characters in The Devil's Disciple are not as fully rounded as those in Candida, and do not offer as many options for fitting them into the Shavian triangle.

Thus, as in Candida, one of the characters cannot be the Superman and therefore two triangles can be rejected out of hand. Following

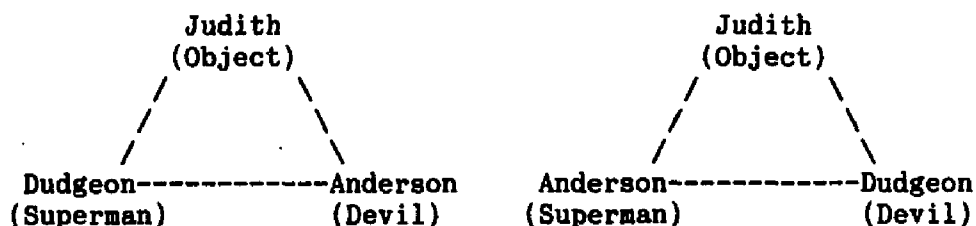
¹ Bentley, Shaw, p. 76. As I did with Candida, I disagree with Bentley's analysis of this play and will note my disagreements later in the chapter.

Bentley, it is impossible for the Superman to be "utterly disillusioned." Whereas in the earlier play it was Morell, the parson/husband, who could not be the Superman, here it is Judith Anderson, the parson's wife. She is hardly unconventional, certainly not when compared to either man, and is unable to see the larger picture and the issues at stake. Therefore it is not necessary to discuss these two triangles:



Judith also makes for a weak Object. While his would appear to be her most natural position, at the apex of both a two-suitor and a father-figure generational triangle (Anderson is older than both his wife and his rival), Judith doesn't really change. She is always a woman of strict conventionality and can not even put aside her needs for the greater need, as Richard can do in going to the gallows; thus, she gives him away. While she appears to change allegiance from Anderson to Dudgeon, it is not the reality of each man's nature that she adheres to, but only her perception of who is the conventional man. Whatever Dudgeon's motives for taking her husband's place on the gallows, she cannot see beyond her own romantic illusion that he is doing so for love of her.¹ Therefore, these two triangles may also be discarded:

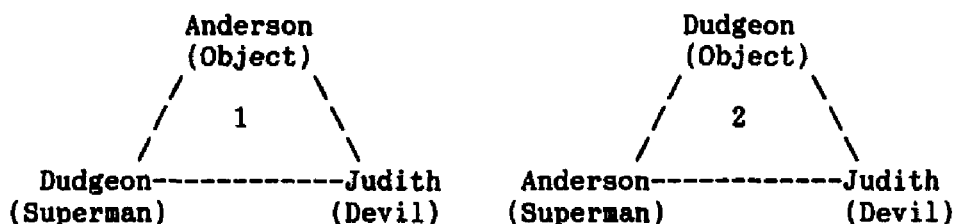
¹ Unfortunately, neither can most audiences. As Candida's smile overrides all before it, so does the romantic melodramatic convention that Dudgeon is going to the gallows out of love for Judith.



Similarly, though appearing best suited for the role, Anthony Anderson makes for a weak Devil. Although the parson's role seems the repository of convention, Anderson is a Puritan parson who "married for love" (2:63), and Shaw describes him as having a "secular authority ... a sensible manner ... a man capable of making the most of this world" (2:58). In short, and not using Shaw's meaning for the word, he is a realist; and unlike Reverend Samuel Gardner, not a conventional hypocrite posing as a parson. Instead, he is a man who unconventionally follows his true nature and leaves the pulpit, rather than conventionally staying there because it is easier, safer, or more respectable.

The only character who can fit into any of the corners of the Shavian triangle is Richard Dudgeon, the erstwhile devil's disciple of the title.¹ But many of his options are forestalled by discarding the triangles which feature Judith as either Superman or Object, and Anderson as Devil, leaving only these two triangles to consider:

¹ Although at first glance Dudgeon does not appear to be conventional, a case can be made for him as the Devil, in my terms as well as those of the play. He can be compared to Sergius in Arms and the Man, a traditional melodramatic hero acting in the conventional way with no thought to its validity; a man who gives in to romantic morality and conventionality. Opposed to this would be Anderson, a man who rises above convention to useful political action; the conventional parson who breaks his mold and becomes, by action, the unconventional warrior Superman. The obvious problem with this triangle is that it leaves Judith to be the Object, albeit a weak one, who is not converted but merely transfers her allegiance from the man she perceives to be conventional (Anderson) to the man who proves to be conventional (Dudgeon). Thus, in this triangle the Devil wins.



It is now possible to get beyond the surface similarities that Bentley describes, and examine a number of the deeper differences between this play and Candida. In the earlier play, the problem was one of influence. The two strongest triangles both featured the same Object, so the question was not who changes, but who has the positive and who the negative influence upon Morell. The difficulty came in deciding who is the Superman and who the Devil; the answer determines one's interpretation of the play. Here, the Devil, or negative influence, is constant, and the issue is one of development. As the two men are both open to the Superman and Object roles, the difficulty comes in deciding who converts whom. As in Candida, a case can be made for either triangle, and again, one triangle is sounder.

Unlike Candida, it is not difficult to find a context in which to discuss these triangles. More than any other Shavian play since Mrs. Warren's Profession, The Devil's Disciple deals primarily with the issues of conventional and unconventional behavior; placing both within a number of contexts: religious, military, societal, and humanitarian (as well as familial). These public contexts mark one of the primary ways this play differs from Candida, which is very much a private, domestic drama.

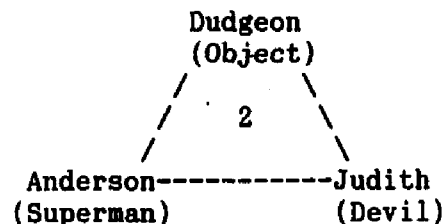
Triangle number one is Bentley's triangle: it reflects his interpretation of the play as described in the quote above. It is also a continuation of the strongest Shavian triangle in Candida, which had

Marchbanks, the rebel/interloper, as the Superman; Candida, the wife, as the Devil; and Morell, the parson/husband, as the Object (which does not, however, correspond to Bentley's interpretation of that play). In this new triangle, Dudgeon, the self-proclaimed devil's disciple, is actually the Superman. The term devil in the title is not meant as I am using it but as a Puritan would; and Richard's claim to be the devil's disciple must be seen in the context of his rebelling against a family of Puritans. God to them is harsh, unloving, unjust. If one is instead looking for love, justice and mercy (remember how Richard acts to Essie), then one must follow the devil, meant here more in a semantic than realistic way. Therefore, it is easy to posit Dudgeon as the unconventional character.

But, does he convert Anderson, which is the crux of this interpretation; can the action at the end of Act Two be taken at face value? Does the parson, only now upon learning that Dudgeon is allowing himself to be hanged in Anderson's place tomorrow morning, suddenly pull on his boots, throw on a secular coat, strap on his pistols, and at this moment become a rebel? Or has he not been one all along? After all, Richard knows that Anderson is a candidate for the gallows. At the end of Act One, he tells him that Major Swindon will next hang "the best man in town to whom he can bring home a rebellious word ... and you, Anthony Anderson, have conducted the service, and sold your family bible to buy a pair of pistols" (2:80-81). In Act Two, he repeats his warning: "It's you who are in danger," to which Anderson responds, "but they do not think so in the town" (2:90), which validates Richard's concern by indicating that Anderson is aware of his danger and has discussed it with

others. Whereas these others may be in Anderson's confidence, it's obvious that Richard is not. Therefore, if even he is aware of Anderson's revolutionary activities, they must have been both fairly open and continuing. Based upon Anderson's behavior and character in Act One and the beginning of Act Two, it is not inconceivable that he has been commanding the local rebel army all along. Thus, it is not really credible that Anderson turns rebel at the end of Act Two in response to Richard's self-sacrifice, and this undermines Bentley's view that Richard "operates as a catalyst," educating Anderson and enabling him "to see that his true nature is not what he thought it was."¹

It is necessary to look to triangle number two to find the Shavian triangle and to understand the structural workings of the play:



The strongest case can be made for this triangle, for it is Richard, and not Anderson, who changes; and it is Anderson who displays the true Superman characteristics. Being true to your own nature is always an

¹ While this is the crux of my disagreement with Bentley, there are other points as well. First, neither outsider breaks in, they are both invited in. Second, although Morell may be said to have been disillusioned, in the sense of having his illusions removed, I question whether Judith is. As I've indicated, she merely transfers her illusions from one man to the other. Instead, as I shall shortly explain, I think it is Richard who is disillusioned. Third, I think Marchbanks and Anderson are the catalysts, in the sense of being the Supermen, and not Candida and Dudgeon. (She is the Devil, he the Object.) Fourth, Candida is not the protagonist in the classical sense of the word; she learns nothing, and is in no way changed. Rather, it is Morell's perception of her, and consequently of their relationship, that is changed.

unconventional approach to life, although perhaps never so much as when one lives among religious hypocrites such as Shaw's Puritans. Anderson not only comes to accept himself as he is, but he also teaches the younger man to do likewise; this is the action of the scene between them in Act Two, a crucial scene in understanding this play.

The key to understanding this scene lies in the character's differences in age. Throughout this scene, Anderson knows how to deal with Richard, never letting the younger man irritate or fluster him. He treats Richard almost as a parent would treat a rebellious child. Richard, the child trying to get a rise out of the parent, is hardly Superman-like; whereas Anderson, calm, unruffled, imparting guidance and wisdom, is the parental figure as Superman. Anderson's effect on Richard is obvious: the almost insolent child of Act One stops his heretofore generalized rebellion, changing from rebel without a cause to rebel in search of his leader's cause. He becomes Anderson's disciple, and Anderson, by having Richard to his house to warn him of possible hanging, sets the philosophical stage and in effect selects the issue to take a stand on: hanging by the British. In keeping with Shaw's expansion of the Superman into the realm of service to others, Anderson's true self is a man of political leadership and action, and Richard is converted away from selfish individuality to the expression of his individuality in the service of others.¹

¹ Although critical opinion varies on how seriously we are to take Anderson's final pronouncement that "the Devil's Disciple here will start presently as the Reverend Richard Dudgeon, and wag his pow in my old pulpit" (2:139), an audience has little choice but to take it at face value, particularly as it is coupled in the speech with Anderson's conversion to soldier, the reality of which we have just witnessed on the stage. Accordingly, we must believe that Richard will indeed stop

Thus the term devil in the title is meant positively, as we (and Shaw) would judge these Puritans negatively. The devil here, in a true Shavian irony, is Christianity, and Anderson is the play's true Christian, the true devil whose disciple Richard becomes. But this does not mean that Richard is dying for the greater good his "surrogate" father represents; nor is he sacrificing himself so that the more worthy Anderson can live and accomplish. Rather, like Lavinia in the later Androcles and the Lion, he is dying for a God greater than he can comprehend. Unlike her, however, he is neither articulate nor possessed enough to express this.¹

All this is interpretive, and how one interprets Richard's motives in taking Anderson's place lies at the heart of how one views the play. In this, one can say that Richard, as well as Sergius, is Shaw's Hamlet: Sergius and Hamlet are the same in their indecisiveness; Richard and Hamlet are the same in the obscurity of their motives. Although Shakespeare's hero is overly slow to act and Shaw's hero is possibly overly rash, neither's motives are clear and are thus open to various interpretations.²

railing from the sidelines as the town's eccentric, and instead start railing from the pulpit as the town's parson.

¹ Actually, the play is as much about Christianity as the American revolution: Anderson has "a copperplate of Raphael's St. Paul" (2:84) hanging on his wall (the dramatic conversion is apt both for him and for Richard); the women all have biblical, albeit Old Testament, names (Judith, Essie or Esther, and Annie, a derivative of Hannah).

² The interpretation expressed in the second Shavian triangle works within the action of the second act and can be understood by an audience watching the play. Compare it, for example, with Maurice Valency's contention that Richard is an anarchist. (Valency, The Cart, p. 160-163). As neither the dialogue nor the action conveys this to the audience, how is it to be shown in performance: have Richard costumed in

Further examples of Anderson's Superman qualities bear mentioning. Even at his most conventional, when he thinks Richard has molested Judith and he is being the outraged husband, Anderson still behaves maturely and rationally. He neither storms, rants nor rages and is more concerned with her well being and honor than with his own: "you shall not tell me at all if it worries you" (2:99). There is also a touch of the prescient about him, telling Judith, "depend on it, my dear, you are really fonder of Richard than you are of me, if you only knew it" (2:88).

But, there exists a strong obstacle to Anderson being the Superman: his lack of primacy and almost total lack of presence in Act Three. In this and other ways, this act stands somewhat removed from the rest of the play. As noted earlier, the criticism is sometimes made that the last two acts of Arms and the Man are not up to its first act. That same criticism, in reverse, has also been applied to The Devil's Disciple: that its first two acts are not up to its third act, in large part because of the character who overwhelms the act and thus the play, General Johnny Burgoyne.

In examining these two acts (the first in Arms and the Man and the last in The Devil's Disciple), it's obvious why they stand out: they are among the earliest examples of a new structure which Shaw will come to

a slouch hat and long overcoat, with a Molotov cocktail hidden inside which he can wave at opportune moments? Or perhaps a production can follow Stanislavsky, who, when presented with an interpretation of Hamlet by Gordon Craig that was not sustained by the lines, remarked, "Well, perhaps we can have someone come out at intermission and explain it?" Similarly unsubstantiated by the text and action, although not as badly, is Bentley's claim that Richard is simply motiveless. (Bentley, Shaw, p. 75). Bentley, writing in 1947, could borrow from post World War II French Existentialism and see Dudgeon as a Shavian Meursault; but could Shaw, writing 50 years earlier, have intended this?

utilize in such plays as Man and Superman, Getting Married, Misalliance and Heartbreak House. Commonly called Discussion Plays, these works eschew a conventional plot and present instead the diverse discussion of ideas as the action of the play. Later still, in Saint Joan, Shaw would use the discussion as the action, structuring the entire play as a debate between Joan and the world, between the saint and the rest of us. But here, in these two early plays, he is merely stopping or delaying the action to allow an extended discussion between two points of view, phrased in some of his most witty repartee. This is not so obtrusive in Arms and the Man because the delay comes right at the beginning, before the action itself has begun; although, as pointed out earlier, Act Two drags with much of the exposition that the discussion has precluded from Act One. Nor is it obtrusive when Napoleon and Giuseppe engage in a similar, albeit far shorter, Shavian discussion at the beginning of The Man of Destiny. However, in The Devil's Disciple, this discussion between Dudgeon and Burgoyne, which comes at the point in the plot where it should be hurtling towards its climax, stops the action of the play in its tracks. And the wit and wisdom of the discussion is so sparkling, and the plot so threadbare, that we don't mind the digression. But we are, unfortunately, thereby jolted with the realization that Shaw's plots aren't up to his discussions.¹

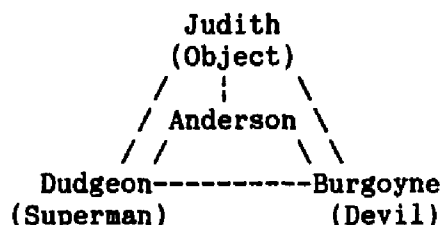
As the third act stands alone, it needs a different Shavian triangle to illustrate its structure. To find it, first acknowledge that

¹ It also places too much emphasis on Burgoyne, who ends up stealing the show. In fact, Burgoyne can so overwhelm the play that in a recent (1989) New York City revival, the actor playing Burgoyne received top billing for what is, after all, only a supporting role.

Shaw, as the title indicates, has not written a play about the Superman, but about the Object; more specifically, about the Object becoming a Superman. In this regard, the play can be compared to Mrs. Warren's Profession. In the earlier play, we did not see the action of the prologue, where Honoria Fraser (as Superman) converted Vivie (as Object) away from the opposing pull of Mrs. Warren (as Devil); but the already realized result of this action, where the wavering Vivie (half Superman, half Object) fought her own battle with her mother (the Devil). Here, in the first two acts of The Devil's Disciple, we see the dramatic action of the prologue, which prepares Richard to fight in the final act as Superman against Burgoyne as the Devil, with the never-wavering Object Judith always aligned with conventionality. (As previously stated, she shifts her allegiance to Richard not because he proves to be conventional, but because she perceives him as such. When finally faced with the need to take her stand in this act, she cannot stand by Richard in his charade, but rather gives him up to Burgoyne.) Although the most obvious reason for seeing Burgoyne as the Devil in this act is simply that he is opposed to Richard, there is a stronger reason. He is a man of conventional military thinking in that he cannot rise above political enmities to recognize in Richard a kindred spirit, and never entertains the idea of sparing his life. He is willing to execute his only true ally in America for the sake of men and ideas he despises.

Thus, in this act, Anderson functions only as a *deus ex machina*, the realized Superman aiding the developing Superman. His presence, however, is felt all through the act, particularly as Richard is passing himself off as Anderson and is constantly addressed as such. We are also

aware of him as a potential "cuckold" in the scenes between Richard and Judith, and as the protected "savior" of Richard in the scenes between Richard and Burgoyne. Therefore, Act Three is structured around the following Shavian Triangle:



which illustrates the main difference between this play and Candida, as well as between this play and all of Shaw's earlier works. Whereas before, the Superman (when he or she existed) always existed in the play's action as a full or semi-developed character, here, for the first time, Shaw is portraying his development, and hence, the need to express the play's action in two Shavian triangles.¹

As mentioned before, the play is Shaw's professed exercise in the genre of melodrama, and as such has many of that genre's trappings: the reading of the will, the orphan girl at the mercy of unsympathetic relatives, the love that can't be fulfilled, one character substituting for another on the gallows, his last-minute rescue. But it does not have one of melodrama's most important staples, the dastardly villain. Shaw is incapable of creating so one-note a character and thus always rounds out and humanizes his villains. Here he goes one step further, and takes one of the most reviled "villains" in English history, Burgoyne, and attempts to rehabilitate him, even while placing him in the ostensible

¹ The Philanderer also encompassed two triangles; but it was failure of character consistency rather than triumph of character development that necessitated that structural switch.

villain's role. This is something Shaw will continue to do in all his subsequent history plays: rewrite and overly simplify history. Here, he is intent on exonerating his fellow-playwright Burgoyne and denouncing the English Foreign Service, in the person of the man who went on holiday and forgot to send the dispatch. While it is probably a little comforting to an English audience to be told that they lost America due to one man's slip-up rather than the failure of their army, its leaders and soldiers, and the rightness of their cause, the reasons for the British defeat are far more complex than a forgotten dispatch. Life is never as easily explained as theatre, one reason why Shaw had greater success in theatre than politics.

The play's locations move through the houses of each of the men, from Dudgeon's in Act One, to Anderson's in Act Two, to Burgoyne's in Act Three, which, as befits his public position, is a "house" of many public locales. (The third act is Shaw's first act which is broken into scenes and not set in one locale.) But in each house, it is Dudgeon who is never completely at home. In both Burgoyne's and Anderson's houses, he is pretending to be someone else in name, while in his own house he is pretending to be someone else in character. (Furthermore, his own house does not become his until well into the first act.) This sense of transition, of constantly shifting personae, is also dramatized in the repeated taking off and putting on of coats and cloaks, and by the movement of Richard from the head of the table in Act One, to the prisoner before the table in Act Three. Time is also used to indicate transition and discord: the sun rises, two clocks disagree.

As he began to do in his previous play, Shaw here presents a much more populous stage world. He has left the tight world of six characters and here, for the first time, calls for two extra ensembles, the British army and the American townfolk. He also introduces characters without a line of dialogue, the Mmes. Titus and William, who speak only as part of a group. But no matter how many characters, Shaw is still playing with their names. Both men's names are alliterative (Anderson's when formal, Dudgeon's when not), which corresponds to their original temperament. Anderson's first name is ironic, Saint Anthony being the founder of Christian monasticism or the retreat from the real world. Dudgeon's last name is also ironic, describing his outer behavior (ill humored, resentful, offensive, angry), but not his true inner self. (A dudgeon is also a knife handle, and Richard does use his "dudgeon" like a weapon.) The two younger women's names, Judith and Esther, are both those of Biblical leaders of rebellion; while Hannah (Annie) was a Biblical mother (Samuel's), and the name itself, ironically, means "grace." Perhaps Shaw is having the most fun with Major Swindon, whose name, and character, are very swinish.

Shaw provides a brief essay on Mrs. Dudgeon to begin the play, and it underscores the growing gulf, at the time the play was written, between Shaw's reading audience and his theatre audience. (At this time Shaw's plays were reaching as many people in print as they were on stage, and not many in either case. The Devil's Disciple would be his first theatrical success, albeit on the wrong side of the Atlantic.) While the essay makes many strong points about women's rights and the inequities of the inheritance laws, the stage portrait of Mrs Dudgeon, without these

written asides to balance it, overwhelms a theatre audience which only sees a mean old woman getting her come-uppence. Why does Shaw make Mrs. Dudgeon so unlikable, since this will only undercut his argument in the audience's eyes? Does he mean to show that even a woman as unpleasant as Mrs. Dudgeon is still being mistreated; or does he mean to show that the treatment itself makes them unpleasant? Either way, he appears to be at cross purposes with himself.

Shaw also provides a longer, detailed essay on Burgoyne; which, for the first time, he does not include within the body of the text but as an appendix. This is the first of the many essays which Shaw would later call prefaces, but which were actually afterwords; these should, as here, be read after the play itself, without Shaw's later interpretation being allowed to intrude.

Finally, there is much discussion in the play of honor: doing the honorable thing, behaving as an honorable gentleman; and the plot's resolution comes about because Anderson is given a safe conduct: honor in the midst of war. But a true warrior general (a Superman such as Caesar or Napoleon) would realize that killing Anderson on the spot would deprive the rebels of their leader and give his side a fighting chance to win; even if it was dishonorable to do so. Burgoyne's code of honor leads to one other approach to the Superman in this play. The three male characters each illustrate a component part of the Superman: action (Anderson), belief (Dudgeon), intelligence or wit (Burgoyne). Or, as Arthur Ganz claims:

The requirement that one earn one's salvation by performing the necessary work of the world ... is met by Morell and Anderson, while a more esoteric need - to retreat from the world's tangle of social, familial and erotic demands - is met by those who, like Marchbanks

and Richard, owe their allegiance to a more exalted ideal: a mission as artist-philosopher or exemplar of a higher morality.

A figure who answers both these demands appears in the last act of The Devil's Disciple ... In the figure of Burgoyne, who combines some of Richard's emotional distance from the ordinary world with Anderson's competence in dealing with it, Shaw bridges the gap between them and takes the next step towards the central achievement of his next play, the dramatization of what he will later call the Superman, what at this point he calls the hero.¹

While it is equally possible to see Burgoyne's "emotional distance" from the world as less that of an unconventional "exemplar of a higher morality" and as more that of a conventional cynic, and thus see him more as Devil than Superman, he does point the way to Julius Caesar and Shaw's next play.

¹ Ganz, Shaw, pp. 125-126.

CHAPTER 9

CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA

The character of Julius Caesar is Shaw's most perfectly realized dramatic Superman. Articulate, astute, charitable, charming, chivalrous, common-sensical, courageous, dominant, eloquent, ethical, honorable, humanistic, ingenious, learned, lucid, Machiavellian, magnanimous, mystical, pedagogic, pragmatic, shrewd, unconventional and visionary; all these adjectives and more may be applied to this giant among men, this demigod among mortals. He is even balanced by the flaws of common humanity, for he is vain about his age and hairline and clear-eyed and realistic about the necessity and uses of money. Unlike Shaw's previous historical Superman, Napoleon, Shaw's Caesar is above the pettiness of sexual jealousies and even sexual liaisons; unlike Shaw's previous fictional Supermen, such as Vivie Warren, Bluntschli and Marchbanks, he is perfectly at home in both the world of reality and action and the world of ideals and ideas.

When such a character is set loose in a play, there is a dangerous trap the playwright may fall into, and it is a trap that Shaw has not avoided here. A character such as Caesar not only dominates a play, he devours it. Caesar and Cleopatra, despite its title, is a one-man show; he is always victorious, resulting in limited dramatic tension. He is rarely at a loss for how to control the situation: he consistently dominates the action, invariably has the last and best word intellectually and always occupies the moral high ground. It is true that he is taken aback when informed of the murders of both Pompey and

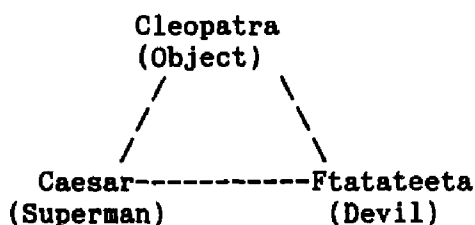
Pothinus, but his dismay at these moments is strictly philosophical; immediately after these musings he is actively giving orders and plotting strategy, successfully in both instances. He only loses control of the play's action (as opposed to its philosophy) when he is cut off at the lighthouse in Act Three. But even this serves to illustrate his genius as a man of action, for he is so confident in his abilities and aware of his responsibilities that he will gladly accept advice from any friendly quarter, which in this case proves to be a Sicilian carpet merchant who suggests swimming for it. (The fact that Shaw later authorized cutting this third act in performance indicates that he did not find this one instance of Caesar's military fallibility to be particularly important.)

Accordingly, there is simply no room in this play for the equally dominating Devil to provide a worthy opponent for this Superman. It is the play's mythology that Caesar is beyond all men, so who could be a worthy opponent for him? As in his previous plays, Shaw appears strangely reluctant to create and maneuver equal antagonists to the point of a titanic Superman/Devil conflict. Either one character must be so overwhelming (the Supermen Vivie Warren, Bluntschli and Caesar; the Devil Sartorius), or both characters' positions uncertain and open to interpretation (as in Candida and The Devil's Disciple), that this clear-cut conflict never materializes. It is as if Shaw has come to see that it can not in a realistic play, for the combination of these characters must shatter all the bounds of realism, which can take only one God at a time. Although Caesar's dominance precludes such scenes in this play, Shaw has already experimented with the Discussion Play, albeit so far only within the realistic framework of Bluntschli and Raina in her

bedroom, Dudgeon and Burgoyne in a military courtroom. Not in this play, nor in his next, will he shatter that realistic frame; but rather in his first play of the twentieth century, Man and Superman, where he will draw the contrast between the Supermen of the realistic and eternal worlds, assigning each different goals and conflicts.

Yet despite Caesar's dominance and Shaw's reluctance, it is still possible to construct a Shavian triangle in this play, although to do so illustrates the triangle's own weaknesses. Begin by placing Cleopatra in the role of Object. She is, at the beginning of the play, the same innocent young ingenue as Raina in Arms and the Man: educated but naive, espousing the ideas of convention mainly because she has not yet been exposed to those of unconvention. If we did not know our history, we might expect the action of the play to show the older Caesar educating the young Cleopatra to become his heir and take his place as enlightened ruler of their combined empires. The fact that we do know our history not only precludes this, but causes other problems to be discussed later.

Having placed Cleopatra in the role of Object, we must find a Devil who exerts upon her the influence of conventional thinking. Although all characters in the play other than Caesar are candidates by way of their thinking, only one may be said to have an influence upon the young queen: her servant and nurse Ftatateeta, who represents the old, superstitious, unenlightened Egyptian way of ruling and who keeps pulling Cleopatra back to it. Therefore, the Shavian triangle may be diagrammed:



and we can immediately see its weaknesses.

Not only is Ftatateeta intellectually unable to defend herself or her position, constantly falling back for justification upon the Gods, she is also disinclined to defend herself, a temperament unfitted for a Shavian Devil.¹ Because she is only a servant, she is always subservient and easily dismissed by a command from Caesar or Cleopatra; her continued existence is always at their pleasure. She has no power, either socially, politically or intellectually, from which to assert her Devil's philosophy and is easily vanquished by the Superman in every encounter. These contests are never suspenseful, although this lack of suspense may also be a function of our knowledge of history. Since we remember him but don't recognize her, we know he must have won; history tends to remember the winners, which is only logical as they are its authors. That he does not even pronounce her name properly indicates the lack of respect in which both he and we hold her.

Moreover, this Superman and Devil differ as to means, not ends. Although she operates by conventional principles, Ftatateeta and Caesar have the same ultimate goal, to see Cleopatra as the securely enthroned queen of Egypt; but they differ strongly both on the means to achieve this and on what she should do once it's achieved. Previous Supermen and

¹ Although we learn that her obedience to the Gods is a show: "Enough of your Gods! Caesar's Gods are all powerful here" (2:259).

Devils had both radically different methods (Sergius led a foolhardy charge armed only with a saber while Bluntschli ran to a lady's bedroom armed with chocolates rather than bullets) and radically different objectives (Sergius wanted military glory while Bluntschli just wanted survival), and thus were in true conflict.

The weakness of this Shavian triangle is also apparent when compared to its traditional antecedent. This is a Shavian variation on the generational, or father/daughter/suitor triangle, with the father figure, Caesar, dispassionately courting for the role of tutor rather than lover and thus being the suitor. This casts the Devil, Ftatateeta, in the role of parent. While Shavian parents are often the servants of their children (as seen in the preemptory way Vivie Warren and Frank Gardner both summoned their respective parents onstage), Ftatateeta has none of the concurrent emotional control Shavian parents often exert over their children; and again, she holds her position only at her "daughter's" pleasure.

Granting the weakness of this Shavian triangle, it still must be acknowledged that despite the deficiency of her position, the Devil wins! Cleopatra, rejecting the unconventional humanism of Caesar and following instead the conventional selfishness of Ftatateeta, orders the murder of her enemy Pothinus. As Dudgeon was the Object converted to the role of Superman during the play, so Cleopatra is the object through the first three acts, converted to the role of Devil for Acts Four and Five. But, whereas in the previous play a second Shavian triangle was constituted for the last act, here the last two acts have no Shavian triangle. There is no Object for Caesar and Cleopatra to work upon, and without this

conversion of a third character Object to provide any distraction, we are left with the unequal head to head match-up of the two title characters. The resulting conflict has limited dramatic tension, and Shaw is forced to fall back on the melodramatic device of a murder behind the curtains and the subsequent revealing of the bloodstained body.

In her role as Devil, Cleopatra is smarter than her teacher, Ftatateeta, but more owing to the Superman's influence than the Devil's. She has learned from Caesar how to see shrewdly through people and how to begin to put the long-range goal ahead of the immediate need, but she hasn't learned how to rise above her own emotions. She is simply a smarter Ftatateeta rather than a younger Caesar, but she is also no more articulate than Ftatateeta as Devil, which, in a Shavian play, makes her equally weak in the role. Her weakness as Devil is further shown by her need for the approval of others. After ordering Pothinus' murder, she orchestrates Caesar's friends to support and agree with her actions, changing the focus from a Superman/Devil battle between them to Superman versus the whole world. But he is so strongly the Superman that he doesn't even care what the others think; he is right and he knows it. His certainty, as with everything else, dominates.

While Cleopatra's final conversion to Devil is Caesar's failure, it underscores his uniqueness as Superman.¹ Even Cleopatra, obviously more intelligent and shrewder than anyone else in the play except Caesar, cannot rise above her own petty selfishness. Although the action of the play is her movement as Object in the direction of his Superman ideas,

¹ It also serves to further illustrate (as did Napoleon's line, "what beats a man first beats him last") that Shaw's Superman is doomed to fail.

she is constantly shown to be mortal and must fall short of him. He is the only possible Superman in the play, the only immortal, the only God. And where is the tension in any play which pits a God against mere mortals?¹

Thus, the play does not portray a Superman/Devil conflict of any magnitude, but (as in The Man of Destiny) presents the Superman in opposition to the whole world; except those few who, like Rufio and Britannus (and the earlier Lady), recognize his superiority and bow before it. Shaw's Caesar is best described not by Shaw but by Shakespeare, whose Cleopatra says of her co star:

I dreamt there was an Emperor ...
 His face was as the heavens, and therein struck
 A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
 The little O, th'earth ...
 His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
 Crested the world: his voice was propertied
 As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
 But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
 He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
 There was no winter in't; an autumn it was
 That grew the more by reaping: his delights
 Were dolphinlike, they showed his back above
 The element they liv'd in: in his livery
 Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
 As plates dropped from his pocket ...
 Think you there was or might be such a man
 As this I dreamt of? ²

Which leads to the need to consider the tensions between Shaw's Caesar and Shakespeare's, as well as those between Shaw's Caesar and history's.

¹ For parallels to Caesar's dominance in the play, one is forced to look at the cartoonish characters of James Bond and Indiana Jones in today's cinema. But this only further illustrates the problem of a weak Devil: as we know Bond will ultimately win, any of the movies is only as good as its villain, and the quality of moment to moment conflict he provides.

² Antony and Cleopatra, V.2, 76-94.

Because there is such limited dramatic tension within the structure of the play, one might be tempted to seek some tension elsewhere. One possible source is the tension engendered between Caesar and our awareness of his fate; or to view it as comparative theatre, between the greatness of Shaw's Caesar and the fate of Shakespeare's. Shaw even plays upon this awareness in Act Five:

RUFIO: Caesar: I am loth to let you go to Rome without your shield.

There are too many daggers there.

CAESAR: It matters not: I shall finish my life's work on my way back; and then I shall have lived long enough. Besides: I have always disliked the idea of dying: I had rather be killed. (2:288)

But the tension here is also limited, because Shaw's Caesar is neither history's nor Shakespeare's. This Caesar not only overwhelms the play, he overwhelms our awareness of his fate. He is so strongly the Shavian Superman that it is difficult to believe that this character is in the slightest suicidal; that he, as opposed to history's or Shakespeare's Caesar, would ever disregard the soothsayer or Cassius's lean and hungry look. He wouldn't walk unsuspecting and haughty into the armed hands of his enemies as Shakespeare's Caesar does; instead, he would know all the details of the plot and take steps to forestall it.

Shaw also limits the romantic tension between Caesar and Cleopatra. Despite historical reality, he portrays no romance between them, but rather a chaste father/daughter, teacher/student, God/supplicant relationship ("Can one love a God?" (2:257)), leaving the play open to the often hurled accusation of Shaw's asexuality.¹ While an author dealing fictionally with history is not bound to present an historically

¹ There is also no overt mention of Caesar's homosexuality, but this is more probably a reflection of Shaw's Victorianism.

accurate account (quite the contrary, an author who does so isn't creating, he's merely reporting), by keeping their relationship asexual, Shaw's most perfect Superman is left lacking in one important aspect: he is not serving the life force, perpetuating the species in its quest to improve itself generation by generation.

To forestall any hint or possibility of a sexual relationship, Shaw early on introduces Mark Antony into the story, albeit as an off-stage presence. This plays upon our awareness of Shakespeare while at the same time plays fast and loose with history. Moreover, by introducing Antony, Shaw sets up a comparison between him and Caesar which works, as does everything else in the play, to Caesar's advantage. Shaw's Caesar can easily handle Cleopatra and is never taken in by her wiles. Shakespeare's Antony, on the other hand, can never handle Cleopatra, and proves so susceptible to her wiles that his believing her dead leads to their final tragedy. But again, Shaw's Caesar overwhelms our awareness of history, for this comparison is historically false. History's Caesar was just as smitten by Cleopatra as Antony; he was just killed before she could push him to the point of killing himself.¹

Finally, one can look for tension between the playwright and his theatre, or between Shaw's characters and the traditional structures he sets them in. On one level, all of the plays so far examined have this tension; but before, Shaw has always provided characters who can represent that traditional structure and serve as Devils in the action.

¹ For discussion of Shaw's historical accuracy see Bentley, Shaw, pp. 108-118 and Weintraub, The Unexpected, pp. 111 - 123.

In Caesar and Cleopatra, there is no Devil to personify the traditional structure of the historical epic, and the play suffers.

As befits an historical epic, Shaw uses time and locale functionally, with no apparent pattern in either. But he does call for ambitious scene locales, illustrating his growing mastery of stagecraft: a Sphinx; a quay, with a departing boat; a lighthouse, with a plunge off the set into off-stage water and a resulting on-stage splash; and the multi-level palace, featuring the stairs Rufio climbs to the roof. He is also more detailed in his description of lighting, and again attempts ambitious effects: the continuing change of light ("The light begins to change to the magenta purple of the Egyptian sunset" (2:271), "The sky has by this time become the most vivid purple" (2:278), etc.) heightens the murders of both Pothinus and Ftatateeta, culminating with the effect of white light on the bloody alter stone of Ra when the nurse's body is uncovered.

Surprisingly, Shaw eschews the chance to comment at length upon Caesar (as he did with Napoleon) in an act opening essay. Those provided are short, but pithy, and Shaw can't resist the dig at modern England versus Egypt: "For Tottenham Court Road civilization is to this Egyptian civilization as glass bead and tattoo civilization is to Tottenham Court Road" (2:195). But sometimes Shaw can be too clever. One of his great talents was explaining intricate ideas in simple terms, humorously presenting multiple point's of view, including his own. Here, he successfully explains the politics of money, but comes a cropper in attacking British colonialism in the guise of Caesar conquering Egypt. He is undercut by the reality of the situation: the Egyptians are, if not

barbarians, then at least children, and the imperialist Caesar does know what is best for them. Shaw, as he often does, is trying to have it both ways; promoting self-determination and individual freedom, while at the same time championing the superior natural leader, the Superman.

As befits an historical epic, the play is the longest Shaw has yet written, and as befits the comparisons he is making between himself and Shakespeare, it is his first to use the five-act structure.¹ But the play's great length works against it, as there is nothing new to learn about any of these characters (except for Cleopatra) after we have first met them. As Shaw himself acknowledged in sanctioning the cutting of Act Three, large parts of the play are dispensable. The prologues are easily cut, as the history involving Pompey is adequately covered in less detail in Act Two, possibly why Shaw shortened the soldier's prologue to the God's prologue. The third act is also disposable. Its military and political developments, introduced but not resolved, are recapitulated in Act Four, and the two pieces of the Cleopatra legend to which this act devotes so much time (her entrance from the rug, here portrayed out of historical sequence - it, not Shaw's more entertaining and private meeting at the Sphinx, was actually their first meeting - and her swim in Alexandria harbor), while entertaining are not necessary; Shaw has already rewritten history and has no need for fidelity now. Finally, as if Shaw knows the play is overlong, the fifth act offers only a perfunctory tying-up of the historical threads and a last show of

¹ Note how far Shaw has come. In his second play, The Philanderer, he used on-stage statuaries to draw an oblique comparison between Shakespeare and Ibsen, to the Norwegian's advantage. By now, he is audacious and confident enough to draw an obvious comparison between the Bard and himself, flaunting subject, structure and title to do so.

Caesar's magnanimous behavior towards his allies; it is by far the shortest act Shaw has yet written. The play itself is really contained in the second and fourth acts, in which Pothinus appears, and with some judicious transferring of speeches these two acts would provide an understandable and complete, if not particularly good, play.

Although the characters do not truly develop, Shaw takes some steps to keep us off guard in our responses to them, at least as long as he can. This is particularly true with Caesar through the first act. Before it becomes clear that Caesar is the manifestation of perfection, some of his actions can be questioned. For example, does he really believe that Cleopatra's voice is that of the Sphinx? Since we know otherwise, this undercuts him in our eyes: a Superman shouldn't be so easily fooled, nor as easily insulted as an ordinary man would be. Similarly, we question his judgment in casting his fate with Cleopatra, for nothing about her in the first act save her name leads us to expect that this foolish child will develop into a queen. It is not until later that we realize that it is a function of Caesar's Superman qualities that he immediately sees queenly potential in Cleopatra that the ordinary man cannot.

These uncertainties about Caesar persist into the second act. Are we to believe Caesar's reaction to Lucius Septimius, the murderer of Pompey: "Oh, if I could stoop to vengeance, what would I not exact from you as the price of this murdered man's blood? ... Begone: you fill me with horror" (2:208)? At this point it is still possible to believe that Caesar is playacting. It's easy to express high moral outrage at Pompey's murder after Pompey has been removed as a threat, but Caesar had

no compunctions about trying to kill Pompey when he was alive and competing with Caesar. Throughout the play, we see that Caesar is most compassionate to those he has defeated, to those he can afford to be compassionate to because they can no longer harm him. But then, at the first sign of possible military reversal, Shaw immediately dramatizes and establishes Caesar's superiority and control. Everyone else, including Rufio who knows the Romans really control the situation, gets emotionally worked up and begins ranting and raving, while Caesar sits calmly knowing exactly what to do. And that image of him, the calm within the storm ("If you can keep your head when all about you/are losing theirs ...") remains dominant for the rest of the play.¹

As for Cleopatra, first impressions are lasting, and our first impression of her as Queen and potential Superman is brutalizing slaves. Partially we are to see this as where she is coming from and how far she must travel to reach Caesar's ideals; but this callow, cruel, self centered child is, to a great degree, history's and Shakespeare's Cleopatra (who also brutalizes slaves), and Shaw never really claims her as his own as he does Caesar. She is most interesting in Act Four, the point of her transition to Devil, because this is the only character change in the play.

¹ Caesar is both Superman and spokesman for Shaw, thereby making Shaw his own Superman. Thus, the play pauses after every major action while Caesar explains to Cleopatra what has just happened. While this is in keeping with his intention of teaching her how to be a Queen, as well as an expression of the Superman/Object relationship they have, it also allows Shaw, through Caesar, to comment vociferously upon the action. Similarly, Caesar's vanity about his age, which expresses awareness and regret at his aging and mortality, mirrors Shaw's own concerns; and was one of the impetuses to his theory of the life force, which expresses a desire to not only live forever but to do so in a healthy, if not young, body.

As the act opens, we immediately mark the change in Cleopatra. She shows more common sense in her line "Well, then, I will learn as a dog learns" (2:252), than in all her previous utterances combined. Moreover, she displays a new lack of pretentiousness, a new shrewdness in dealing with others, a new awareness that she still has much to learn. "Go take the bribe; and bring in Pothinus" (2:254), echoes Caesar, and she has also learned Caesar's trick of using one's emotions to put one's adversary off: she feigns crying and embarrassment to deceive Caesar so he will leave her alone for a moment, giving her the opportunity to order Pothinus' death. However, later in the act, she can't carry off any pretense with Ftatateeta when the servant returns to tell her Pothinus is dead; both Egyptian women still get blood lust. Although we never see Caesar order any deaths (the point of the play is that he wouldn't), we know that if he did, he, like his "son" Rufio, would do so professionally. (Does Cleopatra's know that she is serving up Ftatateeta to Rufio's sword; does she mean for him to kill her old nurse, who has now become a liability? As Cleopatra has now become the Devil in the play, Ftatateeta has become extraneous to Shaw as well. Although he shows Cleopatra as quite agitated after Rufio leaves, Shaw deliberately does not give us Cleopatra's response to the dead body; but in Act Five, she can't keep up her indignation for long.)

Along with her other weaknesses as Devil, Ftatateeta can't keep a secret; she gives Cleopatra away because she needs to pray to her Gods, whom, contradictorily, we later find she doesn't believe in. This follows upon the last Devil, Judith Anderson, who couldn't keep Dudgeon's secret and revealed his charade to Burgoyne. Rufio is actually

the most articulate defender of the Devil's point of view; with his blunt, common-sense approach of "take the world as you find it, deal with it as it will you, kill your enemies before they've a chance to kill you." But Rufio is not the Devil, he's always a follower of Caesar, even if he doesn't agree with him; nor is he the Object, from the beginning he's already as converted to Caesar's ideas as he's ever going to be.¹ To put it in other terms, he is Shaw's Enobarbus. Ptolemy is interesting as the first and only Shavian on-stage child; Shaw describes him as looking older than an English boy of 10, allowing for a teenager or a young adult to play the part (viz. Julie Harris in The Member of the Wedding). The late entrance of Apollodorus raises the question of whether he is brought in only because Shaw, realizing that Caesar is overwhelming the play, feels the need to introduce a character who at least can talk back to Caesar?²

Out of an abundance of interesting lines, three are worth noting: Shaw's self-mocking complaint in the mouth of Ftatateeta that Cleopatra wants "to be what these Romans call a New Woman" (2:255); Caesar being delayed because "he was settling the Jewish question" (2:285), a line funny in Shaw's time but sad today; and Apollodorus invitation to Caesar,

¹ Caesar and Rufio illustrate the old joke on the Golden Rule: Caesar believing "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," Rufio following the perversion "Do unto others before they can do unto you."

² This is a practice Shaw began in You Never Can Tell, introducing Bohun in Act Four with the effect of reenergizing and picking up the play. He repeated this with Burgoyne in Act Three of The Devil's Disciple, and as we shall see, does it again in Captain Brassbound's Conversion. Finally, in Man and Superman, he will extend this to bringing in a new character for each act; but there, he will accomplish more than just reenergizing the play.

in the banquet scene, to "try the lesbian, Caesar" (2:269). This last, a reference to wine, echoes the aforementioned "let me introduce you to Cokane" in Widowers Houses; but this joke was as accessible to Shaw's audience as it is to today's and is perhaps an oblique reference to Caesar's homosexuality.

Beyond the already mentioned comparisons, deliberate and otherwise, flattering and otherwise, that Shaw's choice of material and form draws between himself and Shakespeare, there are two specific points of staging, both involving clothing. Shaw dresses his Cleopatra at the beginning of his play, when she goes to meet Caesar and begin her rule; Shakespeare dresses her at the end of his play, when she goes to meet the asp and end her rule. Similarly, in Act Two, Cleopatra dresses Caesar in his battle garb, which echoes her dressing Antony in Shakespeare's Act Four. But Caesar goes off to be first (and temporarily) setback, then victorious; while Antony is first (and temporarily) victorious, but ultimately set back. Shaw, as much as Cleopatra, is the victim of the irony of Caesar's final promise. By sending Antony to Cleopatra, we know he is sending her death, but he is also sending her immortality. Shaw is playing the losing hand in this contest with Shakespeare; Cleopatra is remembered not for her liaison with Caesar but for her liaison with Antony. Shakespeare has the famous story and Shaw the lesser one.

With rare exceptions (Mrs. Warren's Profession and Pygmalion come easily to mind), none of Shaw's plays have dramatic tension engendered by an unpredictable ending; he is dealing in comedy and we know the lovers will unite (though obviously that doesn't apply here). The fun in Shaw isn't the outcome but how we get there. However, the Shavian route is

best paved with the conflict of two opposing viewpoints, and their battle for the loyalty of a third party. In Caesar and Cleopatra, there are no viewpoints successfully opposed to Caesar's, and anyone, such as Cleopatra, who gives less than whole-hearted loyalty to Caesar is shown to be a lesser person for it. The "how" in this play becomes repetitive, and we begin to lose interest in Shaw's most perfectly realized dramatic Superman. Possibly Shaw, being the dramatic critic he was, saw the end result of this play and also, however reluctantly, began to realize the dramatic unviability of the Superman in a realistic dramatic setting. Although his next play mines some of this same material, the true Superman and Devil are not far off.

CHAPTER 10

CAPTAIN BRASSBOUND'S CONVERSION

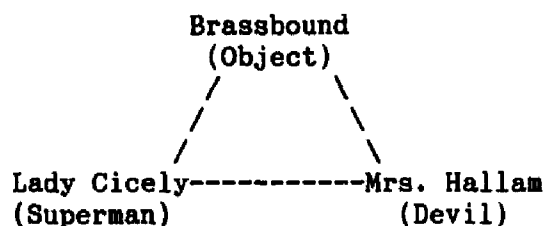
In terms of the Shavian triangle, Captain Brassbound's Conversion is a variation on Caesar and Cleopatra. Again we have exotic locales; again, a clash of cultures played out in actual warfare; again, a cultured European of strong opinions and forceful personality who invades Africa and converts a less cultured, more pliable inhabitant. But this time the outcome is reversed, with the Superman rather than the Devil winning over the Object. (Two of the sexes are also reversed, with a female Superman, Lady Cicely Waynflete, and a male Object, Captain Brassbound, while the Devil remains a woman, Mrs. Hallam, the Captain's off-stage late mother.)

Because his mother's influence on Brassbound is greater than the nurse's was on Cleopatra, this losing, off-stage Devil is a more worthy opponent than was Ftatateeta.¹ She is his real mother, not a surrogate parent, and thus her claim is stronger. Moreover, Lady Cicely, strong as she is, is not as overwhelming a Superman as Caesar was. Finally, as both the Devil and Superman are of the same sex, the normal parent/child/suitor triangle cannot work until the Superman has first supplanted her rival. Lady Cicely cannot sue for the position of

¹ One can draw an ironic comparison between Lady Cicely and Ftatateeta. Both are women, and as such both are ostensibly powerless in the world in which they exist, Ftatateeta because she is a female servant in a ruler's world, Lady Cicely because she is a woman in a man's world. However, both are able to rise above their powerlessness to manipulate their environment. But, ironically and tellingly, the Devil, Ftatateeta, is finally powerless and loses her life at the hands of a man; while the Superman, Lady Cicely, proves to be all powerful and manipulates the lives of the men around her.

Brassbound's mother figure until she has weaned him away from his real mother, whereas Cleopatra could be interested in Caesar as a father figure without being unfaithful to her surrogate mother by doing so.

Thus, this Shavian triangle is easily established:



However, as the Devil remains off-stage, there are great difficulties in attempting to describe the play's entire action with this one triangle. In Act One, this triangle is barely hinted at; we have limited awareness of Brassbound's mother and what she is influencing her son toward. Not only is there no Shavian triangle in Act One, there isn't any dramatic triangle, as the act is primarily taken up with exposition and the true action of the play is only hinted at. It is not until Act Two that the Shavian triangle is introduced; however, it is in Act Two that it is played out and resolved as well. After Lady Cicely converts Captain Brassbound, the basic Shavian conflict is over, but unlike The Devil's Disciple, this play offers no new Shavian triangle in Act three. There is no Object to be worked on, and, with Brassbound's mother defeated, there is no Devil remaining. Shaw is reduced to providing tension by placing the converted Object in jeopardy; making the Devil those who opposes the Superman not in ideas, but merely in action. Unfortunately, we are by now convinced that in the area of action, no one can seriously challenge Lady Cicely Waynflete. Certainly not her brother-in-law, and thus we do not seriously fear for Brassbound's safety.

Shaw does make one half-hearted attempt to overcome this certainty by introducing a new character, Capt. Hamlin Kearney, at the beginning of the act. As we don't know him and as he is American rather than English, we might entertain a slight expectation that he will be able to withstand Lady Cicely. But when we remember that she is an experienced world traveler and we recall how easily she handled Sidi el Assif, who is to her more exotic than an American, this expectation quickly fades. As well it should, for she easily sweeps Kearney aside before the trial has even begun. If Act One is merely entertaining exposition, the bulk of Act Three is less interesting resolution, because we are by now familiar with Lady Cicely and her wiles and ways.

Less interesting until the stage is emptied of all superfluous characters, and we come to the very intriguing and curious final scene between the existing and the nascent Superman. Only once before has Shaw given us two potential Supermen of opposite sex in the same play, setting up the possibility of mutual service to the life force: Napoleon and the Lady in The Man of Destiny. However, he is married and their liaison will only be of one night's duration.¹ Here, nothing stands in the way of a continuing fruitful union: they are of similar ages (Lady Cicely "is between thirty and forty" (2:331), the Captain is "about 36" (2:342)), they both agree that they are not in love, and they both acknowledge their respective positions as "commander" and "subordinate" (2:416). For

¹ In The Philanderer and You Never Can Tell it's hard to postulate any Superman; whomever you choose to be the Superman in Candida, Candida or Marchbanks, the other must be the Devil; neither Trench nor Raina can be considered even a developing Superman, and thus their liaisons with Blanche and Bluntschli don't qualify; Vivie and Caesar are the only Supermen in their plays; The Devil's Disciple ends with two Supermen, Dudgeon and Anderson, but of the same sex.

what is probably the first time in her life, we see that she is not mesmerizing, but being mesmerized, by a man; conversely, probably for the first time in his life, he is dominating, and not being dominated, by a women. And yet, Shaw does not bring the moment to fruition, breaking the spell by the firing of an off-stage gun (the voice of the off-stage Devil?); and the life force is left unserved in the name of exercising the "the secret of command" (2:417).¹

This is the pattern of all *The Plays For Puritans*. Although here the union would have been between two Supermen, there is no final sexual coming together for any of the Supermen in the three plays. The ending of *The Devil's Disciple* comes closest, only because it leaves the barest suggestion that perhaps Anderson is giving Richard his wife along with his pulpit; in any event, one of these two Supermen will have her. Caesar and Cleopatra never have a romantic or sexual relation, and at the end, she is to get Antony, who is definitely not a Superman, while he is to get Brutus. Not only do these three plays suffer from the confrontation of a strong Superman with a weak Devil (except for General Burgoyne in Act Three of the first play), all three end with a Superman not in service to the life force, which is striking because these three Supermen are progressively more feminine: Caesar is self-described "part brute, part woman" (2:182), and Lady Cicely is not only a woman, but one who triumphs by using her femininity, albeit not sexually but psychologically. It is curious that Shaw, having begun to develop the concept of service to the life force in *The Pleasant Plays* should pull

¹ Shaw's "secret of command" is to keep one's emotional distance, but I wonder if he isn't putting the cart before the horse? Perhaps the need to keep emotional distance necessitates a good excuse for doing so?

back so markedly from it in these subsequent plays, and even more curious as his next play will so strongly center on the life force, promoting marriage and sex not in the name of love, but in the name of progress. (Other themes run through *The Plays For Puritans*: the Superman as outsider - even Anderson stands outside his Puritan community; the Superman as converter of another - whether Dudgeon converts Anderson or vice versa; the Superman as one whose abilities are hampered by emotions - which has a negative effect upon sexual service to the life force.

The play shares its title with the essential action of the Shavian triangle, the conversion of the Object, and the locales make for a devilish (in the Christian sense) comment on the action of Captain Brassbound's conversion. Acts One and Three take place at the home of the local Christian missionary, yet the actual conversion occurs in Act Two, in a Moorish castle, a house of Allah. The play's time scheme runs backward, from late afternoon through midday to late morning (forenoon), hinting at a movement from darkness to light or corruption to innocence, as well as a return to the womb and a rebirth.

Shaw is forced to utilize all his considerable talents as a dramatic craftsman here. The first act exposition is awkward, and even its motivation is clumsy. Brassbound's history isn't being told to a stranger or a returning traveler, but to the local missionary who has lived in Mogador for twenty-five years! How can he not know who Brassbound is; why hasn't he asked before? The act also contains two transparent pieces of dramatic manipulation. Drinkwater leaves the house, goes to the pier, boards the ship, fetches his Captain and returns with him all in the space of some twenty lines. Even allowing for the

willing suspension of disbelief, Shaw has not had to resort to so poor a use of stage time since his first play. (Unless we are to think that Brassbound was waiting outside all this time, and we've no reason to think so.) Equally obvious is Shaw's limiting the on-stage population. When the expedition is being planned at the end of Act One, Lady Cicely says "we should have as few men as possible because men give such a lot of trouble travelling" (2:347), which serves to hold down the cast in Act Two. (Later, in Act Three, a sprained ankle provides a convenient excuse for not introducing another on-stage character.)

Equally manipulative is the way Shaw lays everything out for us at the end of Act One. Brassbound's relation with Hallam and his resulting desire for revenge have been established, but a potentially tense situation is defused when Lady Cicely exclaims that an escort "will simply get us into danger and I shall have the trouble of getting it out again" (2:345). Suddenly, her character and her control over all the subsequent action are made clear, and we know where we are going and what will happen; the title is explained and the audience can relax, knowing that there will be no hidden surprises along the way. Shaw has come one hundred and eighty degrees from Widowers' Houses, where he deliberately kept his audience off balance with the plot to compel their attention to a social issue.

As if to make up for all the exposition of Act One, Act Two opens with action, but this merely serves to carry out what was previously set up: she is in command and he is overwhelmed by her. (The fact that he can't stand up to a domineering woman establishes and gives credence to his relationship with his mother when it comes to light.) Her

rearranging of the sleeping quarters keeps us entertained, but it also delays the scene between Brassbound and Hallam which we've come back from intermission expecting and wanting. This tells us that the real action will not be between the men, but between her and Brassbound, and when the scene between the men does come, she is sitting in.

The three of them, Brassbound and Hallam fighting, Lady Cicely sitting by quietly making sure neither goes too far, echoes Candida. But now the men are fighting over a woman long dead, and the referee has no immediate interest and can remain dispassionate; there is no chance of "my boy must not be disturbed" (1:581). Note also how Brassbound immediately brings her into it, needing the approval of a woman. This is Shaw at his most devilish, subtly portraying the fierce captain as a mama's boy.

This subtlety does not carry over into the title scene, which, along with the previously mentioned Shavian pre-absurdism and pre-existentialism, provides yet another Shavian anticipation. Brassbound is the grown-man-as-helpless-child before his mother. She even dresses him, and obviously she is treating him as his mother did, refusing to take him in the least seriously. Here is the pre-Jewish mother, written long before the births of Neil Simon, Jules Feiffer or Woody Allen, and it is extremely funny until we remember that these later Jewish playwrights are writing autobiographically.¹

¹ As Shaw may be doing here. This is his first play to have a female Superman and Devil fighting over a male Object. The play's action depicts a woman attempting to free a man from his mother's influence and Shaw wrote this shortly after his marriage, when for the first time he had both a mother and a wife. Brassbound, like Shaw, is a son who unquestioningly takes his mother's side in blaming his uncle (father) for her unhappiness, until the new woman in his life shows him that mother

For such a populated play, there are only two real characters on-stage, Lady Cicely and Brassbound. Her first name is likely a nod to The Importance of Being Earnest, while Waynflete echoes "way fleet" or "wain (wheel or wagon) fleet," which conjures up doing things quickly, as well as "win fleet," which conjures up a victorious sea Captain. Both she and her brother-in-law are the first titled characters since Crofts in Mrs. Warren's Profession. Our first impression of her is like her namesake in Oscar Wilde: a slightly daffy Englishwoman, she takes over the house, mistakes her host, over-tips the porters. But it's all a show, a way of disarming others and putting them at ease by letting them feel superior: "I don't think anybody can pay me a greater compliment than to be quite sincere with me at first sight" (2:334), particularly since she's being so deceitful and disarming.¹ Finally, Shaw's points about colonialism and imperialism are stronger in her mouth than they were in Caesar's, where his overwhelming Superman actions undercut them and made them sound hypocritical.

Brassbound has no first name, only his mother's diminutive "Paquito" which helps to infantilize him.² His last name implies rigidity, and contrasts with "way fleet" which implies fluidity. But where did he get the name from? His mother's married name was Hallam, and Brassbound doesn't sound like the maiden name of a Brazilian. Thus,

was equally responsible for her situation.

¹ Andrew Undershaft makes the same first impression in Major Barbara, but he has a line that colors the whole situation: "Then you must be my son" (3:85), he says to Adolphus rather than Stephen, which is a true statement in principle if not in fact.

² Shaw's mother called him "Sonny."

he must have given himself the name, but he doesn't come to see his behavior as "brass bound" until after his conversion. Although she has the leading role, it is he who gets the delayed entrance, during which Shaw calls for the light to darken ominously while describing him as "saturnine" (2:341-2). (But he is not the Devil, he's the Devil's child; and his Devil worship is the unquestioning obedience to the conventions he was raised with.) In short, his entrance is theatrical, and so is he. Much of the tension in this play, and a great deal of the humor, is lost to us today because we do not immediately recognize him as a character from one well-known nineteenth century genre, the revenge drama, being juxtaposed with an immediately recognizable character from a diametrically opposed well-known genre, the comedy of manners. It is as if Hamlet met Rosalind and she dissuaded him from even attempting to avenge his father's death; as if Charles Bronson in Death Wish met Katherine Hepburn in The Philadelphia Story. That Brassbound, so manly, so apparently capable is in the helpless, dependent Object role usually occupied by a daughter adds to the humor. (One final point about this mismatched couple. She calls him an "idealist" (2:414), obviously meaning the term as Shaw uses it in The Quintessence of Ibsenism, and we are thus to understand that she is a "realist" from the same tautology.)

The other characters never rise above one-note stereotypes, not even Sir Howard Hallam, whose first impression provides his basic characteristic: dourness. (He is similar to Crofts that way.) He does, however, share one trait with his nephew: despite his position and his age (he's introduced as "more than elderly" (2:331)), he too is reduced to childish quaking before the mere mention of his parent, in this case

his father who we are led to believe is still very much alive. The play's other captain, Hamlin Kearney, is Shaw's second American in three plays, after having none in his first seven. (Among the possible reasons for Shaw's sudden fascination with Americans is his knowing he had an audience in America, and hoping his plays would be more likely produced there with American characters.) Shaw provides a short essay on the American character here, which he will expand when introducing Hector Malone Jr. in Man and Superman.

The titles of the Moslems, Sidi and Cadi, are too similar for Shaw not to be having fun with them; note also the Sheik's name, Assif: as if what? Drinkwater is often more intrusive than comic, while Rankin is merely expository. Perhaps the most noteworthy of the minor characters is the one who, like the play's Devil, never appears on-stage: Lady Cicely's thief turned gardener, the first of many Shavian petty criminals redeemed by love and charity rather than punishment. The best examples are Gunner in Misalliance and the Burglar in Heartbreak House, but they are always minor comic characters, as if Shaw was aware that the idea is too flimsy to stand the scrutiny of a full play.

The play's opening essay provides only brief notes on the missionary, followed by a mini-polemic on Drinkwater ("the abortion produced by nature in a city slum" (2:322)), before entering into a technical description of the cockney dialect. In Pygmalion, where dialect plays a major part, Shaw attempts to reproduce Liza's accent for only a few lines before giving it up in the text. Here, he attempts it for the whole play, and it's distracting and often counterproductive, as some lines become unintelligible in the reading. In performance, the

actor would use only enough cockney dialect to indicate that the character had one, but not so much as to accomplish what Shaw appears to be after here: unintelligibility for Drinkwater. Shaw compounds the problem by reproducing the missionary's Scottish dialect, which gets thicker in Act Three (at least on the printed page), as well as the American dialect of Captain Kearney and his men; yet he does not give us the dialect of the Moslems, only the westerners.

Finally, two lines of dialogue which follow up on themes from earlier plays. Hallam's description "hoisting the rogue with his own petard" (2:336) continues Shaw's self-comparison with Shakespeare, as in Caesar and Cleopatra. The line twists the famous remark of Hamlet, who was also a son done out of his rightful inheritance by his uncle; Shaw gives the line not to the hero/nephew, but to the villain/uncle. Hallam also serves up Shaw's judgement on lawyers, following up on You Never Can Tell. But this line, "whenever you wish to do anything against the law, Cicely, always consult a good solicitor first" (2:337), is much sharper than anything uttered in the previous play.

Captain Brassbound's Conversion is Shaw's last play of the nineteenth century, and the last he would lump with others in a group, pleasant, unpleasant or otherwise. After embarking late on his playwriting career (he was thirty-six when Widowers' Houses was completed), he produced, in the brief space of eight years (1892-1899), all ten of the plays so far examined. He would not finish another for four years; a normal wait for many playwrights' work, an eternity for Shaw. Man and Superman, completed in 1903, would mark the first great turning point in Shaw's career. In it, Shaw would finally bring together

an evenly matched Superman and Devil in true Shavian conflict. To do so, he would alter form and structure, as well as time and space, and so begin the art of twentieth century playwriting.

CHAPTER 11

MAN AND SUPERMAN

In her excellent book, The Shavian Playground, Margery M. Morgan defines the central issue in any discussion of this play:

The crux of Man and Superman, is the relation of the Hell scene in Act III to the rest of the play. Without it, as F.P.W. McDowell has observed, the title Shaw gave the whole is reduced to a mere quip: 'Superman' could only have reference to the woman who overrules the man.¹

The question of whether or not to include this "inner" sequence not only affects the numerous academic discussions of the play, both structural and contextual, but is also among the most important decisions facing the director of any production.² Shaw, in his preface to the play, sanctioned the cutting of the entire third act including the dream sequence which has come to be known as Don Juan in Hell. To do so leaves only a basic Shavian comedy, no small accomplishment, but one that is not particularly noteworthy except for some of the ideas its author places in the mouth of his leading man. However, when the dream sequence is included it opens up philosophical possibilities that raise the play to greatness.

¹ Margery M. Morgan, The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw, (London: Methuen, 1972) p. 100. The reference is to F.P.W. McDowell, "Heaven, Hell and Turn-of-the-Century London: Reflections upon Shaw's Man and Superman," Drama Survey 2 (1963): 245-68.

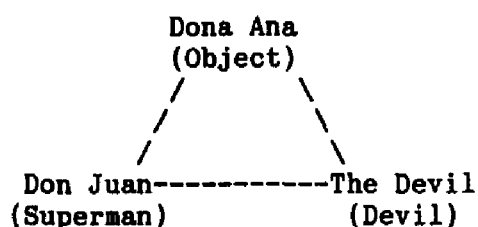
² In a recent essay entitled "Studies of Shaw's Neglected Plays and Mini-Plays," (in Turco, ed., Shaw: The Neglected Plays, pp. 332-47), Charles A. Carpenter states that Man and Superman is one of the five most-written about of Shaw's plays, the other four being Major Barbara, Pygmalion, Heartbreak House, and Saint Joan.

How are the two parts of the play, the "inner" and "outer" plays, related to, and necessary for, the full expression of Shaw's philosophy (whether the play is treated as a dramatic or literary work); how does the play's unique form express its content? One approach to answering this question lies in examining the Shavian triangle: is it present in both plays; how is it constituted; how does it operate within both plays; how does it tie them together? This approach will not only show the interdependence of the inner and outer plays, but how they combine to express Shaw's philosophical purpose.

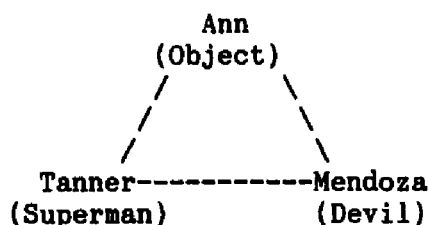
Does one Shavian triangle describe both the inner and outer plays? Shaw is very clear which characters in the outer play embody the characters in the inner one, and the Shavian triangle in the inner play is obvious. Shaw names the character in one corner of the triangle to be the Devil, the defender of Hell; makes plain that his philosophical opponent is Don Juan, the defender of Heaven, who is thus easily accorded the position of Superman; and establishes that it is the newcomer to the afterlife, Dona Ana, who is the Object of their conflicting arguments.¹ (The Statue is clearly shown to have already chosen Hell, although he can acknowledge the soundness of certain of Juan's arguments.) Although there are overtones of convention and unconvention in the two positions (always keeping in mind Shaw's unconventional idea of what is Heaven and what Hell), the philosophical differences between the two are far greater than these simple terms, extending beyond actions and behavior to purposes and reasons.

¹ This is not to suggest that it is only his opposition to the Devil that makes Juan the Superman, merely an attempt to streamline this part of my argument.

Therefore, the Shavian triangle in the inner play is:



and the Shavian triangle in the outer play should be:



But if it is, then in what context are we to see Mendoza as conventional when compared to Tanner? Their politics are basically the same; each is a socialist, with a clear-eyed view of his economic situation:

MENDOZA: I am a brigand: I live by robbing the rich.

TANNER: I am a gentleman: I live by robbing the poor. (2:621)

Neither can be said to be particularly conventional in his economic or political ideas. On the other hand, each is the most conventional of lovers: Tanner is the last to know that Ann has set her cap for him, and the least effective in dealing with her when he does know; Mendoza is a romantic, who has built his whole life of brigandage around his rejected love for a cook. It is true that Tanner runs while Mendoza swoons, but this difference is the result of the responses of their respective women, and again underscores their romantic conventionality.¹ It is hard to see

¹ Albert Bermel, in an essay entitled "Jest and Super Jest," (*The Shaw Review* 18 (May 1975): 57-68), argues that the action of *Man and Superman* is actually that of Tanner allowing Ann to chase him; the man who pursues by pretended flight. He runs just far enough away for her to see him and follow, then stops and waits. Or, as Irving Berlin put it, with the sexes reversed, "A Boy Chases a Girl Until She Catches Him."

a context in which to view these two as Superman and Devil, notwithstanding the fact that Mendoza barely exists as a character in the outer play.¹

Beyond this, is Ann the Object, in any way converted by either of them? She is unchanging throughout the outer play, at all times certain of what she wants and how to go about getting it. It is she who converts Tanner, while having no dealings with Mendoza whatsoever. It is only in the inner play that Ann, as Dona Ana, is uncertain, and then only while the others are dealing in abstractions. When a concrete need is announced, that of a mother for the Superman, she immediately knows what to do and announces herself ready to fill the position. To a lesser degree, the opposite is true of Tanner and Mendoza. They, as Superman and Devil, are quite at home amid the philosophical abstractions of the inner play, each certain of and unconvertible from his position; whereas in the outer play, their absolute certainty of the rightness of their positions leads to their constantly making fools of themselves.

Thus, there is no one Shavian triangle tying together the inner and outer plays, and we are forced to look elsewhere for the Shavian triangle

¹ Perhaps the only way Tanner can be seen as unconventional in a romantic sense is when compared to other versions of his namesake: an unconventional Don Juan who eschews love and women. But that is not an unconventional behavior in the real world, only a negative reaction to an established literary benchmark. Besides, as his ancestor's behavior was unconventional in the real world, so is Tanner's behavior, though unconventional for a Don Juan, conventional for any one else. Mendoza, while hardly a Don Juan, does bear similarities to Tanner's ancestor in his dealings with Straker, who in his concern for preserving his sister's reputation is behaving like Dona Ana's father, while Mendoza, like Juan, is unscrupulously willing to risk the lady's name. But as was Tanner's ancestor (despite what Shaw has him say), this modern Don Juan is the better "fencer," whose weapon is class and who therefore knows he holds the upper hand because of Straker's middle-class fear of scandal.

in the outer play. What are the needs of this triangle; specifically, must it have Tanner as the Superman? Other than his dreaming himself so in Act Three, it's hard to see any justification for placing him in this position. As Eric Bentley has pointed out:

Tanner is a windbag. Indeed, the mere fact of the woman courting the man would probably not yield comedy at all were it not for a further and more dynamic reversal: the woman, who makes no great claim for herself, has all the shrewdness, the real Lebensweisheit, while the man, who knows everything and can discourse like Bernard Shaw, is - a fool. Tanner is, in fact, like Moliere's Alceste, the traditional fool of comedy in highly sophisticated intellectual disguise. Ann Whitefield, into whose trap Tanner falls, is the knave - in skirts.¹

Is Ann then the Superman? She is certainly more unconventional than Tanner; so is Violet. But Ann is also more committed than Tanner. She cannot (or will not) name it, but Ann Whitefield is in service to a cause: the Shavian life force. Instinctively, Ann understands the need to improve the species through generational reproduction, the constant striving upward toward:

... a mind's eye that shall see, not the physical world, but the purpose of Life, and thereby enable the individual to work for that purpose instead of thwarting and baffling it by setting up shortsighted personal aims as at present. (2:663)

It is this battle between the life force and "shortsighted personal aims" which is the Superman/Devil conflict in the outer play.

On one side is Ann, the instinctive Superman. Not only can't she articulate or defend her position, to be able to do so would betray her position. For articulating and defending a position is serving the shortsighted personal aims of the Devil. Man as he exists in the outer play, in the real world, doesn't have the Superman's capacity to deal

¹ Bentley, Shaw, p. 170.

with ideas or philosophies; his humanness keeps getting in his way. He is constantly sidetracked by egotism, the need for love, social proprieties, class differentials, political ideologies and more. Only in the incorporeal realms, where man is free of his human failings, has he the ability and the time (eons and eons of it) to contemplate, debate, think and rethink his ideas and give them the attention and ability they deserve. In the brief life span that we know, a man's brain has only time to begin to function, only time to begin to assimilate all of his experiences and digest them into a coherent philosophy. Before we can do any justice, much less full justice, to our ideas, our bodies begin to fail us; our short-lived brains begin to deteriorate and all the great thinking we are poised to achieve is lost forever. The Shavian life force is the means of freeing the intellect from its corporeal bonds, of defeating this dichotomy of body and brain, the misalliance of a latter play.¹

Shaw introduces this concept early in both the outer and inner plays. Ramsden's comment on Ann's father's death, "its the common lot,

¹ Briefly, it is my contention that the title Misalliance does not refer to the relationship of parents and children, despite Shaw's statement in the preface. Rather, it refers to the misalliance of brain and body which keeps the human race from achieving Superman status and which the life force is striving to overcome. Accordingly, the characters may be broken down into four groupings: those with weak brains and weak bodies (Mrs. Tarleton, Gunner), those with weak brains and strong bodies (Johnny, Hypatia, Joey), those with strong brains and weak bodies (Tarleton Sr., Lord Summerhays, Bentley), and the Superman, with strong brain and body, Lina Szczepanowska, the only character who is not English, and markedly so. Curiously, Shaw attaches Catholic symbolism to Lina: she is from the Catholic country of Poland; her last name is pronounced like "fish church;" and she descends and ascends from earth, using an airplane. At the play's end she goes back up to the sky, taking with her the character who shares his creator's initials (Bentley Summerhays, Bernard Shaw) and who needs only a strong (long-lived or immortal) body to achieve Superman status for his already strong brain.

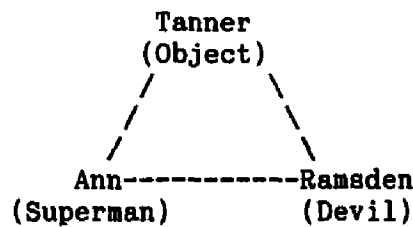
we must all face it some day" (2:535), states the reason why all men should be serving the life force. Later, Dona Ana tells Juan that she was "younger [at 70]: at 30 I was a fool" (2:637). But of what use is it to feel younger (i.e. be smarter) at 70 when your body can't sustain this and you will only be taking this greater wisdom to the grave. If we lived longer, we could apply this late wisdom, and if we lived "as far as thought can reach," we could keep applying this wisdom to gain ever newer and greater wisdom.

Arrayed against Ann are a variety of Devils, for every man in the outer play except Tanner is in the service of shortsighted personal aims. The first, and easiest to see, is Roebuck Ramsden. Ramsden is the Devil of temporal social/political/economic ideas, theories which, as Shaw makes clear, are transitory. In this "drama of ideas ... everything depends on whether his adolescence belongs to the sixties or the eighties" (2:534). Twenty years ago, Ramsden was in the forefront of social thought, on the "cutting edge." But the slash of this cutting edge is quick; in twenty years Ramsden's ideas have become conservative and accepted. They have been replaced by those of the man one generation his junior, John Tanner.

Tanner certainly can be seen as unconventional when compared with Ramsden in the world of social ideas, but Shaw knows that this is an ever changing condition: Ramsden was once the man of unconventional ideas, and Tanner's ideas will also become conventional with time. To Shaw, radicals don't become conservative with age; radical ideas become accepted, and hence become conservative ideas as time goes by. Similarly, unconventional people don't become conventional with age; the

idea of what is conventional changes and the times catch up with them. For Shaw, the truly unconventional man constantly keeps changing his ideas to stay on the cutting edge of unconventionality or radicalism. It is not that one stays true to a set of ideas, but rather to the idea of new ideas.

Thus, in Act One, Ramsden is the Devil, believing "ideas" are all-important (whether they be conventional or unconventional); and Tanner is the Object, who begins the play as the devil's disciple, in revolt about the specifics of ideas, but not their importance. Ann is the Superman, knowing (instinctively) that all ideas, even radical or unconventional ones, are transitory; and that the real importance is propagating the species, serving the life force. For it is only when we reach the point of living so long that we reach full and true maturity, beyond the influence of shortsighted personal aims, that we will have ideas and understanding worth worrying about and discussing. Until then, we must work for that longevity, and not worry about transitory ideas. She converts Tanner to the service of the life force, away from political and social actions which are shortsighted personal aims, self satisfying but unproductive. However, as her last line indicates, if he will serve the life force she will let him keep playing with his "toys" or ideas: "Never mind her, dear. Go on talking" (2:733). (Ramsden has never served the life force; he has no biological children, only godchildren and wards.) Thus, the Shavian triangle in Act One is:



and the context of the act is the transitory nature of ideas.

Both of these triangles, Tanner as Superman, Ann as Object and Mendoza as Devil, and Ann as Superman, Tanner as Object and Ramsden as Devil, have roots in the traditional triangles of nineteenth century theatre. The first is a two-suitor triangle, reflecting Arms and the Man, Candida and The Devil's Disciple, but the triangle no longer describes the action of the play. The second is a generational triangle, reflecting Widowers' Houses, Mrs. Warren's Profession, Arms and the Man (again) and Caesar and Cleopatra, but the relationships are no longer operative and neither is this triangle. Shaw is beginning to bid adieu to the nineteenth century structures that have sustained him so far.

But Ramsden is not the only Devil in the play; how could he be, for after Act One Ramsden himself is barely in the play?¹ Instead, Shaw introduces a new character in each act: Straker in Act Two, Mendoza in Act Three and Malone Sr. in Act Four. While this serves to keep reenergizing the action, these three characters make up their own triangle of men who might appear to be Supermen in the real world: the mechanic (master of machines), the romantic adventurer (master of his

¹ Not only does Ramsden almost disappear after Act One, but Ann is carefully held back in the first two acts and Mendoza doesn't even appear until Act Three. Shaw is saving his actors for the inner play, except Tanner, who is on stage throughout most of the first three acts. This is a practical reason why Don Juan in Hell is often cut: it defies the stamina of most actors who play Tanner.

soul) and the new industrialist (who is buying mastery of England's social and historical institutions). They also represent the new movement of the economic classes: Straker and Malone upward to the middle and upper class, Mendoza romantically downward to the lower class. But each of them is serving a shortsighted personal aim, and each of these characters can be said to be the Devil in his act, the representative of the temporally important.

Straker's machines, like Ramsden's ideas, will soon become outdated and be replaced by ever newer machines. Even so, Shaw can't help but have a fondness and a respect for machinery, perhaps because he understands that however temporary each specific machine, machinery itself can help to bring about the longer-lived bodies the life force is seeking. Accordingly, he also has a fondness for the mechanic, making him a "new man" with new attitudes about class and heritage (although the new man will also become outmoded and be replaced by yet another new man). Moreover, Straker is to Tanner as Tanner is to Ramsden, and can see through Tanner as Tanner can see through Ramsden. His knowing description of his boss, "he likes to talk" (2:589), is a preview of Ann's last line. Nevertheless, he is the Devil in Act Two, and it's he who tells Tanner that Ann is after him, precipitating Tanner's flight and temporarily short-circuiting the workings of the life force; and in Act Three, Straker is as full of middle-class morality and prejudice as any Shavian Devil yet. However, as the Devil of the short Act Two, which bridges the real world of Act One and the eternity world of Act Three, Straker stands halfway between man and Superman and serves as a possible bridge between them.

Mendoza sees himself as a romantic adventurer, but romance or love is not necessary to serve the life force and in fact emotions tend to get in its way. Moreover, Mendoza's adventures belong spiritually to Louisa and financially to Malone Sr. For all his bluster, he is passively fatalistic; sharing more than his occupation with William Boon, the waiter who believes "you never can tell." Ironically, although he is obviously the Devil in the outer play sections of Act Three, it is he who impedes Tanner's flight, serving, not hindering, the life force.

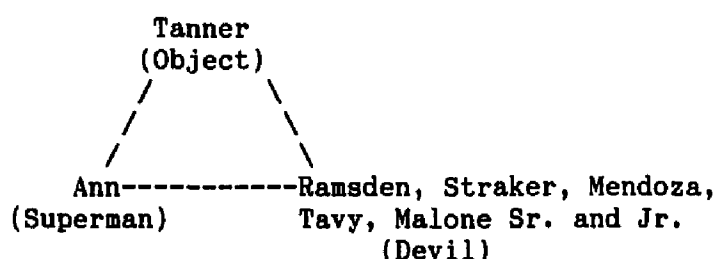
While a representative character in his own right, Mendoza is also Octavius' surrogate in Act Three. Tavy is too young and poetic to be Shaw's idea of the Devil; for that you need an older, more experienced cynic like Mendoza, who provides a better opponent for Tanner than the easily vanquished Tavy.¹ Shaw is continuing the dichotomy of heroes he used in previous plays (the practical man versus the poet: Bluntschli/Sergius, Morell/Marchbanks, Anderson/Dudgeon), but here it is a dichotomy of romantic Devils, as if to reposition his previous real world Supermen.

Hector Malone Sr. has both the pride and arrogance that come with money (which, as Kaufman and Hart reminded us, you can't take with you), and he believes he can buy anything, his son's obedience or an English abbey, by offering or withholding his wealth. But the industrialist is at the mercy of the same parochial pride that drove him to seek wealth, and he would stand in the way of his son's happiness to assuage his Irish need to best the English. His son, meanwhile, is the mirror of his

¹ Albert Bermel once quipped to me that Mendoza is in the play only to "give the Devil his Jew." On a more serious note, the Jew is European history's greatest victim of prejudice, which underpins our need for the life force: until we are free of bodies, societies and prejudices, we can never deal adequately with ideas.

father, and would condemn his wife to poverty to satisfy his pride. Fortunately, both are easily manipulated by Violet, who shares Ann's instinctive understanding of the unimportance of shortsighted personal aims.¹

Thus, Ramsden may be called the shortsighted Devil of ideas, Straker of machinery, Mendoza and Tavy of love, and the Malones of money, and the complete Shavian triangle for the outer play is:



which expresses how weighted down the world is against the true Superman. However, Shaw does not rigidly stratify these Devils, and thus Ramsden doesn't understand Ann because of his romantic illusions about her, while Mendoza leads a group of scruffy brigands who are more like a Fabian debating society.

In a world populated by so many shortsighted Devils, the life force demands a man worthy of serving it, and it is indicative of Ann's Superman qualities that she can recognize Tanner as such. Although in the throes of shortsighted personal aims (The Revolutionist's Handbook), Tanner has integrity and honor; he means to do the right thing, but as he never understands what is really happening, his good impulses lead him

¹ Unlike Ann, who rejects the romantic Tavy, Violet has married the romantic Hector for motives which appear to be shortsighted: money and power. But Violet, even if in spite of herself, is also in service to the life force; and as she is pregnant, she in far more active service than Ann.

into foolishness. In Act One, his decent motivations coupled with his misunderstanding of Violet lead him to make a fool of himself, and to show us that he has learned nothing during the course of the play, he does the same in Act Four with Hector. And he is impossibly dense in realizing that he, and not Tavy, is Ann's prey. But, his basic goodness, coupled with Ann's basic shrewdness, will combine to produce children with qualities of each, and thus move the species slightly up the evolutionary ladder.¹

Therefore, the Shavian triangles of the inner and outer play do not correspond, and the two parts of Man and Superman do not duplicate each other. Rather, they stand in contrast, each commenting upon the other and in combination expressing Shaw's realization of the true need and place for the Superman. Previously, he had been the defender of a specific set of ideas, and Shaw had attempted to establish the Superman in the real world, what Bentley calls "The World As It Is," and to do so both on and off the stage.² Now, Shaw is separating the Superman, establishing two different conflicts, two different goals and two different worlds for him to operate in. It is only when the life force provides the longevity which allows for full development of our mental capacities (now only possible in the death-induced immortality of the inner play), that ideas can take primacy; and thus, in "The World As It Is," the true Superman eschews the temporal, shortsighted personal aims

¹ Shaw is extremely vague about how these generational improvements will come about. In Back to Methuselah, they seem to happen by mere chance, and those with longer lives do nothing to bring their longevity about, while they appear the least likely to advance the species by living longer.

² Bentley, Shaw, p.170.

of ideas (as well as machinery, love and money) to serve the life force. When the needs of the life force have been accomplished, when man's brain has been advanced to primacy over his body, then the Superman of ideas can step forward, and the Superman who serves the life force will be useless and out of place.

Thus, in the outer play, Ann is the Superman and Tanner the Object, while in the inner play these are reversed. In the outer play it is Ann who is effective: manipulating and dominating everyone with whom she comes into contact as she selfishly serves the greater need of the life force. Tanner, on the other hand, is, as Bentley says, a fool and a windbag; whose lengthy expressions of bombast Ann neatly deflates, act by act: "I am so glad you understand politics, Jack: it will be most useful to you if you go into parliament" (2:575); "I suppose you will go in seriously for politics someday, Jack" (2:599); and the aforementioned "Never mind her, dear. Just go on talking" (2:733).

When we move to the inner play, Ann is out of her element. Her concerns are temporal: her appearance, her honor, her reputation, her repentance. She is decidedly a spectator to the central debate, only able to enter fully near the end, when the subject shifts to worldly male-female relations. In the opening scene between Dona Ana and Don Juan, Shaw reverses the roles: he is constantly deflating her bombast. Her final line, "A father for the Superman" (2:689), expresses her misunderstanding: the Superman already exists and fathers and mothers are useless here, but she is still thinking in those terms. (It is the Devil and the Statue who introduce and discuss the idea of the Superman and announce his lack; they can not be expected to recognize his existence in

their recently departed antagonist, Don Juan.) The line is thus ironic, foolish and transitional, back to the real world of the outer play, where a father for the Superman is a legitimate concern.

Similarly, Tanner goes from being the foolish pamphleteer of the outer play to the insightful exponent of the Shavian philosophy of the life force, or Creative Evolution, in the inner. His speeches, while rambling at times, are a coherent statement of Shaw's ideas, and although the Devil is certainly given the opportunity to defend his position, often brilliantly, Juan/Tanner/Shaw is never at a loss for ideas or words to counteract this Devil's advocate.¹

Shaw never comes right out and says it here, but underlying his theory of Creative Evolution is a belief that the ultimate goal of the life force is brain unencumbered by body, pure consciousness which will live eternally. The desire to apply one's will toward this end, is, to

¹ So long as Juan is expressing Shaw, his arguments are logical and cogent; when Shaw tries to express Juan, when he turns to earthly male-female relations, marriage and fidelity, the arguments become foolish and at times absurd. Juan's speech beginning "'Perfectly' is a strong expression" (2:671), is a perfect example of the holes in Shaw's thinking. He compares a married couple with galley prisoners, but despite Tanner's claims to being railroaded by the life force (which may very well be a reflection of Shaw's feelings about his own marriage), one hardly exercises as much choice in entering prison as one does in entering marriage, and married couples are not selected randomly, as Shaw acknowledges that prisoners are: "chain me to the felon whose number happens to be next before mine" (*italics mine*). Moreover, an incompatible marriage can be ended, but even Shaw can't believe jailers to be that accommodating to incompatible galley companions. Even if Shaw is merely arguing for the freedom to remain married but change one's sex partner, the prison analogy is pointless: the prisoners aren't free to briefly row with another partner; it's a monogamous relationship. Finally, the last line of the speech is the most ridiculous; no one claims a prisoner is happy, that's why he's still in chains. As Shaw himself states, prisoners have only "accepted the inevitable," which is a far cry from being happy. Whenever Shaw deals in the specifics of human relations, he seems to do so more as a theoretician than as a participant.

Shaw, the work of Heaven, while the passive acceptance of our current state is the sloth of Hell.¹ The closest Juan comes to stating this is this speech, which also expresses the contrast between the two parts of the play:

... heaven, which is ... the home of the masters of reality, and ... earth, which is the home of the slaves of reality. The earth is a nursery in which men and women play at being heroes and heroines, saints and sinners; but they are dragged down from their fool's paradise by their bodies: hunger and cold and thirst, age and decay and disease, death above all, make them the slaves of reality: thrice a day meals must be eaten and digested: thrice a century a new generation must be engendered: ages of faith, of romance, and of science are all driven at last to have but one prayer "Make me a healthy animal." (2:650)

This same contrast between inner and outer play holds true in Shaw's use of the Devil. In the outer play there are a number of Devils; in the inner play there is only the Devil of love, Mendoza, for the romantic mind is the most antithetical to that of pure ideas. However, in this eternity of Heaven and Hell, where ideas take primacy, the question of the importance and viability of each specific idea is valid and worth discussing. Hence, the Devil of ideas, Ramsden, also exists in this world. But here he is not the Devil, merely a participant. The nature of his ideas preclude his being the Superman, and his rigidity (he is after all a statue) preclude his being the Object. By not being part of the Shavian triangle, he serves as a philosophical ground wire: the voice of middle-class reasoning keeping the philosophical debate anchored to the real world, but without Dona Ana's still existing ties to human concerns. Although he has already decided to throw in his lot with the

¹ At least Shaw recognizes that we must achieve this ourselves. Today, our popular culture tells us that it will be done for us, by "strange visitors from another planet" such as E.T., the monolith from 2001, or the comic-book variation of Shaw's own Superman.

Devil, he can appreciate the points of the Superman; even the philistines are more advanced here.

Thus, the play takes the Superman/Devil conflicts of the previous plays and puts them into a new perspective. Shaw is reframing these conflicts, taking them out of realistic terms because these issues can't be dealt with in the limited time of human life. Only when we have achieved longevity will there be enough time to seriously contemplate and discuss the issues and great ideas the Superman/Devil conflict raises. Until then, the true task of humanity is service to the life force; all other pursuits are the work of the Devil, as they keep men (and women) from the Superman's service to the life force and the immortality it will bring. In the outer play, set in "The World As It Is," it is the women, the instinctive servers of the life force, who are effective and efficient; while the men, especially Tanner, are ineffective and inefficient fools - except for Straker with machinery, which ultimately can serve the life force. (Note also that Straker, the mechanic, can fix any machine, even Ann in Act Four.) But in the inner play, in Hell, it is reversed. The woman is out of her depth and the men are effective and efficient in the eternal world of ideas.

Earlier, reference was made to F.W.P McDowell's claim that without the inner and outer plays the title is "mere quip: 'Superman' could only have reference to the woman who overrules the man." But even a mere Shavian quip can have great depth and profundity, and the title works on a number of levels. In the outer play, McDowell's quip is operative. The title differentiates Tanner and Ann, man and woman, man and Superman, Devil and Superman; the former the involuntary slave of shortsighted

personal aims, the latter the voluntary servant of the long range needs of the life force. In the inner play, it both combines man (Tanner) and Superman (Don Juan) intellectually, as well as differentiating them physically: man (corporeal, mortal, inhabitant of the real world these characters have left behind) and Superman (incorporeal, immortal, inhabitant of the eternal world of ideas). Finally, it connects the two plays. The outer play is set in the real world of man, while the inner play is set in the eternal world of the Superman. Thus, the title expresses the basic conflict inherent both in the play and in Shaw's evolving philosophy of the purposes and goals of man and Superman.

Shaw also uses time and location to underscore the contrast between the two parts of the play. The three acts of the outer play are all set in daytime, each progressively a little later (this is indicated but not specified): Act One in the mid morning, Act Two at noon, Act Four in the early afternoon. But Act Three is set in the evening, thus separated from the others. The first two acts, where Tanner resists the life force, are set in England, where the Devil tells us he has "the largest following" (2:648). The first act, the only interior, is set in an actual drawing room which reflects the act's roots in "drawing room" comedy or comedy of manners. The second act is set outside, and for the first time Shaw does not use a garden or a hotel terrace but rather a driveway, setting us actually on the road. The last two acts are set in Spain, earthly home of the eternal Superman, Don Juan, and it is in these two acts that Tanner stops resisting the life force. Both are exteriors, and both suggestive. Act Three, continuing the motif of Act Two, is also set along a road, but unlike the English driveway, which is an extension

of the house, this is Shaw's most remote exterior yet. (Caesar at the Sphinx wasn't far from Alexandria, Brassbound in the Moorish castle was inside.) This setting, with no explanation, could be anywhere at any time, even Hell. Finally, Act Four removes us from the road, suggesting we have reached our destination, the garden of a Spanish villa. It is here that the service to life force is finally acknowledged, and the garden suggests the starting point of man's evolutionary journey, the Garden of Eden.

Act One not only has roots in "drawing room" comedy, the act is actually the history of this genre in miniature.¹ From the beginning to Ann's entrance, the act is a traditional nineteenth century comedy of manners, with traditional concerns, behavior and motivations, except for the inclusion of a few Shavian touches: the content of the Tanner/Ramsden disagreement, and Tanner's honest self description. But we know these characters, and we know where the play is going: we know that Ann wants Tanner (before we have even met her), and we know that she will get him; we also know that he will ineffectively resist; and we know that Ramsden will bluster and Tavy will pine. Even the issue of guardianship echoes that archetypal comedy of manners, The Importance of Being Earnest, where Jack is Cecily's guardian.

From Ann's entrance to the Ann/Tanner scene, the act shifts to the more realistic post-Ibsen style of late nineteenth century comedy, with the introduction of Violet's unwed pregnancy (as all suppose) and Tanner's Ibsenite reaction to it, as well as his Ibsenite ideas about the role and responsibilities of artists. However, when man and Superman are

¹ I am indebted to Stanley Kauffmann for pointing this out to me.

finally left alone on stage, Shaw shifts gears, moving ahead from the nineteenth century to the new twentieth century Discussion Play format which will constitute the later inner play. Although he undercuts Tanner's defense of the sanctity of his soul with Ann's advice he go into politics, there does appear some Shavian belief in Tanner's views, just as there is Shavian humor in Ann's response. Apropos of it being a scene of ideas, it contains Ann's key line in the outer play: "You seem to understand all the things I don't understand; but you are a perfect baby in the things I do understand" (2:577). Finally, the act's ending is both traditional and post-Ibsen, taking the modern situation of Violet's pregnancy and dealing with it traditionally by revealing that she is married. There are also touches of post-Ibsen realism in Tanner's reasons for supporting Violet and her non-repentant responses, as well as the Shavian twist of Violet deflating Tanner's Ibsenite largess. Note also how quickly the act ends after the Ann/Tanner scene, which is its heart. Everything before is supporting material to get us there; afterwards, Shaw brushes off the supporting material quickly (echoing Widowers' Houses), as only now does Violet conveniently confess.

Moreover, Act Two is structured to parallel Act One. Both start with Tanner, Tavy and the Devil (Ramsden in Act One, Straker in Act Two), Ann enters, she and Tanner are left alone on stage, and finally the Violet subplot is brought on. But there is a coda in Act Two: as if to spoof the foolishness of the plot, Straker tells Tanner about Ann, suddenly he sees what he hasn't seen before, and whoosh, we're off to Spain. Shaw is acknowledging that the plot, and the character types in it, are only necessary as a hook to hang his ideas on. In the next act,

he will try something radical: discard the plot altogether and just have a discussion of the ideas.

Before that discussion begins, there are further echoes of this structure in Act Three, where the three-way discussion between Tanner, Mendoza and Straker echoes the first two acts while also foreshadowing the three men in the inner play. We then move to another Ann/Tanner scene, but this time set in Hell. Finally, in Act Four the structure is reversed, as the Violet sub-plot is brought on first and its resolution begun. This sub-plot stands in contrast to the main plot because it needs the mechanical devices of the Well-Made Play to reach its resolution (the misdelivered letter, the secret marriage disclosed), while the main plot is resolved not mechanically, but through the new Shavian device of discussion: Tanner gives in to Ann because of realization gained from his dream.

The names "John Tanner," "Ann" and "Octavius" are all drawn from the Don Juan legend, but the other names remain Shaw's playthings. Roebuck Ramsden expresses his bull in a china shop approach; Straker evokes "striker," conjuring up the sound and action of his machines; and Violet is certainly no "shrinking" version of her namesake. While Ann's first name comes from legend, her last, Whitefield, evokes a snow covered field (the force of nature at work), a virgin field (waiting to be sown), or a surrender upon a battlefield (Tanner's to her, or hers to the life force).

Ann Whitefield is in a line from Blanche ("white"), Julia, Raina and Cleopatra, but is most like her mature predecessors Candida, the Lady and Lady Cicely, although she is younger than they are. (She is 27

(2:638), hence her unseen younger sister, Rhoda, who provides the true need for a guardian.). But unlike her closest predecessor, Candida, she is not attracted to the poetical suitor; she doesn't want romance, understanding that it stands in the way of her purpose. She is introduced in terms that express immortality and timelessness; Shaw calls her "one of the vital geniuses" (2:549), a term for the Superman. He also describes her using terms that evoke a later Superman, Eliza Doolittle, showing how his mind is already bending towards the later Pygmalion. Upon entering, she immediately sits in Tanner's place: the new Superman supplanting the previous one, just as she supplants his predatory role in courtship.

While she bears little similarity to Vivie Warren, they do share one trait. Both are straightforwardly devious; Ann, however, far more frequently than Vivie. Everybody, except Ramsden, understands how Ann uses "the desires of others" as an excuse to get her way, but nobody can beat her at it. Violet, on the other hand, is secretively devious, which is why she is more of a surprise to the others, but also more susceptible to the machinations of a Well-Made Plot. Ann is always in control, except in her final scene with Jack, and even there, Shaw leaves it ambiguous as to whether she has really fainted.

Her victim, John Tanner, is in a line of practical men of the real world: Charteris, Bluntschli, Morell, Napoleon, Anderson. He has the same forward-looking politics and the same misunderstanding of the realities of his love life; like Bluntschli, he doesn't even understand that he has a love life. Unlike his predecessors, we see him through the woman's eyes, and understand why he is attractive to her. He's not a

father figure; she knows that in what she thinks important, she is far wiser than he, and she shares this knowledge with her closest predecessor, Candida. But unlike Candida, Ann's poetical suitor, Tavy, has no insight into her.

Tanner's relationship with his poetic counterpart, Tavy, contrasts with the previous relationships of Morell to Marchbanks and Anderson to Dudgeon. Here, the practical man of the world bests the romantic dreamer, but only at the sufferance of the woman. The relationship is most like that of Bluntschli to Sergius; with Tanner the more aware and knowing, except about his own love life. (Again, the difference is in the comparison of Ann to Raina.) Tanner is possibly the most attractive and accomplished of these heroes, the one who most seems a Superman and yet he's not. None of these men, practical or poetical, is serving the life force.

This play marks a turning point for Shaw: a last great summation of what had gone before; a rejection of the limits of the forms he had been using; an announcement of what would come after, of new forms and ideas. But life is not so clear-cut as theatre, and Shaw could not simply draw the curtain on the Superman. Like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who tried to bury Sherlock Holmes under the Reichenbach Falls, Shaw found himself resurrecting the Superman again and again, forever intertwined with his most famous creation.

AFTERWORD

The Superman and the life force would remain fixtures in Shaw's theatre, but after Man and Superman the Shavian triangle and the nineteenth century theatrical forms from which it developed increasingly gave way to more modern structures and finally to seemingly no structure at all. In his next play, John Bull's Other Island, Shaw added the element of mysticism to the Superman character of Father Keegan, while keeping him outside the romantic triangle. Later, in The Doctor's Dilemma, he would go so far as to kill off a Superman on stage, in a farewell to the idea of the Superman as simply an unconventional rebel. Thus, we have the death of the Superman, Louis Dubedat (do be that), at the hands of the Devil, Colenso Ridgeon (rigid). This is noteworthy as one of only two on-stage death scenes in all of Shaw's work (the other is in The Tragedy of an Elderly Gentleman, one of the five plays that comprise Back to Methuselah) and The Doctor's Dilemma is subtitled "a Tragedy." Thereafter, Shaw's Supermen were more often women, although not always in service to the life force: Lina Szczepanowska in Misalliance (already discussed); Lavinia in Androcles and the Lion; Eliza Doolittle in Pygmalion (a return to the Shavian triangle of Mrs. Warren's Profession, with Eliza as both Superman and Object); and of course, Saint Joan. There was one last attempt at placing a male Superman in a realistic, albeit futuristic context: King Magnus in The Apple Cart; after which the Shavian Superman became unrecognizable under the structures of the Theatre of the Absurd. (Curiously, the male and female Supermen of Back to Methuselah, supposedly the epitome of the

type, are fairly unconvincing, decidedly humorless and eminently forgettable.)

However, before the death blow delivered in The Doctor's Dilemma, before the new structures of the Discussion Play, the Pentateuch and the Theatre of the Absurd, Shaw returned one last time to the traditional structures of the nineteenth century theatre: to the Superman/Devil/ Object grouping of the Shavian triangle and to setting the Superman/Devil conflict in a totally realistic world. Major Barbara is Shaw's greatest achievement in this form and briefly examining it will serve to conclude this dissertation.

One reason this play works so well is that Shaw has left the specific social problem area of the earlier plays (slum housing, prostitution) and deals instead in a general social condition, poverty and how best to help those who suffer in it. Thus he was not bogged down in details and minutiae; and, by expanding his sights, he raises his characters to a higher level of greater influence, more worthy of the Superman.

But the question is, who is the Superman? While Undershaft appears to be an unconventional munitions-maker, he never questions the Undershaft legacy nor his role in it. He seeks to raise others out of poverty, not in the service of the life force, but of the forces of death. In the end, his defenses, while brilliant, are simply sophistry and not morally defensible. He is the Devil, maker of the very weapons Shaw's earlier Devil accused mankind of loving so well.

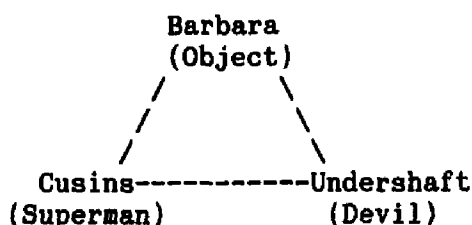
Thus we are left with Barbara and Cusins, and as in Candida and The Devil's Disciple, the question of who converts whom? Does Barbara

convert Cusins to a true belief in the power to help others, will he become the Undershaft who breaks the chain of mindless munitions-making because of her belief in serving mankind? Or does he convert her from the pie in the sky salvation of religion to the practical salvation of money, no matter how it is obtained, in the service of mankind? (Remember, the greatest sin is poverty.) Does he sway her from men's souls to their bodies, or does she sway him from the present to the future?

Part of the answer lies in how one interprets the final actions of the play. Does her father convert her, or does she simply see the reality of Cusins' arguments? Either way, she would be the Object. Alternatively, does Cusins only now make up his mind to take Undershaft's offer? If so, then he has been the Object. Or has he been angling for this, even if unconsciously, all along?

I believe that Undershaft has his eye on Cusins from the start. He is wooing him to become his heir, testing and proselytizing as he goes along. Is Cusins then the Object, the battleground between Barbara and her father? Or is Cusins also testing Undershaft? I think the case can be made that if Undershaft's slavishness to tradition is conventional and not serving mankind, so is Barbara's slavishness to both religion, and to the larger idea that you serve mankind one by one, rather than as a group. Cusins is the visionary, the one who sees how best to marry the two ideas of money and service.

Therefore, the Shavian triangle is:



Moreover, the play has both a father/daughter/suitor and a two-suitor triangular structure, for Undershaft doesn't know his daughter and is also wooing his way into her life. But in both triangles, the victorious suitor (Cusins) is not a father figure, and is not interested in the daughter to be her tutor. It is a sexual, romantic interest and each will tutor the other. Therefore, the marriage of Barbara to Cusins is not only a victory for the unconventional Superman, it is also a victory for the life force and it is this double triumph that is so unique to this play among all those that utilize the Shavian triangle. Moreover, as this is the only play in which the Superman, Devil and Object meet as equals, it may be said that each, in a sense, wins. It is these two factors combined which give Major Barbara the most satisfying of all Shavian endings, and make it Shaw's finest achievement in the use of the Shavian triangle.

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