Man and Superman Study Guide

Man and Superman by George Bernard Shaw

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Introduction

Subtitled "A Comedy and a Philosophy," George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* is a comedy of ideas: its characters discuss ideas such as capitalism, social reform, male and female roles in courtship, and other existential topics in long speeches that resemble arias in an opera. The play's verbosity makes it unwieldy to produce full scale, so the Epistle in the beginning and the Revolutionist's Handbook at the end are usually not performed, and the scene in Hell, although containing the bulk of the play's philosophical musings, is often dropped.

What is left is basically a light-hearted parlor play demonstrating Shaw's idea of the Life Force, the force that drives women to pursue a mate in order to attempt to produce a Superman. This theory, along with a theory of eugenic breeding to accompany it, preoccupied Shaw for the rest of his life. The theories expounded in the play are full of contradictions, typical of Shaw's writing, and critics have devoted countless books and articles to sorting them out. Early critics called the play tedious and dramatically unsound, but today it is considered a landmark in the genre of the "idea play."

Author Biography

George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856, the youngest child of George Carr and Lucinda Elizabeth Shaw. His mother was an opera singer and voice trainer; his father was an unsuccessful businessman and alcoholic who could not pull his family out of poverty, in spite of belonging to the genteel class of Protestant Irish gentry. Shaw once described himself as a "downstart," one whose family had come down in the world. When Shaw was twenty, he moved to London with his mother. Lucinda earned the family's living with her music; Shaw wrote five unsuccessful novels and furthered his education through reading. Music was central to his world and would later come to be essential to his plays.

Shaw entered the theatrical world as a critic, writing music reviews for various papers until asked to write drama criticism for the *Saturday Review* in 1894. He also wrote pamphlets, tracts, and articles, spoke out for the labor movement, and established the Fabian Society, a socialist intellectual group, in 1884 with Beatrice and Sidney Webb. Shaw's interest in the theater soon led him to publish and then to produce what he called the "play of ideas," a shift in dramatic form that altered the course of dramatic structure irrevocably. *Man and Superman* was the first of these, published first in book form in 1903 and then produced on stage in 1905.

Shaw, a shy man despite his speaking ability, developed a public persona, G. B. S., who parried boldly with his critics in editorials and in irreverent comments within the plays themselves. G. B. S.□ impudent and witty□contrasted greatly with the real Shaw, who was shy, prudish, and courteous. Shaw felt compelled to produce plays of social reform. The words spoken by Don Juan in *Man and Superman* might easily have been those of Shaw himself: "I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. This is the law of my life. That is the working within me of Life's incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, intenser self-consciousness and clearer self-understanding." Admittedly a virtual "writing machine," Shaw worked relentlessly, writing plays, critical commentary, and letters of social reform, as well as maintaining a rigorous daily schedule of physical labor in his garden. Among his notable works are the plays *Pygmalion, Major Barbara*, and *Saint Joan*. At the age of 94 he fell from a tree he was pruning and broke a leg. The injury was soon followed by his demise; he died November 2,1950, in Ayot Saint Lawrence, Hertfordshire, England, having become one of the most influential dramatists of all time.

Plot Summary

Epistle Dedicatory to Arthur Bingham Walkly

The printed play includes a dedication, in the form of a letter (epistle), addressed to Arthur Bingham Walkly, a drama critic and Shaw's friend of fifteen years, who, according to the letter, had once asked Shaw why he did not write a Don Juan play. The dedication defends the play's "preaching" tone, and sets out the premise of the play as "the natural attraction of the sexes," to be distinguished from a play about love or marriage. The rest of the rather long and digressive letter explains that Don Juan is a philosopher who follows his instincts, along with some of his theories. This is a play admittedly designed for "a pit of philosophers" as audience.

Act I

Respectable Roebuck Ramsden and brash John Tanner are shocked to discover they must share jointly the guardianship of Ann Whitefield, whose father has just died. Tanner's anarchistic book *The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion* offends Ramsden, and Tanner finds Ramsden hopelessly obsolete. They both would like to marry her off to Octavius, who loves her, and be done with their obligation. They present their dilemma to Ann, but she charms them into accepting their partnership, for her sake, and retires upstairs to mourn her father. Octavius, or Tavy, or Ricky Ticky Tavy, as Ann calls him, is clearly smitten with her, somewhat to Tanner's disgust. Tanner compares her attention to Octavius as like that of a lion or tiger with its prey. Octavius says he would consider such treatment "fulfillment."

Ann returns downstairs, and Ramsden tells her that Octavius's sister, Violet, is pregnant by an unknown "scoundrel." Octavius and Ramsden want to find him and force a marriage, but Tanner's interest is in supporting Violet's need to raise her child, since the male contribution to her condition is essentially over. Octavius goes upstairs to comfort his sister, while Tanner and Ann reminisce about their childhood romance. Tanner accuses her of being a boa constrictor, encircling him in her flirtation. Now Miss Ramsden, Roebuck's maiden sister, comes downstairs, washing her hands of Violet because the young expectant mother does not show proper contrition. Violet shows her true mettle when she is outraged by Tanner's congratulations on her courage. She is offended because she is married, much to everyone's surprise, although she mysteriously withholds her husband's identity. She departs indignantly, leaving the others to contemplate their stupidity.

Act II

The scene opens in the drive of a country estate, where a competent chauffeur, Enry Straker, attends to a broken-down touring car while Tanner looks on helplessly. The chauffeur and Tanner banter nearly as equals about driving fast, which scares Tanner

and exhilarates his employee. Tanner calls Straker the scion of the rising class of intelligent, successful but not wealthy, working men. Now Octavius comes out of the house, having arrived earlier with Ann Whitefield and her sister Rhoda, his own sister, Violet, and an American friend, Hector Malone. Ann has refused Octavius's marriage proposal, claiming to be too upset by her father's death to answer.

Tanner insincerely invites Ann to accompany him on a cross-country drive to Nice, Algiers, and Biskra, assuming she will refuse. Mr. Malone offers to take Violet along, in his car. Mrs. Whitefield and Ann discreetly go indoors, leaving Ramsden and Octavius to help explain Violet's embarrassing situation to the dense American. Alone, Hector and Violet kiss, for Hector is her secret husband. The secrecy evolves from the fact that Hector's father would cut off Hector's substantial inheritance if he learned that his son had failed to marry a girl whose station in life he can improve. Tanner has arranged for Ann to travel with Octavius, and it takes Straker to inform Tanner that Ann is really after him. Tanner escapes by leaving immediately for Biskra.

Act III

The stage directions to Act III consist of an ironic socialist mini sermon on the right of the working man to refuse demeaning labor, as represented by the band of vagabonds discussing "abstruse questions of politic economy" in an abandoned quarry in the Spanish Sierra Nevada. Their discussion parodies an intellectual club meeting, until Mendoza, the chief of the brigand, calls them back to earth. Their mode of redistributing the wealth of society lies in thievery: they are waiting to ambush the next automobile. They catch Straker and Tanner and hold the latter for ransom. To pass the time before morning, when the money can be procured, Mendoza offers to read his love poems, dedicated to one Louisa□who turns out to be Enry's sister, Louisa Straker. The poems are so bad that Tanner recommends he throw them in the fire. The bandits and their prisoners fall asleep in front of the fire listening to, "Louisa I love thee; I love thee, Louisa; Louisa, Louisa."

The stage grows dark, and then a ghostly pallor, accompanied by violins playing a "Mozartian strain" reveals a man dressed as a fifteenth-century Spanish nobleman□it is Don Juan, but he looks remarkably like John Tanner. He is joined by an old woman, who turns out to be Dona Ana de Ulloa, Don Juan Tenorio's love, the one whose father Don Juan had killed in a duel over her honor. Dona Ana, a near twin for Ann Whitefield, has just arrived in Hell (for that is where they are) having lived to the age of seventy-seven. She is surprised to learn that her old lover and her father, Don Gonzalo, are now good friends who enjoy long philosophical discussions, along with the Devil, when the old commander visits from Heaven.

he commander is a statue resembling Roebuck Ramsden in all but his marble form and the style of his moustache. He is the statue that Dona Ana commissioned in her father's honor, after his death. They debate the relative merits of hell versus heaven, with the devil trying to convince Don Juan to go to heaven, since he "has no capacity for enjoyment" and thus doesn't like being in Hell. The good commander would rather be in

Hell because heaven is "too angelically dull" for him. The three men discuss instinct, virtue, and love in lengthy speeches, while Ana expresses shock at their callousness toward women. She leaves in search of a father for the Superman she hopes to conceive.

The sleepers awake and hear a loud bang that turns out to be a flat tire on the car containing Ann Whitefield and the others. She has tracked John Tanner, driven by the Life Force.

Act IV

The scene shifts to a villa on a hillside that looks onto Alhambra, a Medieval Moslem castle. Here, the group learns that Violet's secret husband is the American, Hector Malone; the pair has kept their marriage a secret. Once the elder Malone meets the spirited Violet, however, he blesses the marriage and gives the couple a generous gift of money. Ann again rejects Octavius's marriage proposal. Octavius indicates that he will spend the rest of his life mourning this rejection. Ann then woos and wins Jack Tanner, despite his recognizing the wiles with which she ensnares him. They find compatibility in cynicism.

The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion by John Tanner, M. I. R. C. (Member of the Idle Rich Class)

This section would frequently be printed in the playbill rather than presented on stage. It offers an argument for the breeding of the Superman and for eliminating marriage and describes an experimental commune in America, the Oneida Community. The tract then makes a call for a conference of people who seek the immortality such a program might bring. The handbook ends with "Maxims for Revolutionists" ranging in topic from royalty to the treatment of children and servants and ending with self-sacrifice.

Dedication

Dedication Summary

George Bernard Shaw's letter to Arthur Bingham Walkley is an epistle dedication to the play. Walkley asked Shaw, more than a decade before the play was written, why he had never written a Don Juan play. His question led to the creation of *Man and Superman.*

Shaw recounts the experiences he and Walkley had as critics, and he announces that he has finally written a Don Juan play, but he warns Walkley that it may not be what he is expecting. Shaw does not understand why the public is so interested in his plays, and he apologizes to Walkley for preaching.

Shaw finds all previous attempts to deal with the relationship between the sexes have been a failure. He is certain Walkley did not want him to write a trite Don Juan play as has been done in the past, so he had to spend time crafting the perfect Don Juan character. He then goes on to describe the essence of a Don Juan character as being "a man who though gifted enough to be exceptionally capable of distinguishing between good and evil, follows his own instincts."

Shaw acknowledges that the reader rarely ever gets the message the author intends. Therefore, he has outlined his intention. He reveals that he based his Don Juan on Mozart's version of Don Juan who he considers the last and possibly only great Don Juan. He then goes on to describe how all the world loves Byron's Don Juan, but Shaw does not consider Byron a great writer. He admits that Byron is better than Wordsworth is, but he is not a force like Shelley. Shaw's Don Juan is now a play for the 20th century. The story of Don Juan, in Shaw's opinion, is a full century out of date, and Shaw is ready to give it a facelift.

He says because the fundamental nature of women has changed so must the story. Women no longer cry for pity, rather they take social, legal, and political arms to win their battles.

Although Shaw doubts man ever was the victor of the battle of the sexes, he is positive man no longer claims any hold to victory. He claims that men's business is to keep status and position while women's business is to get married. Overall, he finds this a satisfying means of conducting society. Shaw does not think that the average artist can portray this complicated dynamic because the artist is uniquely absent from the complicated actions of ordinary men and women. Because the artist is absent from the dynamic of ordinary relationships, all the art he creates based on those relationships is flawed.

Shaw notes that most artists portray the man as the sexual initiator; however, he says that the business of sex is largely left to women. Although women are responsible for continuing the human race and marriage, the artist misses this point and incorrectly

portrays the relationship. Thus the artist continues to portray these relationships in an incorrect formula of man pursing woman and being thwarted when in reality the relationship goes, according to Shaw, woman pursues, man resists, woman gets frustrated, man relents.

In Shaw's play, the woman pursues her cause, marriage, against all moral standards. Shaw says society's shock at his heroine's pursuit is just another example of man's hypocrisy because if women held the same moral standard as men, the human race would die out.

If literature portrayed real life instead of rejoicing in woman's illusory beauty, artists would fear women's pursuits. Thus, Shaw concludes that in the instance of sex, art does not imitate life. Shaw is going to change that with this play because although he has been refined by literature, he understands where everyone before him has gone wrong.

He acknowledges that there is a political aspect of the relationship between men and women, but he does not have time to fully deal with the political question in this play. He thinks that the masses have diluted politics because there are no more arranged marriages and interbreeding between political families. Although the masses have earned the right to enter the political fray, they obviously are not confident in their ability because they do not elect members of their own class to parliament. This highlights the class struggle that helps shape society.

Shaw remarks that our society is quickly following the road of Greece and Rome. He thinks the newspapers are inaugurating decadence and that the people are only interested in riches. He believes that society has given up on philosophy and following the truth and instead has become so selfish that our society is doomed to fall much in the same way ancient societies fell.

Shaw says he has incorporated many of his leanings in his play as other authors do, but he says he has taken it one step further than other authors have. Instead of just saying that his Don Juan is a pamphleteer, he has included his handbook as an appendix to the play in order to show the audience that his character has real ideas.

He admits that he has pillaged from many other authors, and he says he admires ancient authors more than he admires the romantics—a notion he thinks will surprise Walkley. All that being said, Shaw says the most important artistic determination is the author's opinion. Shaw says he has not relied, as so many authors do, on recreating another's style of writing but rather has created his own unique style. He ends his letter by hoping Walkley appreciates what he has written.

Dedication Analysis

The letter to Arthur Bingham Walkley is especially important because in it Shaw outlines what he wants the reader to learn from his play. He says in the letter that the author's intent is often lost in literature, and he does not want that to be the case with his Don

Juan play. The letter is not so much a letter to Walkley as it is an explanation to the reader of Shaw's intent.

Shaw was extremely interested in the relationship between men and women. This play almost entirely deals with the complex interaction of women and men. While most modernist writers, greatly influenced by the Romantic Period, wrote about the "ideal" woman, Shaw immediately dismisses the Romantics. Shaw does not see women as objects of fascination rather he sees them as cunning and more imperative to continuing human life than men.

Shaw's idea of women runs contrary to the prevailing idea of women and women's roles when *Man and Superman* was written. He is somewhat of a feminist because he says that men are hypocrites for admonishing women and their role in the sexual dance between the sexes. This theme will be heavily examined and played out through the rest of the play. At the time, women were required to be subservient to men; however, Shaw believes that just required women to get more manipulative in letting the man think he has control when she is really the one holding the reigns.

Shaw's other great interest was Marxism, a theory where class struggle plays a central role in society's development. He touches on this in the letter when he says that he has no time to spare on politics in the play. Although he says he will not deal with politics in the play, he spends a significant portion of the letter discussing class struggle and he touches on it in the play as well.

Another important aspect that Shaw describes is the artist and the educated person being tainted to the love experience. He does not address this in the play as a major theme, but it is important to the development of several of the characters. He says that artists cannot appreciate relationships between men and women because they are exempt from the reality of relationships while at the same time he thinks those who have been refined by literature have unreasonable expectations of love. This is important in the play because the artists do not have fruitful relationships and those who have been tainted by literature do not know what to expect from their dealings with the opposite sex.

The letter also reveals that he has thrown in a third act. Most plays are either three or five acts. *Man and Superman* breaks from this tradition with a four-act play. Shaw says he added the third act to be different. A dream sequence is largely regarded as one of the best philosophical explanations of the relationship between the sexes and is a model example of the existentialistic idea of heaven and hell. Shaw is an existentialist and he takes the third act to explain some of the fundamental ideas of this philosophical movement.

He also mentions many great authors and philosophers such as Nietzsche and Aristotle. We can only assume he mentions these authors to both indicate that he borrowed from them but also to ensure that the reader knows that he intended to borrow material from other great philosophers and writers.

Act 1

Act 1 Summary

Roebuck Ramsden sits alone in his study. He is a distinguished man who is obviously wealthy. Everything about him is polished to perfection—even his head. The state of his study indicates that he has several maids and has no lack of resources.

The parlor maid shows in Octavious Robinson, a clean cut, handsome, young man. Octavious is in morning over the death of Mr. Whitefield. Mr. Whitefield took in Octavious and his sister, Violet, when they were children, and he is upset that he never got the chance to tell him how grateful he is for Mr. Whitefield's kindness. Mr. Ramsden comforts him by telling him that Mr. Whitefield thought he was an honorable youth and that he hoped his daughter, Ann, and Octavious would one day marry.

Octavious loves Ann, but he is certain she would never have him because he has no great ambition for riches. Mr. Ramsden is certain that in light of Mr. Whitefield's death, he will be appointed Ann's guardian. He offers to suggest that she consider Octavious as a husband, but he refuses saying he wishes her to marry him for love not out of obligation.

Mr. Ramsden admires Octavious but he thinks the young man has one flaw—his relationship with Jack Tanner. Jack has written a book, *The Revolutionist's Handbook,* which has been admonished by the newspapers. Mr. Ramsden thinks Jack must be a reprobate even though he has not read his book, and he encourages Octavious to break off his relationship with him.

Just as Octavious is defending Jack, the maid tells Mr. Ramsden that Jack has come to see him. Mr. Ramsden refuses him, but Jack is accompanied by Ann and her mother, so he is forced to see him.

Jack throws Mr. Whitefield's will on the desk, and announces that the will names both Mr. Ramsden and Jack as Ann's guardians. Jack is desperate to get out of this obligation; however, he does not want to nullify the will because Octavious has been left a dowry for his sister and money for his own use.

Jack says he wants Octavious, nicknamed Tavy, to marry Ann in order to rid him of this obligation. Tavy would gladly marry Ann, but he does not think that she wants to marry him. He also does not think it is the right time to ask because her father has just died. Even though Jack suggested the marriage, after he hears Tavy tell of his love for Ann, he begins to tell Tavy marriage to Ann would be a lifetime of misery. He goes on to call Ann a boa constrictor that cannot be controlled, and he says she will do what she wants and blame her guardians if it turns out badly.

The group decides Ann should be consulted on the matter. While Tavy fetches her, Jack and Mr. Ramsden exchange words about Jack's moral character. Mr. Ramsden

admonishes him for his heterodox opinions and Jack thinks Ramsden is too old to understand progressive ideas. Jack is angered that Mr. Ramsden regards him in poorly because of his book even though Mr. Ramsden has never read the handbook.

Ann is a beautiful but not stunning young woman with inexplicable charms. Her mother is an older woman whose thoughts are discounted. Mr. Ramsden wants Ann to choose either himself or Jack as her sole guardian. She says she must respect her father and have them both. She uses her charms to convince them she is right.

Once the group leaves, Octavious and Jack are left alone in the study. They discuss Tavy's obsession with marrying Ann. Jack concludes that marriage is just a form of slavery and that the slave, men, can never be happy with shackles on. He tells Tavy it is naïve to believe in the idea of the happy slave or in a happy marriage. Jack, being enlightened to the ways of women, does not intend to marry.

Mr. Ramsden and Ann gravely come back to announce Violet is pregnant. The two say she must be sent away at once. Jack is shocked at their hypocrisy. He says Violet is only following her natural instincts and undertaking the greatest act of love and bravery.

Violet has been sent to the maid's chambers, and Jack sends Ann to keep her company. Jack finally convinces them that Violet should be welcomed into Mr. Ramsden's home despite her condition and Ann and Mr. Ramsden go to tell Miss Ramsden, Mr. Ramsden's sister who lives with him, of their decision.

Ann and Jack are left alone together. Ann wants Jack to be happy that he is her guardian, and she reminds him that they have known each other since they were children. Then she reveals they used to have a special relationship including a vow never to keep secrets from each other. Jack recalls how he uses to lie to her about his fantastic exploits to entertain her. On one such occasion, Ann found out about a relationship he was having with a girl. She told on the girl and forced the girl to end the affair—something for which Jack has never forgiven her.

When she asks what happened between them, Jack tells her he got a soul. When his passions were ignited, he could not bear to give them over to her. She begins to flirt with him going so far as to draper her arms around his neck. He then admits that he feels a little jealous of Tavy. He thinks he knows Ann is designed on marrying Tavy, but she says she will make Tavy very unhappy. Jack has now grown uncomfortable with the conversation, and he rings the bell for the others to return.

Miss and Mr. Ramsden and Tavy all come into the study. Violet will not tell them whom the man who got her pregnant is, and she will not leave London. Miss Ramsden would like to see her thrown out. Jack is shocked at their behavior. Just then, Violet comes downstairs to catch a cab.

Jack tells her and the group that he is on Violet's side. She is furious that he has insulted her, and she tells the group that she is right because she is married. She says they should have known because she has been wearing a wedding ring but none of

them even had the decency to ask her. She has her reasons for keeping the identity of her husband a secret, and she storms off.

Although the group feels ashamed, they are upset that she did not tell them of her marriage sooner and save them the embarrassment of making such a mistake.

Act 1 Analysis

The characters in the play not only are a means to fulfilling the plot, but to Shaw they also represent archetypes. Mr. Ramsden is the staunch old man who cannot accept change; Octavious is the artist who cannot experience honest love; Jack is the Don Juan; Ann is the manipulator, and so on.

Jack is essentially the main character because he is our Don Juan. It is important the he makes his intentions not to marry very clear because it is essential for the Don Juan to love yet run away from commitment. His relationship with Ann is an example of how Shaw sees all relationships between men and women. Ann pursues and Jack will fall. Shaw expands on these ideas as the play continues.

Jack is more than just the Don Juan character; he is also Shaw's voice. Jack touches on all the ideas Shaw has about the sexes. Jack finds Violet to be the best of them all because she does not put on pretenses. He thinks a woman's place is to help carry on the human race. While society expects women to have children, it places moral limitations on the act, which Jack sees as hypocritical. Thus, Jack is established as Shaw's voice of reason in the play.

Ann's flirting and reminiscing with Jack foreshadows Ann's eventual "snaring" of Jack. Ann's behavior in essence makes her intentions clear while Jack seems oblivious to them. We also know that Tavy loves Ann, but Shaw has already told us the artist cannot experience the reality of relationships, so we know he must loose.

Act 2

Act 2 Summary

Jack is watching his chauffer, or engineer, repair his automobile, but he soon grows exasperated at the progress. He tells the chauffer to leave the car out because he is intending to take a drive and begins to head toward the house to meet some other visitors who arrived earlier also by motorcar.

His chauffer, Henry pronounced Enry, is disappointed that he wasn't given the opportunity to race the other group of visitors to the house. He spends some time talking about new automobile racing records. Jack tells him they will accompany another motorcar in the afternoon. Rhoda, Ann's sister, will ride with them. At the mention of Ann's name, Henry begins whistling a tune.

Octavious comes up and confesses that he asked Ann to marry him. She refused saying he should not be able to think of anything except the death of her dear father. She also told him it would not be right unless he asked for her guardian's permission. Jack gives him his absolute approval. Jack says that he fears Tavy will grow tired of Ann. Octavious says she is his inspiration. Jack tells him not to worry because he is certain Ann has marked Tavy to be her own. Jack then turns to tease Henry about his baseness; however, there is a warmth in their banter.

Tavy hands Jack a note from Rhoda saying that Ann has forbidden her from riding with Jack. When he reads the note, Henry begins to whistle again. Tavy defends Ann saying it is her job now that he father is dead to protect Rhoda.

When Ann comes out, she says Rhoda has a headache. Jack tells her they already have read Rhoda's letter. Ann sends Tavy on an errand, and she is left alone with Jack. She apologizes for the letter from Rhoda and explains that her mother made her forbid Rhoda from riding with him because of his book, a blatant lie.

He lectures her telling her to leave her ties to her mother. He says she will never get her own soul if she does not learn to stand up to her mother. He tells her that to break the chains he would take her on a trip across Europe. She says she will come with him. Even though he was just making an example and did not intend his offer as a genuine invitation, she accepts. He says he would not want to compromise her reputation, but since he is her guardian, she sees no problem with it.

Just then, Octavious walks up with Hector Malone, a wealthy American, Ann's mother, and Mr. Ramsden. Hector is excited about the upcoming motor trip. He says he would like to take Violet with them. At this, the other men confide in him that Violet has secretly married, but that she will not reveal her husband's name. Hector asks to have a few minutes alone with her in order to discuss the trip.

As soon as he and Violet embrace, the audience realizes that Hector is Violet's secret husband. He begs her to let him reveal himself, but she forbids him for fear his father ill disinherit him. Hector's father does not improve of Violet because he feels she is not in the same social class as he is. However, in England Ann is considered to be of a higher social status than Hector.

Jack asks Henry to help him during the motorcar ride to keep Ann and Octavious together and to keep Ann away from him. Henry begins whistling again. Jack has grown tired of Henry's whistling and demands an explanation.

Henry tells him it is obvious that Ann has eyes for him. Jack tells him to start the car because he and Henry are going to take a trip to anywhere but where Ann is.

Act 2 Analysis

This act further enhances Shaw's argument that the character of a person influences their relationship with the opposite sex. Ann has turned down Tavy, and he in turn calls her his inspiration. In Tavy, Shaw is demonstrating that an artist puts a woman too far up on a pedestal to truly experience love with her.

Ann becomes Shaw's ordinary woman. In this act, we first see that Ann will lie and manipulate to get in range of her target, Jack. She becomes an example of how Shaw sees all women—as compromising their morals to gain a means to their end.

As an interesting aside, Shaw includes statistics about motorcars. Automobiles were a rather new technology. During Shaw's time, to own one represented an excess of wealth. Not only were they a representation of class but they also were a fascination for sheer technology sakes. In the same turn, people were still wary of the power they held and regarded them cautiously.

Violet on the other hand represents Shaw's interest in class struggle. She is concerned not with love but with money. She is keeping her relationship concealed because she does not want to be poor. She does not want Hector to work because she sees that as beneath her. In this, she represents the class struggle. She sees those who are "workers" as less than those who are wealthy are. She sees degrading herself to worker status as worse than hiding her love and marriage.

Henry, Jack's chauffer, also represents the class struggle. Jack playfully teases him, but in the end, Jack is his employer. Even if Henry were offended, he must deal with it to maintain his position. Not only that but the first time we see Henry, he is getting dirty working on the automobile setting him up as something less than the wealthy (clean) class.

Jack is a character with much depth and he represents many of Shaw's ideas. Jack is tainted by literature, and he is oblivious to Ann's feeling for him. In this, Shaw is pointing out that Henry, who is not educated by literature, is more in tune with matters of love

than Jack is. When Jack does find out about Ann's designs, he flees. In this, he establishes himself as a true Don Juan.

Act 3

Act 3 Summary

A group of Brigands, pirates of the road, sits on a hill discussing politics. Mendoza, their leader, keeps order to the conversation. The group varies on politics from Anarchism to social democracy. Suddenly the group hears a motorcar coming up the road. The road has been strewn with nails, and Jack's car tire is punctured leading to his and Henry's capture.

Mendoza introduces himself as a man who robs from the rich. In turn, Jack introduces himself as a man who robs from the poor, and the two shake hands. Jack has more than enough money to pay the ransom the brigands are demanding, but he decides to stay with them for the night.

Henry, Jack, and Mendoza stay together to talk as the other men leave to enjoy their evening. Mendoza offers to tell them the story of how he became a brigand. Mendoza was in love with a woman, but she objected to marrying him. As he tells of her charms and beauty, he reveals he name was Louisa Straker, Henry's sister. Henry is furious that he is talking about his sister with such familiarity.

Mendoza recites some poetry about her and Jack falls asleep while listening. He begins to dream of Don Juan.

Don Juan is met by an old woman that he immediately recognizes as a newcomer to hell. She is shocked that she is in hell rather than heaven. Don Juan tells her that in hell, the wicked feel no pain. Since she feels no pain, she must be meant to be in hell. Don Juan does not think he belongs there. He was sent to hell because he murdered someone in a duel.

He convinces her to change her appearance to that of a 27-year-old. When she does, he recognizes her as Ana de Ulloa, the daughter of the man he murdered. He tries to take his leave of her, but she asks him to stay with her to keep her from being lonely. Don Juan has become friends with Ana's father who has gone to heaven and assumed the shape of a statue. As Ana and Don Juan discuss her father, he descends from heaven.

Don Juan tells him his daughter has died; however, her father does not remember her very well. His lack of memory hurts Ana's feelings, and they explain to Ana that in heaven and hell, family relationships are rarely carried on. The devil then joins their conversation.

Don Juan and the devil do not get along because Don Juan cannot stand the prattling on about beauty that dominates conversations in hell. Don Juan does not enjoy himself in Hell, and the devil wants him to take refuge in heaven. He does not want to go to

heaven because it is dull. At this, it is revealed that all are free to go between heaven and hell and the after life is nothing like it is described on Earth.

The group comments that all the best people are in Hell, and the devil adds that he always knew he would win the numbers game because everyone wants to go to hell. Hell is the only refuge from reality; and thus, it is appealing. In heaven, there is only contemplation and helping life in its struggle upward.

The devil thinks that the force of life Don Juan appreciates so much in only death. He believes that men are greedy, lazy, and wasteful but man's only inspiration is death. Don Juan retorts that although the devil is attempting to insult man, he is only building his ego because man likes nothing better than to be called bold and bad. The only true insult to man is to call him a coward. The conversation quickly changes to the relationships between men and women.

Don Juan explains that women only see men as a means for getting children. To a man, woman is something to be worshipped. Through all eternity, the goal has been to propagate the life force and "the brain." All of evolution has been to develop the brain. Ana's father argues that intellect is tedious and he would rather just enjoy himself without knowing why.

However, without intellect, one might be enjoying oneself but would not know it. To Don Juan intellect, religion, and philosophy never held much appeal. The only thing he enjoyed was romance, but he soon tired of that as well.

He then discusses moral hypocrisy. Ana had one husband and 12 children and therefore thinks she is morally fulfilled her duty to replenish the Earth. However, Don Juan argues that it would have been better to replenish the Earth with 12 children from 12 fathers, but society does not look kindly on that. He also is disgusted that society does not accept a woman who has a child without being married as she has fulfilled her role of replenishing the Earth. He decides to go to heaven, as does Ana while Ana's father and the devil stay in hell to party.

When Jack wakes, a motorcar has just stopped and a group of soldiers is coming toward the camp. Ann, Hector, Violet, Ann's mother, and Mr. Ramsden have caught up with Jack and are surprised that he did not give them any warning that he was leaving.

Mendoza recognizes them because he used to be a waiter at a restaurant they all visited. He reveals that Violet and Hector know each other. When the soldiers come upon the group, Jack does not turn Mendoza and his group in but rather tells the soldiers they are his escorts.

Act 3 Analysis

Act three is Shaw's addition to the play. He says this is the act he added to turn it into a four act play. We can see that through most of this act, Shaw digresses from the main plot and enters into a dream sequence.

The dream sequence allows Shaw to explore his philosophies more clearly without the burden of plot. His initial description of heaven and hell gives away that he is an existentialist. The idea of heaven and hell is not to reward or punish but rather is described as an extension of reality or an absence of reality. In that, each man is responsible for his own destiny including the destiny his soul takes in the afterlife. This is not only a confirmation of free will but also a revelation that reality is the burden of life not the reward. This is a plainly existential idea.

He also touches on the idea of intellect as a burden. Man only feels because of intellect but it is because of his intellect that he can never truly enjoy himself. This conundrum cannot be solved. The inherent question is if it is better to feel and know that ones feel or to experience and not be aware of the experience.

Shaw uses the rest of the dream sequence to further explain his ideas of relationships between men and women. Don Juan never married, and he was not entrapped by the wiles of women, but Ana thinks herself morally superior because she did marry. In Don Juan, we see Jack's ideas, and this further establishes Jack as a Don Juan. Shaw also explores hypocrisy in the dream sequence.

In religion, philosophy and other moral institutions, Shaw finds a great hypocrisy. While men say they are doing what is naturally required of them, in essence they have created binding moral rules that do not in fact enhance the quality of life on Earth. He uses Ana's children as an example. Ana says she has done her duty to replenish the Earth, but she has not widened the gene pool because her children all have the same father. If it is a woman's duty to replenish the Earth, then he implies that a woman who has a child out of wedlock should get the same respect as a married woman because she is fulfilling her duty. Because society does not treat everyone equally based on a self-imposed moral ideal, it is hypocritical.

The group of brigands plays a role in pointing out the moral hypocrisy of the idle rich class as well. Mendoza recognizes all the other characters in the play. He points out that they all met at the restaurant to have a sexual liaison with a member of the opposite sex. This in and of itself is a moral flaw; however, some of the characters that think their morality is supreme are the ones engaging in this immoral activity.

In the plot portion of this act, Jack runs away from Ann and finds himself under a different type of capture. Jack does not mind being the captive of the brigands nearly as much as he minds the idea of becoming Ann's captive. Ann plays her role as pursuer even going so far as to track Jack down in Spain.

Mendoza, a self proclaimed poet, once again shows that the artist cannot have love. His object of affection refused him, and he was forced to leave the city and live a life of crime. Because we know Henry to be of the working class, we can assume that Louisa is of the working class as well. Shaw is pointing out in her refusal of Mendoza that the ordinary person experiences love differently than the artist.

Act 4

Act 4 Summary

Henry has picked up Hector Malone (Senior) at a hotel in Grenada and taken him back to a villa the young American and the British have rented. Henry was expecting to pick up Hector Jr. but brought Mr. Malone at his insistence.

Violet comes outside to see Mr. Malone, and he asks to speak to her in private. He reads an intimate note aloud that she had written to Hector. He considers the note very intimate, and Violet confesses that Hector wishes to marry her.

Mr. Malone, although he finds Violet to be a nice girl, wants his son to marry someone with a title. Violet tries to convince him that she is a well-suited match for his son, but he will not hear her argument.

As their civil argument continues, Hector storms into the house. He is enraged that his father would open a letter that was plainly meant for Hector Jr. He tells his father that he means to marry Violet, and he cannot stop him.

When the rest of the group returns to the house and hears the argument, they reveal that Violet is already married. With this announcement, Mr. Malone gets infuriated, insults Violet, and admonishes his son for traipsing around with a married woman. Hector sees this as the last straw, and he announces to the group that he is Violet's secret husband.

Everyone is shocked, and Mr. Malone disowns him on the spot. Hector says he will become a workingman, which angers Violet because she does not want to be part of the working class. Jack and Octavious quickly offer their congratulations and financial support, which angers Mr. Malone. He does not want his son supported by friends. He quickly makes up with Hector. Even though they have made up, Hector still refuses his money. Violet promises to work on him and takes some money from his father.

Mr. Malone says he is in town to meet a man named Mendoza in whom he has invested money. Jack offers to introduce them. Octavious and Ann are left alone. Tavy again confesses his love for her, and she refuses him again. She tells him her mother intends her to marry Jack.

Tavy's heart is broken and she leaves him alone in the garden to cry. As he cries, Mrs. Whitefield comes into the garden and asks him what Ann has done to him. She loves Octavious as a son, she raised him, and she does not want to see him so upset. When she finds out what Ann has said, she is angry with her and denies it. Tavy gives his approval and leaves Mrs. Whitefield with Jack who has just come into the garden.

Jack and Mrs. Whitefield begin to discuss the possibility of his marriage to Ann. They both agree that she is manipulative and a liar. Mrs. Whitefield says she has to marry

someone so it might as well be Jack because she thinks he can control Ann. Violet comes outside and retrieves Mrs. Whitefield.

Ann comes into the garden and is alone with Jack. Jack says he will not marry her, and she almost gives up. He tells her again that he will not marry her, and she yells to him that he will. As the rest of the group begins to walk back into the garden, Ann says she has promised to marry Jack and passes out.

Jack never asked her to marry him, and he knows this is just another one of her traps, but he does not deny what she has said. He, by not denying her, he has agreed to marry her. He tells everyone that the marriage will be held in three days without ceremony. The play ends with everyone laughing.

Act 4 Analysis

Violet again asserts herself as the Marxist voice in the play. She is concerned with money and status and is reviled at the thought of being married to a workingman, but in this act, she also demonstrates something more important. Up until this point, Violet has not been portrayed as the pursuer, and she has not been particularly manipulative—secretive but not deceptive.

In this act, Violet attempts to manipulate Mr. Malone into accepting her. She wins in the end both through her manipulations and through Mr. Malone's overwhelming desire to maintain his status. As Shaw has already told us, it is a man's job to maintain status. By not wanting his son supported by non-family members, Mr. Malone is performing his societal function of maintaining his status.

Mr. Malone also helps to build on the Marxist undertone of the play. He is financing the brigands led by Mendoza. He invested money without any knowledge of the business in which he was investing. This only exacerbates the idea that money is more important than morals and just as a woman will compromise her morals to get married, a man with compromise his morals to earn money and maintain his status.

Jack's character makes a surprising and dramatic change in this act. He turns out not to be a Don Juan because he agrees to marry Ann. It is essential for a Don Juan to love but not become tied down with commitment. Here, Jack commits the ultimate flaw of settling down.

In essence, Shaw is saying there is no true Don Juan and that women must win their pursuit. Woman's role in life of creating children and of pursing marriage is far more important than the man's desire to remain free. Shaw is giving up on the notion that a man can maintain his freedom and is admitting that all men must succumb.

Octavious' heartbreak is also necessary because he is the artist. Shaw has to prove that artists are disconnected from the reality of love, and that they cannot, therefore, truly represent love in his art. Ann by saying that Tavy will never marry points out that artists are exempt from the rules of love.

Mrs. Whitefield and Jack both acknowledge that Ann is deceptive and that she is a liar. However, Mrs. Whitefield still attempts to get her married off and Jack agrees to marry her. In this act, they are both admitting that being deceptive and manipulative is acceptable in the love dance. Although Ann has had to compromise her morals neither Jack nor her mother looks down at her because they understand that what Ann has done is a necessary action to fulfill her role in life.

Handbook

Handbook Summary

The *Revolutionist's Handbook* is a book Jack wrote. It is an appendix to the play. In it, Jack writes a description of what it is to be a revolutionist. He explains that everyone is revolutionist in his own ideas.

Through the rest of the handbook, he touches on social topics. He says the quest for the Superman, although first defined by Nietzsche, did not begin with or end with him. The problem then becomes that everyone has a different idea of who the superman should be. Because no two people can agree on what the superman should be like, society is forced to never have the perfect man.

He also explains his ideas about the prison of marriage, religion, man's objection to improvement, why the world needs a superman, the illusion of progress, the conceit of civilization, and history.

In essence, he says that man is imprisoned by his created social morality; however, man will never be able to live up to his own moral code nor will he be able to break free from his self-imposed moral bondage. Man is too stubborn to learn from his mistakes and his past and to embrace his freedom.

Following this, he includes an appendix of maxims for the revolutionist. For example, he writes, "the golden rule is that there are no golden rules."

Handbook Analysis

Shaw tells the reader in the dedication that he has included the handbook. Many authors write about revolutionists as the central character, but their ideas are never revealed. Shaw means to break that habit by printing Jack's handbook as evidence of his truly revolutionary nature.

The handbook is not only evidence of Jack's character, but it is also Shaw's own opinion. Because the opinions in the handbook so closely mirror those in the dedication, we can assume that Jack is Shaw. The handbook outlines the philosophical ideals that he based the book on and gives the reader a roadmap with which to read the book.

Upon reflection, the reader can see that Shaw was trying to show in the play that the superman is an impossibility. In the handbook, he discusses the lack of agreement of what the superman should be like. He says all the world is searching for the ideal man, but in the play, he demonstrates that even the most ideal man either morally (Mr. Ramsden) or philosophically (Jack) has deep flaws that impede him from becoming the superman.

The handbook also points out man's dissatisfaction and inability to live up to his own moral code. Shaw is implying that man created morals and that morals do not exist outside of man's created society. Throughout the play we see characters doing immoral things proving Shaw's point that even the most moral of men will never be able to live exactly by the moral code.

Characters

The Chief

See Mendoza.

The Devil

The Devil is the suave and sophisticated host of Hell and the alter ego of Mendoza. The devil debates with Don Juan, insisting that it is not the Life Force that governs the earth but Death and that humans are essentially destructive beings, not creative ones. The Devil points out that the country where he holds the largest following is England.

Duval

One of the bandits, a Frenchman, who helps Mendoza waylay travelers to hold them for ransom.

Jack

See John Tanner.

Lucifer

See The Devil.

Hector Malone

An American traveling in Europe who falls in love with and secretly marries Violet, since his father would disapprove of her social status. He is honorable but laughable because of his open-hearted good nature and because he does not know enough to be "ashamed of his nationality." He shows his mettle when he announces himself ready to support his new wife, without his father's financial assistance.

Mendoza

A Jewish Spaniard, a former waiter, and now leader of a band of vagabonds with an imposing "Mephistophelean affectation." Mendoza has thrown his life away over a lost love, Louisa Straker. He is transposed into the Devil in the Don Juan in Hell scene. Mendoza bores his hostages to sleep with the terrible poetry he wrote to Louisa. Mendoza knows most of the main characters because he waited on them at the Savoy

Hotel. Tanner befriends him and provides a viable alibi rather than turning him in to the police when they arrive.

Miss Ramsden

Roebuck's maiden sister takes a high hand with Violet, assuming her unmarried, and succeeds in offending her completely.

Roebuck Ramsden

The quintessence of the well-to-do gentleman, Ramsden ("Granny" to Ann) fancies himself a freethinker but is in fact a conservative. He dresses and acts impeccably, professes to want to help Violet, yet blunders into offending her with his assumptions about her marital status and the presumptuous way that he starts making decisions for her. Underneath the limitations imposed by society' s conventions, Roebuck is a kind person.

Ricky Ticky Tavy

See Octavius Robinson.

Octavius Robinson

Octavius, a rather simple and idealistic soul, suffers for his love of Ann, who merely toys with him and then throws him over for Jack. Tavy will probably never marry but will enshrine his brief moment with Ann on the altar of his heart.

Violet Robinson

Violet, Octavius's sister, possesses a strong will and a firm step. Married and pregnant, she honors her new husband's strange request to keep his name a secret from her friends to delay his father finding out that he has foiled the elder Malone' s plot to buy social advancement either for his son or his son's new wife through marriage. Even though marriage to Violet would not show "a social profit" for anyone, she so charms Mr. Malone that he instantly accepts the marriage and blesses it with his love, and his money.

Senor Commander

See Don Gonzalo Ulloa.

The Statue

See Don Gonzalo Ulloa.

Enry Straker

The modern Prometheus, Enry (or Henry without the dropped H), is a topnotch automobile mechanic with a penchant for fast cars. He has more competence, self-assurance, and wisdom than his employer Jack Tanner because Straker works for a living. It is Enry Straker who recognizes Ann's pursuit of Jack. He also pulls the wool from Jack's eyes about his own desire.

John Tanner

John, or Jack, would prefer to spend his days philosophizing about life rather than living it. He sees right through Ann's manipulations but falls for her anyway. He fancies himself a revolutionary, working for social reform, and to this end has published the *Revolutionist's Handbook,* the precepts of which are expounded to all who will listen by his alter ego and remote ancestor, Don Juan.

Tavy

See Octavius Robinson.

Don Juan Tenorio

Don Juan is the old philosopher who once was a lover and repents not of his acts but of the foolishness of his dreams. In Hell, he expounds his theory of the Life Force, and he longs to live for eternity contemplating reality.

Ana de Ulloa

At the age of seventy-seven, Ana dies and finds herself in Hell with the unexpected option of going to Heaven if she wants. She is the alter ego of Ann Whitefield, though at her age she now lacks Ann's drive for the Life Force. She still remembers her young lover, Don Juan Tenorio, the brash man who wooed her and who killed her father in a duel over her honor.

Don Gonzalo Ulloa

A sincere and honorable man, the commander lived his life as a gentleman, doing what was expected of someone of his class, including facing Don Juan, an expert fencer, in a

duel. When he dies of wounds inflicted by the younger man, he goes straight to heaven, but he spends much time in Hell, chatting amiably with his new friend, Don Juan. Heaven and its saccharine occupants bore the Don. Influenced by his young friend, he is reconsidering the values that guided his life on earth.

Ann Whitefield

Ann is a huntress in the world of male and female relationships. Her instinct toward the Life Force drives her to seek a mate worthy of producing with her the new Superman. She is sophisticated, poised, and fully in command of the men who fall for her. When she breaks Octavius's heart, it causes her no remorse. Tanner is a good match for her because he sees through her hypocrisy. According to Shaw "Every woman is not Ann, but Ann is Everywoman."

Mrs. Whitefield

Ann's mother does not have to play the matchmaker's role with a daughter who seeks her own mate, but she tries to lend a hand. Mrs. Whitefield tells Tanner that she doesn't care if Ann marries him, but when he asserts that he has no intentions along those lines, she slyly suggests that he'd be Ann's match. Mrs. Whitefield cannot help working for the Life Force.

Themes

Sex

Man and Superman expounds Shaw's pointed view of humanity's sexual nature. In this play, Ann Whitefield woos her newly appointed guardian, John Tanner, and he, in spite of his anti-romantic persona, falls for her. He does not love her in the conventional sense, but falls prey to the "Life Force" that she exudes. It is more a matter of sexual attraction than it is of romanic love. Shaw's idea of this Life Force derives from French philosopher Henri Bergson's *Olan vital*, or spirit of life.

Bergson's concept proposed that intellect was an advanced form of instinct, and that intellect and instinct together constituted the source of vitality shared between all creatures and God. Social niceties, such as the conventions of marriage and courting, merely mask the underlying drive toward life and procreation. The Life Force is the creative urge toward self-preservation and regeneration, the drive to evolve, adapt, and actualize. Bergson's philosophy parallels French naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck's biological concept of the organism's tendency to adapt to environment, to survive through self-transformation. Lamarck predated Darwin's theory of natural selection, which Shaw opposes by going back to the idea of Lamarckian determinism in the form of an unconscious will towards life.

Shaw draws on both philosophy and biological theory for his Life Force theory, which became a common theme in his work, especially in his prefaces. Nowhere else, however, is it so fully explored as in the Don Juan in Hell segment found in Act III, where Ann Whitefield transposes into Dona Ana de Ulloa and Tanner becomes Don Juan Tenario. They debate the relative merits of heaven and earth with the devil and "the statue," Ana's dead father. Don Juan insists that, "Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organizing itself . . . the mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium, the files and the fleas and the Fathers of the Church ... all more or less successful attempts to build up that raw force into higher and higher individuals, the ideal individual being omnipotent, omniscient, infallible, and withal completely, unilludedly self-conscious: in short, a god."

The purpose of the Life Force is to create a superior being, the Superman. In *Man and Superman*, Life Force flows through female intuition, whose sole purpose is to achieve union with a male of intellectual superiority. An exceptional woman, who has a strong and irresistible Life Force, scoffs at weaker intellects, such as Octavius, who, though not unintelligent, lacks charisma. She seeks instead someone like Tanner, whose intellect makes him surly and offensive to other men but irresistible to strong women like Ann.

Intellect may seem an odd property to combine with the Life Force, but Don Juan explains that "brains" are needed to avoid death, thus the woman seeks a mate whose offspring have a good chance of survival.

Ubermensch (Superman)

The German term *Ubermensch* first appeared in Goethe's *Faust* (1808) and later in Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1892). Nietzsche meant the term to indicate the universal human goal that could only be achieved when man suppresses his natural passions and commits himself to intellectual creativity. This, according to Nietzsche, is the overarching goal of humanity, the one that transcends individual goals or those of a cultural group. The Superman would be morally and intellectually superior to the average man.

Nietzsche was influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, a German philosopher who proposed that a single all-encompassing "Will" was the cosmic force that drives nature and individuals to act as they do. The Nietzschian concept of a Superman contributed to Hitler's drive for a superior Aryan race, and Shaw himself proposes that the Superman might be bred from humans of the highest intellectual and moral standards.

The Superman in *Man and Superman* has the potential to be forged through a union between Jack Tanner, due to his intellectual superiority, and Ann Whitefield, who embodies the Life Force. The Superman is explicitly mentioned in the play, when the devil calls Nietzsche's Superman "the latest in fashion among Life Force fanatics" in Act III. Shaw's Don Juan explains that the Life Force seeks to create a Superman, and that humanity's highest goal is to serve that purpose as well as to gain a philosophical mind in order to understand its purpose.

The intellect is needed because without it, man "blunders into death." The philosophic man "seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action that will by the so-discovered means." In other words, each human should seek its highest ability to comprehend its ultimate purpose and then bend willingly to the Life Force's urge to create the Superman.

Moral Corruption

The Don Juan story is an age-old tale of an obsessive lover and adventurer who is carried off by the devil after a lifetime of chasing women. It is probably best told by Mozart in his opera *Don Giovanni* (1787). In Mozart's version, Don Giovanni (Don Juan) woos Donna Anna, who rejects him and whose father, the Commander, he kills in a duel over her honor. Later Don Giovanni and his servant Leporello see a statue of the dead Commander in a cemetery and Don Giovanni jokingly asks it to dinner. The statue nods its head and later appears at dinner, whereupon it chastises Don Giovanni for his reckless life. Then the Devil appears to carry him off, while the police arrive too late to arrest him for the murder of Donna Anna's father.

The origin of the Don Juan story is unknown, having first appeared in Spanish literature in 1630 as *Don Juan of Seville*. Moliere also wrote a version in the eighteenth century, and Lord Byron, in the early-nineteenth century, takes Don Juan from Spain to a Greek

island, to Turkey and Russia, and then to England as a garrulous adventurer who intersperses his love affairs with philosophical musings on power, politics, and poets. Shaw's play is a kind of modernized and inverted comedic adaptation of Mozart's work, which Shaw knew intimately from his mother's participation in opera and which he learned to love.

In Shaw's Don Juan story, the woman, Ann Whitefield, plays the pursuer and the Don Juan figure of John Tanner is a reluctant lover. The commander/statue becomes Roebuck Ramsden, who threatens not with a sword but by throwing Tanner's book, *The Revolutionist's Handbook,* at him. Rather than fight over her virtue, they duel verbally over whether Ann should be allowed to read Tanner's book and how to share her joint guardianship. In a distinct role reversal, the theme of moral corruption in Don Juan is, in Shaw's work, cast aside in favor of a theme of moral passion (a term borrowed from Hegel)□a passion, on Tanner's part, to be moral in the face of Ann's seduction. Naturally, he loses, because Ann is without morals and because she is driven by the Life Force□as is Tanner□to procreate. In Shaw's Don Juan, moral corruption is portrayed as simply a side effect of the basic biological drive to preserve the species.

Style

Typical of nineteenth-century drama was the "parlor comedy," which had its roots in the "comedy of manners" popularized during the Restoration period (late-seventeenth century). The dominant theme of the comedy of manners was society life, specifically as it related to courtship and marriage. In a comedy of manners, the plot both reflects and satirizes the moral behavior of the characters, who represent "types" of people rather than fully rounded individuals. The parlor comedy moved the action to the parlor, or sitting room, where the characters discussed their predicaments.

Shaw advanced the parlor comedy into the play of ideas. The play of ideas had evolved from Henrik Ibsen's serious parlor dramas, where characters discussed deep moral or social crises. There was more talk than action in Ibsen's work, and Shaw adapted the "talking" play into a dramatized dialogue between conflicting ideas instead of characters. Whereas Ibsen's plays put realistic characters into a parlor to discuss at some length their conflict with antagonists, Shaw loads the dialogue with philosophical ideas voiced by "types" who discuss ideas at great length. In an idea play, it is not the action or the characters but the ideas that take center stage.

Historical Context

Women's Suffrage Movement

In 1889, Shaw considered running for public office as a Liberal candidate. His platform would include "suffrage for women in exactly the same terms as men." During Shaw's life, women discovered that they could earn an independent living. The next logical step was to demand the right to vote. Women in Britain had been fighting for the vote and the right to own property since 1875. Shaw's circle of friends included renowned suffragettes such as Emily Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel, who endured multiple imprisonments and force-feedings□tube-feedings to prevent them from dying (as a result of the hunger strikes they would pursue) and thus becoming martyrs□in their mission to liberate women.

Shaw supported the suffrage movement and spoke out against forcible feeding, which he considered torture. Although he frequently contributed witty editorials to the suffragettes' cause, however, he felt that women themselves were completely capable of fighting their own battles and that women should not need men's assistance to procure what was rightfully theirs. Furthermore, although he insisted that "the denial of any fundamental rights to the person of woman is practically the denial of the Life Everlasting," he so often couched his criticisms in flippant humor that women were not sure he was actually helping their cause. As it was, the cause dwindled by the turn of the century, after the press lost interest in it.

Finally, in 1918, women over the age of thirty were granted the right to vote and to hold positions in the House of Commons. At the same time, the property clause requiring male voters to own property (amounting to ten British pounds) was removed.

Fabian Society

George Bernard Shaw with his two friends Beatrice and Sidney Webb formed the core of the Fabian Society, named after the Roman general Fabius, who saved Rome from the invading Hannibal. Shaw's Fabian Society sought to obtain basic human rights through gradual reforms in society as a way to stave off what might otherwise lead inevitably to revolution. The society members took as their mission the simplification of their lifestyles, in order to expend their energy in bettering the lives of others.

The Fabian Society was an outgrowth of the Fellowship of the New Life, founded by Scottish philosopher Thomas Davidson in 1883 and centered on achieving ethical perfection in order to serve the larger society through promoting socialism. Cambridge fellow Edward Carpenter honed the group's belief to specifically endorse vegetarianism, hard physical labor, and handspun clothing, in a blatant rejection of the excesses of the Victorian upper classes. The Webbs and Shaw adopted this philosophy, taking the new Victorian work ethic to an extreme: they worked eighteen-hour days gardening, writing,

and distributing pamphlets on socialist ideals. They abhorred any form of personal indulgence, from overeating and sex to the wearing of fine clothing. They abstained from eating meat and led celibate, spartan lives.

Besides their social and political mission, the Fabians also supported the arts, and it was under the auspices of the Fabian Society that Shaw presented a series of lectures about the dramatic influence of Henrik Ibsen (*Hedda Gabler*), whose work he admired and promoted in Britain. Perhaps not coinci-dentally, all three founding Fabians lived productively until their eighties (nineties in Shaw's case), and they were still writing prolifically in their seventies. Their purpose in adopting their strict regime of personal hygiene was to subordinate their needs to greater cause of human equality.

Although others periodically joined the group, H. G. Wells (*The Time Machine*) the most notable among them, it was this trio that held the society together and made its greatest impact on British society. The Fabian Society was revived in 1960 and still serves as a liberal think tank for Britain's current Labour Party.

Critical Overview

Man and Superman was first published in book form in 1903 before being produced on the stage. Shaw published this early play himself, supervising the work closely. He sold just over 2700 copies in Britain. Essayist and critic G. K. Chesterton, as quoted in *George Bernard Shaw: The Critical Heritage,* considered the book "fascinating and delightful" but called his friend Shaw to task for showing little faith in humanity. Likewise, essayist and critic Max Beerbohm, writing in the *Saturday Review,* found Shaw's characters flat and priggish, so much so that "The Life Force could find no use for them."

By the time the play was produced, in May of 1905 at the Royal Court Theatre, many of the prominent drama critics had already read the printed version of the play. The leading critic of the day, E. A. Baughan, who wrote under the pseudonym "Vaughan" in the *Daily News*, called Shaw an "anaemic idealist," who might become "the comedy writer for men and women who have the modern disease of mental and physical anemia." A. B. Walkley, the critic to whom Shaw addresses his dedicatory epistle in the beginning of the printed play, wrote in the *Times Literary Supplement* that Shaw's "idea-plot" interferes with his "action-plot," such that finds the former "soon exhausts itself," while the latter is "a mere parasite of the other."

William Archer, a journalist who had helped Shaw get an early job writing art criticism, and who then wrote for the *World*, expressed distaste for the character of Ann Whitefield, calling her a "man-devouring monster." Archer suggested that Shaw approached his subject with too broad a brush, painting male-female relationships in such general terms as to lose the realism demanded by theater. In spite of such criticism, the play ran for 176 performances and served as a turning point in Shaw's career, because the actor who played Jack Tanner, Granville Barker, was a producer who recognized Shaw's talent and helped him to stage several more plays at his theater over the next few years. The "Don Juan in Hell" scene was not included in this first production but was separately staged at the Royal Court Theatre in 1907. The tradition of producing this scene separately has continued.

Critics evaluating Shaw's career as a whole often point to his lack of feeling, complaining that his plays are "as dry and flat as a biscuit" according to V. S. Pritchett, quoted in *George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey*. These critics complained that his characters talk so much that the ideas in the idea play get lost in the verbiage. In his early years, however, Shaw had great influence over young minds, as drama critic Eric Bentley asserted in *Bernard Shaw*, because he questioned "marriage, the family, education, science, religion, and□above all□capitalism." His mode was to proselytize through discussion, presenting multiple sides of the debate through a dramatized dialectic. He stirred up the beehive and waited for his audience to reorganize their thinking according to higher principles.

That his audiences often simply enjoyed the show and failed to "get" his message was a source of tremendous disappointment for Shaw. He had the reputation of a gadfly or

crank, not a profound social reformer. Misunderstood, Shaw created G. B. S. (George Bernard Shaw), an alter ego who would fight arrogantly with the public while Shaw the man shunned publicity. G. B. S. wrote scathing responses to the critics and was taken for a crank. "Not taking me seriously," G. B. S. announced, "is the Englishman's way of refusing to face facts." Even so, by the time he was seventy, Shaw was "probably the most famous of living writers," according to a *New York Times* editorial.

As Bentley pointed out, "Shaw's career is 'sounder' that any merely popular writer's, for his books have gone on selling indefinitely and his plays have returned to the stage again and again." Looking back, T. S. Eliot, quoted in *Discovering Authors*, said of him that "It might have been predicted that what he said then would not seem so subversive or blasphemous now. The public has accepted Mr. Shaw not by recognizing the intelligence of what said then, but by forgetting it; we must not forget that at one time Mr. Shaw was a very unpopular man. He is no longer the gadfly of the commonwealth; but even if he has never been appreciated, it is something that he should be respected."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Hamilton is a Humanities teacher at Cary Academy, an innovative private school in Cary, North Carolina. In this essay she discusses the ideological contradictions in Shaw's play and in his nature.

Shaw's *Man and Superman* holds a myriad of comic inversions, from the role reversal in which the woman pursues the man, to the satiric switching of heaven and hell. His inversions confuse even the play's characters, whose conventional responses to unconventional situations make up the comedy of his play, while the underlying truths expressed by the inversions make up its philosophical content. For example, Ana, having recently arrived in Hell, finds it a delightful paradise, and she cannot wait to get into Heaven, since to her mind, "if Hell be so beautiful as this, how glorious must Heaven be!"

Don Juan, the Devil, and her deceased father, the Commander, protest: they too once shared her delusion, but they now know the truth. Don Juan is in Hell, where one would expect him to be after having killed the Commander. Having led a life of sin, Don Juan might well look forward to reveling in Hell, but in fact he cannot stand it. However, his reasons reveal an inversion in Shaw's structuring of heaven and hell. Don Juan's problem is not that heaven and hell are switched, but that what he expected from each is also switched. Hell is the Heaven of earthly imagination□but it is based on misguided imagination. Thus Shaw's inversions occur on multiple and intersecting planes.

Hell is a beautiful paradise (a commonplace inversion) that is hellish in its tedium (not an inversion) and the tedium consists of the continuation of earthly hopes and dreams (the key inversion). The latter inversion proves to be the most perverse and is one of the cornerstones of the philosophy Shaw explores in this play. In Shaw's Hell, the Devil is an earnest fellow, not an evil being. But his rather unexpected plea for sincerity and warmth make Don Juan ill. At the same time, the Commander, a good and kindly man, has gone to heaven as he might have expected. But because Heaven too is inverted, he finds it a place of boring contemplation, full of hypocrites. Don Juan wants to go to Heaven to contemplate reality, while the Commander wants to escape this "most angelically dull place in all creation."

Further inversions occur in the Devil's perception of humankind. The Devil abhors (rather than revels in) humanity's obsession with Death and deadly inventions, from the rack and gallows to patriotism and other "isms" that insidiously encourage destruction in their name.

With so many inversions competing for attention, Shaw is not able to avoid certain logical contradictions. For example, Hell is Hellish to someone like Don Juan partly because of the Devil's longing for "love, happiness, and beauty." Rather than feeling inferior to God's creation, the Devil claims to have created Hell as a haven away from Heaven's hypocrisy. Such fatuousness nausates Don Juan, who finds soul-searching hypocritical, although he himself wants to abide in Heaven where he can contemplate

reality. He'll find only hypocrisy in Heaven, according to the Commander, who leaves Heaven "forever," having recently converted from hypocrisy himself.

According to the Commander, the truly blessed go to Hell. Meanwhile, the Devil finds offense in Dona Ana's preference for Heaven's brand of hypocrisy over his. In other words, both places harbor hypocrites as well as enlightened individuals who seek the reality they left behind on earth. Such contradictions led critics such as Bertrand Russell to declare Shaw "more bounder than genius" because the logic of his philosophy did not make sense.

Shaw's penchant for turning things upside down extended to real life as well as the closed fictional world of the stage and again inherent contradictions caused him difficulties. His almost perverse tendency towards opposing conventional thought rankled the suffragettes he tried to help when he suggested that the women's voting rights movement should, by definition, not need to enlist the support of men.

He told his sister Lucy that women were better off speaking for themselves than making use of men's entreaties. He wrote several essays in their support, but then, treating women as he did men, he ridiculed them for their voting follies once they were empowered. As he was quoted in *The Genius of Shaw*:

Only the other day the admission of women to the electorate, for which women fought and died, was expected to raise politics to a nobler plane and purify public life. But at the election which followed, the women voted for hanging the Kaiser; rallied hysterically round the worst male candidates; threw out all the women candidates of tried ability, integrity, and devotion; and elected just one titled lady of great wealth and singular demagogic fascination, who, though she justified their choice subsequently, was then a beginner. In short, the notion that the female vote is more politically intelligent or gentler than the male voter proved as great a delusion as the earlier delusions that the business man was any wiser politically than the country gentleman, or the manual worker than the middle class man.

Shaw compares his disappointment in women voters with his disappointment in businessmen and manual workers. Even though common sense would predict that novice voters would necessarily lack political sophistication, Shaw derides women for it. He glosses over the fact that having never had the vote, they need time to get used to their new responsibility. It is as though, as a way of chiding others to live up to his ideals, Shaw stubbornly refuses to see things as they are but as they should be. At the same time, because he sets himself up as a critic and judge, he fails to attend to his own logical inconsistencies.

Shaw comes by his inversions naturally: born a Protestant in the Catholic city of Dublin, Ireland, he was never to enjoy either acceptance or shared values with his peers at school or at play. His religious and cultural otherness led him to experience painful isolation within a teeming city. He wrote of his year-long stint at a mostly Catholic school in a piece entitled "Shame and Wounded Snobbery," applying the phrase often applied

to Hell and which he reiterates in *Man and Superman*: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

As a strategy for survival, Shaw eschewed relations with the lower class Catholic boys and instead "was a superior being, and in the play hour did not play, but walked up and down with the teachers in their promenade." Meanwhile, because of the "downstart" nature of his family's fortunes, he was also shunned by the more affluent Protestant middle-class boys of the neighborhood. If his outsider status trained his eye for social injustice, it also gave him the time and inclination to train his wit for imaginary reversals of fortune. Doubly shunned, he became doubly aloof, feeling philosophically and economically superior to his Catholic peers even though seen by them as socially inferior.

His memories of this period of his life so haunted him that he said "when ghosts rise up from that period I want to lay them again with a poker." He took his escape route into fantasy, creating an internal world where he righted the wrongs around him. What may have begun as playful imagining, became an ingrained habit of mind. In the preface to his long autobiographical essay *Immaturity*, he explains the creation of his G. B. S. persona as a derivative of his escape into fantasy:

Whether I was born mad or a little too sane, my kingdom was not of this world: I was at home only in the realm of my imagination, and at my ease only with the mighty dead. Therefore I had to become an actor, and create for myself a fantastic personality fit and apt for dealing with men... I was outside society, outside politics, outside sports, outside the church. If the term had been invented then I should have been called the Complete Outsider.

Later within that preface Shaw notes that whenever he addressed "music, painting, literature, or science ... the positions were reversed" and he became "the Insider." Being an Insider in Shaw's terms meant being perceived as capable of judging authoritatively, but ironically, this status implies being outside. In other words, essential inversion lies at the very core of Shaw's personality and in fact serves as a defining characteristic of all that is best in his nature and intellect. Just as he inverted his own self to become an "Insider," he went about constructing fictional worlds that he could breath into life on the stage. Worlds where his upside-down logic could flourish. An Outsider is at heart a critic who serves the world that rejects him by rejecting that which is offensive in the world.

In *Man and Superman,* Shaw applies his inversions to no smaller a target than Humankind and its most important dreams and delusions: the relations between man and woman, the purpose of life, and the structure of the hereafter. In so doing, he chides his fellow humans to reconsider the structures of the mind that delude them, and he builds a bridge, albeit shaky and tentative, between his world and theirs.

Source: Carole Hamilton, for *Drama for Students*, Gale, 1999.

Critical Essay #2

Calling Man and Superman *"Shaw's great treatise on sex, morality, and the war between men and women," Kramer offers a positive review of a 1988 revival of the play, though she expresses reservations about the lead actors essaying Jack and Ann*.

The heroine of *"Man and Superman,"* Ann Whitefield, is one of Shaw's strong-minded women. Like Candida, Barbara Undershaft, and Vivie Warren, she knows the world and what she wants out of life. But Ann isn't as immediately likable as Candida, Barbara, and Vivie; she lacks their forth-rightness and their gift for argument. Where Barbara and Candida can hold their own with fathers, suitors, and husbands, Ann comments on speech instead of engaging in it, and she manages people particularly men instead of trying to reason with them. She's forever getting caught out in some manipulative lie usually by Jack Tanner, the selfstyled radical who seems so anxious to escape her machinations. It's an undignified position for a young woman to put herself in, and one can easily see that Ann Whitefield might offend modern female sensibilities especially since Jack's main attraction for Ann seems to lie in the regularity with which he insults and abuses her.

"Man and Superman" is Shaw's great treatise on sex, morality, and the war between men and women. Written between 1901 and 1903, it was both his answer to the conventional romantic comedy and a response to the joking suggestion, made some years earlier by the London *Times* critic Arthur Bingham Walkley, that he attempt a play about Don Juan. Shaw's modern "libertine" is a man who runs from Woman instead of pursuing her and who outrages not her person or her honor but the tenets of conventional morality. Shaw referred to the long dream sequence in Act III, in which Tanner falls asleep and imagines a conversation, in Hell, between the Devil and the characters in Mozart's opera, as a "pleasantry" and "a totally extraneous act." But the play is full of lines that look yearningly forward or hauntingly back to the dream sequence: "Octavius, it's the common lot. We must all face it some day," "A lifetime of happiness! It would be hell on earth," "I'll call you after your famous ancestor Don Juan," "That's the devilish side of a woman's fascination," "There is a rascal in our midst, a libertine," "When you go to heaven, Ann ..." And, finally, in Act IV, Tanner's "When did all this happen to me before? Are we two dreaming?" Whatever Shaw thought (or said he thought), "Don Juan in Hell" contains the key both to Tanner's essential character as an idealist and to the nature of his attraction for women.

The latest revival of ' *'Man and Superman,* " at the Roundabout Theatre, does not include "Don Juan in Hell." Instead, the production (which excises Act III entirely and renumbers Act IV as Act III) teases the audience with snippets of Mozart. (In Act II, Tanner's chauffeur, Henry Straker, keeps whistling the opening bars of "La ci darem la mano," from "Don Giovanni.") The revival is standard Roundabout Theatre fare: it contains execrable performances by David Birney and Frances Conroy as Jack Tanner and Ann Whitefield and glorious performances in nearly all the secondary roles Straker (Anthony Fusco), Taw (Michael Cumpsty), the American Hector Malone (Jonathan Walker), his father (John Carpenter). Kim Hunter proves a charming Mrs. Whitefield

once she gets going, and of the supporting parts only Tavy's sister Violet is overplayed (by Harriet Harris).

It's typical of New York Shaw that secondary roles are played to perfection and leading roles to no purpose whatever. In recent seasons, what might have been first-rate productions of *"Arms and the Man," "Mrs. Warren's Profession,"* and *"You Never Can Tell"* were marred by the performances of such leading ladies as Glenne Headly, Uta Hagen, and Amanda Plummer. (The Pearl Theatre Company' s recent revival of "Candida" was an exception, held together, as it was, by Rose Stockton's performance in the title role.) What's unusual about the production at the Roundabout is the degree of difference between the levels of performance: Mr. Cumpsty and Mr. Fusco are so deft, Mr. Birney and Miss Conroy so inept that the credit for good performances must clearly go to the actors rather than to their director, William Woodman. Mr. Birney's characterization is lodged entirely in the sort of mannerisms that Shaw worked so hard to abolish from the nineteenth-century stage: in putting his hands in his waistcoat pockets, scratching his nose, pulling his ear, brushing his forehead, and striking attractive poses against convenient pieces of furniture.

Miss Conroy's performance, meanwhile, seems motivated wholly by dislike for the character she is playing. She blinks a lot and speaks in a peculiar, repressed fashion (as though her jaws had been wired together) to show what a hypocrite Ann is, and emphasizes Ann's coquetry by reacting to everything onstage with an affected little moue. She fixes her hair when Tanner's back is turned. Her portrayal is openly hostile, as though she were anxious to divorce herself from the low, scheming creature that Jack divines Ann (and, by extension, all women) to be. I sympathize with Miss Conroy□ I'm not wild about Ann Whitefield myself□but her performance seems dictated by an inability to take in the shape of the play. Even without the ' *'Don Juan in Hell"* sequence, *"Man and Superman"* takes us far beyond Jack Tanner's inadequate views of "the struggle between the artist man and the mother woman." It is Ann, after all, who proves to have the clearer vision, while Tanner, for all his intellectual chatter, is a fool.

Shaw was, in his way (as Eric Bentley has repeatedly observed), as subversive as Ibsen and, later, Strindberg when it came to recognizing women's sexuality. The whole point of *"Man and Superman* " is the role reversal in the courting game: here woman is the pursuer, not (as Jack thinks) because she is basically predatory but because there is something she *wants*. More subversive than any of Jack's verbal flying in the face of convention is the governing idea behind the play's dramatic situation: that the man a woman wants to marry is not the one who idealizes her but the one who knows how rotten she can be. What distinguishes Tanner from the crowd of other speechifying Shavian heroes is the pleasure□almost erotic in its intensity□with which we look forward to the moment when he will stop talking.

It's not impossible to play a character one doesn't have much sympathy with. Rose Stockton, in the circular issued by the Pearl Theatre Company, stated her basic discomfort with some views about women that Shaw espoused, but that discomfort was not discernible in her portrayal of Candida Morell□though it very well might have been. Similarly, though Michael Cumpsty is clearly aware that Tavy is there to parody

conventional idealism, that knowledge doesn't prevent him from making us care about Tavy. Perhaps in some future dream sequence there will be a meeting place imagined for the Rose Stocktons, the Michael Cumpstys, and the Anthony Fuscos of this world, where, without the distracting influence of commercially minded producers and casting directors, they can all come together and perform Shaw.

Source: Mimi Kramer, "Don Bernardo in Hell" in the *New Yorker*, Vol. LXIII, no. 49, January 25, 1988, pp. 85-87.

Critical Essay #3

In a review that was originally published on September 12, 1903, Beerbohm expounds on the nature of dramatists, using Shaw's play Man and Superman, *as an illustration. He also examines the play as a worthwhile theatrical experience*.

Aristotle, often as he sneered at Plato, never called Plato a dramatist, and did not drag the Platonic dialogues into his dramatic criticism. Nor did Plato himself profess to be a dramatist; and it would need a wide stretch of fancy to think of him dedicating one of his works to Aristotle as notable expert in dramatic criticism. On the other hand, here is Mr. Bernard Shaw dedicating his new book to "my dear Walkley," that pious custodian of the Aristotelian flame, and arguing, with Platonic subtlety, that this new book contains a play. Odd! For to drama Mr. Shaw and Plato stand in almost exactly the same relation. Plato, through anxiety that his work should be read, and his message accepted, so far mortified his strongly Puritan instincts as to give a setting of bright human colour to his abstract thought. He invented men of flesh and blood, to talk for him, and put them against realistic backgrounds. And thus he gained, and still retains, "a public." Only, his method was fraught with nemesis, and he is generally regarded as a poet□he, who couldn' t abide poets. Essentially, he was no more a poet than he was a dramatist, or than Mr. Shaw is a dramatist. Like him, and unlike Aristotle, for whom the exercise of thought was an end in itself, and who, therefore, did not attempt to bedeck as a decoy the form of his expression, Mr. Shaw is an ardent humanitarian. He wants to save us. So he gilds the pill richly. He does not, indeed, invent men of flesh and blood, to talk for him. There, where Plato succeeded, he fails, I must confess. But he assumes various disguises, and he ventriloquises, and moves against realistic backgrounds. In one direction he goes further than Plato. He weaves more of a story round the interlocutors. Suppose that in the "Republic," for example, there were "Socrates (in love with Aspasia)," "Glaucon (in love with Xanthippe)," etcetera, and then you have in your mind a very fair equivalent for what Mr. Shaw writes and calls a play. This peculiar article is, of course, not a play at all. It is "as good as a play"□infinitely better, to my peculiar taste, than any play I have ever read or seen enacted. But a play it is not. What is a dramatist? Principally, a man who delights in watching, and can portray, the world as it is, and the various conflicts of men and women as they are. Such a man has, besides the joy of sheer contemplation, joy in the technique of his art□how to express everything most precisely and perfectly, most worthily of the splendid theme. He may have a message to deliver. Or he may have none. *C'est selon*. But the message is never a tyrannous preoccupation. When the creative and the critical faculty exist in one man, the lesser is perforce overshadowed by the greater. Mr. Shaw knows well□how could so keen a critic fail to detect?□that he is a critic, and not a creator at all. But, for the purpose which I have explained, he must needs pretend through Mr. Walkley, who won't believe, to an innocent public which may believe, that his pen runs away with him. "Woman projecting herself dramatically by my hands (a process over which I have no control)." A touching fib! The only things which Mr. Shaw cannot consciously control in himself are his sense of humour and his sense of reason. "The man who listens to Reason is lost: Reason enslaves all whose minds are not strong enough to master her."

That is one of many fine and profound aphorisms printed at the end of the book, and written (one suspects) joyously, as a private antidote to the dramatic tomfoolery to which Mr. Shaw had perforce condescended. Well! Mr. Shaw will never be manumitted by Reason. She is as inexorable an owner of him as is Humour, and a less kind owner, in that she does prevent him from seeing the world as it is, while Humour, not preventing him from being quite serious, merely prevents stupid people seeing how serious he is. Mr. Shaw is always trying to prove this or that thesis, and the result is that his characters (so soon as he differentiates them, ever so little, from himself) are the merest diagrams. Having no sense for life, he has, necessarily, no sense for art. It would be strange, indeed, if he could succeed in that on which he is always pouring a very sincere contempt. "For art's sake alone," he declares, "I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." That is no fib. Take away his moral purpose and his lust for dialectic, and Mr. Shaw would put neither pen to paper nor mouth to meeting, and we should be by so much the duller. But had you taken away from Bunyan or Ibsen or any other of those great artists whom Mr. Shaw, because they had "something to say," is always throwing so violently at our heads, they would have yet created, from sheer joy in life as it was and in art as it could become through their handling of it. Mr. Shaw, using art merely as a means of making people listen to him, naturally lays hands on the kind that appeals most quickly to the greatest number of people. There is something splendid in the contempt with which he uses as the vehicle for his thesis a conventional love-chase, with motors and comic brigands thrown in. He is as eager to be a popular dramatist and as willing to demean himself in any way that may help him to the goal, as was (say) the late Mr. Pettitt. I hope he will reach the goal. It is only the theatrical managers who stand between him and the offchance of a real popular success. But if these managers cannot be shaken from their obstinate timidity, I hope that Mr. Shaw, realising that the general public is as loth to read plays as to read books of undiluted philosophy, will cease to dabble in an art which he abhors. Let him always, by all means, use the form of dialogue□that form through which, more conveniently than through any other, every side of a subject can be laid bare to our intelligence. It is, moreover, a form of which Mr. Shaw is a master. In swiftness, tenseness and lucidity of dialogue no living writer can touch the hem of Mr. Shaw's garment. In ' *'Man and Superman"* every phrase rings and flashes. Here, though Mr. Shaw will be angry with me, is perfect art. In Mr. Shaw as an essayist I cannot take so whole-hearted a delight. Both in construction and in style his essays seem to me more akin to the art of oral debating than of literary exposition. That is because he trained himself m speak before he trained himself to write. And it is, doubtless, by reason of that same priority that he excels in writing words to be spoken by the human voice or to be read as though they were so spoken.

The name of this play's hero is John Tanner, corrupted from Don Juan Tenorio, of whom its bearer is supposed to be the lineal descendant and modern equivalent. But here we have merely one of the devices whereby Mr. Shaw seeks to catch the ear that he desires to box. Did not the end justify the means, Mr. Shaw's natural honesty would have compelled him to christen his hero Joseph or Anthony. For he utterly flouts the possibility of a Don Juan. Gazing out on the world, he beholds a tremendous battle of sex raging. But it is the Sabine ladies who, more muscular than even Rubens made them, are snatching and shouldering away from out the newly-arisen walls the shrieking gentlemen of Rome. It is the fauns who scud coyly, on tremulous hoofs, through the

woodland, not daring a backward-glance at rude and dogged nymphs who are gaining on them every moment. Of course, this sight is an hallucination. There are, it is true, women who take the initiative, and men who shrink from following them. There are, and always have been. Such beings are no new discovery, though their existence is stupidly ignored by the average modern dramatist. But they are notable exceptions to the rule of Nature. True, again, that in civilised society marriage is more important and desirable to a woman than to a man. "All women," said one of Disraeli's characters, "ought to be married, and no men." The epigram sums up John Tanner's attitude towards life even more wittily than anything that has been put into his mouth by Mr. Shaw. John Tanner, pursued and finally bound in matrimony by Miss Ann Whitefield, supplies an excellent motive for a comedy of manners. But to that kind of comedy Mr.Shaw will not stoop□not wittingly, at least. From John Tanner he deduces a general law. For him, John Tanner is Man, and Ann Whitefield is Woman□nothing less. He has fallen into the error□a strange error for a man with his views□of confusing the natural sex-instinct with the desire for marriage. Because women desire marriage more strongly than men, therefore, in his opinion, the sex-instinct is communicated from woman to man. I need not labour the point that this conclusion is opposite to the obvious truth of all ages and all countries. Man is the dominant animal. It was unjust of Nature not to make the two sexes equal. Mr. Shaw hates injustice, and so, partly to redress the balance by robbing Man of conscious superiority, and partly to lull himself into peace of mind, he projects as real that visionary world of flitting fauns and brutal Sabines. Idealist, he insists that things are as they would be if he had his way. His characters come from out his own yearning heart. Only, we can find no corner for them in ours. We can no more be charmed by them than we can believe in them. Ann Whitefield is a minx. John Tanner is a prig. Prig versus Minx, with the gloves off, and Prig floored in every round□there you have Mr. Shaw's customary formula for drama; and he works it out duly in *"Man and Superman."* The main difference between this play and the others is that the minx and the prig are conscious not merely of their intellects, but of "the Life Force." Of this they regard themselves, with comparative modesty, as the automatic instruments. They are wrong. The Life Force could find no use for them. They are not human enough, not alive enough. That is the main drawback for a dramatist who does not love raw life: he cannot create living human characters.

And yet it is on such characters as John and Ann that Mr. Shaw founds his hopes for the future of humanity. If we are very good, we *may* be given the Superman. If we are very scientific, and keep a sharp look out on our instincts, and use them just as our intellects shall prescribe, we *may* produce a race worthy to walk this fair earth. That is the hope with which we are to buoy ourselves up. It is a forlorn one. Man may, in the course of æons, evolve into something better than now he is. But the process will be not less unconscious than long. Reason and instinct have an inveterate habit of cancelling each other. If the world were governed by reason, it would not long be inhabited. Life is a muddle. It seems a brilliant muddle, if you are an optimist; a dull one, if you aren't; but in neither case can you deny that it is the muddlers who keep it going. The thinkers cannot help it at all. They are detached from "the Life Force." If they could turn their fellow-creatures into thinkers like themselves, all would be up. Fortunately, or unfortunately, they have not that power. The course of history has often been turned by sentiment, but by thought never. The thinkers are but valuable ornaments. A safe place is assigned to

them on the world's mantelpiece, while humanity basks and blinks stupidly on the hearth, warming itself in the glow of the Life Force.

On that mantelpiece Mr. Shaw deserves a place of honour. He is a very brilliant ornament. And never have his ornamental qualities shone more brightly than in this latest book. Never has he thought more clearly or more wrongly, and never has he displayed better his genius for dialectic, and never has his humour gushed forth in such sudden natural torrents. This is his masterpiece, so far. Treasure it as the most complete expression of the most distinct personality in current literature. Treasure it, too, as a work of specific art, in line with your Plato and Lucian and Landor.

Source: Max Beerbohm, "Mr. Shaw's New Dialogues" in his *Around Theatres*, Simon & Schuster, 1954 , pp. 268□72.

Adaptations

The classic version of the *Don Juan in Hell* segment of Act III was recorded in the 1950s by actors Charles Laughton, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Charles Boyer, and Agnes Moorehead for Columbia; it is available on audio tape.

Topics for Further Study

In what ways are Shaw's heaven and hell different from conventional concepts of them? How do these differences inflect the meaning of the play as a whole?

The character of Ann Whitefield has been criticized as being a calculating huntress of men, and Shaw has Tanner compare her unfavorably to several animals of prey (boa constrictor, lion, tiger). What does it mean that Ann pursues her man instead of waiting for him to pursue her? What does that say about her character?

Jack Tanner is a member of the ruling class and the author of the Revolutionist's Handbook, in which he offers his theories of socialism and eugenics. Is Jack is the hero of this play? How is the idea of heroism refashioned to a new purpose in *Man and Superman?* How does Shaw's representation of the Life Force in *Man and Superman* compare with Darwin and Lamarck's ideas of instinct?

Compare and Contrast

1903: In Britain, women suffragettes take to the streets in protest marches. They also publish feminist newspapers in an effort to obtain the right to vote.

Today: As of 1928, all British citizens over the age of twenty-one may vote and hold public office. Although inequalities still exist, women hold equal legal rights with men.

1903: Socialism is a new political ideology fastgaining support from intellectuals throughout Europe. Shaw's Fabian Society promotes it as the solution to Britain's social inequalities. In its infancy, socialism promotes a communistic economic model.

Today: Socialists have strong organizations in Britain and Europe and still strive for worker rights and social equality. The economic model has shifted to contain elements of capitalism.

What Do I Read Next?

Man and Superman has strong affinities to Mozart's *Don Giovanni,* the opera on which Shaw based his play. The opera is worth listening to as a way to understand Shaw's use of music and the musicality of the characters' language as well as to enjoy another version of the Don Juan story.

The perennial favorite *Pygmalion* is a Shaw classic, being the story of a street girl whom, on a bet, a gentleman trains to "pass" in high society by teaching her how to act and speak like a lady.

William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) is an eighteenth-century comedy of manners centered on a courtship.

Lord Byron's unfinished *Don Juan* is poem describing the adventures of the lover Don Juan, interspersed with philosophical musings similar to those of Shaw's Don Juan.

Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* presents his idea of the Superman, upon which Shaw based his idea of the Superman.

Arthur Schopenhauer's essay "The World as Will and Idea" presents the philosophy of a community or cosmic Will that drives the actions of individuals as well as nature itself.

Further Study

Bentley, Eric. *Bernard Shaw*, Methuen, 1967.

A leading drama critic looks at Shaw's drama from the perspective of his political and social ideas and the impact he has had on the theater.

Berst, Charles A. *Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama,* University of Illinois Press, 1973.

A close analysis of Shaw's major plays.

Brecht, Bertolt. "Ovation for Shaw" in *Modern Drama*, translated by Gerhard H. W. Zuther, Vol. 2, no. 2, 1959, pp. 184-87.

Brecht, the author of such plays as *Mother Courage and Her Children* and a fellow innovative playwright and social reformer, praises Shaw's art.

Dukore, Bernard F. *Bernard Shaw, Playwright*, University of Missouri Press, 1973.

Dukore praises Shaw as a watershed playwright of the twentieth century.

Hardwick, Michael, and Mollie Hardwick. *The Bernard Shaw Companion*, John Murray, 1997.

Contains summaries of the plays and a brief biography of Shaw.

Hill, Eldon C. *George Bernard Shaw*, Twayne, 1978.

A monograph on Shaw and his plays, part of the Twayne writers series.

Holroyd, Michael. *The Genius of Shaw*, Hodder and Stoughton, 1979.

A biographical study of Shaw's life and times, including pictures of many of his associates and early productions.

Innes, Christopher. *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Recent essays on Shaw and feminism, his dramatic structure, and his influence on the theater.

Kaye, Julian B. *Bernard Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Tradition*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1955.

Describes the legacy of eighteenth-century ideas of sociology and the socialist agenda of the nineteenth century and Shaw's place in this world of ideas.

MacCarthy, Desmond. *Shaw*, MacGibbon and Kee, 1951.

In this biography, an esteemed drama critic evaluates Shaw's social agenda as it appears in his plays.

Meisel, Martin. *Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater*, Princeton University Press, 1963.

Shaw is assessed in relation to the conventions of nineteenth-century popular theater.

Weintraub, Stanley. "Bernard Shaw" in *Concise Dictionary of British Literary Biography*, Volume 6: Modern Writers, 1914-1945, Gale, 1992, pp. 348-68.

Weintraub surveys Shaw's personal life and his work, focussing on his creation of the play of ideas.

Weintraub, Stanley. *The Unexpected Shaw: Biographical Approaches to G. B. S. and His Work,* Ungar, 1982.

Weintraub makes connections between Shaw's personal life and his work, including a chapter on the influence of certain paintings on Shaw.

Whitman, Robert F. *Shaw and the Play of Ideas,* Cornell University Press, 1977.

Examines Shaw as a proselytizer of philosophical,social, and religious ideas.

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Kronenberger, Louis. *George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey*, World Publishing, 1953.

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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