

G.B. Shaw: The Dramatist and His Plays

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Abstract

Shaw is by far the most frequently performed dramatist after Shakespeare and yet a remarkable number of educated and literate people, even people with a remarkable interest in the drama, would receive with astonishment or dismiss with contempt the view that Shaw was Shakespeare's nearest rival. For years it was commonplace to deny that he was a playwright at all, and still there remains a widespread feeling that his characters are little more than walking ideas manipulated by a preacher/ propagandist. His reputation in university departments of English or drama is extremely limited; his name appears very infrequently on course syllabuses and few academics would place him as one of the great writers of the twentieth century. While the standing of Joyce, Lawrence, Yeats and Eliot becomes more assured with every year, Shaw continues to suffer from a disabling association with cranks and enthusiasts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The British playwright, critic, and pamphleteer George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) produced more than 52 plays and playlets, three volumes of music and drama criticism, and one major volume of socialist commentary. George Bernard Shaw's theater extended to his personal life. He considered himself a cultural miracle, and a partisan conflict among his readers and playgoers provoked a massive body of literature for and against him and his work. Shaw ranks as the greatest English dramatist since William Shakespeare. Shaw was born in Dublin, Ireland, on July 16, 1856. At an early age he was tutored in classics by an uncle, and when he was 10 years old, he entered the Wesleyan Connexional School in Dublin. There his academic performance was largely a failure. Shaw later described his own education "I cannot learn anything that does not interest me. My memory is not indiscriminate, it rejects and selects; and its selections are not academic." Part of his nonacademic training was handled by his mother, a music teacher and a mezzo-soprano; Shaw studied music and art at the same time. He became a Dublin office boy in 1871 at a monthly salary equivalent to \$4.50. In March, 1876, Shaw broke loose and resigning a cashier's position, he joined his mother and two sisters in London, where they conducted a music school. Shaw had started writing, at the age of 16, criticism and reviews for Irish newspapers and magazines; in 4 years only one piece was accepted. Shaw lived in London for the 9 years after 1876, supported by his parents and continued to write criticism. He also entertained in London society as a singer. At the age of 23 Shaw had joined a socialist discussion group, of which Sydney Webb was a member, and he joined the Fabian Society in 1884. Fabian Essays published in 1887, edited by Shaw, emphasized the importance of economics and class structure; for him, economics was the basis of society. In 1882 Shaw's conversion to socialism began when he heard Henry George, the American author of Progress and Poverty, address a London meeting. George's message changed the whole current of his life. His reading of Karl Marx's, Das Kapital in the same year, he said made a man of him. For 27 years Shaw served on the Fabian Society's executive committee. In his role as an active polemicist he later published Common Sense about the War on Nov. 14, 1914, a criticism of the British government and its policies. The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Capitalism and Socialism written in 1928 supplied a complete summary of his political position. It remains a major volume of socialist commentary. For six years Shaw held office on a municipal level in a London suburb. Shaw's other careers continued. Between 1888 and 1894 he wrote for newspapers and periodicals as a highly successful music critic. At the end of this period, he began writing on a regular basis for Frank Harris. Saturday Review; as a critic, he introduced Ibsen and the new drama to the British public. Shaw's Quintessence of Ibsenism appeared in 1890, The Sanity of Art in 1895, and The Perfect Wagnerite in 1898. All of them indicate the formation of his esthetics. He married Charlotte PayneTownshend, an Irish heiress and fellow socialist, in 1898. She died in 1943. Shaw received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925 after the success of his play Saint Joan, and the Academy Award for Best Screenplay for Pygmalion in 1938, later made into the musical My Fair Lady (1956). He left one

third of his royalties to the National Gallery of Ireland where a statue of him stands today. George Bernard Shaw died while pruning an apple tree at Ayot St. Lawrence, Hertfordshire, England, on November 2, 1950.

2. SHAW'S CAREER AS A DRAMATIST

In the history of the English drama, Shaw occupies a position second only to that of Shakespeare. He dominated the English theatre for over sixty years and his influence, name and fame were all pervasive. He built up his own theatre, 'The Theatre of Ideas'. Ifor Evans considers him the greatest figure in the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth century drama. He had the longest career in the British Theatre; for his first play, *Widowers' Houses*, begun as early as 1885 and his last work *Buoyant Billions* appeared in 1949, over sixty years later. Throughout the whole of the intervening period, he was engaged in dramatic production, and apart from his work as a creative artist, he made contribution of outstanding importance as a critic. The Quintessence of Ibsenism had an important effect on the development of Ibsen's reputation in England, while Shaw's weekly articles in the *Saturday Review*, collected in 1931 as *Our Theatre in the Nineties*, and are at once the most brilliant and the most painstaking series of criticism ever written. His earliest work in drama was directed towards the statement and criticism of contemporary social evils. In *Widower's Houses* he dealt with slum landlordism; in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* with prostitution and in *Arms and the Man* with the romantic conception of the soldier. Amid these early plays, *The Philanderer*, in which the misconceptions of Ibsenism are mingled with a certain egocentric display, is of more ephemeral interest. In the other plays, he proved to himself, though not immediately to the public, that he was a dramatist of great power and originality. From Ibsen he had learned how to manage the stage for plays with a contemporary setting, and scenes which admit discussion as well as action. From his predecessors in England there was little that he could learn, except to discover that with Oscar Wilde he shared brilliance in dialogue. Unlike Wilde, he was determined to use his verbal gaiety not merely for entertainment, but to explore every known problem—social, moral, political and religious. He had an ear for all the rhythms of speech, and he studied with great diligence the ways in which dialogue could be made as natural in movement as it was witty in content. No account of modern drama can be complete without a consideration of the contribution of Bernard Shaw. Shaw is a peculiar mixture of Ibsen and Wycherley. His aim is as serious, his analysis is as deep as that of any of the more serious dramatists, yet he cloaks that seriousness of purpose with a gaiety and a wit which has rarely been equaled in any time. Shaw's plays can be called as comedies of purpose. They aim at being as laughable as Congreve's, as stinging as Jonson's, and as profound as Ibsen's. There is no earlier comedy in English comparable to that of Shaw; he has brought to the English stage a type of drama entirely new—a type, however, which few could follow. Unquestionably, critics of a hundred years hence will regard his plays as one of the most notable contributions to the theatre in our time, but it is probable that they will find only one or two other dramatists with whom to compare him. The comedy of purpose, if it is not to drift into mere sentimentalism, demands a genius not only of a high, but also of a peculiar kind.

3. DIFFERENT PHASES OF SHAW'S WRITING

Shaw's writing career can clearly be divided into different phases. As seen earlier his earliest work in drama were much directed towards the statement and criticism of contemporary social evils but the middle phase of Shaw, departs from the contemporary scene to portray historical figures, though still maintaining the same formula of inversion as he had first employed in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. The nineties had almost worshipped a romantic conception of Napoleon, and so in *The Man of Destiny* Shaw presented a satiric portrait of the young Bonaparte which mocks at grandeur and idealization. In *The Devil's Disciple*, he showed how melodrama could be made a useful instrument of the discussion of ideas, and then in *Caesar and Cleopatra* he made his most considerable attempt, up to this period, at the presentation of an historical character. His mind had turned towards Shakespeare's writing down of Caesar in *Julius Caesar* and to his magnificent and romantic portrayal of the nature of Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In his play Shaw contrived, with a fuller plot than he usually employs, to give a conception of Caesar which is impressive and yet full, at the same time, of comedy. "Already, as the portrait of Caesar showed, his mind was moving towards philosophical problems. He had worked out for himself a dynamic conception of evolution in which man's will need not be idle in the setting of his destiny. If man would be but alert and active, the Life Force would use him in its unsteady and uncertain fight towards progress"³ Still indulging in an atmosphere of luxuriant comedy, he explores these ideas in *Man and Superman*, one of the most brilliant of all his plays, and unclouded by the deeper vision which appeared after the First War. The play was a success both in England and America, and Shaw, on publishing the play, seemed to give proof that his genius was inexhaustible by adding a third Act, *Don Juan in Hell*. Shaw's other plays before 1914 gave evidence of great versatility. In *You Never Can Tell* he had shown that his comic genius could have an almost irresponsible exuberance. In the later plays, the exuberance

remains even when a social theme is elaborately explored. So in 1906, there is gaiety in *The Doctor's Dilemma* where the Shavian attack on the medical profession is presented, and again in *Misalliance* which has satire on education as its theme. In 1912, *Androcles and the Lion*, with its massive preface on Christianity, give at times an entertainment which is farcical without ever abandoning its main purpose of exploring the nature of religious faith. Some urged in these years that Shaw's plays were merely brilliant speeches. This was altogether to miss the skill with which discussion had been made dramatically possible by a great command of the stage. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in *Getting Married*, where action is reduced to a minimum, while the dialogue and exchange of ideas between the characters maintain the interest of the audience. Three plays of this period show an increased skill in plot-construction. John Bull's *Other Island* is Shaw's dramatic exploration of the Irish problem; *Major Barbara*, looking back towards the methods of 'inversion' in character portrayal, shows the ways of a millionaire munitions' manufacturer and his Salvation Army daughter and of their several contributions to society. Of more permanent interest, is that its theme is detached from social and political problems and rests in human personality as such, is *Pygmalion*. This play may have begun with the jest that phonetics is a clue to class distinction, but it seizes, with whatever Shavian transmutations, on the old fairy-story theme of the poor girl who became a princess.

4. SOME IMPORTANT PLAYS OF SHAW

Shaw began as a dramatist writing against the mechanical habits of domestic comedy and against the Victorian romanticizing of Shakespeare and drama in general. He wrote that; melodramatic stage illusion is not an illusion of real life, but an illusion of the embodiment of our romantic imaginings. The plays of Shaw express, as did his life, a complex range of impulses, ambitions, and beliefs. Reflecting on his life and his work, he explained; "If I am to be entirely communicative on this subject, I must add that the mere rawness which soon rubs off was complicated by a deeper strangeness which has made me all my life a sojourner on this planet rather than a native of it. Whether it is that 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 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, and adaptable to the various parts I had to play as an author, journalist, orator, politician, committee man, man of the world, and so forth. In all this I succeeded later on only too well."⁶ In his long dramatic career, extending well over sixty years, Shaw produced more than sixty plays, out of which thirty are major works. Eleven of his plays received 701 performances. It is not possible in the limited space at our disposal to do justice even to the major plays of G. B. Shaw. We will, therefore, confine our attention to about a dozen plays which are generally regarded as his best.

5. SHAW'S WORKS

The Philanderer

The play is an example of the new humour that had come into the theatre—the Shavian humour. The second of the unpleasant plays, its theme is love and marriage, treated as a game between the sexes. It is a telling satire upon physical science, though enlivened with fine strokes of comedy. Dr. Paramore is a young painstaking physician, who has discovered a new disease, and is delighted when he finds people suffering from it and is cast down into deep despair when he finds that it does not exist. In other words, it is a sharp exposure of the dangers of 'idealism', the sacrifice of people to principles. Shaw shows that excessive idealism exists nowhere so much as in the realm of physical science. The scientist seems to be more concerned about the sickness than about the sick man. This theme of Dr. Paramore's disease is the most farcical, philosophic thing in the play. It is Shaw's first, gleeful attack upon the medical profession.

Mrs. Warren's Profession

It is the third unpleasant play. Its theme is prostitution. G.K. Chesterton comments on it thus: It is concerned with a coarse mother and a cold daughter; the mother drives the ordinary and dirty trade of harlotry; the daughter does not know, till the end, the atrocious origin of all her own comfort and refinement. The daughter, when the discovery is made, freezes up in an iceberg of contempt; which is indeed a very womanly thing to do. The mother explodes into pulverizing cynicism and practicality which is also very womanly. The dialogue is drastic and sweeping. The daughter says the trade is loathsome; the mother answers that she loathes it herself; that every healthy person does loathe the trade by which he lives. And beyond question the general effect of the play is to show that the trade is loathsome; supposing anyone to be so insensible as to require to be told of the fact. Undoubtedly, the upshot is that a brothel is a miserable business, and a brothel-keeper a miserable woman. The whole dramatic art of Shaw is, in the

literal sense of the word, tragi-comic; it means that the comic part comes after the tragic. On account of the theme of the play, it was banned by the Censor of plays and there arose a storm of protest from several quarters. It is society, and not any individual, who is the villain of the piece in the play.

Arms and the Man

It is one of the pleasant plays. Shaw calls it an anti-romantic comedy. It was acted for the first time in April, 1894. It is an amusing exposure of the glory of war and romantic love. The story is based on an incident in a war between Bulgaria and Russia in 1885. The Petkoffs represent an aristocratic Bulgarian family consisting of Major Petkoff, his wife Catherine, and his daughter Raina, who has her head full of romance and who is in love with Sergius, considered to be a hero. Into this circle enters a common soldier, Bluntschli, a Swiss who has joined the Russian army as a mercenary. He has no illusions about war, tells the naked truth about it when he happens to seek shelter in Raina's bed chamber one night from the ruthless shooting of the Bulgarians. The plot is cleverly developed to show that the hero of Raina's dreams, Sergius, is really a humbug, and his so-called military exploits are a mere folly. Sergius is not a false hero on the battlefield alone but also in love. Though in love with, and engaged to Raina, he flirts with the maid, Louka. In course of time, it is found that Raina herself cares more for her 'chocolate-cream soldier', Bluntschli, than for her betrothed Sergius. Thus Shaw tears off the mask of sentimentality surrounding war and love. It should be noted that though Shaw is a pacifist, he is opposed not so much to war as to the so-called glorification of war. He urges that people should not weave a romantic halo round it, but know its grim and ugly truth. It is not an occasion for the display of valour or any other noble qualities. 'Soldiering', in the words of the dramatist, 'is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. That is the whole secret of successful fighting. Get the enemy at a disadvantage, and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms'. The play is remarkable for Shaw's grip on character. Here the satirist and moralist, on the one hand, and the artist, on the other, seem to struggle for supremacy. Bluntschli is a well-drawn character and seems to carry the play away on his shoulders.

Caesar and Cleopatra

The play was first produced in 1898. It is written in the classic manner, with five Acts. Chesterton observes that the play marks a turning in Shaw's fortune and fame. "Up to the time he had known glory, but never success. He had been wondered at as something brilliant and barren, like a mentor, but no one would accept him as a sun, for the test of a sun is that it can make something grow. And in this play Shaw has produced a piece of artistic creation in the portrait of Caesar. If the man is a little like a statue, it is a statue, by a great sculptor; a statue of the best period."⁷ Caesar is a typical Shaw's hero. Caesar was merciful without being in the least pitiful; his mercy was prudence rather than justice. Caesar was a conqueror without being in any great sense a soldier. His courage was lonelier than fear. Caesar was a 'demagogue without being a democrat'. In the same way, Bernard Shaw is a 'demagogue without being a democrat'. This affinity explains, to a large extent, the success that Shaw attained in drawing Caesar's portrait.

Candida

"This is Shaw's best constructed play, classic in its economy and observance of time and place, and in some ways probably his most important play, highly interesting from a technical point of view as a play of anticlimax".⁸

In it, too, he disclosed himself, as he seldom did before or after, displaying the naked conflict between the poet and commonsense. The story is that Morell, a Christian Socialist clergyman of the Church of England finds a young man sleeping on the Thames embankment. He takes him home and discovers that he is a poet, nephew of a peer, who does not understand the everyday affairs of life. Young Marchbanks, the poet, becomes a visitor to the house and devoted to Candida, Morell's wife and mother of two children. She mothers the poet. One day Marchbanks tells Morell that he is in love with Candida, that he, the poet, understands her and that Morell, the husband, does not, and demands that Morell give up his wife to him. Morell treats the matter lightly, but becomes angry when he discovers that Marchbanks is serious, and is moved to shake the silly boy, to Marchbank's terror. When she comes in, he tells his wife what has happened, for he too becomes serious and learns not only that the news does not surprise her, but that she knows his, Morell's weaknesses so well that he cannot believe that nonetheless she still loves him. In his masculine obtruseness he demands that Candida should choose between him, the honest, popular, industrious husband, and the weak, disliked and misunderstood poet. She replies, having already said to her husband that he

should put his trust in her love for him, that she will give herself to the weaker of the two. Marchbanks knows that he has lost and goes away with a secret in the heart.

Man and Superman

Shaw has described it as 'comedy and a philosophy'. It is Shaw's first full-length exposition of his theory of Life Force. With the appearance of this play in 1903, Shaw proved himself a fully mature dramatist. His apprenticeship in the realm of drama was over, and he was able to handle the theatre and the dramatic form with perfect mastery. In *Man and Superman*, observes Ward, "The ideas are more memorable than the characters, and there is little reliance upon stage situation, but the tremendous stirring of moral and intellectual passion is compensation enough."⁹ This play is Bernard Shaw's first full statement of his conception of the way of salvation for the human race, through obedience to the Life Force, the term he uses to indicate a power continually working upon the hearts of men and endeavouring to impel them towards a better and fuller life.

Heartbreak House

First staged in 1919, Shaw calls it *Fantasia* in the Russian manner on English themes. It presents a picture of, cultured, leisured Europe before the war. Shaw's doctrine of the Life Force is developed further in this play. The question posed by the dramatist is, 'Whether Man will or will not address himself to the work of helping life in its struggle upward'. If man does not undertake this work, will the Life Force allow him to enjoy Free will at the cost of upward progress? Shaw shows in the play that this cannot happen. He gives forth a terrible warning that, 'cultured and leisured Europe' will meet its doom, if it does not undertake the mission of the Life Force. This play, begun in 1913, proved to be prophetic. It was completed in 1919 and by that time Europe had witnessed the holocaust of the World War I. A generation which ignored the purposes of the Life Force was like the drunken skipper to whom comes 'the smash of the ship on the rocks, the splintering of the rotten timbers, the tearing of her rusty plates, the drowning of the crew like rats in a trap'.

Back to Methuselah

Begun in 1918 and completed in 1921, it is Shaw's longest and most important play in aim and scope. It is five plays in one, and requires a different theatre from any that exists at present. In this play, Shaw once again considers the purpose of the Life Force and pronounces a great warning that if Man did not come up to the mark, he would be replaced by another set of beings. Shaw's doctrine, in this respect, is contrary to the Theory of Natural Selection expounded by Darwin. Shaw says that Darwinism banished mind from the universe and created the conviction that life was a result of accidents beyond the control of human agency. He wants to replace the Darwinian system by the principle of Creative Evolution, which teaches not only that Man is a potential Superman, but also that Man can work his way upward in the evolutionary process. Shaw wrote, this does not mean that if man cannot find the remedy, no remedy will be found. The power that produced Man when the monkey was not up to the mark, can produce a higher creature than Man, if man does not come up to the mark. What it means is that if man wants to live, he must work out his own salvation. Such is the basic theme to *Back to Methuselah*, but it is doubtful if Shaw has succeeded in giving it a concrete shape. The play contains some excellent dialogues, but it is very unequal, and ultimately unequal to the task. For, with all his wit and eloquence Shaw fails to explain why his unaccountably and everlastingly unfolding universe should be supposed to be changing always for the better. He makes man live for three hundred years, but this is hardly convincing for the layman. The play has never been a success on the stage, for it has no single human being as the protagonist. Its theme is too impersonal for dramatic purposes.

The Apple-Cart

The fine play was produced in 1929, *Upsetting apple-carts* had ever been one of Shaw's main occupations, and in this play he has upset the apple cart of democracy. Chesterton writes of this play as follows: "The *Apple-Cart* is important as showing how many million miles he (Shaw) is still ahead of the Progressive, how much Modern he is than the Modernists. He has realised that the really Modern thing is Monarchy. It does not in the least follow that because it is the modern thing, it is the right thing. I never accepted Democracy merely because it was Modern and I shall not accept Monarchy for any such unreasonable reason. It may not be very important to be up-to-date; but at least Bernard Shaw in his old age is up-to-date. He understands the political change and challenge of our time. He horrified all the other Socialists by expressing approval of the Fascists. Indeed, his last political phase seems to be largely a general loathing of anarchy: and a disposition to accept whatever can reduce it to rational order, whether it

be Fascism or Bolshevism. But in *The Apple-Cart* he brings out many truths that his merely progressive critics were too conventional to see. They missed the fact that the play is tragedy rather than comedy. The King scores by playing the one piece he really has; which is the King. He hits popular government in its one really weak spot; that is a shallow view to suppose that he ends with the vulgarity of victory. He ends fighting against the states and fates and forces of the modern world like any of the tragic heroes."¹¹

Major Barbara

Major Barbara is a play about money. It is a passionate denunciation of poverty. It reveals the materialistic pessimism of Shaw. Here he depicts poverty as the epitome of all vices. 'People say that poverty is no crime: Shaw says that poverty is a crime, that it is a crime to endure it, a crime to be content with it, that it is the mother of all crimes, of brutality, corruption and fear'. Here the dramatist shows that even the noblest enthusiasm of the girl, who becomes a Salvation Army officer, fails under the brute money power of her father who is a modern capitalist.

Getting Married

"The play is a single conversation from start to finish, without even the pretence of division into Acts".¹⁴ It is a discussion about marriage. It gives all the views about marriage which are held by anybody and some which are held by nobody. In particular, it is a discussion of divorce. But the play is still more remarkable for its technical originality. It shows Shaw as a supreme conversationalist, master of the art of dialogue. The play has hardly any story-interest. Its success depends almost entirely on the author's power to hold the audience spellbound by sheer good and witty dialogues. This gave the lie to a conviction then prevailing in the English public that it was useless to have a play without murders, and that a good joke, which is the most popular thing everywhere else, was quite unsaleable in the theatrical world. The play was thus a great triumph over the prejudices of the English public. Everyone who went to theatre felt that he was only eavesdropping at an accidental conversation. But the conversation was so sparkling and sensible that he went on eaves-dropping.

Widowers' Houses

The play was started when Shaw was only twenty-eight, was put aside as hopeless for full five years, and then was taken up and quickly completed. Its theme is a production of conscience in a society that does not allow for conscience. It is an attack upon society, not upon individuals. Shaw himself writes of it as follows: "I previously distorted it to be a grotesquely realistic exposure of solemn landlordism, municipal jobbery, and the pecuniary and matrimonial ties between them and the pleasant people with 'independent' incomes, who imagines that such sordid matters do not touch their own lives. Thus the satirical intention of the author was combined with a good deal of farcical trivialities so that the result was that a serious subject was treated with a degree of annoying non-seriousness."¹⁵ One thing which a study of such Shawian stage-directions teaches us is that Shaw is a consummate dramatic artist. Clearly, a technical device of this kind is apt to make the play untheatrical, because the author, failing to express his meaning through the words of his characters is inclined to fall back upon this easier, more direct method of explaining his purposes. It has been said by many that Shaw was not a born dramatist, that he had merely seized on the theatre because it gave him a platform from which to preach his sermons, that his plays are little more than illustrations of his prefaces. This view, it is almost certain, must be rejected by future historians of the drama. No writer of our time has shown such a vivid and appreciative sense of the theatre as Shaw, and it is because of the theatrical qualities in his work that his plays will survive.

6. A GENERAL ESTIMATE OF SHAW AS A DRAMATIST

Shaw has been most misunderstood or most variously understood. Undoubtedly Shaw has been one of the rare multifaceted personalities in English literature. He is only rated after Shakespeare "Whatever Shaw is he is not primarily a dramatist. Before he came to the writing of plays he had expressed himself as lecturer, writer on social and economic topics, novelist and critic".¹⁷ His plays have never achieved to anything like popularity or even general acceptance in the theatre, and they cannot stand on their own feet without explanation or glossary. His plays are both more or less than plays. They are less in that they require prefaces, expanded stage-directions, and characterization to complete their meaning. They are more in that after the purposes of representation are satisfied, the author goes on to serve other purposes which lie in the field of exposition and argument. By some Shaw has been given credit for creating the modern English theatre. Far from building the Modern English theatre, Shaw would not exist as a dramatist but for the building that others had done before him, work which he adapted and

turned to his own purposes. It is also believed that Shaw depended much on others for his creativity. Shaw was the first playwright in England to find ready for him all the means he needed for the unhampered expression of his point of view. The two instrumentalities upon which Shaw has depended are: first the publication of plays in book form; and second, the free theatre where his plays could be shown to the general public. "Without these he would not exist as playwright and both these instruments were supplied by others. Shaw seized the drama as the best means of exploiting his own vision of truth."

7. CONCLUSION

Shaw's transformations of dramatic genres as forcefields in his socio-cultural and new aesthetic criticism. Shaw's forms have been superseded by more sophisticated forms, the political focus he initiated in drama when he wrote *The Quintessence* remains the standard focus of realism in British drama. Perhaps because Shaw was often ahead of his time, he regularly probed for universals to underline the particulars of his plays and the Shavian Canon has remained remarkably alive—even advanced—while theatre fashions come and go. Shaw had written about the future of the theatre in a way that made clear that he wanted to see realistic subjects presented in a way which involved the audience both intellectually and emotionally, but not empathically.

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