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BERNARD SHAW AS DEVIL'S ADVOCATE.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT
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BERNARD SHAW AS DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

by

James Relford Helvey, Jr.

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School of
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Approved by

Keith Lushman

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APPROVAL PAGE

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HELVEY, JR., JAMES RELERFORD. Bernard Shaw As Devil's Advocate.
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George Bernard Shaw, the nineteenth century Irishman, became a notable twentieth century British dramatist. Though he did not shed his nineteenth century theatrical and philosophical origins any more than he disposed of his Irish humor and gift of gab, he did bring them into the service of his own peculiar dramatic interests as devil's advocate of the Life Force in the theatre.

Shaw's idiosyncratic public manner, which evolved from his journalistic vocation in England, included his use of many pseudonyms and the adoption of many roles: critic, gadfly, reformer, artist. One of the most important roles he played, however, is that of the devil's advocate. As a devil's advocate, Shaw undertook to criticize his cultural and socio-economic world, but he did it in order to promote man's social and intellectual improvement. His paradoxical manner conflicted with the religious and social conventions of his day, but his diabolical gestures, which were more than a jest, made his devil's advocacy central to his career as a dramatist.

Shaw's role as devil's advocate primarily serves his faith, the ideology of the Life Force. This faith has roots in Christianity, but it is a faith which supersedes the institutional and doctrinal dogmas of the Church. Shaw's faith blends the purposeful philosophy of the later nineteenth century and the socio-economic political concerns of such early twentieth century organizations as the Fabians. His faith is proclaimed in all of his writings. It is embodied most effectively in his drama, the primary medium for his functioning as a devil's advocate.

Shaw viewed the theatre not only as a commercial enterprise for public entertainment, but also as a public forum for his faith and social concerns. However, just as the Church required reformation, so Shaw found the nineteenth century theatre and drama in need of revitalization. Part of his role as devil's advocate was to expunge from the theatre what was abhorrent to the faith while he constructed plays which expressed his ideas in all their multifaceted complexity. Shaw created a comedy of ideas that borrowed something old--even classical--and incorporated something new in the discussion of social issues as well as his philosophy and faith.

Shaw's drama is distinguished not only by its subject matter and didactic manner, but by its characters. Shaw's central characters have been viewed as supermen and superwomen as well as saints and devils. However, they function most distinctively as devil's advocates, who in action and dialogue reveal the same critical purpose and paradoxical manner as their creator. The characters of Shaw's plays display a willful independence that not only defies social customs but that at times reveals a diabolical non-conventionality. However, their diabolism is finally a means of exposing the illusions and hypocrisy of their societies and for disclosing the truth necessary for real progress and creative evolution.

Shaw's role as a devil's advocate is vindicated by his important contributions to the theatre and to society's understanding of itself. This has led to belated honors and to a somewhat mixed reaction on the part of the theatre-going world and critics of literature and society. Although he has received cultic veneration by the Shaviolators who revere his ideas and plays, he sought only to serve as a guide and instrument of his faith.

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This study was brought to fruition because of the thoroughness in examination and guidance given by my chairman, Dr. Keith Cushman. I am particularly indebted for his willingness to assume the direction of my dissertation and am grateful for the intensity which he gave to it. I also wish to thank the members of my committee for their attention, interest and suggestions.

Assistance has also come from the library staffs of Wake Forest University, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, St. Louis University, and Davidson County Community College.

However, this project would never have obtained completion had it not been for the patient persistence of my wife, Doris Anne, and her tireless diligence in typing revision after revision as well as the final copy.

To thank all who contribute to a study of this magnitude must include teachers whose ideas have been shared along the way, such as Dr. James Wimsatt who was originally on my committee; friends and colleagues who have shared with insights and encouragement; my three children--Jessica, Jay and Jennifer--who have helped in many ways and given up much while their father continued his degree work; and my parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Helvey, Sr., for underwriting the costs of the final copies and binding.

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TEXTUAL NOTES

The quotations in this dissertation taken from Shaw's works follow his peculiarities in spelling and punctuation, which were sometimes archaic and idiosyncratic. He is reported to have said:

The apostrophes in ain't, don't, haven't, etc., look so ugly that the most careful printing cannot make a page of colloquial dialogue. Besides, shan't should be sha''n't, if the wretched pedantry of indicating the elision is to be carried out. I have written aint, dont, havnt, shant, shouldnt and wont for twenty years with perfect impunity, using the apostrophe only where its omission would suggest another word: for example, hell for he'll. . . . (VII, 6-7)

All quotations in this dissertation which come from Bernard Shaw, Collected Plays with their Prefaces, 7 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975) are noted by volume and page in the text. This seven volume set, prepared under the editorial supervision of Dan H. Laurence, is described as "the final authoritative and complete edition of the dramatic works" of Shaw.

CHAPTER I
SHAW'S MANNER

"Who the devil was he?"¹

George Bernard Shaw, "the man of the century,"² emerged from the nineteenth century of Victorian politics, philosophy and culture to launch a new philosophy and theatre for the twentieth century. Before his death on November 2, 1950, at the age of ninety-four, Shaw distinguished himself as a writer of over fifty plays and playlets, several short stories, five novels, numberless essays and criticisms, volumes of letters, and a multitude of speeches; in fact, scholars are still discovering unpublished letters, manuscripts and other Shaviana.³ Shaw did not become a playwright of note until the beginning of the twentieth century, but by the time of his death he had established his reputation as the jesting-playwright and destroyer of ideals in the world's theatres.

Shaw's literary career began after he came to London in 1876 to join his mother, who had left his father in pursuit of a musical career. Shaw was nineteen years old when he left Dublin, the place of his birth.

¹C. B. Purdom, A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963), p. 69.

²Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: The Man of the Century (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956).

³A regular feature in the Shaw Review.

He accomplished little during his first years in London, though he had undertaken to write several plays before his retirement as a drama critic in 1898 from The Saturday Review.⁴ However, he enjoyed no popular acclaim in England until 1904-05. His first successes came in America in 1897 with The Devil's Disciple and in Europe, primarily Austria and Germany, in 1902-03 with The Devil's Disciple, Candida and Arms and the Man. The blossoming of Shaw's popularity came with the production of his plays under the auspices of Vendrenne and Granville Barker at the Court Theatre. It was in 1905 that John Bull's Other Island received a command performance before King Edward II. Shaw's dramatic popularity has fluctuated since those days before World War I, when, some feel, he created his greatest works. Others feel that the climax of his career came with the presentation of St. Joan in 1923 and that even this was a somewhat belated achievement. Though Shaw continued to write plays until his last year, when he wrote Why She Would Not, it is generally thought that he produced nothing new in subject matter nor in dramatic presentation after St. Joan.

Many have written about the dramatist, noting the various roles he has played as critic, jester, philosopher, prophet, pulpiteer, atheist, Socialist, rebel and devil; almost as many have come apologizing for writing yet another book about Shaw. Consequently, the question may arise, why another study on Shaw? In this case, it is because no one has undertaken the study of Shaw as a devil's advocate, though many have

⁴Biographical data in this work is from Archibald Henderson's George Bernard Shaw: The Man of the Century unless otherwise noted.

called him that in passing. To view Shaw from the perspective of a devil's advocate provides new insight into Shaw and his career as dramatist, critic, and reformer. When understood in terms of his role as devil's advocate, the complex and multitudinous interests of Shaw come into sharp focus.

Louis Kronenberger, compiling one of the first collections of essays on Shaw, highlights the attractiveness of writing about Shaw by pointing to the vast scope of his interests and concerns. He also confesses that Shaw's interests embrace "too many things for any one person to write about with sufficient authority"⁵:

Any man with a specialty or a mania must somewhere have found Shaw adverting to it; any man with a grievance must have found in Shaw an antagonist or ally; whatever a man's politics, or his God, or his denial of one, Shaw--early or late--must have had his say about it. For on however outmoded or ill-reasoned or cantankerous a basis, Shaw's collected works constitute a sort of encyclopaedia. Shaw has greeted an endless succession of events with a twenty-one gun salute--his little innovation being to take lethal aim as well. He not only took all human activity for his province, but strongly suggested that nothing superhuman was alien to him, either--he swept Heaven clean of charm, drastically lowered the temperature of Hell, brought back the dead, landscaped and peopled the future. No matter what one's field or one's foible--God or devil, O'Leary or John Bull, prizefighters or soldiers or poets, armament-makers or brothel-keepers, Shakespeare or Wagner, phonetics or marriage or divorce, slums or drama critics, war or revolution--Shaw may serve as a pretext for writing about it, or it as a pretext for writing about Shaw.⁶

As we will see, it was Shaw's gift to be able to play God and devil at once.

⁵Louis Kronenberger, ed., George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1953), p. x.

⁶Ibid., p. ix.

In writing about Shaw, critics have approached him in various ways and with various interests, and pointed to the various roles he has played, but on balance they emphasize that he was primarily a critic. He was a critic of life and his criticism ranged over the broad spectrum of society and culture. He served as art and music critic for several journals from 1885 to 1894, before becoming a drama critic in 1895. However, Shaw did not confine his criticism to these areas although he gained respect as a music critic in his day. His criticism focused on man and his shams and shortcomings in economics, politics, literature, religion, the family, science, and the theatre.

Charles A. Carpenter, elaborating on Shaw's ethical concerns in these areas, examines his dramatic techniques in the ten earliest plays. In The Art of Destroying Ideals,⁷ Carpenter notes Shaw's attacks on hypocrisy in the last decades of Victorian England as Shaw deals with such diverse topics as poverty, marriage, capitalism, romantic comedy, Christianity, heroes and the legal profession. William Irvine declares Shaw to be England's official gadfly and writes about his early years: "He was learning to be open-minded. . . how to manage people with his curious inverted tact of disguising truth as humorous insult." He further describes Shaw's drama as having been invented "when Shaw walked into a debating society."⁸

⁷Charles A. Carpenter, Bernard Shaw, The Art of Destroying Ideals (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

⁸William Irvine, The Universe of G.B.S. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1949), p. 55.

In Shaw's later plays and prefaces his criticism simply expanded into more areas and with greater ferment. He repudiated the educational systems of his day, the medical profession, the churches and pious Churchmen, Darwinism, Marxism, the ineptness of democracy and limited suffrage, and Shakespeare. He disdained alcoholic beverages, vivisection (surgery), vaccinations, and a meat diet, but was not quite as vociferous about these as about the larger issues of life. Shaw was able to take issue with almost any matter in some way. The accounts of his controversial contradictions are almost endless. Henderson cites the occasion of his atheistic stance at a Browning society meeting. Ervine tells how he lost an election in the only office he stood for because he dared to attack everyone rather than to "dissemble" himself as he was advised.⁹ Stephen Winsten, telling of Shaw's early controversial nature, recounts his attendance at a lecture of Charles Bradlaugh, the renowned atheist. Shaw, with merely an "itch to contradict," asked Mr. Bradlaugh if science was not "the grossest of superstitions and likely to create much suffering."¹⁰ The aftermath of this was that because of Shaw's shifting attacks and petulant inquiries he created consternation among the public and, in this case, among his fellow atheists:

Shaw now took every opportunity of calling himself an atheist and was disgusted that those people who held the same opinions as Bradlaugh, Besant and he, persisted in calling themselves

⁹St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1956), p. 371.

¹⁰Stephen Winsten, Jesting Apostle: The Private Life of Bernard Shaw (New York: Dutton, 1957), p. 35.

agnostics. Both Bradlaugh and Annie Besant were subsequently arrested for publishing a pamphlet, *The Knowlton Pamphlet*, which upheld the teaching of Malthus, and George Bernard Shaw attended the trial before the Lord Chief Justice, and to his horror heard the two atheist "saints" sentenced to six months imprisonment. At once Shaw offered to help in the distribution of the banned book, but all the others were puzzled, still regarding him as an Irish Catholic because of the strange question he had asked at the Bradlaugh meeting.¹¹

Shaw could rarely resist a chance to be disputatious.

Shaw's reputation for criticism grew with the years, and his assistance in a variety of causes was in great demand.

All reformers now placed George Bernard Shaw's name on the top of their lists as the person who could help, by his writings, to eradicate their particular evils. The number of articles from his pen were legion. All his articles were not only widely read but eagerly discussed: articles on such subjects as "Flogging in the Navy," "Fiscal Policy," "Vivisection," "Egypt," "Spelling Reform," "Minimum Income," "Regulations in Hospitals," "Publishers' Methods," "The Czar's Visit to England," and of course "The Medical Profession."¹²

Of course when Shaw found that his efforts were not always successful, he only intensified his endeavors. "He complained that it was a ghastly business to get anything done: one had to shout and lie, mock and plead, make a fool of oneself generally to find in the end that things had receded."¹³

In his later years, after his success with St. Joan, he was invited to participate in a new series of radio broadcasts over BBC. The letter inviting his assistance indicated that the talk should be about twenty minutes and that "it should be free from highly controversial

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 136.

matter, including politics and religion":

Shaw read this letter and came to the conclusion that it was a practical joke. To invite him, of all people, to give an address free from highly controversial matter! Surely this official had invited him because he was the very personification of controversy; wherever there was a verbal scrap he was bound to be in it. . . . What did they expect him to discuss? The talk was to be entertaining but his one way of entertaining an audience was to provoke it to fierce antagonism by telling the obvious truth.¹⁴

Shaw finally agreed to make the talk, but he was not to be outdone. What he did was to read his playlet, O'Flaherty, V.C., assuming all the parts and singing. "He enjoyed himself, because through a work of art he had put forward the most highly controversial matter." He "was a soldier talking his mind and with the usual digs at the English, at domestic life, at heroics, at war. . . ." ¹⁵ His critical turn of mind colored everything he did.

Shaw's enthusiasm as a critic and controversialist reveals another aspect of the man and his manner. He was something of a clown--a joker of the first rank. J. Percy Smith recounts an episode at a Fabian Society Meeting, when H. G. Wells sought to change their policy of gradualness and proposed the removal of the Executive. In the anecdote which Smith attributes to S. G. Hobson, he tells how Shaw, called on to respond to Wells, said:

"Mr. Wells in his speech complained of the long delay by the 'Old Gang' in replying to his report. But they took no longer than he. During his Committee's deliberations he produced a book on

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 168.

America. And a very good book too. But whilst I was drafting our reply I produced a play." (Here he paused, his eyes vacantly glancing around the ceiling. It really seemed that he had lost his train of thought. When we were all thoroughly uncomfortable he resumed.) "Ladies and gentleman, I paused there to enable Mr. Wells to say: 'And a very good play too!'"

The narrator reports that everyone laughed and kept on laughing.

Shaw has always been an adept at the unexpected: never did he put his gift to better purpose. He stood on the platform waiting. Wells, also on the platform, smiled self-consciously; but the audience went on laughing. Finally, when we were too exhausted to laugh longer, Wells withdrew his amendment and we all went trooping out in search of refreshment.¹⁶

As usual, the joking had a serious purpose.

Eric Bentley, who views Shaw a failure as a propagandist because he was not taken seriously, emphasizes the humorous and often ludicrous manner communicated by his personality:

His whole nature is histrionic. By this I mean, not that he is a charlatan, or insincere, but that acting is his means of communication, which is another way of saying that he communicates, not directly, but by impersonation. . . . Anyone who has seen Shaw on the screen or heard him on the radio has experienced the theatrical magic of Shaw's presence and Shaw's performance.¹⁷

Shaw's antics became more and more celebrated by the public and by Shaw himself. John Palmer says that "when G.B.S., as Corno di Bassetto, was writing about music for a London newspaper, the public insisted that his

¹⁶J. Percy Smith, The Unrepentant Pilgrim: A Study of the Development of Bernard Shaw (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965), p. 97.

¹⁷Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw: 1856-1950 (New York: New Directions Books, 1957), p. 202.

appointment was a joke,"¹⁸ Shaw then proceeded to capitalize on the publicity; playing "with this popular legend of himself," he knocked the professors' heads together without the least idea of what they contained." His characteristic way of dealing with this public confutation of his personality was to reduce it to absurdity: "when people handed him a score, he held it carefully upside down and studied it in that position. When he was asked to play a piano he walked to the wrong end."¹⁹ Shaw was not unaware of what he was doing as he expressed it in a letter to Florence Farr: "It is by jingling the jester's cap that I, like Heine, will make people listen to me. All genuinely intellectual work is humorous. . . ." ²⁰

Henderson points out how Shaw's jesting manner emerged in his early childhood when "He. . . amused himself by shocking his elders":

In this and other ways the future playwright began early to act a part in public, and to hide his real personality behind it. Like his most famous predecessor he was an actor to whom all the world's a stage. In the language of the stage he was "a character actor" who never "played straight." In "character" he was impudent and audacious: in himself he was mortally diffident and shy. What is called his development is nothing but the gradual discovery of a very unexpected real person behind the fantastic and intriguing playboy of the western world.²¹

¹⁸John Palmer, "George Bernard Shaw: Harlequin or Patriot?" George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey, ed. Louis Kronenberger (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1953), p. 49.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Winsten, p. 95.

²¹Henderson, p. 14.

Colin Wilson, who also sees Shaw's jesting traits as an outgrowth of his childhood, points to the emergence of a distinct Shavian persona, G.B.S.: "The evidence would seem to suggest, then, that the young Shaw was naturally shy and introverted, and that he developed the persona called G.B.S. . . ."22

Shaw apparently worked at making himself conspicuous. Some say that he did this merely for self-advertising; others say that it was in order to gain attention for the causes he was espousing. Shaw had succeeded in making his presence as G.B.S. known by the time he retired from his position as drama critic.

After ten years of continuous criticism of the arts and music and the drama, Shaw gave up, exhausted. . . . By this time he had reached the age at which one discovers that "journalism is a young man's standby, not an old man's livelihood." he had said all that he had to say of Irving and Tree, of Ibsen and Shakespeare. But, above all, he had gloriously succeeded in the creation of the most successful of all his fictions: G.B.S. "For ten years past, with an unprecedented pertinacity and obstination, I have been dinning into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England: and no power in heaven or earth will ever change it. I may dodder and dote; I may pot-boil and platitudinize; I may become the butt and chopping block of all the bright, original spirits of the rising generation; but my reputation shall not suffer: it is built up fast and solid, like Shakespear's, on an impregnable basis of dogmatic reiteration."23

Shaw's designation as G.B.S. not only became histrionic but has also become historic. Books are written about G.B.S., thus highlighting

²²Colin Wilson, Bernard Shaw: A Reassessment (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 18.

²³Henderson, p. 417.

the self-created identity. Studies are written which try to distinguish between the real and the illusory Shaw. Henderson calls attention to Shaw's use of a large variety of pseudonyms during his formative years:

During these years, Shaw sometimes signed his full name, sometimes his initials, sometimes signed not at all. With his irrepressible spirit of mischief, it was to be expected that he would use a pen name occasionally. But one was not enough: he liked to cover his tracks as humorist by using quite a number. An early disguise, which no one seems to have penetrated, was F. B., which stood for Fred Bayham, a character in Thackeray's The Newcomes. He was then (1885) reviewing fiction for The World under the editorship of Edmund Yates, whom he disliked because he was a bully. There was Redbarn Wash, a thin disguise in anagram; G.B.S. was up to his old pranks again; L. O. Streeter, a silly specimen which meant Lives in Osnaburgh Street (No. 36); Knifer Swimmingly, for no conceivable reason; and when invention failed, simply George Bunnard. And two feminine dominos, to hide his sex when he was up to one of his outrageous "spoofs," were Amelia Mackintosh and Horatia Ribbonson. He once wrote a letter to the press in the role of a suicidal lunatic protesting against the railing-in of Highgate Archway: and again as Napoleon posthumously advising the use of black gunpowder to make smoke screens on the Marne. Perhaps the most preposterous of his spoofs, the secret of which he soon revealed, was taking a name after a great ape in London Zoo named Consul. On one occasion, when the question of Voronoff's "monkey glands" was a press sensation, he signed a long contribution on the subject "Consul, Junior," with postmark "Monkey House, London Zoo"! Later on (1917), long after he had abandoned the practice of using pseudonyms, he gave on the title page of the acting version (rough proof--unpublished) the name of Gregory Biessipoff as the author of Annajanska, the Wild Grand Duchess, which is stated to be a translation from the Russian. In the Collected Works, the title is changed to Annajanska, the Bolshevik Empress.²⁴

Shaw was as elusive as a chameleon; it was the public's job to catch him.

Corno di Bassetto, one of Shaw's most memorable aliases, was a name he adopted upon becoming the music critic for The Star. Ervine explains Shaw's selection of the name as a means of self-advertisement, something

²⁴Ibid., p. 167.

which columnists writing anonymously did not ordinarily enjoy:

Critics in those days were anonymous, but G.B.S. never had any use for anonymity. He was not allowed to sign his articles with his name, so he invented a pseudonym, Corno di Bassetto. This was the name of an instrument better known, in English, as the basset horn, which had gone out of use in the time of Mozart, and has now been replaced by the bass clarinet. G.B.S. knew its name, but that was all he knew about it. It had a "peculiar watery melancholy" and "a total absence of any richness or passion in its tone. If I had heard a note of it by 1888, I should not have selected its name for a character I intended to be sparkling. I took care that Corno di Bassetto should always be amusing and by using knowledge, to provide a solid substratum of genuine criticism."²⁵

Shaw's humorous antics and varying self-advertisements grew into a notoriety that many critics, as Bentley's comment suggests, have found objectionable and damaging to Shaw's effectiveness and reputation. Colin Wilson calls attention to this by declaring that the persona, G.B.S., eventually "became his Frankenstein's monster and the chief cause of the decline in his reputation. . . ." ²⁶ Shaw himself, in his most directly autobiographical work, The Sixteen Self Sketches, expresses something of a similar concern to that of Wilson's, but he adds that he had no other recourse if he was to get the public to pay attention to what he was saying. Recounting his answer to a question addressed to him in 1901, "What is your honest opinion of G.B.S.?" Shaw replied:

Oh, one of the most successful of my fictions, but getting a bit tiresome, I should think. G.B.S. bores me except when he is saying something that needs saying and can best be said in the G.B.S. manner. G.B.S. is a humbug.²⁷

²⁵Ervine, p. 188.

²⁶Wilson, p. 22.

²⁷Smith, p. 261.

J. Percy Smith gives an extended account of the pros and cons of the G.B.S. mannerisms, concluding that Shaw eventually became G.B.S.²⁸

But what bothers Wilson is not altogether what bothers and intrigues other critics of Shaw. Shaw's critical, self-advertising ways, though jovial, were iconoclastic and diabolical. If Shaw was known for anything, it was his eccentric behavior and unconventional views, which earned him the title of a Mephistophelian or devil's disciple, if not, in the minds of some, Satan incarnate.

Russell remarked that some German delegates to the International Socialist Congress of 1896 "regarded Shaw as an incarnation of Satan, because he could not resist the pleasure of fanning the flames whenever there was a dispute." Pearson wrote of the early Fabians that "it took them some time to get used to Shaw, whose method of settling any friction that arose was to betray the confidence of all the parties to it openly in a wildly exaggerated form, the effect of which was that the grievance was forgotten in the general reprobation and denial of Shaw's revelations."²⁹

One of the most daring of his acts was one which he himself reported, several times, that purportedly took place during a discussion on religion and science prompted by the concerns over neo-Darwinism. He says it was on the evening of 1878 "or thereabouts" at a bachelor party:

It was certainly the method taught in the Bible, Elijah having confuted the prophets of Baal in precisely that way, with every circumstance of bitter mockery of their god when he failed to send down fire from heaven. Accordingly I said that if the question at issue were whether the penalty of questioning the theology of Messrs Moody and Sankey was to be struck dead on the spot by an incensed deity, nothing could effect a more convincing settlement of it than the very obvious experiment attributed to Mr Bradlaugh, and that consequently if he had not tried it, he ought to have tried it. The omission, I added, was one which could easily be remedied

²⁸Ibid., p. 265.

²⁹Wilson, p. 109.

there and then, as I happened to share Mr Bradlaugh's views as to the absurdity of the belief in these violent interferences with the order of nature by a short-tempered and thin-skinned supernatural deity. Therefore--and at that point I took out my watch. The effect was electrical. (V, 284-85)

Numerous accounts are given of Shaw's devilish manner, not only in his behavior but also in his appearance. J. Percy Smith emphasizes this by indicating that the further away we get from the lifetime of George Bernard Shaw, "it is evident that the image of him which remains in the public mind is the one caught by Max Beerbohm's famous cartoon: the Mephistophelian one."³⁰ Late photographs of him all convey the well-known appearance of "the direct, sharp, impudently questioning eyes, the fierce white beard and shaggy upturned eyebrows, the mocking, arrogant mouth, the lithe, erect frame, with head slightly tilted back, "that all somehow combine to convey an impression of simultaneous vanity and other worldliness."³¹ Henderson, in describing the influence on Shaw's literary and psychological development, recounts the devilishness of the Punch and Judy shows, culminating in the devilish Richard III, which Shaw simulated.

The Punch and Judy puppet plays, which enlivened Shaw's childhood, were part of the same unconscious course of education. Punch's character is that of an all-denying rebel, a slapstick tyrant, who kills wife, child, dog, doctor, and even vanquishes the devil himself. It is easy to believe that the Punch prototype is the veritable Vice of the old moralities. Sonny Shaw subconsciously absorbed, we suspect, the ethics of this authority-scoring, death-challenging,

³⁰Smith, p. 1.

³¹Ibid.

deity-defying hero of the most popular of all puppet plays. . . .

Among his radical associates, Secularists, Atheists, Socialists, Positivists, Nihilists--William Morris, Prince Kropotkin, Sergei Stepniak, Annie Besant, Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, Sydney Olivier--he came to be recognized as a devil's disciple, a diabolonian, an ethical thinker who sought to replace the standardized codes of conduct and orders of merit by their opposites. He revealed in Richard III as the best of all versions of Punch. "Richard is the prince of Punches: he delights Man by provoking God, and dies unrepentant and game to the last."³²

Shaw's devilish reputation had its impact not only in his criticism and personality but also in his drama. His plays are full of roguish characters and devil's disciples: Characteris of The Philanderer, Bluntschli of Arms and the Man, Dick Dudgeon of The Devil's Disciple, Don Juan of Man and Superman, Undershaft of Major Barbara, Shotover of Heartbreak House, as well as Satan himself in Man and Superman.

One of Shaw's contemporary critics, William Archer, who became a kind of midwife to Shaw's early dramatic career, first noted this devilish tendency in Shaw's drama when commenting on the drama of Henrik Ibsen. Archer had first met Ibsen on a trip in Italy in 1881 and developed an interest in the great Norwegian. When encountering him again six years later, he recorded the following impression:

I am becoming more and more convinced that as a many-sided thinker, or rather a systematic thinker, Ibsen is nowhere. He is essentially a kindred spirit with Shaw--a paradoxist, a sort of Devil's Advocate, who goes about picking holes in every "well-known fact". . . , or . . . looking at the teeth of every "normally built truth" and proclaiming it too old to pass any longer. . . .³³

Many other critics and biographers have picked up on Archer and

³²Henderson, p. 742.

³³Ibid., pp. 394-95.

made passing reference to Shaw as devil's advocate. Only one, however, has pursued the notion in any detail, and this only in relation to Shaw's criticism. A. P. Barr in an article examining Shaw's criticism, "Diabolonian Pundit: G.B.S. Critic," notes Shaw's use of the term in a review of the German philosopher Nietzsche. Shaw described Nietzsche as a "Devil's Advocate of the modern type."³⁴ Barr then observes that Shaw applied the concept to himself in Pen Portraits as he sketched a history of Satanism:

"Formerly when there was a question of canonizing a pious person, the devil was allowed an advocate to support his claims to the pious person's soul. But nobody ever dreamt of openly defending the devil as a much understood and fundamentally right-minded regenerator of the race until the nineteenth century. . . ." Blake tried, but was dismissed as a paradoxical madman--besides, he was a poet. The subsequent attempt to purify religion, the exaltation of "duty, morality, law, and altruism about faith," and the new Ethical Societies "left my poor old friend and the devil (for I too was diabolonian born) worse off than ever. . . . All seemed lost when suddenly the cause found its dramatist in Ibsen. . . . After the dramatist came the philosopher. In England, G.B.S.: in Germany, Nietzsche."³⁵

Barr, in noting similarities between the thought of Shaw and Nietzsche, emphasizes Shaw's tendency as a critic to "Shavianize" other writers as he criticizes them: that is, "Shaw's ability, partly consciously and partly unconsciously, to take a philosopher whose meaning is inextricably linked with his tone and style, to strip his words of these and to shape

³⁴Alan P. Barr, "Diabolonian Pundit: G.B.S. as Critic," Shaw Review, 9, No. 1 (January 1968), 21.

³⁵Ibid.

them to the Shavian mold."³⁶ Barr does not develop the significance of Shaw's diabolic qualities beyond noting the nature of his thought and the practice of "his criticism to proselytize." But he does conclude his article by stating:

What clearly stands out, then, is Shaw's capacity for reading an author (and certainly he was conscious of what he was about) in a way convenient for his argument. Yet it is but one significant facet of Shaw as a relentlessly diabolonian crusader. Exactly the same trait pervades his own plays, lectures, essays, and novels.³⁷

What I wish to do is to examine the fuller significance of "Shaw as a ruthlessly diabolonian crusader" in his drama, that is, in his role as devil's advocate to the world.

The "devil's advocate" is a term popularly used to designate "one who advocates an opposing or bad cause, esp., for the sake of argument" or "an adverse critic, esp. of what is deemed good."³⁸ As already noted, Shaw would seem to more than qualify as a devil's advocate in this sense. It may be that this term and concept derive from the Biblical account of Job's accuser, Satan, in the Old Testament though little is available in English translation on the etymology of the term. The term comes more directly from the office of the Roman Catholic Church that functions in the process of examining candidates for sainthood. Shaw alludes to Roman

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., p. 23.

³⁸The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 385.

Catholic procedure when he says, "Formerly when there was a question of canonizing a pious person, the devil was allowed an advocate to support his claims to the pious person's soul." However, as is often the case with Shaw, as Barr indicates, Shaw modifies his sources or simply ignores the facts when they are beside the point, as he does here, because, as the Church uses the term, devil's advocate is not actually an advocate of the devil at all.

The office was formally established by the Church during the Middle Ages to control the indiscriminate honoring of deceased members and pious leaders of the Church as saints or heroes of the faith. The function of the devil's advocate was (and is) to examine the credentials of the candidates to determine whether or not they were qualified for further consideration by the Congregation of Rites and final declaration of veneration by the Pope. Significantly, however, the official name for the office is promotor fidei, promoter of the faith.³⁹ In other words, the devil's advocate is in actuality a "defender of the faith" of the Church, not of Satan or evil or the devil. The popularized version of the office is called "devil's advocate" because its primary function is to raise questions that critically examine the piety of persons nominated for canonization.

How this applies to Shaw has already been suggested by the popularized definition and understanding of the term, but as is obvious, this is only part of its meaning. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the fuller ramifications of the term as it applies to Shaw's

³⁹R. L. Burtzell, "Advocatus Diaboli," Catholic Encyclopedia (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1907), I, 168.

dramatic output and to show how the critical interpretations of Shaw and his drama venerate him as "devil's advocate to the world." I contend that the church office of devil's advocate (promotor fidei) is a most appropriate image and analogy for understanding the man and his message, because of its religious function and features and also because of its paradoxical nature and critical purpose.

Shaw fulfills the religious functions and nature of the devil's advocate in several ways. First, as a defender of the faith (promotor fidei), Shaw emulates the devil's advocate, though Shaw's faith is something different from that of the Church, as is shown in Chapter Two. Furthermore, Shaw functions as a devil's advocate in that he operates within an established institution, that of the theatre. Although his medium is not conventionally religious, it takes on religious overtones, as noted in Chapter Three. Finally, Shaw functions most explicitly as a devil's advocate, distinct from the role of a prophet or an ordinary pulpiteer or other church functionary, in that, like a devil's advocate, he is instrumental in the canonization of saints, as is discussed in Chapter Four. The examination of Shaw's function as a devil's advocate reaches its culmination in Chapter Five as the veneration of Shaw--the result of his role in the advocacy of a faith through the medium of the theatre--is considered.

Before examining these aspects of Shaw and his drama, however, it is important to emphasize the paradoxical nature of the office (and the term) of devil's advocate in order to appreciate further its applicability to Shaw and his dramatic writings: The danger of any paradox is its

tendency to confuse and thwart understanding because of its apparent self-contradiction: "A statement of proposition seemingly self-contradictory or absurd but in reality expressing a possible truth. . . ."40 The office of the devil's advocate is "seemingly self-contradictory or absurd" when one considers it in the popular sense, or simply as a service accorded to the devil by the Church, but its "possible truth" is apparent when one understands that it describes a function on behalf of the Church and not against the Church. The office of devil's advocate is by its very nature paradoxical. It must be emphasized that the role of the devil's advocate is actually and always to defend the faith.

For anyone who knows Shaw and understands paradoxes, the relevance of using a paradoxical term to describe him and his writings is apparent, but to those who do not a few examples and references should illustrate its relevancy. Bentley draws attention to Shaw's paradoxical nature in connection with his jesting and donning the mask of G.B.S.

The lunatic jester was named "G.B.S.," a personage who from the start was known to many more people than Bernard Shaw could ever hope to be, a Funny Man, whose perversities were so outrageous that they could be forgiven only on the assumption that they were not intended, whose views and artistic techniques seemed to be arrived at by the simple expedient of inverting the customary. Unfortunately Bernard Shaw proved a sorcerer's apprentice: he could not get rid of "G.B.S." The very method by which Shaw made himself known prevented him from being understood. The paradox of his career--for the paradoxer is himself a paradox--is that he should have had so much fame and so little tangible and positive influence."41

Extensive studies have also been made on the nature of Shaw's personality

⁴⁰The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, p. 1046.

⁴¹Bentley, p. 188.

and his use of a work. Daniel Dervin⁴² has undertaken a psychological study of Shaw and countless writers have explored Shaw's childhood for further understanding of the paradoxical Shaw, the man and the dramatist. As early as 1916, Richard Burton in his The Man and the Mask was examining Shaw and his mask as revealed in Shaw's first thirty plays, noting the paradoxicalness of Shaw and its tendency to obscure Shaw's dramatic reputation.

As a result, and quite naturally, he is among the best known and least known of men. His vogue as a dramatist is very great, he is both notorious and famous in this phase of his activity; yet little understood, even yet, in the true sense. Shaw first suffered from the darkness of obscurity; now he suffers from that excess of light offered by newspapers: which is darkness visible. Of old, misunderstood and neglected, it is his paradoxical fate,--with a certain fitness for the dealer in paradox,--when lauded and run after, to be still misunderstood. If the mountebank hides the man, he himself must divide the blame with the public; since it is by his own preference that he has put an antic disposition on.⁴³

Nevertheless, it is a disposition that befits Shaw as a devil's advocate.

Richard Ohmann, one of the first critics in over thirty years to give extended attention to Shaw's style, points to the paradoxical nature of Shaw's prose, indicating how it underlies his philosophical views of change and his iconoclastic manner.

The penchant for flouting expectations spills over easily enough into the device of paradox. Although Shaw is no Chesterton whose thought moves from one paradox to the next without touching

⁴²Daniel A. Dervin, Bernard Shaw: A Psychological Study (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1975).

⁴³Richard Burton, Bernard Shaw: The Man and the Mask (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1916), pp. 1-2.

ground, his thought does come to rest in them incidentally, as a result of his deep sense of the oddness of things. A typical Shavian paradox runs like this: America is "a country where every citizen is free to suppress liberty." In a reasonable world freedom would not lead to suppression of liberty, but it is precisely the world's unreasonableness that elicits these paradoxes. Conduct is inconsistent. The business man "goes on Sunday to the church with the regularity of the village blacksmith, there to renounce and abjure before his God the line of conduct which he intends to pursue with all his might during the following week." As this anomaly suggests, the twisted and knotted social system--capitalism--is a rich mine for Shavian paradox, so many affronts does it offer to common sense.⁴⁴

Ohmann goes on to describe Jack Tanner's Handbook for Revolutionaries as "strung together on a thread of paradox" with the following maxims:

Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it.
 The golden rule is that there are no golden rules.
 Masters and servants are both tyrannical; but the masters are the more dependent of the two.
 Decency is Indecency's Conspiracy of Silence.
 Every genuinely benevolent person loathes almsgiving and mendacity.
 The conversion of a savage to Christianity is the conversion of Christianity to savagery.⁴⁵

R. F. Whitman's intensive study of Shaw's philosophical origins indicates that Shaw's reputation is also built on paradox. Shaw's "ideas have often been criticized as contradictory, ambiguous, paradoxical," but it is those very characteristics that have produced "yet another quality, one in which the man himself had a passionate faith: the power of perpetual rebirth and renewal."⁴⁶ Whitman enlarges upon the

⁴⁴Richard Ohmann, Shaw: The Style and the Man (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1962), pp. 56-57.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 57.

⁴⁶Robert F. Whitman, Shaw and the Play of Ideas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 17-18.

significance and presence of paradox in Shaw:

Shaw, of course, could scarcely open his mouth without making a dogmatic, categorical pronouncement. He built his reputation as an impudent upstart, and later as a professional paradoxer, on cocksure generalizations that contradict some apparently self-evident fact. Dogmatic assertions are weapons in his arsenal of shock tactics, and more often than not grow out of his awareness of the very complexity of the issues involved. But when Shaw is not playing games with us--as he very often is--he is much more humble in the face of the world's ambiguities than most of his critics will allow. Indeed, they cry out against his contradictions and inconsistencies as though they had discovered a useful weapon with which to discredit his disturbing insights. Neither he nor I, however, need appeal to Emerson's hobgoblins to justify the inconsistencies. In some ways they are rhetorical devices; but in a larger sense they reflect, and are an attempt to embrace, the more elemental contradictions that he understood and could tolerate in unresolved suspension, while smaller minds fled to the illusory security of simple answers.⁴⁷

The predominance of paradox in Shaw and his plays obscures any beliefs which he advances, for his beliefs are never ends in themselves. Shaw is more committed to exhibiting the vitality and reality of life in the Life Force than he is in the promoting of it as another belief. He finds in the process of devil's advocacy the means of furthering the purposes of the Life Force. Of course, he conceives of the process as enhancing the well-being of mankind, and he endorses and uses any of the institutions, agencies and ideas of men and civilization to carry on this process while seeking to expose, alter or eliminate any aspect of society that hinders or will not be used in the process. However, to espouse a creed beyond that of Creative Evolution and the Life Force is abhorrent to the devil's advocacy of Shaw. "It is fashionable to say that Shaw's main concerns were politics and sociology, but if these were his

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 22-33.

main concerns they were only as means rather than as ends."⁴⁸ Shaw himself explains this view as well as anyone: "We must have a hypotheses as a frame of reference before we can reason; and Creative Evolution, though the best we can devise so far, is basically as hypothetical and provisional as any of the creeds" (V, 701-2).

Margery Morgan in her summation of Shaw's dramatic comedy also points to the prominence of paradox in Shaw and his drama: "But the consistent Shavian mask, the created persona of the author, defines the master of paradox, operative in a single phrase or in the basic concept in which an entire play is structured."⁴⁹ She goes on to point to its value:

Whether it is an incidental device, or a major reflection of mental attitude, it serves the general effect of liberating readers and audiences from conventional thinking. The self-contradiction at the heart of paradox confronts common sense and moderate "reasonableness," those lowest common denominators of understanding, with the frankly nonsensical and thus joins with farce in presenting a version of the world as more fantastic than is familiarly acknowledged: fantastic, but not meaningless. An abundant use of paradox does more than shock the mind into re-examining long-accepted propositions; it encourages and gives practice in a mode of thinking which is an unorthodox constant in the Western tradition. The distinction between right and wrong fades into insignificance before the growing awareness that no single rational formulation is adequate to express the many aspects of reality.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Harold Fromm, Bernard Shaw and The Theater in the Nineties: A Study of Shaw's Dramatic Criticism (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1967), p. 27.

⁴⁹Margery M. Morgan, The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw (London: Methuen and Co., 1972), p. 347.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 342.

Just as Shaw's functions as a dramatist take on the religious connotations of the devil's advocate, his paradoxical manner simulates the critical nature of the devil's advocate in the Church. Thus Shaw's critical purposes conform also to the role of the devil's advocate. While defending his faith, he attacks the conventional beliefs and practices of religion and society as well as those of the theatre. The predominance of Shaw's critical manner has already been noted, but what I will further emphasize in this dissertation, in connection with the religious aspects of Shaw's drama and faith, are the positive and constructive features of Shaw's criticism. He is not only out to destroy and eliminate that which obstructs faith and which is debilitating in life and society, but also he labors to affirm the faith of the Life Force, the medium of the theatre, a canon of saints and the strategies of the devil's advocate as a way for the world.

Shaw himself has expressed it best when he wrote in the preface to On the Rocks in 1933:

Put shortly and undramatically the case is that a civilization cannot progress without criticism, and must therefore, to save itself from stagnation and putrefaction, declare impunity for criticism. This means impunity not only for propositions which, however novel, seem interesting, statesmanlike, and respectable, but for propositions that shock the uncritical as obscene, seditious, blasphemous, heretical, and revolutionary. The sound Catholic institution, the Devil's Advocate [underlining mine], must be privileged as possibly the Herald of the World to come. (VI, 626)

No other term or analogy of the many that have been offered in the critical works on Shaw appears as comprehensive and as explicit in describing the way Shaw and his drama serve the world. In the pages that follow I

will examine in detail the significance and implications of Shaw's role as devil's advocate in relation to his faith, his theatre, and his characters. I will show how he treats everything in his devil's advocacy critically and--as is always the case with Shaw--paradoxically.

CHAPTER II

SHAW'S FAITH

"As my religious convictions and scientific views cannot be more specifically defined than those of a believer in creative evolution, I desire that no public monument or work of art or inscription or sermon or ritual service commemorating me shall suggest that I accepted the tenets peculiar to any established church or denomination nor with the form of a cross or any other instrument of torture or symbol of blood sacrifice."¹

One of the key questions concerning Shaw as a devil's advocate is "What is his faith?" Much has been written about Shaw's faith: inquiries into his religious beliefs and practices from childhood to nonage, questions on whether or not he had a faith and whether it was Christian, and examinations of his creed of Creative Evolution to decide whether or not it is a religion or only a philosophical point of view. These concerns indicate that Shaw was a man of faith, but a faith so radical that it leads critics to differing conclusions as to its nature. All churchmen, regardless of their function in the Church and despite the degree of their devotion to the Church, hold a common faith either as revealed in the Bible or as expressed in the creeds and dogmas of the Church. However, Shaw, as a devil's advocate of the Life Force, is not satisfied to merely accept what is given. He wishes to examine it, expand on it, alter it or (if need be) dispose of it, in order to offer a faith that is meaningful and adequate for the times. In other words, he attacks in order

¹Stanley Weintraub, Shaw: An Autobiography, 1898-1950, The Playwright Years (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970), p. 223.

to advance, and in the case of the Church's faith, he attacks it and espouses something more.

Henderson, his authorized biographer, spoke to Shaw particularly about the question of his faith. He gives a capsule statement of it in a letter to the editor of the New York Times:

Shaw cherishes the idea of creative evolution, as he once told me, because it gives him something to look forward to, something to hope for. It gives him a deep and satisfying faith in something better and greater, beyond the life-forms already developed. Man he thinks of as only a stage in the scale of evolution; and entertains grave doubts as to man's survival. Shaw is essentially a wishful thinker: he is "on the side of the angels." The Life Force, as he once expressed this mystic hope to me, will continue its efforts to realize itself. After the passage of uncountable aeons it will produce something more complicated than Man: the Superman, the Angel, the Archangel, and last of all the omnipotent and omniscient God.

This is a mere skeletal abstract of Shaw's theology; but it is, I believe from many conversations with him on the subject, essentially correct. Once asked if he believed in a personal God, Shaw replied: "The Life Force is God." Shaw was indubitably a deeply religious man; but he rejected the ascetic ideal of Christianity and the doctrine of the Atonement. Not long before his death he publicly declared that he had bequeathed to the world the only credible religion. It is just possible that Bernard Shaw is his only convert.²

As Henderson indicates, Shaw comes to this faith, appropriately for a devil's advocate, by attacking the faith of conventional Christianity which he had known in his youth. J. P. Smith, who has been particularly interested in the development of Shaw's career and faith, calls attention to the religion of his childhood and how his faith evolved from a decadent Irish Protestant snobbery to a socialistic gospel, finally

²Archibald Henderson, "Creative Evolution," Shaw Review, 1, No. 1 (February 1951), 4-5.

culminating in the faith of the Life Force.³ Shaw's biographers have been more explicit in providing details of Shaw's experiences with the religion of his day. Henderson points to the irreligious atmosphere that prevailed in Shaw's home where there was a "comic irreverence" toward the Church and Christian faith. Shaw recounts in his prefaces and sketches his distaste for church attendance which ceased by the time he was ten and the extravagant and laughable renditions of Bible stories given by his father and uncle.

To his maternal uncle, Walter Gurly, a surgeon on the Inman Liners, he listened, with the admiration of the young for an elder's artistic skill and knowledge of the world, to Rabelaisian stories and Biblical extravaganzas. While these stories, deftly told, left Shaw's nature untainted with vulgarity, they were completely effective in destroying all his "inculcated childish reverence for the verbiage of religion, for its legends and personifications and parallels." The delightful irreverence of his uncle appealed to him as pellucid acuteness and common sense freed of all religious superstition. On one occasion during his childhood, on inquiring of his father what a Unitarian was, he was told that the Unitarians believed that Jesus was not crucified but was seen running away down the other side of the Hill of Calvary. . . . An even more perfect illustration is afforded by one of the many heated religious controversies to which Shaw as a lad was frequently treated. His father, his uncle and G.J.V. Lee were discussing the raising of Lazarus. The entire tone of the discussion was that of Mark Twain's old sea captain elucidating the reasons for Elijah's victory over the other prophets in the classic altar contest. Shaw's father held the evangelical view; that it took place exactly as described. The musician was a pure skeptic, and dismissed the story as manifestly impossible. Shaw's Uncle Walter, however, characteristically described the whole thing as a put-up job, in which Jesus had made a confederate of Lazarus--had made it worth his while, or asked him for friendship's sake, to pretend to come to life.⁴

³J. Percy Smith, The Unrepentant Pilgrim: A Study of the Development of Bernard Shaw (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965).

⁴Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), pp. 43-44.

J. P. Smith cites one of Shaw's early acts of irreverence as recounted by Shaw's childhood friend Edward McNulty. It was in a cricket match:

McNulty sent a ball through a stained glass window in the nearby Roman Catholic chapel. For a moment awe-struck silence descended on the play ground. Then "suddenly came an unearthly scream of laughter, and we saw Shaw rolling on the ground in hysterics of delight."⁵

A more familiar and sophisticated expression of Shaw's contempt for the religion of his day occurred when he was nineteen. Moody and Sankey, two American evangelists, were conducting revival meetings in Dublin, which Shaw apparently attended and reacted to in a letter to Public Opinion (April 3, 1875). Shaw analyzes the motives of the large crowds reported attending the meetings, attributing the large attendance to nothing more than curiosity and a free gathering in a luxurious hall. He then evaluates the inappropriateness of the speaker's oration and the uselessness of the efforts:

It is to the rough, to the outcast of the streets, that such "awakenings" should be addressed; and those members of the aristocracy, who by their presence tend to raise the meetings above the sphere of such outcasts, are merely diverting the evangelistic vein into channels where it is wasted, its place being already supplied, and as, in the dull routine of hard work, novelty has a special attraction for the poor, I think it would be well for clergymen, who are nothing if not conspicuous, to render themselves so in this instance by their absence.

The unreasoning mind of the people is too apt to connect a white tie with a dreary church service, capped by a sermon of platitudes, and is more likely to appreciate "the gift of the gab"--the possession of which by Mr. Moody nobody will deny--than that of the Apostolic Succession, which he lacks.

Respecting the effect of the revival on individuals I may mention that it has a tendency to make them highly objectionable members of society, and induces their unconverted friends to desire a speedy reaction, which either soon takes place or the revived

⁵J. P. Smith, p. 13.

one relapses slowly into his previous benighted condition as the effect fades, and although many young men have been snatched from careers of dissipation by Mr. Moody's exhortations, it remains doubtful whether the change is not merely in the nature of the excitement rather than in the moral nature of the individual. Hoping that these remarks may elucidate further opinions on the subject.⁶

The letter was signed "S." Whether this stood for Shaw or Satan or some other anonymous pseudonym is a matter of some conjecture, but it was apparently not too pseudonymous for Shaw's fellows to attribute it to him.

Shaw's concerns about conventional religion apparently subsided in the years immediately following the writing of this letter and during his subsequent move to London. In fact, his vigor became more positively channeled into a devotion to Marxism and then into the non-Marxian socialism, called Fabianism. But eventually his interest turned again to matters of theology and religion. Warren Sylvester Smith in two studies gives an extended account of this renewed interest in religion: one in 1963, noting Shaw's speeches on religion;⁷ the other in 1967, giving an extended collection of Shaw's written statements on religion.⁸ In the foreword to the first book Arthur H. Nethercot notes conflicting inquiries as to whether Shaw was a cynic or a mystic and then concludes that he was both.

⁶Henderson, George Bernard Shaw, pp. 47-48.

⁷W. Sylvester Smith, ed., The Religious Speeches of Bernard Shaw, foreword by Arthur H. Nethercot (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1963).

⁸W. Sylvester Smith, Shaw on Religion (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1967).

Several years ago, in the course of a talk to the Shaw Society of London, I casually referred to Shaw as both a cynic and a mystic, and during the discussion period afterward I was indignantly challenged on both counts--by two different people. Somewhat to my surprise, as the argument developed, I discovered that the critic who was unwilling to accept him as a mystic was only too willing to accept him as a cynic. Eventually the rest of the audience agreed that he was both, just as, in the Quintessence of Ibsenism, after distinguishing carefully between the idealist and the realist, Shaw, citing Shelley as an example, pointed out that an individual might be an idealist in some matters and a realist in others.⁹

Nethercot goes on to emphasize that Shaw's mystical faith is his religion and notes that the tenets of it, though stated in lectures, prefaces, and essays, are also to be found in his plays. However, in this particular book Smith concentrates on the public speeches of Shaw rather than his plays, while indicating in the introduction that Shaw's developing mysticism in his plays parallels the "religious" speeches made by Shaw on various occasions.

The best and most subtle evidence of the maturation of Shaw's religious thought is found in his plays. The first four (Widower's Houses, The Philanderer, Mrs. Warren's Profession, and Arms and the Man) are concerned primarily with social and moral questions without reliance upon mystical qualities, as such. The next six (Candida, The Man of Destiny, You Never Can Tell, The Devil's Disciple, Caesar and Cleopatra, and Captain Brassbound's Conversion) all contain indications that certain forces beyond rational explanation are at work in guiding human destinies. . . .

After 1900 Shaw's religious ideas emerge much more strongly in his plays. In Man and Superman, John Bull's Other Island, and Major Barbara, the mystical forces are confidently recognized for what they are. . . .

The year after Shaw wrote Major Barbara, he delivered the first of the speeches in this book. He was then 50, and his religious ideas were fully formed.¹⁰

⁹W. Sylvester Smith, ed., The Religious Speeches of Bernard Shaw, pp. vii-viii.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. xvi-xviii.

Smith also notes later plays, along with their prefaces, that touch upon Shaw's faith and religious views but stresses that his views never changed, only expanded.

Once formulated, Shaw's religious ideas changed very little, but he never wrote the "gospel of Shawianity" he proposed in 1895. The preface to Back to Methuselah is a textbook on creative evolution developed from the ideas expressed in the preface to Man and Superman seventeen years before. The preface to Androcles and the Lion and the preface to On the Rocks, written twenty years later, both critically examine the bases of Christianity. The preface to Saint Joan deals with mysticism and sainthood.¹¹

Smith pursues this interest in Shaw's religion in his second book, where he discloses Shaw's plan to publish a book on religion:

The Standard Edition of Bernard Shaw's Collected Works first appeared in 1930. Among the non-dramatic volumes (such as Pen Portraits and Reviews), Shaw intended one devoted to his uncollected writings on religious subjects. It was to bear the title Religion and Religions. The table of contents still exists in the British Museum, along with proof-read and amended copies of the articles Shaw had selected for inclusion. The portfolio contains three items marked "hitherto unpublished," as well as some fugitive pieces that might easily escape a careful collector. These are retained here (even at the expense of some repetition), and with them are included whatever from the plays, prefaces, and letters seemed necessary to the essential religious Shaw. For if the book is to serve its wider purpose of contributing to the present debate-in-progress, the reader may need some help in culling from the thirty or forty volumes, none of which are without pertinent material. Shaw was a deeply religious writer and his own peculiar mysticism infuses everything he wrote.¹²

Smith goes on to point to the relevance of Shaw's faith to moderns concerned about the failings of Christian orthodoxy, the loss of religious beliefs, and the attainment of self-realization by citing selections from

¹¹Ibid., p. xxii.

¹²W. S. Smith, Shaw on Religion, p. 7.

his dramatic and non-dramatic writings. These selections are primarily excerpts from Shaw's prefaces and plays but also include occasional articles and letters; they reveal that Shaw was a man of a philosophical and ethical religion but a religion and faith that is contrary to the conventional Christian dogmas and rituals of his childhood, though he often uses the terminology of Christian orthodoxy. Blanche Patch, Shaw's secretary for many years, makes an astute observation about Shaw's creedal statements and his paradoxical use of words:

On Going to Church, the pamphlet in which he makes this declaration of faith, evidently achieved some sort of circulation in the United States. It is undated, but it was probably written round about the meeting of the two centuries, for, says Shaw, "if you should chance to see, in a country churchyard, a bicycle leaning against a tombstone, you are not unlikely to find me inside the church if it is old enough or new enough to be fit for its purpose." He had stopped riding a bicycle long before I knew him; and I should have said that he had stopped believing in the Holy Catholic Church long before that, if indeed, as commonly accepted, he ever did believe in it. Shaw who, at the age of ninety-two, wrote to The Times complaining that he found it impossible to make himself understood because nobody using the same words meant the same thing by them, was as responsible as anyone for that general misapprehension. He would frequently imagine a meaning of his own for somebody else's idea and then demonstrate how wrong it all was.¹³

Opinions vary as to whether Shaw subscribed to Christian theology, even though he was baptized into the Protestant Church. George Whitehead, explaining Shaw and his religion in 1925, noted the philosophical and Biblical sources of Shaw's faith. He also pointed to Shaw's tendencies toward contradiction in his statements on religion and Christianity. Whitehead concludes that Shaw affirms a Shavianized Christianity. Shaw

¹³Blanche Patch, Thirty Years with G.B.S. (London: Gollancz, 1951), p. 180.

could not accept a doctrinaire Christianity and particularly the Paulinized version of it with the emphasis on atonement of "crossianity." He singles out as the principal facet of Shaw's religion the notion that "personal righteousness is impossible side by side with social injustice."¹⁴ He then focuses on what he considers the vital essence of Shaw's faith--creative evolution--and points out how this is developed in Man and Superman and Back to Methuselah, explaining "the need for a religion which can be accepted by the thoughtful who have outgrown the traditional faith" ¹⁵ Whitehead concludes by emphasizing that Shaw is more of a dramatist than a philosopher, as reflected both in his inconsistent and shifting views and his artistic development and statement of his faith.

One of Shaw's chief faults--inconsistency of thought, and especially of expression--may be explained by saying he sees life as a dramatist instead of as a philosopher. As a dramatist it is his business to view matters from the angle of various characters who, if they are to reflect life, must naturally have considerable diversity of outlook.¹⁶

Whitehead himself seems to take divergent points of view on Shaw and his faith, complimenting him on one hand, reprimanding him on the other, and finally accepting him as a product of the Life Force. "He is the advance guard of the coming Superman, and, take him all in all, is one of the most remarkable products the Life Force has so far evolved."¹⁷

¹⁴George Whitehead, Bernard Shaw Explained: A Critical Exposition of the Shavian Religion (London: Watts and Company, 1925), p. 76.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 156.

Anthony Abbott in 1965 analyzed what he considers to be the Christian elements of Shaw's faith, attempting to make Shaw's position clear both as an artist and a prophet. Focusing on plays other than those selected by Whitehead--The Devil's Disciple, The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet, Major Barbara, Androcles and the Lion, St. Joan, and The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, Abbott examines Shaw's concern for social responsibility in religion and his search for truth beyond the creeds of sectarian Christianity. However, he deals with these concerns only somewhat tentatively as he scrutinizes these plays, stating that "to examine such questions in detail is, of course, the task of the theologian, and is neither within the range of the present study, nor within the ability of the author."¹⁸ He shares Whitehead's view of Shaw's Christianity but emphasizes the relevance of Shaw's faith and drama for the twentieth century:

What the foregoing examples do suggest, however, is simply that Shaw was much less of a fool in religious matters than we have hitherto thought him, and that he was able to present on the stage certain lines along which man's quest for faith in the modern world might be meaningfully carried out, lines that very clearly have some affinity with the most vital thinking of today. Christians are being called upon today to go through a drastic recasting of their faith, and now that the plays of Bernard Shaw are no longer in danger of being viewed as silly jests or sacrilegious shockers, they can play a significant role in that process. Shaw wrote plays with the deliberate intention of changing men's minds, and today, when men's minds are more amenable to change than they were sixty years ago, those plays can be an even greater force in the theatre than they were when they were first written.¹⁹

¹⁸Anthony Abbott, Shaw and Christianity (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), p. 199.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 199-200.

He further attests to the pioneering nature of Shaw's drama:

No one today questions the value of what Shaw did for the theatre during the first quarter of the century. His explosion of false faith, his laying bare of the hypocrisy in our daily life, his courageous fight for the abolition of poverty, his insistence that man be free to search for truth uninhibited by social mores or restricting creeds, his use of the theatre as a forum for discussion, his combination of wit and wisdom, did much to lay the foundation for the intellectual freedom and honesty of the theatre of today, the theatre of Pirandello and Brecht, Beckett and Ionesco, Sartre and Camus.²⁰

His conclusion is that though Shaw has much in common with playwrights of the twentieth century in dealing with the issues confronting mankind, Shaw and his plays supply a faith which the others fail to produce:

What place do Androcles and Saint Joan, The Devil's Disciple and Major Barbara have in a world that accepts No Exit, Waiting for Godot, and The Bald Soprano as valid dramatizations of the human predicament? Here again the surface view would associate Shaw with the outmoded liberalism of the earlier part of the century, but a closer look makes it clear that Shaw would not deny the truth that Sartre, Beckett, and Ionesco are expressing. He would simply say that they do not go far enough. Peter Berger reminds us that "unless the debunker has the inner substance not only to observe but to be prepared to speak helpfully in this situation there is something morally distasteful about the debunking enterprise." Today's playwrights are undeniably great debunkers. They are honestly aware of man's loneliness, his anxiety, his confusion; they are aware that the traditional reassurances of Christianity are inadequate; their drama is a brilliant and sometimes savage exposure of the religious and social lies we use to deceive ourselves. But for the most part, it stops there; and that is where the real difference lies between their work and the theatre of Bernard Shaw.²¹

Shaw has made clear his views on Christianity in the preface to

²⁰Ibid., p. 200.

²¹Ibid.

Androcles and the Lion, among other places. There he affirms his admiration for Christ, though he finds him mistaken in his claims to divinity. He finds two main problems with Christ and Christianity: one, Christ has never been taken seriously by his followers; two, Paul perverted Christ's teachings with his doctrine of atonement, which Shaw dubs "Crossianity." After giving an extended account of Christianity's developing perversion and examining the four gospels critically, Shaw denotes the four concepts of Christ which he espouses: God and man are one, private property is wicked, punishment is to be abolished, and marriage and the family are detrimental to one's livelihood.

The most recent exposition of Shaw's religious concerns is a study by Alan P. Barr. Barr says that his study is an attempt to pull together the unending fragments that constitute the "Playwright's total accomplishments." He argues "that a satisfactory perspective through which to see" Shaw's seriousness "is as a religiously crusading writer."²² He contends that Shaw was seeking a solution to the religious dilemma of Victorianism's confrontation with science and philosophy which he examines extensively and that Shaw "discovered that essays in the short run, and drama, in the long run, were his most effective tools."²³ He concludes that Shaw's dislike of Crossianity made his religion something more than conventional Christianity and he develops his study around Shaw's "didactic view of art and conception of the theater as a church, his belief in work and socialism, and his fascination with heroes."²⁴ He touches on Shaw's plays

²²Alan P. Barr, The Victorian Pulpiteer: Bernard Shaw's Crusade (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1973), p. ix.

²³Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴Ibid., p. 9.

only incidentally, emphasizing Shaw's innovative faith and use of the theatre and his characters to promote his faith and vision. He is not unmindful of the diabolical nature of some of Shaw's characters but fails to appreciate the significance of their viewpoints in relationship to Shaw as a devil's advocate, which I emphasize in Chapter Four.

Shaw was undoubtedly influenced by Christianity, but what he was most aware of was the inadequacy and intolerance of the Christianity he knew in Ireland. Henderson cites Shaw's estimate of Irish Christianity:

In later life, Shaw reached the unalterable conclusion that Ireland, as far as the Protestant gentry are concerned, is the most irreligious country in the world. Just as in England the Church people persecuted the Dissenters and the Dissenters for their part hated the Church with the deepest bitterness; so in Ireland the Protestants and Catholics "despised, insulted, and ostracised one another as a matter of course."²⁵

Shaw concluded with characteristic wit: "If religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sunders, then I must testify that I found the religion of my country in its musical genius and its irreligion in its churches and drawing rooms."²⁶ However, Shaw was not unmindful of Christianity's potential relevance and validity, as Charles A. Berst has noted:

In expanding biological impulse into the Life Force, in interpreting the prophets as imperfect supermen, and in transmuting Jehovah into God in the Becoming, Shaw may convince the unwary that Man and Super-

²⁵ Henderson, George Bernard Shaw, p. 45.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 43.

man is "a revelation of the modern religion of evolution," but such a tag obscures the fact that this religion is as much a new dress as a new faith--more daring and contemporary than the old, but only thinly covering many attitudes basic to conventional Christian thought. Shaw is definitely not Christian in a doctrinal sense; his cosmology does not fit the slots of orthodox theology. But while Shaw's absolutes are not traditional, they have many aspects which are, and most of the moral implications he derives from them are decidedly Christian. Shaw's skeptical and rebellious stance has the virtue of subjecting old forms to irreverent scrutiny and a modern viewpoint, but finally it produces less an assertion of that which is truly revolutionary than an affirmation of old spiritual values, values revitalized and reemphasized by being shaken.²⁷

When reading or writing about Shaw's faith, one becomes conscious of two facts: one, the faith tends to seem fuzzy because of its paradoxical nature; two, it is overwhelming in the scope of the material it encompasses. However, Barr and J. Percy Smith are both correct: Shaw's faith is integral to his career and life. It is central to Shaw and his dramatic arts and, particularly, to his diabolical advocacy of faith: it is a philosophy, but it is a philosophy that is a religion and a religion that is not Christian though it has Christian overtones. There are basically four facets to Shaw's faith of the Life Force: first, it is functional, not propositional; second, it is universal, not exclusive; third, it is socially oriented, not otherworldly; fourth, it requires personal responsibility, not passive indifference. A fifth point, encompassing these four rather than paralleling them because it pertains to mode rather than essence, is developed in Chapter Three. This faith is artistically expressed, not metaphysically disclosed.

The central facets of the faith have been hinted at in the studies

²⁷Charles A. Berst, Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 136.

of Shaw's faith already cited. They are explicitly expressed to varying degrees in Shaw's plays, though one feature or another may be more prominent in a particular play. The dimensions of this dissertation do not allow an examination of all of Shaw's plays, but all of Shaw's serious plays exhibit one or more of these facets of Shaw's faith. The faith is even important in some of the tomfooleries.

Shaw's primary dramatic statement of his faith is spoken by Don Juan in Act III, "The Hell Scene" of Man and Superman, often referred to as his Genesis. Don Juan makes repeated affirmations of the faith of the Life Force while he engages in dialogue with the devil. Satan argues that life's history is nothing but a cycle of vanity:

THE DEVIL. Don Juan: shall I be frank with you?

DON JUAN. Were you not so before?

THE DEVIL. As far as I went, yes. But I will now go further, and confess to you that men get tired of everything, of heaven no less than of hell; and that all history is nothing but a record of the oscillations of the world between these two extremes. An epoch is but a swing of the pendulum; and each generation thinks the world is progressing because it is always moving. But when you are as old as I am; when you have a thousand times wearied of heaven, like myself and the commander, and a thousand times wearied of hell, as you are wearied now, you will no longer imagine that every swing from hell to heaven an evolution. Where you now see reform, progress, fulfilment of upward tendency, continual ascent by Man on the stepping stones of his dead selves to higher things, you will see nothing but an infinite comedy of illusion. You will discover the profound truth of the saying of my friend Koheleth, that there is nothing new under the sun. Vanitas vanitatum--(II, 683)

Don Juan answers with a series of rhetorical questions that reveal his belief that there is purpose to life. He then goes on to describe the purposeful nature of the Life Force:

DON JUAN. But I should not have them if they served no purpose. And I, my friend, am as much a part of Nature as my own finger is a part of me. If my finger is the organ by which I grasp the sword and the

mandoline, my brain is the organ by which Nature strives to understand itself. My dog's brain serves only my dog's purposes; but my own brain labors at a knowledge which does nothing for me personally but make my body bitter to me and my decay and death a calamity. Were I not possessed with a purpose beyond my own I had better be a plowman than a philosopher; for the ploughman lives as long as the philosopher, eats more, sleeps better, and rejoices in the wife of his bosom with less misgiving. This is because the philosopher is in the grip of the Life Force. This Life Force says to him "I have done a thousand wonderful things unconsciously by merely willing to live and following the line of least resistance: now I want to know myself and my destination, and choose my path; so I have made a special brain--a philosopher's brain--to grasp this knowledge for me as the husbandman's hand grasps the plough for me. And this "says the Life Force to the philosopher" must thou strive to do for me until thou diest, when I will make another brain and another philosopher to carry on the work." (II, 684)

But Shaw said that he was not entirely happy about the statement of his faith in Man and Superman. He extended this statement in Back to Methuselah. As Man and Superman is Shaw's Genesis, Back to Methuselah is his Bible or at least his Pentateuch. Back to Methuselah is a series of five plays, which Shaw insisted should be performed as five parts of one play, though few have undertaken it since it is so massive and lengthy. Most critics agree that it is Shaw's poorest dramatic creation, though it is also one of drama's most ambitious undertakings. Shaw, however, considered it his masterpiece, though not necessarily his best play. What the series of plays does is to describe the work of the Life Force from "In the Beginning" (Part I) to "As Far As Thought Can Reach" (Part V). Shaw dramatizes the effect of creative evolution as three-hundred-year-old Ancients are produced by a will to live long enough to accomplish something meaningful in life rather than meaningless destructiveness, as so much of civilization's leaders and nations have.

The plays complete the cycle of man's history as Lilith, the female medium of creation, returns to speak of life's culmination--not conclusion--in response to Adam's questioning as to what was the purpose of it all. She says, after she has recounted the beginnings of life and man's vile efforts to survive:

The pangs of another birth were already upon me when one man repented and lived three hundred years; and I waited to see what would come of that. And so much came of it that the horrors of that time seem now but an evil dream. They have redeemed themselves from their vileness, and turned away from their sins. Best of all, they are still not satisfied: the impulse I gave them in that day when I sundered myself in twain and launched Man and Woman on the earth still urges them: after passing a million goals they press on to the goal of redemption from the flesh, to the vortex freed from matter, to the whirlpool in pure force. And though all that they have done seems but the first hour of the infinite work of creation, yet I will not supersede them until they have forded this last stream that lies between flesh and spirit, and disentangled their life from the matter that has always mocked it. . . . I say, let them dread, of all things, stagnation; for from the moment I, Lilith, lose hope and faith in them, they are doomed. In that hope and faith I have let them live for a moment; and in that moment I have spared them many times. But mightier creatures than they have killed hope and faith, and perished from the earth; and I may not spare them for ever. I am Lilith: I brought life into the whirlpool of force, and compelled my enemy, Matter, to obey a living soul. But in enslaving Life's enemy I made him Life's master; for that is the end of all slavery: and now I shall see the slave set free and the enemy reconciled, the whirlpool become all life and no reaching out towards that, I will have patience with them still; though I know well that when they attain it they shall become one with me and supersede me, and Lilith will be only a legend and a lay that has lost its meaning. Of Life only is there no end; and though of its million starry mansions many are empty and many still unbuilt, and though its vast domain is as yet unbearably desert, my seed shall one day fill it and master its matter to its uttermost confines. And for what may be beyond, the eyesight of Lilith is too short. It is enough that there is a beyond. (She vanishes). (V, 629-30)

The most significant aspect of Lilith's declaration is her final recognition that not even the history of man is everything; it is only

"as far as thought can reach." Lilith is declaring that the nature of life's force is endless; it exceeds man and all his highest achievements, expectations, ideals and institutions. This, of course, is the ground for Shaw's assault on the conventional morality of his day in the family and marriage, in the systems of government and national states, in capitalism and Marxism--even socialism, in science, Darwinism, religion, art and man himself.

This functional, progressive nature of Shaw's faith, which is its primary facet, is dramatized in Shaw's various plays as they deal with the questions of marriage (Getting Married), family (Misalliance, Candida, and Fanny's First Play), systems of government (On the Rocks and The Apple Cart), nationalism (John Bull's Other Island, St. Joan and, in part, The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles), capitalism (Heartbreak House, Widowers' Houses, Mrs. Warren's Profession, The Apple Cart), science and art (The Doctor's Dilemma, In Good King Charles' Golden Days, Man and Superman and Back to Methuselah), religion (Major Barbara, St. Joan, Androcles and the Lion, The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles), and man and the nature of life (particularly in Back to Methuselah). These are not exhaustive or exclusive listings. I mean only to indicate the primary areas of Shaw's concern and the working out of his evolutionary faith in his plays.

Many have expressed concern that Shaw's faith-philosophy does not have any substance. But indeed Shaw's emphasis on process is the unique nature and feature of his faith. The faith is not static; it is alive, not dead. In contrast, the faith of the Devil in Man and Superman is sterile and moribund, and so are many of the institutions of the world, except as they are renewed by strife, schism or reformation.

Robert Whitman, who has made one of the more incisive studies of the philosophical background of Shaw's Life Force faith, emphasizes the progressive nature of Shaw's Hegelian philosophical foundations:

Hegel, who appears to have provided, at least at one remove, a structural basis for a good many of Shaw's ideas about life and Creative Evolution, does not say much about death. . . . He does have a good deal to say about life, both as an abstraction and as a natural fact. Its essence, he says, lies in a dialectic relationship between unity and diversity. When Hegel speaks of evolution, it is more in a rational and metaphysical than a biological sense, but the concept itself is important: "In evolution, something that is undeveloped, undifferentiated, homogeneous, . . . and in this sense abstract, develops, differentiates, splits up, assumes many different, hence opposing or contradictory forms, until at last we have a . . . unity in diversity. . . a definite concrete reality in which the opposites are reconciled or united in the whole. . . . Without contradiction there would be no life, no movement, no growth, no development; everything would be dead existence, static externality."

Hegel defines life as a condition of diversity in unity, in which the dialectic tension between the two (diversity and unity) constitutes its life. To go back to our first illustration of the dialectic triad: becoming possesses both unity (it being a concept in its own right) and plurality (because it is a synthesis of, and hence subsumes, both non-being and being); and hence its "life" consists of the tension between the two.²⁸

Wisenthal has produced an analysis of Shaw's middle plays on this proposition that "Shaw's habit" is "seeing the world in terms of contraries that can find a fulfillment only in union. . . ."29

A second facet of Shaw's faith is its universalism. Shaw in emphasizing Ann Whitfield of Man and Superman as "everywoman" stresses the universal element in his faith. His insistence on an equal income for all persons, which has not been understood as realistic by everyone,

²⁸Robert F. Whitman, Shaw and the Play of Ideas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 287-88.

²⁹J. L. Wisenthal, The Marriage of Contraries: Bernard Shaw's Middle Plays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

is also an instance of Shaw's insistence on universalism in his concern that the ugenic development of a superman will not be hindered by economic divisions of society. This concern is particularly dramatized in Pygmalion, where Eliza, a flower girl of the streets, is found to be discriminated against because of her use of unlady-like cockney as well as her living in poverty. Shaw shows what opportunities can be provided a woman who has eloquence of speech and a gentlewoman's financial status.

This same emphasis on the equality of humans is manifested in other plays, not so much to argue the need for equality as to demonstrate its acceptability: Chinese and blacks hold positions of responsibility, functioning as effectively as Englishmen in The Apple Cart and Back to Methusalem. The mixing of the races is espoused in the group marriage in The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, though if overstressed it could be construed as a cause of failure since the children of this communal society prove intellectually and morally deficient. In Shaw's fictional theological statement of his doctrine of God in the Black Girl in Search of God, the young black girl ends in marrying an Irish "prophet."

Shaw's universalism is voiced most nobly by Father Keagan in John Bull's Other Island. His universal outlook is indicated in the opening scenes of Act Two where he converses with a grasshopper, showing his kinship to life, but it expands in a more humanistic way in the last act as he ironically confronts the Englishman Broadbent and the Irishman Larry Doyle who collaborate to exploit the Irish of their land rights:

Sir: when you speak to me of English and Irish you forget that I am a Catholic. My country is not Ireland nor England, but the whole realm of my Church. For me there are but two countries:

heaven and hell; but two conditions of men: salvation and damnation. Standing here between you the Englishman, so clever in your foolishness, and this Irishman, so foolish in his cleverness, I cannot in my ignorance be sure which of you is the more deeply damned; but I should be unfaithful to my calling if I opened the gates of my heart less widely to one than to the other. (II, 1019-20)

He concludes his refutation of their economic provincialism by uttering the famous trinitarian creed of John Bull's Other Island describing a heavenly earth:

In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman. (II, 1021)

It is significant to this account of Shaw's universalism that Keegan explains his madness as a revelation received from a "black" man, a Hindoo.

That is not quite what occurred. (He collects himself for a serious utterance: they attend involuntarily). I heard that a black man was dying, and that the people were afraid to go near him. When I went to the place I found an elderly Hindoo, who told me one of those tales of unmerited misfortune, of cruel ill luck, of relentless persecution by destiny, which sometimes wither the commonplaces of consolation on the lips of a priest. But this man did not complain of his misfortunes. They were brought upon him, he said, by sins committed in a former existence. Then, without a word of comfort from me, he died with a clear-eyed resignation that my most earnest exhortations have rarely produced in a Christian, and left me sitting there by his bedside with the mystery of this world suddenly revealed to me. (II, 990)

Revelation is universal in that it can be bequeathed by a non-Christian Hindoo to a Catholic priest effecting a madness that is in reality a

sanity. Keegan's "madness" reveals that all men are one.

Shaw also makes his point on the universal nature of life and religion in an article "On Ritual, Religion and the Intolerableness of Tolerance." Smith says the original title of this article was "The Church Versus Religion" and that its topic is ecumenical. He explains that Shaw was specifically seeking a religion for the British Empire, but the problem is one of continuing concern: "The paradoxical religious needs of mankind: to be united in common brotherhood and at the same time to recognize in every human being a Separate Church."³⁰ Shaw articulates the problem in the article:

Let me state the case in due order from the beginning, using for convenience sake, the term Quaker (it is more homelike than Platonist) to denote the man at one end of the scale, and the term Ritualist to denote the man at the other.

There has always been, and always will be a division between the Ritualist and the Quaker. There is no reason for quarrelling over it. There is room in the world for George Fox and the Pope. The trouble begins only when an attempt is made to force ritual on Fox, or to smash the statues and extinguish the candles in the Pope's chapel. Religion takes different men in different ways; and if they would accept that fact instead of trying to force their ways on one another, a process which involves the utter extinction of the religious spirit the moment it is even contemplated, both the Ritualist and the Quaker would be free to develop their states of grace to the utmost.

The first thing to grasp is that ritual is not religion, nor the absence of ritual irreligion.³¹

The solution to the problem of these differences, he observes, is to recognize that they are all equally good, as Tennyson did when he wrote:

³⁰W. S. Smith, Shaw on Religion, p. 148.

³¹Ibid., pp. 150-51.

"God fulfill himself in many ways."³² Shaw then adds his favorite Scripture: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly before thy God."³³

The universalism of Shaw's faith is dramatized in Androcles and the Lion, where the Christians express their faith each in his or her own way: Ferrovious, who repulses foppish taunters by threatening to obliterate them and withstands the gladiators in the coliseum with his sword; Spinthio, who in his cowardice runs into the den of lions seeking to do obeisance to the Roman gods; Lavinia, who resists the amorous invitations of her Roman guard but allows him to debate with her over their faith; Androcles, the befriender of wounded lions, who enjoys the "magnanimous peace" of the Romans under the protection of his lion. The same view is expressed in The Devil's Disciple where Dick Dudgeon decides his calling is to be a minister, while the minister, Anthony Anderson, accepts his true calling as a soldier.

St. Joan exhibits the concern for universalism, even though her efforts are construed as nationalistic. What she contends is that nationalism is universal in that it is as appropriate for the French as it is for the British.

JOAN. They are only men. God made them just like us; but He gave them their own country and their own language; and it is not His will that they should come into our country and try to speak our language.

³²Ibid., p. 167.

³³Ibid.

ROBERT. Who has been putting such nonsense into your head? don't you know that soldiers are subject to their feudal lord, and that it is nothing to them or to you whether he is the duke of Burgundy or the king of England or the king of France? What has their language to do with it?

JOAN. I do not understand that a bit. We are all subject to the King of Heaven; and He gave us our countries and our languages, and meant us to keep to them. If it were not so it would be murder to kill an Englishman in battle; and you, squire, would be in great danger of hell fire. You must not think about your duty to the feudal lord, but about your duty to God. (VI, 93)

The third facet of Shaw's faith is its focus on social concerns. This emphasis is found in his earliest plays, and though many find Shaw becoming disillusioned with economic solutions, he never lost his concern for the physical needs of man and society. This is evident through the last of Shaw's plays. Bouyant Billions is not highly regarded, but it does reflect some of Shaw's more humane concerns. In it, Junius Smith, who refuses a lucrative vocation in order to be a "world betterer," ends up marrying and undertaking the study of medicine in order to discover the hormone that gives "mathematical foresight." The children of Bill Bouyant are generally rich busybodies, except for Clementina who marries Junius. They are warned that they will receive none of their father's billions upon his death and had better be prepared to earn a living: to become contributors to life rather than parasites upon society.

Shaw's earlier plays develop the theme of social concern much more effectively. His first, Widowers' Houses, and third, Mrs. Warren's Profession, are well known for their accusations against a capitalistic society that fails to duly consider the needs of the slum dwellers. The concern for poverty is further developed in Major Barbara with the attack

(of the devil's advocate) directed against religion for its failure to provide adequately for either man's physical needs or his spiritual needs. The theme of religious failure to deal with man's social needs is given some impetus in the character of Mrs. Dudgeon in The Devil's Disciple; though a pious puritan, she shows no kindness for her granddaughter or her son, clutching on to her husband's possessions, as long as she can, in her piety. The authentic sense of mercy is dramatized in the one act play The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet, subtitled "A Sermon in Crude Melodrama," in which a renegade horse thief risks his own life by giving up the horse he has taken in order to spare the life of a sick child.

Shaw's concern for social responsibility is not confined to an attack on business men and pious religionists. In Captain Brassbound's Conversion he exposes a barrister's usurping of an outcast nephew's inheritance; in The Doctor's Dilemma he repudiates doctors who show more concern for their honors and fees than for their patients, though he does exonerate one member of the profession who himself suffers near poverty in seeking to serve in a poverty stricken community.

This concern for the lack of regard for human beings is also developed in Shaw's plays dealing with marriage and the family. Shaw has been accused of being against marriage, even though he married, and against the family, which would in some ways undercut his expectation of supermen. But the critics are only partially correct. Shaw did not believe in the institution of marriage and the family as ends in themselves, especially where mates and children are maimed and their rights as person's are violated. Shaw's anti-romantic stance in Arms and the Man reflects this

human concern for persons, both in regard to marriage and the military. Bluntschli wants marriage to be for love and not merely as a social obligation, and in battle he contends for survival at the expense of victory. Plays which seem to disparage marriage, such as The Misalliance and Fanny's First Play (primarily the play within the play), are centrally concerned with due regard for persons. This is clearly expressed in The Philanderer, Shaw's second play, where Julia Craven is enraged at Charteris' flaunting of her apparently in order to marry Grace Tranfield. However, Charteris points out to her that "according to the Ibsen code that she professes, she has refused to marry him," because of "claiming her right to separate from him if she 'found the companionship incompatible with her full development as a human being.' He therefore claims the same right to leave her."³⁴ Grace Tranfield, in refusing to marry Charteris, declares the same principle: even though she professes a love for him, which might be interpreted as a fondness or respect for him as opposed to a passion, she cannot marry because her rights as a person might be abrogated. In the meantime, Julia continues to make scenes of protest because of Charteris jilting her, which Grace interprets as revealing that Julia in reality is a "womanly woman," that is, one more consumed with passion than regard for the rights of persons. Julia does, however, marry Dr. Paramore, who appears to be a suitable match since his character is best depicted by his name.

³⁴Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, Theatrical Companion to Shaw (London: Rockliff, 1954), p. 25.

The play Misalliance, which represents a new development in Shaw's dramatic genre according to Margery Morgan,³⁵ is a melodramatic farce depicting the ineptness of natural parents to adequately rear their children, both because of the parents' ineptness and emptiness and because of the deprivations in such restrictive relationships. The melodramatic arrival of Joey Percival, "a much-fathered--splendid specimen of humanity," and of Lina Syczepanowska, the unwomanly daughter of Polish acrobats "who make it a point of honor to risk their lives at least once a day,"³⁶ presents persons who are a striking contrast to the other children in the play, the siblings of the Tarletons and Summerhays. The latter have apparently been smothered and petted to death by parents who know only sentimentality, which is exhibited by the fathers and sons who make fools of themselves chasing the girls and particularly Lina. Even the arrival of another strange young man, Julius Beeker (Gunn), discloses the personality of one who has been abused psychically in a family relationship. The same concern for the individual rights of persons is also depicted in Fanny's First Play, though in that case, Fanny, the daughter of Count O'Dowda, and Margaret, the daughter of the Knoxes, as well as Bobby, the son of the Gilbeys, are able to overcome the smothering by the older generations, because they enjoy exposure to influences outside the home.

³⁵Margery M. Morgan, The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw (London: Methuen and Co., 1972), p. 187.

³⁶Mander and Mitchenson, p. 134.

In Bernard Shaw's Philosophy of Life, R. N. Roy has emphasized that Shaw's drama focuses on society's lack of human concern. He points to this as the key to the decadence and despair depicted in Heartbreak House:

Making love to by others [sic] is the main occupation of almost everybody in Tarleton's house. Heartbreak House also exposes the feckless romancing, flirtation and philandering of the idle rich. Hesione and her husband know only how to make "love and have not a care in the world." A "terribly handsome" and "an exceedingly clever ladykiller," Hector flirts with Ellie Dunn under the name of Marcus Darnley, telling her fantastic stories by which she is taken in. When he meets his sister-in-law Lady Utterword, he makes love to her automatically and Lady Utterword, is "quite a good player, myself. . . at that game." Far from feeling any jealousy, Hesione has invited all sorts of pretty women to the house so that her husband might get a chance of making love to them. She herself, as Ellie Dunn says, is "not the sort of woman for whom there is only one man and only one chance." Ellie, whose heart is broken by the discovery that Hector is already married, describes it as "this silly house, this strangely happy house, this agonising house without foundations. I shall call it Heartbreak House." This Heartbreak House is the house of the idle rich, a class created by Capitalism, and it is as fatal to society as Horseback Hall, another time-killing and soul destroying institution created by this class. Being an idle house it is also hypochondriacal house, always running after cures.³⁷

The evidence of Shaw's concern for human well-being could be extended to other plays, but this should suffice to point to the predominance of his humane concern for others as a vital part of his faith.

The final important aspect of Shaw's faith is also humanistically centered. It is reflected in Shaw's concern for personal responsibility on the part of each man and woman who is part of the Life Force faith. Shaw and his faith have no place for idlers--either poor or rich. Heartbreak House, as already noted, is one of the primary dramatizations of the failure of society's idlers. The consequence of personal indolence is

³⁷R. N. Roy, Bernard Shaw's Philosophy of Life (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1964), pp. 76-77.

depicted also in Too True To Be Good, a farce which displays the productivity and renewal of those who live meaningfully and responsibly. Miss Mopply, a young lady with an over-indulgent, idle Mother and a bad case of measles, is rejuvenated by the exertion of her will and the melodramatic intrigue of love and adventure with a burglar. Popsy, the burglar, stresses the point: "They who cry Safety First never cross the street: the empires which sacrifice life to security find it in the grave. For me Safety Last: and Forward, Forward, always For--" (VI, 454). The scene shifts in the second act to the desert where Colonel Tallboys is officially in charge, but the only person who keeps the camp going and is able to withstand attack from desert marauders is Private Meek. Both are ironically and appropriately named: the first is officious; the latter is responsibility personified. Though Tallboys enjoys his undeserved honors, "He envies Meek, who can do all the hundred-and-one jobs that a man enjoys, while he himself can only issue orders, read the papers and drink to keep himself sane."³⁸ The play is full of satire but it ends in the same farcical vein in which it developed, with Aubry, the burglar who is also a preacher, preaching but having nothing to say-- not only because of his own dereliction, but also because of the ineptness of the home and society from which he has come.

Further demonstrations of the lack of personal responsibility are depicted in The Apple Cart, On the Rocks, and Geneva, as well as Good King Charles's Golden Days, where the focus is on the strong man. Many critics have been perturbed by Shaw's praise and high regard for monarchs

³⁸Mander and Mitchenson, p. 226.

and dictators, particularly when he seemed to be a leading proponent of equality for all men. But Shaw's point is to emphasize two things: one is that the strong man is characterized by assuming personal responsibility--even though it may be devoid of humaneness; the second is that strong men rise to the fore to displace the weaker and to bypass the processes of democracy only because the masses have been derelict in their responsibilities in attending to both their democratic and personal obligations. Wisenthal has discerned this in his study of Shaw's plays by noting the two-fold elements as correlatives of Shaw's religion: the coupling of individual responsibility with public concern.³⁹

This concern for personal responsibility is farcically but nonetheless pointedly dramatized in The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles when the reports come of the Judgment of God removing useless persons from the earth. Iddy, the young clergyman lately come to the isles, is appropriately named for his innocuous preachments on love and eternity. He seems even more ironic when one considers that he was invited to cohabit with the daughters of Pra and Prola in order to supply the children with consciences which they lack. But after radio reports are received telling of society's political leaders in government vanishing from the British Empire, it is not surprising to find the "beautiful and wonderful, but sterile" children of the group marriage experiment in the Unexpected Isles also disappearing, for they were depicted as only names for Love, Pride, Heroism and Empire. The parents deliberate on the meaning of what has happened and their failure to produce children

³⁹Wisenthal, p. 44.

of force and substance, but they are not deterred from their concern for each other and resolve to try again. Hyering says:

Look here. I have an uneasy feeling that we'd better get back to our work. I feel pretty sure that we shant disappear as long as we're doing something useful; but if we only sit here talking, either we shall disappear or the people who are listening to us will. What we have learnt here today is that the day of judgment is not the end of the world but the beginning of real human responsibility. Charles and I have still our duties: The Unexpected Islands have to be governed today just as they had to be yesterday. Sally: if you have given your orders for the housework today, go and cook something or sew something or tidy up the books. Come on, Charles. Lets get to work. (VI, 835-36)

Then later Proia and Pra exchange vows:

PRA. Then I, Pra, must continue to strive for more knowledge and more power, though the new knowledge always contradicts the old, and the new power is the destruction of the fools who misuse it.

PROLA. We shall plan commonwealths when our empires have brought us to the brink of destruction; but our plans will still lead us to the Unexpected Isles. We shall make wars because only under the strain of war are we capable of changing the world; but the changes our wars will make will never be the changes we intended them to make. We shall clamor for security like frightened children; but in the Unexpected Isles there is no security; and the future is to those who prefer surprises and wonder to security. I, Proia, shall live and grow because surprise and wonder are the very breath of my being, and routine is death to me. Let everyday be a day of wonder for me and I shall not fear the Day of Judgment. (She is interrupted by the roll of thunder). Be silent: you can not frighten Proia with stage thunder. The fountain of life is within me.

PRA. But you have given the key of it to me, the Man.

PROLA. Yes: I need you and you need me. Life needs us both.
(VI, 839-40)

Shaw emphasizes that the nature of each person's responsibility varies according to his situation and circumstances. Mrs. Warren exerts responsibility by rising from her poverty to become a successful Madam. Undershaft displays responsibility by using his power to provide for his workmen and also in winning Barbara away from the ineptness of the

religion of the Salvation Army. Androcles waltzes with a lion. Ann gets her man. Miss Mopply founds an unlady-like sisterhood. Shaw himself manifests responsibility in his writings and particularly in providing a Bible for the twentieth century man.

In the preface to Back to Methuselah, Shaw describes the "threat" of Darwinism and science to human thought and faith, remarking that the mechanistic nihilism of the scientific-commercial combines will come to the brink and "will begin to look around for a religion."⁴⁰ However, he says there already is a new faith, though it is not really new:

In short, there is no question of a new religion, but rather of redistilling the eternal spirit of religion and thus extricating it from the sludgy residue of temporalities and legends that are making belief impossible, though they are the stock-in-trade of all the Churches and all the Schools. (V, 325)

The reaction to the make-believe of the churches has turned the professional class from the Bible to Ethical and Rationalist tracts.

Our minds have reacted so violently towards provable logical theorems and demonstrable mechanical or chemical facts that we have become incapable of metaphysical truth, and try to cast out incredible and silly lies by credible and clever ones, calling in Satan to cast out Satan, and getting more into his clutches than ever in the process. Thus the world is kept sane less by the saints than by the vast mass of the indifferent, who neither act nor react in the matter. Butler's preaching of the gospel of Laodicea was a piece of common sense founded on his observation of this.

But indifference will not guide nations through civilization to the establishment of the perfect city of God. (V, 326)

What is needed is a faith and religion that are universal and that

⁴⁰Bernard Shaw, Complete Plays with Prefaces (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1962), II, lxxii. This statement comes from a revised preface and is not found in Shaw's original preface.

produce legends that convey the truth of life. Shaw contends that "What we should do, then, is to pool our legends and make delightful stock of religious folk-lore on an honest basis for all mankind. . ." because "All the sweetness of religion is conveyed to the world by the hands of story-tellers and image-makers" (V, 330). Since "Creative Evolution is already a religion, and is indeed now unmistakably the religion of the twentieth century, newly arisen from the ashes of pseudo-Christianity, of mere scepticism, and of the soulless affirmations and blind negations of Mechanists and Neo-Darwinians" (V, 332), all that is needed are the artists to portray it.

Recognizing the need of an artist-playwright to responsibly espouse the religion of the twentieth century, Shaw recounts how he has undertaken this, first with the Don Juan story in Man and Superman and now with a second legend in Back to Methuselah:

Accordingly, in 1901, I took the legend of Don Juan in its Mozartian form and made it a dramatic parable of Creative Evolution. But being then at the height of my invention and comedic talent, I decorated it too brilliantly and lavishly. I surrounded it with a comedy of which it formed only one act, and that act was so completely episodic (it was a dream which did not affect the action of the piece) that the comedy could be detached and played by itself: indeed it could hardly be played at full length owing to the enormous length of the entire work, though that feat has been performed a few times in Scotland by Mr Esme Percy, who led one of the forlorn hopes of the advanced drama at that time. Also I supplied the published work with an imposing framework consisting of a preface, an appendix called The Revolutionist's Handbook, and a final display of aphoristic fireworks. The effect was so vertiginous, apparently, that nobody noticed the new religion in the centre of the intellectual whirlpool. . . .

I now find myself inspired to make a second legend of Creative Evolution without distractions and embellishments. My sands are running out; the exuberance of 1901 has aged into the garrulity of 1920; and the war has been a stern intimation that the matter is not one to be trifled with. I abandon the legend of Don Juan with

its erotic associations, and go back to the legend of the Garden of Eden. I exploit the eternal interest of the philosopher's stone which enables men to live for ever. I am not, I hope, under more illusion than is humanly inevitable as to the crudity of this my beginnings of a Bible for Creative Evolution.⁴¹

In a postscript to Back to Methuselah, written twenty-five years later, Shaw recounts what he undertook to do, knowing that it was not an easy task--to write or perform--but that it was of the Life Force even as he is of the Life Force:

Besides, I do not regard my part in the production of my books and plays as much greater than that of an amanuensis or an organ-blower. An author is an instrument in the grip of Creative Evolution, and may find himself starting a movement to which in his own little person he is intensely opposed. When I am writing a play I never invent a plot: I let the play write itself and shape itself, which it always does even when up to the last moment I do not foresee the way out. Sometimes I do not see what the play was driving at until quite a long time after I have finished it; and even then I may be wrong about it just as any critical third party may. (V, 685)

Shaw as a devil's advocate examined the credentials of conventional religion and found them inadequate for the twentieth century. However, he pointed the way toward a workable faith by espousing the faith of the Life Force. Moreover, he produced his own scriptures to portray this faith. The question must next arise, if the devil's advocate has a faith and a Bible to validate it, what is his church? The answer can be found in Chapter Three: Shaw's Medium.

⁴¹Ibid., II, lxxxviii-ix.

CHAPTER III
SHAW'S MEDIUM

The theatre is really the week-day church; and a good play is essentially identical with a church service as a combination of artistic ritual, profession of faith, and sermon.¹

Moving from Shaw's faith in the last chapter to his theatre in this chapter is moving from the faith of the devil's advocate to the church of the devil's advocate. To speak of Shaw's theatre as his church is not merely a figure of speech, for Shaw viewed the theatre as his church. "A theatre to me is a place 'where two or three are gathered.'" He viewed his dramatic vocation as a kind of religious calling. "The apostolic succession from Eschylus to myself is as serious and as continuously inspired as that younger institution, the apostolic succession of the Christian Church."² This attitude was not new; in fact, it is a very ancient view, since the theatre had its origins in religion and the Church. Shaw himself alludes to the religious origins of the theatre in a lecture he delivered in 1924:

The function of literature as an interpretation of life gave it a religious character. The Greek drama was religious. The drama began by setting before the people various aspects of popular legends, many of which were believed to be true. In the course of doing this it was discovered that it was possible to present a great many other things that were pleasant and interesting, and in this way the drama arose. . . . The mediaeval mystery

¹ Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw (New York: William H. Wise and Company, 1931), XXIII, 264.

² Harold Fromm, Bernard Shaw and The Theater in the Nineties: A Study of Shaw's Dramatic Criticism (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1967), p. 36.

plays were really meant to foster religious belief, and the man who played in them really believed in the truth of their religion.³

To say that Shaw's theatre is his church is obviously not to say that it is a church in the conventional sense of the word. Rather, it is to emphasize the seriousness with which he took the theatre and the didactic purpose for which he used it, particularly, in espousing his faith in the Life Force and in functioning as a devil's advocate.

Shaw appreciated the Church for what it had meant to mankind, but he found it wanting, as noted in Chapter Two. He also believed that what it failed to provide could be supplied by the theatre. The failure of the Church was its failure to teach and provide a faith to minister to and meet the needs of mankind which had arisen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Therefore, the purpose of the theatre was to attend to these needs by bringing a message of faith and truth to mankind. In the didactic nature of a vital theatre, Shaw found the theatre to be like a church. J. P. Smith paraphrases a speech Shaw made at a church for a Stage Guild meeting in 1889, which articulates Shaw's views on the didactic-religious nature of the theatre:

Acting--and indeed the whole art of the theatre--is, properly understood, an instrument of truth, of life, of growth. In short--Shaw did not hesitate to say so--its function is didactic; and it follows that to make of it an instrument of mere self-display or empty "entertainment" is a prostitution and a betrayal, a means of continuing in a Fool's Paradise. . . . The play itself, if its author is a genuine artist, is an imaginative projection of his conception of the relation of man

³Allan Chappelow, Shaw: "The Chucker-Out" (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1969), pp. 48, 52.

to the cosmos; and the performance in the theatre is the celebration in miniature of the mysterious workings of the Life Force, in which the spectators participate as surely as the actors. In a word, it is ritual.⁴

Shaw's strong respect for the theatre was in appreciation of its didactic purpose. He was concerned that its didacticism provide something meaningful in the lives of the theatre-goers. For Shaw the achievement of this purpose was the work of the devil's advocate in the theatre of the Life Force.

The distinctive opportunity which the theatre provided Shaw was one of enlightening people and reforming their culture. Shaw felt that he could use the theatre as no other medium of his day could be used to provide the public with a meaningful way of life and to deliver society from a mundane, meaningless conformity to ideals that offered no purpose. To use the theatre to educate the public and effect a change in society, Shaw had to have an understanding of the theatre that would enable him to appropriate it for his view of life. His complex concept of the Life Force is that view.

The theatre was especially appropriate to Shaw's function as a devil's advocate of the Life Force in two ways: it enabled him to portray the work of the Life Force in the lives of persons in the varying social relationships and situations of society which he chose to dramatize, and it more directly involved the audience in that portrayal than any other medium could. That audience involvement was achieved not only by what was being said and affirmed--this could be done as much by the

⁴J. P. Smith, The Unrepentant Pilgrim: A Study of the Development of Bernard Shaw (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965), p. 199.

pulpit or platform--but it was effected more intensely by enabling the audience to see and feel the consequences of the affirmations and arguments as the audience identified with the ideas of Shaw's characters. Shaw further immersed his audience in the work of the Life Force by varying the usual forms of the theatre and letting his plays convey the vitality of the Life Force itself. In these ways the devil's advocate of the Life Force used the theatre to fulfill his function. However, Shaw did not come to appreciate this purpose all at once. This understanding of the theatre was a developing awareness which began early in his life.

Shaw's home was somewhat theatrical. His father played the fool in his tale-telling, while his mother and Vandeleur Lee displayed their musical talents in practices and performances as well as providing an intriguing domestic triangle. Nor was the story of Shaw's discovery of the theatre confined to the home. It also came about because of his exposure to the stage of his own day. He saw the performances of Barry Sullivan, attended the opera, and in general enjoyed the theatre of nineteenth century Dublin. These experiences were, of course, supplemented in later years when, as a drama critic, he became surfeited with the late Victorian stage productions in London.

His journey to play writing was also assisted by other experiences: the friendship with Edward McNulty, a classmate of his in Dublin and later a minor novelist, with whom he shared literary interests and discussions; rejected juvenile articles to a journal in Dublin and a letter protesting the American evangelists, Sankey and Moody, in a rally in Dublin in 1875; an apprenticeship served in the writing of five novels (plus another uncompleted novel) over a period of five years (1879-1883),

which reflected the concerns of the author and demonstrated ability with dialogue. Dan Laurence in an introductory note to Shaw's Collected Plays has noted some "abandoned fragments" or "occasional pieces," which were previously unpublished,⁵ that indicate Shaw's early interest in dramatic dialogue. No doubt, the prodigious stream of letters to friends, play managers, actors, and actresses, as well as numberless others, sharpened his pen and mind for further writing. His diaries, aborted short fictions, essays, and uncounted articles on subjects that aroused his ire and interest, also helped to pave his way to the stage.

His inability and refusal to maintain a salaried job enabled Shaw to frequent the British Museum in order to fill the gaps in his education and to satisfy an almost insatiable curiosity, particularly about the arts and economics. Interests spurred by his participation in the Zetetical Society, Shelley and Browning Societies, and especially the Fabian Society have been extensively documented along with his attendance at lectures and informal discussion groups of almost every kind. These meetings not only challenged his mind but also broadened his knowledge and the sphere of his acquaintances and friends, such as the Webbs, Henry Salt, William Morris, Belford Bax--just to mention a few. However, the key man in Shaw's coming to the theatre as a playwright was William Archer.

St. John Eryine gives a fine capsule description of this Scottish-born drama critic who shared with Shaw an interest in Ibsen and

⁵Bernard Shaw, Collected Plays with Their Prefaces (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975), VII, 418 ff. Dan H. Laurence served as editorial supervisor of this collection.

journalistic criticism.⁶ Though they did not always agree, apparently they remained friends. Archer enabled Shaw to obtain the regular job as an art critic for The World in 1885 and to provide opportunity for income in the writing of book reviews for the Pall Mall Gazette. He also seems to have been the person who most induced Shaw to write plays. Talking with Shaw in the British Museum where they both studied, Archer suggested the idea for a play on slum landlordism built around a Wagnerian "Rheingold" episode. As the story goes, Archer confessed an inability to write dialogue but proposed a plot. Shaw assured Archer he could provide the dialogue but he ran out of plot by the time he had finished only two acts. Archer, not happy with Shaw's treatment of his subject, called off the collaboration, and Shaw shelved the two acts which turned up later in Shaw's first play.

In the meantime Shaw continued advancing in the journalistic world, moving from art critic of The World to music critic of The Star, then to music critic of The World and, finally, to drama critic of The Saturday Review. Also during this time he was developing his skills on the platform, actively participating in debates, serving as a spokesman and penman for the Fabian programs, and making himself a notable and notorious critic of his society's foibles and failures, particularly in economics and the theatre.

It was initially as a critic that Shaw began playing the role of the devil's advocate. Harold Fromm, who gives a brief history of Shaw's critical work in music, art and drama, examines the focal points of

⁶St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1956), pp. 174 ff.

Shaw's drama criticism: aesthetics, ethics and metaphysics, nineteenth century drama, Elizabethan drama and Shakespeare, Ibsen, censorship, actors and acting, and the theatre. He summarizes the distinct quality of Shaw's criticism:

Shaw's criticism has a quality not found in that of his contemporaries, an organic and consistent view of drama, animated by a fiery personality with strong opinions. When one has a fine sensibility and extensive knowledge, nothing is more useful than strong opinions. Although other critics of Shaw's day had knowledge, like Archer, or emotions, like Scott, or sensibility, like Walkley, none of them had them all and in such felicitous admixture as Shaw. As one Shavian scholar has remarked: "As a critic of painting, of music, of the drama, what he was fighting for so violently was to vindicate the ways of the artist, his freedom and integrity, against the indifference and inertia of the Philistines."⁷

Criticism is the essential function of the devil's advocate--analyzing, evaluating, exposing, commending--and Shaw, the devil's advocate, obviously functioned effectively as a critic of culture and society, vindicating what he felt was vital and debunking what he found dull and debilitating to society and mankind.

In the meantime, Shaw had launched his career as a dramatist. In 1892 he wrote and presented to the public his first play. The devil's advocate engaged the theatre as his medium--to many, shockingly-- with a play entitled Widowers' Houses. The story of the launching of an Independent Theatre in London to promote the modern drama of playwrights such as Ibsen has been told many times. Suffice it here that Shaw had a part in the production of this first short-lived effort which critics

⁷Fromm, p. 25.

viewed as a horrendous affront to the stage. He followed this play shortly thereafter with two more which were also concerned with problems of society. Shaw was launched as a playwright, but so far without any public success. Nonetheless, he was committed to the faith of the Life Force. To effect social improvement through criticism, he exposes human failings and offers insights for corrections and progress.

Charles A. Carpenter has clearly described the nature of Shaw's drama in the early period of his career, indicating how the first ten plays exert an attack upon the ideals, dogmas, and establishments of Victorianism and how they serve as a prelude to the later periods of Shaw's drama.⁸ Martin Meisel and most other students of Shaw's drama, following Shaw's lead, divide the plays into three periods.⁹ In The Art of Destroying Ideals, Carpenter says:

The ten substantial plays that Shaw found time to write during this era constitute a distinct period in his evolution as a dramatic artist. Shortly after finishing Captain Brassbound's Conversion, he told actress Ellen Terry: "And now no more plays--at least no more practicable ones. None at all, indeed, for sometime to come: it is time to do something more in Shaw-philosophy, in politics and sociology. Your author, dear Ellen, must be more than a common dramatist." This proved prophetic. Between 1899 and 1903 Shaw completed only the brief Elizabethan parody, The Admirable Bashville, which he wrote in a single week. Then, putting "all his intellectual goods in the shop window," he published the immense philosophical, political, and sociological drama Man and Superman--obviously an uncommon and impracticable play for the watery theatre of Pinero, Jones, and their followers. In itself, the purely actionless and argumentative dream sequence of the play represents a turning

⁸Charles A. Carpenter, Bernard Shaw, The Art of Destroying Ideals (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

⁹Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

point in Shaw's artistic progress. He once remarked (referring as usual to himself): "all the great artists who have lived long enough have had a juvenile phase, a middle phase, and a Third Manner." He singled out Man and Superman as the first play of his middle phase.¹⁰

Carpenter, concentrating on Shaw's earlier period, gives particular attention to the critical purpose to which Shaw puts these plays. He labels the first three as propaganda plays, emphasizing the priority of individual will and Shaw's seeking to convict the audience for the ills and wrongs of society. The second group of four plays consists of critical comedies in which Shaw makes "his characters seem ridiculous when they act in accord with ideals and sympathetic when they act naturally."¹¹ Carpenter also points to Shaw's use of the stage to repudiate the forms of the stage in romantic comedies. These first two groups of plays were published in 1897 as Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant, the first group designated "unpleasant" and the second called (somewhat ironically) "pleasant." The third group, which Shaw entitled Plays for Puritans when they were published in 1900, utilizes melodrama in focusing on heroism. Here Shaw exposes false heroes and puritans. These ten plays are considered the prelude to Man and Superman, which is the clearest affirmation of Shaw's faith. However, later plays, as Carpenter recognizes, still maintain some of the same concerns as these earlier ones and utilize some of the same forms.

As Carpenter indicates, Shaw's first three plays are conspicuous

¹⁰Carpenter, pp. 4-5.

¹¹Ibid., p. 73.

for their attacks upon society. Widowers' Houses is a "realistic exposure of slum landlordism, municipal jobbery, and the pecuniary and matrimonial ties between it and the pleasant people of 'independent' incomes who imagine that such sordid matters do not touch their lives" (I, 17). The predominance of the play's social concerns was notably evident in the original audience's response: Shaw's socialist friends applauded it highly, while everyone else hooted it. The critics repudiated the play and Shaw along with it; only two performances, even in the Independent Theatre, indicate its inadequacy as a work of art according to the conventions of its day. Shaw said of Widowers' Houses in the preface for Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant, "I had not achieved a success, but I provoked an uproar" (I, 19). It is, nevertheless, remembered for focusing the apparatus of the theatre on the problems of Victorian society. Shaw's attack on society's exploitation of human life in the slums was only a foretaste of his challenges to capitalistic culture's indifference to the poor.

Shaw's second play, The Philanderer, was written in 1894, though not presented for several years and then with no success. It is not as obvious in its attack upon society as Widowers' Houses. The Philanderer is not concerned with political and economic questions but ostensibly with the social institution of marriage. Written at the height of the Ibsen controversy, this play seeks to make fun of the intelligensia who though considering themselves sophisticated fail to appreciate Ibsen and the seriousness of love and marriage. Shaw describes the purpose of this play as his intention to show

The grotesque relations between men and women which have arisen under marriage laws which represent to some of us a political necessity (especially for other people), to some a domestic profession for women, and to some that worst of blundering abominations, an institution which society has outgrown but not modified, and which "advanced" individuals are forced to evade. (I, 33)

Valency points out that Shaw had described the play a little differently a few years earlier in a letter to Golding Bright, a young journalist.

There he noted that his first three plays were "what people call realistic . They were dramatic pictures of middle class society from the point of view of a Socialist who regards the basis of that society as thoroughly rotten economically and morally. . . ." In The Philanderer you had the fashionable cult of Ibsenism and "New Womanism" on a real basis of clandestine sensuality.¹²

Valency goes on to say that the play does not seriously deal with marriage or the problems of society. "It is, if anything, a protest against the unreasonable possessiveness of women in love, . . . an anti-marital attitude. . ." that "Shaw had formulated quite explicitly three years before in his lecture on Ibsen to the Fabian Society."¹³

Margery Morgan generally expresses the critical consensus about this play when she says that it "has received scant critical attention" because it is unsatisfactory "as a thesis play about a contemporary social evil, like slum-landlordism, or prostitution."¹⁴ However, she is intrigued by its "greater cunning":

¹²Maurice Valency, The Cart and the Trumpet: The Plays of George Bernard Shaw (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 87.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Margery M. Morgan, The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw (London: Methuen and Co., 1972), p. 30.

True, it has a topical-symbolic setting, in the Ibsen Club, appropriate for an examination of the "advanced" views and attitudes of the nineties. Political and economic questions have been put aside, but the social institution of marriage enters into the discussion and also supplies a pretext for the plot.¹⁵

She concludes her discussion of the play by clarifying its thematic point:

"The Philanderer justifies the focus of its title not only by exposing the sentimental illusions of romance. . . but by revealing the intensity of romantic love as morbid and its beauty as deformity. . . ."16

Mrs. Warren's Profession, Shaw's third play written in 1894, is one of Shaw's most notable efforts to use the theatre for direct social criticism. This play continues in part the concern of Shaw's first play, the problems and exploitations of the poor. However, this play, unlike Widowers' Houses, shows a kind of resolution to the problem. In this case, Mrs. Warren and her sister escape from the deprivations of poverty by becoming exploiters instead of the exploited. Instead of working for a pittance in order that employers might enjoy luxurious profits, the two women go into business for themselves as prostitutes. Prostitution is never actually named for fear of censorship, but the play was refused a license anyway. Shaw believed this happened because of the play's realistic approach to the problem of prostitution, rather than romanticizing it melodramatically with a repentance scene at the end of the play, as was typical of nineteenth century drama.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 30

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

Shaw's social concerns did not cease with these "problem" plays, though his social concerns became less emphatic in his later plays and the focus of the succeeding plays turns to more aesthetic and philosophical concerns. However, these early plays are distinctive not only for the strong critical function to which Shaw put them, but also for the manner in which he achieved that function. As he said, he makes his "heroes" villains; in other words, the leading characters of these plays tend to be morally reprehensible. Sartorius, Blanche and Dr. Trench in Widowers' Houses (the protagonists of the play) are all engaged in the exploitation of the slum dwellers. Charteris and Grace Tranfield in The Philanderer are both exponents of freedom in love while those who marry (Julia and Dr. Paramore) are made to be the antagonists. Mrs. Warren, Frank Crofts and Vivie of Mrs. Warren's Profession, who benefit from the business of prostitution, are the leading characters in that play.

It was Shaw's manner as well as his subject matter that created an adverse reaction to these early plays, but the creation of somewhat reprehensible leading characters is not the total extent of the paradox. Shaw arranged the development of the plays so that the audience became either antagonists to the leading characters or found themselves identifying with the leading characters. However, when the audience identified with the protagonists of the plays, they identified with social practices that were none the less condoned by the civic and church leaders of society. Consequently, the audience and society became indicted to the extent that they identified with the leading characters.

I must, however, warn my readers that my attacks are directed against themselves, not against my stage figures. They cannot too thoroughly understand that the guilt of defective social organization does not

lie alone on the people who actually work the commercial make-shifts which the defects make inevitable, and who often, like Sartorius and Mrs. Warren, display valuable executive capacities and even high moral virtues in their administration, but with the whole body of citizens whose public opinion, public action, and public contribution as ratepayers, alone can replace Sartorius's slums with decent dwellings, Charteris's intrigues with reasonable marriage contracts, and Mrs. Warren's profession with honorable industries guarded by a humane industrial code and a "moral minimum" wage. (I, 34)

Shaw's first three plays were not popularly received by the public or the critics. He felt that this was so because he was telling the truth about the unpleasant realities of life.

In Mrs Warren's Profession I have gone straight at the fact that, as Mrs Warren puts it, "the only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her." There are certain questions on which I am, like most Socialists, an extreme Individualist. I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character in its units should organize itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and all women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their affections and their convictions. At present we not only condemn women as a sex to attach themselves to breadwinners, licitly or illicitly, on pain of heavy privation and disadvantage; but we have great prostitute classes of men: for instance, the playwrights and journalists, to whom I myself belong, not to mention the legions of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and platform politicians who are daily using their highest faculties to belie their real sentiments: a sin compared to which that of a woman who sells the use of her person for a few hours is too venial to be worth mentioning; for rich men without conviction are more dangerous in modern society than poor women without chastity. Hardly a pleasant subject, this! (I, 33-34)

Shaw was not deterred by the adverse criticism and the reaction to his plays. His commitment to the theatre merely induced him to undertake two new points of attack. He decided to undertake publication of his plays, and he decided to attempt a different approach to the drama.

By 1898, he had written nine plays, but not with any great reception. Consequently, he began having problems finding theatre managers who would produce his plays. Therefore, he decided to publish his plays in order to cultivate the audience for his drama that he could not find in the theatre. When the two volumes of his plays appeared in 1898 entitled Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant, they launched an effort which no one had really successfully achieved before. Plays had been published primarily as prompt copies for production and then were generally discarded, and they contained much extraneous technical jargon. Therefore, Shaw was wise enough to polish up his editions so that they could be read more like novels. Some have faulted him for providing long scene and character descriptions; however, these not only added to the readability of his plays, but they also enabled performers to appreciate the particular emotion and atmosphere which the playwright intended.

However, Shaw went beyond these novelistic additions to his published plays; he also added prefaces. The prefaces, like Shaw's plays, have been varyingly received: some feel that they have no place with the plays; others find them extremely useful in helping one to understand Shaw and his ideas. The prefaces were almost always written after the plays and often revised or added to. They deal with matters beyond the subject matter of the play, though they are never unrelated to issues raised in the plays. Consequently, they add insights into Shaw's thinking about the theatre and society.

Ervine expresses his appreciation for the prefaces with a wish that Shakespeare had done as much and goes on to note the wide and impressive reception enjoyed by the two volumes of Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant,

in which Shaw's prefaces first appeared. However, he adds the bewildered, despairing remarks of William Archer, once Shaw's professional mentor, which express disappointment in Shaw's plays and disapproval of their publication and the prefaces that went with them.

I record these emotions, not as a criticism, but simply to show the dynamic quality of the book. Good or bad, it is certainly not indifferent. Its appearance is an event, literary or theatrical, of the first magnitude. From the theatrical point of view--the point of view, that is to say, of those enthusiasts who long and hope to see a worthy dramatic literature of the English stage--it is not an entirely encouraging event. . . .

But the main fact is that we have among us, and still in the full vigour of his faculties, the man who wrote Mrs. Warren's Profession and Candida. While there is life there is hope; and who knows but that, sometime in the coming century, Mr. Shaw may arrive at years of discretion.¹⁸

Shaw's prefaces continued to be appended to his plays as they were published, and, of course, they are printed in the complete works. Though sometimes they tend to be confusing in their digressive, loose form as they repeat themselves and much that Shaw said in other articles, nevertheless, they were another means for Shaw to refine the theatre and present his message to the public.

The concerns of Shaw's prefaces and criticism were extensive, but they centered on the same concerns as his drama: to improve the thinking of his contemporaries and to induce people to live life more purposefully in accord with the faith of the Life Force. Shaw had high expectations for the theatre. He felt that the theatre ought to serve the higher, intellectual needs of society and mankind. Therefore, he understood the

¹⁸Ervine, p. 329.

theatre to be something more than a medium for the titillation of man's romantic sentiments. He felt that if the theatre is to succeed in serving the public it must present life as it is lived: "The pleasures of the senses I can sympathize with and share; but the substitution of sensuous ecstasy for intellectual activity and honesty is the very devil. . . ." Shaw felt that human beings required a serious illumination of the issues of life. "For all institutions have in the long run to live by the nature of things, and not by childish pretendings" (II, 28). Carpenter summarizes Shaw's goals as a playwright:

The responses that Shaw wanted to evoke are what he describes in various essays of 1894-96 as considerate sympathy and humane ridicule. The constructive side of his campaign to supplant ideals with realities was to make people sense the value of humanity as it naturally is, as opposed to what it allegedly should be. His experience as a propagandist playwright told him that artistically induced impressions--dramatic effects--could be just as useful in this effort as persuasive arguments, if not more so. He therefore worked into his critical comedies a subtle fabric of elements designed, first, to stimulate only "human" rather than "animal" emotions, and second, to prod the spectator into impulsively favoring natural over ideal behavior. Shaw presents the general theory behind this tactic in The Sanity of Art. Demonstrating the "solid usefulness" of art, he posits that "art should refine our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our self-knowledge, self-control, precision of action, and considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity."¹⁹

Shaw's second strategy in claiming the theatre as a medium was even more revolutionary than the publication of his plays with prefaces and best typifies the function of the devil's advocate of the Life Force. Shaw knew the need to scrutinize and criticize the medium of his faith,

¹⁹Carpenter, p. 78.

but being more than an ordinary critic, he also knew the necessity of promoting and developing a theatre that would serve the didactic purposes of promoting his faith. This he felt could only be accomplished by providing a new kind of drama. As he said, "Every attempt to extend the repertory proved that it is the drama that makes the theatre and not the theatre the drama" (I, 16). However, his method was not simply to displace dramatic forms of his day but to exploit them for his own purposes. In the subtle, paradoxical manner of the devil's advocate he launched a two-pronged attack in the plays he wrote after Mrs. Warren's Profession. First, he continued to deal with issues of concern which he manifested in his criticism and prefaces, though these expanded as his repertory expanded. In this way he reversed the purpose of the theatre which had come to be primarily to entertain. Second, while utilizing the forms of the stage which were prevalent in his day, he altered them in such a way as to make them serviceable to the promotion of his faith and ideas as they pertained to the theatre, society and multiple issues of life.

Shaw altered the theatrical forms of his day because he found the theatre decadent and mute. He felt that it failed to touch the lives of people or confront the problems with which people wrestled and which society suffered from. He wanted the theatre to be alive to the Life Force even as he wanted all of society to be alive to the Life Force. He undertook to awaken them by his attacks upon society and the theatre. This becomes evident as we examine the forms through which he worked and a sampling of the plays in which he accomplished his aims.

Shaw's first play in his attack upon the theatrical forms of his day was Arms and the Man. As Carpenter puts it:

The most clear-cut example of this strategy occurs in Arms and the Man. Shaw arouses the conventional expectations of romantic drama, deliberately violates them, and finally exults in his triumph by having the utterly prosaic professional soldier, Captain Bluntschli, declare with sincerity that he has "an incurably romantic disposition." This naturally astounds the deposed romantic hero, Major Sergius Saranoff, who has wondered whether Bluntschli is a man or machine; but even he comes to conclude that the values Bluntschli represents are better than his own unattainable ideals. At the curtain, the former idealist hails the realist with the meaningful words: "What a man! What a man!"²⁰

Arms and the Man was written and presented in 1894 to oblige Florence Farr, one of Shaw's many female friends of the theatre. She had undertaken a series of productions with the financial backing of Miss Annie Elizabeth Frederica Horniman, a significant but little-known figure in the new Irish theatre. Not having much success with her productions, Farr turned to Shaw, who dashed off Arms and the Man. It enjoyed a "boisterous" reception, and critics praised it highly, though it was a financial failure.

In Arms and the Man Shaw used romantic comedy, a popular dramatic form of the nineteenth century stage, complete with appropriate heroes and heroines and popular themes of romance and war adventure, but he used the form in such a way as to make a joke of war and romance and to satirize the hero and heroine. Meisel calls Arms and the Man a form of melodrama well known and widely accepted in London's "end of the century" theatres. Shaw's play was originally subtitled "A Romantic Comedy," but later publications label it as "an anti-Romantic Comedy" because the "original audiences had tended to enjoy the fun and miss the serious

²⁰Ibid., p. 89.

concerns of the play."²¹

The contemporary plays which featured love and heroism "presented an idyllic picture of war in which all wounds were chest-high and the brave acquired the fair. . . . The soldier made brave by a lover's joy or a lover's despair was the typical hero of military romance."²² Sergius of Arms and the Man is this type of hero enjoying the love of Raina, his betrothed, but Sergius is not the protagonist. Instead Bluntschli is the anti-romantic protagonist, and he wins Raina away from Sergius. Bluntschli as a soldier is quite a contrast to the conventional dashing gallant upon a horse dispersing the enemy. He is the enemy fleeing from the horrors and risks of battle to enjoy the shelter and safety of a woman's boudoir. In addition to fleeing from battle, Shaw's non-heroic and anti-romantic soldier, noted for carrying chocolates instead of cartridges in his gun belt, runs on foot from battle with broken nerves rather than coming home on a prancing stallion in glorious array. In Shaw's play the battle is lost through a mistake and won by an absurdity; war is represented as being full of paperwork and prosaic routine.

However, Shaw, in order to couch his innovative purpose in the conventional form, did not completely obliterate the conventions of military romance. In Arms and the Man, he uses the appeal of a recent real war. Shaw also employs the convention of love as a motif for overcoming the antipathies of war. Raina, the Servian, shelters the Bulgarian fugitive and declines to reveal him to her "beloved" Sergius. Meisel concludes

²¹Meisel, p. 186.

²²Ibid.

his description of Shaw's successful use of the melodramatic conventions of military romance by explaining Shaw's critical purpose.

How is the conventionality of action and setting in Arms and the Man to be explained? Shaw ostensibly wrote Arms and the Man to explode the conventions of military romance and replace them with a much more common-sensical view of war and women. But he did not simply paint a stark and grim contrasting picture of war. His method was to confront the conventional attitudes and actions with this common-sense point of view, and to make his drama out of their conflict. In the process, we get an exterior action filled with the conventions of Military Romance and an interior action presenting the disillusionment and conversion of the heroine of that romance to the exalted common sense embodied by Bluntschli. The artistic success with which Bluntschli, Sergius, and Nicola embody philosophical points of view and the success, despite misunderstanding, with which the play embodies a drama of spiritual discovery undoubtedly inclined Shaw toward his further experiments in Melodrama.²³

Shaw's use of the dramatic forms of his day to expose and explode their conventions as well as their cultural and social viewpoints continued with the next play, written in 1894-95 but not produced until 1897. Candida has proven to be one of Shaw's most fascinating plays because of the perplexing question about what Shaw is doing with his form and subject. Though he subtitled it "A Mystery"--an allusion to the last line uttered by Marchbanks, the poet, "But I have a better secret than that in my heart" (I, 594)--the play has generally been regarded as a kind of domestic comedy. However, because of what Shaw does with the theatrical forms, such classifications must be used with caution. Shaw calls it his pre-Raphaelite play, but its setting in the home of Rev. and Mrs. Morrell (Candida) at first leaves the reader wondering what is pre-Raphaelite about it. The home setting with a third party, Marchbanks,

²³Ibid., p. 194.

as a rival to the husband, provides the domestic element and atmosphere for the play, but the nature of the dialogue and the images incorporated in the play reveal it to be no ordinary domestic situation. Morrell is not simply a husband fighting for his wife; he is also a social reformer seeking to uphold the rights of the working class. Marchbanks is not simply a young man seeking to have an affair with another man's wife. He is a poet, who like the pre-Raphaelites, is haunted by the idealized woman, though his poetic adoration undergoes considerable alteration by the end of the play when he chooses to renounce the woman of his "dreams" for the "night outside." Candida herself is no ordinary matron in this Victorian home, nor simply a woman to be idolized. She is a woman who has taken charge of the situation. She is a woman who can help those around her to appreciate not only what she truly is but also what they themselves truly are.

It is in this way that Shaw as a devil's advocate makes the theatrical forms of his day work for him. He not only reshapes the form, but he uses it to disclose the realities of domestic relationships and life's larger purposes. He does this simultaneously. He renews the forms of the theatre while promoting a faith that is dedicated to the discovery and disclosure of the true and the real in life. This process continued throughout most of his career, though the quality tended to diminish in his later years.

Another popular form which Shaw masterfully converted to the purposes of his faith through the manner of the devil's advocate--attacking while promoting--was melodrama. This he initially accomplished in The Devil's Disciple. The play has all the apparatus for a full-fledged

melodrama: a villain in Dick Dudgeon, the devil's disciple; a heroine in Judith, pastor Anthony Anderson's wife; a forsaken mother and widow in Mrs. Dudgeon with her orphaned granddaughter; as well as the threat of death on the gallows in the closing scene of the play with the added device of a last-minute reprieve. However, as most critics, along with Shaw, have observed, despite all the melodramatic elements, this is more than a nineteenth century melodrama. This is a melodrama with more than one message behind it: one, a man can seek to save the life of another without any sentimental love for a woman; two, a hero does not necessarily have to conform to the religious or dramatic conventions of his society or stage. Again, the devil's advocate is repudiating the forms of society with a dual thrust of attack: he strikes at both the religious piety and theatrical forms of the day, but he is also commending a theatre whose roots encompass hell itself. Shaw emphasizes the latter point in his preface:

The Diabolonian position is new to the London playgoer of today, but not to lovers of serious literature. From Prometheus to the Wagnerian Siegfried, some enemy of the gods, unterrified champion of those oppressed by them, has always towered among the heroes of the loftiest poetry. Our newest idol, the Superman, celebrating the death of godhead, may be younger than the hills; but he is as old as the shepherds. Two and a half centuries ago our greatest English dramatizer of life, John Bunyan, ended one of his stories with the remark that there is a way to hell even from the gates of heaven, and so led us to the equally true proposition that there is a way to heaven even from the gates of hell. (II, 33-34)

Shaw recognizes that nothing is altogether evil and that whatever is repugnant to society may be instrumental to truth. Shaw is paraphrasing the Biblical dictum: "many that are first shall be last; and the last first" (Mark 10:31).

Shaw also uses melodrama in several other plays: Captain Brassbound's Conversion, The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet and Arms and the Man.

Meisel explains the relationship of these plays in Shaw's use of the genre:

. . . we can follow Shaw's discovery of the possibilities of the genre in Arms and the Man, his exploitation of these possibilities in The Devil's Disciple and Captain Brassbound's Conversion, and, perhaps, his exhaustion of the possibilities for his own talent and interests in The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet.²⁴

The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet is a short play not requiring examination since it only adds further illustration of Shaw's ways with the melodramatic form, but it effectively accomplishes Shaw's didactic purposes. Its subtitle, "A Sermon in Crude Melodrama," indicates the religious purposes to which Shaw put this play. Captain Brassbound's Conversion reflects Shaw's religious purposes in its very title.

In 1898, Shaw turned to yet another genre of his day, the history play. Meisel suggests that the historical drama of the nineteenth century posed a slight problem in classification because it did not have a distinct identity: "There was no distinct frontier between history and any other genre."²⁵ However, he does note its characteristic features and classifies some of Shaw's plays accordingly, as Shaw himself did when he subtitled his plays. Caesar and Cleopatra is Shaw's first full-length history play, though it was not his last. He used this form only three or four times, depending on how one classifies In Good King Charles's Golden Days. When he wrote The Man of Destiny in 1895 and Saint Joan

²⁴Ibid., p. 186.

²⁵Ibid., p. 350.

in 1923, he made use of the genre in somewhat the same manner as he did with Caesar and Cleopatra. Shaw's dramatic method was to use the forms available to him for the didactic purposes of promoting his faith; therefore, he refined his plays in ways necessary to enable them to communicate his faith. At the heart of Shaw's faith was a concern for truth, and Shaw as a devil's advocate was dedicated to discovering and conveying truth, not merely the reciting of stories or recounting of facts. In other words, he used stories of heroic personalities and facts about their lives as the material for fleshing out the truth, primarily the truth of the Life Force which this devil's advocate served. Consequently, his interest in history is somewhat paradoxical or secondary; he is not interested in history per se, but only in using history to depict a truth that permeates and transcends history.

Several critics have taken exception to Shaw's historical accuracy in his historical plays, particularly in portraying Caesar and Joan, but others, having come to understand Shaw's way with history as well as with dramatic forms, realize that Shaw's purpose is not simply to dramatize history or to present heroic personalities. Shaw's commitment is to present the truth, as he declares in the preface to Saint Joan, and this is more important than the accuracy or compilation of facts, since the views and assessment of facts change, like the fashions in clothes, with each generation.

Shaw further confesses to his use of anachronism, but he justifies it because of his contention that man has not really changed despite English claims of progress:

The more ignorant men are, the more convinced are they that their little parish and their little chapel is an apex to which civilization and philosophy has painfully struggled up the pyramid of time from a desert of savagery. . . .

Now if we count the generations of Progressive elderly gentlemen since, say, Plato, and add together the successive enormous improvements to which each of them has testified, it will strike us at once as an unaccountable fact that the world, instead of having been improved in 67 generations out of all recognition, presents, on the whole, a rather less dignified appearance in Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* than in Plato's *Republic*. And in truth, the period of time covered by history is far too short to allow of any perceptible progress in the popular sense of Evolution of the Human Species. The notion that there has been any such Progress since Caesar's time (less than 20 centuries) is too absurd for discussion. All the savagery, barbarism, dark ages and the rest of it of which we have any record as existing in the past exists at the present moment. (II, 294-95)

Shaw contends that the real problem with the acceptance of the truth of Joan, however, is that "the faith demanded by Joan is one which the anti-metaphysical temper of nineteenth century civilization contemptuously refuses her" (VI, 67). Consequently, the truth of Joan is that, in not being understood, she is murdered by well-meaning persons. Shaw further contends that others, writing about Joan, without appreciating the human dilemma of her accusers have reduced her story to a simple melodrama between a heroine and the villains who executed her.

Shaw concedes that in recounting and dramatizing the truth of the history of Joan he has to make some allowances for facts.

For the story of Joan I refer the reader to the play which follows. It contains all that need be known about her; but as it is for stage use I have had to condense into three and a half hours a series of events which in their historical happening were spread over four times as many months for the theatre imposes unities of time and place from which Nature in her boundless wastefulness is free. Therefore the reader must not suppose that Joan really put Robert de Baudricourt in her pocket in fifteen minutes, not that her excommunication, recantation, relapse, and death at the stake were a matter of half an hour or so. (VI, 69)

But more importantly, to give emphasis to the truth which he wishes to convey through his drama, he must render "an inexact picture of some accidental facts."

But it is the business of the stage to make its figures more intelligible to themselves than they would be in real life; for by no other means can they be made intelligible to the audience. And in this case Cauchon and Lemaitre have to make intelligible not only themselves but the Church and the Inquisition, just as Warwick has to make the feudal system intelligible, the three between them having thus to make a twentieth-century audience conscious of an epoch fundamentally different from its own. Obviously the real Cauchon, Lemaitre, and Warwick could not have done this: they were part of the Middle Ages themselves, and therefore as unconscious of its peculiarities as of the atomic formula of the air they breathed. But the play would be unintelligible if I had not endowed them with enough of this consciousness to enable them to explain their attitude to the twentieth century. All I claim is that by this inevitable sacrifice of verisimilitude I have secured in the only possible way sufficient veracity to justify me in claiming that as far as I can gather from the available documentation, and from such powers of divination as I possess, the things I represent these three exponents of the drama as saying are the things they actually would have said if they had known what they were really doing. And beyond this neither drama nor history can go in my hands. (VI, 73-74)

Shaw did somewhat the same thing with Caesar, for Caesar and Cleopatra too was didactic. Ra in the prologue to the play says that he is about to show the audience "for the good of your souls" (II, 166) that Caesar was something bigger than life. Shaw adds to this in his preface:

In exhibiting Caesar as a much more various person than the historian of the Gallic wars, I hope I have not been too much imposed on by the dramatic illusion to which all great men owe part of their reputation and some the whole of it. . . . At all events, Caesar might have won his battles without being wiser than Charles XII or Nelson or Joan of Arc, who were, like most modern "self-made" millionaires, half-witted geniuses, enjoying the worship accorded by all races to certain forms of insanity. But Caesar's victories were only advertisements for an eminence that would never have become popular without them. Caesar is greater off the battle field than on it. . . . I cannot cite all the stories about Caesar which seem to me to shew that he was genuinely original; but let me at least point out that I have been careful to attribute nothing but originality to him.

Originality gives a man an air of frankness, generosity, and magnanimity by enabling him to estimate the value of truth, money, or success in any particular instance quite independently of convention and moral generalization. . . . It is in this sense that I have represented Casesar as great. Having virtue, he had no need of goodness. (II, 301-303)

Meisel emphasizes that Shaw's Caesar is intended to stand out in contrast to the spectacle which was a convention of the history play. Caesar's greatness is portrayed not by the colorful setting but by the quality of "his superiority to the setting and by the independence of his actions and ideas."²⁶

Meisel summarizes Shaw's history plays by emphasizing that "historical truth" for Shaw was not "simply a matter of fact, but a matter of interpretation; and his quarrel with the nineteenth-century History Play was not simply with its romantic fictions but also with its documented facts, romantically or trivially interpreted." Shaw believed that "Historicity for its own sake was of no more value. . . in a History Play than verisimilitude for its own sake in drawing-room comedy."²⁷ Shaw's purpose was not merely to present facts but to present "essential truth" through facts of history. Essential truth is the concern of the devil's advocate because truth is the essence of Shaw's Life Force and the devil's advocate is dedicated to serve that essential truth. In the "essential truth" of Shaw's drama two primary concerns can be identified:

There are two aspects of Shaw's demand for essential truth which pervade the very fabric of his plays and provide glaring contrasts with the traditions of the nineteenth century. One of these is

²⁶ Ibid., p. 364.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 371.

Shaw's concern to dramatize the historical issues rather than the private passions of a particular historical moment. The other is his desire to give to the past the immediacy and familiarity of the present.²⁸

Shaw found the realities and issues of life to be bigger than any person. Persons were only instruments of the reality of the Life Force. However, this truth of the Life Force could be found in the "histories" of persons because of the continuing vital nature of the Life Force.

Shaw wrote two other plays generally classified as history plays. He declared that the purpose of The Man of Destiny, a short piece written in 1895, was "to display the virtuosity of the two principal performers" (I, 375). Shaw's other history play is also less a history play than either Saint Joan or Caesar and Cleopatra. In Good King Charles's Golden Days is appropriately subtitled "A True History That Never Happened." Though it does include several historical personages, it is mainly a discussion play.

Before examining Shaw's discussion plays a further word must be said about the forms of his plays because much criticism has been pointed against these forms. Critics have been concerned because Shaw seems to follow no set pattern, but as Barzum notes, his is a pattern of varying forms:

Shaw himself does not use one unvarying pattern: he has written farces, high comedies, tragi-comedies, melodramatic comedies, comedies of manners, of situation, and of ideas. The fact that we can distinguish them argues at least a sense of tone in their maker. True, he teased his critics by calling his plays Discussions, Conversations, and the like, but when it came to the test

²⁸Ibid., p. 372.

of production under existing theatrical rules, the lines spoke well, the business could be set, and all quibbles disappeared in the great fact that the audience stayed and laughed. . . .

Consider now the possibility of grouping Shaw's plays, not according to ideal form, but according to easily recognizable design--length, plot, climax, distribution of parts, balance of interest, and so on. This done, who can doubt that Shaw has again and again proved his ability to work within accepted late nineteenth century formulas, that he has, indeed, repeatedly worked them for all they were worth?²⁹

Margery Morgan has given considerable attention to the forms of Shaw's plays, showing more appreciation for the innovativeness and quality of the plays in his later years, after Saint Joan, than any other critic. Morgan is extremely conscious of the prototypes of Shaw's plays. She makes repeated allusions to other plays, both ancient and modern, but she emphasizes Shaw's own inventiveness and purposefulness:

Certainly there is intellectual control in his plays, most obvious when he moves away from plots of strong narrative interest to the dramatic equivalent of philosophical debate. This can be seen as an aspect of his discarding of the artistic conventions of realism in a move towards greater abstraction. But he also seems to have felt restricted from the first by tight, "organic" plots inasmuch as they excluded any play of fantasy or comic improvisation. His experimentation with fragmented, wilder-seeming forms, approximating in some degree to the extravaganza, can be traced back at least as far as Caesar and Cleopatra. Alternatively, and in line with symbolist practice, he sought a fluidity of development in emulation of music. In this respect, the handling of dialogue in Candida anticipates the much more fully "musical" structuring of Misalliance and Heartbreak House. The more completely he was able to convert the dramatic medium to his own ends the more likely is the real unity and coherence, which all art must have, to be pervasive; but the conceptual principle from which the play has sprung may then be hidden deep and takes patience to tease out.³⁰

²⁹ Jaques Barzum, "Bernard Shaw in Twilight," George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey, ed. Louis Kronenberger (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1953), p. 166.

³⁰ Morgan, p. 4.

Shaw's concern with the forms of the drama was similar to his concern with the theatre itself. He wanted not to imitate them but to utilize them for the purposes of his faith and in his role as a devil's advocate in conveying the truth and vitality of the Life Force.

One of the most formidable of Shaw's dramatic genres is what has come to be known as the discussion play. Meisel notes that reviews of one of Shaw's first popularly received plays, John Bull's Other Island, promoted the idea that his plays were plotless. According to a reviewer in The Illustrated London News, they, nevertheless, were "something much more interesting--a series of loosely connected, almost disconnected scenes," in which the dramatist, "through the mouths of his characters, expresses his views on a multitude of topics connected with the distressful country and its problems and its various classes of people. . . ."31 Consequently, Shaw sub-titled his next major play, Major Barbara, "A Discussion in Three Acts." Meisel says:

Alone, Major Barbara would not have established a genre; but by the time Shaw dramatized Trotter's complaint in Fanny's First Play, he had added Getting Married, A Conversation (later called A Disquisitory Play) and Misalliance, A Debate in One Sitting. When these plays are taken together, it is evident that the Discussion Play is a distinct genre with defining characteristics and that it was a realization and culmination of tendencies evident in Shaw's earlier work, dating particularly from just after the period of the melodrama.³²

The discussion play is perhaps the most characteristic of Shaw's dramatic forms. Using the deliberations of his characters' discussion,

³¹ Meisel, pp. 290-91.

³² Ibid., p. 291.

he was not only able to repudiate some of the social and cultural views of his day, but he was also able to develop a dramatic form that became distinctively Shavian. Shaw made all of the forms he used serve the purposes of the devil's advocate--defender and promoter of the faith--of the Life Force, but the discussion plays were most apropos in that they expanded more deliberately on the concepts of Shaw's faith. Shaw's discussion plays depicted his characters confronting one another's ideas and the issues of their situations through which the Life Force revealed its reality. The dialectical nature of the discussion plays not only communicated insights into the scope of the Life Force but also conveyed its immediate vitality by the relevance of the discussions to the life situations of the audience. The audience became immediately involved in the reality of the Life Force.

Shaw's understanding of this form first manifests itself in The Quintessence of Ibsenism, where he comments on the drama of Ibsen and the new theatre, pointing out that a new "technical factor in the play is discussion."³³ He explains the function of discussion in the play and how Ibsen succeeded with it.

Formerly you had in what was called a well made play an exposition in the first act, a situation in the second, and unravelling in the third. Now you have exposition, situation and discussion; and the discussion is the test of the playwright. The critics protest in vain. They declare that discussions are not dramatic, and that art should not be didactic. Neither the playwrights nor the public take the smallest notice of them. The discussion conquered Europe in Ibsen's Doll's House; and now the serious playwright recognizes in the discussion not only the main test of his highest powers, but

³³Bernard Shaw, Major Critical Essays (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1932), p. 135.

also the real centre of his play's interest. . . .

Since that time the discussion has expanded far beyond the limits of the last ten minutes of an otherwise "well made" play. The disadvantage of putting the discussion at the end was not only that it came when the audience was fatigued, but that it was necessary to see the play over again, so as to follow the earlier acts in the light of the final discussion, before it became fully intelligible.³⁴

What Shaw observes in Ibsen, Shaw produces in his plays; though some critics contend that what Shaw produces in his plays, he "produces" in Ibsen. Shaw in his accounts of the discussion play also answers objections raised against it.

In vain does the experienced acting manager declare that people want to be amused and not preached at in the theatre; that they will not stand long speeches; that a play must not contain more than 18,000 words; that it must not begin before nine nor last beyond eleven; that there must be no politics and no religion in it; that breach of these golden rules will drive people to the variety theatres; that there must be a woman of bad character, played by a very attractive actress, in the piece; and so on and so forth. All these counsels are valid for plays in which there is nothing to discuss.³⁵

All critics of Shaw's dramatic art are cognizant of his use of the discussion play. Meisel, one of the first to have commented on it extensively, notes the most significant factor in the discussion plays.

The subordination of incident to dialectical exigencies is the fundamental formula of the mature Discussion Play. On this foundation other qualities rest, and a descriptive definition of the genre must take into account the following technical characteristics: a central subject of discussion, as in the Platonic dialogues and Shaw's own prefaces, but a free resort to the entire intellectual universe of G.B.S.; a familiar center of reference in a genre; a systematic use of representative social types in addition to representative figures embodying values and points of view.³⁶

³⁴Ibid., pp. 135, 138.

³⁵Ibid., p. 137.

³⁶Meisel, p. 293.

Meisel and the others who examine these discussion plays differ in their lists of which plays contain these elements. Meisel lists four (Major Barbara, Getting Married, Misalliance and Heartbreak House), while Dukore finds elements of discussion beginning with Mrs. Warren's Profession and concluding with In Good King Charles's Golden Days.

I have already considered several of these plays which contain discussion. However, Dukore distinguishes between plays with discussion and discussion plays. In plays with discussion which he feels, like Meisel and Shaw, derive from Ibsen, the action usually produces and precedes the discussion, though in one case (The Doctor's Dilemma) discussion produces or precedes action. In the plays which he denotes as discussion plays (Getting Married, Misalliance, Heartbreak House, "Don Juan in Hell," Back to Methuselah and In Good King Charles's Golden Days), he finds little or no action; they are "nothing but discussion."³⁷ I have chosen to examine two discussion plays to demonstrate how the devil's advocate develops and uses the discussion mode: one a play which contains discussions, the other, a full-fledged discussion play.

Pygmalion displays the features of the first type of discussion play, a play with discussion. It is a play with a story plot which also deals with two of Shaw's prominent topics--poverty and art. He considers them in this discussion play by using a familiar story--the myth of Pygmalion, the sculptor-artist who brings his statue to life. As is typical of Shaw, he alters his borrowed story, for Pygmalion the artist does not marry his creation. In fact, marriage is not the primary

³⁷ Bernard F. Dukore, Bernard Shaw, Playwright: Aspects of Shavian Drama (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), p. 53.

concern of this play, though not all interpreters and producers of the play have understood Shaw's failure to focus on marriage. As Bentley observes, someone unfamiliar with Shaw's theatre who sees this play for the first time would expect it to be a typical romantic comedy, as the subtitle suggests.³⁸ Such a viewer would consider the play's denouement reached when Higgins is able to pull off his plan and win his bet by tricking his aristocratic friends into thinking Eliza is a lady as she speaks at his mother's house party. The comedy of this play is amplified satirically when Eliza's ability to speak like an aristocratic lady includes the fact that she can talk only about such subjects as the weather and health. It is at this point that Shaw's play enjoys one of its most famous laughs. Eliza, at her wit's end, reveals her true nature and declares, "Not bloody likely." This is a perfect conclusion for a hilarious comedy. However, the play does not end because the truth of this play has not been fully revealed

Rather than conclude his play at this point, Shaw expanded his discussion and explored more fully some of the issues in the play: What is the purpose of art? What is the value of money? What makes a lady a lady? By the time the play concludes, one realizes that a lady is a woman only when she is a person in her own right; then she can exhibit her independence as much as a man or any other person regardless of one's status in society. This is what Eliza does, at the conclusion of the play, by refusing to be a housemaid carrying Higgins' slippers or doing his shopping. Shaw canonizes one of his independent women

³⁸ Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw: 1856-1950 (New York: New Directions Books, 1957), p. 119.

here, even as he skillfully demonstrates the use of discussion in a play. Eliza refuses to be only the doll-like creation of Higgins' artistry and tells him so in words and actions.

Getting Married is avowedly a discussion play. Shaw initially subtitled it "A Conversation," then later called it "A Disquisitory Play," unapologetically advertising its form. The devil's advocate is commending the form, but he is also examining and scrutinizing the subject of marriage. The subject of the play is stated in the title, Getting Married. Shaw approaches his subject by creating the occasion for discussing marriage, a wedding breakfast for Edith Bridgenorth and Cecil Sykes. Shaw explains in his preface that this is a way of getting a number of people onto the stage. He succeeds and with a purpose: to have a variety of viewpoints on marriage and divorce expressed by the varied representatives of society. In considering and offering the variety of viewpoints Shaw is able to immerse his audience in the vitality of the play's concerns and genuinely to arrive at a truth that evolves out of the comprehensiveness of the viewpoints. The church, the army, and the government are represented in three attendants of the wedding: Bishop Bridgenorth; General "Boxer," his brother; and William Collins, a local alderman. Further viewpoints on marriage are contributed by others in attendance: Leo Bridgenorth, a divorcee; Lesbia Grant-ham, an old maid and aunt to the bride-to-be; Mrs. George, a kind of woman about town and local mayoress; Soames, a celibate churchman; and Hotchkiss, a libertine. It is obvious that discussion is central to this play, but it is not without its plot and situation. Shaw declares he has unified it in a classical manner and, by making discussion basic to his drama, has returned to the classical nature of drama.

If you look at any of the old editions of our classical plays, you will see that the description of the play is not called a plot or a story, but an argument. That exactly describes the material of my play. It is an argument--an argument lasting nearly three hours and carried on with unflagging cerebation by twelve people and a beadle. (III, 667-68)

However, Shaw, as always, is concerned with more than forms. His medium is not an end in itself; it is a means to further understanding of life, in this case, the life in and out of marriage. The discussion initially arises because Edith and Cecil decide, on the day of their wedding, not to marry until they have a fuller understanding of marriage and until they can work out a marriage contract as is appropriate to every human enterprise involving financial obligations. However, after the multiplicity of views is expressed and no agreement can be reached, Mrs. George, the mayoress, woman about town, and clairvoyant, is called in, and in a farcical trance she dramatizes the spiritual nature of marriage which can never be fully reduced to a contract. It is essentially paradoxical in nature: it is a legal enterprise, but it is more--it is a fellowship of love. Most all concur, though Edith and Cecil still work out some agreements and end up getting married in a civil ceremony rather than at the church, because a marriage is a marriage is a marriage--regardless of sanctions. There are many finer facets to the question of marriage examined in this play, as well as in its preface, but the devil's advocate in this discussion play again is able to explore the potential of the form he has devised as well as the paradoxical institution of marriage through his medium.

These patterns of discussion with a purpose can be found throughout most of Shaw's plays regardless of the forms he used. It is, therefore,

evident that Shaw had a way with dramatic genre, and that he used his genre in accord with his purpose to promote and effect what is vital and useful. Shaw's vitality and innovativeness with the forms of drama become even more apparent in a type of play which Meisel labels "Extravaganza." This, of course, is a term that Shaw also used for some of his later plays. Meisel considers this the last stage in Shaw's development of dramatic forms.

Placed in the perspective of his entire dramatic career, Shaw's turn to Extravaganza was the last stage of his liberation from the literal realism which had confused the issue of Ibsenism at the end of the nineteenth century. Shaw, who had seen through the confusion more readily than most of the prophets and persecutors of the new drama, did not altogether escape the initial influence of realistic doctrine. Consequently, one can observe a clear movement from the early Unpleasant Plays, with their contemporary middle class settings, social concerns, and journalistic associations to the late Extravaganzas, with their remote and fanciful settings, universal concerns, and associations with fairy tale, fable, and parable.³⁹

Extravaganzas arose gradually from the special dramatic features of Caesar and Cleopatra and Androcles and the Lion, even in the atmosphere of the discussion plays. The features of extravaganza became more apparent, however, in Back to Methuselah. Thereafter, according to Meisel, extravaganza was the dominant mode in Shaw's play-making until his death.

Extravaganza is a term associated, in Shaw's earlier days, with burlesque and farce. In fact, many of his early plays were so labelled by critics whom Shaw felt neither understood nor appreciated what he was trying to accomplish. However, Shaw was not reluctant to reclaim

³⁹ Meisel, p. 380.

an epithet or label thrown at him to serve his didactic purposes, and, according to Meisel, he utilized these fanciful forms of fantasy from the late nineteenth century to convey his faith and ideas on the stage:

There was both a formal and a pragmatic aspect of Shaw's eventual open appropriation of the name and conventions of Extravaganza. Plays like The Apple Cart and The Simpleton were formally Extravaganzas in their use of an imaginary world to comment on the actual. They were pragmatically Extravaganzas in adopting a number of the genre's conventional characters and devices, and in embodying, however incongruously, a political and philosophical substance.⁴⁰

Politics has long been the subject of burlesque, and burlesque was the means for deflating and ridiculing "an elevated genre, or . . . a subject with heroic, operatic, or legendary claims."⁴¹ Shaw, ever alert to the opportunities available to him in the theatre, appropriated the burlesque in his extravaganzas for both political and philosophical purposes.

Heartbreak House is among the forerunners of this form. Though a kind of discussion play, Heartbreak House is more, as Shaw suggests in his subtitle: "A Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes." Shaw's description of the play, as well as the play itself, has provoked much discussion about how it is a play of the Russian type and what is meant by a fantasia. Generally, it has come to be recognized that when Shaw speaks of this play as Russian, he is considering its theme more than its form, a theme centering on the decadence of characters and society. However, when he refers to it as a fantasia, he is alluding

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 383.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 385.

more to its form.

Dukore has provided an extensive examination of the musical aspects of this play and how they contribute to the play's structure. Generally, a fantasia is regarded as a piece of music with no fixed form, "with a structure determined by the composer's fancy."⁴² Shaw's high regard for opera and music is generally well known. Here the musical element extends to the totality of the play's structure and the interrelationships of its subject matter. "All Shaw's themes are in it. You might learn from it his teachings on love, religion, education, politics. But you are unlikely to do so, not only because the treatment is so brief and allusive but because the play is not an argument in their favor."⁴³

Heartbreak House is a highly symbolic play. Even the title is weighted with meaning, as it exemplifies the decadent state of England and civilization at fin de siecle noted by students of the end of the nineteenth century. The "House" as society is further symbolized by the figure of a ship headed for the rocks. It is also literally a place of people without purpose or strength and vitality in the face of life's challenges and problems. The blend of theme and form makes this play a forerunner of other dreamlike plays in the modern theatre. Again, the devil's advocate is assessing society, this time a decadent one, and exonerating a form which he himself has largely evolved. I will reserve my main discussion of the play's achievement for Chapter Four where I consider the functions of the devil's advocates within Shaw's plays.

⁴²The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, unabridged edition (New York's Random House, 1966), p. 515.

⁴³Bentley, p. 140.

Another one of Shaw's most intriguing plays is also a kind of dream play, Too True To Be Good. The basic story of this play is told in act one, and it is followed by discussion as the monster announces at the end of the act: "The play is now virtually over; but the characters will discuss it at great length for two acts more. The exit doors are all in order. Goodnight" (VI, 455-56). However, what follows is not discussion as much as a multiplicity of episodes with a message or a discussion through farce and action. This kind of extravaganza is considered a forerunner of absurdism.

The point of this play is described in the opening act where young Miss Mopply, the hypochondriac daughter of a wealthy Mother, is bedridden. As the scene opens, she is being robbed by her nurse and an accomplice, but as the scene ends, she is freed from her "disease" and the confinement of her home, which really is the cause of her sickness. She then becomes an accomplice of the thieves in a contrived theft and kidnapping and is as healthy as the rest. The play plays on a theme familiar to Shaviana but with a twist. It is a concern with poverty but, in this case, the poverty of being rather than of not having, of the person rather than the purse. The remaining action of the play takes place in the far-flung regions of a Middle Eastern desert, as was made famous by Lawrence of Arabia, and simply elaborates on the theme of non-developed persons with all the farce necessary to delight any audience looking for a laugh. However, what Shaw says in the action is more than a joke. Just as he depicts the sickness of a girl without a reason or purpose to live despite all her wealth, he depicts the failures of others in high places, such as Colonel Tallboys, to be anything but a representative of authority. What Tallboys

lacks is manifested in Private Meeks, who despite his low rank is alive and able to perform tasks beyond the duties of his position. The inability of Tallboys to perform the duties of his office reflect the deficiencies of others in the play also.

The concluding episode, which underlines the theme in Shaw's paradoxical manner, is the final speech of Aubrey, a former preacher. He speaks but has nothing to say because he, like so many in the play, is nothing but a status symbol. To be a preacher requires more than talk. Though some critics have dared to identify Shaw with this preacher, it is only because they fail to understand that Shaw is more than a preacher, and that he offers something more than talk. This, of course, is not only what this play of Shaw is about, but this is also what Shaw, the devil's advocate, is all about--showing people who they are and what they can become if they know that there is a becoming, a reason to be, as the devil's advocate of the Life Force affirms.

Because of the variety of Shaw's dramatic forms and the diversity of his subjects, the analysis of Shaw's plays is intriguing when one understands the way he works and for what purpose. Of course, this points to the heart of Shaw's drama and its basis in ideas. Reason and dialectics are a vital part of his didactic concerns for the theatre, and so is his dramatization of the faith of the Life Force. Meisel is pointing to Shaw's theatre of ideas when he notes the rhetorical qualities found in Shaw's plays.

He converted a rhetorical drama of the passions into a rhetorical drama of the impassioned ideas, using as his vehicle the most popular and "theatrical" modes of the nineteenth-century theatre. Such a synopsis leaves much to be inferred. But Shaw's exploitation

of stock-company stereotypes; his deliberate attempts to embarrass, if not destroy, certain romantic conventions and genres; his exploitation of the rhetorical aspects of opera and music; his campaigns as a critic for and against certain kinds of drama and acting; even his use of "comedic paradox," and of the wit and irony, the flirtation with logic and illogic, which are the weapons of intellect however impassioned, are all implicit in the central, governing action of Shaw's playwriting career. There remains much, of course, that a single statement does not account for. For example, the great variations in the form of Shaw's drama of ideas are partly the consequence of his developing notions of the inherent interest of passionate thought and partly the consequence of the difference between Shaw attacking the illusions and orthodoxies of the past and Shaw giving shape to the myths and orthodoxies of the future.⁴⁴

The centrality of ideas to Shaw's drama is clearly evident not only in the subject matter of his plays but also in the variety of forms he utilized for the purposes of the devil's advocate. Meisel, however, is also emphasizing that ideas with Shaw are more than simply a matter of philosophy.

The tendency of Shaw's playwriting was not toward "passion incarnate," but toward a drama of incarnate ideas. Nevertheless, he also needed a verbal medium, a theatrical convention which would express ideas that no human being could pour out, and express them in a manner thrilling, startling, and electrifying; and for this he bypassed contemporary modes of both fashionable and avant-garde playwriting and drew upon the obsolete rhetorical drama of the passions. To convert the medium to his own purposes--a formidable task on the face of it--Shaw simply made ideas into passions of the mind.⁴⁵

The living, not merely the proclaiming, of life with all of its truth and vitality is what Shaw was about. He found the theatre, his theatre, most apropos in portraying, communicating and effecting that vital truth, the vital truth of the Life Force. This he felt could not be achieved simply

⁴⁴ Meisel, p. 446.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 434.

in the writing of novels or in the preaching of the Church, but only in a theatre with a passion for ideas. He underlines this aspect of his drama:

. . . not for a moment will you find in my plays any assumption that reason is more than an instrument. What you will find, however, is the belief that intellect is essentially a passion, and that the search for enlightenment of any sort is far more interesting and enduring than, say, the sexual pursuit of a woman by a man, which was the only interest the plays of my early days regarded as proper to the theatre: a play without it was "not a play."⁴⁶

The scope of Shaw's concerns with his medium was not confined to its forms or its ideas. His commitment to his medium induced him to scrutinize as a true devil's advocate almost every significant facet of the theatre in order to better promote the faith he espoused. At this point I will consider several of the most prominent theatrical issues of his day that he examined and grappled with. These include the problem with the drama critics, the question of art's purpose, especially as it relates to the theatre, Shakespeare and his drama, censorship and its bearing on the theatre, and finally, the treatment of sex on the stage.

Shaw had a great deal to say about critics of drama in his day, especially since he was often at odds with them. Shaw's criticism of critics reached its epitome when he attacked them in Fanny's First Play in 1911. Ostensibly, this play follows the form of a contemporary farce dealing with a domestic problem, the conflict between parents and children with an additional social motif about suffragettes added for good measure.

⁴⁶"Mr. Shaw on Mr. Shaw," New York Times, 12 June 1927, Sec. VII, p. 1, as quoted in Meisel, p. 435.

However, Shaw sets the main conflict of this play in a play within a play. He then uses the frame play to serve his purpose of attacking the theatre and critics of his day. He attacks not only the type of drama which he was ostensibly presenting, representing the conventions of his day, but he also attacks his contemporary critics who generally endorsed the contemporary theatre and rejected Shaw.

In fact, because of his problem with critics, Shaw had begun the habit of having his plays open outside of London and even outside of England in order for them to gain public acceptance before the expected attacks of the London critics. To add to his didactic purpose in Fanny's First Play, Shaw had it produced anonymously. This served as a means of publicity, but it was also an attempt to help it avoid a biased attack because of its authorship as indicated in comments by critics in the play.

GUNN (interrupting him) I know what you're going to say, Count. You're going to say that the whole thing seems to you to be quite new and unusual and original. The naval lieutenant is a Frenchman who cracks up the English and runs down the French: the hackneyed old Shaw touch. The characters are second-rate middle class, instead of being dukes and millionaires. The heroine gets kicked through the mud: real mud. There's no plot. All the old stage conventions and puppets without the old ingenuity and the old enjoyment. And a feeble air of intellectual pretentiousness kept up all through to persuade you that if the author hasn't written a good play it's because he's too clever to stoop to anything so commonplace. And you three experienced men have sat through all this, and can't tell me who wrote it! Why, the play bears the author's signature in every line. (IV, 436-37)

Shaw's concern with the drama critics of his day is expressed in a column from The Saturday Review:

My real aim is to widen the horizon of the critic, especially of the dramatic critics, whose habit at present is to bring a large experience of stage life to bear on a scanty experience of real

life, although it is certain that all really fruitful criticism of the drama must bring a wide and practical knowledge of real life to bear on the stage. . . . our dramatic critics specialize themselves to such an extent that they lose the character of men and citizens, and become mere playgoers, in which unhappy condition, since stageland then appears a quite real place to them, and the laws of Nature are supplanted in their minds by the conventions of the stage, every fresh permutation and combination of the old stage situations and effects appeals to them as a historical, evolutionary development. They tell the story of Fedora and discuss her motives and character when there is really nothing whatever to discuss and except how Sarah Bernhardt, or Mrs Bernard Beere, or Mrs Patrick Campbell make this or that effect.⁴⁷

Henderson describes the problem Shaw faced with his contemporary critics and the outcome Shaw enjoyed.

Shaw's wit and satire were liabilities as well as assets. For the silly critics, who didn't know their own silly business, he so obviously had his tongue in his cheek! This went on so long that at last, in Fanny's First Play, he turned the tables on the critics and covered them with the most genial ridicule. The public, out of sheer enjoyment of this supposedly anonymous work, played Shaw's game for him, laughed the critics out of countenance, and left him completely victorious. His eminence, indeed, his pre-eminence, in contemporary British drama was never thereafter seriously challenged. Shaw had won the long battle against prejudice, stupidity, malevolence, and superciliousness.⁴⁸

The play within a play in Fanny's First Play is written by Fanny O'Dowda, a student at Cambridge and a member of the local chapter of the Fabian Society. She is the daughter of Count O'Dowda, "an Obsolete romantic who runs away from life because it is sordid and ugly."⁴⁹ He has arranged, in the frame play (a prologue and epilogue), for his daughter's

⁴⁷Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw, XXIII, 187-88.

⁴⁸Henderson, p. 605.

⁴⁹Ervine, p. 430.

play to be presented in a private theatre with several representative drama critics to be present. They all assume it will be the typical nineteenth century amateurish effort: "The heroine will be an exquisite Columbine, her lover a dainty Harlequin, her father a picturesque Pantaloon!"⁵⁰ The father is shocked when he discovers a modern realistic play dealing with contemporary domestic and social problems. The critics register stereotyped reactions to this typical Shavian play. The Count says:

Gentlemen: do not speak to me. I implore you to withhold your opinion. I am not strong enough to bear it. I could never have believed it. Is this a play? Is this in any sense of the word, Art? Is it agreeable? Can it conceivably do good to any human being? Is it delicate? Do such people really exist? Excuse me, gentlemen: I speak from a wounded heart. There are private reasons for my discomposure. This play implies obscure, unjust, unkind reproaches and menaces to all of us who are parents. (IV, 433)

But the critics are not concerned about its lack of artistry; they are only interested in the identity of the author so they can decide whether it is good or bad. They are at odds about the type of play it is. Finally, in their ignorance they start guessing: Gunn says Granville-Barker; Vaughan says Barrie; Bannal attributes it to Shaw because of the Frenchmen's long speech; and, finally, Trotter announces correctly that it is by Fanny, leaving Fanny delighted that most of them thought it to be the work of a professional playwright. Shaw, of course, was himself delighted to have produced a successful play that reiterated his views on what a play should be while laughing at the critics.

Shaw also had much to say about art and particularly the art of the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 431.

theatre. He was well equipped by his childhood experience, continual studies and journalistic work to express opinions not only on specific works of art in music, painting or drama but also to take and express a philosophical view on the function and nature of art--and he did.

Shaw's views of art were stated in his critical columns and in other critical works, such as The Quintessence of Ibsenism, The Perfect Wagnerian and The Sanity of Art. These views have been extensively examined, particularly by Elsie Adams,⁵¹ who notes Shaw's developing views from the novels through his drama. She stresses that his "moral" and utilitarian concerns are opposed to those of the aesthetes who make art an end in itself. She recognizes, as many critics of Shaw do, that Shaw found art, like religion, in danger of becoming idealized and conventional and that he considered conventional art another obstruction to the work of the Life Force. Again and again Shaw emphasizes that vitality through innovation and relevance to life is the essence of reality on the stage as in all of life. This is expressed in his criticism of a play he reviewed while serving on The Saturday Review. This passage captures all the nuances of Shaw's style and paradoxicalness, as he again and again repudiates the object of his attack and all persons and things associated with it. First, he alludes to the present failure of the London Theatre, then he proceeds to analyze its problem and to show mockingly how "Chinese plays" suggest a solution.

The latest attempt to escape from hackneydom and cockneydom is the Chinatown play, imported, of course, from America. There is no

⁵¹Elsie Adams, Bernard Shaw and the Aesthetes (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1971).

reason, however, why it should not be manufactured in England. I beg respectfully to inform managers and syndicates that I am prepared to supply "Chinese plays," music and all, on reasonable terms, at the shortest notice. A form of art which makes a merit of crudity need never lack practitioners in this country. The Chinese music, with marrowbones and cleaver, teatray and cat-call, ad lib. And the play is nothing but Wilkie Collins fiction disguised in pigtail and petticoats.⁵²

Shaw's analysis focuses on the artificiality and stale conventions of London's theatrical performances, and he argues that even the simplicity of the Chinese plays "from America" succeed beyond anything London theatres have to offer because the Chinese plays with all their naiveté exhibit a freshness and vitality not found in London's productions, which tend only to be imitations.

Truly the secret of wisdom is to become as a little child again. But our art loving authors will not learn the lesson. They cannot understand that when a great genius lays hands on a form of art and fascinates all who understand its language with it, he makes it say all that it can say, and leaves it exhausted. When Bach has got the last word out of the fugue, Mozart out of the opera, Beethoven out of the symphony, Wagner out of the symphonic drama, their enraptured admirers exclaim: "Our masters have shewn us the way: let us compose some more fugues, operas, symphonies, and Bayreuth dramas." Through just the same error the men who have turned dramatists on the frivolous ground of their love for the theatre have plagued a weary world with Shakespearean dramas in five acts and in blank verse, with artificial comedies after Congreve and Sheridan, and with the romantic goody-goody fiction which was squeezed dry by a hundred strong hands in the first half of this century. It is only when we are dissatisfied with existing masterpieces that we create new ones: if we merely worship them, we only try to repeat the exploit of their creator by picking out the titbits and stringing them together, in some feeble fashion of our own, into a "new and original" botching of what our master left a good and finished job.⁵³

⁵²Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw, XXV, 247.

⁵³Ibid., p. 248.

He contends that the essence of vital drama comes in impregnating art with life.

But vital art work comes always from a cross between art and life: art being of one sex only, and quite sterile by itself. Such a cross is always possible; for though the artist may not have the capacity to bring his art into contact with the higher life of his time, fermenting in its religion, its philosophy, its science, and its statesmanship (perhaps, indeed, there may not be any statesmanship going), he can at least bring it into contact with the obvious life and common passions of the streets. This is what has happened in the case of the Chinatown play. The dramatist, compelled by the nature of his enterprise to turn his back on the fashionable models for "brilliantly" cast plays, and to go in search of documents and facts in order to put a slice of Californian life on the stage with crude realism, instantly wakes the theatre up with a piece which has some reality in it, though its mother is the cheapest and most conventional of the daughters of art, and its father the lowest and darkest stratum of Americanized yellow civilization. The phenomenon is a very old one. When art becomes effete, it is realism that comes to the rescue. In the same way, when ladies and gentlemen become effete, prostitutes become prime ministers; mobs make revolutions; and matters are re-adjusted by men who do not know their own grandfathers.⁵⁴

Shaw, the devil's advocate, is emphasizing again the vitality and reality he considers essential for effective theatre.

Shaw's concern for vitality in drama is also presented in the fifth play in Back to Methuselah, "As Far As Thought Can Reach," where art is viewed as an activity of the more sensual and mechanistic persons. Part V of Back to Methuselah is one extended act where the younger generations have gathered for a festival in which children are being born and artists are presenting an exhibition of their works. One sculptor, Martellus, in a discussion with another sculptor, Arjillax, reveals that he and Pygmalion, a scientist (apparently a robot-like creature from the laboratory), have succeeded in making artificial human beings. In the discussion of the

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

values of art and its highest expressions, Martellus, the wiser of the two, quashes all of Arjillax's visions of artistic grandeur by emphasizing that life is greater than art:

MARTELLUS. Because you cannot give them life. A live ancient is better than a dead statue. (He takes the Newly Born on his knees: who is flattered and voluptuously responsive). Anything alive is better than anything that is only pretending to be alive. (To Arjillax) Your disillusion with your works of beauty is only the beginning of your disillusion with images of all sorts. As your hand became more skilful and your chisel cut deeper, you strove to get nearer and nearer to truth and reality, discarding the fleeting fleshly lure, and making images of the mind that fascinates to the end. But how can so noble an inspiration be satisfied with any image, even an image of the truth? In the end the intellectual conscience that tore you away from the fleeting in art to the eternal must tear you away from art altogether, because art is false and life alone is true. (V, 588)

Appropriately, this speech is soon followed by an episode in which the two automatons, fashioned by Martellus and brought to life by Pygmalion, further prove the futility of art, especially when it is wedded to science, and art and science become ends in themselves. Ironically, the two automatons turn on Pygmalion and kill him when he attempts to prevent them from killing each other. The satire here is on more than just science or art; it is also on a mankind that strives only after idealization of art as well as science.

Though Shaw appreciates science, he puts a higher premium upon art, as portrayed in In Good King Charles's Golden Days. This preference for art is also apparent in Shaw's repudiation of Darwinism, but this is because Darwinism dares to become an end in itself, a faith, in this case, without a way of life or purpose. However, it is for the same reason that he repudiates art, as well as religion, and even a theatre that becomes frozen, deadened, absolute, and an end in itself. Art for art's

sake, drama for drama's sake are anathema to Shaw and his Life Force.

Shaw's view of art's function in the theatre tends to be paradoxical. He found the theatre of his day attempting to imitate life by creating an illusion of reality, but Shaw contends that since the stage is an illusion, it cannot imitate life. On the contrary, it can only instruct life and induce life to imitate it. The theatre must recognize the illusory nature of its art, and use the art to affect life vitally. Bernard Dukore states Shaw's position:

A master of paradox, Shaw is sometimes so paradoxical that it seems as if he wanted to have things both ways. . . . "It is this privilege of the drama to make life intelligible, at least hypothetically, by introducing moral design into it, even if that design be only to show that moral design is an illusion, a demonstration which cannot be made without some counter-demonstration of the laws of life with which it clashes." While the good playwright does not construct his plays by mechanical design, he--paradoxically--reveals moral design in them.

To Shaw, the playwright does not merely photograph or hold a mirror up to nature, he interprets life. Photographs reveal little about people. A photograph of daily activities in a city street would be unintelligible, for the viewer would be unable to understand what the persons are thinking or why they are expressing certain emotions. A snapshot of a man with an expression of disgust would not reveal that he was planning to murder his wife. A motion picture of that street scene would reveal only an "unmeaning mass of events" that leaves a spectator "as ignorant and bewildered as it has left many a bootblack who has seen it day after day for years." The playwright selects people and events, not as his play, but as the basis of his play, for the job of the playwright, and indeed of every artist, "is to take the events of life out of the accidental, irrelevant, chaotic way in which they happen, and to rearrange them in such a way as to reveal their essential and spiritual relations to one another. Leaving out all that is irrelevant, he has to connect the significant facts by chains of reasoning, and also to make, as it were, bridges of feeling between them by a sort of ladder, get the whole things in a connected form into your head, and give you a spiritual, political, social and religious consciousness."⁵⁵

⁵⁵Dukore, pp. 21-22.

To do this the playwright must resort to art and the illusion of the stage, but he performs his function conscientiously and honestly, allowing, indeed enabling, his audience to share in what he knows as well as in what he is doing. Of course, ultimately what he is doing is exemplifying the vitality (and paradoxical nature) of his faith by means of a creative art and stage and, consequently, venerating this faith and creative way of life by using the stage. Shaw makes this point in an extended essay, The Sanity of Art.

The claim of art to our respect must stand or fall with the validity of its pretension to cultivate and refine our senses and faculties until seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and tasting become highly conscious and critical acts with us. . . . Further, art should refine our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our self-knowledge, self-control, precision of action, and considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity. The worthy artist or craftsman is he who serves the physical and moral senses by feeding them with pictures, musical compositions, pleasant houses and gardens, good clothes and fine implements, poems, fictions, essays, and dramas which call the heightened senses and ennobled faculties into pleasurable activity. The great artist is he who goes a step beyond the demand, and, by supplying works of a higher beauty and a higher interest than have yet been perceived, succeeds, after a brief struggle with its strangeness, in adding this fresh extension of sense to the heritage of the race.⁵⁶

The point is presented dramatically in Man and Superman, where Tanner discusses the nature of art and the function of the artist with Octavius, an artist.

Since marriage began, the great artist has been known as a bad husband. But he is worse: he is a child-robber, a blood-sucker, a hypocrite and a cheat. Perish the race and wither a thousand women if only the sacrifice of them enable him to act Hamlet better, to paint a finer picture, to write a deeper poem, a greater play, a profounder philosophy! For mark you, Tavy, the artist's work is to

⁵⁶Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw, XVI, 315-16.

shew us ourselves as we really are. Our minds are nothing but this knowledge of ourselves, and he who adds a jot to such knowledge creates new mind as surely as any woman creates new men. (II, 558)

This, of course, is basic to Shaw's view of the theatre as his medium and his church: it is to serve for the edification of mankind; it is to develop within them the consciousness that is required for the Life Force faith; it is the means for making what Don Juan called "Superman" or what the church calls saints and what some would call the Shavian hero. "Fine Art," says Shaw, "throughout the world is only known to a few people as being a really good thing, as being an edifying thing, as being a necessary part of civilization."⁵⁷ Fromm adds, "The aims of art, he has said, are to cultivate, refine, and extend the ranges of our senses and faculties, and this is essentially a spiritual extension--it is, in a word, the goal of the Life Force."⁵⁸

Shaw's concern for an art that reflects the vitality of life and that influences life and its realities explains his concern not only with the drama of his day, but also with Shakespeare and particularly the Shakespearean drama in the nineteenth century theatre. Shaw's attacks on Shakespeare are much better understood today than they were in his day. However, in the theatre of Shaw's day, Shakespeare was the king of playwrights and only a villainous rebel or a diabolonian would dare attack Shakespeare. Shaw naturally took on the task by virtue of his critical nature and his dedication to the theatre but also in his function as a

⁵⁷E. J. West, ed., Shaw on Theatre (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), p. 229.

⁵⁸Fromm, p. 56.

devil's advocate. Understanding this function sheds light on the nature and intent of Shaw's attacks.

First of all, Shaw did not despise Shakespeare the playwright. He spoke often in admiration of Shakespeare's accomplishments. For example:

It does not follow, however, that the right to criticize Shakespeare involves the power of writing better plays. And in fact--do not be surprised at my modesty--I do not profess to write better plays. The writing of practicable stage plays does not present an infinite scope to human talent; and the playwrights who magnify its difficulties are humbugs. The summit of their art has been attained again and again. No man will ever write a better tragedy than Lear, a better comedy than *Le Festin de Pierre* or *Peer Gynt*, a better opera than *Don Giovanni*, a better music drama than the *Niblung's Ring*, or, for the matter of that, better fashionable plays and melodramas than are now being turned out by writers whom nobody dreams of mocking with the word immortal. It is the philosophy, the outlook on life, that changes, not the craft or the playwright. A generation that is thoroughly moralized and patriotized, that conceives virtuous indignation as spiritually nutritious, that murders the murderer and robs the thief, that grovels before all sorts of ideals, social, military, ecclesiastical, royal and divine, may be, from my point of view, steeped in error; but it need not want for as good plays as the hand of man can produce. (II, 41-42)

In fact, Shaw has noted and scholars have commented on Shaw's borrowing of characters and dramatic subjects from Shakespeare. Shaw also had a high appreciation of Shakespeare's use of the language. Furthermore, Shaw worked extensively to erect a National Theatre as a monument to Shakespeare. His short one-act play, The Dark Lady of the Sonnets, was written for this project and alludes to it. The preface to this play as well as several others also demonstrates Shaw's support for Shakespeare as a playwright.

However, the prefaces also reveal Shaw's two points of attack on Shakespeare. One was a belief that Shakespeare lacked the "moral" and "didactic" purpose to which Shaw was committed and toward which he thought drama should be directed. Shaw expresses this in a dramatic review:

. . . with extraordinary artistic powers, he understood nothing and believed nothing. Thirty-six plays in five blank-verse acts, and (as Mr Ruskin, I think, once pointed out) not a single hero! Only one man in them all who believes in life, enjoys life, thinks over his death-bed; and that man--Falstaff! What a crew they are--these Saturday to Monday athletic stockbroker Orlandos, these villains, fools, clowns, drunkards, cowards, intriguers, fighters, lovers, patriots, hypochondriacs who mistake themselves (and are mistaken by the author) for philosophers, princes without any sense of public duty, futile pessimists who imagine they are confronting a barren and unmeaning world when they are only contemplating their own worthlessness, self-seekers of all kinds, keenly observed and masterfully drawn from the romantic-commercial point of view.⁵⁹

Fromm in commenting on Shaw's views of Shakespeare says:

The Shavian portraits of Shakespeare are portraits of a romantic poet par excellence, with plenty of invention but little brains. Shakespeare was the king of dramatists, as far as poetical faculties go, but in weighty matters of sociology and ethics he was a Simon Tappertit. Most of Shakespeare's so-called profundities were to Shaw collections of "shallow proverbs in blank verse as exemplified in the remark that good and evil are mingled in our natures." Since most of Shakespeare's philosophic observations were platitudes of the age, Shaw finds Shakespeare unable to develop them. Instead, after introducing an idea that has the flavor of profundity, Shakespeare wanders off to other ideas that have the flavor of profundity.⁶⁰

The other point of attack on Shakespeare was not on Shakespeare and his works per se but on the cult of Shakespeare and the idealization of his work. Shaw found him abused and misplayed on the stages of the nineteenth century theatre, according to Fromm:

Chief of the Shakespeare mutilators was Sir Henry Irving. Although the delicacy and introspective quality of his acting of Hamlet is attested to by Shaw himself, as well as other critics, like Max Beerbohm, there is also general agreement on Irving's limitations. In a

⁵⁹Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw, XXV, 1-2.

⁶⁰Fromm, p. 103.

review of Irving's Cymbeline, Shaw wrote that Irving "does not merely cut plays: he disembowels them. In Cymbeline he has quite surpassed himself by extirpating the antiphonal third verse of the famous dirge. A man who would do that would do anything." Irving's only rival in Shakespearean infamy was perhaps Beerbohn Tree, "for whom Shakespeare does not exist at all." Tree, of generous nature, says Shaw, wrote plays of his own which he attributed to Shakespeare, manufacturing unlimited stage business and speaking blank verse unintelligibly.⁶¹

Shaw felt Shakespeare was deserving of more, and he wanted something more for the theatre of his day. He, therefore, played the role of devil's advocate: attacking the deficiencies of Shakespeare and his theatrical presentation and calling for something better. He found something better in the Elizabethan Stage Society presentations of Shakespeare and complimented them. Fromm describes the improvements of the Society's reforms:

the speaking of the actors was slowed down so that the poetry became intelligible and absorbing, and since the star-system was not in effect (because the performers were not stars) the actors showed more interest in their lines than in themselves. The Society avoided scenery, leaving the audience's imagination free to picture the scenes suggested by the poetry. "The poetry of The Tempest is so magical that it would make the scenery of a modern theatre ridiculous." . . . The Society used a stage which resembled the stage of Shakespeare's day, with a platform jutting out into the audience. Later in his life, Shaw praised the movies for their ability to do what Shakespeare's stage was able to do: bring the drama close to the audience.⁶²

The other main issue which Shaw attacked in the theatre of his day is as ancient and contemporary as art itself: the problem of censorship. This became a personal problem for Shaw with three of his plays: Mrs. Warren's Profession, The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet, and Press Cuttings. The later two plays, brief and minor, were written for production in 1909,

⁶¹Ibid., p. 126.

⁶²Ibid., p. 127.

many years after Mrs. Warren's Profession and the extensive conflict it provoked with the censors. Mrs. Warren's Profession was prohibited from public performance in London in 1892 but was finally presented in a single private performance there. It was not publicly performed there again until September 28, 1925. It also encountered difficulty in America when it was performed in New Haven, Connecticut. Arnold Daly presented the play at the Hyperion Theatre on October 27, 1905, after which the mayor instructed the police to close the theatre "until after Daly's company had departed." The mayor had heard that "the play was grossly indecent and an insult to the New Haven public." The local newspapers also denounced the play as Daly took it to New York. There the mayor warned Daly that his "company would be arrested and the theatre would be indefinitely padlocked"⁶³ if he undertook to perform Mrs. Warren's Profession. Daly chose to disregard the mayor's dictum, and he and his company were arrested.

St. John Ervine, who gives an extended account of the problems with "comstockery" (a term coined from the New York incident by Shaw) and the history of censorship in England, explains the outcome of the restrictions put on Shaw's two latter plays, Press Cuttings and The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet. The first was banned because it contained references to obvious eminent persons in the British government, which the censorship policy in the theatre had been instituted to protect. The second was banned because of words put in Blanco Posnet's mouth about the Almighty. "He's a sly one. He's a mean one. He lies low for you.

⁶³Ervine, p. 347.

He plays cat and mouse with you. He lets you run loose until you think you are shut of Him: and then, when you least expect it, He's got you."⁶⁴ Nevertheless, growing dissatisfaction with the censorship policies prompted the government to appoint a Joint Committee of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons on Stage Plays in July, 1909. Shaw among many others appeared to make statements against the practice of censorship. The result was twofold: one, "the licensing of plays was sensibly changed," although the office of Reader of Plays was not eliminated, and Blanco Posnet was later licensed by the request of St. John Ervine who sought to produce it; two, Shaw was not allowed to complete his statement before the committee because of words and phrases he used about himself and England's religion and immorality.

I am not an ordinary playwright in general practice. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. In particular, I regard much current morality as to economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong; and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters.⁶⁵

Shaw gives an account of the proceedings along with his views on the matter in the preface to The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet.

An interesting sidelight on the question of censorship in Shaw's discussions of the theatre is Shaw's own views on sex. Shaw, with his strong anti-romantic and didactic concerns for the theatre, is the least

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 424.

⁶⁵C. B. Purdom, A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963), p. 98.

likely playwright to abuse the privileges of the stage and the sensibilities of the audience with "obscurities." Nevertheless, in his concern for reality he did not skirt the matter of sex. He simply treated it more frankly. According to Fromm, Shaw used to say:

There is very little frank treatment of sex on the stage. . . . There is plenty of legal entanglement resulting from sex, divorce cases, court scenes, and social horror at women with pants, but nothing is ever written about genuinely sexual matters per se.⁶⁶

Consequently, Shaw presented Man and Superman as the "first modern sex play in English," though it does not deal with sex in the way in which most people would expect. Fromm says that most people consider Shaw's plays sexless because he does not treat sex romantically or as an "aphrodisiac stimulation" but takes it seriously:

The seriousness of treatment and the lack of romantic and conventional attitudes toward sex are sufficient to make the plays seem sexless to audiences who want vicarious sexual experience from art forms such as drama. In the final analysis, Shaw's view of sex, both in his criticism and in his plays, is dignified and serious in the way that the Greek and Roman view is dignified and serious. But whereas the Ancients regarded love, union, and offspring as of serious importance because of their role in continuing an ancestral line and maintaining family and civic traditions, Shaw regarded sex as serious because it was the chief agent of the Life Force in the process of creative evolution which made the son intellectually and emotionally superior to his father. And whereas the Ancients treated sex seriously because they respected their ancestors, Shaw treats sex seriously because he has hope in his posterity.⁶⁷

At the same time Shaw abhorred what other playwrights did with sex on the stage in farcical sexual comedy and in the plays constructed around

⁶⁶Fromm, p. 61.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 62.

the fake sexuality of the woman-with-a-past. Joad says that "Shaw thought art should supersede not glorify sex."⁶⁸ Shaw found that "The search for enlightenment of any sort is far more interesting and enduring than, say, the sexual pursuit of a woman by a man."⁶⁹ Shaw made a critical statement on sex in comedies of his day in his estimate of a notorious farce, Gentleman Joe, which is significant not merely in that it reflects Shaw's views on the insipid sexual comedies of his day, but in that it pinpoints his critical role as a devil's advocate:

At the same time, I am of the opinion that these entertainments would be far more enjoyable if they were not so depressingly moral. Let them be courageously written from the point of view of the devil's advocate; and then there will be conviction in them, interest in them, and wit in them. For example, I have not the slightest objections to Yvette Guilbert singing Les Vierges. In that song you hear virtue attacked with bitter irony by a poet who does not believe in it and--I must not say by an artist who does not believe in it either, but at all events by one who has the power of throwing herself with mordent intensity into the poet's attitude for the moment. Let us by all means have whole plays written like Les Vierges, in which the votaries of pleasure can religiously put forward their creed against idealists and the Puritans. There would be life in that--purpose, honesty, reality, and the decency which arises spontaneously beside them. But a timidly conventional play like Gentleman Joe, with its abject little naughtinesses furtively slipped in under cover about a debauched clergyman riding in a cab with a lady, of whom Mr Roberts sings "Perhaps she was his aunt, Or another Mrs Chant,"--all this is about as lively as the performances of the children who make faces at their teachers in Sunday School.⁷⁰

Shaw in this statement from his drama criticism emphasizes again the vitality that he thinks plays ought to manifest. This is achieved and

⁶⁸C. E. M. Joad, Shaw (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1949), p. 191.

⁶⁹Fromm, p. 61.

⁷⁰Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw, XXIII, 58-59.

performed by the devil's advocate of the Life Force in the theatre as he attacks theatrical conventions and social views that treat sex romantically.

Along with everything else that Shaw did in the theatre, he maintained a sense of humor and the comedic outlook of his faith. This humor is reflected in his plays in several ways. One is in the devices he used. In many instances, they were sheer farce and slapstick comedy. As he said about You Never Can Tell:

You Never Can Tell was an attempt to comply with many requests for a play in which the much paragraphed "brilliancy" of *Arms and the Man* should be tempered by some consideration for the requirements of managers in search of fashionable comedies for West End theatres. I had no difficulty in complying, as I have always cast my plays in the ordinary practical comedy form in use at all the theatres; and far from taking an unsympathetic view of the popular preference for fun, fashionable dresses, a little music, and even an exhibition of eating and drinking by people with an expensive air, attended by an if-possible-comic waiter, I was more than willing to shew that the drama can humanize these things as easily as they, in the wrong hands, can dehumanize the drama. (I, 376)

Many writers have noted the elements of Shaw's comedy and a few have focused their studies on Shaw's comic devices. Fred Mayne was one of the first in The Wit and Satire of Bernard Shaw.⁷¹ His title basically delineates the elements noted. John A. Mills, who has written a generalized study of what he calls the "comic diction" in Shaw's plays, says, "The primary source of comic power in Shaw's plays is the thought exhibited by the characters in them." He finds that "The clash of dissimilar ideologies, so essential in Shavian dramaturgy, produces the major

⁷¹Fred Mayne, The Wit and Satire of Bernard Shaw (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1967).

portion of the comic pleasure the plays afford. . . ."72 He focuses on Shaw's skill with words in four direct ways: dialects, style, jargon and punning, and also considers Shaw's innovative structuring as a major aspect used for gaining comic effect. Berst in a concluding section of his examination of Shaw's comedy describes it as a sophisticated "Bergsonian man-as-machine humor," complemented "by a great range. . . of wit" and conjoined by "frantic laughter issuing into tragi-comedy."⁷³ One, of course, does not have to be aware or conscious of all these technical aspects of Shaw's comedy to appreciate the hilarity of his plays. But one should not forget that Shaw was a dramatist who could use slapstick and word-play to accomplish his didactic purposes.

A second aspect of Shavian comedy is the instructive purpose for which he used it. This is particularly noteworthy in considering the ways of the devil's advocate since his concern is to affirm as well as scrutinize. Berst emphasizes the use of comedy in Shaw's drama in promoting his ideas:

Shaw's primary idiom in his drive toward an expansion of consciousness is comedy. Comedy may be classified as another Shavian genre, but in Shaw's hands its use is so basic, its spectrum so wide and its ends so closely aligned with his intellectual and aesthetic instincts that it underlies the other genres, serving a seminal function. Ironically, comedy is fundamental to the very seriousness of Shaw, to the artist seeking to communicate an inner

⁷²John A. Mills, Language and Laughter (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1969), p. 26.

⁷³Charles A. Berst, Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 309.

vision of truth, a quintessential way of looking at the world. It is an element which helps render Shaw the teacher-socialist-mystic primarily poetic, dramatic, and intuitive, and only secondary prosaic, didactic, and rational.⁷⁴

Shaw's method of instruction has been described as "sugar coating the pill," but critics have retorted that the audience has tended to take the coating without the pill. However, Shaw contends that when a seed is planted the truth will emerge.

The explanation is to be found in what I believe to be a general law of the evolution of ideas. "Every jest is an earnest in the womb of time" says Peter Keegan in John Bull's Other Island. "There's many a true word spoken in jest" says the first villager you engage in philosophic discussion. All very serious revolutionary propositions begin as huge jokes. Otherwise they would be stamped out by the lynching of their first exponents. Even these exponents themselves have their revelations broken to them mysteriously through their sense of humor.⁷⁵

Furthermore, Shaw's ways of instructing were like Swift's: to attack and to satirize, but not to attack persons. Rather he attacked representatives, issues, and ideas that paraded as absolutes. According to Sylvan Barnet, Shaw believed that

. . . allegiance to a code is necessarily ludicrous, for it becomes outdated. His comic hero, then, develops, or adopts, a new realistic morality beyond that of his society's idealism. Shavian comedy is critical not of individuals but of society's norm, insisting that the individual who pierces illusions is not absurd but in line with the process of the world spirit.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 307.

⁷⁵Bernard Shaw, Major Critical Essays, p. 126.

⁷⁶Sylvan Barnet, "Bernard Shaw on Tragedy," PMLA, LXXI (1956), 892.

The third aspect of Shaw's comedy is the manifestation of its paradoxical nature, which is of the essence of Shaw as a devil's advocate. Many have no more appreciated or understood Shaw's paradoxical ways in his comedic outlook than they have understood it in his plays generally. When Shaw laughed at his mother's funeral, his companions, particularly Granville Barker, were appalled. It so upset his friends that he had to remind them: "Don't think that I am a man who forgets the dead. . .; one has to be practical and unsentimental with matter out of place. . . ." ⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the accusation has been made that Shaw never took evil seriously and, consequently, that he could only produce comedies. Shaw's answer to this has been given in more than one way.

First, he viewed life very seriously. He emphasizes that he would never have taken to write a line if he had not been serious about the didactic impact of his plays. He also makes Dr. Ridgeon remark in The Doctor's Dilemma: "Life does not cease to be funny when people die any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh" (III, 429).

Second, Shaw considered tragedy more a matter of the irreconcilable consequences of the conflicts in life, such as that embodied by Joan and her accusers, than a matter of dramatic form. Margery Morgan emphasizes the relationship of tragedy to comedy in Shaw:

The element of truth in the twentieth-century view of Shaw as a late Victorian sage needs to be supplemented by recognition that there was no place in the official Victorian canon for his greatest and most characteristically "Shavian" virtue: gaiety of mind. . . . It has been justly remarked that a true assessment of Shaw cannot be made without

⁷⁷ Stephen Winsten, Jesting Apostle: The Private Life of Bernard Shaw (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1957), p. 152.

an understanding of comedy--as the twin rather than the degenerate poor relation of tragedy. For the dramatist who wrote, "The lot of the man who sees life truly and thinks about it romantically is Despair" (Preface to Three Plays for Puritans), the difference between tragedy and comedy is a matter of perspective and deliberate attitude; and humour is a response to distress, cleansing the personality of morbid emotions and intimate confusions which otherwise inhibit positive action and limit the possibilities of change.⁷⁸

Third, critics such as William Archer have accused Shaw of skirting the question and problem of death. From this criticism came The Doctor's Dilemma that dealt explicitly with death and went so far as to seriously present a death scene on the stage. Shaw's faith in the Life Force enabled him to take life and death seriously and realistically, but it also enabled him to see through them to something beyond the tragic. This also helps to explain the epilogue to Saint Joan and reveals the faith as well as the dual function of the devil's advocate--criticizing and defending the faith--in his examination of life's realities.

This paradox in Shaw's handling of life's problems "comically" may best be reflected in a statement made by the defrocked priest, Keegan, in John Bull's Other Island: "My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world. When a thing is funny, search it for a hidden truth" (II, 930). Dukore explains that "though the technique is comic, the substance is serious,"⁷⁹ and Shaw underlines the paradoxical seriousness of his humor in the preface to his collected works: "My method. . . is to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then to say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the

⁷⁸Morgan, p. 1.

⁷⁹Dukore, p. 45.

real joke is that I am in earnest."⁸⁰ Shaw was dedicated to the truth of his faith even in jesting, and he disclosed it through his theatre.

Shaw was dedicated to his "Church," the theatre, as much as any man ever was to the conventional Church. His dedication induced him to examine it, alter it, and to make it serve the purpose for which it came into being--to lead people into a fuller awareness of the realities of life and the world of which they are a part and not merely leave them to be duped into a ritual of sensuous, decadent entertainment. As a devil's advocate, Shaw served as a scrutinizer of his medium and a canonizer of plays by examining the genre, the issues and the very essence of the theatre of his day. He also challenged and induced the audience of his day to become alive and involved in the issues of their society. Consequently, he brought men the vitality of his medium and pointed the way for others who also wish to use the theatre to give meaning and purpose to their society. The further effects of the devil's advocate's theatre in his plays and on his own consequent veneration are to be discussed in the final two chapters.

⁸⁰ Bernard Shaw, as quoted in Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: His Life and Works (Cincinnati: Stewart and Kidd Company, 1911), p. 201.

CHAPTER IV
SHAW'S CANON

"To understand a saint, you must hear a devil's advocate. . . ." ¹

Having examined the faith and medium of Shaw as a devil's advocate and having observed his critical and paradoxical manner, it is appropriate now to give attention to the essential function of the devil's advocate--the making of saints. This function requires a clearcut faith, and as I have shown in Chapter Two, Shaw's Life Force is such a faith. In this chapter his faith is manifest in his presentation of characters as devil's advocates who perform in Shaw's critical and paradoxical manner. His devil's advocates are found throughout his fifty-plus plays though they are only embryonic at first. In his middle plays, they develop into major roles and dominate the action of the plays. However, his characters have never been examined as devil's advocates.

Over five hundred characters have been generally examined in three ways: evaluating their effectiveness as a whole, collectively according to types, and selectively in the context of a given play. The main question raised by critics is whether the characters are well-developed or are purely personifications of Shaw's ideas. Inasmuch as Shaw's plays are highly ideological, the characters are certainly representative of ideas and varied viewpoints. Shaw and his critics recognized this, but

¹Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw (New York: William H. Wise and Company, 1931), XIX, 296.

Shaw's plays also present characters that are more than mouthpieces and plays that are more than philosophical dialogues. Turco expresses the point as clearly as anyone:

As for Shaw's characterization, it will of course seem abstract if measured against Chekhov's impressionistic registering of details that gradually open out to reveal a sense of a person's inner life. Yet just as "you cannot have Aesop's Fables unless the animals talk," so Shawian drama would be impossible if characters were not endowed with "powers of self-consciousness and self-expression which they would not possess in real life." While such heightened powers of articulation and self-analysis tend to push their possessors in the direction of becoming personified ideas, this result is not inappropriate for the kind of modern morality play we shall soon find Heartbreak House to be. Furthermore, in Shaw's resourceful handling, personal encounters are rarely allowed to decline into a mere dialectical game of clashing concepts.²

Turco's understanding of the didactic and allegorical nature of Shaw's plays leads to his understanding of the appropriateness and effectiveness of Shaw's characterization. He stresses the suitability of Shaw's characters in his examination of the allegorical nature of Man and Superman:

But we cannot forget the allegorical element in this particular play. In all allegory, the characters can be neither too simple nor too complex--if they are the former, the result will be patterned dullness; if the latter, the individual psyche will obliterate the larger design. This does not mean that the allegory itself is not complex; it means rather that its intricacy is that of a total configuration, not of the individual character.³

Other critics are concerned with the same issue, though of course they have differing emphases. Sonja Lorichs notes variations in the way Shaw develops his characters but emphasizes that "if some of these

²Arthur Turco, Shaw's Moral Vision: The Self and Salvation (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 234.

³Ibid., p. 149.

characters may be said to embody ideas, others depicted more completely. . . live their own life in our imagination long after the production of the play."⁴ Bentley points to the "staginess" of Shaw's characters and feels that Shaw, being "afraid of his own didacticism," may have tried to spice up his drama "with every trick of the trade."⁵ However, he does not consider this a detraction from the vitality and effectiveness of the plays. Colin Wilson finds Shaw instilling psychological insight into his characters, so that they become very convincing.⁶

Granted, almost everyone agrees that Shaw's characters function well; the question is what, if anything, makes them distinctively Shavian. Critics have divided Shaw's characters into various categories. Shaw himself used this approach in The Quintessence of Ibsenism,⁷ where he observes that Ibsen's characters can be classified into three groups, representative of all human beings: idealists, realists, and philistines.

It is in his second chapter, entitled "Ideals and Idealist," that Shaw lays the whole groundwork for his system. For here he makes his partition of mankind into three types: the idealists, the realists, and the Philistines. And the determination of the proper assignment of each individual to his type depends on his use or rejection of masks to hide the face of the truth, which many fear to confront. These masks are our so-called "ideals," and those who refuse to look at anything but them are "idealists."

⁴Sonja Lorichs, The Unwomanly Woman in Bernard Shaw's Drama (Stockholm: Uppsala, 1973), p. 185.

⁵Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw: 1856-1950 (New York: New Directions Books, 1957), p. 129.

⁶Colin Wilson, Bernard Shaw: A Reassessment (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 97, 102.

⁷Bernard Shaw, Major Critical Essays (London: Constable and Company, 1932), p. 1.

The person who insists on tearing off these masks, in order to expose the reality underneath, is the realist. And the satisfied persons, who neither erect masks nor bother themselves about realities, but vegetate contentedly as they are, are the Philistines. Out of every thousand persons, Shaw guesses, there are 700 Philistines, 299 idealists, and only one lone realist.⁸ The last, obviously, is going to have a difficult time in life.

Shaw then proceeds, as do other critics, to analyze or refer to characters in his own plays as either idealists, realists or philistines.

Arthur Nethercot uses this classification in his discussion of Candida, but differs with Shaw about which character fits into which classification.⁹ Alfred Turco begins by using this scheme in analyzing Shaw's characters in Shaw's Moral Vision but does not follow through with it, and J. L. Wisenthal, who gives extensive consideration to Shaw's characters in the middle period plays, finds it entirely inadequate.¹⁰ This means of classification is helpful in making distinctions between Shaw's characters and their function in the plays in relationship to Shaw's basic faith and didactic purpose, but it tends to reduce the characters to stereotypes. The terms themselves are somewhat arbitrary and vague.

Nethercot has given the most extensive attention to classifying Shaw's characters, and in doing so he has arranged them in a multiplicity of groupings. After looking at Shaw's philistines, idealists and

⁸A. H. Nethercot, Man and Superman: The Shavian Portrait Gallery (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), p. 5.

⁹Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰J. L. Wisenthal, The Marriage of Contraries: Bernard Shaw's Middle Plays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 7.

realists, he notes the six types of women in Shaw's plays, three types of males, a miscellany of ethnic and racial representatives, six professional groups, nine sub-divisions of politicians and, finally, the Superman. Sonja Lorichs' study of The Unwomanly Woman in Bernard Shaw's Drama provides intensive scrutiny of Shaw's plays with "unwomanly women" and also classifies Shaw's women into basically three categories. Lorichs' classification does reflect the distinctiveness of the independent women who are representative of the Life Force faith and are found among the characters Shaw venerates. However, these groupings of Shaw's characters do not emphasize the didactic nature of his plays and his ideological purpose.

Other critics, seemingly sensing this, have sought a classification of Shaw's plays that would focus on what is most distinctive about his drama as well as his characters. One popular approach has been to look for supermen and superwomen. The reason for this is obvious, since Shaw announced that the superman was to be the evolutionary product of the Life Force in Man and Superman, but the epithet has proven far from satisfactory in analyzing the characters. In fact, Nethercot, looks extensively for supermen among Shaw's characters, but he finds none, unless a bird-like creature in Farfetched Sketches could qualify.¹¹ If this play exhibits Shaw's superman, then his plays are not peopled with supermen and women.

Charles Berst has stated that since Shaw's theory of creative evolution is more metaphor than philosophy, so is his superman.¹² Shaw

¹¹Nethercot, p. 288.

¹²Charles A. Berst, Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p. 99.

himself tended to discount this formulation of his theory when he wrote in the preface to Back to Methuselah that he was abandoning "the legend of Don Juan with its erotic associations" to "go back to the legend of the Garden of Eden," though he recognized that even this "parable" is tentative. Of course, to view the legend of the superman as a metaphor in no way invalidates Shaw's purpose in seeking to point men to a greater sense of destiny and social responsibility. In fact, for many philosophers, including Plato, metaphor has proven a more appropriate way to get at truth than abstractions or formulae. However, it does leave unanswered the question of how best to classify Shaw's characters.

Other critics have noticed Shaw's early preference for "heroic" personages, such as Napoleon in The Man of Destiny and Caesar of Caesar and Cleopatra, as well as Barbara in Major Barbara and Joan of Saint Joan. Consequently, this has induced still others to look for anti-heroes or diabolical personages such as Dick Dudgeon in The Devil's Disciple, Under-shaft in Major Barbara, even the devil in Man and Superman. However, this strategy ignores Shaw's caution about reducing his characters to the heroes and villains of melodrama.

Certainly it is easy to dramatize the prosaic conflict of Christian Socialism with vulgar Unsocialism: for instance, in Widowers' Houses, the clergyman, who does not appear on the stage at all, is the real antagonist of the slum landlord. But the obvious conflicts of unmistakable good with unmistakable evil can only supply the crude drama of villain and hero, in which some absolute point of view is taken, and the dissentients are treated by the dramatist as enemies to be piously glorified or indignantly vilified. In such cheap wares I do not deal. (I, 373)

Shaw does use the term hero but in a very generalized sense. He does not seek to advance the romantic notions of extraordinary or superhuman

beings: "My hero in fiction was the rebel, not the goodygoody citizen, whom I despised."¹³

Shaw's characters then are not essentially supermen or superwomen nor does viewing them merely as heroes or villains do justice to Shaw's didactic purpose and critical role. It seems logical that a more satisfactory classification for the characters of a devil's advocate might be that of saints. Several of Shaw's leading characters are avowed saints; others are referred to as saints or are in some way saint-like. Saint Joan, of course, is the saint par excellence, but Father Keegan in John Bull's Other Island also has the attributes of saintliness.

A man with the face of a young saint, yet with white hair and perhaps 50 years on his back, is standing near the stone in a trance of intense melancholy, looking over the hills as if by mere intensity of gaze he could pierce the glories of the sunset and see into the streets of heaven. He is dressed in black, and is rather more clerical in appearance than most English curates are nowadays; but he does not wear the collar and waistcoat of a parish priest. He is roused from his trance by the chirp of an insect from a tuft of grass in a crevice of the stone. His face relaxes: he turns quietly, and gravely takes off his hat to the tuft, addressing the insect in a brogue which is the jocular assumption of a gentleman and not the natural speech of a peasant. (II, 922)

Other churchmen in Shaw's plays as well as Major Barbara might also be categorized as saints. In fact, several critics have written of Shaw's characters as saints but find this classification insufficient either because it does not include all of Shaw's significant characters or because it is confusing. For example, Edmund Wilson calls attention to the saints in Shaw's canon of characters, but notes that they must be

¹³Bernard Shaw, Complete Plays with Prefaces (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1962), II, ciii.

contrasted with more practical-minded characters:

The principal pattern which recurs in Bernard Shaw. . . is the polar opposition between the type of the saint and the type of the successful practical man. This conflict. . . is the principle of life of his plays. We find it in its clearest presentation in the opposition between Father Keegan and Tom Broadbent in John Bull's Other Island and between Major Barbara and Undershaft. . . .¹⁴

Eric Bentley makes a similar dichotomy of Shavian characters when he distinguishes between characters who are saints and conquerors.¹⁵

John Mills likes this classification, and yet he feels that it is not entirely acceptable:

Since Shaw's conception of saintliness differs so radically from the usual meaning of the term, ambiguity is almost inevitable. The average reader is apt to interpret "saint" in the usual, Christian sense and come to a false impression of the character of Shaw's writing, while even the reader who knows Shaw's connotation has always to lay aside his accustomed interpretations of the world. . . .

It seems clear then that the application of the title of "saint" to Shaw's characters must be undertaken cautiously. Given Shaw's special meaning, the term accurately describes certain aspects of his protagonists, but confusion with Christian saintliness seems inescapable and any attempt to make Christian saintliness an essential element of Shavian dramaturgy can have little validity. A striking number of the major plays feature, it is true, important characters with more or less clearly defined religious connections, but to call these characters saints and thereby imply that they have a common quality essential in Shaw's scheme of things--a quality which puts them at the opposite pole from another group of characters who have no such religious connections--is to misrepresent the basic organization of the plays.¹⁶

¹⁴ Edmund Wilson, "Bernard Shaw at Eighty," George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey, ed. Louis Kronenberger (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1953), p. 143.

¹⁵ Bentley, p. 115.

¹⁶ Mills, pp. 17-18.

Mills is correct in noting the religious identity of Shaw's characters, but I do not share his reluctance to see them in the perspective of sainthood. If they are saints, they are saints, and so be it. However, it is also obvious that Shaw's saints are not conventional, any more than his faith and church are conventional. Though Shaw uses the term saint and his plays and characters have religious associations, his major, distinctly religious characters display something different from the faith of the traditional dogmas of the institutional church. Shaw's most venerated characters are not "saints" because of their identification with the Church. In fact, none of them has any official connection with the Church. Shaw's characters are saints because they express a vitality that exhibits the nature of Shaw's Life Force. They confront and repudiate those who inhibit that vitality in themselves and the society of which they are a part.

The unique and vital aspect of Shaw's characters as saints has been duly noted by critics. Barr emphasizes the non-ecclesiastical nature of the Shavian saints.

Shaw seized upon this capacity of the emotionally engaging hero to persuade us to his view. If we understand the sainthood to include only those canonized by the church's councils, then it will be surprising to talk of Shaw's heroes as a community of saints. But if Shaw's vitalism included the earnest attempt to revitalize religion, and if a religion's saints are effective because of the qualities they manifest, then such a view becomes invitingly sensible. Shaw's canonical assembly sometimes overlaps the more traditional one (as in the case of St. Joan), sometimes diametrically counters it (witness Dick Dudgeon), and frequently is an independent but parallel group (represented by Caesar and Cicely Waynefleet). In any event, however, Shaw remained concerned with what he regarded as their religious qualities. He had, in fact, long been interested in dramatizing the life of a great religious figure--Mahomet or Christ--an interest finally realized with the writing of St. Joan. Louis Crompton sees that "sainthood is for Shaw something more than the mere absurdity it was for Voltaire and

Anatole France. For all his unorthodoxy, Shaw is a man who looks at the world primarily in theological terms, and the epithet of his title makes serious claim for Joan's eligibility in a Shavian 'Communion of Saints' whose canon, including as it does non-Christians like Socrates and Mohomet, and even professed atheists like Shelley, is more catholic than the canon of Catholicism."¹⁷

Watson makes the same point when she contrasts Shaw's saints with the saints of other writers, such as T. S. Eliot, and emphasizes that the distinctive quality of Shaw's saints derives from the Life Force:

The difference between Shaw's saints and T. S. Eliot's, or, for that matter, between Shaw's saints and the ordinary interpretation of Christian sainthood, is a fundamental dogma of the religion of creative evolution: that "the great game" is not a result of submerging the will, but of freeing it, that the saintly deed is not an immolation of the self, but a liberation of the self. This is both a humanistic and optimistic religion.

The Life Force expresses itself through these individual wills which are in harmony with the universe. In Saint Joan, as in some others, it takes the form of celibacy and sainthood. More commonly, it takes the form of the mother woman's determined pursuit of the man who, as instinct tells her, will father the best children. Such a will may be in opposition to habit, to convention, to reasonable compromise, but in the vital person it is never in opposition to the individual will.¹⁸

The most distinctive feature of Shaw's characters, then, is not their conventional canonization but their vitality, and that vitality is exhibited in characters who are not conventional saints. In fact, Joan is not a saint in the historical context in which Shaw presents her. It is only in his concluding epilogue that she is acclaimed a saint, and even there she is still rejected by the official representatives of society.

¹⁷ Alan P. Barr, Victorian Stage Pulpit (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1973), pp. 150-51.

¹⁸ Barbara Bellow Watson, A Shavian Guide to the Intelligent Woman (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1964), p. 77.

Furthermore, Shaw's canon of characters prominently features persons who function as he did, characters who attack the foibles of society and the hypocrisies of humanity. They seek to guide others into an awareness of this vitality by willfully criticizing those who obscure it and thereby distort the truth and the nature of the real. Through their critical roles they become mediums of the faith and instruments for disclosing the truth. Whitman emphasizes this feature of Shaw's plays.

A study of virtually any one of the early Shaw plays reveals patterns of conflict between realistic and idealistic ways of seeing things, of opposition and synthesis, of development that proceeds along dialectic lines. These patterns represent one of the most important ways in which Shaw's philosophy manifests itself in the plays. . . .¹⁹

Margery Morgan corroborates this view: "Shavian drama owes its force and liveliness to the practice of letting every devil, and every biased human being, have his due. . . ." ²⁰ Wisenthal notes this dialectical operation in Shaw's presentation of his characters as each expresses his own viewpoint.

What Shaw tries to achieve in most of his plays is the inclusion of a wide variety of points of view--that is, types of values--in conflict, instead of taking the point of view of one character and judging the behavior of the others in relation to it. Each character tries to live up to his own values, and usually defends them forcefully. . . .²¹

¹⁹Robert F. Whitman, Shaw and the Play of Ideas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 123.

²⁰Margery Morgan, The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw (London: Methuen and Co., 1972), p. 185.

²¹Wisenthal, p. 9.

In fact, Shaw himself emphasized this feature of his plays and his characters. It is at the heart of his dramatic technique and purpose.

In the new plays the drama arises through a conflict of unsettled ideals rather than through (situations) to which no moral question is raised. The conflict is not between clear right and wrong: the villain is as conscientious as the hero, if not more so: in fact, the question which makes the play interesting. . . is which is the villain and which the hero.²²

However, just as the conflicts in Shaw's plays are never simply a matter of "right and wrong," the conflicts are also between adversaries who are examining one another or are being examined. Shaw's most notable characters are usually villainous and even devilish, quite contrary to the conventional presentation of protagonists. They engage in the critical examination and repudiation of the more conventional characters in their plays. Shaw noted this function of his characters repeatedly, but it takes on particular significance when he describes Nordau's essay criticizing artists.

In 1893 Doctor Max Nordau. . . trumped up an indictment of. . . men of genius as depraved lunatics, and pled it (in German) before the bar of Europe under the title *Entartung*. It was soon translated for England and America as *Degeneration*. Like all rigorous and thoroughgoing sallies of special pleading, it has its value; for the way to get at the merits of a case is not to listen to the fool who imagines himself impartial, but to get it argued with reckless bias for and against. To understand a saint, you must hear the devil's advocate: [underlining added] and the same is true of the artist. Nordau had briefed himself as devil's advocate against the great artistic reputations of the XIX century; and he did his duty as well as it could be done at the price, incidentally saying many more true and important things than most of the counsel on the other side were capable of.²³

²² Bernard Shaw, The Collected Works of Bernard Shaw, XIX, 149-50.

²³ *Ibid.*, XIX, 296.

Shaw believes that only in the scrutiny of persons is their genuineness disclosed and that only in the process of criticism can truth be revealed. This process is more effectively achieved by devil's advocates. Shaw's "saints" are, therefore, devil's advocates.

Shaw's devil's advocates function in the following ways: primarily they exhibit individuality marked by a strong willfulness; they also serve as critics of the less willful or the hypocritical and inhibiting antagonists of their societies; usually they take on diabolical reputations because of their non-conforming and non-conventional practices and views; finally, Shaw's more developed devil's advocates become evangelistic in commending their idiosyncratic ideology and critical manner to others. Some of these features of Shaw's devil's advocates can be seen in the strategies of characters in his first plays. However, Shaw's devil's advocates do not become integral to his plots and perform major roles until his middle plays. Nevertheless, Shaw's first group of plays bear examination because they introduce adversaries who function in the manner of devil's advocates, though they are not full-fledged devil's advocates of the Life Force.

In Widowers' Houses Dr. Harry Trench, a young man who has fallen in love with Blanche Sartorius, is Shaw's first adversary with the makings of a devil's advocate, though he has little to advocate. Dr. Trench is thrown into the difficult situation of choosing between his sense of morality and his marriage. He is engaged to marry Blanche Sartorius, but as he is arranging for the confirmation of her acceptance, he discovers that her father, Sartorius, receives his enormous wealth from slum rentals. Therefore, Trench demands that she refrain from accepting any further

income from her father following their marriage. When Trench confronts Sartorius, however, he is not immediately so blatant in his demands. Rather he suggests that he has decided that he and Blanche will not accept any of Sartorius' money after the marriage, though Blanche does not concur. Sartorius is flabbergasted and resents any insinuations about the illegitimacy of his income, protesting that he is "a self-made man, and I am not ashamed of it." Trench challengingly replies:

You are nothing of the sort. I found out this morning from your man--Lickcheese, or whatever his confounded name is--that your fortune has been made out of a parcel of unfortunate creatures that have hardly enough to keep body and soul together--made by screwing, and bullying, and threatening, and all sorts of petti-fogging tyranny. (I, 91)

Trench has the forthrightness of a devil's advocate of the Life Force, until Sartorius turns the tables on him. Sartorius points out to Dr. Trench, very deliberately, that Trench knows little about the ways of business and then proceeds to show Trench that he is as much a part of slum landlordism as is Sartorius. He asks, "and now, Dr. Trench, may I ask what your income is derived from?" Dr. Trench immediately retorts: "From interest; not from houses. My hands are clean as far as that goes. Interest on a mortgage." Then Sartorius responds, "Yes: a mortgage on my property." And he proceeds to explain Trench's involvement.

When I use your own words, screw, and bully, and drive these people to pay what they have freely undertaken to pay me, I cannot touch one penny of the money they give me until I have first paid you your seven hundred a year out of it. What Lickcheese did for me, I do for you. He and I are alike intermediaries: you are the principal. It is because of the risks I run through the poverty of my tenants that you exact interest from me at the monstrous and exorbitant rate of seven per cent, forcing me to exact the uttermost farthing in my turn from the tenants. And yet, Dr Trench, you, who have never done

a hand's turn of work in connection with the place, you have not hesitated to speak contemptuously of me because I have applied my industry and forethought to the management of our property, and am maintaining it by the same honorable means. (I, 93)

Trench concedes, "We're all in the same swim, it appears. I hope you'll excuse my making such a fuss." Sartorius is very "understanding" and proposes that Trench explain his views to Blanche. Blanche, however, has now decided to have nothing to do with the snobbish Trench, and he is left dangling until the end of the play, when both are reconciled to marry and enjoy the benefits of their income from further investments in slum tenements.

Though adversaries of this play perform for their own mercenary advantages, they nonetheless use the scrutinizing stratagems of a devil's advocate. The adroitness with which Shaw's characters as devil's advocates expose the hypocrisy of others continues unabated throughout his plays, though with different issues and in more extensive confrontations.

Shaw's next play, The Philanderer, again has a kind of devil's advocate, but in this case the advocacy is for freedom in love and for the liberated advanced man and woman. This play opens with Leonard Charteris, a philanderer, enjoying the amours of Grace Tranfield. They are rudely interrupted by an irate Julia Craven who demands that they desist from making love, for Julia has come both to assert her matrimonial claims on Charteris and to denounce Grace Tranfield's meddling with Charteris whom Julia claims has just recently expressed his love for her. The confrontation between the three is heightened by Julia's attempts to attack Grace and by Charteris' physical restraints of Julia's violent actions. Finally, Charteris is able to state the case for the position of the

advanced man and woman:

As a woman of advanced views, you were determined to be free. You regarded marriage as a degrading bargain, by which a woman sells herself to a man for the social status of a wife and the right to be supported and pensioned in old age out of his income. Thats the advanced view: our view. Besides, if you had married me, I might have turned out a drunkard, a criminal, an imbecile, a horror to you; and you couldnt have released yourself. Too big a risk, you see. Thats the rational view: our view. . . . I think that was how you put the Ibsenist view: our view. So I had to be content with a charming philander, which taught me a great deal, and brought me some hours of exquisite happiness. (I, 147)

It turns out, of course, that Julia is no more a believer in this creed than was Trench an opponent of slum landlordism, but Charteris plays the role of a devil's advocate not only by affirming what the advanced man and woman stand for but also by repudiating Julia in her failure to measure up. The extent to which Charteris' affirmation can be said to be of the Life Force may be debatable, but to the extent that the Life Force is a faith of individuality he does seem to qualify. Charteris shows his concern for the society of which he is a part. He is primarily concerned about his own independence. Nevertheless, Charteris does play the role of a devil's advocate, in his independent willfulness and his criticism of others' failure to live in the same independence. He is not one of Shaw's more-memorable characters nor does he advocate Shaw's social or philosophical concerns. Appropriately, Shaw concludes this play with Grace Tranfield, an unwomanly woman, saying, "Never make a hero of a philanderer" (I, 227).

Shaw's third play continues to develop characters who play the roles of advocates and adversaries, but in this play the independent nature of Shaw's advocates of the Life Force is joined to their social concerns.

Mrs. Warren's Profession is apparently concerned with the social issue of prostitution, but to read the play in these terms, as some have, is to miss Shaw's real emphasis. In fact, Mrs. Warren's Profession is better understood if one perceives the play in terms of the functioning of its devil's advocates.

As the play opens, we meet Vivie Warren, Kitty's daughter. Vivie, who is independent and almost arrogant, greets Praed, an artist who has come to visit her, perhaps with matrimony in mind. In fact, Shaw's descriptions reinforce the character of Vivie as an independent unwomanly woman. Vivie's independent manner is maintained throughout the play in relationship to everyone she meets: young, foolish, flippant Frank Gardner who hopes to marry her; George Crofts, an older man and partner in business with Mrs. Warren; and, finally, her mother. Vivie's role as a critic and scrutinizer of each of these persons is portrayed in this play, but it is as she reproves her mother that Vivie takes on major significance for the unwomanly woman theme of the play.

Praed generally seems to share Vivie's unconventional behavior. They engage in a confrontation which is an exposition of Vivie's independence; but with the others Vivie's adversary role is more emphatic and dramatic. She summarily dismisses Frank's father, the minister, who could be Vivie's father, but he is only incidentally considered by her: as she says, "He doesn't strike me as being a particularly able person" (I, 299). Then she almost casually brushes off Frank as being "tiresome" and childish, though the matter of a common father is raised. Next, she is confronted by George Crofts, where her role as a devil's advocate is further delineated.

Crofts also proposes marriage, but Vivie refuses him very plainly and forthrightly as befits her manner; however, their conversation does not cease with that. Crofts seeks to ingratiate himself by pointing out to her how he aided her mother and thereby aided Vivie. When Vivie suggests she wants no part of his aid, he emphasizes that she had been a part of it through the income and education she has received from her mother. However, Vivie emphasizes that she no longer has to continue being the recipient of his aid and clearly does not intend to have any further involvement with Crofts.

It does not matter. I suppose you understand that when we leave here today our acquaintance ceases. . . . My mother was a very poor woman who had no reasonable choice but to do as she did. You were a rich gentleman; and you did the same for the sake of 35 per cent. You are a pretty common sort of scoundrel, I think. That is my opinion of you. (I, 330)

Crofts proves his vileness as he presses the point of their interrelated financial involvements, but Vivie, acknowledging her failings, is not victimized by Crofts' assaults and further repudiates his intentions.

I hardly find you worth thinking about at all now. When I think of the society that tolerates you, and the laws that protect you! When I think of how helpless nine out of ten young girls would be in the hands of you and my mother! the unmentionable woman and her capitalist bully--. (I, 332)

Crofts retorts, "Do you think I'll put up with this from you, you young devil?" (I, 332). He, of course, has put up with Vivie's repudiation, as his question implies. However, as Frank comes up, Crofts' vileness is further revealed as he makes one last verbal thrust by telling Vivie that Frank's father, Rev. Gardner, is her father too: "Allow me, Mr. Frank, to introduce you to your half-sister, the eldest daughter of the

Reverend Samuel Gardner. Miss Vivie, your half-brother. Good morning" (I, 333). Vivie is momentarily shaken, but she is not subdued.

Her independence and resoluteness are further exhibited as she finally decides to be truly on her own, forsaking matrimony, at least for the moment, and takes the position of actuary proffered to her by Honoria Fraser in London. She is thereby free of her mother and her mother's income. Her mother, however, is reluctant to give up her daughter for whom she has labored these eighteen years. Mrs. Warren goes to London seeking Vivie's return, but Vivie has no intention of going back. She must again take issue with her mother when her mother presses her to return. Mrs. Warren emphasizes the benefits of her wealth to serve Vivie's needs. As Mrs. Warren attempts to persuade Vivie by pointing out what her profession and wealth mean, Vivie retorts: "So that's how its done, is it? You must have said all that to many a woman, mother, to have it so pat" (I, 350). Mrs. Warren insists that she is not asking Vivie to do wrong and that Vivie does not understand the realities of the world. Vivie replies, "I recognize the Crofts philosophy of life, Mother. I heard it all from him that day at the Gardners!" (I, 354). Mrs. Warren insists she is not trying to force Crofts and his plans on Vivie, and Vivie then makes her affirmation as she repudiates the views of her mother.

Mother: you dont at all know the sort of person I am. I dont object to Crofts more than to any other coarsely built man of his class. To tell you the truth, I rather admire him for being strong-minded enough to enjoy himself in his own way and make plenty of money instead of living the usual shooting, hunting, dining-out, tailoring, loafing life of his set merely because all the rest do it. And I'm perfectly aware that if I'd been in the same circumstances as my aunt Liz, I'd have done exactly what she did. I dont think I'm more prejudiced or straitlaced than

you: I think I'm less. I'm certain I'm less sentimental. I know very well that fashionable morality is all a pretence, and that if I took your money and devoted the rest of my life to spending it fashionably, I might be as worthless and vicious as the silliest woman could possibly want to be without having a word said to me about it. But I dont want to be worthless. (I, 352)

Mrs. Warren is forced to confess that she continues in what she is doing because she likes what she is doing. There are further strong, emotional exchanges that befit a mother and daughter speaking so frankly and deeply of what they believe, but there is no alteration of their position despite the words and the tears. Vivie, like her mother, is now a woman in her own right, but not of her mother's profession.

The coldness with which Vivie appears to turn out her mother and the anger which Mrs. Warren expresses are harsh and disturbing to many readers of this play, but they need not be quite so disturbed if they understand what has been going on in the deeper processes of the play as the characters function as adversaries to one another in the roles of devil's advocates. Mrs. Warren herself had played the role when earlier confronted by Vivie over the question of where Mrs. Warren's money came from and what kind of business she was in. This is where Vivie initially manifests her independence to her mother, as the question of what Vivie is to do now that she has completed school, is raised. Vivie specifically asks about her mother's way of life, which Mrs. Warren highly resents. "What nonsense is this youre trying to talk? Do you want to shew your independence, now that youre a great little person at school? Dont be a fool, child" (I, 306). However, Vivie's arrogance softens as her mother explains why she entered "the business" to begin with.

But where can a woman get the money to save in any other business? Could you save out of four shillings a week and keep yourself dressed as well? Not you. Of course, if you're a plain woman and can't earn anything more; or if you have a turn for music, or the stage, or newspaperwriting: that's different. But neither Liz nor I had any turn for such things; all we had was our appearance and our turn for pleasing men. Do you think we were such fools as to let other people trade in our good looks by employing us as shopgirls, or barmaids, or waitresses, when we could trade in them ourselves and get all the profits instead of starvation wages? Not likely. (I, 312-13)

Finally, Vivie recognizes that her mother is a remarkable woman to have managed as she did, given the circumstances she confronted. Mrs. Warren clearly functioned as an advocate of the Life Force in her youth as she repudiated the society in which she was reared. Her independence had succeeded in gaining her an income. Unlike her sister Lizzie, however, she continued the profession simply because she enjoyed it. Furthermore, she refuses now to allow Vivie to enjoy the same independence that she herself advocated and practiced. In this play, we see the makings of Shaw's devil's advocates in the mother and child, but it is the child who stands forth at the end of the play most independently as a devil's advocate of the Life Force. Though the arrogant edge to Vivie Warren's independence may leave much to be desired, Shaw has not presented her to be admired. He has presented her to be a complex example of human independence and a vehicle for the Life Force. Shaw's memorable characters are venerated not because they are admirable but because they are devil's advocates.

The independent, critical nature of Shaw's devil's advocates continues to be portrayed in Shaw's succeeding plays. However, his first diabolical character emerges in The Devil's Disciple. Dick Dudgeon appears to be anything but a saint as the play opens. He is recognized

by his family and fellow townsmen as a despicable character--"Wicked, dissolute, godless" (II, 59). And yet despite this general assessment he is not hesitant to affirm his views in contrast to the piety of his Puritan mother. As the play develops, he is also able to repudiate the government of King George and the Christianity that sanctions executions of innocent citizens. Consequently, he gains the admiration of General Burgoyne as well as pastor Anderson's wife, when he offers his life for Anderson's. However, more significantly, Dudgeon motivates Anderson into military action against the British and induces Anderson into a recognition of his true calling.

This play, generally regarded as a melodrama, does not involve any serious philosophical or social questions, but it does present a character with all the qualities of Shaw's devil's advocates: he is willful and individualistic in his behavior; he is critical of the conventions of his society and peers; he is deemed fully diabolical; and he is also evangelical, in a critical and paradoxical manner, in the proclamation of his faith.

The play that most clearly enunciates the faith of the Life Force and vividly portrays Shaw's devil's advocate is Man and Superman, recognized as Shaw's most explicit dramatic statement of his creed. The creed is found in the extensive conversation and debate between Don Juan and the devil in the "hell scene" of Act Three, but it is also conveyed in the actions of Jack Tanner and Ann Whitfield in the main play of Acts One, Two and Four. There is no need to examine the Life Force creed again. What is appropriate here is to observe the ways that the Life Force advocate functions in this play.

First of all, we have two advocates specifically confronting one another over the very question of the Life Force faith. Ironically, both characters have a diabolical reputation and, therefore, both could be called devil's advocates in the popular sense of the term. However, the devil's proposals have no real identity with the Life Force nor with that larger sense of a devil's advocate, as a promoter of faith. The term does not really suit the devil. Don Juan, on the other hand, is clearly a devil's advocate of the Life Force in this play: first, because of his critical repudiations of the devil's proposals; second, because he is affirming a faith of the Life Force; third, because he commends the faith to all, even the inhabitants of hell; and, finally, because he has a diabolical reputation which is alluded to in his conversation with Anna. Interestingly, Juan does not really gain any converts to his faith, though Anna does decide to follow him to heaven in search of the superman, the type of person whom Juan commends.

The debate between Juan and the devil is an extended argument about the nature and the reality of the Life Force. If the credibility of an argument were based on the number of its supporters, the "devil's" advocacy would seem to surpass that of Juan's. However, the number of adherents to the faith of Shaw's devil's advocates is not the criterion for its success or validity. On the contrary, Juan admits many failures:

Are we agreed that Life is a force which has made innumerable experiments in organizing itself; that the mammoth and the man, the mouse and the megatherium, the flies and the fleas and the Fathers of the Church, are 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 [sic] self-conscious; in short, a god? (II, 661-62)

Furthermore, often advocates of the Life Force are not successful; they are surpassed by the mundane, conventional forces within society, at least for the moment, in a given situation. However, as this play shows in the fuller structure of its four acts, the Life Force is not to be thwarted, as Tanner acknowledges when Ann Whitfield succeeds in getting her man. "I love you. The Life Force enchants me. . ." (II, 729).

Finally, it must be emphasized that just as confusion arises in the paradoxical nature of a devil's advocate, which is particularly evident in the case of the two disputants in Act Three of this play, so the very terms used to carry the argument are subject to confusion because the same word can be used for contrary purposes. This is no more evident than in the ideas of heaven and hell, life and death, and reality and appearance. One of the functions of a devil's advocate is to disclose the true and real. The reality of life for a devil's advocate is more than a matter of words. This is borne out in this play by the attached "Maxims for Revolutionists" and the Revolutionists's Handbook, which contain not only the beliefs of Tanner but also a list of paradoxical definitions. A large part of what Shaw's faith is all about and, particularly, much of what the devil's advocate of the Life Force is doing in this play is reclaiming from the devil concepts that legitimately pertain to the faith of the Life Force.

Juan illustrates this deceptiveness of semantics as he seeks to disclose to Anna the real nature of hell:

But here you escape this tyranny of the flesh; for here you are not an animal at all: you are a ghost, an appearance, an illusion, a convention, deathless, ageless: in a word, bodiless. There are no social questions here, no political questions, no religious

questions, best of all, perhaps, no sanitary questions. Here you call your appearance beauty, your emotions love, your sentiments heroism, your aspirations virtue, just as you did on earth; but here there are no hard facts to contradict you, no ironic contrast of your needs with your pretensions, no human comedy, nothing but a perpetual romance, a universal melodrama. (II, 650-51)

The reality behind words is made more vivid as Juan exposes the lies of Satan:

In this Palace of Lies a truth or two will not hurt you. Your friends are all the dullest dogs I know. They are not beautiful: they are only decorated. They are not clean: they are only shaved and starched. They are not dignified: they are only fashionably dressed. They are not educated: they are only college passmen. They are not religious: they are only pewrenters. They are not moral: they are only conventional. They are not virtuous: they are only "frail." They are not artistic: they are only lascivious. They are not prosperous: they are only rich. They are not loyal, they are only servile; not dutiful, only sheepish; not public spirited, only patriotic; not courageous, only quarrelsome; not determined, only obstinate; not masterful, only domineering; not self-controlled, only obtuse; not self-respecting, only vain; not kind only sentimental; not social, only gregarious; not considerate, only polite; not intelligent, only opinionated; not progressive, only factious; not imaginative, only superstitious; not just, only vindictive; not generous, only propitiatory; not disciplined, only cowed; and not truthful at all: liars every one of them, to the very backbone of their souls. (II, 681)

When Satan repudiates Juan's statement as nothing but words, Juan concurs but stresses that reality consists of much more than words: "That is the family secret of the governing class; and if we who are of that caste aimed at more Life for the world instead of at more power and luxury for our miserable selves, that secret would make us great" (II, 682). These dialectical exchanges enable Juan to make evident that the devil is no more an advocate of life than is hell a place of reality. The devil's advocate of the Life Force discerns and discloses the truth: that hell and Satan are only shams.

Now, as to the main play, the comedic action of Acts One, Two, and Four is very farcical and somewhat oversimplified in expressing the Life Force faith. The role of the devil's advocate of the Life Force is subordinate in the main plot of the play. First of all, the central message of the main play is that the purpose of the Life Force is to produce a superman, and he is only to be realized through a marriage of a superior man to a superior woman. The arguments of the hell scene clearly indicate that there is much more to the Life Force than biology, though the perpetuation of the race is thus far clearly a basic means of producing adherents to the Life Force. However, as Shaw emphasizes throughout his plays, the purpose of the Life Force is accomplished more by the affirmation of the faith through the work of the dramatist than in the simple physiological functions of the mating of male and female.

The action of the main play operates in two plots which show the work of the Life Force. In the main plot Ann Whitfield captures Jack Tanner, and in the subplot Violet Robinson gains the support of her friends and father-in-law for her secret marriage to his son Hector Malone, Jr. Violet is another of Shaw's independent women who functions as a devil's advocate on a small scale. She shows the willful, critical nature of Shaw's Life Force advocates as she answers Hector's father's repudiation of his son's marriage to a commoner like Violet. She also acquires a diabolical reputation when, at the beginning of the play, it is reported that she is pregnant though apparently unmarried. In forthright assertions she silences critics of her condition and in arguments with her father-in-law she gains his blessing.

Ann Whitfield is less a devil's advocate for the Life Force than

she is a medium of the Life Force. She succeeds in her purpose to win a husband not so much by argument as by subtle, "serpentine" stratagems. She has persuaded her father to name Tanner her guardian in his will, and she maneuvers her mother into condoning her marriage to Tanner. Tanner, though a verbose radical, is anything but a devil's advocate. All of his talk is only talk as his protestations are to no avail. He protests being Ann's guardian, but he is; he protests Ann's traveling with him to Europe, but she races after him; he declares that he will not marry her, but he falls helplessly in love with her. Shaw emphasizes this irony by concluding the play with Tanner still "talking" to no avail. Tanner and Ann Whitfield are stereotyped male and female characters in a comedic melodrama illustrating the Life Force faith. Man and Superman dramatizes the workings of the Life Force more explicitly than any other play of Shaw, but the devil's advocate operates predominantly in the center play of Act Three in repudiating Satan and defending the Life Force faith.

Shaw continued this multifaceted proclamation of his faith through the devil's advocates of the Life Force in many of the plays that follow. In some plays the devil's advocates succeed and are joined by those who have opposed the advocates of the Life Force. In other plays, the devil's advocates do not succeed in gaining converts, but they are able to disclose truth, demolish illusions, and vindicate the Life Force faith. However, in all these plays the devil's advocates of the Life Force dominate though they are not always fully developed. The works that I have selected for examining Shaw's fully developed devil's advocates include some of his most memorable plays. They exhibit the devil's advocates functioning in varying social situations and presenting insights into the issues that

interested Shaw most. John Bull's Other Island is a political-economic play dealing in part with the Irish question; Major Barbara considers the question of religion; The Doctor's Dilemma deals ostensibly with the medical profession; Fanny's First Play treats a theme of parent-child relationships as well as the question of respectability; Heart-break House involves the socio-economic situation of the World War One era; Saint Joan is a religious play concerned with theological questions of revelation and ecclesiastical authority; and The Apple Cart is very explicitly political.

John Bull's Other Island is a play that exposes the traditional notions which the Irish and the British have of each other: the Irish are viewed as idling dreamers by the British, and the British are viewed as fumbling opportunists by the Irish. The exposition of these biased, misguided views is accomplished by the work of a devil's advocate of the Life Force who repudiates both the idling Irish and the enterprising British businessmen. Tom Broadbent and Larry Doyle are two businessmen who are obviously advocates, but they are not advocates of the Life Force faith, though initially they might appear to be. They come from England to Roscullen, Ireland, to promote a real estate deal that is intended to develop the commercial progress for the town and its citizens. They preach a gospel of efficiency, though they preach it with differing styles. Broadbent pompously preaches of his dedication to the ideals of independence and Home Rule which he contends will be adjuncts to the commercial enterprise of the English business syndicate he represents. Doyle, a cynical Irishman, is a man of few but plain words. He believes in the enterprise and its efficiency but readily admits, in a kind of

adversary relationship to Broadbent, that it is going to mean the displacement of many of the less able Irish men, particularly the elderly. "Pah! what does it matter where an old and broken man spends his last days, or whether he has a million at the bank or only the workhouse dole? It's the young men, the able men, that matter" (II, 1014). Broadbent concurs but does not like to put it in such terms.

Why can't you say a simple thing simply, Larry, without all that Irish exaggeration and talky-talky? The syndicate is a perfectly respectable body of responsible men of good position. We'll take Ireland in hand, and by straight-forward business habits teach it efficiency and self-help on sound Liberal principles. (II, 1014-15)

Father Keegan, referred to simply as Peter Keegan because he has been defrocked, is the only true devil's advocate in this play. Despite the fact that he talks with grasshoppers and claims to be a brother to the ass and the pig, he is not as mad as he makes out or as others of the town, particularly Father Dempsey, the local priest, indicate. Keegan's sanity is obviously a case of "the mad being sane"; his views are contrary to the conventions of the established Church and enterprising businessmen. However, despite the alienation it causes him, it does not prevent Keegan from taking an interest in the community and its good, ignorant, aged members. In fact, he dares to speak plainly of Broadbent's pompous verbosity and calls him a hypocritical ass to his face. Broadbent, of course, can only view such frankness as the expression of Irish humor, and Keegan softens his judgments, assuring him that the ass is a kindly creature to which Keegan is a brother. Keegan is equally plain in his rebuke of Doyle's crassness and reproves the unsavory consequences of their land deals and commercial plans. Father Keegan takes

on major proportions in this play because he offers the only creditable resistance to Broadbent's and Doyle's scheme to commercialize Irish land for their own profits in a crucial speech. He comprehensively and ironically pinpoints the "efficient" consequences of "efficiency":

KEEGAN. . . I stand rebuked, gentlemen. But believe me, I do every justice to the efficiency of you and your syndicate. You are both, I am told, thoroughly efficient engineers; and I have no doubt the golf links will be a triumph of your art. Mr Broadbent will get into parliament most efficiently, which is more than St. Patrick could do if he were alive now. You may even build the hotel efficiently if you can find enough efficient masons, carpenters, and plumbers, which I rather doubt. . . . When the hotel becomes insolvent. . . your English business habits will secure the thorough efficiency of the liquidation. You will reorganize the scheme efficiently; you will liquidate its second bankruptcy efficiently . . .; you will get rid of its original shareholders efficiently after efficiently ruining them; and you will finally profit very efficiently by getting that hotel for a few shillings in the pound. . . . Besides these efficient operations, you will foreclose your mortgages most efficiently. . .; you will drive Haffigan to America very efficiently; you will find a use for Barney Doran's foul mouth and bullying temper by employing him to slave-drive your laborers very efficiently; and . . . when at last this poor desolate countryside becomes a busy mint in which we shall all slave to make money for you, with our Polytechnic to teach us how to do it efficiently, and our liberty to fuddle the few imaginations your distilleries will spare, and our repaired Round Tower with admission sixpence, and refreshments and penny-in-the-slot mutoscopes to make it interesting, then no doubt your English and American shareholders will spend all the money we make for them very efficiently in shooting and hunting, in operations for cancer and appendicitis, in gluttony and gambling; and you will devote what they save to fresh land development schemes. For four wicked centuries the world has dreamed this foolish dream of efficiency; and the end is not yet. But the end will come. (II, 1017-18)

Father Keegan is a devil's advocate of the Life Force despite his alienation from the Church and the disregard by Broadbent and Doyle. He not only utilizes mad sanity, but he is also able to discern the difference between the true saints and real traitors of Ireland.

Ireland, sir, for good or evil, is like no other place under heaven; and no man can touch its sod or breathe its air without becoming better or worse. It produces two kinds of men in strange perfection: saints and traitors. It is called the island of the saints; but indeed in these later years it might be more fitly called the island of the traitors; for our harvest of these is the fine flower of the world's crop of infamy. But the day may come when these islands shall live by the quality of their men rather than by the abundance of their minerals; and then we shall see. (II, 1016)

It is this latter declaration that finally fully qualifies Keegan as one of Shaw's venerated devil's advocates, even though only a few poor souls such as a half-witted Patsy appreciate Keegan's saintly judgement. This defrocked Irish priest exhibits a greater sanity than either his fellow Irish or the British, and he fulfills the social responsibility of a prophetically effective religion even though he carries no apostolic credentials.

Major Barbara is Shaw's first avowedly religious play, as it deals with the question of religion in the context of the mission work of the Salvation Army among the poverty-stricken workers of London. This play reveals evangelical Christianity bereft of social mission. Shaw dramatizes his own concept of a responsible religion through one of his most intriguing characters, and it is not Barbara but her father, Andrew Undershaft. Shaw notes that he almost named this play Undershaft's Profession, and it would have been appropriate since Undershaft is the primary character in this play and is Shaw's devil's advocate. In this play there are several who become advocates of the Life Force by the last act, but they are led from the beginning by Undershaft, who plays a very paradoxical role: is he evil or is he good? He has all the appearances and manners of a gentleman, but he resorts to all the devices of a devil; as his name suggests, he has underworld associations, if not origins. He

is also referred to as Mephistophelian and Machiavellian. There is, in fact, a mystery associated with his origin, since being a foundling is what qualifies him to serve as the head of the cannon works at Percivale St. Andrews. However, his name and business are also suggestive of power, and if read figuratively and in the light of Undershaft's determined and individualistic ways, he is obviously an advocate of the Life Force. As Shaw says in his preface,

. . . he is only the instrument of a Will or Life Force which uses him for purposes wider than his own. . . . All genuinely religious people have that consciousness. To them Undershaft the mystic will be quite intelligible, and his perfect comprehension of his daughter the Salvationist and her lover the Euripidean republican natural and inevitable. (III, 31)

Shaw further emphasizes in his preface the important idea developed in the play in regard to Undershaft's religion: "What is new, as far as I know, is that article in Undershaft's religion which recognizes in Money the first need and in poverty the vilest sin of man and society" (III, 31).

Undershaft's particular advocacy in this play is that religion should be as much concerned with the physical needs of persons as with their spiritual needs. Or to put it another way, a faith that is genuinely concerned with the spiritual well-being of persons must also attend to their physical needs. Undershaft's commitment to the concerns of others exemplifies his Life Force faith and his function as a devil's advocate. He, of course, does not suffer any severe alienation because of his faith, but as the play opens, he is estranged from his wife and family and is resented by those who do not understand him. His

manner leads him to some paradoxical and almost sinister actions, particularly regarding the Salvation Army. On the one hand, he makes a sizeable financial contribution to their program and joins in some of their meetings, but on the other hand, he seeks to win his daughter, Barbara, and her fiancé, Cusins, away from the Army.

Undershaft's purpose is neither sinister nor cynical, not even anti-religious; on the contrary, it is wholly religious, but for what he considers a much more valid and vital religion--the religion of the Life Force which relates to the totality of a person's needs and not merely to the rituals and dogmas of a conventional faith. He, therefore, urges Barbara to get a new religion. "Come, come, my daughter! don't make too much of your little tinpot tragedy. . . . If your old religion broke down yesterday, get a newer and a better one for tomorrow" (III, 170-71). Undershaft, nevertheless, leaves the decision to her. He even meets her halfway. He has agreed to come visit the Army Shelter if she comes to visit his munitions plant and worker's village.

He is finally successful in engaging Barbara and Cusins to join in his enterprise of power, which has provided physically for workers; however, Undershaft wants his workers to have the cultural and spiritual elements that he might not have wholly provided. In enlisting others in his efforts and in his exposure of a "false" religion, as well as his concern to provide for others, Undershaft is clearly vindicated as a devil's advocate of the Life Force. His devilish nature adds to the ambiguity of his motives, as his making of armaments magnifies the paradox of this devil's advocate who seeks to improve the well-being of his employees. However, his armament business is concerned with more than

producing explosives. As an instrument of the Life Force, Undershaft is associated with greater power as well as a greater religion than that of the Salvation Army.

The Doctor's Dilemma presents Shaw's criticism of medical quacks and mountebanks. However, this time he does it in a play that ironically utilizes an artistic mountebank, Louis Dubedat, one of his vilest major characters. The Doctor's Dilemma presents Dubedat among the doctors, the most debased group of characters in any of Shaw's plays. These doctors are an object of Shaw's scorn because though doctors are generally among the more highly regarded professionals in society, he finds them self-serving. This play provides basically two sets of advocates: the doctors, who propose to heal the sick, and the artist and his wife who advocate the artistry of Dubedat. However, only the latter pair qualifies as Shaw's devil's advocates in this play.

On the surface the doctors appear to exemplify the Life Force by virtue of their service to humanity and their repudiation of Dubedat's fraudulent and mercenary practices. However, this appearance is gradually demolished by the unfolding of the play's events and by the role which Dubedat and his wife play as genuine advocates of the Life Force. Their work is not accomplished before the doctors have made some serious, even fatal, decisions. The doctors decide that Dubedat who is ill is not worth saving because of his fraudulent habits of taking personal loans he never repays. Therefore, because Dr. Ridgeon can treat only a limited number of patients who have a fatal disease, he chooses to treat another old, "good" doctor. This leads to Dubedat's death because the doctor who is chosen to treat him does not know the cure.

Life Force advocates are no more conventional in their mores than they are in their religion, but they are dedicated to serving something other than themselves though they do it in peculiar and individualistic ways. Dubedat is neither a conformist nor simply self-serving. He is dedicated to the reality of his artistry, regardless of what honors or benefits accrue to him. He is also eager to inspire the lives of others, such as his wife, Jennifer, and does not refrain from repudiating the hypocrisy and failures of the doctors, at whatever risk to himself or despite the fact that his personal behavior does not measure up to the expectations of the doctors. Dubedat has all the manners and appearances of a rogue. He schemes to get money from the doctors; he is apparently a bigamist since he was married before living with Jennifer. Nonetheless, he is able to function as a devil's advocate because of his sense of realism, and he dares to confront those who pretend to be good and wise but who are only deluding themselves.

His most telling repudiation of the doctors comes in the death scene where he corrects their assumptions about his bigamy.

Oh bigamy! bigamy! bigamy! What a fascination anything connected with the police has for you all, you moralists! I've proved to you that you were utterly wrong on the moral point: now I'm going to shew you that you're utterly wrong on the legal point; and I hope it will be a lesson to you not to be so jolly cocksure next time. (III, 390)

The doctors reveal their failings not only in a faulty judgment of Dubedat's marital relationship but also in their decision not to treat his sickness. Their moral failure is manifest most poignantly as it is revealed that a factor in Dr. Ridgeon's decision not to treat Dubedat was his interest in Mrs. Dubedat, though ironically he first considered

Dubedat's case because of the appealing Mrs. Jennifer Dubedat. Dr. Ridgeon's indictment is pronounced in the closing scenes by Dubedat's widow:

JENNIFER. But--oh, it is only dawning on me now--I was so surprised at first--do you dare to tell me that it was to gratify a miserable jealousy that you deliberately--oh! oh! you murdered him.

RIDGEON. I think I did. It really comes to that.

Thou shalt not kill, but needst not strive
Officiously to keep alive.

I suppose--yes; I killed him. (III, 432-3)

The final vindication of Dubedat's advocacy is in the life and forthrightness displayed in Jennifer's change to exuberance and honesty:

And you think that is your doing. Oh doctor, doctor! Sir Patrick is right: you do think you are a little god. How can you be so silly? You did not paint those pictures which are my imperishable joy and pride: you did not speak the words that will always be heavenly music in my ears. I listen to them now whenever I am tired or sad. That is why I am always happy. (III, 434)

The case for Dubedat's veneration as a devil's advocate of the Life Force is obscured because of his mercenary habits, but these habits did not prevent him from inspiring others by what he did in his painting nor preclude him from telling the doctors the truth about themselves and their judgments. As reprehensible as he might be in some ways, Dubedat is a devil's advocate who effectively conveys Shaw's belief that the truth of the Life Force is no respecter of persons. The reality of the Life Force is achieved more by the perceptiveness of a devil's advocate than by the practices of a conventional morality.

Fanny's First Play, in part a good-natured spoof of Shaw's own drama critics, was highly popular because of its light-hearted pleasantness. The moral tone of this play is mild compared to that of The Doctor's

Dilemma. There are no vile or sinister devil's advocates in sight, but there are devil's advocates of the Life Force who have adversaries to be confronted. Fanny, if more fully developed, would be a devil's advocate of the Life Force; as it is, she only turns out to exemplify the modernity of Shaw's independent women and to be an ardent admirer of Bernard Shaw's plays. Her counterparts in the play within the play, Darling Dora and Margaret Knox, do function as devil's advocates. However, the design of the play is such as to make Dora and Margaret complementary devil's advocates. Each serves to illuminate parents in differing households. They reveal the need of children to grow up and partake of the freedom from parents and conventional morality that is necessary for maturity, and they expose the shams of social status and respectability as they contrast with the vitality of genuine religion and human relationships. Devil's advocates are portrayed in this play as they promote aspects of the Life Force in a family situation.

For example, Dora's exuberance and independence typify Shaw's Life Force advocates. She conveys this as she bursts into the Gilbeys' house to tell them what has become of their son, Bobby. Shaw introduces Dora as "a young lady of hilarious disposition, very tolerable good looks, . . . so affable and confidential that it is very difficult to keep her at a distance by any process short of flinging her out of the house" (IV, 373). Her role as a devil's advocate comes to the fore as she reproves Mr. Gilbey: "Oh, aint we impatient! Well, it does you credit, old dear. . . . I'm coming to it, old dear: dont you be so headstrong" (IV, 376-77).

Margaret Knox, her counterpart, does much the same thing as she returns home after fourteen days' absence to tell her parents that she

has been in jail. She demonstrates her identity with the Life Force as she announces her freedom: "For good or for evil I am set free; and none of the things that used to hold me can hold me now" (IV, 396). Margaret functions in the role of a devil's advocate as she exposes the harsh ways of the law enforcement officers and repudiates the meaningless words of preachers. She is identified even more literally with a devil's advocate as her mother observes that she is like a devil, which equates to a devil's advocate because Margaret dares to face the realities of good and evil and to discern the difference as a devil's advocate must in making valid judgments and criticisms. This devil's advocate is to distinguish between words and the realities that words represent and to note the spiritual power of the Life Force wherever it is found--in the music of a Salvation Army Meeting, in the music of a theatre, in the music of a dance hall, or even in the realities of a prison cell. Finally, she functions as a devil's advocate of the Life Force as she declares what she knows and believes without fear, tearing down facades of respectability, as Dora did less dramatically in the earlier episode of Act One. Margaret continues to function in this way throughout the play. At the end Juggins describes her as "a lady of very determined character" (IV, 430). Fanny's First Play is admittedly highly farcical, but that did not prevent Shaw from incorporating his devil's advocates to accomplish a dual purpose: to dramatize social issues for which he repeatedly expressed concern and to lampoon the biased views of his critics.

The next play is also situated in a household setting, but the house functions metaphorically. Heartbreak House symbolizes the situation of civilization in Britain preceding the outbreak of World War I. This

play, like all of Shaw's, is concerned with the problem of society's failings but, unlike any other of his plays, it treats the failure of society in general and in symbolic terms. This play also seems to take a much more despairing view of the world and its future than does any of his other plays. Heartbreak House has a dream-like setting, and the main pattern of its actions consists of the gradual stripping away of illusions to disclose reality. Shaw uses several characters to achieve the process of disillusionment, but Captain Shotover is the principle character in this play. The captain functions most fully as Shaw's devil's advocate of the Life Force.

Shotover, one of Shaw's most complex characters, is the father of two daughters and the master of Heartbreak House, which, in addition to being a place of heartbreaking disillusionment, is also symbolic of the ship of state and British society. As the captain of the ship, Shotover is involved in various ways with all the residents and visitors to Heartbreak House, but he functions primarily as a devil's advocate in two ways: one, to pronounce critical judgments on all who fail to heed the realities and dangers of heartbreak, and, two, to offer guidance into the truth and deliverance from the rocks which threaten to wreck the ship of state and civilization.

Shotover appears to be very ineffective in his pronouncements. Ariadne, one of his daughters, has long been estranged, and Hesione, the other daughter, while living in the same house with him, has no warm, close identity with him. The cult of love she lives by is in total opposition to everything he believes in. Hector Hushabye and Randall Utterword are even further removed from Shotover. They do not heed Shotover's warnings that

unless they learn navigation they will wreck upon the rocks. Shotover knows the shortcomings of Mazzini Dunn as well as the burglar Billy Dunn. They are both criminals, and though Shotover appears to get them confused, he is not really confused because he knows both are usurpers. Mazzini wastes the lives of his family by his idealistic views; Billy simply grabs the property of others. Shotover also knows the industrialist Mangan's unscrupulous ambitions and foresees his annihilation.

As ineffective as Shotover may seem because of his agedness and drunkenness, he has keen insights into the situation of Heartbreak House and pronounces his opinions with Old Testament authority. He has stored dynamite in a gravel pit that explodes to destroy Mangan and Billy, the burglars of society who were hiding like rats. He had foreseen their destruction as well as that which threatens the others "in the ship" in the form of bombs falling from the sky.

While Shotover's pronouncements go unheeded by his immediate family and most guests in the house, he does gain a positive response from Ellie Dunn, the daughter of Mazzini Dunn and a friend of Hesione. Bentley, along with others, has observed that this play seems to center around Ellie and her "education."²⁴ One sees her move from the illusion of romance in her infatuation with Hector to a cynicism in her matrimonial commitment to Boss Mangan and, finally, to a sense of expectant purpose in a symbolic marriage with Captain Shotover, who has forced Ellie to think about the soul-destroying project of her proposed marriage to the opportunistic Mangan. Her new knowledge is symbolized by her spiritual wedding

²⁴Bentley, p. 136.

with Shotover, claiming him as husband and father. Consequently, she avoids the entanglements of Hector's dream-like existence and a cynical marriage of convenience with Mangan. Out of these insights, she is also able to see and point out the falsity in the lives of those around her, who are unresponsive to Shotover's guidance. It is in the light of Ellie's contrast with the others and her identifying with Shotover that one understands that she is an instrument of the Life Force faith. She recognizes the futility and decadence pervading Heartbreak House and not only anticipates its destruction but encourages it as she tells Hector to burn it. As Don Juan had said in Man and Superman and as the captain forewarned, the Life Force disposes of that which is not responsive to its purposes.

Shotover's movements in and out of the situations and lives of those in Heartbreak House, as well as his mysterious past, tend to obscure his role as a devil's advocate in this play, and his failure to maintain control of his decadent daughters and wayward household undercut the optimism associated with Shaw's Life Force faith. However, Shotover in all of his paradoxicalness stands firm as a prophetic figure on the bridge of his ship, though his clarity of vision is aided by regular "shots of rum." As the play ends, his insights are vindicated. The thieves and rectory are destroyed, and he is able to declare the ship safe thus far (before falling asleep). However dismal the prospects for society have become and despite the incapability and irresponsiveness of the inhabitants in the house, the devil's advocate of the Life Force has not ceased to function even in Heartbreak House.

Nevertheless, a question is left at the end of this play which

bothers many critics and which many critics feel reflect a concern of Shaw: What is to become of society? Who is to lead the ship of state? The answer to those questions comes in varying ways in Shaw's remaining plays and can be seen in part in the last two plays to be examined. In Saint Joan we see a strong Church and a strong Britain dominating the subdued French and their docile King until Joan emerges to inspire her own people and confront the intruders. In The Apple Cart, a strong monarch acts in lieu of an inept democracy.

Saint Joan is one of Shaw's most memorable and tragic plays, and its heroine is one of Shaw's most notable characters and a significant devil's advocate. She is doubly venerated, by Shaw and the Church, though for different reasons. Joan is certainly not celebrated in this play because she has been honored by the Church. She is celebrated because she was a moving force in her time, a force that affected history and reflected the creative evolution of society. Her independence and unwomanly aggressive courage certainly mark her as an advocate of the Life Force faith, not only in the unconventional and paradoxical manner of her behavior but also in her daring to confront the French court and, especially, the authority of the Church and its Inquisitors. Joan, of course, initially enjoyed great success in military exploits and popular following, but her career ended with her having no apparent supporters, except in a belated veneration by the Church portrayed in the epilogue. However, Shaw's play is not designed simply to venerate Joan as a Church saint, because the charges and events in the play still leave her canonization in question. The play does exonerate Joan from the charge of heresy, but she receives canonization as a Shavian saint

only in accordance with the precepts of his own heterodox faith. However, the idea of venerating Joan as a devil's advocate requires some explanation.

One of Joan's basic affirmations in this play is that God calls her to lead France to realize its national destiny by seeing the Dauphin Charles crowned as King and seeing the British removed from French territory. It is, of course, in the actions she takes to accomplish these tasks that she identifies with Shaw's Life Force. This identification is manifested in two ways. First, in her denunciation of all who would thwart the purposes of God for the French people. Initially, this leads to her repudiation of the courtiers, but, finally, it results in her confrontation with the authority of the Church itself. She further manifests her identity with the Life Force as she leads French soldiers in miraculous victories over the British and as she maintains her faith even unto the point of death.

Joan's feats are deemed miraculous and may seem quite fantastic to some, just as her defiance of the authority of the Church seems uncalled for and absurd by others. She is judged to be mad, of the devil, a heretic; but all of these charges are ways of emphasizing the major point of the play and a key aspect of the Life Force: she is an individual who dares to exhibit her understanding of truth and her way of life; she does challenge others in her manners but does not force anyone into accepting her manners, as the Church seeks to do to her; and she carries on regardless of the consequences to herself and her reputation, even if she is to be deemed mad or executed. Though the threat of death frightens her, the threat of the deprivation of life in a prison appalls her more and provokes anew her sense of the realities of truth and life.

You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear: I can live on bread: when have I asked for more? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean. Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction. But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers; to chain my feet so that I can never again ride with the soldiers nor climb the hills; to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and keep from me everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate Him: all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times. I could do without my warhorse; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind. But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and that mine is of God. (IV, 183-84)

Joan is burned at the stake. No one comes to her defense and only a common soldier identifies with her cause and affirmations. Her repudiation and execution are marks of her being a devil's advocate. This play and Joan's defiance of the Church's authority raise a very basic question that could be extended to all of Shaw's plays; who is the advocate and who is the adversary? Who is right and who is wrong? Where does the rightful authority lie? Shaw in his preface to this play says that the Church was right at the time and according to its own tenets, but Shaw's qualifications pertaining to time and place make it clear that such institutional decisions are not eternal and absolute. Therefore, in the larger perspective of the Life Force, Joan was right and is right, even though she had to die to affirm it.

The last play to be examined is from Shaw's later period and is one of Shaw's most political plays. The Apple Cart has raised many

questions about Shaw's politics and faith in democracy. However, it should be evident that Shaw placed his faith in democracy and in the Life Force and its instruments. It was his hope that all men might be responsive to the Life Force and that the consequences for society would be a democracy operating in a socially responsible economy. But if mankind did not respond, he believed that the Life Force would find other ways. In The Apple Cart we see one of the other ways, a strong, autocratic, but clever monarch functioning as another of Shaw's devil's advocates.

King Magnus is the most notable advocate in this play, but, of course, he is not without his adversaries, represented primarily by Proteus, a prime minister, and Boanerges, president of the Board of Trade, who turns out to be more an admirer than an opponent because of Magnus' commanding leadership. King Magnus is faced with a cabinet, influenced by capitalists and politicians, who wish in effect to depose the monarch and purportedly institute a pure democracy. However, King Magnus is no mere figurehead. Not to be outdone, he accepts the challenge and proposes himself to run for the office of prime minister in a democratic election. This bold assertiveness, which exhibits the quality of a Life Force advocate, succeeds in thwarting the challenge to his monarchical authority. His advocacy, moreover, is not merely one of proclaiming the authority of the monarchy, but of asserting the rights of the people in the face of dominance by economic powers and usurping politicians. One of the main themes reiterated by him and the characters in the play is the need of strong persons who stand out above the crowd. He affirms the principle in a memorable metaphor drawn from

a scene in the Interlude with Orinthia, his mistress.

Every star has its own orbit; and between it and its nearest neighbor there is not only a powerful attraction but an infinite distance. When the attraction becomes stronger than the distance the two do not embrace: they crash together in ruin. We two also have our orbits, and must keep an infinite distance between us to avoid a disastrous collision. Keeping our distance is the whole secret of good manners; and without good manners human society is intolerable and impossible. (VI, 346-47)

As in many of Shaw's plays, other issues are referred to, but the primary focus in this play is on politics. Magnus' actions in many ways accord with the criteria of a Shavian devil's advocate. His display of semantic astuteness shows his critical perception, and his political gamesmanship to achieve his purpose shows his willful assertion of the Life Force; furthermore, he dares to assume the role of a commoner, though he does not really wish to, in order to challenge threats to his kingship and rights as a monarch; finally, he commends his ways to others and wins admiration from some cabinet members, particularly Boanerges, the new cabinet member, who initially seemed opposed to Magnus' proposals.

In the process of maintaining his throne and executing his strategy, Magnus is also able to expose the ineptness of his cabinet members, the undue power of Breakages Unlimited--the capitalist forces behind the political scenes--and Orinthia's pretensions to royalty and even divinity. Magnus' way with words in rebuking his adversaries is noted not only in the metaphor of the stars, but also in a lengthy speech to the cabinet on its failures.

You are many: I oppose you single-handed. There was a time when the king could depend on the support of the aristocracy and the cultivated bourgeoisie. Today there is not a single aristocrat left

in politics, not a single member of the professions, not a single leading personage in big business or finance. They are richer than ever, more powerful than ever, more able and better educated than ever. But not one of them will touch this drudgery of government, this public work that never ends because we cannot finish one job without creating ten fresh ones. . . . Today only the king stands above the tyranny. (VI, 323, 325)

Magnus is not really a tyrant; instead he is an instrument of the Life Force.

The perplexity that his stronghanded manner produces in the minds of some is reflected in the ridicule of Orinthia when she tells Magnus that he talks "like a child or a saint" (VI, 344). However, though some may have thought Magnus to be only a child playing at politics, Shaw's play vindicates him as an effective benevolent political ruler. The name of King Magnus connotes the greatness which Shaw wished to attribute to the role of this devil's advocate.

From Vivie Warren and Dick Dudgeon to Saint Joan and King Magnus, Shaw's major characters emulate Shaw as a devil's advocate. They function willfully and critically in the varying social situations of their plots, exhibiting the range of Shaw's interests and the nature of his drama. Shaw found devil's advocates operative, effective and necessary in every aspect of society--Church, government, home, business and art--and he venerated their roles in his plays. They, like himself, were seldom popularly acclaimed as they functioned diabolically, but like the leavening of the loaf, they were always present where society was progressing and truth was being disclosed. They fulfilled the mission of Shaw's didactic theatre and revealed the purposefulness of his Life Force faith; consequently, they merit the veneration Shaw's plays have given to them, for they are truly Shaw's saints.

CHAPTER V
SHAW'S VENERATION

"Oh cynic mask, that hid a friendly face."¹

We have observed how Shaw's critical, paradoxical manner makes it appropriate to perceive him as a devil's advocate. We have observed his devil's advocacy in his attack against religion while affirming a faith, in his use of the theatre though modifying it for his didactic purposes, and in his important portrayal of devil's advocates in the characters he created. A final question remains: how does all this contribute to Shaw's own veneration in the twentieth century? Shaw's veneration, like that of any saint, is basically dependent upon our assessment of his contributions to mankind; in Shaw's case it is a matter of his contributions through his playwriting. Ultimately, only time will determine Shaw's veneration, but in the meantime his popularity and the world's understanding and appreciation of his purpose and his literary contributions can be noted.

Many have spoken of Shaw as a saint. "Already, in a stained-glass window of the West London Ethical Church, he appears with Anatole France on the other side and St. Joan between them."² In fact, Shaw arranged—with tongue-in-cheek—for himself to be honored in the Fabian Window of

¹Josephine Daskam Bacon, "G.B.S., 1856-1950," Shaw Review, 1, No. 3 (May 1952), 16.

²Blanche Patch, Thirty Years With G.B.S. (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1951), p. 186.

the Beatrice Webb House in Surrey, where he appears along with Sidney Webb, Edward Pease and other Fabians.³ However, to speak of Shaw as a saint is primarily a way of emphasizing the religious bent of his drama and his purposeful outlook on life. Wilson says, "What made Shaw the greatest playwright of his time was the total commitment to a purpose; he felt himself to be an instrument of the evolutionary force as a saint feels himself the servant of God."⁴ Certainly, it is not to enroll him in any book of the martyrs of the Church that Shaw is viewed as a saint.

Whitman says:

What he probably wanted more than anything else was to be thought of as a heretic, a heretic saint, like Joan, who might someday be seen to have risen above mortal limitations of life and death, and through his heresy give man a religion, or at least a faith that would enrich the quality of his life and move him ever so slightly on his evolutionary way toward being a god.⁵

Shaw himself, only half seriously and somewhat paradoxically, referred to himself as a saint.

Granted that St. Bernard and St. Thomas were as resolute egoists as I, having equally disregarded the interests and wishes of our families in our determination to go our ways, and choosing always the course of life most congenial to us at all costs to ourselves and others, why did they go so far as to kill themselves at half my age by overwork and privation? It was not because they believed themselves to be the servants and instruments of God: for I believe myself to be the servant and instrument of creative

³J. B. Priestly, The Edwardians (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970), pp. 140-41.

⁴Colin Wilson, Bernard Shaw: A Reassessment (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 164.

⁵Robert F. Whitman, Shaw and the Play of Ideas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 288.

evolution, which comes to the same thing, and entitles me to rank equally with them as a religious person: that is to say, a person to whom eating, drinking, and reproduction are irksome necessities in comparison with the urge to wider and deeper knowledge, better understanding, and greater power over ourselves and our circumstances. So far, there is no reason why I, too, should not be canonized some day. Perhaps I shall.⁶

This was Shaw's way of emphasizing the importance of what he was attempting to do for mankind in his writings.

Shaw's acclaim as a saintly figure is in accord with recognitions and honors he received as a playwright who has made meaningful contributions to mankind. Though the honors were slow in coming, they did come, even in his lifetime. On the occasion of his seventieth birthday almost the only notice taken of him was a complimentary letter from Germany, but in 1925 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. He at first refused it, stating that he had no need of it, but when arrangements were made for the money to be placed in an Anglo-Swedish Literary Foundation for the publication and translation of Swedish literature into English, he accepted it. Several years later, in 1929, the Malvern Festival was established by Barry Jackson as an annual affair in honor of Shaw. It continued until 1939, at the beginning of the World War II, as a Shavian tribute. It was revived for one season in 1949. Most of Shaw's later plays, as well as earlier ones, were performed there. The plays he wrote specifically for Malvern were The Apple Cart, Too True To Be Good, The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, On the Rocks, The Millionairess,

⁶Stanley Weintraub, Shaw: An Autobiography, 1898-1950, the Playwright Years (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970), pp. 4-5.

Geneva, and In Good King Charles's Golden Days.⁷

Shaw was in Russia with his wife and the Astors on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, and a public reception was accorded him in Moscow where he felt that he was treated like Karl Marx. He met Stanislavsky and had a conference of over two hours with Joseph Stalin, though apparently not of much consequence. An honor was finally forthcoming from his own country in 1932, but it was too late. He refused the Order of Merit, saying that "he wanted nothing from politicians whose incapacity for government he was constantly attacking."⁸ The O.M. was offered to him on several occasions, but his response was

I need no publicity: I have already more than my fair share of it. I shall have my period of staleness and out-of-dateness for years after my death (it is beginning already) but an Order of Merit will not save me from this. If I am offered the O.M. my answer will be: Deeply grateful as I am for the award of the highest distinction within the gift of the Commonwealth, yet the nature of my calling is such that the O.M. in it cannot be determined within the span of a single human life. Either I shall be remembered as a playwright as long as Aristophanes and rank with Shakespeare and Moliere, or I shall be a forgotten clown before the end of the century. I dare not anticipate the verdict of history. I must remain simply (signed) Bernard Shaw.⁹

Shaw also won Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awards for two of his films, "Pygmalion" in 1939 and "Major Barbara" in 1940. The filming of Shaw's plays is a story in itself, told by Gabriel Pascal

⁷C. B. Purdom, A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1963), p. 55.

⁸Ibid., p. 58.

⁹Ibid., p. 59.

in The Disciple and His Devil.¹⁰ Shaw had little interest in putting his plays on the screen, feeling that filming only distorted the intent of the drama, and he was certainly adamant about not having his text changed. Nevertheless, Pascal was able to overcome Shaw's objections and assist in the widening of Shaw's fame and veneration through the cinema.

Shaw's ninetieth birthday was the occasion of extensive celebrations and honors: he was made honorary freeman of Dublin and St. Pancras Borough in London; a volume of tributes was edited by Stephen Winsten in G.B.S. 90;¹¹ numerous articles appeared in newspapers; and ten volumes with 100,000 copies of each volume of his works by Penguin Press were published and quickly sold. The comments in honor of Shaw were many. Typical was one from The Saturday Review of Literature for July 22, 1944:

Bernard Shaw possesses qualities that all thinking men must admire: unbreakable personal integrity, fearlessness and generosity of spirit. His fierce hatred of hypocrisy, of evasion and downright public lying have brought down upon him the wrath of his contemporaries. He has never yielded an inch. His principles have never been changed. He is the honest intellectual incarnate. I believe that we will look back upon him with reverence and awe.¹²

Despite the fact that his death came rather soon after the celebrations of his ninetieth birthday, there was an extraordinary demonstration on the day of his death. Ervine reports that "The Indian Cabinet adjourned;

¹⁰Valerie Pascal, The Disciple and His Devil (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970).

¹¹Stephen Winsten, ed., G.B.S. 90 (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1946).

¹²R. F. Rattray, Bernard Shaw: A Chronicle (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1974), p. 270.

the lights on Broadway were briefly extinguished; The Times gave him its first leader. The press everywhere was full of him. There was a singular sense of loss."¹³ Among the number of tributes to Shaw at his death are the comments by St. John Ervine who was asked to give a broadcast on the day Shaw died:

He was a great laugher and he laughed with his whole body. He threw his shoulders about while the laughter ran up his long legs and threatened to knock his head off. He was a kindly laugher. There was not a sneer in his whole composition.

He set you thinking even when he was wrong, as he frequently was; though he was always wrong in a great and magnificent manner. He was a good companion. . . . He was infinitely kind and generous It was his eagerness to promote the general welfare that made a socialist of him: no man known to me was more individualistic in his nature. He hated untidiness and he regarded ill-health and ignorance and poverty and unmerited suffering as part of a slovenly world he wished to abolish. He did not withhold his hand even from his bitterest enemies. . . .

He faced his end without fear. I said to him one day that Thomas Hardy told me that death meant no more to him than removal from one room to another. Shaw nodded: "That's how I think of it," he said.

He was a noble man, of unbounded charity, who won and kept the deep affection and love of many dissimilar men and women.¹⁴

Shaw distinguished himself both in his chosen profession and as a person. Shaw contended, "As long as I live I must write," (VII, 307) and his writings have still not been totally catalogued. Of course, the most appropriate measure for a saint, even of the literary variety, is the scope and nature of his service to humanity. Shaw, not generally remembered as a man of warmth, was known by his friends to be a man of great

¹³ St. John Ervine, Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1956), p. 594.

¹⁴ Rattray, p. 295.

consideration to others. There is no way to list all that Shaw did for others because this was not one of the things he advertised, but a look at the provisions of his will and a perusal of his correspondence and biographies provide extensive evidence of the "saintliness" of George Bernard Shaw. The forty-six sections of Shaw's thirteen-page will show that he gave his statuary and portraits to various institutions and friends and made provisions for his staff, and provided for widows of household helpers. Even his ambition to create a standardized worldwide phonetic alphabet, misguided and idiosyncratic as it seems, should be perceived as a sincere attempt to facilitate better understanding among the peoples of the world. Finally, he had trusts made to the British Museum, which obtained a large collection of his works, the National Gallery of Ireland, The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London, and the Actor's Orphanage, for which he had written his one-act play Passion and Putrification to provide funds.¹⁵

Shaw had been attacked for his thoughtlessness by those who failed to understand the financial conditions under which he lived with his mother, while he had a legacy from his father, and by those not understanding why a man, who was a wealthy avowed socialist could not oblige the needs of all who made requests. The truth of the matter is that he made many contributions to causes, not the least of which was in his almost unceasing campaigning for Fabian concerns and social improvements, without remuneration. The scope of Shaw's influence on England's economic and political programs through the Fabian Society is still being

¹⁵Weintraub, pp. 233.

assessed.¹⁶

Nevertheless, if Shaw is to be venerated, it must be as a devil's advocate, as incongruous and paradoxical as that may seem, but paradoxicalness is one of Shaw's most distinguishing characteristics. Shaw functioned as a devil's advocate in the characters he created as well as in the role he himself played through his dramatic achievements. He was a critic and reformer concerned with all aspects of society, and in this way he identified with his characters.

Shaw was not unaware of his identification with his characters. He mockingly has Vaughn, a critic in Fanny's First Play, say, "that proves it's not by Shaw, because all Shaw's characters are himself. . . ." (IV, 438). Fanny also identifies herself with Shaw when another of the critics notes that her play resembles Shaw's plays: "Oh, of course, it would be a little like Bernard Shaw, the Fabian touch, you know" (IV, 440). Louis Dubedat in The Doctor's Dilemma declares himself a disciple of Shaw. "I'm not a criminal. All your moralizings have no value for me. I don't believe in morality. I'm a disciple of Bernard Shaw" (III, 393). The most conspicuous and significant association of Shaw with his characters is in their critical tactics and advocacy of the Life Force. Joan is a prime example.

There is no doubt that Shaw saw more than a little of himself in his representation of Saint Joan. With tongue in cheek he referred to "Saint Bernard," and otherwise included his name in the rolls of the blessed. And he was only half-joking. He found in his own nature the same unlimited energy and will, the realistic vision,

¹⁶Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie; The Fabians (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1977).

the somewhat cocky independence, the creative imagination; and he too had a cause. He was dismissed as a heretic, a fraud, a bump-tious upstart, and idle paradoxer and jester; or worse, he was ignored. He saw the dominant values of his time antithetical to his own in every way. He saw himself, like Joan, locked in mortal combat with the vested interests and established institutions of his day, the State, the Church, and above all capitalist middle-class morality. In that struggle he could well be defeated--perhaps already had been; but his great source of hope was that out of the energy of the conflict a fire would be lit, a spirit would be moved, his will would live on--not as any individual victory, but as an advance for the Life Force.¹⁷

However, Shaw's veneration as a devil's advocate stems more from the significance of the role as Shaw played it than from his identification with his characters. Shaw in his long-run performance as G.B.S., as well as in his dramatic techniques, brought the role of the devil's advocate to prominence in life and on the stage. He focused on a role that has never really been accentuated in literature, and particularly in drama. His concern about the individual's rights and function as a critic of society is repeatedly manifested in his plays and writings.

In 1898 he wrote The Gadfly¹⁸ for a friend, Elinor Voynich. This play is little known because it was written so that Voynich could gain a copyright for her novel, and it has not otherwise been produced. The play is the story of a young man, renowned for his criticism of the Church and government, who becomes known as a gadfly because of the severity of his attacks on these institutions. However, he is caught and executed by the government because of his revolutionary activities when

¹⁷Whitman, p. 274.

¹⁸Bernard Shaw, Collected Plays with their Prefaces, ed. Dan H. Laurence (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1975), VII, 559-99.

the bishop, who turns out to be his father, betrays him to the authorities.

This simple plot again highlights Shaw's concern with the role of the critic of society and its institutions and those institutions' disregard for the concerns of the critic. Shaw continually emphasized that his didactic concern was really an attempt to retrieve the essential nature of drama as a guide for the people, but critics, like society, have too often either not heard him or preferred to ignore him.

Colin Wilson acknowledges the validity of Shaw's role as a devil's advocate, even though he does not use that metaphor, when he declares that reading, studying and listening to Shaw prodded him to look beyond nihilism and the pessimism and decadence of his age. He stresses the influence of Shaw in his own search for truth. He rightly sees in Shaw not a man who is proposing still another creed, but rather one who provokes the continuing search for truth--under the aegis of the Life Force. Wilson explains his own "conversion experience," which came as a result of listening to "Don Juan in Hell."

All this explains why that first evening of listening to Don Juan in Hell produced a sensation like a thunderbolt. It was the most total and shattering intellectual impression of my life to that date. So there was somebody else in the world who was aware of the question, and I was no longer a man with a unique disease. What was even more astonishing, Shaw was clearly optimistic. I found it hard to understand the grounds for this optimism. The notion that the purpose of life was to understand its own existence seemed to me to be based on a verbal misunderstanding. Supposing it understood its own existence?--that would still leave the problem of what to do. Still, there could be no doubt that Shaw had grasped the question. He expressed my basic fear in one sentence: "Shall man give up eating because he destroys his appetite in the act of gratifying it?" For my feeling that all values were negative--mere responses of the body--made it seem that eating was the most futile of human activities.

I can still remember my feeling when I woke up the next morning--that a revolution had taken place. The nihilism was also still there--it persisted for many years to come--but there was also a restoration of my faith in the value of thinking. Merely to listen to Shaw's performance was to want to join in, to produce books and plays of ideas.¹⁹

He further accentuates the significance of Shaw's role as a devil's advocate when he describes the positive effects on human awareness and productivity coming from the negative effects of crisis (or criticism, as in the work of a devil's advocate):

"There is an area of consciousness that is indifferent to pleasure, but that can be stimulated by pain or inconvenience"--that is "the St. Neot margin". . . . We possess a muscle in the brain, so to speak, whose purpose is to keep consciousness flooded with vitality. But man is, after all, 99 percent an animal, whose "living" is merely a series of responses to stimuli from the external world. The "muscle" responds automatically to crisis, but it is extremely difficult for us to move it by an ordinary process of intentionality.²⁰

The same human experience has been recounted endless times, and recently the Associated Press reported the story of Tatyana Khodorovich, who was expelled from Russia because of her resistance to the KGB. In explaining her departure, she not only said that she was tired of the struggle and lies, but she added most significantly: "It may be that our state is constructed in such a way that it strengthens some kind of spiritual forces in people through its attempts to suppress them."²¹

¹⁹Wilson, pp. 281ff.

²⁰Ibid., p. 295.

²¹Seth Mydans, "Woman 'Tired of Lie' Leaves Her Native Land," Winston-Salem Journal, 11 Dec. 1977, Sec. A, p. 16.

No doubt, the role and manner of the devil's advocate employed by Shaw has been utilized before. Plato's Socratic dialogues and many other great philosophic inquiries follow, like Shaw's plays, the pattern of confrontation exemplified in the role of the devil's advocate. Nevertheless, the importance of learning and discovering the truth--in whatever field--is emphasized in the metaphor of this religious office and claims attention because of what Shaw has achieved with it. Shaw further emphasized its importance when he declared, "That sound Catholic institution, the Devil's Advocate, must be privileged as possibly the Herald of the World to Come" (VI, 626).

Veneration must be accorded Shaw as a devil's advocate not only because of the prominence he has given to the role but also because he has suffered the indignities, as well as the honors, attached to serving as a social critic. Perhaps, criticism of Shaw did not come from his critics' awareness of his playing the role of devil's advocate, but consciously or not, it came because of Shaw's didactic drama and his unconventional and critical views of the culture of his time.

Criticism of Shaw came, first of all, because no one appreciated his "imprudent" new drama, daring to dramatize "blue books" in problem plays that repudiated society's failures. Then when he attempted to change his approach by casting drama in the stage forms of the times, he still was not appreciated because he belittled the romantic and melodramatic elements. Shaw's lack of critical acceptance in his lifetime has been amply documented, but it continues even until today in varying degrees. Wilson discusses this situation in the introduction to his "reassessment" of Shaw. Noting the possibilities of a revival of

interest in Shaw, he says it never really emerged.

The Shaw slump began about forty years before his death, at the beginning of the First World War, and although he still had great successes ahead of him, I think it would be true to say that his serious reputation went into steady decline. Usually, age helps to canonize a writer. Critics discover deeper meanings in his works, overall patterns, and no longer feel embarrassed at using the epithet "great." This never happened to Shaw. Even from a fairly early stage in his career there was a tendency to say: "Oh, Shaw," with a dismissive wave of the hand. And what this meant, translated into more specific terms, was that Shaw was a lightweight, a man of superficial brilliance, but without depth.²²

He goes on to explain Shaw's lack of widespread acceptance as due in part to attacks from other influential writers who discussed Shaw:

Pound wrote about Joyce: "He has presented Ireland under British domination, a picture so veridic that a ninth rate coward like Shaw dare not even look it in the face." Elsewhere Pound refers to Shaw as "an intellectual cheesmite." In Eliot the tone is--as one would expect--less scurrilous but more deadly. Shaw is "dramatically precocious and poetically less than immature" and his "life force" is merely a "powerful juju." D. H. Lawrence classified Shaw with Galsworthy and Granville Barker as one of the "rule-and-Measure mathematical Folk," and when he writes to Koteliansky about an article on Shaw for a book called Scrutinies he suggests that it should be done by someone else, as "slaying my elders only interests me in spasms." It is taken for granted that, whoever does it, it will be a razor job. Aldington echoes Lawrence when he calls Shaw "a fanatic of the intellect" in his introduction to Lawrence's Apocalypse. Since Shaw's death, criticism has become, if anything, more dismissive. Raymond Williams, in a book on Drama from Ibsen to Eliot, calls Back to Methuselah "an adolescent fantasy," and remarks: "Shaw's dynamic as a dramatist is surely weakening, and it seems impossible that it can, as a major force, survive the period of which he was a victim." This is a kind of rock-bottom of dismissal; Shaw is no longer even to be attacked; only pitied.²³

²²Wilson, p. ix.

²³Ibid., pp. ix-x.

This lack of critical acceptance of Shaw was reiterated in the special session devoted to Shaw at the 1975 MLA Conference. Commenting on the number of critical essays on Shaw's plays, Charles A. Carpenter said at this conference that well over half of the essays on Shaw's individual plays have been published since mid-1969 and most of these were in seven books. He also noted that when comparing the increase of critical writings on Shaw to critical writings on Yeats or Joyce,

no less than 26 substantial essays exist on the only play that James Joyce wrote, Exiles. More pages of critical analysis deal with Exiles--350--than with Saint Joan and all but three other Shaw plays. But at least Exiles is full-length. When we turn to Yeats' plays, most of them shorter than The Music Cure or Passion, Poison, and Petrification, we get an even clearer hint of the actual evolutionary state of Shaw studies. Yeats' Cuchulain cycle consists of five plays that roughly equal Shaw's Man of Destiny in total bulk. Almost 950 pages of critical analysis have been devoted to the cycle. The most microscopic part of it, At the Hawk's Well has prompted more pages of analysis than Shaw's Candida or Back to Methuselah. A parallel example: Yeats' tiny dramatic poem Purgatory barely trails Candida, and leads Back to Methuselah, in this numbers game. Twelve of Shaw's fat, major plays have evoked 100 pages of criticism or more; but ten of Yeats' skinny, minor plays have done the same.²⁴

Beyond the difference in quantity of criticism can be found a difference in quality. Carpenter cited a long list of the names of leading literary critics who have written on Eliot and Yeats, but have produced little or nothing on Shaw and his works and concluded:

It must be acknowledged that modern literary giants, so long as they are not primarily dramatists, are highly susceptible to analytical

²⁴ Charles A. Carpenter at the 1975 MLA Conference, cited in Charles A. Berst, ed., "Bernard Shaw--Scholarship of the Past 25 Years, and Future Priorities," Shaw Review, 21, No. 2 (1976), 61.

overkill. This is true of Joyce, Yeats, Eliot, and of course Samuel Beckett. Nevertheless, from the comparative perspective I have given, it is very hard to feel ecstatic about the recent gains in the depth and sophistication of Shavian critical analysis, not to mention its mere quantity.²⁵

The repudiation of Shaw was even more personal and vindictive during World War I, not simply because of his plays, but because of his views on the war. Shaw, never reluctant to attack his own government, saw no reason to refrain from doing so before and during the First World War. He foresaw the European plunge into the political-economic catastrophe and challenged the governments to seek to prevent it through mutual collaboration. When they would not, Shaw reprimanded his government's self-interest as much as or more than he did that of the Kaiser and Germany. Shaw was threatened as a traitor and repudiated by many of his fellows. In fact, Henry Arthur Jones proposed his expulsion from the Society of Dramatic Arts and reportedly never spoke to Shaw again. Shaw's views on Britain's responsibility for the war seemed to mellow as the war progressed, though it was mainly a matter of affirming his political allegiance as a Britain; he never renounced his criticism of the government's failures.

Taylor Caldwell's book, The Devil's Advocate, emphasizes the re-creations awaiting those who play the role of a devil's advocate. In the introduction to her book she tells a legendary Scottish story about a devil's advocate who was hanged. "The entire hamlet was determined that the Devil be condemned, including the advocate who was a very

²⁵Ibid.

religious man of great probity." The advocate of the devil was concerned about how he could, "while maintaining his integrity as the appointed defender of the Devil, so present the case to the jury that the Devil would be condemned." The devil's advocate decided that "while defending the Devil he must also awaken the people to the presence of evil, and its horrors, which the devil represented. . . ." He undertook to "reveal the Devil in all his power and his terribleness and his infamy while ostensibly defending him!" He hoped to "gain the admiration of his just neighbors by an open defense, and their respect when he lost the case. Moreover, they would learn to recognize evil forevermore when it was exposed before all eyes."²⁶ He succeeded brilliantly.

The people listened with dread and guilt and fear. They remembered their sufferings under the influence of evil, how they had contributed to the power of that evil, by way of their stupidity and their jealousy of their neighbors, and their avarice and lack of compassion. . . . The Devil was condemned to eternal banishment from the hamlet.²⁷

However, the advocate failed to reckon "with the obtuseness and stupidity of his fellow citizens. They had not understood his plan at all. On the day the devil was banished the 'advocate' was hanged."²⁸

The role of a devil's advocate involves indignity and suffering, but there is more. A third reason for veneration of Shaw as a devil's advocate is that though many have resented Shaw's critical, unconventional

²⁶Taylor Caldwell, The Devil's Advocate (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1952), p. iii.

²⁷Ibid., p. iv.

²⁸Ibid.

diabolical manner, others have come to accept and approve his great contributions to the theatre. Despite the lack of wide acclaim, he has attracted strong appreciation from some admirers for several reasons: the relevance of his thought, the artistry of his drama, and the realism of his purpose.

Many critics have noted the relevance of Shaw's thought. This is not to say Shaw was a great or systematic thinker, but an impressive thinker he was. Though he concentrated on problems of social concern, he did not confine himself to these problems. Joad gives a general estimate of Shaw's thought when he says:

. . . there is the sense in which a man may be the dispenser of wisdom in memorable thoughts and sayings on a vast number of topics of secular importance--on money, God, love, marriage, desire, death, ambition--wisdom which may, as in Shaw's case, spring from and be informed by the coherent and comprehensive view. . . .²⁹

Colin Wilson, though disturbed by Shaw's failure to continue to develop his views, is nonetheless impressed by the originality of Shaw's thought.³⁰ Morgan speaks of Shaw as a philosopher of both the rational and the irrational.³¹

Wilson is unusual in praising Shaw's thought even above his dramatic expertise. Wilson points out that Shaw's ideas provided him with insights into mankind's age-long struggles for purpose. He wrote his

²⁹C. E. M. Joad, Shaw (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1949), p. 172.

³⁰Wilson, pp. 124, 230.

³¹Margery Morgan, The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw (London: Methuen and Co., 1972), p. 107.

first book, The Outsider, under Shaw's influence:

In the Christmas of 1954, when I was twenty-three, I sketched out The Outsider in a room in New Cross, and wrote it at intervals during the next eight months or so. It was a statement of this problem of religious man in a secular age. Surprisingly enough, although most of the writers I discussed were pessimistic in tone--Sartre, Kafka, Eliot, Dostoevsky--I discovered that Shaw and his own formulations of the problem remained relevant throughout. This was one thing of which I was quite certain: that the tendency to dismiss Shaw as someone who was too Victorian to understand the depth of the problems expressed by Eliot and Kafka, and too stupid to grasp the complexity of those analysed by Sartre and Heidegger, was simply a misapprehension by people who were too lazy or prejudiced to actually read Shaw.³²

What Wilson really likes is the modernity of Shaw's thought:

But what I am here pointing out is that Shaw grasped the objective of the revolution fifty years before it began to emerge into more general consciousness; and when the revolution is completed, I believe that Shaw will be seen as its original prophet as Marx was the prophet of the Russian revolution. . . . I believe that Shaw was right when he said that human beings are on the point of outgrowing "tragedy," and that a certain optimism and sense of intellectual purpose can prolong human life far beyond its present limit. "Wellsian man," the intellectually creative portion of the "5%," will then have to recognise that the way forward lies through world government, through some degree of genetic control, and through a careful attempt to devise means of creative self-expression for every one of the rest of the "5%." But, far more important, a new psychology that recognises the importance of human will and optimism will devise means of investigating and exploring the capacities of that will.³³

Shaw was a thinker who evolved a faith that touches all facets of life--personal, psychological, religious, scientific, artistic, social, economic, political, marital, literary, and educational. Frederick P. W.

³²Wilson, pp. 283-84.

³³Ibid., p. 297.

McDowell emphasizes this:

Not to mention some of his more idiosyncratic fixations on diet, dress, and alphabet reform, we can see Shaw as a pioneer, or an original or at least a challenging thinker in manifold fields. He was a great music scholar and critic, a competent critic of painting, a foremost critic of drama, a great playwright and innovator in the theatre, an original moralist, a penetrating thinker on social, economic and political questions, a biologist of some acumen, and a religious philosopher of some range and depth. The breadth of his interests meant, of course, that Shaw was nothing if not an eclectic.³⁴

While some have admired Shaw for the range and relevance of his thought, others have come to appreciate the artistry of his drama.

Edmund Wilson stresses this:

Bernard Shaw has been underrated as an artist. Whether people admire or dislike him, whether they find his plays didactically boring or morally stimulating, they fail to take account of the fact that it is the enchantment of a highly accomplished art which has brought them to and kept them in the playhouse.³⁵

More and more studies focus on the artistry of Shaw's drama. As Frederick McDowell notes, "after Charles Berst's book, or . . . Valency's book, we are now aware that Shaw was a creative artist and not just simply a polemicist in the form of drama."³⁶ Woodbridge, of course, entitled his study of Shaw's plays G. B. Shaw, Creative Artist.³⁷

³⁴Frederick P. W. McDowell at the 1975 MLA Conference, cited in Berst, p. 62.

³⁵Edmund Wilson, "Bernard Shaw at Eighty," George Bernard Shaw: A Critical Survey, ed. Louis Kronenberger (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1953), p. 141.

³⁶McDowell cited in Berst, p. 69.

³⁷Homer E. Woodbridge, George Bernard Shaw: Creative Artist (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1963).

Significantly, some critics, such as Bentley, who previously failed to appreciate Shaw, have come forward in admiration of his drama.

I had written two books in which Shaw came to occupy a central and yet--to me at least--problematic position. I say "came to" because in the earlier drafts of my first book Shaw's place was both inconspicuous and, so to say, disgraceful. He was a villain in a gallery of villains. When the manuscript was revised for the press, however, he looked like the solitary hero of the collection. In the second book my interest was in the theatre, especially in the so-called drama of ideas. In this realm too Shaw rose in my estimation from being one of a crowd to being the chief one in the crowd. I went on reading him, and seeing him in the theatre, after finishing both books. Although with the passage of time I was less and less able to understand him, in the sense of being able to explain him with a formula, I became more and more aware of the inadequacy of the formulae which I and others had up to now made shift with.³⁸

Bentley explains in the "Foreword" of his third, definitive book on Shaw how he went on studying Shaw while finding few critics who really understood him. He observes that in every aspect of Shaw's politics, religion and drama one can find contradictory points of view, which are not surprising for a paradoxist. However, Bentley attempts to demonstrate how Shaw balances the variety of his interests and ideas by "thinking as an artist":

Shaw is primarily an artist. His plays are worth analysis both for what is original in them and for what is in the tradition of high comedy. They cannot be divorced from Shaw's thinking, because Shaw like every literary artist, is what Flaubert called a "triple thinker," one who thinks with his imagination and on several planes at once.³⁹

³⁸Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw: 1856-1950 (New York: New Directions Books, 1957), pp. xi-xii.

³⁹Ibid., p. 16.

Further vindication of Shaw has come in the continuous performances of his plays. Shaw's plays have continued to be played--around the world. Henderson provided an extensive study in the appendix of his last book on Shaw indicating that contemporary performances of Shaw's plays take place all over the world.⁴⁰ The Shaw Review carries a regular column on current productions.

One of the most popular series of Shavian productions is that which occurs annually at Niagara, and recently Saint Joan was praised in its return to Broadway.⁴¹ Louis Stagg of Memphis State University reports that a drama company at Memphis State had studied Shaw's plays from two viewpoints and found them quite playable as literature and drama. He noted the production of two of Shaw's one-act plays, Passion, Poison and Petrification and The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet, and said, "I can testify from experience that this is one very real way of getting at Shaw, and he still plays quite well, even his lesser known plays."⁴² Langner, one of Shaw's American producers, says, "when in doubt, play Shaw."⁴³

The final tribute to Shaw's dramatic skill is not simply in his thought, nor only with the popularity of his plays, but in the social concerns that he conveyed through his dramatic forms. One of the

⁴⁰Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: The Man of the Century (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), pp. 903-04.

⁴¹Martin Gottfried, "The Life and Times of Shaw's 'St. Joan,'" New York Times, 11 December 1977, Sec. D, pp. 1, 4.

⁴²Berst, p. 71.

⁴³Lawrence Langner, G.B.S. and the Lunatic (London: Hutchinson, 1963), p. 101.

distinctive features of Shaw's drama, as noted in Chapter Three, was to dispense with any pretense of realism and recognize the true nature of the theatre and reality. In answering the question "Are you an advocate of stage realism?", Shaw replied: "I am an advocate for stage illusion; stage realism is a contradiction in terms. I am only a realist in a Platonic sense" (I, 483). In other words, Shaw recognized the stage as an instrument for leading persons to discover truth in themselves, and not as the "imitation" of life. Consequently, he could resort to fantasies or history or discussion plays in his dramatization of the search for truth. It is this sense of reality in his theatre that claimed the admiration of Brecht and Pirandello and had an impact on playwrights in the modern theatre. Christopher Fry says:

I am glad that you have asked me for an impression of Bernard Shaw. There is not one of us in Church or State who does not owe him a greater debt than we have it in our natures even to acknowledge. He knew that clear thought, compassionate judgment and wise laughter are cardinal virtues: that good must be sought out and acclaimed, and evil sought out and vilified, wherever they may be. He knew that there is a cold war, not between nations but within nations, not even between individual men but within the individual man.⁴⁴ This is nearer than most of us come to a spiritual positive.

It is also true that few have attempted to imitate his unusual blend of theatre of ideas and comedy of manners. The degree of Shaw's influence in the theatre remains an area that requires examination.

Shaw's concern for didacticism in the theatre is well known. Wilson, in commenting on Shaw's anti-romanticism, points out how Shaw impressed such an important figure as Bertolt Brecht.

⁴⁴Christopher Fry, "Nearer to a Spiritual Positive," Shaw Bulletin, 1, No. 7 (Jan. 1955), 24.

The audience can revel in the romantic situations while convincing themselves that the pleasure is intellectual: they are involved while apparently uninvolved. It has never been done before. Earlier dramatists tried to involve the audience in the play as if it were reality; but Shaw--as Brecht recognised--knew that "the mere reproduction of reality does not give the impression of truth." It was also Brecht who observed: "Probably every single feature of all Shaw's characters can be attributed to his delight in dislocating our stock associations." That is to say, Shaw invented the "alienation effect" which became the centre of the Brechtian drama.⁴⁵

Shaw's didacticism has led many to repudiate his drama, but it has also become the occasion for many to admire him. Even Albert Einstein praised the pertinence of Shaw's realistic drama.

You, Mr. Shaw, have succeeded in gaining the love and the joyful admiration of mankind by a path which for others has led to martyrdom. You have not only preached to mankind morality but even dared to mock at what to others seemed unapproachable. What you have done can be done only by the born artist. . . .

Whoever has glanced into this little world sees the world of our reality in a new light. He sees your puppets blending into real people so that the latter suddenly look quite different from before. By thus holding the mirror before us, you have been able as no other contemporary to effect in us a liberation and to take from us something of the heaviness of life. For this we are all grateful to you and also to fate--that with all our earthly ailments has also been granted to us a physician and liberator of the soul.⁴⁶

The most recent recognition of Shaw's "impish, irate, iconoclastic" manner has been in My Astonishing Self, a one-man play running off-Broadway as I write this. The play is a collection of Shaviana showing Shaw's "trick of mind, his infernal habit of seeing the other side--the

⁴⁵C. Wilson, p. 146.

⁴⁶Albert Einstein in "They Say," New York Times, 2 November 1930, as cited by Henderson, p. 766.

seven other sides--of the argument" and his "preposterous inversions of traditional notions."⁴⁷ Shaw still plays; Shaw still lives.

Morris West in another novel called The Devil's Advocate represents the devil's advocate as a churchman who has been removed from the realities of life until he begins to investigate the credentials of a candidate for sainthood. In the process of the investigation the devil's advocate himself touches the lives of others: "An erring priest has returned to God, a child has been kept from great moral harm and a lost and unhappy woman has been given light enough to seek remedies for her condition."⁴⁸ Shaw as a devil's advocate has and continues to touch the lives of others for good, for truth and for the Life Force. The words of John Bunyan's Mr. Valiant for Truth, cited at Shaw's funeral by Sir Sydney Cockerell, indicate the nature of Shaw's concerns and their continuing relevance:

My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage,
and my Courage and Skill to him that can get it. My Marks and
Scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me that I have fought
his battle, who will now be my rewarder.⁴⁹

The debate over the veneration of Shaw and his role in twentieth century drama no doubt will continue, but it continues with growing attention. Paradoxically, however, though Shaw wanted attention, he

⁴⁷T. E. Kalem, "G.B.S. Lives," Time, 111, No. 5 (Jan. 30, 1978), 68.

⁴⁸Morris West, The Devil's Advocate (New York: Morrow, 1959), p. 317.

⁴⁹Henderson, p. 877.

also did not want it. He only cared about public recognition as it served his purposes, not himself. When clubs were organized in his honor, he reacted against the cult of Shavianism as he had reacted to all cults, including bardolatry. In his last year he wrote a letter to one Shaw Society expressing this concern:

The list of illustrious names on the foundation committee of the American Shaw Society is so staggering that I am at a loss how to comment on it or exult in it without a gross self-complacency foreign to my very diffident nature. . . .

Then what can I say to the attachment of my name to associations of great artists and thinkers among whom I can claim no pre-eminence? I can only hope that in other hands Shavianism will be carried so far that future generations will say "We agree with your doctrine; but who the devil was Bernard Shaw?"⁵⁰

Shaw considered himself only an instrument to be used, a guide in the service of the Life Force. Shaw's sense of service permeates all that he did and this most fully comprises his role as a devil's advocate to the world.

An incident near the close of his life aptly illustrates Shaw's desire to serve mankind and guide others through his drama. Blanche Patch, Shaw's secretary for thirty years, describes one of the few occasions that brought Shaw out to the little church at Ayot St. Lawrence. It was for the dedication of a new wrought iron gate at the old Abbey, demolished during the war. Shaw shared in the service and spoke about the history of the Abbey and the significance of the gate.

"There are no stained-glass windows," he said, "in fact there are no windows at all; there is no room. It is exposed to

⁵⁰W. D. Chase, "Bernard Shaw's Message," Shaw Review, I, No. 1 (Feb. 1951), 1.

wind and rain, but it is still the House of God. It is most fitting therefore that on this day, we, the inhabitants of this old village, should be gathered here on the Green to accept the gate which will open to the Abbey. . . . It is most fitting that this beautiful gate should be added, not as a barrier, but as an invitation. It is in keeping with the spirit of the Abbey."⁵¹

Shaw "then pronounced a kind of benediction, 'This is His way, and this is His Gate,' and, pointing to it, passed through, followed by the Rector."⁵²

⁵¹ Patch, p. 186.

⁵² Ibid.

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