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## Shaw and the French: Irreconcilable Differences, Lasting Impact

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life. He engaged his patients in telepathic experiments and mutual mind reading, and gave them the affection they sought.

This book will interest specialists in English literature, comparative literature, and cultural history. Theoretically-minded literary scholars will appreciate the author's extensive use of Lacan, Foucault, and queer theory. Cultural historians might find her focus on gender and sexuality too narrow and insufficiently contextualized. There were other sources of anxiety too. Bellicose rhetoric accompanied Germany's challenge to British naval and imperial supremacy and the Irish struggle for home rule was becoming ever more violent. These conflicts cannot be reduced to gender anxiety, even if it was a factor. As a Jew, Freud had good reasons to fear occultism; antisemitism was embedded in "aryan theosophy" and in Reichenbach's theory of an "odic force," doctrines popular in Austria and Germany. Freud's warning against mystical faith in a healer/analyst was, at least in part, a response to new political parties, headed by mud-slinging anti-semites, that were gaining a mass following. Finally, the occult beliefs that Thurschwell describes were part of a Europe-wide rejection of rationalism and positivism that was intensified by Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche. All of them associated music with the non-rational aspects of the human psyche. Surely it is significant that Svengali was a musician and Teleny, a pianist.

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*Bernard Shaw and the French.* By Michel W. Pharand. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000. xviii + 412 pp. \$55.

Considering that basic principle of alliances—"The enemy of my enemy is my friend"—one would expect France to embrace Bernard Shaw for his life-long service as England's gadfly, particularly after he wrote a Nobel prize-winning play lionizing France's patron saint and another featuring its greatest general, "the man of destiny," Napoleon Bonaparte. Shaw also deserved Gallic gratitude for championing French artists, writers, and phi-

losophers, including Auguste Rodin, Emile Zola, Eugene Brieux, and Henri Bergson. However, as Michel W. Pharand demonstrates in his excellent study of Shaw's relationship with the French, that relationship was troubled by misunderstandings and doomed by irreconcilable differences.

In the wide range of literature Pharand examines, there is no mistaking the deep current of mutual distrust, irritation, and even hostility that prevented Shaw's genius from being fully appreciated in France, and Pharand analyzes the reasons for that Gallic resistance, even as he also demonstrates how deeply Shaw was influenced by French culture and how Shaw, in turn, influenced some important French writers who came after him, including Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jean Giraudoux, Jean Anouilh, and Jean-Paul Sartre. In this book, Pharand significantly expands the inquiry begun by Mina Moore's *Bernard Shaw et la France* (1933), the only other extended study of Shaw's connections to France, which remains untranslated.

Pharand covers a wide range of topics, which attests to his impressive versatility as a scholar. Furthermore, as a bilingual French-Canadian, Pharand is able to offer an in-depth analysis of one subject that would be of particular interest to comparative literature scholars: Shaw's trouble with his French (mis)translators, Augustin and Henriette Hamon, whom Shaw chose more for their political ideas than for their expertise in translation or their understanding of theater. It was a disastrous choice which seriously impeded French acceptance of Shaw's plays. Pharand explains the difficulty with a precision that is one of the book's strengths:

Hamon was bound to fail, considering the obstacles posed by Shaw's mastery of English. He used slang, aphorisms, idioms, allusions; his characters spoke satirically or ironically, using words with multiple meanings; key words and phrases were repeated in different places verbatim or with a significant variation. After a career as a critic of art, music, and drama, Shaw's style was supple, voluble, lucid—and his vocabulary was enormous. It was easy for the Hamons to misunderstand and misrepresent his ideas and intentions: 'stone dead' became 'morte comme une pierre'; 'pulled the house about our ears' became 'tiré les oreilles à toute la maison' instead of "nous a entraîné dans la ruine" [dragged us into ruin]. (108)

Pharand also shows how Shaw himself, in translating works by the French pacifist Romain Rolland, made some errors significant enough to change the meaning of the work.

Other subjects covered include Shaw's early reviews of French paintings and the influence of French art on Shaw's plays, and Shaw's criticism of music by major French figures, such as Georges Bizet and Hector Berlioz, as well as lesser artists such as Charles Gounod and Jacques Offenbach. There is also an interesting survey of Shaw's criticism of French theater, which consisted of repeated attacks on the ideal of the "well-made play" advocated by Eugène Scribe and the overly histrionic acting of the wildly popular Sarah Bernhardt, as well as support for the more philosophical, didactic plays of Alexandre Dumas, *films*, and Eugène Brieux.

Other sections are devoted to discussion of the writing, staging, and reception of Shaw's *St. Joan*; Shaw's treatment of Napoleon; Shaw's relationship with French pacifist Romain Rolland and the sculptor Rodin; the French roots of Shaw's idea of the Life Force in the works of Henri Bergson and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck; the influence of Voltaire on Shaw's theology, and Shaw's relationship with French existentialist writers, especially Sartre.

Pharand's lucid writing is particularly valuable in the last section where he analyzes the French influence on Shaw's philosophical and religious ideas. The world has had nearly a century to digest *Man and Superman*, *Back to Methuselah*, and the many other expressions of Shaw's idiosyncratic "metabiologic" religion of Creative Evolution, yet critics and supporters alike continue to struggle with Shaw's ideas. Having carefully studied both Shaw and the original French thinkers who influenced him—primarily Lamarck and Bergson—Pharand shows that Shaw's idea of the Life Force "is more than a synthesis of famous principles." He shows in detail how Shaw borrows some ideas but modifies them to fit his own world view (240). Pharand provides a thorough analysis of the original ideas (Lamarck's, Shaw's, and Bergson's,) and the ruminations of modern critics who have tried to interpret them, and then he adds his own original interpretation. In most respects this ambitious section (chapters 14, "Creative Evolution" and 15, "Optimistic Vitalism") is clear, lucid, and impressive in its attention to detail and sensitivity to ambiguity.

I have only a few small caveats in recommending this section to scholars. First, in the attempt to provide a useful nutshell summary of Shaw's idea of the Life Force at the beginning of Chapter 14, Pharand seems to oversimplify Shaw's ideas when he states that "the Life Force (individual will) works through creative evolution (eugenic procreation) to produce the Superman (pure intellect) who strives toward God (divine perfection). The Life Force is an impersonal, amoral power [. . .]"(239). Certainly Shaw's writing contains many apparent paradoxes, but he didn't ask us to believe that the Life force was both "individual will" and "an impersonal, amoral

power.” I would argue that Shaw conceived the Life Force as being larger than any “individual will”; it is a universal force that operates through individuals, if they will consent to it and enlist their powers to serve its larger purpose. As Shaw explains in the postscript to *Back to Methuselah*, that larger purpose is “the goal of godhead,” which it works toward by “incarnating itself in creatures with knowledge and power enough to control nature and circumstances” (xcvii). Later in the chapter Pharand does refer to the Life Force as “an inner force moving toward perfection,” which is much more Shavian, but his earlier summation is so convenient, I fear it will be more often quoted, leading to further confusion on this difficult point.

Similarly, I would also argue that in citing only “eugenic procreation” as the method by which the Life Force operates, the summary on page 239 oversimplifies Shaw’s ideas. Eugenic procreation is only one method; willed transformation of the individual, coupled with inheritance of acquired characteristics is another method of the Life Force that Shaw believed in strongly (to the lasting embarrassment of Shaw supporters). Pharand goes on to discuss in great detail this and other methods by which the Life Force works toward godhead, but, again, the reader might initially be misled by the oversimplification of the summary.

Finally, I believe Pharand might mislead readers when he asserts that, like Bergson, Shaw believed in “the continuity of pure memory beyond bodily decomposition—as in *Back to Methuselah*” (247). Admittedly, at the end of that “Pentateuch,” Shaw offers a sort of coda to provide closure and bring the story full circle, and in this scene we hear the voices of long-dead beings: Lilith, Adam, Eve, Cain, and the Serpent. However, this dramatic device should not be interpreted as proof of Shaw’s belief in personal immortality, a doctrine that Shaw vehemently repudiates throughout his canon. Shaw did imagine an evolutionary offshoot of humanity, the “Disembodied Races,” which might exist as pure thought—independent and self-conscious beings who can embody themselves if they wish (as one does in *Farfetched Fables*), but that is not the same as an immortal disembodied “memory” outlasting its body’s death.

Beyond these small caveats, though, I strongly recommend Pharand’s book as a valuable contribution to Shaw studies and as an invaluable reference work for scholars interested in any of its many subtopics: the history of art, music, and theater, and the history of several important modern ideas, including pacifism, socialism, and existentialism. The book’s value as a reference is strongly enhanced by its appendices, which include a performance history of Shaw’s plays in France, a record of his French travels, an extensive (34-page) chronological bibliography of works by and about Shaw in

French, and works about Shaw and French culture and literature. This book belongs in any library used by scholars investigating either Shaw or French culture.

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*The Delirium of Praise: Bataille, Blanchot, Deleuze, Foucault, Klossowski.* By Eleanor Kaufman. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001. xii + 224 pp. \$42.50

It's not the easiest job reviewing Eleanor Kaufman's book on this gaggle of major French "theorists": her work is, after all, essentially about reviewing, or reviewers reviewing each other. Any reviewer, then, inevitably is encompassed (and embarrassed) by Kaufman's argument—to praise her book is to enter into the affective and intellectual economy that she has already analyzed. I'll try to refrain from "deliriously" praising the book, however, thereby remaining tenuously outside the network of "major" thinkers that is her subject.

As with the surrealists, and the beats, the group of thinkers analyzed in Kaufman's book all knew each other (although I don't think Deleuze or Foucault ever met Bataille, and it's unclear who Blanchot, in his reclusiveness, ever met, if anyone at all), often hung out with each other, mentioned each other, and mentioned hanging out with each other. They refer often to each other's work, and if one has spent much time reading this bunch one has developed the habit of bracketing their remarks as inconsequential—of value mainly in indicating other authors of interest, those who play a role in a certain intellectual genealogy. (Bataille and Klossowski first came to the attention of many American readers, for example, through references in Derrida, Deleuze, and Foucault; for that reason translations of their works actually lagged behind that of their younger contemporaries. Bataille in fact died six years before May 68.) Kaufman has the audacity to turn to these seemingly minor, sometimes almost embarrassing bits of praise (Foucault on Deleuze, for example), and study them in their own right. In this