



TWENTIETH CENTURY DRAMA:

England, Ireland, the United States

RUBY COHN AND BERNARD DUKORE



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EDITED BY
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AND

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D R A M A

C O N S U L T I N G E D I T O R :

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FOREWORD

THIS ANTHOLOGY AROSE from the teaching needs of its editors, who wished to deal with a significant range of twentieth-century drama written in English. The criteria for selection were: (1) the author had to be an important playwright who has produced a corpus of work, (2) the play itself had to be a good play, and (3) the reprinting rights had to be available.

In several cases—Shaw's *Major Barbara* and Synge's *Playboy of the Western World*, for example—there is widespread agreement that the play is a twentieth-century classic. Where this is not the case, selection was dictated by copyright restrictions, editorial compromise, and/or the perhaps astigmatic viewpoint of 1965.

We envisage this anthology primarily as a textbook of contemporary dramatic literature and have therefore supplied brief introductions dealing with the author, the work, and the specific play. In the Selective Bibliographies that follow these introductions, we have confined ourselves to those works that elucidate the plays in this anthology. There are, we believe, two significant omissions, Sean O'Casey and Arthur Miller, whose plays were unavailable to us. Since we feel students should nevertheless be introduced to these playwrights, we have provided editorial material for the plays we would have selected.

We are enthusiastic about these plays, and we hope that others will share that enthusiasm.

Ruby Cohn
Bernard F. Dukore

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* Dates throughout refer to first performance or first publication, whichever is earlier, with the exception of plays by Shaw and Albee, where the dates refer to the year of completion.

† Play not included in anthology. Prefaces to O'Casey and Miller to be used with separate versions of these particular plays.

Twentieth Century

D R A M A

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

[1856 - 1950]

✻ *The Man*

BERNARD SHAW was born before the encounter of the Monitor and the Merrimac, and died after the atomic destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He was concerned with nearly all of the major social and artistic currents of the century, from Darwinism to Fascism, from Ibsenism to Motion Pictures. His writings include political commentaries, economic treatises, religious essays, plays, novels, theater criticism, music criticism, and art criticism.

George Bernard Shaw, known also as G.B.S., later dropped his first name. His parents were Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly and George Carr Shaw, Protestants in a predominantly Catholic city. As a boy in Dublin, he hated school; as a man, he made the famous statement "He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches." Nevertheless, young Shaw liked to read; among his favorites were Shakespeare, Dickens, Bunyan, and The Bible. At the Dublin theater he saw melodramas, Shakespearean productions, and operas. Music played an important role in his development. His mother assisted George John Vandeleur Lee, a voice teacher and conductor, in his musical undertakings. In 1873 she followed Lee to London, and three years later young Shaw joined her.

He first sought literary success in fiction, and from 1879 produced a novel a year for five years. As he was later to do in the drama, he utilized conventions of the nineteenth-century novel, injecting such Shavian elements as wit, an untraditional point of view, and articulate characters aware of their intellectual and social commitments.

Before he wrote his last novel, he was converted to socialism. In 1884

he joined the newly formed Fabian Society and soon became one of its leading figures.

Shaw's playwriting career began shortly after the formation of J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre in 1891. Shaw responded to Grein's call for native playwrights by completing *Widowers' Houses* (begun in 1885 in collaboration with William Archer but soon dropped). Dealing with the problem of slum landlordism, *Widowers' Houses*, produced in 1892, was England's first modern drama. From 1904 to 1907 Harley Granville-Barker, in partnership with J. E. Vedrenne as business manager, leased the Royal Court Theatre. With Barker acting in his plays and Barker and Shaw directing them, there was a triumphant meeting of actor and playwright, which created some of Shaw's greatest successes.

✿ *The Work*

SHAW'S PLAYS are intended, through laughter, to cure abscesses in the social body. However, though he writes political and economic essays advocating socialism as the cure for England's ills, his plays generally treat the subject indirectly; in *Heartbreak House*, for example, he describes the collapse of capitalist England and allows the audience to infer the remedy.

Shaw was himself a lover of paradox, and several of the characteristics of his plays may be stated in the form of paradox. He writes of passionate people who do not have what is commonly thought of as passion; although sexual passion plays a negligible role in Shaw's comedies, his characters are obsessed by intellectual and moral passions. His plays deal with ideas but are peopled by emotional characters; he presents his ideas dramatically by drawing people whose intellectual and moral positions govern their lives, create their conflicts, and cause their deaths. Another Shavian paradox is that these apparently "talky" plays contain much action and many highly theatrical ingredients: a fugitive in a lady's bedroom, a costume party, a waltz with a lion, bombs falling, beauties in bathing suits. Shaw's "intellectual" theater is set in a framework of hi-jinks and hokum, characteristic of "unintellectual" theater.

Shavian dialogue is rhetorical, and at times operatic. One of its most distinctive features is its humor: the impudent placing of familiar phrases in unfamiliar contexts, paradox, comic irony, inversion, as well as low-comedy devices. Shaw's plays abound in pratfalls as well as wit.

The Play

IN CONTRAST to today's significant plays, such as those of Beckett and Pinter, which generally present a "face" of obscurity and ambiguity, Shaw's plays present a "face" of the utmost clarity. Nevertheless, they have layers of meaning and significance beneath the surface; they are complex in addition to being clear.

The roots of all of his plays lie in traditional theater, and *Major Barbara* is no exception. Beneath the economics and religion is the familiar love story which concludes with the foundling winning the princess and gaining the kingdom. The first act of *Major Barbara* is drawing-room comedy; in the second act a brass band strikes up a rousing march while the heroine's heart is breaking; in the third, life-size, corpse-like dummies draw the audience's attention while a diabolonian character discusses the virtues of his establishment.

As is often the case with Shaw's plays, *Major Barbara* deals with conversions. There are the pretended conversions of "Snobby" Price and "Rummy" Mitchens, the potential conversion of Bill Walker, and the actual conversions of the principal members of the Undershaft family. Stephen is converted to the view that his father's business is respectable and praiseworthy. Lady Brit is converted to an acceptance of the facts that Stephen will not inherit the foundry, and that in order to keep it in the family she must marry Barbara to a foundling. Andrew Undershaft is converted to the view that Cusins is a legitimate bastard and therefore eligible to inherit the foundry. Cusins and Barbara are converted to Undershaft's doctrine of realism and power. Although they realize that the Undershaft gospel—the elimination of poverty—is the essential first step, they hope to convert the Undershaft power to their own ends. In direct opposition to Undershaft, Cusins intends to broaden the base of power by giving it to the common man. Barbara realizes that God's work cannot be done by bribery but can be accomplished only by well-fed, free human beings determined to do that work for its own sake; her endeavors at Perivale St. Andrews will be toward that end. The converted young couple will themselves try to convert.

The aims and points of view of Undershaft, Cusins, and Barbara form a mystic trinity of body, mind, and soul, which are necessary for

the salvation of mankind. In *John Bull's Other Island*, written shortly before *Major Barbara*, Father Keegan speaks of several trinities in his dreams of heaven. There, the State was the Church and the Church the people, work was play and play life, the priest was the worshiper and the worshiper the worshiped, life was human and humanity divine. In large measure, these trinities are embodied by the principal trio of *Major Barbara*, who are connected to each other by several links: Undershaft is Barbara's father and will be her father-in-law, Cusins will become Undershaft and will be Barbara's husband and step-brother, Barbara is the daughter of Undershaft and will be the wife of Undershaft. The father, the adopted son, and the holy salvationist are united in what Cusins describes as a potentially heavenly city. After Barbara's Gethsemane in the second act, she undergoes an apotheosis in the third—a "transfigured" Barbara "has gone right up into the skies" and, to paraphrase Matthew and Mark, she becomes as a child (tugging at her mother's skirts) before entering the kingdom of heaven. Rarely simplistic, Shaw calls in the final scene of *Major Barbara* for both individual regeneration and social improvement.

Major Barbara may be called Shaw's Grecian play. One of the characters is a Greek professor who is modeled on Gilbert Murray and is nicknamed Euripides. Murray himself advised Shaw on the play and allowed him to use two passages from his translation of Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Homer is quoted and Plato paraphrased. The stories of the Greek god and the modern salvationist are connected by Undershaft. Father of Barbara, he is called Dionysus; appropriately, his wine is rich in natural alcohol, and under his influence Cusins declares himself to be possessed. His own "rebirth" at the hands of an adoptive father parallels that of the Greek god. Just as Dionysus was born twice (when Semele died in giving birth to him, Zeus saved him by enclosing the infant god in his thigh, from which he was born a second time), so the successor to the cannon foundry has a symbolic second birth upon assuming the name Andrew Undershaft. Just as Dionysus is associated with the seasonal pattern of the transition of winter to spring and the archetypal pattern of death and resurrection, so *Major Barbara* progresses from Barbara's wintry despair of the second act to her spiritual rebirth in the third.

✿ *Dramatic Works*

Widowers' Houses, 1892.
 The Philanderer, 1893.
 Mrs. Warren's Profession, 1894.
 Arms and the Man, 1894.
 Candida, 1895.
 The Man of Destiny, 1896.
 You Never Can Tell, 1897.
 The Devil's Disciple, 1897.
 Caesar and Cleopatra, 1898.
 Captain Brassbound's Conversion,
 1899.
 The Admirable Bashville, 1901.
 Man and Superman, 1903.
 John Bull's Other Island, 1904.
 How He Lied to Her Husband,
 1904.
 Major Barbara, 1905.
 Passion, Poison, and Petrification,
 1905.
 The Doctor's Dilemma, 1906.
 The Interlude at the Playhouse,
 1907.
 Getting Married, 1908.
 The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet,
 1909.
 Press Cuttings, 1909.
 The Fascinating Foundling, 1909.
 The Glimpse of Reality, 1909.
 Misalliance, 1910.
 The Dark Lady of the Sonnets,
 1910.
 Fanny's First Play, 1911.
 Androcles and the Lion, 1912.

Overruled, 1912.
 Pygmalion, 1912.
 Great Catherine, 1913.
 The Music-Cure, 1914.
 O'Flaherty, V.C., 1915.
 The Inca of Perusalem, 1916.
 Augustus Does His Bit, 1916.
 Annajanska, the Wild Grand
 Duchess (later changed to
 Annajanska, the Bolshevik Em-
 press), 1917.
 Heartbreak House, 1919.
 Back to Methuselah, 1920.
 Jitta's Atonement (adapted from
 the German of Siegfried Tre-
 bitsch), 1922.
 Saint Joan, 1923.
 The Apple Cart, 1929.
 Too True to Be Good, 1931.
 Village Wooing, 1933.
 On the Rocks, 1933.
 The Simpleton of the Unexpected
 Isles, 1934.
 The Six of Calais, 1934.
 The Millionairess, 1935.
 Cymbeline Refinished, 1937.
 Geneva, 1938.
 In Good King Charles's Golden
 Days, 1939.
 Buoyant Billions, 1948.
 Farfetched Fables, 1948.
 Shakes Versus Shaw, 1949.
 Why She Would Not, 1950.

❖ *Selective Bibliography*

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Major Barbara

CHARACTERS

SIR ANDREW UNDERSHAFT

LADY BRITOMART UNDERSHAFT, his wife

BARBARA, his elder daughter, a Major in the Salvation Army

SARAH, his younger daughter

STEPHEN, his son

ADOLPHUS CUSINS, a professor of Greek in love with Barbara

CHARLES LOMAX, young-man-about-town engaged to Sarah

MORRISON, Lady Britomart's butler

BRONTERRE O'BRIEN ("Snobby")

PRICE, a cobbler-carpenter down on his luck

MRS ROMOLA ("Rummy") MITCHENS, a worn-out lady who relies on the Salvation Army

JENNY HILL, a young Salvation Army worker

PETER SHIRLEY, an unemployed coal-broker

BILL WALKER, a bully

MRS BAINES, Commissioner in the Salvation Army

BILTON, a foreman at Perivale St Andrews

The action of the play occurs within several days in January, 1906.

ACT I *The Library of Lady Britomart's house in Wilton Crescent, a fashionable London suburb.*

ACT II *The yard of the Salvation Army shelter in West Ham, an industrial suburb in London's East End.*

ACT III *The library in Lady Britomart's house; a parapet overlooking Perivale St Andrews, a region in Middlesex northwest of London.*