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# Don Juan in Pre-Brechtian Hell, or Shaw the Unexpected Terrorist

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“Don Juan in pre-Brechtian Hell,”

or

“Shaw the Unexpected Terrorist”

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Scholars rarely view the late-Victorian theater as a source of innovative, deeply intellectual, thought-provoking comedic material. Both the British and American popular theaters of the late nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries were largely a place of frothy entertainment and escapism. Melodramas, romantic comedies, and even saccharine rewrites of Shakespearean tragedy dominated the popular stage. According to nineteenth and twentieth century playwright George Bernard Shaw, a theatergoer with an appetite for “true comedy” was hard-pressed to find any at the tail end of the Victorian era, one dominated by “the watery theater of Pinero, Jones, and their followers” (Carpenter 5). While lighthearted, and “well-made,” these plays did not meet Shaw’s standards of “true comedy” in nature or purpose. His standards of “true comedy,” and theatrical representation in general, were quite progressive for his time, and went beyond mere entertainment.

Shaw defines “true comedy” as “the fine art of disillusionment” (Meisel 122). He felt that comedy’s purpose was the invocation of deep thought and contemplation from the audience through laughter. The comedy in question must not only make the audience laugh, but also inspire the audience to think and question the source of the laughter. By this definition, then, Shaw is an authority on the art of “true comedy.” Shaw, an Irish-born, England-ensconced, novelist, drama critic, essayist, and famed socialist vegetarian, was one of the most prolific and commercially successful playwrights of the early twentieth century; his body of work included over sixty plays, many of which were, by matter of opinion, funny. What is unusual about Shaw, however, is that his commercial success in the late Victorian/early Edwardian theater resulted from a very revolutionary style of comedic playwriting that shattered previous late-Victorian theatrical norms.

Shaw's plays largely sought to surprise, shock, and jar the audience's thoughts after lulling them into a false sense of security (Kauffman 279). As simple as it sounds, this method of playwriting incited strong reactions from his contemporaries and critics. His comedy showcased the "fine art of destroying ideals"; the comedic plays appear, at first, to be stylistically standard Romantic and/or social comedies, but through various inversions of these generic standards, Shaw "sharpshoots" at the audience, upsetting their ideals and previously held values through biting, deeply provocative humor (Carpenter 218). The most prominent example of this comedic style is Shaw's 1903 "comedy and philosophy" *Man and Superman*, "the first major watershed in Shaw's dramatic career" (Carpenter 209). In *Man and Superman*, subtitled "A Comedy and Philosophy," Shaw writes what appears, in form, to be a standard early 1900's Romantic comedy, revolving around a strong-willed woman's pursuit of her intended husband; however, a closer examination of the comedic moments in the play, as well as its structural elements, reveals a far more "philosophic" tone than would be expected from such a play.

More specifically, the inclusion of the "Don Juan in Hell" episode in Act III upsets the late Victorian theatrical tradition of the light, frothy, "well-made play" (Meisel 291). The playwriting of the Victorian era was dominated by the "well-made play" method. The "well-made play" centered around one consistent plot, a protagonist, and an antagonist, but often contained contrived plot twists and trivial stories. Shaw abhorred this sort of playwriting that was "churned out" by writers like the popular French writers Sardou and Scribe, and referred to their ridiculous plot devices and smarmy, generically romantic storylines as "Sardoodledom" (Wilde 136). Shaw himself knew he was defying the norms of the late Victorian/early Edwardian stage, and purposely sought to do so.

In much of his other work, Shaw lulls audience into coziness through a conventional structure until a “bomb explodes” (Kauffman 278). This bomb, in *Man and Superman*, is the “Don Juan in Hell” scene. In “Don Juan in Hell,” *Man and Superman*’s characters John Tanner, Ann Whitefield, Roebuck Ramsden, and Mendoza appear, respectively, as their alter-egos from Mozart’s opera “Don Giovanni”: Don Juan, Dona Ana, The Statue (of Ana’s father), and The Devil. These characters meet in Shaw’s vision of hell, and wittily argue with each other over such issues as love, war, traditional Judeo-Christian morality, and, most importantly, women’s roles. The episode’s irrelevance to the main plot, structure, and general subversion of archetypical characters is a prime example of Shaw’s “sharpshooting” comedy, which aims to invoke deeper thought as a result of their laughter. *Man and Superman*, in addition to many of Shaw’s plays such as *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*, *Saint Joan*, and *Arms and the Man*, generated a significant amount of international recognition, as well as praise, severe criticism, and general intrigue from his contemporaries all over the world, including Bertholt Brecht.

Bertholt Brecht (1898-1956), the German actor, director, playwright, poet, literary/theatrical theorist and champion of the “epic” theatre, stands out as one of Shaw’s most ardent and most surprising supporters. While it seems unusual that an experimental playwright and theorist like Brecht would take an interest in the work of an older, commercially successful playwright like Shaw, whom he never actually met, Brecht admired Shaw enough to write a brief essay for the *Berliner Borsen-Courier*, in 1926, dedicated entirely to praising Shaw’s playwriting. In this essay, “Ovation fur Shaw,” or “Three Cheers for Shaw,” Brecht applauds Shaw as a “terrorist,” one that uses an “extraordinary weapon, that of humour” (Brecht 10). Brecht’s insistence upon Shaw’s

status as a “terrorist” belies Brecht’s admiration for Shaw’s “belief in mankind’s infinite capacity for improvement”, as well as his method of using theater as a forum for political and social ideas, something to which Brecht was passionately dedicated (Brecht 13).

Brecht claims that his theory of audience “alienation,” his most famous contribution to literary/theatrical theory, is the main method through which to inspire deep thought in the audience on the political and/or social issue presented onstage, and to cause them to turn inward and examine their own beliefs on that subject.

Brecht defines “alienation,” the hallmark of his “epic theatre,” in opposition to traditional “dramatic theatre” in his essay “Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction,” the title of which derives from the Latin philosopher Horace’s statement that “theater should both please and instruct.” In this essay, Brecht defines “alienation<sup>1</sup>” as a process by which:

...the spectator [is] no longer in any way allowed to submit to an experience uncritically (and without practical consequences) by means of simple empathy with the characters in a play... The epic theatre’s spectator says: I’d never have thought it- That’s not the way- That’s extraordinary, hardly believable- It’s got to stop- The sufferings of this man appal me- I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh (Brecht 71).

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<sup>1</sup> Translators and scholars debate whether “alienation” is, in fact, the best possible translation of Brecht’s idea of *Verfremdungseffekt*. Andrew E. Doe, for example, argues in his essay “Brecht’s Lehrstücke: Propaganda Failures” that the proper translation would be “estrangement.” In other words, “alienation” implies that the audience is turned off entirely by the onstage action; Doe argues instead that Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* seeks only to “make strange” the action onstage, separating the audience from the narrative instead of causing them to suspend disbelief. However, “alienation” has become the most common translation used in literary and theatrical circles; for the purpose of this essay, then, I will use “alienation” to describe the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*.

The deep thought and introspection that may be inspired by a successful piece of Brechtian theater does not have to result from serious, “strenuous” playwriting. Comedy is possible within Brechtian theater, but it must be used sparingly, and only if there it inspires “deep” laughter; in other words, Brecht writes that the only useful comedy falls under Shaw’s definition of “true comedy” (Brecht 72). Overall, though, any piece of Brechtian “epic” theater that utilizes “alienation” constantly reminds the audience, whether through music, direct address, or a non-realistic style of acting, that they are watching a performance, and must not get wrapped up in the narrative, suspend disbelief, or directly empathize with the characters, as one would with a traditional piece of “dramatic” theater. Above all, the result of these “alienating” elements must cause the audience to separate from the action onstage, and critically examine themselves and their beliefs on the subject being presented and utilize any new insight gained to go out and change their lives, or the world.

If the aim of “alienation,” as Brecht envisions it, in an “epic” style of theater is to invoke self-examination in the audience, Shaw’s work in *Man and Superman*, by this definition, is basically Brechtian. *Man and Superman*, even in the “Don Juan in Hell” scene, seem like a very traditional piece of theater compared to the experimental pieces that Brecht produced, directed, or wrote. Shaw’s writing in the “Don Juan in Hell” scene is only literally Brechtian in the sense that it uses two musical interludes, and raises serious social questions through a debate between non-archetypal characters that is never quite resolved; this is Brechtian “alienation” at its most rudimentary. However, while the writing and nature of the “Don Juan in Hell” episode lends itself to a Brechtian interpretation and performance, Shaw more closely follows Horace’s ideals of the true

purpose of theater while revolutionizing the early twentieth century theater scene. Specifically, the upset of expectations that arise from the use of archetypical characters, the sheer irrelevance of the episode to the actual plot of *Man and Superman*, the surreal setting, musical interludes, the discussion-oriented structure, and, most importantly, Shaw's unconventional portrayal of Ana, the lone female character, in juxtaposition with the men showcases a uniquely pre-Brechtian form of Shavian "alienation" through "true comedy." This pre-Brechtian "alienation," though, does not stand alone, without influences, in theatrical and literary tradition.

Brecht, in "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction," acknowledges Horace's influence on literary and theatrical criticism, and more specifically, his views on the true purpose of theater; the work of both Brecht and Shaw, without directly mimicking or agreeing with Horace, exemplifies Horace's idea of theater that both pleases and instructs. Brecht agrees with Horace, but only by slightly altering Horace's "pleasure/instruction" binary: "If there were not such amusement to be had from learning the theatre's whole structure would unfit it for teaching" (73). Brecht insists that there is pleasure inherent in learning from the theater, and that any writers who attempt to artificially create pleasure (such as Brecht argues is a hallmark of "dramatic theatre") are basically trying too hard, which fails to achieve a depth of experience for the audience and/or reader. Brecht's ideal "alienation" effect aligns with Shaw's idea of the effect of "true comedy"; both writers also draw from the tradition laid out in Horace's *Ars Poetica*. Horace dictates in *Ars Poetica*, his canonical treatise on the purpose of literature, that theater should be both "pleasing and lead the hearer's mind where it will," or, as it is commonly paraphrased, "both please and instruct" (Horace 126). This statement is

widely known as the “Horatian platitude”(Leitch, etc 122). Horace follows up this statement with his assertion that the pleasure taken by the audience in a dramatic performance leads to opportunity for instruction. Brecht’s essay “Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction,” the title of which derives from the Horatian platitude, emphasizes the usage of the theater as an instructional forum for political ideas, yet agrees with Horace inasmuch as “theatre remains theatre even when it is instructive theatre, and in so far as it is good theatre, it will amuse” (73). Brecht emphasizes humankind’s capacity to gain intellectually from the theater, and the necessity of such an experience; when done well, pleasure will be found through the instruction. Many critics, such as Charles A. Berst, agree that “Don Juan in Hell,” despite its “elaborate intellectual content, is infused with dramatic vigor through rhetorical power, diverse characters, dialectical pyrotechnics, and an imaginative, cosmic frame of reference” (Berst 130). Shaw’s work, then, achieves the pleasure/instruction balance in both a Brechtian and Horatian sense. Shaw’s interpretation of this pleasure/instruction balance takes on added significance, considering the purely light, pleasure-oriented popular theatre of the late-Victorian theater.

Historically, Shaw loved the popular theater, and saw limitless potential for subversion therein; through the “Don Juan in Hell” scene, Shaw “slyly” uses the old theater against itself (Kauffman 279-280). In other words, Shaw uses the late Victorian genre of the sentimental romantic comedy as a starting point for his comedy, and then turns the convention on its ear. According to one critic, “in itself, the purely actionless and argumentative dream sequence of the play [*Man and Superman*] represents a turning point in Shaw’s artistic progress” (Carpenter 5). This “turning point” is also a structural

device that surprises the audience, estranging them from the narrative onstage, “alienating” them, making them wonder what really is going on. What appears to be a traditional sentimental romantic comedy is interrupted by the introduction of the “Don Juan in Hell” scene. According to Shaw scholar Martin Meisel, “the genre conventions of the comedy of romance and courtship were generally useful to Shaw as theatrical points of departure and sources of dramatic appeal; but in *Man and Superman*...the Comedy becomes a parable for a Philosophy” (Meisel 183). Using the popular theater as a point of departure in order to trick the audience into comfort, and then upset their expectations is a prime example of an “alienation” technique; the “comedy as parable for philosophy” is what makes this pre-Brechtian “alienation” uniquely Shavian.

The structural placement and episodic nature of the “Don Juan in Hell” portion of *Man and Superman* contributes heavily to its potential for Brechtian-style audience alienation. The seeming irrelevance of this episode to the main plot of *Man and Superman* is what often contributes to its omission from performances, yet is crucial to the play’s development as a whole since “Don Juan in Hell” “presents a reality inverse from that of the rest of the play” (Berst 127). The episode does not even get labeled as a new scene- it occurs around the middle of Act III. Shaw’s very specific stage directions call for a fade from the visual sets of the first half of Act III, stating, instead, that whether through sound, lighting, or scenery, the effect should be of “omnipresent nothing...No sky, no peaks, no light, no sound, no time nor space, utter void” (Shaw 123). The fact that Shaw wrote a surreal, barely relevant episode in the middle of an otherwise standard early twentieth century social comedy gives the play a distinctly modern, experimental feel, which showcases a uniquely Shavian sort of audience alienation while anticipating

the techniques of Brecht. Shaw viewed slavish devotion to realism in the theater as anesthetic rather than provocative, inducing complacency and comfort rather than deep thought and critical questioning in its audiences (Wilde 136). The very beginning of the “Don Juan in Hell” episode sets the tone, then, for an entirely new, uncomfortable, and thought-provoking experience; by setting this portion in this empty sort of hell, Shaw creates a “drama concerned with the contemporary world set in an altogether fantastic realm of embodied ideas” (Meisel 323). The discomfort provoked by the setting leads to a greater awareness of the ideas presented in the ensuing discussion of the “Don Juan in Hell” scene.

Once these elements establish the “omnipresent nothingness,” Shaw’s stage directions call for a specific strain of Mozart’s opera *Don Giovanni* to be played, with a “ghostly” effect (Shaw 123). Shaw’s use of music, according to some critics, could contribute to his overall musical, yet political tone; according to critic W.H. Auden, “for all [Shaw’s] theater about propaganda, his writing has an effect nearer to that of music than the work of any of the so-called pure writers” (Auden 156). However, this is not exactly what marks Shaw’s work in “Don Juan in Hell” as pre-Brechtian, highly modern theater. The aim for a “ghostly” effect through music at the beginning of the “Don Juan in Hell” episode resembles Brecht’s “epic” theater most literally. In another essay on the epic theatre, “On the Use of Music in an Epic Theatre,” Brecht writes that music “which would have a more or less exactly foreseeable effect on the spectator,” is ideal in an “alienating” piece of epic theatre, and “it would be particularly useful, for instance, to have the actors play *against* the emotion which the music called forth” (Brecht 90).

Within the first few lines of the scene, even, Shaw's characters set about "playing against" the eerie, ghostly effect of the scene:

*Don Juan:* Hell, Senora, I assure you; Hell at its best: that is, its most solitary-  
though perhaps you would prefer the company.

*The Old Woman:* But I have sincerely repented; I have confessed-

*Don Juan:* How much?

*Old Woman:* More sins than I really committed. I loved confession (Shaw 125).

Through the Old Woman, who turns out to be Ana, the initially desolate, eerie tone of the scene is shattered through a bit of humor. All throughout the "Don Juan in Hell" scene, Shaw's characters continue to play against tone initially laid out through the music at the top of the scene.

Shaw's use of archetypal characters, and subsequent upset of the behavioral expectations associated with such characters is just one example of a uniquely pre-Brechtian form of "alienation," which does not completely adhere to Brecht's technique: "Shaw's work does not distance his audience with the methods of alienation later developed by Brecht to avoid this problem. Rather, he seems to rely on an informed, thoughtful audience's 'self-alienation'" (Gainor 227). While Shaw utilizes some literally Brechtian methods of alienation through an unusual, unsettling setting, and music against which the actors must play, it is Shaw's characterizations, the juxtaposition of certain character traits against archetypes, and rhetoric which "alienates" in "Don Juan in Hell." His "ingenious inversions of words, characters, and concepts make for startling dialectical effects, but their artistic virtues of vitality, uniqueness, new perspectives, and sharp insights are in large part due to their violation of coherent, readily accessible

associations” (Berst 133-134). The inversion of archetypal characters in “Don Juan in Hell” is the most prominent example of this type of uniquely Shavian “alienation.”

In “Don Juan in Hell,” Shaw uses recognizable characters from Mozart’s opera “Don Giovanni,” the Statue, the Devil, Don Juan, and Ana, then characterizes them in ways that defy the expected norms established by previous portrayals of those types of characters. The Statue of Ana’s father, a powerful, imposing, deeply religious, and angrily vengeful figure who comes back to haunt Don Juan and banish him to Hell in Mozart’s opera, appears as a genial, friendly, humble, generally mild-mannered old gentleman, yet very flawed and human. Shaw “shatters ideals” through this portrayal of the Statue: Ana’s idealized view of her long-dead father is shattered when his Statue, or dignified, powerfully imposing image enters on friendly terms with Don Juan, great friends with the Devil, and completely unaware of who she is;

*Ana:* What does this mean?...you, father, have forgotten my name. You are indeed turned to stone.

*The Statue:* My dear: I am so much more admired in marble than I ever was in my own person that I have retained the shape the sculptor gave me. He was one of the first men of his day, you must acknowledge that.

*Ana:* Father! Vanity! Personal vanity! From you!

*The Statue:* Ah, you outlived that weakness, my daughter: you must be nearly 80 by this time...Besides, my child, in this place...the farce of parental wisdom is In dropped. Regard me, I beg, as a fellow creature (Shaw 132).

In just a few lines, Ana’s ideals about her father are permanently altered. In this exchange, Shaw makes a case for the shattering of any ideals; in times of change, old

views must be questioned, and hero worship is not to be condoned; Ana's expression of personal disappointment reveals this to the audience. This personal disappointment, though, is not played for audience empathy, but instead for thoughtful laughter from the audience (Brecht 71). This heavy message, stated through a humorous exchange between two not-so-conventional character archetypes emphasizes the role of humor in Shaw's unique, pre-Brechtian sort of "alienation."

Shaw's ridiculous portrayal of the Devil, and his kingdom of Hell, is another characterization and playwriting choice that may upset audience and/or reader expectations, thereby inducing an "alienating" effect, through surprise and puzzlement more than anything else. Instead of the demonic, terrifying figure expected by an audience versed in traditional Judeo-Christian imagery, Shaw presents the Devil as "not at all like Mendoza, though not so interesting...on the whole, a disagreeably self-indulgent looking person; but he is clever and plausible, though perceptibly less well bred than the other two men..." (Shaw 133). This Devil, though "disagreeable," is a far cry from the traditional view of the Devil as the supreme torturer of the damned. Instead, the Devil is a passive, ridiculous, ardent proponent of love, beauty, romance, and ideals. Through the Devil's unconventional portrayal, as well as through his rendering of Hell, Shaw gives the audience a taste of his views of senseless Romanticism and idealism, both of which he seeks to destroy through his comedy, in a pre-Brechtian fashion:

*The Devil:* ...for Hell is the home of the unreal and of the seekers for happiness. It is the only refuge from Heaven, which is, as I tell you, the home of the masters of reality, and from Earth, which is the home of the slaves of reality... ..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...and yet you want to leave this paradise! (Shaw 140).

Here, Shaw's upset of the conventional, iconographic idea of the Devil and of Hell is Brechtian in the sense that, instead of portraying Hell in the stereotypical "fire and brimstone" fashion, he paints Hell as "the paradise of the romantic imagination," something which Shaw believed was extremely detrimental deep thought leading to progress (Meisel 138-139). The conventional portrayal of the Devil is not one that would traditionally garner audience sympathy anyhow, but Shaw's "disagreeable" Devil is still off-putting to the audience, but in the "alienating," "epic theater" sort of fashion. Shaw's portrayal of the Devil in such a way paves the way for the audience to look inwards and re-examine themselves and their beliefs on one of the main topics at hand, the perception of women and women's roles in their society.

Shaw's unconventional Don Juan, the usually iconic libertine and seducer, helps to further this goal of audience alienation resulting in the questioning of their beliefs on the perception of women and their roles in society. The traditional Don Juan character, usually painted as a hedonistic womanizer, is completely overturned in the "Don Juan in Hell" scene (Berst 131). Shaw's Don Juan is disgusted with women to the point of misogyny, as is evident in his description of his past infatuation with women:

*Don Juan:* ...I came to believe that in her voice was all the music of the song, in her face all the beauty of the painting, and in her soul all the emotion of the poem.

*Ana:* And you were disappointed, I suppose. Well, was it her fault that you attributed all these perfections to her?

*Don Juan:* Yes, partly. For with a wonderful instinctive cunning, she kept silent and allowed me to glorify her: to mistake my own visions, thoughts, and feelings for hers...(Shaw 152).

Don Juan's misogyny, juxtaposed with Ana's starkly realistic, vital point of view distances the audience; however, instead of simply enforcing a misogynistic point of view, Don Juan's disillusionment and misogyny urges the audience to step back and consider that "the critical spirit is needed at the present time so that humanity can become conscious of the point at which it has arrived" (Wisenthal 209). However, one of Don Juan's more pivotal, memorable lines occurs at the beginning of "Don Juan in Hell," before he realizes the Old Woman's identity:

*Don Juan:* Patience, lady: you will be perfectly happy here...

*The Old Woman:* Happy! Here! Where I am nothing! Where I am nobody!

*Don Juan:* Not at all: you are a lady; and wherever ladies are is hell...

While Don Juan may be simply making a misogynistic statement, using "ladies" to refer to all women, he could also be critiquing the notion of ladylike propriety, as well as the romantic ideal of the lady. Shaw's ideas of the "lady" ideal "shocked a bourgeois audience," since Shaw's ideas of what was "ladylike" or not were distinctly different from the "thoroughly impossible standards of polite pretense flourishing" around the turn of the century (Watson 18-19). Though there is debate surrounding whether this echoes Shaw's views of the "lady" standard of his time, nonetheless, its comic timing is coupled with a bold statement that raises questions. Shaw uses Don Juan's misogynistic and

cynical statement, which is humorous on many levels, to inspire disconcerted, introspective laughter in the audience; this is basically Brechtian, since the “epic theater” can use humor of this kind (Brecht 72). This type of “alienating” humor also sets up the introduction of Ana, the only female, and arguably the strongest character in the entire sequence, and the main source of “alienating,” humorous insight which aims for audience self-examination concerning perceptions of women and women’s roles.

Ana, the assertive, blunt, often abrasive lone female character in the scene, is a prime example of Shaw’s “New Woman,” a source of much dispute among literary scholars. When critics assaulted Shaw’s women in their reviews, Shaw responded by saying, “I declare that the real secret of the cynicism and inhumanity of which shallower critics accuse me is the unexpectedness with which my characters behave like human beings, instead of conforming to the romantic logic of the stage” (Watson 21). Ana, as a Shavian “New Woman,” is bluntly realistic, clever, vital, a far cry from the wispy, ethereal, sentimental romantic heroines commonly seen in romantic comedies on the late-Victorian stage. In general, Ana even breaks from the usual stereotypical portrayals of women of the time in all stage genres as the “bitch, witch, vamp, virgin, or goddess” (Peters 109). On all fronts, Ana is a realistic human being, who defies the traditional female association with romance. In response to the Devil, the Statue, and Don Juan’s debate on love and beauty, and on women’s fickle/mysterious/insidious nature, she argues,

*Ana:* I daresay you all want to marry lovely incarnations of music and painting and poetry. Well, you can’t have them, because they don’t exist...Women have to put up with flesh and blood husbands- and little

enough of that too, sometimes; and you will have to put up with flesh and blood wives. *The Devil looks dubious, the Statue makes a wry face.* I see you don't like that, any of you; but it's true, for all that; if you don't like it, you can lump it" (Shaw 153).

Ana's statement is a bold one, defying the theatrical norms of female portrayal. The men's reactions, also, are a reflection of the anticipated response from Shaw's shocked audience. Ana's statement was clearly a shocking one, for an audience steeped in sentimental romantic heroines. While the audience, by this time, may have settled into the idea of this unreal, "play within a play," and may be wrapped up in the discussion, Ana's statement here turns the tables on the audience once again. By firmly establishing herself, as a representative of all women in this scene, as anti-sentiment/romanticism, and bluntly realistic, she not only opens up further debate between herself and Don Juan, but keeps a thoughtful, neutral audience member from identifying with any of the more romantic, sentimental male characters onstage. By upsetting the late Victorian romantic, sentimental ideal of the onstage woman, Ana forces the audience back into reality, even as they are watching a scene unfold in an unreal locale; this is a prime source of Brechtian "alienation" and self-examination. Statements such as these, though they may not provoke uncomfortable reactions in current times, may provoke questions- and that is essentially Brechtian.

While Ana is a clever, realistic, anti-romantic woman, she is very flawed and human, as previously mentioned, with a multi-faceted personality; this endowment of such an archetypical female character with more unconventional, which defies audience expectations, is another example of Shaw's uniquely pre-Brechtian "alienation." Ana,

before she is revealed as Dona Ana, laments, as the Old Woman upon finding out that she is in Hell: “Oh! And I might have been so much wickeder! All my good deeds wasted! It is unjust” (Shaw 125). This reveals a distinctly human, selfish side of the prototypical devout, chaste, damsel-in-distress, seduced victim of the dastardly Don Juan portrayed in the Mozartian Don Juan story. This line, then, calls into question the motivations behind traditional religious morality. It becomes clear throughout the rest of the scene that Ana’s “ladylike” behavior on Earth was tied to her sense of religious morality; she did good deeds and behaved like a chaste, moral lady only in order to get to heaven, and not for the sake of bettering mankind. Shaw also plays with the traditional ideas of “man as mind, woman as body”; while Ana is reasonable, blunt, and articulate, she also embodies what Shaw calls the Life Force, or vitalism, the drive to seize life, procreate and propagate the human species, and becomes “Woman Incarnate, relentlessly seeking her mate” (Peters 216). Ana, when confronted about the religious values she adhered to on Earth, defends this vitalistic point of view:

*Ana:* Don Juan, a word against chastity is an insult to me.

*Don Juan:* I say nothing against your chastity, Senora, since it took the form of a husband and twelve children. What more could you have done had you been the most abandoned of women?

*Ana:* I could have had twelve husbands and no children: that’s what I could have done, Juan. And let me tell you that that would have made all the difference to the earth which I replenished (Shaw 155).

Here, Shaw seems to reinforce the idea that woman’s concerns are of the body, and of procreation. However, he does juxtapose this with Ana’s rhetoric and ability to mentally

joust with all the men in this scene, a quality with which he endowed almost all of his leading characters, male or female (Hatton-Swanson 1). Shaw, then, through displaying a major side of Ana that may seem to defy the “strong woman” ideal, while creating her in such a way that defies sentimental stage stereotypes of the time, confuses the audience, “alienates” them, and provokes thought, and the question “what is truly feminist?”

Critics and scholars have argued for decades over Shaw’s status as a feminist. On the one hand, Shaw’s beliefs on the status of women are clearly visible in Ana’s statement to Don Juan; According to Sally Peters, Shaw asserted, throughout his writings, that,

A woman is really only a man in petticoats...In a society that conceived of women as absence, Shaw conferred on woman the signifying power of gender, thereby abdicating the power traditionally reserved for the male. In a society where relations between men and women were hierarchical and vertical, Shaw advocated the horizontal, the equal, the similar (Peters 219).

This point of view, though, does not allow for differences between the sexes, instead endowing the female with male qualities; this goes against much of what current scholars describe as truly “feminist.” Peters, in addition to J. Ellen Gainor, is one of a number of feminist critics and scholars that question whether Shaw could truly create original, absolutely female characters, and that all of his characters were simply projections of himself, a man. Zabrowski and Kirschmann, however, argue the opposite: “The fact that these aggressive, resolute, intelligent women are *women* does not seem to have mattered to Shaw, as the very same tendencies and characteristics are present in his male characters” (Zabrowski/Kirschmann 98). If Shaw’s work leads audiences to question

their beliefs on the status of women in a Brechtian fashion, then the Zabrowski/Kirschmann idea of Shaw's supposed feminism is more aligned with this method: by proving Ana a human, and altogether worthy adversary in a mental battle with the Statue, the Devil, and Don Juan, Shaw muddles together the dichotomy of "maleness" and "femaleness," even when the debate concerns the status of women. Placing this debate, even, in Hell, which is "freed of life's constraints," further displaces previously held biases, and invokes deep laughter and deep thought in the audience, instead of mindlessly entertaining them with comfortable archetypes that fulfill convention (Wisenthal 210). This, while not literally Brechtian theater in its technical form, accomplishes the deepest purpose of Brechtian "alienation."

In summation, Shaw's work deviates slightly both from the Brechtian and Horatian models of effective theater writing, yet accomplishes the essence of the messages in both "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" and *Ars Poetica*. Shaw's plays "are not mere oratory decked out with a few playwriting tricks...they do not promote socialism or any other doctrine; they raise questions rather than answer them" (Hornby 344). This is Brechtian alienation at its most basic. While the scene seems to have no relevance or cohesion to the actual plot of the play, Shaw's writing in the "Don Juan in Hell" scene lends itself to a Brechtian-style, alienating performance. Shaw follows many of Brecht's models for his modern "epic" theatre, and almost anticipates this style of theater writing, by subverting a popular genre, using a surreal setting "freed from life's constraints," writing characters which play against the mood initially set by the music and setting, and endowing archetypal characters with unconventional, unexpected qualities. Most importantly, Shaw's portrayal of Ana, the

lone female of the scene, juxtaposes many ideal and human traits, and otherwise upsets the expectations of the stereotypical female onstage. Through all of this, Shaw has, in fact, utilized his own unique form of alienation, which wins over the audience with humor, then alienates them, causing them to think critically about what is being said onstage about women, and to question their own views about this subject. Shaw, however, did not wish to be admired for his playwriting techniques: Shaw once wrote:

...to listen for a writer's message, even when the fellow is a fool, is one thing: to worship his tools and tricks, his pose and his style, is an abomination. Admire them by all means, just as you admire the craft of the masons and the carpenters and sculptors who built your cathedral; but don't go inside and sing Te Deums to them" (Weintraub 5).

The message, for Shaw, is what's most important. This message, though, must come through characters that are real, and not conventional, expected archetypes. In another one of his essays, "Sixteen Self Sketches," he defies "any baffleheaded idiot of a university professor, half crazy with correcting examination papers, infer that all my plays were written as economic essays, and not as plays of life, character, and human destiny..." (Watson 89). It is safe to say that Shaw's writing at least makes the audience or reader of his play-within-a-play build their own opinions, through an "alienation" invoked by the presence of real, multifaceted, non-archetypal characters onstage. This break from Victorian theatrical tradition, in a pre-Brechtian yet uniquely Shavian fashion, paved the way for modern theatrical writing.

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