The Shavian Protagonists and Shaw's Changing Use of Classical Myths

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ABSTRACT: This article illustrates Shaw's changing use of classical myths to portray his protagonists. As these protagonists developed with his theory of the Life Force and Creative Evolution, they were structurally configured and supported through manipulations of classical myths. First, Shaw makes use of mythical elements in his early writings. Then he thinks through classical myths. Ultimately, he makes his own myth of the Life Force and Creative Evolution and, in so doing, dismantles the scaffolding provided by the classical myths. As Shaw drifts away from the socialist and political writer wanting to amend the defects of social systems and becomes a visionary and a mystic, he is increasingly reliant on classical myths as elevated platforms to work out his concept of the superman.

KEYWORDS: classical myths, heroes, stylistics, transformation, creative evolution

This article illustrates Shaw's changing use of classical myths to portray his protagonists. Broadly speaking, Shaw's myth-using and myth-building have three main stages: (1) pre-1900: preliminary explorations on how to make use of mythical elements to convey his advocacies of the Life Force and Creative Evolution; (2) 1900–1917: experimentation with classical myths to portray his superman; and (3) 1917–21: arriving at a mature gospel of the Life Force and Creative Evolution through his own mythmaking, so that the scaffolding of classical myths can be deconstructed and disintegrated. Whereas myths are used to assist hero depiction in the early works, they are indispensable assets in *Androcles and the Lion* and *Pygmalion* where the play is the myth. But as Shaw's myth-building efforts become more intense

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in *Heartbreak House* and *Back to Methuselah*, the classical myths start to disintegrate. For Shaw, utilizing classical literature is more than retelling an old story; not just inspiration for dramatic techniques, but also a lode of constructive elements to build his own myth of the Life Force and Creative Evolution.

Shaw's usage of mythical elements in his writings is ubiquitous. There are excellent studies of classical myth elements in Shaw, such as in Susan Beth Cole Stone's *Myth and Legend in the Drama of Bernard Shaw* (1970) and Sidney Albert's *Shaw, Plato, and Euripides: Classical Currents in Major Barbara* (2012). Rather than repeating those great efforts, which perhaps cannot be repeated, I would like to elucidate how Shaw's recreations of classical myths change with the development of his gospel of the Life Force and Creative Evolution, and the corresponding construction of the Shavian hero or heroine. Although not all of the myths I am going to discuss belong to the classical tradition of antiquity, they are going to be included because it is the only way one can get a holistic, coherent vision of Shaw's use of myths.

Pre-1898: Testing How to Make Use of Mythical Elements to Convey His Advocacies of the Life Force and Creative Evolution

Shaw explored other kinds of myths before arriving at classical myths. In his early writing career, there were the Christian myth in *Passion Play* (1878), the Teutonic myth of Siegfried in *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1883), and another reference to the Christian myth in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891).

Shaw's first attempt at drama is *Passion Play*, a fragment started in 1878. Significantly, this was also a time when Shaw secured a reader's pass for the British Museum Reading Room, which later became the British Library. He frequented the Reading Room on weekdays. One may get an idea of how the British Museum's rich collection of books and artifacts on classical myths shaped Shaw's knowledge of classical myths by referring to the museum's current online educational resource on "Ancient Greece: Myths and Legends."[1] Traditionally, a classical myth is defined as a whole set of legendary stories clustering around a number of focal points. They may involve gods and goddesses and focus on the creation of the world and of humans and the rule of the gods; or depict a specific hero, a place such as Athens, or an event such as the Trojan War.[2] In this regard, finding out how Shaw makes use of classical myths is crucial for a full understanding of Shaw's works and ideas. As Northrop Frye writes in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, "A myth being a centripetal structure of meaning, it can be made to mean an indefinite number of things, and it is more fruitful to study what

in fact myths have been made to mean."[3] This has profound implications in didactic terms. For instance, according to the British Museum study guide on classical myth, for the ancient Greeks, myths explained or justified things such as the creation of the world or the role of women in society. It also draws attention to how Greek writers made up their own versions of stories or poked fun at mythical characters. In addition, the British Museum study guide draws attention to Greek philosophers interrogating the basis of myths and making up their own myths to represent their own systems of thinking. All these uses of classical myths in Ancient Greece can also be found scattered in Shaw's writings.

Passion Play (1878) demonstrates Shaw's early usages of myths. He takes the Christian myth and fabricates an imaginary dialogue between Judas and Jesus. Unlike Jesus in the Bible, the mother of Shaw's Jesus considers her son a "proud and good-for-nothing vagabond"[4] (VII: 490). Here we can find an embryonic Shavian Creative Evolution. In the play, under the tutelage of Judas Iscariot, Jesus progresses from romancing Rahab and finds his Faith: "But were I to believe no God at all / I would, despairing, die" (VII: 506). Judas, on the contrary, embraces the individual will and tells Jesus to "stand absolutely by thyself." They develop a partnership with the rational Judas helping the religious Jesus to find an audience for his Gospel.

How serious was Shaw making use of the Christian myth in *Passion Play*, or was he just another author making use of old myths? On a related note, a most popular and prominent work coming out just before *Passion Play* (1878) was Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen, The Ring Cycle*, which was first performed at the Bayreuth Festival in 1876. Wagner's Siegfried is a major character with a long critical and literary tradition that sets the Cycle "within the German tradition of the successive reinterpretations and reworkings of Greek tragedy."[5] However, Shaw's use of the Teutonic myth is much more serious in his own interpretation in *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1883). Here Shaw found his embryonic superman from Wagner's hero. In Wagner's *Ring*, Brünnhilde as the romantic heroine is the second most important character after Siegfried, while in Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite*, it is Wotan who is second only to Siegfried. Shaw's Wotan finds his Godhead limited by Fricka's Law and Loki's Lie.

In Shaw's commentary on Wagner's mythic opera *The Niblung's Ring*, he shows his image of the Hero in Siegfried, "the type of healthy man raised to perfect confidence in his own impulses by an intense and joyous vitality which is above fear, sickliness of conscience, malice and the make-shifts and moral clutches of law and order which accompany them."[6] But while Siegfried is above Godhead and stands for the free will to life, the unhindered

thrusting of the life energy of the world to higher and higher organization, he is vulnerable until he acquires Alberic's earthly power as Shaw writes: "The end cannot come until Siegfried learns Alberic's trade and shoulders Alberic's burden."[7] This Teutonic myth is again used in *Widowers' Houses* (1884–92), in which Siegfried acquires Alberic's power. William Archer's plot, based on *The Rhinegold*, has the hero Harry Trench throw the tainted treasure of Sartorius metaphorically into the Rhine.[8] But Shaw's hero, after learning that his own money is drawn from the same source as Sartorius's, becomes a partner in Sartorius's financial plans and renews the engagement with Blanche.

The search for the superman through myths continues in *Emperor and Galilean* in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891). Shaw asserts the validity of the individual will: "Maximus knows that there is no going back to 'the first empire' of pagan sensualism. 'The second empire,' Christian or self-abnegatory idealism, is already rotten at heart. 'The third empire' is what he looks for: the empire of Man asserting the eternal validity of his own will. He who can see that not on Olympus, not nailed to the cross, but in himself is God."[9] His resorting to myths enabled Shaw to set his ideals beyond the real, existing world, which he wanted to ameliorate through his advocacy of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. In the table of contents of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw considers *Emperor and Galilean* an "Autobiographical Anti-Idealist Extravaganza," thus effectively operating beyond the bounds of the realistic plays.

Soon after *The Quintessence*, in *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), when Cleopatra asks Ftatateeta to murder Pothinus, Caesar instructs Rufio to get rid of Ftatateeta. Caesar says: "If one man in all the world can be found, now or forever to know that you did wrong, that man will have either to conquer the world as I have, or be crucified by it" (II: 290). So in addition to being the great conqueror, Caesar also has a Christ-like aspect. The regenerative element in Caesar is shown when he wants to make "a new kingdom" and build "a holy city there in the great unknown at the source of the Nile" (II: 270). There is a circular, spiral progress finding the future in the "source," the beginning, the past.

Caesar is the dominant character in the play. In *The Perfect Wagnerite*, Shaw puts Caesar in an evolutionary perspective: "Now it is quite clear that if the next generation of Englishmen consisted wholly of Julius Caesars, all our political, ecclesiastical, and moral institutions would vanish. . . . This is precisely what must happen someday, if life continues thrusting towards higher and higher organizations than it has hitherto done."[10] Shaw meant Caesar to be his hero, as he wrote to Richard Mansfield on May 1898: "C & C

is the first and only adequate dramatization of the greatest man ever lived. I want to revive . . . the projection on stage of the hero in the big sense of the word."[11] This is enacted in the play through classical myths.

The mythification of Caesar can be seen in Shaw's new 1912 prologue to the play: classical myths can be taken to elevate Shaw's plays to a higher, spiritual level suitable to show evolutionary demise and regeneration. The power of adding a classical mythic level is visible in the 1912 new prologue to *Caesar and Cleopatra*. The old and new prologues in effect compare a more ordinary dramatic approach and a classical approach expanding space and time through mythic resonances. The original "An Alternative to the Prologue" is a prosaic, down-to-earth dramatic scene, in which Caesar is presented as a man of action, an able soldier seen from the perspective of an Egyptian soldier. On the contrary, the 1912 prologue is a sublime, mock-heroic speech delivered by the god Ra in Memphis presenting Caesar as a demigod. Two different leaders are presented: Pompey is the mighty soldier who adheres to "law and duty," for whom "the way of the soldier is the way of death." Caesar is the "great man" (IV: 694–95) who does not adhere to law and duty, who is creative and unashamed of his own handiwork. He is "on the side of the gods" as "the way of the gods is the way of life" (IV: 673). Evolution runs from Pompey to Caesar, like the old Rome of Pompey passing on to the new Rome of Caesar.

Shaw was not just retelling an old story, as he picked his classical sources. His Caesar is different from Suetonius's Caesar who is "every woman's husband and every man's wife," or the vile and vain tyrant in Shakespeare. A "sixteenth century *Condottiere*, a classic example of the Renaissance prince who acquires power by allying himself with the populace against the ruling oligarchy."[12] Instead, as Shaw reveals to Hesketh Pearson in 1918, his source is mainly chapters in the fifth book of the English translation of Mommsen's *The History of Rome* (1862–66),[13] which has a more favorable view of Caesar, who is depicted as "the only creative genius that Rome produced."[14] Indeed in the play, Caesar defies laws and conventions.

The mythic resonances in the 1912 prologue in effect add another perspective to Caesar by highlighting his godlike qualities and his position in the Shavian Creative Evolution. In his opening address to the Sphinx, he sees himself as a god exiled on earth, a complement to the Sphinx above common mankind. The prologue by Ra presents Caesar in the light of the Sphinx in classical myths, in addition to Caesar the great Roman soldier. Furthermore, the symbolic presence of the Sphinx foreshadows Caesar's death. The Sphinx, a creature with a woman's head, lion's body, serpent's tail, and eagle's wings, was famous for the riddle the Three Muses had

taught her: "What being, with only one voice, has sometimes two feet, sometimes three, sometimes four, and is weakest when it has the most?" Oedipus solved the riddle, saying "Man, because be crawls on all fours as an infant, stands firmly on his two feet in his youth, and leans upon a staff in his old age." Aeschylus in *Seven Against Thebes* called the Sphinx "the man-snatching Cer."[15] Robert Graves explains: "Cer . . . whose name (also spelt Car or U're) came generally to mean 'fate,' 'doom' or 'destiny,' multiplied into *Ceres* meaning 'spites, plagues, or unseen illnesses'—must have been the Cretan Bee-goddess, a goddess of Death in Life."[16] Caesar's affinity with the Sphinx not only foreshadows his death, but also regards his death as martyrdom or sacrifice to fulfil a higher purpose: "My way hither was the way of destiny; for I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman, and part god—nothing of man in me at all" (II: 183). Cer is a goddess of "Death in Life," which may imply that Caesar's death may be a "necessity" to bring forth a better future. The genius of the protagonist may lie in his animal, instinctive power (part brute), his creativity (part woman), and his godhead (part god). To broaden perspectives even further, the prologue by Ra provides the missing piece to put Caesar in evolutionary perspectives. In Egyptian mythology, Ra was the great sun god at Heliopolis. He is a child in the early morning, a man in his prime at noon, and an old man in the evening—the journey of Ra through the day being like the Sphinx's riddle. Ra journeyed through the underworld at night to be reborn at dawn. He is the supreme deity in Egyptian mythology, the prime creator of the physical universe and of men. The god of the life-giving Sun stands for creation and regeneration, though the pattern also includes decay, degeneration, and death. Like Ra, Caesar has been rising to his prime, appearing as a great soldier and emperor in the play, and like the descent of the sun has premonitions of his death. But the parallel of Ra and Caesar shows the regenerative quality of the Life Force, and puts the Shavian protagonist in evolutionary perspectives. This makes Caesar go beyond mortal man and identify him with the Superman.

The Shavian hero asserts his individual will as Shaw writes in the notes to the play: "He [Caesar] has only to act with complete selfishness; and this is perhaps the only sense in which a man can be regarded as *naturally* great" (VII: 303). But the need to evolve into the superman is also there. Shaw writes in *The Perfect Wagnerite*, "In short it is necessary to breed a race of men in whom the life-giving impulses predominate."[17] In the play, this becomes, as Caesar says, "to the end of history, murder shall breed murder, always in the name of right and honor and peace, until the gods are tired of blood and create a race that can understand" (II: 278).

So by the end of the nineteenth century, Shaw has already worked out quite a substantial theory on the Life Force and Creative Evolution through the biblical myth and the Teutonic myth—finally arriving at the classical myth. Shaw would eventually discover that classical myths offer more powerful opportunities.

1900–1917: Experimenting with Classical Myths to Portray His Superman

The period 1900 to 1917 marks a progression from the naturalistic play to making use of classical literature to explain ideas; from drawing parallels to classical myth to making way eventually for the construction of Shaw's own myth of the Life Force and Creative Evolution.

In *Major Barbara* (1905), there are two levels of references to myth. First, there is the use of Gilbert Murray, a famous classical scholar, as Cusins, which makes overt mythical references in the play credible; and second, there is an extended use of a mythic reference to Undershaft as Dionysus. *Major Barbara* is Shaw's most "classical" play, where the Professor of Greek Gilbert Murray and Euripides make their debut on the Shavian stage. The characterization of Adolphus Cusins was inspired by Gilbert Murray, Barbara by Murray's wife Lady Mary, and Lady Britomart Undershaft by Rosalind Howard—Countess of Carlisle, and his mother-in-law.[18] Through Cusins, the script explicitly refers to the classical playwrights when he quotes Euripides to interpret Undershaft's morality:

> UNDERSHAFT. For me there is only one true morality for every man; but every man has not the same true morality. . . .
> CUSINS. As Euripides says, one man's meat is another man's poison morally as well as physically. (III: 90)

As Shaw explains in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*: "Immorality does not necessarily imply mischievous conduct: it implies conduct, mischievous or not, which does not conform to current ideals. All religions begin with a revolt against morality."[19] In this sense, both Undershaft and Cusins follow their own "true morality."

Likewise, Cusins tries to understand Undershaft's motto ("Money and gunpower") through Euripides:

> One and another
> In money and guns may outpass his brother;

[. . .]
But who'er can know
As the long days go
That to live is happy, has found his heaven. (III: 117)

Yet, Cusins fails to understand the significance of Undershaft through Euripides—the mythic reference built structurally into the play. In order to identify this mythic structure, first we have to pay attention to the significance of the inclusion of Gilbert Murray in the play. This goes far beyond Shaw's putting a friend on stage.

The years 1900 to 1917 mark a period of revival of classical plays on the English and American stages and the rise of modernism. Putting Gilbert Murray on stage in *Major Barbara* (1905) is more than using a real-life model for a character. In the same year that *Major Barbara* was written, Murray translated Euripides's *Trojan Women* (1905), which became the archetypal anti-war play. Gilbert Murray also played an important role in the revival of classical drama on stage around that time. According to Chambers, at the beginning of the twentieth century, classical theater in both the United Kingdom and United States meant almost exclusively Shakespeare and his contemporaries. In addition, the reading and production of classical plays at the beginning of the twentieth century was associated with the schools and universities. Gilbert Murray's personal enthusiasm for the production of classical plays, and the immense popularity of his translation of *Tragedy* started to take classical plays out of the academic world. But the available translations, which were phrased in high-flown, late Victorian poetic diction, were still not suitable for production.[20] A turning point, however, took place in May 1915, which saw Harley Granville-Barker's famous production of *Iphigenia in Tauris* at the Harvard Stadium.[21] The interest of the modernists in classical works changed the situation. For example, Eliot, Pound, and Yeats were interested in Greek tragedy: Eliot attacked Murray's translations, cleared classical literature from the rhetoric of a dead poetic tradition, and provided a better understanding of theatrical practicalities. These put classical plays under new light, seen as part of a living theatrical language that can be made use of by writers and producers.

In Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite*, the hero Siegfried needs the power of the Alberics. In this regard, Undershaft is an Alberic figure. He recalls that he "moralized and starved until one day I swore that I would be a full-fed free man at all costs; I became free and great. I was a dangerous man until I had my will: now as I am a useful, beneficent, kindly person" (III: 89–90). To Undershaft, his will cannot be asserted without "money and gunpowder."

But Undershaft is imperfect, and the raw force in "money and gunpowder" needs directions to be used solely for benevolent purposes. The ambivalence of Undershaft's power is more obvious in the Gabriel Pascal film version of 1940–41, where Cusins—when ushered through Undershaft's factory—shouts that he is witnessing "the raw material of destruction," to which the latter replies, "or construction. How about the railway lines?"[22] Cusins, as Undershaft's heir, has to "make war on war" (III: 178), as he will arm the common people against the oppressors. Shaw writes to Gilbert Murray on 7 October 1905, "As to the triumph of Undershaft, that is inevitable because I run in the mind that Undershaft is in the right, and that Barbara and Adolphus, with a great deal of his natural insight and cleverness, are very young, very romantic, very academic, very ignorant of the world."[23] In Undershaft's final appeal to Cusins: "Plato says, my friend, that society cannot be saved until either the Professors of Greek take to making gunpowder, or else the makers of gunpowder become Professors of Greek" (III: 178). What Undershaft means here in referring to the "Professors of Greek" is explained in the aforementioned letter to Gilbert Murray: "I have taken special care to make Cusins the reverse in every point of the theatrical strong man. I want him to go on his quality wholly, and not to make his smallest show of physical robustness or brute determination." Quite fittingly, Cusins's name originates from the Swedish king Gustavus Adolphus, the linguist turned master of the art of war.[24]

Undershaft is a Dionysian character and this mythic reference is built structurally into the play. Ultimately, the play goes beyond quotations from Euripides to the myth of Dionysus to show the inheritance of the spiritual side of Undershaft. He tells Cusins: "I can make cannons: I cannot make courage and conviction. You tire me, Euripides, with your morality mongering. Ask Barbara: she understands" (III: 169). The underlying myth of Dionysus shows the irrational, intuitive aspects of Undershaft's power and Barbara's inheritance of his "religion." In Act II when Cusins says that he is a "collector of religions," he is in effect comparing the rituals of the Salvation Army to the Bacchic rites: "It takes the poor professor of Greek, the most artificial and self-suppressed of human creatures, from his meal of roots, and lets loose the rhapsodist in him; reveals the true worship of Dionysos to him; sends him down the public streets drumming with dithyrambs." Then Undershaft, Cusins, and Barbara are all described as "mad" (III: 120–21), which recalls the madness of Dionysus and his wild array of frenzied Satyrs and Maenads. The Salvation Army meeting at the end of Act II ends as a chaotic Bacchic rite, with Undershaft's trombone and Cusins's drum. The Professor of Greek tells Barbara: "Dionysos Undershaft has descended. I am

possessed" (III: 135). Undershaft can do step dancing, is called a "poet" by Cusins, and spends the night before drinking with Cusins. Dionysus, the god of fertility of nature, a suffering god who dies and comes to life again like the natural cycle, shows the regenerative potentials of Undershaft's challenging Cusins to "make war on war," to destroy and regenerate, made obvious by Barbara's final affirmation:

> CUSINS. Then the way of life lies through the factory of death?
> BARBARA. Yes, through the raising of Hell to Heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow. (III: 183–84)

In losing his name when he becomes the next Andrew Undershaft, Cusins is also like Pentheus the "cousin" of Dionysus who was torn to pieces when he challenged him. Barbara also senses the elemental power of Dionysus in Undershaft's cannon foundry, comparing it to the "earthquake" at Cannes (III: 170). The intensity of his power can be seen in Shaw's instruction to Louis Calvert, who created the role of Undershaft at the Court Theatre in 1905. Shaw describes the scene when Undershaft speaks to the Salvation Army Commissioner Mrs Baines as a "fantasia played on the nerves of . . . (Cusins) and Barbara by Machiavelli Mephistopheles. All that is needed to produce the effect is steady concentration."[25] The synthesis of the Apollonian Cusins and the Dionysian Barbara enacts Shaw's notion of Creative Evolution in a manner that elaborates on the analogous tension between Tanner and Ann in *Man and Superman*.

The sinister ambivalence of the association of Undershaft with Dionysus comes out in a later reference. Shaw wrote to Frank Harris on 4 January 1918 on how he used *The Bacchae* of Euripides to draw parallels that would illustrate his antiwar efforts: "Considering the sensation my *Common Sense About the War* made in November 1914, when it was treason to write otherwise than as a raving madman . . . in the autumn of 1915 I returned to the platform and delivered a harangue . . . in . . . which I recalled the terrible scene in the Bacchae of Euripides, where the Bacchante who thinks she has torn a stag to pieces in the Dionysian frenzy finds that the dripping head she carries in triumph is that of her own son; and I said that many an English mother would wake from her patriotic delirium to the same horror."[26] Gunpowder still kills. There is a need to go beyond the raw power of Undershaft.

The 1910s was a great period of Shaw's use of classical literature. There were *Androcles and the Lion* (1912), *Pygmalion* (1912–13), *Heartbreak House*

(1913–19), and *Back to Methuselah* (1918–20). In the 1910s, Shaw's utilization of classical literature changed, as his needs for dramatic expressions changed alongside his more comprehensive gospel of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. He also gained new inspirations from the writings of his contemporaries. In this period, there were two notable works available to Shaw in this department: Ernest Jones's essay "The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery," published in the *American Journal of Psychology* in January 1910; and Gilbert Murray's translation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, performed in London in January 1912. To Shaw, Sophocles shows rigid conventions constraining human development, while Euripides portrays life, character, and human destiny and provides scopes for further development. Another source of inspiration was supplied by Harley Granville-Barker, who produced the early plays of Shaw, also produced Gilbert Murray's Greek translations.[27] Most notably, he brought Gilbert Murray's Euripides to the United States in 1915 and staged a spectacular outdoor production. Shaw knew of the Granville-Barker productions of Murray's plays.

It was in this context that Shaw reconsidered his previous works under new classical lights: *Man and Superman* and *Caesar and Cleopatra* acquired new classical garments. Without having read Murray's translation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* (typical of Shaw), Shaw wrote to him on 14 March 1911, saying "Roebuck Ramsden & John Tanner in *Man & Superman* are Sophocles & Euripides." Shaw thinks that Sophocles was conventional, "the sort of man the English like, with the brains of a ram, the theatrical technique of an agricultural laborer, the reverence for tradition of a bee, and . . . what the English call 'immense character' with brute artistic faculty for word music galore."[28] He gave *Caesar and Cleopatra* a new prologue as well (see above).

Shaw also needs additional tools for his playwriting. By 1911, there was a need to broaden his scope as Shaw had elaborated on his Gospel of the Life Force and Creative Evolution quite substantially. He thought that the world will and the individual will should work in close cooperation as he wrote in "First Public Conference on Mr H. G. Wells' 'Samurai'":[29]

> In regard to the question of God. We want a reconstruction of our theories. We've got to conceive of God as a powerless power unless it operates through man . . . the world-will is useless without man. Man is the only possible executant; he is God in operation. This belief screws up the sense of responsibility and self-respect. We want to organize Being. If we are told that God is all-powerful and all

> good, and that man is nothing, a sensible man sits down and does nothing; but if he believes that God is no more powerful than himself he buckles to and does some work.

On a similar note, he declares his faith in "The Religion of the Future" (1911): "As for my own position, I am, and always have been, a mystic. I believe that the universe is being driven by a force that we might call the life-force. I see it as performing the miracle of creation, that it has got into the minds of men as what they call their will. Thus we see people who clearly are carrying out a will not exclusively their own."[30] Thus by 1911, Shaw had to find new ways to preach his gospel of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. How can man reaching Godhead be depicted on stage? Creative Evolution takes a long time. So how can it be shown telescopically on stage when performance time is limited? The three unities in classical performances are within twenty-four hours, but Shaw has to show eons of time. It takes something more than a naturalistic stage. To bridge this seemingly insurmountable gap Shaw, among other things, began to experiment with classical myths—to the extent that, whereas there were classical elements in the earlier plays, in *Androcles and the Lion* and *Pygmalion* the whole play is the classical myth.

Androcles and the Lion (1912) shows the spiritual aspect of the Shavian heroes as agents of the Life Force through the classical folktale. Shaw started writing the play on 2 January 1912 and completed it on 6 February, which coincided with his watching the performance of Gilbert Murray's translation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, as he reveals in his letter to the latter dated 3 February 1912.[31] Shaw is not just retelling an old fable, but tries to show the spiritual, visionary, creative will through the relationship between Androcles and the Lion.

Ferrovius, Lavinia, and Androcles represent three stages in Creative Evolution. Shaw's Ferrovius is a new character added to the original story in the ancient fable, which has only Androcles, the Lion, and the Emperor at the end of the story. Shaw draws the plot from the classic tale recorded in Aulus Gellius's *Attic Nights* (second century AD).[32] He adds new characters to show different types of faiths. Ferrovius, for example, can see only the present. The formidable fighter is never quite sure of his Christian faith, and eventually concludes that "the Christian god is not yet" (IV: 633). In the meantime he will serve Mars the God of War, accepting the Roman Emperor's offer of a position in his Praetorian Guard.

Another new Shaw character is Lavinia. It is not surprising that Lavinia is as prominent in the play as Androcles, as Shaw wrote the role for

Lillah McCarthy. Lavinia stands for believers of all religions for she tells the Captain, "Religion is such a great thing that when I meet really religious people we are friends at once, no matter what name we give to the divine will that made us and moves us" (IV: 597). She can see further than Ferrovius, and is willing to die for God, but she does not know what is God: "When we know that, we shall be Gods ourselves" (IV: 624). Both Ferrovius and Lavinia can see the "God that will be," but they are still confined to the present.

In principle, there can be two levels of interpretation for this play. First, as a social play—for apparently the drama in *Androcles and the Lion* is the conflict between the established Roman religion and the outlawed Christian faith. Soon this takes a Shavian social turn: the Christians are persecuted because they do not follow the beliefs of the majority, as Shaw puts in the epilogue that the persecutions are "an attempt to suppress a propaganda that seemed to threaten the interests involved in the established law and order, organized and maintained in the name of religion and justice by politicians who are pure opportunist Have-and-Holders" (IV: 635).

Second, Shaw has further mythologized Androcles. In order to do so, he adds a new character: Androcles's wife Megaera, who thinks that the Roman religion is respectable and classy. Thus, in light of the fact that Shaw was writing *Androcles and the Lion* when he watched the performance of Gilbert Murray's translation of Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex*, the play seems to begin comically with the end of Murray's play; that is, with Androcles followed by his wife Megaera in the prologue. In classical mythology, Megaera was one of the Erinyes or Furies living in Erebus, who represented the old system of retributive justice by avenging crimes, especially marital infidelity, parricide, and perjury. Oedipus is pursued by the Erinyes for his parricide. But Shaw's Androcles takes a comic Dionysiac turn. His Megaera was a big strong woman, daughter of a public house owner, and Shaw's Androcles used to be addicted to drinking. After Androcles pulls the thorn from the lion's paw, he and the lion waltz away from the stage with his wife jealously complaining: "You haven't danced with me for years; and now you go off dancing with a great brute beast that you haven't known for ten minutes." So right at the beginning of Shaw's play, Androcles and the Lion conjure up the images from the myth of Dionysus with the drunkenness and the dancing marking the Dionysiac rites. In addition, Dionysus took the form of a lion several times in classical myths. The horned infant Dionysus tried to evade the assaults of the Titans by turning himself into various shapes, "assuming the likeness successively of Zeus and Cronus, of a young man, of a lion, a horse, and a serpent," until he was cut to pieces in the form of a bull by the Titans.[33] When the three daughters of Minyas

refused to join in the revels at Orchomenus, Dionysus changed his shape and became successively "a lion, a bull, and a panther," and drove them insane.[34] Robert Graves writes: "Dionysus had epiphanies as Lion, Bull, and Serpent, because these were Calendar emblems of the tripartite year—that is, the Great Goddess's tripartite Sacred Year in which the year is divided into three parts: spring, summer and winter. Dionysus was born in winter as a serpent (hence his serpent crown); became a lion in the spring; and was killed and devoured as a bull, goat, or stag at midsummer."[35] The lion has a long tradition as a symbol of spring in classical myth and ancient religious rites. Furthermore, the lion is supposed to ensure the revival of nature in springtime. As Frazer writes in *The Golden Bough*, "animals are often conceived to possess qualities which might be useful to man, and homoeopathic or imitative magic seeks to communicate these properties to human beings in various ways."[36]

Shaw often refers to the Life Force as the "creative spirit in nature," and the regenerative spirit of spring can be found in the mythical roots of the lion. So when Androcles dances with the Lion, it evokes the dance in Dionysiac celebrations. Androcles's willingness to be eaten by the lion rather than dying for "Christianity" or for "his honor as a tailor" shows his readiness to subjugate his individual will to the creative force in nature. He "throws up his hands in supplication to heaven" when he is about to be eaten by the lion, and this also enables the lion to recognize him as its old friend. Unlike the previous Shavian heroes, Androcles sees himself as part of something larger and higher than himself. Shaw's Androcles belongs to another species. While all others were pardoned by the Roman Emperor at the end, Androcles is still thrown into the arena as he is regarded as a "sorcerer" rather than a Christian. In this regard, he illustrates the broadened perspectives and the diminishing individual character in the greater scheme of the Life Force and Creative Evolution.

Classical myth, as the title readily foreshadows, is also prominent in *Pygmalion* (1912). Higgin's role as Pygmalion is of absolute dominance and, I would contend, far more important than Eliza's. However, somewhat paradoxically, the "Mrs" characters, the matrons that used to be the roles women were expected to take at that time, are as important as Eliza. All these show the uphill battle Eliza is fighting to gain her independence and assert her will. Never in any other play has there been such a great difference between the dominance of the male protagonist and the female protagonist. The guiding myth highlights the significance of Eliza's coming to life, and Shaw's reversing the ending to show Galatea breaking away from Pygmalion—thereby claiming her independence.

One can see Shaw's changing use of myth in *Pygmalion*. The origins of the play are social, having its roots in the 1890s when Shaw wrote to Ellen Terry about actor manager Sir John Forbes-Robertson and his leading lady Patrick Campbell: "I would teach that rapscallionly flower girl of his something . . . I want to write (a play) for them in which he shall be a west end gentleman and she an east end dona in an apron and three orange and red ostrich feathers."[37] There is a strong social message about the creation of an individual and her attempt to transcend social intimidations. But by 1912, Shaw added a mythic aura to the play with the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, which highlights the inevitability of Eliza-Galatea becoming a real human being. In the ancient Roman myth, Sculptor Pygmalion loved Aphrodite and made an ivory (or marble) image of her. He lived alone with his statue, shunning his life of fickle women. He prayed to the goddess to give the statue life. The statue was eventually transformed into a real woman (Galatea) and later bore Pygmalion two children, Paphus and Metharme. By contrast, to Higgins, Eliza is a lifeless puppet transformed by him from "squashed cabbage leaves," to a doll at Mrs. Higgins's home, to Duchess Eliza. This is not a new approach, as the role of Eliza is reminiscent of the dancing doll in the ballet *Coppelia*, in Act I of Offenbach's *Les Contes D'Hoffman*—based largely on Olimpia from Hoffman's *Der Sandmann*. The transformation of a disprized girl from humble origins to the topmost ranks of society also has well-known fairy tale counterparts such as *Cinderella, The Ugly Duckling, The Beauty and the Beast*, and *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*. As expected, Shaw topples these myths and fairy tales. For example, while Higgins and Pickering can teach Eliza manners and upper class diction, they can never control what she says. In the end, Shaw's Galatea-Cinderella-Eliza hurls the slippers at Higgins instead of trying on a pair of glass slippers; Eliza Doolittle walks out of her creator's house instead of becoming the princess and living happily ever after with her prince. She asks Higgins: "What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? Whats to become of me?" (V: 142). Socially, Eliza has come to exist as an unintimidated individual in her own right.

Eliza as the "child" undergoes an education when she is socialized by Higgins and Pickering. After this initial stage, Shaw thinks that the child should be left alone to be educated by the Life Force within herself (IV: 25). Eliza is less the experiment of Higgins and Pickering, than that conducted by the Life Force. In *Back to Methuselah*, the Brothers Barnabas think that Evolution is driven by a "force" which proceeds by "Trial" and "Error," and makes numerous "experiments" in its striving toward godhead—a process

dramatizes by making use of the classical myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. The prime moment is the statue coming to life at the end of the myth, which Shaw overturns as he makes Galatea-Eliza become independent of her creator. But he embraces the most important element in the classical myth: the statue comes to life not because of Pygmalion's craftsmanship, but because of the divine power of the goddess Aphrodite—only the divine power in Shaw's play is the Life Force. Thus, *Pygmalion* enacts the Shavian educational process described in "Parents and Children":

> But you had better let the child's character alone. If you once allow yourself to regard a child as so much material for you to manufacture into any shape that happens to suit your fancy you are defeating the experiment of the Life Force. You are assuming that the child does not know its own business, and that you do. In this you are sure to be wrong: the child feels the drive of the Life Force (often called the will of God); and you cannot feel it for him. (IV: 25)

The individual is seen as part of the Life Force's attempt to create the "Superman," or, as Shaw writes, "the fundamental proposition of my creed . . . which is . . . that all living creatures are experiments. The precise formula for the Superman, ci-devant the Just Man Made Perfect, have not yet been discovered. Until it is, every birth is an experiment in the Great Research which is being conducted by the Life Force to discover that formula" (IV: 70). It's an experiment made by the Life Force toward Creative Evolution, not by Pygmalion. Thus, it should come as no surprise that when Pygmalion reappears as a classical character in *Back to Methuselah*, he creates two lifeless automatons that destroy themselves. This will be further discussed below.

1917–21: Deconstruction of the Classical Myths to Construct the Shavian Myths of the Life Force and Creative Evolution

Eventually, the classical myths give way to Shaw's myth of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. Classical myths prove inadequate to present the Shavian myth. *Heartbreak House* (1916–17) features characters imprisoned within the myth of the Trojan War and are predestined to drift into destruction. With the dark shadows of World War I looming in the background, Shaw makes use of the Trojan myth to show the destructiveness of the modern full-scale warfare. I have previously written on the use of Greek myths in *Heartbreak House*.[38] Here I would like to focus on how the classical myth enables Shaw

to demonstrate that the characters' defying the will of the Life Force will result in a drift toward destruction.

Unlike in *Androcles and the Lion* and *Pygmalion*, the mythic characters are breaking away from their casts as Shaw deconstructs the classical myths to make way for his own. Mrs. Hushabye is the central mythic character. She has mythic origins as Hesione in the Trojan War. The origin of the Trojan War is not the abduction of Helen of Troy, but the abduction of Hesione. In classical myths, Hesione was the aunt of Hector who was taken away by Telemon, the Aeacid, to Greece. Hesione's brother was King Priam who sent his son Paris to Greece to save her. This resulted in the abduction of Helen and, ultimately, in the Trojan War. The use of the myth of the Trojan War in the play is obvious: comparing the largest, most destructive modern warfare to date at that time (World War I) to that in mythical history (the Trojan War). Another classical reference is found in the fact that Heartbreak House is built like a ship, suggestive of the ship of state described in Plato's *The Republic*. Linking Plato with the myth of the Trojan War, the original inhabitants of Heartbreak House are Shotover's two daughters Hesione and Ariadne, who in the myth are both victims of the wrath of Poseidon, the god of the sea. The mythic Hesione had no individual will, constantly at the disposal of others, helplessly tied to a rock and left to the monster. Shaw's Hesione is more willful—she's called a "Siren" by Ellie—and sets out to fascinate Mangan and Mazzini to save Ellie from marrying Mangan. In turn, Mangan, the most mentioned character in the play, is paralyzed by Ellie and Hesione. In classical myths, the Sirens were fabulous creatures luring sailors to destruction with their songs. But Shaw's Hesione, in marrying Hector who is a *hushed up* hero, a "Hushabye," also becomes a Hesione who has fallen asleep, always coaxing, kissing, and laughing to escape from the "cruel, damnable world." She was self-hypnotized in her cultured, leisured world of England before World War I. The already mellow Hector in *Man and Superman* indulging in love and romantic idealism develops into Hector Hushabye in *Heartbreak House*, the famous classical hero—now emasculated, hushed, and drowsy.

Lady Utterword's role is as important as Hector's in terms of floor apportionment and direct references to her. She also has origins in classical myths such as Ariadne. From Horseback Hall, she thinks that she "never lived until [she] learnt to ride" (V: 160). In classical myths, Ariadne was also ominously related. She was the daughter of King Minos II, who pursued the maid Britomartis relentlessly until she plunged into her death from a cliff. Ariadne, like Lady Britomart in *Major Barbara*, is also moralistic and bound by social conventions. The mythic Ariadne ran away from

her father, fell in love with Theseus, guided him out of the Labyrinth, and helped him to kill the Minotaur. Likewise, Shaw's Ariadne left her father to marry Sir Hastings Utterword, the governor of all the crown colonies in succession. According to Robert Graves, "Ariadne" is a Fertility goddess, as "ariagne" ("very holy") was the Moon-goddess's title honored in the dance, and the fruitful Barley-mother in the bull ring, with the Sumerian name *Ar-ri-an-de*.[39] The mythic Ariadne married Dionysus, but Shaw's Ariadne left Heartbreak House as she hated its strange, unconventional ways and "longs to be respectable, to be a lady, to live as others did, not to have to think of everything for [herself]" (V: 66). She became like an automaton and married Hastings Utterword who has a "wooden" expression, and Ariadne ends up only capable of repeating "words" "uttered" by other people. But Ariadne is also a Helen of Troy figure—as she is Hector's sister-in-law, and the sister-in-law of the mythic Hector, brother of Paris, is Helen of Troy. Randall in *Heartbreak House* is "Randall the Rotter" who, then, is Paris as he runs after Ariadne-Helen of Troy, and the mythic Paris brought destruction to his country because of his infatuation of Helen of Troy.

Significantly, the Shavian heroine Ellie Dunn is a new addition to the classical myth, and she is as prominent as Mrs. Hushabye from the quantitative perspective of how much she gets to speak (and is spoken about) in the play. Ellie Dunn goes through the lures of the romantic hero: Hector Hushabye pretending to be "Marcus Darnley" and telling her a pack of lies. She wears out her engagement to Boss Mangan, realizing that she has no reason to be grateful to him for saving her father Mazzini Dunn from bankruptcy, as the boss has actually ruined him on purpose. She "marries" Captain Shotover, a "marriage" made in "heaven" where "all true marriages are made." She has become Shotover's "disciple," ready to take on his gospel of "hardship, danger, horror and death" that enabled him to feel the life in him more intensely. The social and political message is clear, as Shaw explains in the Preface that "Heartbreak House is cultured, leisured Europe before the war, and the play is about why Britain drifts into World War I" (V: 12). The complement institution, Horseback Hall, "consists of a prison for horses with an annex for the ladies and gentlemen who rode them, hunted them, talked about them, bought them and sold them, and gave nine-tenths of their lives to them, dividing the other tenth between charity, church-going (as a substitute for religion), and conservative electioneering (as a substitute for politics)" (V: 14). Both Heartbreak House and Horseback Hall are driving the country to a destructive war.

However, the above classical myth was deconstructed to make way for Shaw's own myth of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. Although the

myth of the Trojan War elevates Shaw's play to a universal level, at the same time the characters may potentially be imprisoned within their ominous mythical archetypes, as if their will is immovable within their classical destinies. By the end of the play, the clear, classical form of the classical archetypes collapses into Ellie and Shotover's dreams. If Don Juan tells Ana in *Man and Superman* that he wants to spend his eons in contemplation of Life, the force that ever strives to attain greater power of contemplating itself (II: 651–52), Shotover spends his time in contemplation to achieve "the seventh degree of concentration" so that he can develop a mind ray that will explode the ammunition in the belts of his adversary before the latter can point his gun at him. Shotover can never finish the benevolent contemplation as he has to earn money to keep the house alive by designing life-destroying machines like the magnetic keel that sucks up submarines or the harpoon cannon to kill whales. He tells Ellie, "When you are old: very very old, like me, the dreams come by themselves" (V: 147). He has to rely on rum to pull himself away from self-indulgence, yielding, and dreaming. There is the Dionysiac intoxication and madness, but there is inadequate energy left in Shotover to push pass death to renewal as found in the classical myth. He has to pass his leadership to somebody else, but Hector is an ambiguous candidate:

> HECTOR. I still have the will to live. What am I to do?
> CAPTAIN SHOTOVER. . . . Learn your business as an Englishman . . . Navigation. Learn it and live; or leave it and be damned. (V: 177)

But Hector's response is to turn on the lights of the house. In view of the Zeppelin attack, he seems to be navigating toward destruction as this practically makes the house a target for the bombing. He seems to want to come face-to-face with death to make himself feel alive. Eventually, Shotover's dynamite kills the thief on land and the thief on the sea, that is, Mangan and Billy Dunn. This foreshadows the liquidation of the four children representing Love, Pride, Empire, and Heroism at the end of *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, in which the selection is made by the Life Force. Shotover regards the death of Mangan as "the hand of God" and his last words in the play are "the ship is safe," while Ellie hopes for a return of the Zeppelins. It may be interpreted that in the bombing of the thieves, the Life Force is making the selection. Shaw writes in the Preface to *Back to Methuselah* (1918–20), that "Natural Selection" means "that instead of being evolved to fulfil some vital purpose [*the development of Evolution*] they were the aimless and promiscuous results of external material pressures and accidents

leading to the survival of the fittest to survive under such circumstances. With, of course, the extinction of the unfit" (V: 259). In *Modern Religion II* (1919) written as he was working on *Back to Methuselah*, Shaw dismisses Darwin as banishing mind and purpose from the universe: "We know that there is intention and purpose in the universe, because there is intention and purpose in us."[40] We will eventually evolve into the superman.

The classical myth seems to collapse at the end of the play. The characters with neat one-to-one correspondence between them and their mythic namesakes are the inhabitants of Heartbreak House and Horseback Hall who cannot save the country. Hope is in Ellie Dunn. In "marrying" Shotover, Ellie is furthering the work of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. This may be further explained by drawing a parallel with *The Black Girl In Search of God* (1932), where the Black Girl attempts to find God, and eventually marries the Irishman who tells her that God is "not properly made and finished yet. Theres something in us that dhrivin at Him, and something out of us that's dhriving at Him. . . . Somethin makes plenty of mistakes in thryin to get there. We've got to find out its way for it as best we can, you and I."[41]

Eventually Shaw made a heroic attempt to build his own grand myth of Creative Evolution in *Back to Methuselah*. The play is a medley of the biblical myth, the classical myth, and Shaw's own myth. Shaw needs myths to present his religion, as he writes in the preface, "All the sweetness of religion is conveyed to children by the hands of the storytellers and image-makers. Without their fictions the truths of religion would for the multitude be neither intelligible nor even apprehensible" (V: 330). Shaw even states explicitly, "Creative Evolution is already a religion . . . but it cannot become a popular religion until it has its legends, its parables, its miracles" (V: 332). Shaw makes use of the beginning of the biblical myth to begin his myth of the Creative Evolution: "I try again with this cycle of plays that keep to the point all through. I . . . go back to the legend of the Garden of Eden" (V: 339). *Back to Methuselah* is Shaw's Cycle. The medieval "cycle" plays presented on the feast of Corpus Christi are miracle plays representing in chronological order crucial events in the biblical history of mankind, from the Creation and the Fall of Man, through Nativity, Crucifixion, and Resurrection to the Last Judgement. *Back to Methuselah*, similarly, starts with Adam and Eve learning from the Serpent that they can fix the length of their lives, and ends with the ghosts of Adam, Eve, Cain, and Lilith passing their judgment on mankind's achievements. But while the biblical myth is linear, Shaw's myth is cyclical, featuring Adam resurrecting as the Reverend Haslam and the Archbishop, and Eve reappearing as the Parlor Maid and the Domestic Minister to show that Creative Evolution is spiraling up the evolutionary ladder.

While in *Androcles and the Lion, Pygmalion*, and *Heartbreak House* Shaw builds his plays on the classical myths, in *Back to Methuselah* he deliberately deconstructs the classical myths, effectively demythicizing and demystifying them. But Shaw is aware that he is trying to show something that he cannot show: the longlivers. As he wrote to St. John Ervine on 21 September 1921: "In Methuselah I could not shew the life of the longlivers, because, being a short liver, I could not conceive it. To make the play possible at all I had to fall back on an exhibition of shortlivers and children in contrast with such scraps of the long life as I could deduce by carrying a little further the difference that exists at present between the child and the adult."[42] Thus, instead, he shows the defects of his former realistic heroes. Napoleon—the "Man of Destiny"—is a sophisticated version of Cain earlier in the play, who foresees his own demise. He is "shot" by the Oracle. Napoleon, being a shortliver named "Cain Adamson Charles Napoleon," can at most be a descendant of Adam (the first man) and Cain (the first murderer), who do not have time to age beyond suicidal militant conquests.

Significantly, instead of building the myth of Creative Evolution and the Life Force with classical myths, here in *Back to Methuselah* the classical myths are exploded and pulled apart. Shaw erodes the classical myths by exploding the clichéd pastoral, bucolic setting. It is like a theme park, a show run by the longlivers for the visiting shortlivers. The Oracle, who is authoritative in classical plays, is now merely a longliver in dress up. Zozim is a "young" male longliver dressed up in a Druid's robe—complete with a wig and long false beard. Part V, which Shaw thinks should better be called "As Far as My Thought Can Reach," features activities of the children and bits and pieces of the ancients' life as understood by the children. Shaw builds his own Arcadia, in which there is Strephon's lovesickness, Ecrasia's aestheticism, Pygmalion's science, Arjillax's art and Acis's primitive philosophic speculation. In mythical contexts, "Strephon" was the shepherd whose lament forms the opening of Sidney's "Arcadia" and the name is often used for a rustic lover. "Acis" was the shepherd lover of Galatea. "Chloe" is one of the names of the Greek goddess Demeter, and the Newly Born's name; "Amaryllis" was the name given to a Shepherdess by Theodritus, Virgil, and Ovid. This use of mythical shepherds' names is connected with the biblical myth: Jesus is a shepherd and people are "sheep"—sometimes gone astray, sometimes returning to the fold. The life of the Newly Born was telescoped through indulgences in love and power. Creation is shown through a series of failed attempts. During the Festival Day, the artist Arjillax tries to capture the He-Ancient's intensity of mind by sculpting busts of ugly Ancients. Martellus cooperates with Pygmalion the scientist

and creates two automatons, Ozymandias and Cleopatra-Semiranis. But their Automatons can only respond to external stimulus, and are incapable of thinking.

Unlike his earlier efforts to use classical myths in earnest, Shaw parodies former famous use of classical myths. Shaw's Ozymandias quotes from Shelley's "Ozymandias" (1818), the sonnet about the ruins of a monument colossal statue of King Ozymandias and the futility of human vanity. "Semiramis" can be tracked back to Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (Book II, Canto X) about the mythical, wise, and beautiful queen of Assyria who allegedly killed her second husband and built many cities. Paradoxically, Pygmalion—the mythic artist—cannot create life; and neither can Martellus, who eventually realizes the folly of image making. This is perhaps a warning against idolatry and even a subtle reference to the second commandment. Eventually, the Ancients step forward and redefine "creation," which needs a "direct sense of life" (V: 617). Immortality to the Ancients is disembodied immortal vortices of thought. In a classic case of Shavian anticlimax, such disembodied thought is depicted in the "Sixth and Last Fable" of *Farfetched Fables* (1948) as a Cockyolly Bird.

Shaw's Changing Use of Classical Myths

Shaw's usages of classical myths were constantly changing as his protagonists developed with his theory of the Life Force and Creative Evolution. In the early twentieth century, there were external factors with the growing popularity of reviving classical myths on the British and American stages that partially explain why the classical myths of *Androcles and the Lion* and *Pygmalion* took center stage in Shaw's plays. The classical myths become increasingly important structural elements in the plays, and these classical structures are gradually removed as Shaw's myth of the Life Force and Creative Evolution matures. In *Passion Play*, despite the Christian myth, no mythic characters take central position. The mythic figures gradually feature more prominently in *The Perfect Wagnerite* and *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* until they coincide with the protagonists in *Caesar and Cleopatra, Androcles and the Lion*, and *Pygmalion*. Then there is a dissociation between the protagonists and the classical mythic figures in *Heartbreak House* and *Back to Methuselah*, when Shaw deconstructs the scaffolding of the classical myths to build his own myth of the Life Force and Creative Evolution.

The classical myths prove limited and limiting. While the stories in classical myths are finite with known conclusions, Shaw's myth is infinite as he cannot fully know the destinies of Creative Evolution. Thus at the end

of the cycle, the classical myths are debunked and exposed as hypothetical and provisional. This also reflects Shaw's ultimate intent, as he writes in the "Postscript: After Twenty-Five Years" (1944) to *Back to Methuselah*: "Creative Evolution, though the best we can devize [*sic*] so far, is basically as hypothetical and provisional as any of the creeds" (V: 701–2). Arcadia, a mountainous region in Peloponnese, is commonly taken in classical myths as an ideal of rustic contentment. Through the Arcadian setting at the end of *Back to Methuselah*, Shaw shows that the gospel of Creative Evolution and the Life Force are the ideals as far as his thought can reach.

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NOTES

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1. "Ancient Greece: Myths and Legends" (British Museum), https://www.britishmuseum.org/learning/schools_and_teachers/resources/all_resources/resource_myths_and_legends.aspx.

2. For a retrospective account of the origin and shaping of the modern concept of myth and mythology, see, for example, Fritz Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), esp. chap. 1.

3. Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 341.

4. See *The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw: Collected Plays with Their Prefaces* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1970–74). All citations to the plays and prefaces are given parenthetically in the text with volume and page numbers (Roman and Arabic, respectively) according to this edition.

5. Mary A. Cicora, *Mythology as Metaphor: Romantic Irony, Critical Theory, and Wagner's* Ring (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998), i. For a further, updated reference, see also Daniel H. Foster, *Wagner's* Ring *Cycle and the Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

6. Bernard Shaw, *Major Critical Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 240.

7. Bernard Shaw, *Major Critical Essays*, 270.

8. It is a well-known fact that *Widowers' Houses* began as a joint, collaborative project between Shaw and Archer—a project later abandoned and eventually reorganized by Shaw, who added a third act at the request of Jacob Grein.

9. Bernard Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), 52.

10. Bernard Shaw, *Major Critical Essays*, 266.

11. Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters 1898–1910* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1972), 90.

12. Maurice Valency, *The Cart and the Trumpet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 179, 173.

13. Theodore Mommsen, *The History of Rome* (London: Dent, 1911).

14. Hesketh Pearson, *Bernard Shaw: His Life and Personality* (London: Unwin Hymen, 1987), 212.

15. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vols. 1–2 (1955; rev. ed., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 1:280.

16. Ibid.

17. Bernard Shaw, *Major Critical Essays*, 242.

18. See Sidney P. Albert, "From Murray's Mother-in-Law to Major Barbara: The Outside Story," *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* 22 (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2002), 19–65.

19. Bernard Shaw, *Major Critical Essays*, 145.

20. Colin Chambers, *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre* (London: A&C Black, 2006), 24.

21. Harrison Smith, "The Revival of Greek Tragedy in America," *Bookman* 41 (1915): 409–16.

22. Alfred Turco Jr., *Shaw's Moral Vision: The Self and Salvation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 224.

23. Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters 1898–1910*, 566.

24. Louis Crompton, *Shaw the Dramatist* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1969), 241.

25. E. J. West, ed., "Shaw to Calvert—Magnetic Intensity," in *Shaw on Theatre* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1965), 108.

26. Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters 1911–1925* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1985), 523.

27. Niall W. Slater, "'The Greatest Anti-war Poem Imaginable': Granville Barker's Trojan Women in America," *Illinois Classical Studies* 40, no. 2 (2015): 347–71.

28. *Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1911–1925*, 14.
29. *New Age* n.s. 1 (2 May 1907), 10.
30. Bernard Shaw, "The Religion of the Future," *Cambridge Daily News*, 30 May 1911.
31. Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters 1911–1925*, 73.
32. The fable of "Androcles and the Lion" has been often attributed to Aesop (seventh to sixth century BCE), and it is traditionally included in the *Aesopica* (*Aesop's Fables*), a motley collection of fables credited to him.
33. J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London: Macmillan, 1987), 388.
34. Graves, *Greek Myths*, 1:105.
35. Ibid., 1:108.
36. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 31.
37. 8 September 1897, in Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters, 1874–1897* (London: Max Reinhardt, 1985), 803.
38. Kay Li, "Heartbreak House and Greek Myth," in *Shaw and Other Matters*, ed. Susan Rusinko (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1998), 83–92.
39. Graves, *Greek Myths*, 1:347.
40. Bernard Shaw, *The Religious Speeches of Bernard Shaw*, ed. Warren Sylvester Smith (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1963), 75.
41. Bernard Shaw, *The Black Girl in Search of God and Some Lesser Tales* (1946; repr., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), 80–81.
42. Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters 1911–1925*, 732.