What Makes Johnny Run? Shaw's "Man and Superman" as a Pre-Freudian Dream Play

Rodelle Weintraub*

Abstract: *"Long before Freud was heard of," Bernard Shaw wrote to a friend in 1934, a generation after he had written* Man and Superman, *(1901-1903), "I held that Nature had introduced an element of antipathy into kinship as a defence against incest."* *Although* Man and Superman *appears to be a late-Victorian comedy about love and money and Shaw's philosophy of the Life Force, one of the driving forces that impels both the manifest play and the latent dream play is the incest taboo. It is a taboo which is so universal and so strong, that it affects persons who have brother-sister and parent-child relationships, even if they are not actually family members.*

Ann Whitefield is determined to have as her mate, her first love, John Tanner. Tanner knows he has long loved her and still does. But his terror at having any sexual relationship with her is far stronger than his ardor. For much of the first two acts, Ann manipulates and tempts John as their relationship changes from brother-sister to father-daughter and then pursued lover and determined pursuer. At some point between Act 2 and Act 3, while Tanner and his chauffeur Straker are racing through France and Spain, Tanner falls asleep and the remainder of the play takes place on two levels: the manifest play which includes the literary dream sometimes played separately as "Don Juan in Hell" and the latent dream play in which Tanner's fear of incest is resolved and he is finally able to accept himself not as Ann's brother but as her future husband.

"What makes Johnny run?" What makes Johnny run is what makes "Man and Superman" run. This pre-absurdist play seems deliberately to make no sense. In the first act, a what we might now call a Rolls-Royce radical has been named guardian of Ann Whitefield, a young woman who is old enough not to require a guardian and with whom he and his friend, Octavius, also known as "Ricky-Ticky-Tavy," grew up in a brother-

* Pensylvania State university, USA.

sister relationship although they are unrelated. Now not only is he emotionally Ann's brother, he has become in effect her father.

On 2 July 1901, Shaw drafted an outline and cast list for "The Superman, or Don Juan's great grandson's grandson." Among the characters who are omitted from the final text of "Man and Superman" are John Tanner's parents: George *Whitefield* Tenerio and Mrs. *Whitefield* Tenerio.[1] (Berst, 201-2) There is no suggestion in "Man and Superman" that John Tanner is also a Whitefield and in some way actually related to Ann; yet in those intriguing preliminary notes, there is a hint that Shaw was considering, even if not consciously, the suggestion of an incestuous relationship between Ann Whitefield and JohnTanner. When in the second act he realizes it is he, not Octavius, whom Ann is determined to marry, Tanner flees in the first automobile ever to be put on the stage.

The next act opens in the Sierra Nevada. A group of brigands is headed by Mendoza, a lovesick Jewish London waiter whose Louisa has rejected him in anti-Semitic England because she is not good enough for him. His brigands, all but one of whom are also British, include an anarchist and socialists who argue about which type of socialism is more correct and who are dressed more for cold London streets than for Spain. Their political argument is interrupted when they carjack John and his chauffeur, Straker. 'Enry Straker, who has a polytechnic degree and should be an engineer not a chauffeur, is the brother of Mendoza's Louisa and is more proud of his dropped ***H***'es than the gentlemen are of their Oxbridge accents. Night falls and John and Mendoza dream. In the "Don Juan in Hell" dream scene, Mendoza is the Devil, John is Don Juan, Ann Whitefield is Dona Anna and her other guardian, the elderly Roesbuck Ramsden, is her father. The four debate ideas about heaven and hell, happiness and fulfillment, life and death, and with the exception of the last line of the dream, Dona Anna's exclaiming, "A father – a father for the superman,"[2] (689) there seems so little connection to the frame play that this long scene can be, and has been, played as a separate, complete drama. In drafting the play, Shaw also gave Ann's line to John,(Berst., 201) but in the completed play John says, instead, "Is there a father's heart as well as a mother's?" (729) Shaw wrote the Hell scene interlude before he wrote the social comedy that is the frame play. (Berst. 202) The frame play can also be played without the Hell scene. When the five hour drama is played in its entirety, it is often broken for a supper break as is opera at Glynnebourne.

The third act ends with the arrival of Ann and party, three men and two women, in the company of an armed escort. It is inconceivable that the group of five plus the unmentioned and unseen but inevitable chauffeur has managed to get there in Hector's American steam car. The travellers' original plan was to head for Nice, northeast of Granada. Hector says "When we found you were gone, Miss Whitefield bet me a bunch of roses my car would not overtake yours before you reached Monte Carlo." To Tanner's "But this is not the road to Monte Carlo," Hector replies, "No matter. Miss Whitefield tracked you at every stopping place: she is a regular Sherlock Holmes." (692) The utter

impossibility of her having done so, not knowing where he was headed nor from which port he had embarked, stretches one's ability to suspend disbelief.

The final act takes place in Granada and Ann's party now includes her mother. Mrs. Whitefield had not been in Ann's party in the third act and would have had no idea that Ann and the others would have wound up in Granada. Hector Malone's father, an Irish peasant who fled the famine ("the starvation" 704) and has become the wealthiest furniture manufacturer in the United States, turns up in the same hotel as his son is staying. In an inversion of a Henry James theme, Mr. Malone has sent his son to England to marry a titled lady. But James's millionaires were not Roman Catholic and such a misalliance between a Catholic peasant's son and an upper class Anglican British woman could not have been possible. Even though they might be the possessors of an abbey, they would have been cut by the society so dear to Violet. The senior Malone might have softened and not disinherited his son for marrying a woman without a title, but he would never have countenanced his son's marrying out of the faith.[3] Malone, the otherwise shrewd man of business, has bought stock in an enterprise about which he knows nothing except that it is operated by Mendoza, the waiter turned brigand. Ann compromises John by announcing that she has agreed to marry him, even though he has neither proposed to her nor agreed to marry her. And the play ends with the triumphant Ann treating John as a child. All of this, and more, occurs in a frame play that is generally thought to be a somewhat realistic comedy about manners. Just what is going on here?

In a dream play the latent play, that is the dream, complements the manifest play and solves the deep seated emotional problem of the dreamer.[4] Shaw provides us with numerous clues – the non-linear structure, already described, the language, the splitting of characters, and the symbols – suggesting that he intended "Man and Superman" to be a dream play, one which includes within it another dream that reflects upon and complements the frame play dream. In both the manifest play and the latent play, John Tanner must overcome the incest taboo in order to become the mate of the woman to whom he is both brother and father, having been named her guardian after the father's death. That he is not actually related to her does not affect his feelings as the taboo can occur when children who are not related are raised together as they had been. In the Hell scene, the dream play within the frame play, the Commander, Dona Ana's father, has been killed by Don Juan. Having in this way resolved in the dream his conflict caused by in effect being Ann's father, John must now deal only with the problem of being her brother.

Many of us take some bedtime reading to our pillows. The text suggests that John Tanner may have read himself, and dreamed himself, into his play. One volume seems to have been Kipling's *Jungle Book* (1895), which includes the story of the heroic mongoose Rikki-tikki-tavi. The mongoose kills a father cobra, whose mate attempts to retaliate on humans. The play's ineffectual "Ricky-Ticky-Tavy," the heroine's pet name for her suitor, seems an inversion of the deadly mongoose. Continuing the image, Tanner refers to Ann as a boa constrictor "with ensnaring eyes and hair." The women in Kipling's story outwit and dominate the men (Cauley, 23-4) as do the women in *Man and Superman*.

The other book is suggested in the Preface to the play where Shaw writes, "The theft of the brigand-poetaster [Mendoza] from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is deliberate." [Bodley Head 2, p 518] Reading Conan Doyle in either *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* or in *The Strand Magazine*, Tanner would have found, in the story "Silver Blazes," a retired jockey named John Straker who may metamorphose into John Tanner's chauffeur, Henry Straker. Hector Malone calls Ann a "regular Sherlock Holmes." Perhaps the very literary John Tanner, just prior to the opening of Shaw's play, has taken both Kipling and Conan Doyle to bed, and fallen asleep. In addition, as a gentleman, he had most likely been to a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni.* There are deliberate references to that opera in the dream sequence which opens with "*a faint throbbing buzz as a ghostly violincello palpitating on the same note endlessly. A couple of ghostly violins presently take advantage of this bass [...]. It is all very odd. One recognizes the Mozartian strain*;" Donna Ana's entrance is heralded by a clarinet playing *Donna Ana's song to Ottavio.* (632)

Shaw, by repeatedly using the word *dream*, even when some other word would have done as well, reminds us that this might indeed be a dream. From the start, the play is full of allusions to dreams. In the first act when Ann makes her first appearance, the stage directions say "Ann would still make men *dream*." (549) Tanner in describing the unscrupulous artist says the artist knows women can "make him see visions and *dream dreams*." (557) In the verbal duel between John and Ann in the first act, he tells her "Love played a part in my earliest *dreams* [...]. Yes, Ann: the old childish compact between us was an unconscious love compact [...]. Oh. Don't be alarmed." To Ann's "I am not alarmed." He, aware of the taboo that has not affected Ann, responds "Then you ought to be" (571-3)

In Act two John tells Straker, "I am the slave of that car. I *dream* of the accursed thing at night." (586) As a Freudian symbol, an automobile while more likely to represent a phallus can also represent a female.[5] John tells Tavy that if he marries Ann she will cease "to be a poet's *dream* [...]. You'd be forced to *dream* about somebody else." Tavy answers "There is nothing like Love: there is nothing else but Love: without it the world would be a *dream* of sordid horror." (593) In Act three Mendoza tells Straker and Tanner: "I went to America so that she [Louisa] might sleep without *dreaming* [...]." (627) He then tells Tanner, "[...] these mountains make you *dream* of women – of women." (629) As symbols, the mountains themselves may represent female genitalia and breasts. John answers "They will not make me *dream* of women. I am heartwhole." Mendoza cautions him, "This is a strange country for *dreams*." (629) In the dream play within this dream play, Don Juan tells Donna Ana "Whilst he fulfills the purpose for which she made him, he is welcome to his *dreams* [...]" (659-60) "The romantic man [...] went to his death believing in his *dream*." (655) "I had been prepared for infatuation, for intoxication, for all, the illusions of love's young *dream*." (667) "I had never *dreamt* [...]." (677) "Never in my worst moments of superstitious terror on earth did I *dream* [...]." (682) When morning comes and Tanner and Mendoza awake, Mendoza asks Tanner, "Did you *dream*?" and Tanner responds "Damnably. Did you?" and Mendoza replies, "Yes. I forget what. You were in it." To which Tanner responds, "So were you. Amazing."

(690) In Act four, Ann tells Tavy, "Then you must keep away from them [women], and only *dream* about them." (717) John says to Ann: "When did all this happen to me before? Are we two *dreaming*?" (728)

John Tanner and his friend Octavius can be viewed as being different aspects of the young John Tanner. Both were treated as sons by Ann's father, having had unlimited access to his house. Both love Ann. Tanner tries to resist that love, feeling that somehow it would be inappropriate for Ann and him to mate. Tavy, the romantic side of John, desires nothing else but that consummation. While Ricky-Ticky-Tavy thinks he is an artist and poet, it is Tanner, the author of "The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion," who is the creative one. John will overcome his fear of incest and marry Ann while Tavy will be "that sort of man who never marries." (727) Ann tells them that she will have "my dear Granny to help out and advise me. And Jack the Giant Killer. And Jack's inseparable friend Ricky-ticky-tavy." (554) Granny, Roebuck Ramsden, Ann's other guardian was in his youth a liberal, even a radical. Since he still holds the beliefs and attitudes he had as a young man, Jack considers Ramsden an out-of-date conservative. Ann assures them that "Nobody is more advanced than Granny." (553) We can see in Ramsden another side of Jack, the man he will become. Jack tells Ramsden "You have no more manners than I have myself." (545)Both guardians appear in the dream sequence, Ramsden as Donna Ana's father while Tanner is Don Juan, the libertine who killed Donna Ana's father. In Ramsden we can also see the elderly bachelor that Octavius will become. Ramsden's sister, however, will remain unmarried, unlike Violet, Tavy's sister. Ramsden, the matured John, wants Tavy, the immature John, to reject the friendship of "your schoolfellow" to whom "you feel bound to stand by because there was a boyish friendship between you. Jack could not be turned out of Whitefield's house because "you lived there [...]." (538)

Jack tells Tavy "you must marry her after all and take her off my hands. And I had set my heart on saving you from her!" (545) Tavy says, "I have no secrets from Jack." (559) In a listing of his childhood pranks that Ann describes to Jack she includes "[...] You set fire to the common; the police arrested Tavy for it [...]." (572) When Ann, responding to Jack's description of her as a boa constrictor, throws her arms around him, he exclaims, "My blood interprets for me. Ann. Poor Ricky-Ticky-Tavy!

Ann:	Surely you are not jealous of Tavy?
John:	Jealous. Why should I be? But I don't wonder at your grip on him. I feel the coils tightening round my very self.
Ann:	Do you think I have designs of Tavy!
John:	I know you have.
Ann:	Take care Jack. You may make Tavy very unhappy if you mislead him about me.
Jack:	Never fear: he will not escape you.
Ann:	If you and Tavy choose to be stupid about me, it is not my fault. (576-7)

Tavy having proposed to Ann and been rejected, tells Jack, "You don't understand. You have never been in love."

Jack: I! I have never been out of it. Why I am in love even with Ann [...]. Tavy: I believe we were changed in our cradles, and that you are the real descendent of Don Juan [...]. She has marked you for her own; and nothing will stop her now. (593)

The act ends when Straker informs Jack that Ann is not interested in Tavy "Cause she's arter summon else." Pressured by Jack to reveal who it is, Straker says "You."

John: Me!!

Straker: Mean to tell me you didn't know [...] the marked down victim, that's what you are and no mistake." (610)

Mrs. Whitefield tells Tavy "I don't know which is best for a young man: to know too little, like you, or too much, like Jack." (719) When Ann asks Octavius to congratulate her on being engaged to John, Ramsden says "Jack Tanner. I envy you." and Mendoza,responds, "Sir: there are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it. Mine and yours, sir." and John's and Tavy's. (731-2) Three characters in the manifest play; three facets of the dreamer in the latent play.

In Ann Whitefield and Violet Robinson, Octavius's sister, we can see the dream's splitting of the manifest play's Ann. The stage directions describe Violet as "*a personality which is as formidable as it is exquisitely pretty. She is not a siren, like Ann; admiration comes to her without any compulsion or even interest on her part; besides there is some fun in Ann, but in this woman none, perhaps no mercy either: if anything restrains her it is intelligence and pride, not compassion* [...]." (580) Both women must connive and manipulate in order to marry the spouse of her choice. Ann must trick John into marrying her while Violet is already married but must inveigle her husband's father into consenting to that marriage. In discussing Violet with her brother, Ann says: "You are so softhearted! It's queer that you should be so different from Violet. Violet's as hard as nails."

Octavius: On no. I am sure Violet is thoroughly womanly at heart.

Ann: [...] Is it unwomanly to be thoughtful and businesslike and sensible? Do you want Violet to be an idiot – or something worse, like me?

Octavius: Something worse – like you! What do you mean, Ann?

Ann: [...] I have great respect for Violet. She gets her own way always.

Octavius: So do you.

Ann: Yes; but somehow she gets it without coaxing–without having to make people sentimental about her.

Tavy: No one could get very sentimental about Violet, I think, pretty as she is.

Ann: Oh yes they could, if she made them. (717)

After it is revealed that Violet is a married woman and everyone is embarrassed by their behavior to her except Ann, Violet says, "Yes: Ann has been very kind; but then Ann

knew." (583) In Act four, Mrs. Whitefield says "How I wish you were my daughter, Violet." And Violet answers "There, there: so I am." Ann, projecting her feelings onto Violet, says: "Fie, mother! Come, now: you mustn't cry any more: You know Violet doesn't like it." (724) As Violet leaves, with Mrs. Whitefield, she tells John, "The sooner you get married too, the better." John relies "I quite expect to get married in the course of the afternoon. You all seem to have set your minds on it.

Violet: You might do worse.

She and Mrs Whitefield exit and Ann says: "Violet is quite right. You ought to get married." (724-5)

As in *Arms and the Man*, Shaw's earliest dream play,[6] the play opens in a set permeated by Freudian-type symbols. The study, an enclosed room, and the bookshelves that line the walls, can be interpreted as a uterus and by extension, a woman. On Roebuck Ramsden's right is a window looking out onto a street. The window can be a body orifice, and the street, a place for traffic with women. In the center of the wall is a door opening into the house, repeating the symbolism of the window and the room. "*Against the wall are two busts on pillars*." (534) Both heads and pillars are phallic symbols, with the bodyless head – the busts – symbols of fear of castration. Before a word has been spoken, the audience has been prepared for the erotic problem-solving dream that will follow, one in which the dreamer must overcome his fear of incest and the emotional castration it has imposed upon him.

Tavy protests Jack's describing Ann as a boa constrictor (544). He also describes her as a spider, a bee, and a elephant. All are symbols not of a woman but of the male phallus yet when Ann throws her scarf, called a boa, around Jack he "feels the coils tightening around himself" (576) inverting the symbolism and becoming the penis within the vagina during intercourse.

Act two opens in a park of a country house, "*a motor car has broken down. It stands in a clump of trees round which the drive sweeps to the house, which is partly visible through them [...] a pair of supine legs [...] protrude."* (585) The car and the protruding legs are both symbols of the penis, but in this case the car is an impotent penis while the legs protrude from the cavity beneath the car, a symbol for female genitalia. According to Leon Altman, a Freudian psychoanalyst, "The number of things reconstituted in the image of man's narcissism with regard to the phallus and endowed with its attributes is truly awesome." and the man who dreams of a broken automobile is "preoccupied with his potency." (Altman, 27) The house seen through the clump of trees might represent a woman or her genitalia seen through a clump of pubic hair.

Act three opens in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of Spain. The description of the mountains in early evening is both realistic and symbolic. "*Rolling slopes of brown, with olive trees [...] in the cultivated patches, [...] Higher up, tall stone peaks and precipices, [...] the high road passes a tunnel [...] in the face of the cliff, a romantic cave [...] towards the left a little hill, commanding a view of the road, [...] and an occasional*

stone arch [...]." (613) John Tanner's car drives into this sexually charged atmosphere,[7] and its tires are punctured by the nails the bandits have strewn in the road. The act ends with the arrival of Ann and party. They are heralded by the sound of a shot fired from a rifle, an obvious phallic symbol. Their automobile has also been rendered inoperable because of the nails strewn on the road. Ann had bet Hector a bunch of roses if he could overtake John before he arrived at Monte Carlo. Having won the bet, he reminds Ann that she now owes him those flowers. "Flowers, like eyes, can stand for either [...] female genitalia," (Altman, 25) but it is his wife Violet, not Ann, whom he beds.

Act four opens in a garden. In the background are, of course, more hills, with the Alhambra on the top of one of them. "*If we stand on the lawn at the foot of the garden looking uphill, our horizon is a stone balustrade of a flagged platform [...] Between us and this platform is a flower garden with a circular basin and fountain in the centre, [...].*" (596) Since the setting is a garden, there are many flower beds, clipped hedges, and such. Since it is walled and gated and, contains furniture, the space is a room as well as an out-of-doors space. It is in this space that Violet manipulates her father-in-law into accepting her and Ann tricks John into becoming her fiancé. While still struggling against his having to marry Ann, John responds to her "you do not love me," "It is false. I love you [...]. But I am fighting for my [...] honour." (729) In both the manifest play and the dream play Ann overcomes that delicacy and John's resolve. Having conquered the emotional taboo of incest, in both the manifest play and the dream play, he can marry the woman he loves.

Notes

1 Holograph Manuscript, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection, New York Public Library, Astor, Lennox and Tilden Foundations, as quoted in "Superman Theater: Gusts, Galumphs, and Grumps," Charles A. Berst, *SHAW Unpublished Shaw*, v. 16.University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, 202-3. Italics mine.

2 All quotations from the play are from *The Bodley Head Shaw,* v. 2, 493-733.

3 Later in the century, when rich Catholics sought titles for their daughters they went to the Continent to purchase Catholic nobles. A notable exception was Joseph Kennedy's daughter Kathleen who married an English nobleman and whose mother then refused to recognize her as a daughter.

4 For a more detailed discussion of a dream play, see Rodelle Weintraub, "Johnny's Dream: Misalliance," *SHAW: The Neglected Plays,* 171-86.

5 Some commonly accepted symbols are listed in Leon I. Altman, *The Dream in Psychoanalysis,* 24-30.

6 See Weintraub, R. "Oh, the Dreaming, the Dreaming" *Arms and the Man*, in *Shaw and Other Matters.* University Park, the Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998, 31-40.

7 Rolling slopes and mountains : female genitalia; tall stone peaks : phalluses; precipices breasts; caves: bodily cavities; stone arch: female genitalia.

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