Bernard Shaw
(1856 – 1950)
A Bibliography
Bernard Shaw
(1856 – 1950)

George Bernard Shaw (26 July 1856 – 2 November 1950) was born in Dublin, the son of a civil servant. His education was irregular, due to his dislike of any organized training. After working in an estate agent's office for a while, he moved to London as a young man (1876), where he established himself as a leading music and theatre critic in the eighties and nineties and became a prominent member of the Fabian Society, for which he composed many pamphlets.

He began his literary career as a novelist; as a fervent advocate of the new theatre of Ibsen (The Quintessence of Ibsenism, 1891) he decided to write plays in order to illustrate his criticism of the English stage. His earliest dramas were called appropriately Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant (1898). Among these, Widower's Houses and Mrs. Warren's Profession savagely attack social hypocrisy, while in plays such as Arms and the Man and The Man of Destiny the criticism is less fierce. Shaw's radical rationalism, his utter disregard of conventions, his keen dialectic interest and verbal wit often turn the stage into a forum of ideas, and nowhere more openly than in the famous discourses on the Life Force, «Don Juan in Hell», the third act of the dramatization of woman's love chase of man, Man and Superman (1903).

He is the only person to have been awarded both the Nobel Prize for Literature (1925) and an Oscar (1938). These were for his contributions to literature and for his work on the film Pygmalion, respectively. Shaw would have refused his Nobel Prize outright, because he had no desire for public honors, but accepted it at his wife's behest: she considered it a tribute to Ireland. He did reject the monetary award, requesting it be used to finance translation of Swedish books to English.¹

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