

BERNARD SHAW

AS A

POETIC DRAMATIST

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS: This thesis attempts to define Shaw's meaning for the terms "poet" and "poetry" as they appear in his prose works, and to compare that meaning with the usage of modern criticism. It examines in the light of these definitions some passages selected from Shaw's plays, pointing out the oracular and often Biblical nature of their rhythm and imagery, and making a distinction between those speeches which are rhetorical or persuasive and those which are poetic or introspective. It then explores in detail the rhythmic dialogue and symbolic significance of three dramas, Major Barbara, Heartbreak House, and Saint Joan, contending that the creative ability which is present in these plays may reasonably be called poetic.

PREFACE

My aim in conducting this study is to examine seriously Shaw's claim to be a poet, and to consider whether it has any significance in relation to his plays. The idea that Shaw should be called a poetic dramatist is one which automatically arouses scepticism in the reader. G. B. S. has been assessed as a writer of comedy, and of political and social polemic, but the fact that he sometimes referred to himself as a poet, and to his work as poetic drama, has been either ignored, or treated as a Shavian flippancy. In his lifetime Shaw projected his acquired "persona" so forcibly that the resentment and antagonism which it often aroused is still rather widely felt, leading to some judgments of his play which I feel to be based less upon literary assessment than upon dislike of the writer. Shaw's critical conclusions and quoted remarks, especially those about himself, are even more prone to be received in this way than are his plays. While I realise that many of the dramatist's observations, particularly in old age, were provocative and self-admiring rather than truthful, I feel that the fairly frequent application in Shaw's prose of the term "poetic" to himself and his work should not be ignored. My interest has been increased by the growing attention of certain critics to the rhythmic qualities of some of Shaw's dialogue, and to the symbolic resonances within his greater plays. I have therefore attempted in this thesis to examine his claim to be a poet seriously, not in an attempt to prove its truth or falsity, but as a new angle from which to view his style as a writer and his methods as a dramatist. Although we may not admit Shaw to be a poet according to any modern definition, it is worth-

while to discover his own meaning for the word, and to assess whether in writing his plays he measured up to his own poetic standards. If, going further, we can observe in some plays qualities which modern critics would term poetic, this will justify the examination not only from the historical but from the literary point of view. The question is not so much "Is Shaw a poet?" as "What light does his claim to be a poet throw upon his plays?" With this end in mind I have in the first place looked at his own prose statements on the subject, and have discussed selected passages from his plays, but my main argument concerns three dramas which in my opinion contain poetic qualities, Major Barbara, Heartbreak House, and Saint Joan.

All references and quotations from Shaw's plays are taken from The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw, (London: Odhams Press, [n.d.]), and all references and quotations from his prefaces are to be found in The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw, (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965).

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CHAPTER I

SHAW'S DEFINITION OF A POET

The terms "poet" and "poetry" are found fairly often in Shaw's critical writings, sometimes alone, sometimes as part of a group of activities which the dramatist puts together because of a common quality which he sees in them. Since Shaw tends to group and synthesise, it is useful, when attempting to define his meaning for the category of "poet", to begin by considering his general definition of the artist. In his early critical work The Sanity of Art, written as a reply to Max Nordau's imputation that contemporary art was degenerate, Shaw suggests a high destiny for the creative man:

The great artist is he who goes a step beyond the demand, and by supplying works of a higher beauty and a higher interest than have yet been perceived, succeeds, after a brief struggle with its strangeness, in adding this fresh extension of sense to the heritage of the race.¹

The "extension of sense" of which Shaw speaks has a double meaning. On one level he is speaking physically, judging art by the "validity of its pretension to cultivate and refine our senses and faculties until seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling and tasting become highly conscious and critical acts with us."² On another level the artist serves the moral senses, and as an artist-philosopher, impelled by his "higher but vaguer and timider vision"³, he must make for himself a new morality,

¹G. B. Shaw, "The Sanity of Art", Modern Critical Essays, (London: Constable, 1932) p. 315.

²Ibid., p. 315.

³Shaw, "Preface to Plays Pleasant", p. 729.

often in conflict with that of the society around him, but capable of influencing the beliefs of a new generation. His art, according to Shaw, will then be of the "first order" of morality, with its ideas original and not derivative, a category which the dramatist distinguishes from the "second order" work of those artists who simply reflect the morality of their own age.¹ In technique, too, the artist should disregard old forms:

In creative art no ready-made rules can help you. There is nothing to guide you to the right expression for your thought except your own sense of beauty and fitness... (which) is necessarily often in conflict not with fixed rules, because there are no rules, but with precedents.²

Shaw's ideas on the nature and function of creative art are obviously influenced by his religious beliefs. He sees art as a tool of evolution, which for Shaw was not Darwin's blind natural selection, but Butler's experimental Life Force, engaged in the deliberate process of Creative Evolution, seeking higher and higher goals. Shaw called himself a Vitalist, a servant of life, a tool of the Life Force. The artist in his role of pathfinder was, he believed, such a tool, as were great statesmen, prophets, or philosophers, and the common function of these men was more important to Shaw than their differences. "Inspiration and moral grandeur" were the shared qualities of "our prophets and poets, from Langland to Blake and Shelley,"³ their creations were vehicles of

¹ Shaw, "Preface to The Irrational Knot", p. 688.

² Shaw, "The Sanity of Art", p. 321.

³ G. B. Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, (London: Constable, 1932) III, 258.

"revelation and inspiration", and the highest level of human consciousness was represented by "the philosophy, the poetry, the art and the statecraft of the world."¹

Poetry as an art-form was to Shaw, therefore, an instrument of the Life Force, and the poet was a seer, a planner of Utopias,² with a vision of how man's life might evolve. The high gift of poetry, however, was not necessarily an asset; it was more often a "terrible destiny and crushing burden"³, a gift of exultation for which the recipient paid the price of life-long loneliness, giving up the "small beer of domestic comfort" for the "majestic and beautiful kingdom of the starry night."⁴ On a less exalted level, Shaw gave some idea of the area within which poetry functions, particularly in plays, when he suggested that "the passions and frailties, humilities, confessions and renunciations...of the instinctive human creature"⁵ were the material of poetic drama, and that it was the business of poets to throw themselves strenuously "into the most yearning and vital intercourse with humanity"⁶ Human emotion was the stuff of poetry, and

¹Ibid., p. 201.

²Shaw, "Preface to Man and Superman", p. 185.

³Shaw, "Preface to Autobiography of a Super Tramp", p. 798.

⁴Shaw, on several postcards, 8 March, 1920, quoted by George A. Riding, "The Candida Secret", The Spectator, 185 (Nov. 17, 1950) p. 506.

⁵Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, II, 89.

⁶Ibid., p. 87.

not the sectional and temporal "isms" which had no power to "move a man to the mighty effort which is needed to produce great poetry." In this connection, he recognized that the problem play, and in particular A Doll's House, was below the poetic level.¹

On the details of poetic technique in plays Shaw is less than specific. He makes an apparent distinction between poetry and rhetoric without defining either, when describing his choice of Lillah McCarthy to play Ann Whitfield in *Man and Superman*. Lillah, he says, "was saturated with declamatory poetry and rhetoric from her cradle."² The phrase "poetic atmosphere" is used rather broadly in his early criticism to describe the imaginative effect which diction, action, and stage picture may produce in combination,³ and much later he writes to Stella Campbell of the poetry underlying the "bustle and crepitation of life" in his own plays.⁴ In the same very general sense he speaks of You Never Can Tell as "a poem and a document, a sermon and a festival."⁵ His remarks on rhythm are more concrete. "Metric patterns" and "the devastating tradition of blank verse" he discards in favour of the freer rhythms, closer to music, of the "impassioned prose writers from

¹Homer Woodbridge, George Bernard Shaw: Creative Artist, (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1963) p. 162, quoting Shaw. "Symposium on the Problem Play," Humanitarian, 1895.

²Shaw, "Foreword" to Lillah McCarthy, Myself and My Friends, (London: T. Butterworth, Ltd., 1933) pp. 5-7.

³Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, I, 76.

⁴Alan Dent (ed.) Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell: Their Correspondence, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952) p. 18.

⁵G. B. Shaw, "Letter to Wm. Archer", 10 July 1906, in Charles Archer, William Archer, (London, 1931) p. 295.

Bunyan to Ruskin." ¹ The composer and poet become almost interchangeable in this context, as he speaks of the decay of formal pattern:

In the nineteenth century it was no longer necessary to be a born pattern designer in sound to be a composer. One had but to be a dramatist or poet completely susceptible to the dramatic and descriptive powers of sound.²

A suggestion that Shaw anticipated the modern need for symbolism in poetry is contained in his Advice to a Young Critic, in the letter of June 10th, 1896. "Candida", he says, "is the poetry of the Wife and Mother -- the Virgin Mother in the true sense." ³ Elsewhere he speaks of the "motifs" present in his plays,⁴ and again, while voicing his admiration for Blake, he reveals his own desire to be "the iconographer of the religion of my time."⁵

I have noted above that Shaw sometimes speaks of poetry, in a very general sense, as being present in his plays. He rarely speaks of himself directly as a poet, but indirect suggestions of this type are to be found in his criticism. In recalling his early novels, he uses the term "immature poet" as a metaphor for his own experience,⁶ and elsewhere he speaks of his feeling of unity with the great artists of the world: "Mighty poets, painters and musicians were my intimates...[I lived] on the

¹G. B. Shaw, "The Perfect Wagnerite", Major Critical Essays (London: Constable, 1932) p. 261.

²Ibid., p. 261.

³G. B. Shaw, Advice to a Young Critic, and Other Letters, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1963) pp. 49-50.

⁴G. B. Shaw, Letters to Granville Barker, ed. C. B. Purdom, (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1957) p. 198.

⁵q.v. Irving Fiske, "Bernard Shaw and William Blake," G. B. Shaw, ed. R. J. Kaufmann, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965) p. 170.

⁶Shaw, "Preface to Cashel Byron's Profession ", p. 690.

heroic plane imaginatively." ¹ His references to poets and artists with whom he felt a particular affinity, "whose peculiar sense of the world I recognise as more or less akin to my own", are fairly frequent.

Bunyan, Blake, Hogarth and Turner, Goethe, Shelley, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Ibsen, Morris, Tolstoy and Nietzsche are included in the most exhaustive list of such influences. ² The catholicity of Shaw's category of servants of the Life Force is evident here.

In forming his ideas about the nature of poetry, Shaw was affected by the views of several of the writers in the catalogue above. The concept of the artist as pathfinder for the ethics and sensibilities of the race is one in which he was greatly influenced by Shelley. The name of Shelley appears frequently in Shaw's prose, and it is his work which the dramatist recognizes as having the most powerful effect upon his early development: "I had read much poetry; but only one poet was sacred to me: Shelley." ³ The influence was one not so much of technique or subject-matter as of moral and philosophical outlook. Shelley was an iconoclast, repudiating duty and tearing up scripture in the service of ethical progress. Popular religion, conventional marriage laws, neglected children, slaughtered animals, all aroused Shelley's indignation, as they did his disciple's. Denounced by his fellow-men because they feared his vision of the future, Shelley accepted the loneliness of the poet, and also his

¹ Shaw, "Preface to The Irrational Knot", p. 686.

² Shaw, "Epistle Dedicatory to Man and Superman", p. 162.

³ Shaw, "Preface to Immaturity," p. 664.

sorrow:

It was not through joyless poverty of soul that Shelley never laughed, but through an enormous apprehension and realisation of the gravity of things that seemed mere fun to other men.

Poets were to Shelley "hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration... unacknowledged legislators of the world."² To Shaw, the poet who could use his technique to arouse the conscience of his fellows so that they might see the possibilities of life, and destroy the social evils which plagued the miserable century of his birth was fulfilling his function of prophet and seer.

A study of Shelley's influential essay, Defence of Poetry, suggests that this work was a major source of many of Shaw's ideas about poetry and the poet. Shelley's belief that the poet, in exercising his function, comes into direct contact with the world of Platonic ideals, which is true reality, resembles Shaw's idea that the artist is in touch with a higher level of consciousness than the ordinary man. Shelley's definition of poetry is, like Shaw's, a comprehensive one:

Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined, to be "the expression of the imagination."³

Poets, or those who imagine and express this indestructible order [the world of Platonic ideals] are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the

¹Shaw, "Quintessence of Ibsenism", Major Critical Essays, (London: Constable, 1932).

²P. B. Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry", The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, (London & New York: The Julian Editions, 1930) VII, p. 140.

³Ibid., p. 109.

institutors of laws and the founders of civil society and the inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers, who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion.¹

Shelley comments on the practice of the ancient world, which relates poets to legislators and prophets, and states, as Shaw does after him, his belief that the poet comprises and unites those functions. This he does by enlarging the imagination of his hearers, that faculty which enables man to identify himself with the sorrows and joys of others, and which thus elevates his moral sense.

If Shelley suggested to Shaw the need for originality in the social and moral field, William Blake stood as an example of the poet as prophet and seer. Irving Fiske's perceptive article "Bernard Shaw and William Blake", which G.B.S. himself commended, explains the feeling of kinship which the later artist had for the earlier in terms of their shared religious outlook.² In spirit a revolutionary like Shelley, repudiating convention and calling for freedom of the emotions, Blake was also a visionary, looking beyond social good and evil in his search for the meaning of life. He was to Shaw "the most religious of our great poets,"³ whose attempts to "open the immortal Eyes/Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity"⁴ corresponded with Shaw's desire to act as

¹Ibid., p. 112.

²Irving Fiske, "Bernard Shaw and William Blake", G.B.Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Kaufmann, p. 170.

³Ibid., p. 170.

⁴Ibid., p. 170.

"iconographer of the religion of my time". The religion of his time was for Shaw the Nietzschean religion of the Life Force, for which Shaw had found himself waiting after his experience with Shelley had confirmed his negations.

To the philosophy of the Life Force Shaw was to give his life, with a devotion as total as that of another artist whom he deeply admired, John Bunyan. Shaw's reading of A Pilgrim's Progress in childhood had given him a foretaste of the terror and glory of poetic and religious insight. Bunyan's vision of life as a road of struggle, danger and triumph appealed to the hero-worshipper in Shaw, while the Biblical cadences which "soar like the sunrise or swing and drop like a hammer"¹ established a rhythm which he was later to imitate. Bunyan achieved greatness as a "field preacher who achieved virtue and courage by identifying himself with the purpose of the world as he understood it."² He possessed, therefore, like all the other artists with whom Shaw identified himself, the vision of himself as a servant, being used for a mighty purpose. He was a pathfinder, like Langland, Blake and Shelley, whom Shaw described as prophets and poets, creatures of inspiration and revelation, men with a vision of the possibilities of human life, to whom cruel industrial reality was unendurable. The inspiration which classical and Renaissance poets had attributed to the power of the Muses, Shaw allegorized as the striving of the Life Force, which he, as an aspiring artist-philosopher,

¹Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, III, 4.

²Shaw, "Epistle Dedicatory to Man and Superman", p. 163.

willingly served:

This is the true joy of life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap-heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.¹

As a corollary to his belief in the Life Force, Shaw followed Shelley in his division of artists into two orders of morality, the lower of which he stigmatized as "romantic", concerned with masking or idealizing the truth, while the higher included those artists whom he admired, who faced and served life in its total reality. He saw himself as one of the elect. Of his second novel, The Irrational Knot, he said, while admitting its faults:

It is a fiction of the first order...in which the morality is original and not ready made. Now this quality is the true diagnostic of the first order in literature, and indeed in all the arts, including the art of life.²

This distinction enabled Shaw to separate those who had influenced him positively from the poets of whom he disapproved. It divided those who accepted the ready-made view of life proffered them by society from those who could face a realistic vision of the future. The heroism of Bunyan, to whom the world was a terrible place, but who fought and defeated its dangers, was more to Shaw's taste than the sentimentality of Swinburne, however sweetly he might sing of merriment and love. Swinburne,

¹Ibid., p. 163.

²Shaw, "Preface to The Irrational Knot", p. 688.

like Tennyson and Herrick, was one of the poets whom Shaw distrusted, because he achieved his effects by the use of the "arts of illusion and transfiguration,"¹ which Shaw the Puritan saw as cutting him off from reality.

This was a criticism made from within, in the voice of a former disciple, for in his childhood and adolescence Shaw had saturated himself in the romanticism which was the prevalent artistic mood of the mid-nineteenth century. Brought up in a household where emotions were sublimated through music, he became familiar with the romantic operas of Mozart before he was ten. While his physical life was dull and squalid, the land of dreams provided a route of escape. Like John Tanner in Man and Superman, the young George Bernard Sardanapulus lived a secret life of the imagination which surpassed all the stage romanticism he was later to encounter. William Irvine describes the alluring mirage of romantic literature which Shaw encountered in the works of Tennyson and Browning, Arnold and Carlyle.² This early word and sound immersion gave him a deep understanding of the romantic caste of mind and expression and of its value on its own terms. As a lonely child, he needed dreams, and he did not lose sight in later life of the worth of the cult of the Uranian Venus, which could raise the young mind from the level of the Philistine herd. Its dangers, however, were clear to him too, for "a surfeit of beauty and an excess of voluptuousness"³ could only be rewarded by the

¹Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, III, 172.

²William Irvine, The Universe of G.B.S., (New York: Whittlesey House, 1949) pp. 112-113.

³G. B. Shaw, Sixteen Self-Sketches, (London: Constable, 1949) p. 114.

fate of Odysseus' men on the island of Circe. "Life is nobler than that,"¹ as the Shelleyan figure Marchbanks put it. While recognising the skill of the decorative poets, he could not in adult life admit them to the level of those whom he admired, the artist-philosophers. They had "no depth, no conviction, no religious or philosophic basis, no real power or seriousness,"² although these pure enchanters could manipulate instinct and emotion to a level of unaccountable ecstasy.

Shaw's famous quarrel with Shakespeare was based on this distinction, for while in his dramatic criticism he praised the superlative word-music which Shakespearian actors so often destroyed, he attacked a philosophy in the plays which seemed to him fundamentally pessimistic and nihilist, contributing nothing to ethical progress. Similarly, the intellectual and moral power which he found lacking in Tennyson and Swinburne was not to be recompensed by their technical skill. The use of metrical ability as sheer decoration, while expressing third-hand ideas, was to Shaw a form of refined savagery, the work of an insensitive mind which regarded art as a "quaint and costly ring in the nose of nature!"³ Art separated from life in this fashion became destructive rather than vital, particularly in its effect upon the second-rate mind. Original thought seemed to Shaw the fundamental quality of good art, and of works without this freshness he wrote, "They have the unreality, and consequently the

¹ Shaw, Candida, p. 152.

² Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, II, 181.

³ Ibid., I, 179.

tediousness, of the images which the imagination produces when, instead of being solidly fed on experience, it is merely excited by the contemplation of other works of art."¹ On these grounds he annihilated "Mr. Swinburne, who expresses in verse what he find in books as passionately as a poet expresses what he finds in life."²

Some second-rate poets were deficient not only in morality but in technique, which Shaw felt should be, like ideas, created anew to fit the new situation, often finding itself in conflict with earlier precedents. Shaw's debt to music is observable in his remarks about technique, for while he disliked the strongly repetitive patterns of the writers of "pretty lyrics", he admired the "poetry" which he sensed in the flowing movement of Beethoven's symphonies. Conscious of the movement away from stereotyped verse-form, he attacked writers such as Austin Dobson for using conventional metre. Freedom of thought was to be accompanied by freedom of poetic movement, not only in verse, but in the drama, where he admired Ibsen, who disregarded the old stage tricks, and substituted for them a "forensic technique of recrimination, disillusion, and penetration through ideals to the truth, with a free use of all the rhetorical and lyrical arts of the orator, the preacher, the pleader and the rhapsodist."³

The problem involved in isolating Shaw's definition of poetry is evident in this quotation. Instead of separating, analysing in detail, and observing differences, he usually groups, synthesises, and implies

¹Ibid., II, p. 98.

²Ibid., II, p. 181.

³Shaw, "Quintessence of Ibsenism", Major Critical Essays, p. 146.

similarities. The poet is defined by his likenesses, to the preacher, the prophet, the orator. With them he shares the capacity to see beyond the range of common vision, and the dedication to serve the evolutionary force which will change prophecy to reality. Because of his visionary powers, he is unable to accept contemporary social and moral patterns, and is forced in his art to suggest new ones which will better serve the new age. As a corollary, he refuses to employ traditional techniques, but must create his own forms to suit his new ideas. The only details of technique which Shaw mentions, however, are that the poet should develop a more fluid rhythm than conventional metrical forms allow, and that symbolism can be a vehicle for expressing imaginative truths.

In his use of the terms "poetry" and "poet", Shaw is more often talking about himself than about his work. Self-description was an activity which he enjoyed, and which he practised continuously, analysing himself as tirelessly as any subsequent critic. "The crow who has followed many ploughs"¹ defined himself as journalist, music-lover, dramatist, Satanist, vegetarian, Socialist, Vitalist philosopher. At one time he was a "reasonable, patient, consistent, apologetic, laborious person, with the temperament of a schoolmaster and the pursuits of a vestryman"²; at another, while outwardly poor and shabby, he was an insider in the world of the mind³; while in his old age he described himself to Stephen Winsten

¹ Shaw, "Preface to Three Plays for Puritans", p. 753.

² Shaw, "Epistle Dedicatory to Man and Superman", p. 149.

³ Shaw, "Preface to Immaturity," p. 680.

as a writer of "essentially poetic dramas"¹. Shavian critics have followed Shaw's lead, in focusing first on the man and only secondarily on his work, causing Frederick McDowell at the M.L.A. conference on Shaw in 1959 to point out the serious gaps in existing scholarship. Biographical material has been plentifully provided by Archibald Henderson, F. H. Rattray, William Irvine and St. John Ervine, but the perceptive analyses of G. K. Chesterton, and later Eric Bentley, were for many years among the few comprehensive attempts to criticize the plays. Even these concentrated mainly on an explanation of the ideas behind the drama, rather than on the literary skill used in its creation. Shaw's mind was the phenomenon to be explained, while his plays were seen mainly in the light of his intellectual characteristics, as expressions of Puritan morality, of progressive politics, and of Nietzschean philosophy. Since 1959 the situation has improved, and the publication of A. S. Downer's The Theatre of Bernard Shaw,² Martin Meisel's Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre,³ R. J. Kaufmann's G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays,⁴ and J. P. Smith's The Unrepentant Pilgrim,⁵ have begun to meet McDowell's demand for

¹Stephen Winsten, Days With Bernard Shaw, (London: Hutchinson, [1948 ?]) p. 19.

²Alan S. Downer (ed.) The Theatre of Bernard Shaw: Ten Plays Chosen and Discussed, (Toronto: Dodd, Mead, 1961).

³Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963).

⁴R. J. Kaufmann (ed.) G.B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965).

⁵J. P. Smith, The Unrepentant Pilgrim: A Study of the Development of Bernard Shaw, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1965).

more detailed critical attention to the plays and to the philosophy behind them. Stylistic analysis, however, apart from Richard Ohmann's illuminating Shaw; the Style and the Man,¹ is still in its infancy.

With this gradual increase of serious attention to his plays, many early judgments on Shaw's superficiality are being altered, in strange parody of the dramatist's favorite device of "peripeteia" or unexpected reversal. "The real joke", as he pointed out frequently, "is that I am in earnest."² Chesterton and Bentley were able to see the solid structure behind his political credo, and to analyse his philosophical outlook, so that by the forties he was recognized as a serious dramatist of ideas, a superb rationalist. Recognition of his imaginative qualities, however, has been slower in arriving. As late as 1959 Erik Erikson could speak of G.B.S. as "the old atheist"³, a viewpoint hardly borne out by J. P. Smith's study of Shaw as a religious writer.⁴ For many years Shaw's music criticism was denigrated or ignored, but by 1965 Boyd Neel could applaud his ability as a major catalyst in the nineteenth-century revival of music in England.⁵ Stylistically, the same contradictory situation is to

¹Richard M. Ohmann, Shaw: the Style and the Man, (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1962).

²Quoted by Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw, (2nd ed.; New York: New Directions, 1957) p. 187.

³Erik Erikson, "Biographic: G.B.S. (70) on George Bernard Shaw (20)", G. B. Shaw, ed. R. J. Kaufmann, p. 25.

⁴Smith, The Unrepentant Pilgrim.

⁵Boyd Neel, "Shaw and Music", Shaw Seminar Papers-65 (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1966) pp. 55-61.

be found. G. Wilson Knight describes the prose of the plays as "bare" and "colourless".¹ Ohmann has done much to illustrate the incompleteness of such a statement, by noting the "highly tuned awareness of similarity in dissimilars which "in a poet...might have found expression in a penchant for metaphysical trope."² Shaw's prose, this critic feels, uses comparison in more dilated form than would a poet, but nevertheless creates a style rich in texture and meaning. Ohmann might agree with T. S. Eliot's assessment, used to illustrate the distinction between prose and poetry as employed in the theatre, that Shaw is "one of our two greatest prose stylists in the drama."³

Towards Shaw's claims to poetic power, however, Eliot was less generous. He called him "dramatically precocious and poetically less than immature."⁴ Yeats allowed him some imagination, but not the ability to use it; to him Shaw was "an atheist who trembles in the haunted corridor."⁵ Ezra Pound dismissed him completely, as a "mere louse."⁶ If these judgments suggest a reaction to the man rather than to his work, and are therefore closer to invective than to criticism, T. R. Henn's negative assessment in

¹ G. Wilson Knight, "Shaw's Integral Theatre", G. B. Shaw, R. J. Kaufmann, pp. 128-129.

² Ohmann, Shaw: The Style and the Man, p. 14.

³ T. S. Eliot, "Poetry and Drama", Selected Prose, (London: Penguin Books, 1953) pp. 68-69.

⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

⁵ W. B. Yeats, "Letter to George Russell (AE), July 1 1921 ", The Letters of W. B. Yeats, ed. Allan Wade, (London: Hart-Davis, 1955) p. 671.

⁶ Quoted by Bruce R. Park, "A Mote in the Critic's Eye: Bernard Shaw and Comedy," G. B. Shaw, ed. R. J. Kaufmann, p. 43.

"The Shavian Machine" gives more literary detail:

Ibsen was a poet; Shaw, taking over from those elements of Ibsen's art which best fitted his own optimistic scepticism, could only produce poetry from the teeth outwards; in spite of three notable attempts. (In The Doctors' Dilemma, John Bull's Other Island, Saint Joan)¹

Henn deprecates the weakness and sentimentality of Dudebat's speeches, and goes on to attack Shaw's "attempt to solve the problem of lyric speech at the moment of greatest tension" in the trial scene in St. Joan. He feels a lack of rhythmic unity in the speech of defiance, and a consciously poetic tone which is out of keeping with Joan's character. He dislikes the Synge-like rhythms which he observes here, feeling them inappropriate in the work of a man who he believes is not a tragic artist:

The sense of a tragic pattern is all-important; if this does not emerge from the interaction of character, the pattern must be brought out by imagery or symbol in the broad poetic movement. That poetic statement cannot be applied, at those points of the play where the dramatist thinks that they are demanded by the theatrical context; it must be, as it were, latent from the very beginning of the play, as much in its Image as in its language.²

In this essay T. R. Henn, while denying Shaw poetic power, realises that in St. Joan he was making a deliberate attempt to be poetic. Other critics apply the term more positively to some of Shaw's dialogue. Homer Woodbridge calls this same oration "a great poetic speech of defiance"³;

¹T. R. Henn, "The Shavian Machine", G. B. Shaw, ed. R. J. Kaufmann, p. 162.

²Ibid., p. 169.

³Woodbridge, George Bernard Shaw, p. 121.

A. C. Ward observes, like Shaw himself did, the "suppressed poetry" within some of the plays¹; the image of suppression is enlarged by Pirandello when he remarks:

There is a truly great poet in Shaw; but this combative Anglo-Irishman is quite willing to forget that he is a poet, so interested is he in being a citizen of his country, or a man of the twentieth century society.²

In the same vein G. B. Purdom, though he feels that Shaw is not more than an incipient poet in the modern sense, suggests that he is genuinely poetic according to Plato's definition, where "all arts are kinds of poetry, and their craftsmen all poets." He adds the rather ambiguous idea that Shaw wrote out of direct poetic apprehension, but that his drama is not poetry.³ Elsewhere, however, he compares Shaw with Chekhov in being poetical without writing verse, and applies the term "poetic" to Candida, Back to Methusaleh, and Good King Charles' Golden Days. That individual taste influences the critic's judgment of this question rather strongly is suggested by the fact that Homer Woodbridge, in contrast with Purdom, feels that only in Caesar and Cleopatra and St. Joan is the poet in full command, while in others, such as John Bull's Other Island, Misalliance and The Applecart, the dramatic poet is in uneasy alliance with the philosopher-reformer.⁴ Robert Brustein isolates Heartbreak House

¹A. C. Ward, Bernard Shaw, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1957) p. 8.

²Quoted by B. R. Park, "A Mote in the Critic's Eye: Bernard Shaw and Comedy", G.B. Shaw, ed., R. J. Kaufmann, p. 44.

³C. B. Purdom, A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw, (London: Methuen, 1963) pp. 86-87.

⁴Woodbridge, George Bernard Shaw, p. 163.

as a play containing "ambiguous, highly charged dramatic poetry"¹ whereas R. J. Kaufmann breaks away from the attempt to apply the term to particular passages or plays:

Shaw's poetic power is not to be judged by his spasmodic, self-conscious, now faded attempts at "fine writing", but by the nervous vitality with which his lines follow the contours of practical emotions and create an original syntax to express the precise qualities of his characters' wills.²

Martin Meisel, on the other hand, sees Shaw's poetic power not as all-pervasive, but as a specific talent exercised at particular times, and distinguished from rhetoric and argument:

Having discarded the vehicle of the five-act blank verse tragedy, Shaw embedded rhetorical flights and poetic techniques in the verbal substance of an argumentative comedy.³

Elsewhere he gives more detail to the analysis, describing how in the later plays there is sometimes "a sudden shift to a patterned, semi-poetic, ritualistic speech [which] indicates a passionate intensity of perception or revelation which transcends the ordinary levels of the play."⁴

Stanley Weintraub, in "The Avant-Garde Shaw," his contribution to the Shaw Seminar in 1965, enlarges upon this idea that Shaw's dialogue contains different levels of intensity. He distinguishes Shaw from the representational dramatists because of his use of the pre-naturalistic

¹Robert Brustein, "Bernard Shaw: The Face behind the Mask", G.B. Shaw, ed. R. J. Kaufmann, p. 114.

²Kaufmann, G.B. Shaw, p. 12.

³Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre, p. 8.

⁴Ibid., p. 437.

stage convention that characters may have written into their roles an artificial amount of self-awareness. Such increased self-consciousness enables the character to use non-realistic eloquence where necessary. Weintraub observes the tendency of Ibsen and others to modify downwards the level of dramatic language, to approach the speech of real life, and points out that this tendency hinders the dramatist if he attempts to express the whole range of human experience:

To overcome this limitation Shaw employed the player whose speech had vitality beyond what would be normal for his role, using normal conversation speech throughout the play, but shifting into intensified rhetoric (possibly poetic prose, or even verse) at the points of crisis. The technique is psychologically valid, for at times of crisis or peaks of emotion we all reach for another and more metaphorical level of language (at its lowest level that of the formerly unprintable variety.)¹

Weintraub notices intensified rhetoric in Caesar's apostrophe to the Sphinx, the speeches of Don Juan to the Devil and the defiant outburst of St. Joan at her trial, and he describes as semi-poetic Father Keegan's chat with the grasshopper in John Bull's Other Island, The Mayoress's speech in Getting Married, the trio lament in Heartbreak House, and the quintet of Adam, Eve, Cain, the Serpent and Lilith at the end of Back to Methusaleh. Such technique, he feels, is the germ from which the allegorical extravaganzas of the thirties grew. It provided for Shaw the opportunity of creating "a reality of ideas and emotions which goes beyond

¹ Stanley Weintraub, "The Avant-Garde Shaw", Shaw Seminar Papers 65, (Toronto: Copp-Clark, 1967) pp. 36-37.

a committment to external details."¹

The critics whom I have quoted fall into two groups. Some use the term "poet" in Plato's, Shelley's, or Shaw's sense, suggesting that because Shaw is imaginative, or lacks imagination, he is or is not a poet. This group includes Yeats, Pirandello, and, to some extent G. B. Purdom. Others disregard Shaw the man, and base their judgment upon an analysis of his style. Of these, T. R. Henn feels that Shaw's use of lyric speech and powerful rhythm is not integrated into the fabric of his action, and that he fails to use repetitive symbolism to form an overall poetic pattern for his plays. Others such as Robert Brustein and R. J. Kaufmann equate poetry in Shaw's dialogue with ambiguity and nervous vitality, while Martin Meisel and Stanley Weintraub argue in opposition to T. R. Henn that the change of style which he deprecates is a merit rather than a fault, since at these points the full emotional meaning of the play is expressed.

In forming a twentieth-century judgment of Shaw's dialogue it seems to me that, while we must remember the dramatist's own definition of a poet, we cannot form a satisfactory assessment of his powers on his own terms alone. By Platonic or Shelleyan definition Shaw is certainly a poet, a maker. To discover, however, whether his plays "enlarge the sensibilities of the race" in the moral and social sense is a task for the historian. In considering Shaw's success at "refining the senses" we come closer to the literary realm, since this implies a study of dramatic

¹Ibid., p. 38.

imagery. His suggestions that rhythm and symbolism are part of the nature of poetry are relevant to a modern approach, though not sufficiently detailed. In the following chapters I will examine some of his plays, or sections of plays, along the lines proposed by T. R. Henn and Stanley Weintraub, looking within the individual speech at its rhythm, vocabulary, imagery and emotional power, and within the total play for its repetitive symbolic pattern. I would define poetry, in opposition to rhetoric, as a highly personal utterance, concerned with looking inwards to the speaker rather than out at the listener, on the lines of W. B. Yeats' dictum. "We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry."¹ The rhythm of a poetic passage, while not forcibly metrical, should be distinguishable from the long, undulating rhythms of rhetoric or the random patterns of conversation. Its language should be cognitive, achieving, as Auden says, "a bringing to consciousness...of emotions and their hidden relationships".² It should be evocative, recalling to the mind a multiplicity of associations. The linear nature of scientific and prose vocabulary should be replaced by the layered language of irony and paradox, of imagery, metaphor, or symbol. Within a whole play the skilfully developed and repeated symbol should form a subterranean theme, preparing the audience subconsciously for the eruptive moment at which the poetic meaning of the drama takes full verbal form.

¹W. B. Yeats, "Per Amica Silentia Lunae", Mythologies, (London: MacMillan, 1959) p. 331.

²Quoted by Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw, (New York: New Directions Paperback, 1957), p. 131.

CHAPTER II

SHAW AS A POET: ONE CRITIC'S OPINION

The only full-length discussion of Shaw's claim to be a poet which I have found is contained in Bruce R. Park's article "A Mote in the Critics Eye: Bernard Shaw and Comedy", contained in R. J. Kaufmann's collection of critical essays, G. B. Shaw¹. Mr. Park notes that, apart from a few exceptions, modern literary critics have treated Shaw with contempt, refusing to consider his work as literature. He himself is concerned to identify the kind of literature which Shaw writes, and to examine the attitude which informs his drama. Despite the unwillingness of any contemporary poet to acknowledge his claim, Park quotes Shaw as telling Stephen Winsten: "I am a poet, essentially a poet" (p. 45) a remark which the writer feels was mainly a cry for attention, a reaction to the neglect of serious critics, who, Shaw suspected, ignored him because of his lack of poetic power. Throughout his life, Park feels, Shaw was torn by a conflict between his desire to be an artist and his sense of political and social responsibility. In Mr. Park's estimation, the artist lost the battle.

An illustration which is used to strengthen the thesis in this article is G. K. Chesterton's criticism that "Shaw has never had piety" (p. 43) which, as Mr. Park reads the context, implies that Shaw was not part of

¹Bruce R. Park, "A Mote in the Critic's Eye: Bernard Shaw and Comedy", G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. R. J. Kaufmann (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965) pp. 42-56.

the European literary tradition. The dramatist himself testified to the truth of this, Park feels, by admitting that what he gained from poets such as Shelley and Morris were not literary qualities but attitudes of behaviour such as vegetarianism and forthright speech. His habit of compiling lists of his illustrious literary and philosophic ancestors while claiming that he was proud to be a journalist was, the critic feels, typical of the ambiguity of his situation, in which the artist, as Pirandello and Edmund Wilson have suggested, was smothered by the political man.

Mr. Park goes on to analyse what he feels to be Shaw's failure to penetrate the deepest levels of human experience. The dramatist was, he feels, too dependent upon reason and too interested in the structures which reason invents. His powers of observation were limited, so that he saw, not the individual object, but the generalised category, homogeneity rather than detail. Along with this liking for rational fact, the article suggests, came a dislike for such allegory as is found in the Bible and a distrust of poetry and poets. To illustrate the last point, Mr. Park quotes remarks which Shaw made about Swinburne, about love poetry, and about the masks shaped by idealist poets. He then describes the division which Shaw made between first-and second-order poets (or, as the article puts it, between "true and false poets") and suggests that for Shaw, the poet was a species of Superman, "the repository of an intenser consciousness, a more complex organisation, a greater vitality" (p. 46) The ability to spin tales, and put words together effectively was a lesser skill, not in Shaw's opinion sufficient to earn a writer the name of poet.

Mr. Park now defines modern criticism's view of language, which is "layered, [and] contains all the modes of thought, feeling, and perception which the experience of ages has successively deposited." (p. 47) He describes poetry as "the literary species which exploits language in depth!" (p. 47) In contrast, he asserts that "to Shaw, the best poetry is prose", (p. 47) and he defines the dramatist's prose as compact, non-metaphoric, linear, and intended to convey a single exact meaning. Mr. Park feels that Shaw drew a qualitative distinction between prose and poetry, to the detriment of the latter. As an example he refers to Shaw's attitude to blank verse in the following way:

Shaw detested blank verse because he thought it just enough to a rhetorical discipline to make poetry. Again the Puritan Shaw emerges: poetry was easy, therefore less than prose. Poetry as something in a man was a bag of tricks with language, poetry as the man was an attitude of mind towards truth. (p. 48, n. 6)

In this distinction between poetry as a craft and poetry as an attitude of mind, Mr. Park finds the source of the opposition between modern critics and Shaw, for "the terms which modern critics have taken from the tradition to define poetry were to Shaw terms for the ornamentation which kept verse from being prose." (p. 49) While he thought of poetry as decoration, prose to Shaw was organic, containing creative life, the same essence which encouraged evolution in politics, in society, in architecture, and in music, and which was derived from the evolutionary Life Force. In the case of music, Mr. Park finds his hypothesis of the ambiguity in Shaw's position verified; as a lover of music he sees the dramatist as torn between the two extremes of expression, between pure form and pure pattern,

or between Wagner and Mozart, to both of whom he was passionately attached. Life and art were apparently in conflict within him, so that while during his maturity he attempted to escape from the demands of art, in his old age he longed for what he had missed.

The article now goes on to suggest that in pressing his claim to art in the wrong direction Shaw played into the hands of his detractors. It presents R. P. Blackmur's distinction between the "writer", who is in some part a social reformer, and the "poet", whose main concern is with the nature of words, and concludes that according to this definition Shaw is a writer, not a poet. He is, however, a dramatist, a category which modern criticism tends to ignore, having devoted most of its attention to poetry. Even if critics admit the existence of drama, Park suggests, they ignore comedy, and elevate tragedy as the dramatic archetype. Because of this, such a critic as Francis Fergusson, in The Idea of a Theatre,¹ refuses to allow that Shaw is an artist, because he is not a tragedian. Fergusson sees him as inferior to Pirandello because he rationalizes rather than uses myth as a basis on which "many versions of human action may be shown together to the eye of contemplation." Shaw, Park feels, is certainly a rationalist in the tradition of Plato, where "moralities are used as motifs" (p. 53), and where matter is considered only a shadow of the real, final essence. Back to Methusaleh in particular, the article suggests, shows the Platonic ideal where matter and art are both outgrown.

¹ Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

Like Plato, Shaw banished art from civilization because his greatest loyalty, Park feels, was to man as citizen.

Modern criticism, the article goes on, has moved away from the Platonic idea of rational man to a concept of "essential man", whose thought is mythopoeic. Civilization and comedy, however, are both based on the triumph of rationality, whereas tragedy is created by a hero who reaches outwards, away from the community. To Francis Fergusson, comedy is an inferior form because it reinforces the stability of the community which it represents. Shaw's "emancipated parlor," where, Fergusson suggests, the secure basis of their little world, the eternity of the drawing room, is never seriously questioned" (p. 54) is not big enough to contain significant action, whereas tragedy can reflect the greatest heights and depths of human experience.

Mr. Park disagrees with Fergusson's view of tragedy as the archetype of drama, and suggests that while tragedy realises the full potential of individual man, comedy is complementary and equally important, in that it shows man "undermining or sustaining an existing social order". (p. 55) The comic world takes civilization as its framework, whereas tragedy pits man against the unknown. Shaw's work is comic. He subjects his characters to the eye of reason. While the tragic hero, Park feels, inhabits the cosmos and the myth, and is alienated from society because of his individual grandeur, "Shaw and the writers of comedy live in the city, where the stars are seldom seen". (p. 55)

Shaw has suffered, this writer feels, because he has encouraged critics to look for other qualities in his plays than actually exist there.

He is not a poet, not a tragedian, but a writer of comedy, and can only be justly criticized if he is thus recognised.

"A Mote in the Critic's Eye" contains a number of valuable suggestions about the nature of Shaw's work. Mr. Park's argument that Shaw should be considered as fundamentally a comic dramatist is convincing, and is supported by the fact that of Shaw's fifty-one plays, at least thirty are primarily light in mood, extravagant in tone, and concerned more with the dilemmas of society than with the nature of individual man. The dialogue of his lighter plays is strictly prose dialogue, witty, conversational, and based on a clash of ideas. Pygmalion is perhaps the epitome of such plays. The article is correct, I think, in refuting Frances Fergusson's implication that all drama should be measured against the yardstick of Oedipus Rex. In outlining Shaw's definition of "poetry" Mr. Park is also correct in suggesting that Shaw differed from modern critics in his use of the term, and that he divided poets into two categories, only one of which he admired. In limiting Shaw's total dramatic output to the area of prose and comedy, however, Mr. Park has in my opinion unnecessarily narrowed the scope of possible criticism. Can Heartbreak House, for example, be adequately assessed as a comic picture of civilized city life, projected "clear and small as a photograph" with its characters "shrink[ing] en bloc in the eye of reason?" (p. 55) The world of the cosmos and the myth, the landscape of tragedy, is, as I hope to show in the following chapters, not so alien to Shaw's imagination as Mr. Park believes.

My major area of disagreement with the article, however, is with the writer's discussion of Shaw's attitude to poetry. While suggesting at a late point in the article that Shaw was a Platonist, Mr. Park does not allow for the fact that the dramatist's definition of the poet was based on Plato's ideas. Shaw's poet is "a species of superman", (p. 46) a definition which seems to Park not Platonist but paradoxical, since he feels that this clashes with Shaw's dislike of sentimental poetry. While allowing Shaw to follow Plato intellectually he does not explore fully the Shelleyan and Platonist implications behind the dramatist's use of the term "poet", but judges him as though he should be using the word as modern critics do. To judge Shaw's work by modern standards is of course, a necessary second stage in the exploration, and one which should be accompanied by a study of Shaw's dialogue; but I feel that Mr. Park's preliminary attack on Shaw for his use of the term is unfair, because it does not adequately define Shaw's meaning for the word. Moreover, in attempting to show that the dramatist was engaged in self-deception on this subject, he bases his argument on extracts from Shaw's conversations and critical works rather than upon the plays, and sometimes quotes or interprets in a misleading manner.

His first quotation from Shaw on the subject for example, is an unidentified remark to Stephen Winsten, "I am a poet, essentially a poet." The only remark of this kind which I have found in Winsten's books reads, "My plays are essentially poetic dramas, and should be sung."¹ The latter

¹Stephen Winsten, Days with Bernard Shaw, (London: Hutchinson, 1948) p. 79.

remark is more moderate and defensible than Mr. Park's quotation, although even in this form it requires justification or dismissal through a study of the plays, which this critic does not attempt. Later he quotes another remark made to Winsten, in which Shaw laments that "the one thing that might have given me satisfaction has been denied me, and that is art." (p. 43) Park in his text equates the term "art" with "poetry", although he modifies this in a footnote by suggesting that the usage "seems to be quite general, although he was probably thinking of painting." If Shaw was thinking of painting, the equation with poetry is valueless.¹ It seems unlikely in the total context that Shaw was using the term generally, since it would be most uncharacteristic of him to deny himself the status of artist. As I have suggested in Chapter I, much of his criticism is concerned with defining the nature of the artist, and with asserting his affinity with the great creative writers and musicians. A single remark made at the age of ninety seems to me an insufficient basis for a contrary argument.

Another weak point in Mr. Park's thesis occurs when he reinforces his criticism of Shaw's claims to poetic power by quoting G. K. Chesterton's remark, "Any Latin, or member of the living and permanent culture of Europe, will sum up all I say in one word: that Shaw has never had piety." (p. 43) Mr. Park reads the context of this quotation as meaning that Shaw was not part of the European literary tradition, and therefore lacked the necessary background for a poet. He locates these words as occurring in

¹Winsten, in his Preface to G. B. S. 90, (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1946) says that Shaw regretted not having been a painter.

the 1909 edition of Chesterton's George Bernard Shaw. In fact they occur in the 1935 addition, entitled "The Later Phases",¹ and they refer not to the European literary tradition, but to the Catholic religious heritage of which Shaw was not a part, and to the love of home and country which were killed in Shaw, Chesterton believes, during his unhappy childhood. The term "piety" is defined by Chesterton a few lines after the comment which Mr. Park quotes:

The cult of the land, the cult of the dead, the cult of that most living memory by which the dead are alive, the permanence of all that has made us, that is what the Latins meant by Pietas; and that is what I meant by the thing from which an Irish Protestant of genius was so tragically cut off. Shaw had really a great deal of Religion, in the sense of spirituality: he has Religion but no Piety.

(p. 116)

Chesterton's other objection to Shaw is that he lacks romance and patriotism. This does not, I believe, justify Mr. Park's suggestion that the lack which Chesterton felt in Shaw was specifically literary or poetic. The next point in the article rests upon this one, for Mr. Park attempts to prove the statement which he believes Chesterton to have made, by quoting Shaw as having derived his vegetarianism, but not his technique, from Shelley. Mr. Park is here being rather selective in his quotation. As I have pointed out in my first chapter, Shaw frequently mentioned his imaginative debt to Shelley, who helped to form his mind as well as his personal habits, and who was particularly important in influencing his definition of a poet. Shaw was also, as his critical works testify, widely

¹G. K. Chesterton, "The Later Phases", George Bernard Shaw, (3rd ed.; London: Guild Books, 1949) p. 116.

read in Shakespeare, Fielding, Moliere, Bunyan, Blake, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Dickens, William Morris, and Ibsen, to quote only the most well-known literary influences upon him. His readings in philosophy and politics, and his vast knowledge of music, would not perhaps be considered relevant to the making of a poet's mind, but if he were indebted to no other literary source, his familiarity with the Bible would surely qualify him as part of the tradition to which Bunyan belonged. Eric Bentley has noted Shaw's frequent use of the images and cadences of the Bible,¹ while Henderson remarks:

Shaw's knowledge of the Bible, aided by an extraordinarily retentive memory, was amazing; and he has asserted that he was "saturated" with the Bible and with Shakespeare before he was ten years old. So profound were the influence and solace of the Book of Books, in his case, that throughout his life he was never without a Bible. He read straight through the Old Testament and the four Gospels "from a vainglorious desire" as he puts it "to do what no one else has done."²

Shaw himself related how he showed academic brilliance at school on only one occasion, by coming second in a Scripture examination.³ While his inattention at school may have left him ignorant of the classics, therefore, his record of wide reading in English literature is surely worth remembering, when considering whether or not he is part of the "European literary tradition".

¹Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw, (New York: New Directions Books, 1957) p. 67.

²Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956) pp. 30-31.

³Quoted by Henderson, George Bernard Shaw, p. 19, n. 8.

The argument of "A Mote in the Critic's Eye" has up to this point been concerned with drawing conclusions from some of Shaw's remarks about himself, and from the comments of others about him. Now it goes on to discuss his attitude to poetry and poets, which it describes as one of distrust: "Shaw coveted the prestige which the European literary tradition has accorded poetry, but distrusted poetry and poets." (p. 45) To support this statement, it quotes from The Quintessence of Ibsenism:

Young and excessively sentimental people live
on love, and delight in poetry or fine writing
which declares that love is Alpha and Omega...
Let the Sapphos and Swinburnes sing as sweetly
as they can, when we think of great poets we
think of their brains, not of the concupiscences.

(p. 45)

I have pointed out in Chapter I that Shaw disliked romanticism in poetry, particularly if, as with Swinburne, it was accompanied by technical virtuosity. The quotation above clearly applies to this kind of verse, not, as Mr. Park at first suggests, to all poetry. His conclusion that "Shaw distrusted poets, because they masked facts with beauty" (p. 46) is therefore inaccurate. He later recognizes this point, when he discusses Shaw's division of poets into two orders, but calls the contradiction an "artificial paradox" on the part of the dramatist, rather than admitting his own misuse of quotation. He goes on to define adequately the two orders of morality in art which Shaw postulated, although by calling them "true" and "false" he adds a dimension which Shaw did not intend. Citing Shelley, Wagner and Ibsen as artists whom Shaw admired, he concludes that "if false poets...were dedicated to concealing the 'facts', true poets were those who tore aside the veil." (p. 46) This is certainly one of the distinctions which Shaw drew between artists of the first and second order

of morality, although he defined it more fully by stipulating that a poet of the first order had a duty, not merely to destroy, but to create a new vision of truth more demanding than the old comfortable illusions. This is the genuine basis of the dislike which Mr. Park notes for metrical patterns and ornament in language. Shaw attacks these features, not as obnoxious in themselves, but as sterile when unaccompanied by serious and original thought. Mr. Park suggests that Shaw "detested" blank verse. Shavian criticism of Shakespeare, however, testifies to the love and admiration which Shaw felt for Shakespeare's metrical and verbal craftsmanship; his objection was not to the language as such, but to the ideas within the plays, which he felt to be unoriginal. Poets whom he did attack as merely shallow word-spinners, such as Swinburne and Austin Dobson, would hardly be rated any more highly by today's critics.

Mr. Park's attempt to disprove Shaw's claims to poetry by referring to the dramatist's own words on the subject does not seem to me well-handled. The core of his argument, however, which suggests a qualitative difference between Shaw's prose and genuine poetry, is a tenable hypothesis. In my opinion, however, it cannot be supported or disproved by collecting critical opinions alone, or by making unsupported assertions such as "to Shaw, the best poetry is prose." If the language of Shaw's plays is considered linear, intellectual, and scientific, lacking any poetic qualities, only an examination of his dramatic dialogue will verify or disprove this hypothesis. I propose to make such an examination in the following chapters.

CHAPTER III

SOME POETIC ASPECTS OF SHAW'S STYLE

The first performance of Mrs. Warren's Profession at the New Lyric Club on Jan. 5th, 1902, was greeted by the London critics with "an hysterical tumult of protest, of moral panic, of involuntary and frantic confession of sin...."¹ The "sudden earth-quake shock to the foundations of morality"² which Bernard Shaw observed within the audience for this long-postponed staging of a banned play, was an effect which delighted him, for it satisfied his definition of a work of art as a catalyst, a medium for stretching, however painfully, the minds and sensibilities of those who experienced it. A similar roar of execration had followed the first performances of his earlier plays, Widowers' Houses and The Philanderer. These works met Shaw's criteria for art of the first order of morality, by their original treatment of their themes, and by their ability to shock the mind into a recognition of new truths. Unlike the work of those practitioners of drama and poetry who separated their art from living experience, Shaw's early plays, as he assured Archer³, were based on first-hand knowledge, both of rent-collecting and of philandering. These works, therefore, apparently possess two of the qualifications which Shaw deemed essential to great art.

¹G. B. Shaw, "Preface to Mrs. Warren's Profession", p. 220.

²Ibid., p. 220.

³A. Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. 1956) pp. 529-530, n. 10.

No critic apart from Shaw himself, however, has suggested that the Unpleasant Plays contain any poetic qualities. The first and last have been admired as strong and ironic drama, at times approaching tragedy, but the imaginative power which inhabits Heartbreak House or St. Joan had evidently not yet developed. The most emotionally intense passage of Mrs. Warren's Profession, where Vivie attacks her mother's way of life and is magnificently countered, is a good example of the nature and quality of Shaw's dialogue at this period:

Vivie: [more and more deeply moved] Mother: suppose we were both as poor as you were in those wretched old days, are you quite sure that you wouldn't advise me to try the Waterloo bar, or marry a laborer, or even go into the factory?

Mrs. Warren: [indignantly] Of course not. What sort of mother do you take me for? How could you keep your self-respect in such starvation and slavery? And what's a woman worth? What's life worth? without self-respect! Why am I independent and able to give my daughter a first-rate education when other women that had just as good opportunities are in the gutter? Because I always knew how to respect myself and control myself. Why is Liz looked up to in a cathedral town? The same reason. Where would we be now if we'd minded the clergyman's foolishness? Scrubbing floors for one and sixpence a day and nothing to look forward to but the work-house infirmary. Don't you be led astray by people who don't know the world, my girl. The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her. If she's in his own station of life, let her make him marry her; but if she's far beneath him she can't expect it: why should she? it wouldn't be for her own happiness. Ask any lady in London society that has daughters; and she'll tell you the same, except that I tell you straight and she'll tell you crooked. That's all the difference.

(p. 77)

This passage is the pivot of the play. It represents the confrontation between generations, between outlooks, between ways of life, which ultimately leads to Vivie's separation from her mother and her decision to stand alone. It is persuasive prose, but it does not justify Stanley Weintraub's observation in some Shaw plays of "non-realistic eloquence" in critical areas of dialogue, of "intensified rhetoric (possibly poetic prose, or even verse) at the points of crisis."¹ Rhetoric it is, in the sense that the Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics uses the term, defining it as the art of persuasion.² Its persuasive power is attested, to Shaw's satisfaction at least, by its effect on Vivie, whose low opinion of her mother is swallowed up in admiration. The repetition of the theme of self-respect, the balancing of the gains of prostitution against the misery of poverty, the antithetical parallelism used in the two final arguments, demonstrate Shaw's skill in using rhetorical techniques to add strength to his thesis. This is, as Allardyce Nicoll has remarked of Shaw's dialogue, exquisitely modulated prose³, but it is essentially a prose construction. The sentences are long and complex, containing a high proportion of subordinate clauses and phrases, and are moulded in the slowly undulating and variable rhythms characteristic of a prose passage. The imagery, of the gutter, starvation, floor scrubbing, the foolish

¹ Stanley Weintraub, "The Avant-garde Shaw," Shaw Seminar Papers-65, (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1966,) p. 36.

² Alex Preminger, F. J. Warnke, O. B. Hardison, Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1965) p. 702.

³ Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama, (London: Harrap, 1949), p. 751.

clergyman, the cathedral town, is used to persuade rather than to probe. The distinction may be well observed by contrasting an extract from the passage above with an outburst on a similar theme, though with a different conclusion, from Getting Married. Mrs. Warren's view of the male/female relationship is intellectual, as the complex sentence structure of her remark suggests: "The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her." Mrs. George, in a moment of poetic insight, sees woman not in her nineteenth-century social context, but immeshed in her eternal dilemma, and her lament is not intellectual but emotional:

Was it not enough? I paid the price without
bargaining: I bore the children without
flinching: was that a reason for heaping
fresh burdens on me? I carried the children
in my arms: must I carry the father too?

(p. 583)

Observable here is the parallelism, the reiterated clause rhythm, and the introspective intensity which justifies W. H. Auden's remark that the melody and rhythm of Shaw's dialogue gives some of his writing an effect near to that of music.¹ The passage meets, therefore, some of the requirements of the modern definition of poetry as well as fitting Shaw's generalisations about enlarged consciousness and fidelity to life. The trance episode, however, represents a style which had passed through several stages of development since the writing of Mrs. Warren's Profession. Shaw's next step, after considering himself as a "poet" in Shelley's

¹Quoted by Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw, (New York, New Directions Books, 1957) p. 131.

sense during the writing of his novels and early plays, was to project his ideas about the poet's function into a character, Marchbanks in Candida. Here his dreams of surpassing the artistic consciousness of his own period, and of embodying a new understanding, a "higher but vaguer and timider vision",¹ in a new drama, took physical shape.

The Marchbanks of the first two acts of Candida is a pre-Raphaelite, indulging in decorative visual metaphors. The rarity of the visual image in Shaw's dialogue, and the knowledge of his avowed dislike for decoration, renders suspect the picture of the shallop, the marble floors washed with rain, and the green and purple carpets of the poet's dream-world (p. 139) and lends strength to Walter King's argument in "The Rhetoric of Candida" that Shaw is deliberately contrasting Marchbank's tired romanticism with Morell's rhetorical magniloquence, in order to bring both characters to self-knowledge.² In the trial scene of the final act Marchbanks sloughs off adolescent pseudo-poetics, as he makes his bid for Candida, and speaks with genuine emotion of "My weakness. My desolation. My heart's need" (p. 151). The words are a signal of the loneliness which Shaw felt must be part of the great artist's burden, and are reinforced by the young poet's dismissal of happiness as a life goal, and his departure into the night, leaving Morell and his wife ignorant of the understanding which he has gained.

If Mrs. Warren's Profession fulfilled the requirements of enlarging social consciousness, and being drawn from conditions of real life, Candida

¹ Shaw, "Preface to Plays Pleasant", p. 729.

² Walter King, "The Rhetoric of Candida", Modern Drama, II, Sept. 1959, p. 75.

adds to these points the portrait of a Shelleyan artist entrenched in loneliness. The concept is built up to some extent by the use of "fool", "beggar", and "starvation" motifs within the play, and by associations of childishness and weakness which cling, first to Marchbanks, and later to Morell as the balance of power changes. Morell is considered a fool by Burgess (p. 128), Marchbanks a weakling by his enraged adversary (p. 134); Candida would offer her love to Eugene as a shawl to a beggar dying of cold (p. 141), while the poet describes the surface personalities of both Morell and himself, their follies, vanities and illusions, as "rags and tatters" which hide their souls (p. 146). The normal escape route from such loneliness and beggary is through protective love in its various forms, sought by all the characters in the play except the central symbol, Candida herself. Prossy and Lexy wallow in hero-worship for Morell, Burgess wants reconciliation with his daughter, Marchbanks is Candida's slave, while Morell finds himself helpless without her. Only the poet, at first an escapist like the rest, finally faces and accepts his fundamental solitude, showing that vivid consciousness of inner realities which Martin Meisel notes as distinguishing Shaw's heretic-saints.¹ Candida has shown him how to accept and draw strength from his beggary, from a life without "comfort or welcome or refuge" (p. 151), to travel beyond that castle of love and indulgence within which she protects her husband, to walk alone as a man in the dark night of the soul.

¹Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater, (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1963) p. 219, n. 35.

Despite G. B. Purdom's appraisal of the play as "poetic comedy on the emotional rather than the rational level"¹, however, it is only in the lowest sense, by equating poetry with the manipulation of the emotions, that the play can be so described. The style is generally naturalistic or rhetorical, and the deepest level of self-knowledge is contained, not in the dialogue, but in a final stage direction which cannot be conveyed to an audience. Candida shows us the poet as a character, and begins to use symbolic imagery in a way which becomes increasingly important in later plays, but stylistically its poetic passages are written, as T. R. Henn puts it, "from the teeth outwards".²

The suspicion voiced in Chapter I that Shaw may be guilty of self-deception in considering himself a poet is at first reinforced by a consideration of the play which he called "a poem and a document", You Never Can Tell. Valentine's "The fact is I owe six weeks rent; and I've had no patients until today" (p. 177) perfectly fits Wilson Knight's designation of Shaw's prose as colourless and flat. The dialogue is conversational or occasionally rhetorical, while such display of emotion as exists is treated lightly, intended for public consumption. The contrast between the melodrama of Crampton's denunciation of his family and Captain Shotover's quiet bitterness towards his daughters illustrates the difference between You Never Can Tell and Heartbreak House in emotional level and in rhythmic

¹G. B. Purdom, A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw, (London: Methuen 1963) p. 167.

²T. R. Henn, "The Shavian Machine", G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. R. J. Kaufmann, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965) p. 162.

quality:

Crampton: [heartrent] She told you what I am: a father: a father robbed of his children. What are the hearts of this generation like? Am I to come here after all these years? to see what my children are for the first time! to hear their voices! and to carry it all off like a fashionable visitor; drop in to lunch; be Mr. Crampton? Mr. Crampton! (p. 193)

Captain Shotover puts it more briefly, but more effectively:

Captain Shotover: You left because you did not want us. Was there no heartbreak in that for your father? (p. 799)

You Never Can Tell exhibits Shaw's skill in construction and in light characterisation, but his artistic imagination is here exhibited, not in style, imagery, or emotional depth, but in the visual stage colour which Wilson Knight considers to be a balance for his bare prose.¹ The charming detail of the twins' harlequinade costumes, of turquoise and gold, orange and poppy crimson (p. 212) makes only a minor impact on the reader, but in performance this colour, combined with the strings of Chinese lanterns glowing among the trees, the "commedia dell'arte" characterization, and the sparkling comedy of the dialogue, produce a heightened imaginative effect which perhaps explains in some part Shaw's use of the term "poem" for the play. The usage, however, can hardly be considered more precise than Purdom's description of *Candida*. It is, of course, consistent with the generalised definition of the poet's function

¹G. Wilson Knight, "Shaw's Integral Theatre", G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 128.

which Shaw derived from Shelley, since You Never Can Tell was, in its day, a play concerned with advanced social concepts, and designed to stretch the minds of its audience. In any modern sense, however, the term is unjustified.

Shaw's first attempt at overt allegory, one which is sometimes considered poetic because of its dream-like quality, was the Hell scene in Man and Superman. The transformation of the time-enclosed characters of the outer play into their archetypes, the evocative music, the gloomy setting, all intensify the imaginative impact of the scene, but a study of the dialogue reveals a lengthy exercise in pure rhetoric. The respective arguments in favour of hell or heaven are stimulating, emotionally powerful, amusing, colourful, but their primary purpose is to convince the listener, both on-stage and off. One element which grows in importance in some later dialogue is the use of a shorter and more repetitive rhythmic unit than we found in the early prose plays, reinforced by balance and parallelism:

In heaven, as I picture it, dear lady, you live
and work instead of playing and pretending. You
face things as they are; you escape nothing but
glamor: and your steadfastness and your peril
are your glory.

(p. 375)

Rhythm is a feature of Don Juan's speeches in particular; some sentences are even capable of being scanned as iambic pentameters.¹

¹The megatherium, the ichthyosaurus
Have paced the earth with seven-league steps and hidden
The day with cloud-vast wings. Where are they now? (p. 375)

While the dialogue contains some technical features of poetry, however, the purpose of the speeches is in all cases to persuade. Man and Superman, therefore, while aspiring to intellectual and social originality, presenting an isolated central figure, making use of imaginative symbolism and rhythmic dialogue, still lacks the essential quality of poetry, introspection, or "the quarrel with ourselves".

The Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, in defining the distinction between rhetoric and poetry, notes Socrates' observation that "no poet can hope to enter the doors of poetry unless he is mad."¹ That Shaw was aware of this idea is suggested by his attribution of "madness" (in the eyes of other characters) to the lonely artist philosophers of his plays, Marchbanks, Caesar, Keegan, the Undershaft-Cusins-Major Barbara trinity, and most of his other symbols of solitude and greatness. This madness comprised, to Shaw, an alienation from others, and a superior imaginative energy which enabled the possessor to see within himself more perceptively and to act towards the world more powerfully than an ordinary mortal. It is perhaps this last ability, characteristically Victorian, which hinders the modern imagination from accepting the dramatist's characters; the modern hero with his psychic wound has little in common with the ruthlessness of an Undershaft or the undefeated optimism of his daughter. The other characteristic of the heretic-saint's madness, however, his heightened awareness of himself and of others, is the quality required by Yeats' definition, that poetry is "the quarrel with ourselves".

¹Preminger, Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, p. 702.

The character who has attracted most attention as exemplifying the introspective quality in Shaw's earlier plays is Father Keegan in John Bull's Other Island. The bulk of the action in this play is prosaic, with Shaw's imaginative powers being expended on descriptions of scenery. In the last act, however, after the slaughter of the pig which Broadbent carried in his car as a political publicity stunt has dramatized the different points of view of Keegan and the peasants among whom he lives, imaginative power and rhythm enter the dialogue. The result has been variously received; Homer Woodbridge feels that in this play the dramatic poet is in uneasy partnership with the philosopher-reformer;¹ Sean O'Casey admires the visionary and rhapsodic element which Keegan represents;² but R. B. Parker considers his speeches sentimental rhetoric.³ The key passage is the speech by Keegan describing his vision of heaven; which is deliberately contrasted with the prosaic and naive pronouncement by Broadbent which precedes it:

Broadbent: (reflectively) Once, when I was a small kid, I dreamt I was in heaven. (They both stare at him.) It was a sort of pale blue satin place, with all the pious old ladies in our congregation sitting as if they were at a service; and there was some awful person in the study at the other side of the hall. I didn't enjoy it, you know. What is it like in your dreams?

¹Homer Woodbridge, George Bernard Shaw: Creative Artist, (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1963) p. 163.

²Sean O'Casey, "Drums Under the Windows", Autobiographies I, (2nd ed.; London: MacMillan, 1963) pp. 559-561.

³R. B. Parker, "Shaw and O'Casey", Shaw Seminar Papers-65 (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1966) p. 26.

Keegan: In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman. (He goes away across the hill.)
(p. 452)

The difference in style from Broadbent's speech serves to accentuate the rhythmic quality of the Keegan passage, and to point up its central image, of the communion of the Trinity, which contrasts strongly with the Englishman's fierce patriarchal god. The pattern of the "three-in-one" refrain is worked out both within individual sentences and in their inter-relationship. The unity of Church/State/people, representing the institutions of a nation, joins with the work/play/life triad or secular activity, and the priest/worshipper/worshipped group or spiritual activity, to coalesce in a godhead which blends the human with the divine. Meaning and pattern are inter-dependent, forming a ritualistic style reminiscent of liturgical chant. The passage can scarcely be called rhetoric, since it persuades no one, and is rather an examination of Keegan's emotional longings than an intellectual concept. Its metre fulfills the requirements of poetic metre in being functional to the meaning of the passage, and not imposed from outside. By creating a ritual frame resembling the symbolic form described, the trinity, the rhythm heightens the impact of the words. The weakness of the speech lies in the imprecision of its metaphors: if, as much modern criticism suggests, the universal is expressed

best through the particular image, Shaw's images here fall short of the universal because of their general nature. "The Church", "work", "divinity", are concepts too broad to touch the sensibilities deeply. I have commented on the lack of visual imagery in Shaw's writing except in stage directions or deliberate pastiche; it is untrue, however, to assume that he uses no imagery. Like Shelley, whose imagery of movement was at first unrecognised, Shaw's predominant imagery is often of action. Kinaesthetic imagery derived from the sensations of poor or rural life are fairly common in his prose, images of scrubbing, of shivering or hunger, of the broken bannister, the leaping pig, the toppling wall. Ellie, in Heartbreak House, has her cold welcome accentuated by the suggestion that she drink from the duckpond; Major Barbara's followers delight not only in music, but in the sensations of playing musical instruments and marching; Mrs. George's burden is made heavier by the need to scrub, mend and carry. Keegan in the passage quoted above uses no image as significant to the senses as these; his concepts are basically intellectual. The rhythm of the speech is powerful, but the imagery is less than poetic.

Other speeches by Keegan in this play, however, bring us closer to the type of cadence which may be considered dramatic poetry. Keegan's bitter protest over the pig is rhythmic, contains some forceful kinaesthetic imagery, and suggests also another dimension which his description of heaven touched only generally:

There is danger, destruction, torment! What more
do we need to make us merry? Go on, Barney: the
last drops of joy are not squeezed from the story
yet. Tell us again how our brother was torn
asunder.

(p. 437)

Keegan's description of heaven used only the most general religious terms, such as "church" and "divinity". Here the language is more directly Biblical. The peasant revellers who are described earlier in this episode are contrasted with Keegan's image of hell, recalling the New Testament farmer who told his soul "Eat, drink, and be merry", unaware that judgment awaited him that night. (Luke: 12.19.) The Christian association is strengthened by the likeness of Keegan to St. Francis, not only in his description of the pig as a brother, but in his conversation with the grasshopper, (p. 416) his partly sympathetic picture of Broadbent as an ass (p. 450), his poverty and other-worldliness, and his withdrawal from the Church establishment. Biblical cadences occur frequently in Keegan's speeches, when, for example, he speaks of Barney Doran as a "poor lost soul, so cunningly fenced in with invisible bars" (p. 449), or of Broadbent, "mighty in mischief, skilful in ruin, heroic in destruction" (p. 450) or when he echoes St. Matthew's Gospel in his vision of the gates of hell still prevailing against him. (p. 452)

That the use of Biblical cadences and imagery is no isolated phenomenon, but a recurrent factor in Shaw's plays, is noted by Eric Bentley in his comment on the dramatist's use of Christian theology and language.¹ He describes how Shaw employs traditional theology as a symbolic framework for his Creative Evolutionary creed, observing his use of the doomsday theme, the story of Genesis, and the history of a saint in his plays, and his portraits of Jesus, Paul, and Pilate in the Prefaces.

¹Eric Bentley, Bernard Shaw, p. 67-69.

He also observes that Shaw makes frequent use of words and phrases from the Bible, the church services, and the hymnal.

The earliest major speech in which I have noticed this Biblical echo is Julius Caesar's oration to the Sphinx in *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Before his silent listener, Caesar meditates introspectively about his loneliness, as Shaw had done many times before:

Hail, Sphinx: salutation from Julius Caesar!
 I have wandered in many lands, seeking the
 lost regions from which my birth into this
 world exiled me, and the company of creatures
 such as I myself. I have found flocks and
 pastures, men and cities, but no other Caesar,
 no air native to me, no man kindred to me,
 none who can do my day's deed and think my
 night's thought. In the little world yonder,
 Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this
 great desert; only I wander, and you sit still;
 I conquer, and you endure; I work and wonder,
 you watch and wait; I look up and am dazzled,
 look down and am darkened, look round and am
 puzzled, whilst your eyes never turn from looking
 out -- out of the world -- to the lost region --
 the home from which we have strayed. Sphinx,
 you and I, strangers to the race of men, are
 no strangers to one another: have I not been
 conscious of you and of this place since I
 was born? Rome is a madman's dream: this
 is my Reality. These starry lamps of yours
 I have seen from afar in Gaul, in Britain,
 in Spain, in Thessaly, signalling great
 secrets to some eternal sentinel below,
 whose post I never could find. And here at
 last is their sentinel -- an image of the
 constant and immortal part of my life,
 silent, full of thoughts, alone in the silver
 desert. Sphinx, Sphinx: I have climbed
 mountains at night to hear in the distance the
 stealthy foot fall of the winds that
 chase your sands in forbidden play -- our in-

visible children, O Sphinx, laughing in
whispers. 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. Have I
read your riddle, Sphinx?

(p. 257)

The central image of this passage, of the wanderer seeking a
promised land, is reminiscent of the Book of Exodus, and also of such
phrases from the Psalms as "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary
way; they found no city to dwell in" (Ps. 107.4.) Like the Hebrews,
whose God "bringeth them unto their desired haven, (Ps. 107.30.)
Caesar has spent his life searching for "lost regions" from which he feels
himself exiled. Caesar's description of "flocks and pastures, men and
cities" recalls the Old Testament landscape. Both the Sphinx and Caesar,
high above their fellow-men and their surroundings, are also similar in
some ways to the Old Testament God, as well as to his people; Caesar
finds "none who can do my day's deed or think my night's thought."
Isaiah's God says "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are
my ways higher than thy ways, and my thoughts than thy thoughts". (Is. 55.9)
The concepts of stillness, of enduring and conquering, of darkness and
light, of the lost creature and the stranger are all images used
often in the Bible, while the starry lamps, symbols of eternal wisdom
which summon Caesar to the Sphinx, recall not only the starry heavens of
the Psalms, but also the vivid picture in Revelations:8.10., where "there
fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp." The attributes
of the god-like Sphinx, "eternal...immortal...silent, full of thoughts"
are those of the divinity described by Timothy!...the King eternal, immortal,
invisible, the only wise God." (I Tim.: 1.17)

The Biblical effect of Shaw's imagery in this passage is supplemented by his use of a characteristic device of Hebrew poetry, parallelismus membrorum or symmetry of units.¹ "Flocks and pastures, men and cities" is an example of a common form of Biblical parallelism, the parallelism of sameness, or grouping of similar objects. "I wander and you sit still; I conquer and you endure", imitating the Biblical parallelism of antithesis, is more typically Shavian, and several examples of this device can be found in the passage; while the parallelism of complement, or the building up of one idea upon another in a set pattern, is present in such sentences as "I look up and am dazzled, look down and am darkened, look round and am puzzled." The balancing of clauses and phrases in these ways throughout the passage enhances its ritual and traditional effect.

The end of the speech, however, confirms Eric Bentley's point about Shaw's use of Biblical tradition, for here theology is transformed into symbolism; the god is human as well as divine, pagan rather than Christian, a fusion of old ideas into a new form, "part brute, part woman, and part god." By using traditional religious themes and language to illuminate his philosophy, Shaw cloaks his ideas with a seriousness and imaginative power which are here highly effective. Only the incongruous note, reminiscent of Barrie, of the winds chasing the sands as "our invisible children, O Sphinx, laughing in whispers" detracts from the impact of the passage.

Caesar's speech, while justifiable as poetic according to Shaw's definition, also brings us closer to the tenets of modern poetic criticism.

¹Preminger, Warnke, Hardison, "Hebrew Poetry", Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, p. 337.

Its language, while perhaps lacking that startling clarity of image which characterises great poetry, acquires depth by invoking Biblical echoes to increase the significance of its central figure, the pilgrim. Its rhythm is stronger and more repetitive than that of the flowing periods found in Mrs. Warren's Profession; it is the rhythm of free verse, or of that category described in the Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (p.899) as lying between prose and verse, and known as oracular or associational rhythm. This rhythm is a feature of such oracular or prophetic writing as the Koran or the Bible, or, from a secular source, the Tom O'Bedlam speeches in King Lear, and Shaw falls naturally into it in his meditative speeches, since these almost always concern the relationship of man with the infinite.

The rhythmic and verbal qualities of the passage are reinforced by the introspective nature of its meaning. A major distinction between the speeches of Caesar or Keegan and those of Don Juan in Man and Superman lies in their effect upon their hearers. The Don speaks to persuade, and is indeed persuasive. Caesar, on the other hand, meditates upon his life before the unanswering Sphinx, while Keegan considers the nature of eternity within hearing of an ass. These ironic dreams of madmen, or poets, look inward to the soul, and have little concern with the outside world. At the same time, however, they serve as a standard against which the evanescent movement of the play may be measured, a distillation of the play's deeper meaning, freed from personality and prophetic in quality. While not all, or even most, of Shaw's plays contain speeches of this kind, such soliloquy, when it occurs, is noticeably different in tone and effect from the prose which surrounds it, and carries a heavy burden of meaning.

Perhaps the most interesting single passage in this visionary style is Mrs. George's lament in Getting Married, spoken in trance state, after the presentation in the body of the play of the problems of marriage. Mrs. George, who has had many lovers, reproaches man for his enslavement of woman:

When you loved me, I gave you the whole sun
and stars to play with. I gave you eternity
in a single moment, strength of the mountains
in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all
the seas in one impulse of your souls. A moment
only: but was it not enough? Were you not paid
then for all the rest of your struggle on earth?
Must I mend your clothes and sweep your floors
as well? Was it not enough? I paid the price
without bargaining: I bore the children without
flinching: was that a reason for heaping fresh
burdens on me? I carried the child in my arms:
must I carry the father too? When I opened the
the gates of paradise, were you blind? was it
nothing to you? When all the stars sang in your
ears and all the winds swept you into the heart
of heaven, were you deaf? were you dull? was I
no more to you than a bone to a dog? Was it not
enough? We spent eternity together: and you ask
me for a little life-time more. We possessed all
the universe together; and you ask me to give you
my scanty wages as well. I have given you the
greatest of all things; and you ask me to give you little
things. I gave you your own soul: you ask me
for my body as a play thing. Was it not enough?
Was it not enough?

(p. 582-3)

The qualities of rhythm and balance, already observed in the speeches quoted from John Bull's Other Island and Caesar and Cleopatra, are particularly evident in this passage. The mood of lament is in-

tensified by the antithetical parallelism of the contrast between the paradise which the man may find in sexual union and the burden which the woman carries in marriage, between the joy felt in happiness freely given, and the discontent which woman feels at the further demands made on her by man and society. It is not enough to give man intimations of eternity; her life-time's labour must be given too. The image of man carried in woman's arms like an infant, blind, deaf, dull and unfeeling, contains the kernel of female bitterness. The effect is heightened by the titanic imagery of stars, sun, seas, and mountains, balanced by and contrasted with the repetitive and mindless labour of the household, mending and sweeping, bearing and carrying the children. The imagery of action observed in earlier passages is predominant here. Man plays, clasps, and heaps burdens; woman pays, bears, and opens the gates of paradise. Above all the woman is the giver; she gives to the man sun and stars, eternity and strength, her labour and her endurance, her soul and body. Her lament at this continual draining of her powers by perpetual giving is intensified in the refrain "Was it not enough?"

The power of this passage is strengthened by its Biblical language, and particularly by its affinities with the Book of Job, both in its mood of bitter lament, and in its echo of the words of the Lord out of the whirlwind, asking Job where he was when the foundations of the earth were laid, the seas put in bounds, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job: 38.7) The rhythm and imagery of the speech, the use of Biblical reference and of the antithetical technique of the Psalms, produce an incantatory effect which is clearly

intentional. It is interesting, therefore, to note that the climax of the episode is similar to that in the Caesar speech, and in an impassioned section of Major Barbara (p. 479), namely the definition of a Shavian divinity. Caesar had been "part brute, part woman, and part god," (p. 257); Undershaft, Cusins, and Barbara are millionaire, poet, and saint: Mrs. George arouses similar feelings in her hearers:

Soames: My lord: is this possession by the devil?

The Bishop: Or the ecstasy of a saint?

Hotchkiss: Or the convulsion of the pythoiness on the tripod?

The Bishop: May not the three be one?

(p. 583)

This passage and its concluding questions satisfy the conviction of such modern critics as John Crowe Ransom that poetry is the language of paradox. The precise meaning of Shaw's repeated trinitarian riddle is impossible to pin down, but it is clearly a symbolic pattern, standing for his vision of the Life Force, and full of emotional significance for him, which, when it appears in the plays, generates with the help of rhythm, imagery, and incantatory language an energy more powerful than is felt in the areas of straight prose or argument. Perhaps only such a mystical concept could offer him hope of relief from loneliness.

I have attempted in this chapter to distinguish between three different levels of Shaw's style, the plain prose or conversational, the rhetorical, and the poetic or oracular. Shaw's definition of poetry, while adequate for the nineteenth century, is, I think, too general to

satisfy modern demands. For this, we must find depth of language, functional rhythm, irony, and symbolic significance. The later speeches which we have considered begin, I believe, to satisfy these needs. Since Shaw is a playwright, however, a study of individual passages must be only a preliminary to the consideration of complete plays, where the language of a particular speech is only part of the fabric of plot structure, characterisation, and symbolism in the whole work. Only within the total play can the poetic passage achieve its full potential.

CHAPTER IV

MAJOR BARBARA

On the superficial level, Major Barbara is an intrigue based upon the well-worn themes of the "birth-mystery" and the inheritance of money. The argument between Andrew Undershaft, wealthy munitions maker, and his wife, Lady Britomart, as to whether the power and wealth of the armaments business should be handed on to their son Stephen, or, in the Undershafts' iconoclastic tradition, to a nameless foundling, is presented to the audience at the opening of the play, and by its close this problem on the naturalistic level is solved to the satisfaction of all parties. By the middle of the first act, however, it has become clear that a deeper and more significant battle is about to commence, a battle in which money is only a symbol of wider power. As the struggle develops, the entire realistic plot may be seen as symbolic, its characters and events only shadows of a conflict on the heroic plane between satanic and angelic forces. This Miltonic confrontation is given a characteristic Shavian twist by the addition of a third element. The demonic, worldly power of Andrew Undershaft confronts the mystical, Christ-centred power of his militant daughter, while between them oscillates the effervescent spirit of Dionysus in the shape of Adolphus Cusins. The ambiguous

resolution of this tricorn struggle has divided critics since the play's first performance, for on the surface the powers of life seem to be defeated. Barbara apparently loses her faith, and together with Cusins sells her soul to the forces of evil, so that the final impact in performance may be one of mocking disillusion on the part of the audience, in face of the heroine's ultimate self-deception. An understanding of Shaw's paradoxical attitude towards definitions of good and evil, however, along with a realisation of his deep and optimistic faith in the power of the Life Force, should make us wary of any interpretation which culminates in despair. A study of the imaginative suggestiveness of Major Barbara, of that "strange, unanalysed vibration below the surface" which Gilbert Murray sees as the hall-mark of great drama¹ may show us a conclusion to the titanic struggle more in line with the ending of the realistic plot, a conclusion not of despair, but of fruitful compromise, the nature of which will continue to puzzle and stimulate the audience long after the curtain has fallen.

The play opens, deceptively, on the naturalistic level. Like most of Shaw's pre-war drama, it presents a realistic situation placed in a conventional setting. Lady Britomart Undershaft's library in her Wilton Crescent house would have seemed familiar to Major Petkoff or Mr Sartorius, while the drab prose dialogue of the opening exchange between Stephen Undershaft and his mother contains nothing to startle the conventional audience. The exposition of an apparently stock dramatic

¹Gilbert Murray, "Hamlet and Orestes", The Classical Tradition in Poetry, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1927) pp. 239-240.

situation is deftly achieved within the first few minutes. Through the conversation of these two minor figures, Shaw skilfully introduces two major protagonists, Barbara and Cusins, and their foils, Sarah Undershaft and Charles Lomax, and points out the prospective poverty of their incipient marriages. Lady Britomart makes it clear to her son that the situation can only be saved by an appeal to his absent and mysterious father, Andrew Undershaft, who is not only separated from his wife, but has made his vast fortune by selling cannons. Stephen's sense of propriety is outraged to discover that his father was an illegitimate slum child, who proposes to pass over his son for another foundling in the bestowal of his inheritance.

So far there is nothing to distinguish either the situation or the dialogue of Major Barbara from that of any contemporary drawing-room farce. The family is grouped ready for its father's well-prepared arrival, and although in the intellectual and subtle Cusins and the energetic Barbara we can see some promise of action to come, Shaw at this point allows nothing to detract from the audience's expectation of the entrance of Undershaft. Lady Britomart's tenseness, the nervous foolishness of Cholly Lomax, the servant's confusion, all mark this entrance as the first point of crisis. When Andrew comes in, a typically Shavian anti-climax points up the comedy of the situation, for he appears on the surface to be a stout, shy, apologetic man who is overwhelmed by his dominating wife. Behind the conventional marital farce, however, we already glimpse the deeper implication. Undershaft has a "watchful,

deliberate, waiting, listening face, and formidable reserves of power," (p. 466) which unfold gradually as he counters his wife's every move by his very submissiveness, introducing a mood of revolt against her power, by which several members of the family are inspired. Cholly runs to fetch his concertina to enliven the embarrassed group, Cusins holds forth on the value of Greek scholarship, Barbara is encouraged to explain the fascination of her work with the poor. Natural ability is triumphing over social convention. As the tone of the exchanges becomes more intense, the nature of the dialogue changes. The play opened with colloquial prose and the actions of realism:

Lady Britomart: Now are you attending to me, Stephen?

Stephen: Of course, mother.

Lady Britomart: No: it's not of course. I want something much more than your everyday matter-of-fact attention. I am going to speak to you very seriously, Stephen, I wish you would let that chain alone.

Stephen: (hastily relinquishing the chain) Have I done anything to annoy you, mother?

(p. 460)

After the entrance of Undershaft, however, the speech of the characters who carry the play's meaning gains rhythm and seriousness. Andrew, prosaic and circumspect in his words to his wife and son, moves rhythmically in his approach to those members of the group whom he has some hope of influencing. Lady Britomart, Stephen and Sarah are totally bound by social convention, and unassailable. Charles Lomax, basically

conventional, shows a gleam of hope in his frivolity, which leads him into revival meetings with Barbara and arguments with Undershaft. Andrew pays him the compliment of his first balanced and meaningful speech, as he comments on the ambiguity of his position as father and stranger. To Barbara he reveals in balanced clauses the root of his iconoclastic, anti-social power. "I am not a gentleman: and I was never educated." (p. 467) The syllogistic balance of Adolphus Cusins' reply on the value of Greek is perhaps to be expected from a scholar, though this impulse to rhythm did not appear before Andrew arrived to inspire it. The plain-spoken Barbara, who is deliberately made to appear hearty and prosaic at her entrance, (anticipating Shaw's later and more famous saint) listens with growing interest and excitement as Andrew, who has quickly shown his understanding of her Heavenly Father's nature, spars with the feather-weights, Cholly and Stephen, on the topic to which she is giving her life. As the unworldly subject of salvation is tossed to and fro in this conventional drawing-room, the prosaic style expands and quickens into rhythm and a first suggestion of symbolism:

Undershaft: I am rather interested in the Salvation Army. Its motto might be my own: Blood and Fire.

Lomax: [shocked] But not your sort of blood and fire, you know.

Undershaft: My sort of blood cleanses: my sort of fire purifies. (p. 468)

"So do ours" cries Barbara, and the battle lines are laid. The scene continues in a growing intensity of rhythmic verbal skirmishing which culminates in a stylized and symbolic challenge. Andrew constructs

a series of antitheses in which he makes clear his own moral code. His fascination with the destructiveness of war, the impossibility of his separating action from morality, his refusal to buy conventional peace of mind with conscience money given to charity, all lead him towards a denial of the tenets of established religion:

Your Christianity, which enjoins you to resist not evil, and to turn the other cheek, would make me a bankrupt. My morality -- my religion -- must have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it.

(p. 468)

This declaration sets him clearly in opposition to his daughter, yet links him with her in a strange partnership, for like her, though for a different reason, Undershaft will allow to every man his own interpretation of morality. The unimaginative Stephen sees the world in black and white, but Barbara, who comes into her own when the conversation turns from money to men, refutes him bluntly: "Bosh! There are no scoundrels." (p. 469)

Her words are prosaic and colloquial, but the tone is intense, and even she moves into rhythm as she expands her interpretation of good and evil:

There are neither good men nor scoundrels: they are just children of one Father; and the sooner they stop calling one another names the better... They're all just the same sort of sinners: and there's the same salvation ready for them all

(p. 469)

The terms of the conflict are now fully outlined. In simple antiphonal phrases the challenge is presented. The "maker of cannons", with a soul to be saved, will go the next day to the Salvation Army shelter. On the day following, the saviour of men, with a soul to be

lost, will come to the cannon works. Both understand the stakes:

Barbara: Take care. It may end in your giving
up the cannons for the sake of the
Salvation Army.

Undershaft: Are you sure it will not end in your
giving up the Salvation Army for the
sake of the cannons?

Barbara: I will take my chance of that.

Undershaft: And I will take my chance of the other.
(They shake hands on it.) (p. 469)

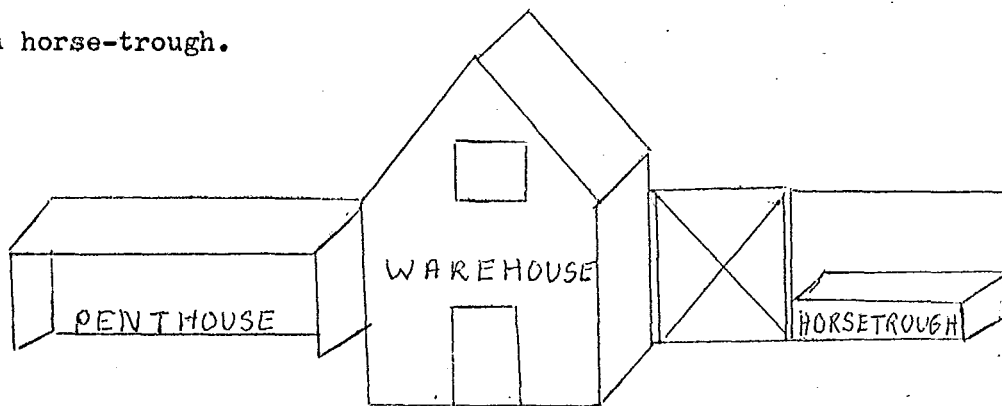
The military-chivalric motif is to be expanded in the later acts. At this point let us observe only the martial and heraldic description of the battle locations. The shelter is "In West Ham. At the sign of the Cross. Ask anyone in Canning Town". The works -- "In Perivale St. Andrews. At the sign of the sword. Ask anyone in Europe." (p. 469) On this note, ominously triumphant, from Andrew Undershaft, the need for a triumphant fanfare is correctly sensed by Charles Lomax, and Barbara aptly proposes "Onward Christian Soldiers" as a suitable climax. The sites for the duel are chosen, the weapons, cross and sword, proposed. The black knight with bar sinister faces the soldier of Christ.

In terms of conventional plot, a large part of the action of Major Barbara is, like that of William Archer's outline Rhinegold, all used up in the first act.¹ Halfway through the first act it is clear that the battle for settlement money is won, since Undershaft begins his reunion with his family with the question: "Now what can I do for you all?" (p. 467) That the inheritance question will prove more complex is suggested by Lady Britomart's account of her earlier quarrels with Andrew

¹Shaw, "Preface to Widowers' Houses", p. 699. Shaw here recounts how in his first play Widowers' Houses he used up in Act I the play-outline entitled Rhinegold which William Archer had provided, and shocked his collaborator by asking for some more plot.

on the subject. Since the traditional structure, both of the Undershaft inheritance and of the "birth-mystery" theme, demands the presence of a foundling, we would conventionally expect the action of the play to concern itself with the search for such a character. The end of Act III in fact produces one, when Cusins, by a plausible conjuring trick, is revealed as illegitimate in terms of English law. The bulk of the play, however, is clearly and most seriously concerned with a philosophical problem presented in near tragic terms, concerning the nature of individual morality. The fact that action and philosophy do not fly apart in production suggests not only the writer's high degree of technical skill, but also, as mentioned before, the likelihood of some strong symbolic link between these apparently disparate elements. Andrew Undershaft is looking for an heir. The real question which the play poses, and the one which for many critics is still unanswered, concerns the nature of that inheritance. The philosophical discussion in Act I is the opening movement of Andrew's search, as he looks for one who, like himself, is a moral orphan, one who has been discarded by society, and who has rejected its values in order to form a morality of his own. A personal morality is the true inheritance, and only to one who has such spiritual power can Andrew pass on the temporal power which his cannon foundry represents. The mood of the act intensifies from prosaic to rhythmic and poetic as his search proceeds, and on his final exit, towards a joyful musical service of prayer in the drawing room, he leaves defeated the first claimant to his inheritance, respectable society in the shape of his son Stephen.

The movement from prose to poetry observable in Act I is repeated in the second act of Major Barbara, which opens on a dreary East End scene in the middle of January, and a cynical, destructive conversation between two down-and-outs. The nature of the dialogue is flat and colloquial, alike in nature, though not in class, to Lady Britomart's worldly conversation. The symbolism of the close of Act I, however, is not forgotten, and the symbols have deepened from Christian soldier and black knight into Christ and his everlasting opponent. Like Undershaft's power, symbolism at first hides below the surface of the action. This is West Ham, "the sign of the Cross," and a study of the stage directions shows that Shaw uses his scenery in this act to set the symbolic mood, for the buildings of the Salvation Army shelter are arranged in a cruciform shape. In the centre stands a two-storey warehouse with gabled end, flanked on either side by white-washed walls and the low shapes of a penthouse and a horse-trough.



Not only the buildings but the weather, the "grindingly cold January day", the "leaden skies", suggest the atmosphere of the dying god. (p. 470) The bread and watery milk which the Salvation Army dispenses, thin and inadequate food both physically and spiritually, indicates the imminent defeat of the Christian god and of his symbols. Like the rich in Act I,

the poor in the shelter live a life of sham appearances. Snobby Price, a capable craftsman, prefers sponging to work, while old Rummy Mitchins exaggerates her sins in order to please the "dear good girls" who hope to save her. Not Christ, but another deity, brings them joy as they join exuberantly in the revival meetings and confess their imaginary weaknesses. Rummy suggests the element which is sacred to their god when she tells Price, "You wont be let drink, though", and Snobby completes the identification in his reply "I'll take it out in gorspellin, then. I don't want to drink if I can get fun enough any other way." (p. 471) Towards the Salvation Army worker, Jenny Hill, and to the other beggars, this couple is full of sham Christian joy, but the real condition of poverty, its deep and incurable misery, is personified by Peter Shirley, an out-of-work mechanic. These two elements of poverty, deceit and disillusionment, are joined by a third, animal violence, as a young thug strikes Jenny Hill in his fury at being deprived of his girl. Christ in the person of Jenny has been deceived, turned from, and struck. Such is the scene on which Christ in the person of Barbara now enters.

At first the tide of defeat seems to be turning. Capable, dominating, filled with religious conviction, Barbara is not to be shaken by the failings of her inferiors. With the joy and courage of the early Christian martyrs, "quite sunny and fearless", (p. 474) she confronts brute violence, and brings it into a state of shame and terror, almost of tears. At this point of apparent triumph, her father arrives to watch Barbara's technique of hypnotic conversion, as playing on the theme of Bill's cruelty to Jenny Hill, she ironically calls on him to fight against

his salvation, while her victim writhes convulsively "from his eyes to his toes." The possession is almost complete, as he is called "to brave manhood on earth and eternal glory in heaven", (p. 477) when the moment of crisis is shattered by the Dionysiac beating of a drum. Barbara's power is broken, though it is some time before either she or the audience realise that fact, or its cause. Cusins, the drummer, the servant of Dionysus, seals the incident with a traitor's kiss.

This repetition of the Act I pattern of general exposition, build-up and anticlimax, is followed, as in the preceding act, by a scene of heightened emotional impact conveying the true central meaning of the action. Christian conversion has failed. Now Undershaft and Cusins confront each other in their forms of mythical stature. Undershaft has already declared the need for an individual morality. Now he reveals that his creed is based on two elements necessary for salvation, money and gunpowder. To him the elements of death are paradoxically those of life. Power, and the willingness to destroy anything which threatens power, is the basis of the "rich, strong, safe life", and all other virtues are but graces and luxuries built upon this basis. Undershaft has seen and weighed the strength of Barbara's beliefs. Now he examines those of Cusins. As Dionysus stands face to face with "Father Undershaft", whose mythic identity is yet to be revealed, the cadences of heightened emotional power reveal themselves in his speech rhythms. Cusins follows the Army because it expresses his beliefs, "of joy, of love, of courage", because it transforms men and women through music and laughter, because 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 Dionysus in him; sends him down the public street drumming dithyrambs". (p. 478) The god who really inspired Snobby Price and Rummy Mitchins at their revival meetings stand revealed. These qualities which Cusins worships, he sees embodied in Barbara, and for this reason, on the naturalistic level, he is determined to marry her. Undershaft too, sees in his daughter the qualities which he espouses, individuality and the will to power; on the plot level, therefore, he will make her his heir. Their mutual desire for her, however, phrased in highly emotional and poetic language, expresses a symbolism far above the level of realistic plot:

Undershaft: You mean that you will stick at nothing: not even the conversion of the Salvation Army to the worship of Dionysus?

Cusins: The business of the Salvation Army is to save, not to wrangle about the name of the pathfinder.
Dionysus or another: what does it matter.

Cusins: Barbara is quite original in her religion.

Undershaft: [triumphantly] Aha! Barbara Undershaft would be. Her inspiration comes from within herself.

Cusins: How do you suppose it got there?

Undershaft: [in towering excitement] It is the Undershaft inheritance. I shall hand on my torch to my daughter. She shall make my converts and preach my gospel --

Cusins: What! Money and gunpowder!

Undershaft: Yes, money and gunpowder. Freedom and power. Command of life and command of death.

Cusins: - - - Of course you know that you are mad.

Undershaft: Pooh, Professor! let us call things by their proper names. I am a millionaire; you are a poet; Barbara is a savior of souls. What have we three to do with the common mob of slaves and idolators?

(p. 479)

The identities of Dionysus and Christ are now clearly linked with Cusins and Barbara. But who is Undershaft? That the three of them are characters on a mythic level far above the common multitude, that between them they represent man's striving towards the Godhead, and that Shaw is moving towards a synthesis of all three points of view in his philosophic definition of the Life-Force, has been made clear in the preceding passage. In Act I Undershaft has assumed knightly qualities, though he is also clearly associated with what would conventionally be defined as evil. The remainder of Act II not only confirms Barbara in her position as Christ, but also begins to clarify the place of Andrew Undershaft in the cosmic pattern.

Cusins has hinted at Andrew's position on two occasions, when he refers to him as an "infernal old rascal". When Barbara, returning from her revival meeting, shows that she, like the rest of the world, depends on money, and Undershaft cunningly prepares the way for his betrayal of her by commending her unselfishness, Cusins is more specific: "Mephistopheles! Machiavelli!" (p. 481) By Act III the connotation is quite clear. "Oh, clever, clever devil!" cries Cusins, when "the Prince of Darkness" subtly restores his daughter's lost faith, after the crucifixion of Act II. (p. 492) Barbara's identification with Christ becomes defined at the point in Act II where she refuses her father's money and Bill Walker's

conscience offering:

Barbara: Oh you're too extravagant, papa. Bill offers twenty pieces of silver. All you need offer is the other ten. That will make the standard price to buy anyone who's for sale. I'm not; and the Army's not.

(p. 482)

At this point of confident declaration, however, the soldiers are at hand in the garden -- Mrs Baines of the Army has "wonderful news" for Barbara and Jenny. Lord Saxmundham, later identified as the distiller of Bodger's whisky, the ruin of the slums, has offered five thousand pounds which the Army will accept, if another five thousand can be found to match it. Undershaft's opportunity, and Barbara's crucifixion, are to hand. To the ironic accompaniment of psalm-like praise from Mrs. Baines, Undershaft raises his pen to sign the cheque, surrounded by an admiring crowd. Deserted on the far side of the stage stands Barbara, watching, as the cynical voice of Bill Walker mocks her.

Bill: [Cynically, aside to Barbara, his voice and accent horribly debased] Wot prawce selvytion nah?

Barbara: Stop. [Undershaft stops writing: they all turn to her in surprise.] Mrs. Baines: are you really going to take this money?

(p. 484)

Her cry of anguish, however, can only delay the Dionysiac and Mephistophelian fervour for a moment. Her bitter reminder of the power of Bodger's whisky over the "poor, drink-ruined creatures on the Embankment" (p. 484) is powerless against the deliberately-assumed hypocrisy of Undershaft who pretends to be undermining his own power by his gift to the preachers of peace and good will. Power and malice have overwhelmed

Cusins by this point, as he cries in an ecstasy of mischief: "The millenium will be inaugurated by the unselfishness of Undershaft and Bodger. Oh be joyful!" (p. 484) As in Act I, prose elevated to poetry becomes inexpressible in anything but music, and the cavalcade prepares to march out "intoning an Olympian diapason". With a supreme gesture of defeat, Barbara takes off her Salvation Army badge, the silver S or uplifted serpent, motif of the crucified Christ and of immortality,¹ and pins it on her father's coat. The antiphonal chorus bursts forth once again at the peak of emotional intensity, as the protagonists one by one cry out their creeds:

Mrs. Baines: Blood and Fire!

Jenny: Glory Hallelujah!

Undershaft: "My ducats and my daughter"!

Cusins: Money and gunpowder!

Barbara: Drunkenness and Murder! My God; why hast thou forsaken me?

(p. 485)

As the penultimate words of Christ on the cross die into silence, the sneering refrain of the thug is heard again. "Wot prawce selvytion nah?" In the tones of the unrepentent thief he assails her, while the "repentent thief" figure, in the person of the secularist Peter Shirley is the only man in the shelter who attempts to help and understand her. Her crucifixion is complete.

The beginning of Act III serves not only as a plot link, in which the inheritance machinery is further developed, but as an interlude of prosaic sanity following the intense emotionalism of the preceding action.

¹ q.v. Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, (London: O.U.P., 1963) pp. 276-277. Miss Bodkin does not comment specifically on this play, but remarks that while the serpent usually denotes evil, it can also stand symbolically for immortality, and also for the sacrificed Christ.

Slow-moving and conversational in tone, the episode in Lady Britomart's library at first suggests little of a symbolic nature other than a further identification of Cusins, weak after a night of drinking, with Dionysus, and an amplification of Undershaft's powers as the "Prince of Darkness". Before the end of this scene, however, a conversation between the three major protagonists reveals the direction towards which the concluding action of the play is heading. The family is preparing to visit the armanents factory:

Cusins: Why are we two coming to this Works
Department of Hell?...

Barbara: I have always thought of it as a
sort of pit where lost creatures
with blackened faces stirred up
smoky fires and were driven and
tormented by my father.

(p. 492)

The descent into Hell follows the crucifixion, with a transition somewhat resembling in its strange and romantic unreality the move to the Hell scene in Man and Superman. The delicate and beautiful white-walled town on the valley slopes, contrasting grotesquely with the foundry in its depths, and the gashed and mutilated dummy soldiers on its hilltop fortification, suggests an ambiguity about the nature of Hell subtler and more evasive than that of the Devil Mendoza's domain. The paradox puzzles Barbara, as she stands in Christ-like pose looking over the city. Everything "perfect! wonderful! real!" as Cusins puts it: and yet "Not a ray of hope." The torments imagined by "hell-ridden evangelists", the "smoky fires" of Barbara's nightmares are transmuted ironically into a force for material good, producing these domes and campaniles, libraries

and schools, pleasant homes and self-satisfied workers, which conventional society can do nothing but admire, and which even the creative individualist cannot condemn:

Cusins: It's all horribly, frightfully, immorally,
unanswerably perfect.
(p. 493)

The resolution of the paradox has in fact suggested itself to Cusins already. Good and evil, as Barbara suggested in Act I, are not separate, but indivisible. The tragedy of the situation in the second act lay not, as she thought in her betrayal by others but in her own desertion of this principle, in refusing to allow the powers of evil to do the work of good. This town, like her shelter, is in the power of the Prince of Darkness, but it is potentially the realm of light. "It only needs a cathedral to be a heavenly city instead of a hellish one." (p. 493) The fact that Peter (Shirley) has been installed as gate-keeper suggests that this transformation is in the making. The remainder of the scene is concerned with the fusion of the three mythic figures into a trinity of power which will be an embodiment of neither good nor evil, but of Godhead.

The problem on the naturalistic level remains that of finding an heir to the Undershaft inheritance. The problem on the spiritual level is the same. Undershaft's work, his parody of salvation, must be continued and made more god-like. Barbara's form of salvation, bread and milk and hymn singing, has been revealed as more of a parody than is her father's work of destruction. Cusins' salvation through wine and merriment, has ended in a hangover. Only in Hell is there hope, and life must apparently be born again from the realms of death. In the depths of

defeat Barbara retains the seed of resurrection. "There must be some truth or other behind all this frightful irony." It is this unquenchable life-force, the source of her divinity, which makes others worship her, leading Cusins to attribute to her the joyous spirit of Dionysus, while Undershaft recognises her power to transform humanity. Lady Britomart instinctively expresses the solution to both the realistic and the philosophical dilemma. "Barbara has rights as well as Stephen." Since the professor of Greek and the savior of souls are to be married, "Why should not Adolphus succeed to the inheritance?" (P. 495)

In terms of plot the problem of the play is now solved. By a comic and patently contrived twist of coincidence, Cusins is shown to be a foundling and the Undershaft millions lie beneath his hand. After his marriage to Barbara three forces of power and influence will be united. The spiritual question, however, has only now been fully posed. Is Cusins to sell his soul, Barbara to lose her integrity for the sake of worldly power and wealth? Barbara deliberately leaves Cusins to face this question alone, just as he deserted her in her hour of purgation. Undershaft makes the responsibilities clear. The owner of the foundry must have the integrity of knighthood, "the true faith of an Armorer", (p. 497) using the power in his hands impartially, knowing its value as an instrument of material welfare, upon which basis the spiritual pyramid may be built. Poverty and slavery can be wiped out by such power, if it is used wisely. The clinching argument follows up this Pauline imagery with a proposition from Plato, by which Cusins is finally persuaded. For the best use of power, for its creative use, the philosopher must become king.

The forms of good and evil, of gods and devils, Christ, Dionysus and Satan, are now seen to be but shadows or facets of divine power. Fusion on the spiritual level, as on the natural, elucidates and enlightens. What began as profound disagreement on the nature of morality culminates in a united vision:

Barbara: I want to make power for the world...but it must be spiritual power.

Cusins: I think all power is spiritual...You cannot have power for good without having power for evil too. (pp. 501-502)

Power used for material welfare, as Barbara sees, will rid mankind of physical burdens to free their spirits for a higher struggle, the battle which she has survived, against self-satisfied pride:

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. (p. 503)

The stage direction tells us "she is transfigured". As she runs to meet her mother, Cusins says of her: "She has gone right up into the skies". The Christ of Shaw's play, who embodies "Dionysus and all the others" ascends to a form of divinity of which the myths created by men are but shadows.

CHAPTER V

HEARTBREAK HOUSE

Shaw told his official biographer, Archibald Henderson, that Heartbreak House "began with an atmosphere, and does not contain a word that was foreseen before it was written."¹ As a play, then, it apparently owes less to planning and more to the inspiration of the moment than does his earlier drama. If, as Yeats suggests, poetry is made "of the quarrel with ourselves"², this play, for which Shaw had a particular affection³ and which stems admittedly from his unconscious, is likely to contain more deeply-felt personal utterance, more exploratory treatment of form, character and idea, more patterned language, more metaphor and symbol than his previous work.

The allegorical nature of the setting and characterization of Heartbreak House has been frequently noted. In examining its plot structure, we find the random and perplexing event-sequence of a dream, in which a group of characters pass and intermingle, defining in their passage the peculiar atmosphere of "this silly house, this strangely happy house, this agonizing house, this house without foundations" (p. 799) The unfettered imagination that has produced this fluid structure is also at work in the

¹ Archibald Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1956) p. 625.

² W. B. Yeats, "Per Amica Silentia Lunae", Mythologies (London: MacMillan, 1959) p. 331.

³ Sean O'Casey reports in his autobiography that Shaw felt Heartbreak House to be his best play. Sean O'Casey, Sunset and Evening Star, (London: MacMillan, 1963) p. 610.

dialogue of the play, which moves easily and often to the level of rhythmic poetic speech which I observed in Major Barbara. Martin Meisel points out the depth of significant meaning which such passages carry:

"A sudden shift to patterned, semi-poetic, ritualistic speech regularly indicates a passionate intensity of perception or revelation which transcends the ordinary levels of the play. "¹

The nature of this revelation is ambiguous; as is normal with exploratory drama, critics are deeply divided over the interpretation of Heartbreak House. Shaw gives us little help, leaving more of the problem than usual for his audience to solve. "Shaw", says Henderson, "brusquely refused to explain. 'I am not an explicable phenomenon: neither is Heartbreak House.'"² His Preface tells us that the drama concerns "cultured, leisured Europe before the war", giving most literary comment upon this play its starting point. Beyond this, however, the Preface describes a group of people who bear only a superficial resemblance to the characters of the play, with none of their depth. Without the interplay of dialogue, Shaw can apparently, as in the descriptive passages of his novels, give us only the veneer of reality. The Preface's group of "pretty, amiable voluptuaries"³ who are versed in the liberal culture of the potential Socialist or Creative Evolutionist, but who shun the drudgery of politics, thereby delivering themselves and their country into the hands of barbarian

¹ Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 437.

² Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, pp. 625-626.

³ Shaw, "Preface to Heartbreak House", p. 378.

ignorance, remind us on the surface of Hesione and Hector, of Ariadne whose "first impression (erroneous) is one of comic silliness," (p. 760) of the entirely commonplace Boss Mangan, whose interest is apparently only to make money and to stick a ramrod in the other fellow's works. Captain Shotover, the shamanistic central figure of the play, however, is more memorable and effective in dramatic form than as the vituperative speaker of the Preface, while Ellie, representative of the future, is more complex and evocative as she faces the bombers than is the soldier of the Preface "heroically dying for [his] country"¹ Shaw's hints in the Preface give us little more than a caricature, of which the performance deepens and qualifies our understanding. Our final interpretation of the play's meaning must depend upon a study in greater depth than the Preface gives us. Shaw tells us that Heartbreak House is an allegory inspired by his reaction to the world immediately preceding the First World War. General agreement can be found for this interpretation, although Homer Woodbridge questions Shaw's definition of the play at the root, finding little similarity between prewar Europe and the "gorgeous and theatrical figures" of this fantasy.² Shaw's other hint about the nature of his play, in his subtitle "A Fantasia in the Russian manner on English themes" has produced a characteristically mixed reaction among critics, some of whom see, like John Jordan, certain resemblances to Tchekov in method and setting,³ while others, such as Harold Clurman, advise actors to

¹ Shaw, "Preface to Heartbreak House", p. 399.

² Homer E. Woodbridge, George Bernard Shaw, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963) p. 105.

³ John Jordan, "Shaw's Heartbreak House", Threshold, I, i (1957) p. 51.

disregard Shaw's subtitle as "altogether misleading."¹ Such disagreement reaches an advanced point when criticism moves from technique to an interpretation of mood or thought. On the equivocal reaction of Ellie to the possible return of the bombers the whole mood of the play may be made to turn, so that Robert Corrigan, in "Shaw's Elegy for Europe", can conclude that "her future is the most despairing of all...Nothing is left -- nothing is real or true in Heartbreak House. Ellie states her own failure and that of those around her."² The same event, in a play which Corrigan sees as one of despair and hopelessness, but which seems to Clurman extravagant, farcical and full of "capering humour",³ is interpreted as a triumph by Robert Reed, who sees Ellie as the prototype of a new and courageous generation, liberated from greed and expediency, the "sanguine hope of a man whom darkest circumstances could not completely frustrate."⁴

The play's difficulty evidently lies in the nature of its philosophical statement, this problem being particularly acute at the end of the last act. A consideration of Shaw's characteristic endings in other plays is of some interest here. Arms and the Man, for example, ends with a question: "What a man! Is he a man?" (p. 122) Marchbanks leaves

¹Harold Clurman, "Notes for a Production of Heartbreak House," Tulane Drama Review, V, iii, (1961), pp. 65-66.

²Robert W. Corrigan, "Heartbreak House: Shaw's Elegy for Europe", Shaw Review, II, ix, p. 6.

³Clurman, "Notes for a Production of Heartbreak House," p. 66.

⁴Robert Reed, "Boss Mangan, Peer Gynt and Heartbreak House", Shaw Review, II, vii, (1959) p. 12.

Candida ignorant of "the secret in the poet's heart," (p. 152) Man and Superman concludes with a situation familiar to the reader of Shakespeare's comedies, but rendered disturbing by a Shavian glimpse into the future.

"Ramsden: it is very easy for you to call me a happy man: you are only a spectator. I am one of the principals; and I know better." (p. 404)

The audience at John Bull's Other Island is left pondering an ironic conclusion which contrasts the insensitive Broadbent "devoting his life to the cause of Ireland" by the building of a hotel destined for bankruptcy with the "madman" whose dreams constitute a vision of a higher reality.

(p. 452) The equivocal nature of Major Barbara's philosophic statement has already been suggested, while on a more frivolous level the denouement of Pygmalion has caused arguments since the play's first performance with Herbert Beerbohm Tree in the lead.¹ Many of Shaw's conclusions, it appears, are questions. St. Joan poses the central problem which activates all of Shaw's explorations into the nature of man and society. "How long, O Lord, how long?" (p. 1009) The audience experiences, not the catharsis of resolved action, but the collective guilt which attends an unsolved problem. The dramatist's purpose is to arouse action, to stimulate in the watcher the question of Eliot's Fisher King, "Shall I at least set my lands in order?"² It is this question, rather than a strong sense of individual character, of milieu or of action, which remains in the mind at the conclusion of Heartbreak House. The introspection of the dramatic poet

¹Henderson, George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century, p. 685.
 "By...the ingenious business of throwing flowers to Eliza...between the end of the play and the fall of the curtain... [Tree transformed] the disagreeable curmudgeon into the sympathetic lover..." P. 5.

²T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land, Collected Poems, 1909-1962, (London: Faber and Faber, 1961) p. 79.

(as Shaw calls himself in the Preface to the play) leads to the self-scrutiny of the "guilty creatures" sitting in his audience. The introspective questioning of Heartbreak House lends it much of its poetic power. It is, on one level a political metaphor; on another, a spiritual allegory; but at its deepest moments it touches on the private and autobiographical elements of Bernard Shaw's life in personal symbolism.

"Cultured, leisured Europe"¹ may be the intended political milieu of Heartbreak House, but its actual location is obviously England. The play contains no European references or implications, while frequent allusions to Shakespeare set the English tone. The house itself, built on a hill in Sussex, one of the affluent southern countries, is firmly English upper-middle class, though eccentric in detail.² The room in which Ellie Dunn finds herself at the beginning of the play has been built "so as to resemble the after-part of an old-fashioned high-pooed ship with a stern gallery", (p. 758) a ship built for Drake or Nelson, not one in which Captain Shotover could actually have sailed, a symbol, therefore, of the past glory and power of England. The symbolism of the "ship of state" is enlarged through the character of the Captain, the governing figure, who takes little direct part in such action as the play contains, but who appears and re-appears continually from his hide-out in the "galley" to care for, advise and admonish his strangely-assorted crew.

¹ Shaw, "Preface to Heartbreak House", p. 378.

² In Grant Webster's, "Smollett and Shaw: a note on a source for Heartbreak House", Shaw Review, IV, iii, (1961) pp. 16-17, the writer suggests Commodore Trunion's house in Peregrine Pickle as a parallel.

The aging captain, grown too old for his task, evidently despairs of finding a successor among his undisciplined family. His daughter Hesione disrupts the household, while the putative hero, her husband Hector, has all the qualities of leadership, courage, brains and initiative, but no will to apply them. He has a drawerful of George Medals awarded for actual heroism, but prefers to brag of imaginary exploits to women who will admire him for these fictions. Shotover sees him as a man used up by his vampire wife and left with nothing but dreams. The Captain's other son-in-law, Hastings Utterword, engaged in the actual business of colonial government, resembles, in a continuation of the nautical metaphor, the figure-head of Shotover's ship, the Dauntless, "wooden, yet enterprising" (p. 759) The Captain calls him a numskull, recognising his connection with the non-thinking inhabitants of Horseback Hall, and his wife Ariadne points out the source of his power when she calls for "a good supply of bamboo to bring the British native to his senses." (p. 769) Mazzini Dunn, Ellie's father, linked into the "possible rulers" group by the Captain's deliberate confusion of him with a former pirate, is a disillusioned liberal who has spent his youth in pamphleteering and protest, only to find the old evils as powerful as before. A few minutes before the arrival of the bombers he complacently comments that "nothing ever does happen. It's amazing how well we get along, all things considered." (p. 800) Boss Mangan, the soulless and cunning brute of Shaw's Preface, is, like Hastings, engaged in government. Captain Shotover has little regard for him, either as a symbolic seaman, ("Not able-bodied") or as a politician, where he uses his ministerial position as an outlet for personal spites. Shotover has experienced the exhilaration of a

commitment to life. He has stood on the bridge in a typhoon, has engaged himself with hardship, danger, horror and death in a way which his children will probably never imitate. He warns Hector of his business as an Englishman, to learn navigation, or to share the fate of the drunken skipper, as he hears the smash of his ship on the rocks, "the splintering of her rotted timbers, the tearing of her rusty plates, the drowning of the crew like rats in a trap" (p. 801) As he ends his warning the throb of destructive engines is heard, and with a prophetic intuition of the passing of power from sea to air Shaw shows us the threat to the ship of state, and the destruction of church and capitalism by fire from the skies, at the conclusion of the play.

The political allegory in Heartbreak House is clear and effective. It is seen in setting, in dialogue, in characterisation and action. The navigation/statesmanship metaphor, however, accounts for only a small portion of the play's substance and significance. Futile men and women bringing about their own destruction do not make up the sum total of the play's impact, nor does the "ship of state" allegory exhaust the symbolic content of the action. John Jordan, in his article "Shaw's Heartbreak House", has observed the recurrence of the ancient symbols "the ship", "the house," and "the heart". The "ship" metaphor he treats as political; the "house" is more ambiguous. In one way it represents the world's political and social bankruptcy, but in another it is "the ark of the world's primal truths," a symbol of the world, containing the world's weariness, but "redeemed by the continuing existence within it of certain

values which the real world has set aside or forgotten."¹ On this level of philosophical allegory, the characters acquire more depth, the action more purpose. The subject is no longer only England and twentieth-century politics, but also man and his place in the universe. Captain Shotover was a sailor in his prime, and still uses nautical language, but his family thinks of him more often as a sage or prophetic figure. He lives on a hill "beneath the dome of Heaven, in the house of God" (p.769) overlooking a dip in the ground containing a cave full of dynamite. Allegorically, this setting suggests the world set between heaven and hell, with its inmates contemplating their relationship to the universal. Some of the more poetic dialogue of the play concerns this setting. The Captain, warning Mangan that he should not marry Ellie, invokes the power of the universe. "What is true within these walls is true outside them. Go out on the seas; climb the mountains; wander through the valleys. She is still too young." (p. 769) When Mangan threatens to leave the house which has made him unhappy, Shotover positions it in the universe once more. "You were welcome to come: you are free to go. The wide earth, the high seas, the spacious skies are waiting for you outside." (p. 784) The universe has a moral relationship with man; it welcomes him as part of itself; it moulds him by exposing him to its storms and furies as well as to its gentleness; it offers him space, self-knowledge, and freedom; but if man fails, it may prove destructive to him. That "splendid drumming in the sky" which Hesione hears at the beginning of Act III may be

¹John Jordan, "Shaw's Heartbreak House", Threshold, I, i (1957) p. 52.

"Heaven's threatening growl of disgust at us useless futile creatures," a warning that the Life Force will supplant man as she has the animals, or that "the heavens will fall in thunder and destroy us!" (p. 794)

This apocalyptic vision is seen in the context of a continuing universe, however, for while the drunken skipper may wreck his ship,

Shotover: ...At sea, nothing happens to the sea. Nothing happens to the sky. The sun comes up from the east, and goes down to the west. The moon grows from a sickle to an arc lamp, and comes later and later until she is lost in the light as other things are lost in the darkness. After the typhoon, the flying fish glitter in the sunshine like birds. It's amazing how they get along, all things considered. Nothing happens, except something not worth mentioning.

Ellie: What is that, O Captain, my Captain?
(p. 800)

Ellie's deliberately resonant question brings us back from the universe to man; from the ordered cycles of the heavens to the violence and futility of man's existence. As a philosopher Shaw shows us allegorically and in poetic imagery the creatively evolving universe of which man is a part; but he questions deeply the nature of man and the possibilities of his future. At the end of Act I, after we have met all the inhabitants and guests of Heartbreak House and have learnt something of their relationship, Shotover raises a strange wail of lamentation for his house and his daughters, prophetically calling on the thunder from heaven which will later threaten their destruction. The universe is a place of light and glittering moonshine, but Shotover, supporting the establishment in Heartbreak House, calls despairingly for deeper darkness.

"Money is not made in the light!" (p. 775)

The "house" metaphor, we have observed, is ambiguous. As the world, it may contain positive values, but it is also an "agonizing house", where hearts are broken, and where man learns to see himself naked. "In this house", says Hector, "we know all the poses. Our game is to find out the man under the pose." (p. 792) As we combine the "house" and the "heart" theme, the play's relevance to Shaw's personal situation becomes clearer. Knowing himself as a man who put on a mask to shield himself from the public gaze, despising, yet needing, the role of the clown Joey, Shaw created in Heartbreak House a place where men in conflict with life remove their masks, and lose their illusions. Ariadne is the first to acknowledge her need for the comforting shell of respectability which she put on at her marriage, to escape the casual chaos of her home. The sorrow of finding no welcome on her return forces this self-recognition. Ellie, older and harder after the destruction of her romantic dreams about Hector, adopts the mask of a cynic in her cold-blooded manipulation of Mangan before she finally reaches self-knowledge during her confrontation with Shotover. Hector plays idly with various romantic-love situations, but becomes seriously introspective in his discussions with the Captain on his feelings towards his fellow-man. By the end of Act II, after watching Ellie, his wife and his sister-in-law playing with the affections of the men around them, he realises his own subjugation. "I am tied to Hesione's apron string...Why should you let yourself be dragged about and beaten by Ariadne as a toy donkey is dragged about and beaten by a child?" He, like Shotover, invokes destruction.

"Oh women! women! women! Fall. Fall and crush." (p. 794) Mangan, who appears at the beginning of the play to have no heart to break, hears under hypnosis in Act II the unfeeling plans which Ellie has for his future, and overflows in bitter reproach to Hesione, who, showing for the first time in the play some genuine feeling, covers her face in shame.

"There is a soul in torment here", (p. 784) comments the Captain, while later Ellie, watching Mangan weep, says of heartbreak, "It is a curious sensation; the sort of pain that goes mercifully beyond the powers of feeling. When your heart is broken, your boats are burned: nothing matters any more. It is the end of happiness and the beginning of peace."

(p. 788) This stripping of illusions culminates in Act III with Ellie's realisation of the falsities of the world; only her father's affection and Shakespeare's poetry are real to her; Hector's heroic tales, Mangan's money, Hesione's beauty, Ariadne's respectability, even the Captain's wisdom, are all masks. "Look here" screams Mangan wildly, "I'm going to take off all my clothes!" (p. 797) Nakedness to him is madness, not truth. He wants to escape back to the respectability of his childhood, or to the city where he is a figure of importance. Hector, on the other hand, is implacable in his search for truth. He recognises the emptiness in himself and in the others. They are all ghosts, all heartbroken imbeciles, trapped in "this soul's prison we call England." When the bombers arrive, Mangan dives for safety to the cave. Paradoxically, in this dynamited hell he finds the death for which he is fitted. Hector, hoping for death, turns on the lights all over the house, filled with exultation in the face of danger. The fact that he lives intensely at

this moment lends man, perhaps, some hope of a creative relationship with a universe which may otherwise destroy him.

The setting, characterization, and action of Heartbreak House show revelation on an increasingly deeper level as we consider the recurrent symbols of the ship, the house and the heart. Much, however, has been omitted, which does not fit my interpretation on any of the levels yet considered. The chaotic structure of the play, for example, can only be understood if it is interpreted as a dream sequence. It is possible, for example, to consider the whole play as Ellie's dream, after she falls asleep when the curtain opens. Sleep, with its associated states, is a recurrent factor in the action, with Hesione falling asleep during one of her few benevolent activities,¹ constant references to the Captain's forgetfulness, Mangan's hypnotic trance, and the dreamlike moonlit scene of the third act, through which the Captain intermittently dozes to wake into abrupt lucidity at the necessary moment. Only a dream would contain such deliberately rough transitions as the brutal entrance of Hector in the middle of Ellie's romantic tale. Attempted nakedness such as Mangan's, or Mazzini's appearance in an exotic dressing-gown, are characteristic dream situations, while the Captain's confusion of the two Dunns, or the burglar's sudden appearance and subsequent behaviour are the stuff of fantasy. The exaggerated and continual use of the typically Shavian device of "peripetia"² of reversal of expectations

¹ i.e. Putting flowers in Ellie's room, p. 762.

² A. S. Downer drew attention to Shaw's frequent employment of this device in "Aspects of Shaw", his address to the Shaw Seminar at Brock University, St. Catharines, 1966.

in this play partakes of the nature of the dream. Ellie and Kriadne arrive at an unwelcoming house, inhabited by a wild-looking old gentleman, who refuses to recognise his daughter, and throws Ellie's tea into the slop-basket. Non-recognition is the rule for most characters meeting each other throughout Act I, from the non-pirate Massini Dunn to Randall Utterword who, mistaken for Hastings when he arrives at this chaotic house which has no knocker and no bell, takes advantage of the confusion to kiss the siren Hesione. This action foreshadows the turmoil of Act II, where affections are exchanged and withdrawn casually and freely in a parody of match-making. Act III, with its self-revelations, symbolic marriage, and apocalyptic destruction, moves wholly into the realm of fantasy.

Why is a dream-sequence necessary? Allegory can be conveyed without its use, as Major Barbara has indicated. According to psychological research, however, the dream reveals the deepest subconscious desires and fears of the individual, as the mind wanders free from rational restraint. Shaw has told us that this play was unplanned. If it is considered as a waking dream, not only attacking the political situation in England, not only portraying Shaw's universal philosophy nor the self-discovery of his characters, but also containing some of his deepest personal problems, the significance of some symbolism as yet unconsidered may be revealed.

A characteristic of many dreams, particularly in childhood, is their sinister quality. The dreamer's helplessness is pitted against supernatural powers. An area of imagery which cannot be ignored in Heartbreak House is the demonic cluster of associations surrounding

Shotover and his daughters. The effect of distorted reality within the play, which is initiated by the symbolic setting and by the erratic action, is increased by the exotic implications which begin to adhere to Shotover as we learn of his sojourn in the China seas and in Zanzibar, and of his marriage to a negress. The references quickly develop from outlandish to fearful. "They say he sold himself to the devil in Zanzibar before he was a captain," (p. 760) says the old nurse to Ellie before she has been five minutes in the house. Ariadne is called by her father "a perfect fiend". (p. 761) Hector, that "damned soul in hell" (p. 788), who cannot escape from his siren wife, contemplates the activities of "the daughters of that supernatural old man", the mystical progeny of the black witch of Zanzibar. "There is some damnable quality in them that destroys men's moral sense, and carries them beyond honour and dishonour." (p. 771) The sinister fear engendered by these references becomes more understandable as we observe that it is aroused in connection with the emotional relationships of the central characters, the relationships of parent/child, or of husband/wife. These are unsatisfactory for the Captain and his children; they were the cause of much anxiety (becoming fear in dreams) for G.B.S. in his childhood. An instructive contrast to the fear-dominated partnership is provided in the play by the relationships between Ellie and her father, and between Mazzini Dunn and his wife (as suggested in Act II, p. 780), which are affectionate and undemanding, unlike the sucking, vampire-like association between the "demon daughters" and their men. Since Heartbreak House is not melodrama, however, the situation is complicated by our observation of ambiguities in the

characterization. Ellie and Mazzini have a variety of qualities, more and less admirable, and the Ellie/Mangan relationship partakes of the vampire nature. Shotover, it appears, only pretended to sell his soul to the devil in order to control his brutes of seamen, while the negress, far from being a witch, brought him back into contact with humanity, or "redeemed" him. (p. 769) He is a searcher for wisdom, for the seventh degree of concentration, which allows Yoga devotees to approach the Infinite,¹ though in the typically ambiguous context of this play he would use the supernatural power to destroy the fools and brutes who surround him. As a searcher, rather than as one who has yet attained peace, he evokes sometimes admiration, sometimes sympathy, sometimes disgust, as did King Lear, whose associations also cling to him.

Shaw's references to Shakespeare during this play have already been noted. Ellie is reading Othello; the speech and actions of Nurse Guinness recall Romeo and Juliet; Shotover's situation as a once-dominating old man harassed by two ungrateful daughters and tended by a loving Cordelia figure bears obvious resemblances to King Lear,² while the "dog" imagery often used by Shotover also links him with this play.³ The antagonism which the Captain feels towards the smothering activities of one of his offspring and the callousness of the other culminates in a lament reminiscent of Lear's bitterness towards his thankless children:

¹ John Noss, Man's Religions, (New York: MacMillan, 1949) p. 239.

² Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre, p. 317N.

³ q.v. Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958) pp. 341-2.

You left because you did not want us. Was there no heartbreak in that for your father? You tore yourself up by the roots; and the ground healed up and brought forth fresh plants and forgot you. What right had you to come back and probe old wounds?

(p. 799)

The tragic loneliness of this passage is reinforced by the Lear-like atmosphere of the play as a whole, the sense of blindness, of impotence, of approaching darkness, and by the image of the Captain, like the King, fighting a tempest in which alone he finds reality.

The fear and loneliness which the "demon" and the "Lear" images convey reflect the sense of abandonment which Shaw experienced early in life, when he was left in the hands of thoughtless and slum-visiting servants while his mother occupied herself elsewhere. He writes to Ellen Terry, "O, a devil of a childhood, Ellen, rich only in dreams, frightful and loveless in realities."¹ The situation was reinforced in his mid-teens by his mother's departure for London with his two sisters in the wake of George Vandaleur Lee, an event which cannot have failed to produce bitterness and shame in those left behind in Dublin, particularly in the 1870's. Philip Weissman, in Creativity in the Theater, writing of Shaw's childhood, remarks on the intense conflict which this desertion must have aroused in the boy.² A reflection of this conflict may perhaps be seen in Heartbreak House, considering Shotover as the central Shavian figure, the protagonist for man, contending with the power of the female, who in this play is overwhelmingly threatening, at once over-maternal,

¹ Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters, 1874-1897, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Max Reinhardt, 1965) p. 773.

² Philip Weissman, Creativity in the Theater, (New York: Delta Book, 1965) p. 151.

sexually fascinating, dominant and destructive.

A hint that the imaginative genesis of Heartbreak House springs from the conditions of Shaw's early childhood, or even of his infancy, is given in the wealth of infantile memories, references, and language to be found in the action. Hesione's surname is Hushabye; the nurse uses baby-talk to everyone; Ellie has an uncritical adoration for her father typical of the four-year old; the demon sisters kiss and smother everyone within reach; the story which Ellie relates about "Marcus Darnley" is of his romanticized abandonment in babyhood; Mazzini's birth situation is recounted; Mangan is reduced to small boy status as whimpering Alfie; Randall is a toy donkey for Ariadne to beat. Hesione the uncorseted overflows the play as a possessive mother figure. The list is endless.

This recurrent infancy motif reinforces the position of the dominant female within the play. Apart from Mazzini, who is impregnable against harmful magic because his need for love has been fulfilled, the men in Heartbreak House are either subservient to women or struggling against them. The caricature situation is presented by the burglar's relationship with Nurse Guinness, whose hideous triumph at his death lends a touch of horror to the play's ending. Mangan under hypnosis is a figure of pitiful fun, Hector is a kept husband, Randall a love-lorn fool. All are dominated by the three women who play cat and mouse with them. The Captain, smothered and nullified by the epithet "Daddikins", attempts to escape by the common male trick in female-dominated households, of deafness, but he is forced despite his evasiveness to provide money for the establishment he despises, at his daughter's bidding. It is significant that Ellie,

unwelcomed on her arrival, is given the genuine comforts of home, not by her hostess, but by the Captain. Good tea, a comfortable bed, clean sheets, are provided by Shotover; Hesione, in contrast, falls asleep while putting flowers in Ellie's room. In this house, only smothering is provided by the female, not genuine love. Shaw, who missed the early mothering essential to the development of a mature love relationship, here reiterates his need with hostile suspicion. In revenge, he allows only the men in his play (apart from Ellie, who perhaps represents Shaw's life-long search for an ideal) to approach self-knowledge, while the demon daughters are tormented by a lack which they do not comprehend. Hesione drops her coaxing and kissing to comment bitterly for one moment on this "cruel, damnable world" (p. 781) while Ariadne the torturer turns in rage from the heartbroken Ellie, in the sudden realisation of her own emptiness.

The different levels on which this play may be interpreted, from the broadly general to the intensely personal, give it a considerable depth of exploratory significance. The readiness with which the epithet "poetic drama" has been applied to Heartbreak House, in contrast with Shaw's other plays, is an indication of the variety of imagery, symbolism, and evocative and rhythmic language to be found here. The "quarrel with oneself" which Yeats postulates as the sine-qua-non of poetry is perhaps to be found in more of Shaw's work than is generally acknowledged. Here it is self-evident. In life Shaw's biographers are doubtful whether he ever resolved the problem of his relationship with women. In his play the issue is equally in doubt. Ellie's spiritual and sexless marriage with Captain Shotover is admittedly a father-daughter relationship,¹ the

¹"I, Ellie Dunn, give my broken heart and my strong sound soul to its natural captain, my spiritual husband and second father." p. 798.

union of youth and age, the reconciliation of Lear and Cordelia. The climax of the play, however, may be seen as positive. Male weakness, in the shape of the burglar and Mangan, is destroyed in the death-containing female cave, struck by the masculine shaft of fire from heaven. Masculine action, the fierce joy of Captain Shotover in the teeth of the typhoon, has momentarily triumphed as Ellie and Hector rejoice in their danger. Shaw's optimism was never totally quenched. Though he might never experience it, "life with a blessing", as Ellie described it (p. 798) was somewhere and occasionally to be found in the life of man.

CHAPTER VI

SAINT JOAN

St. Joan is a play based on the theme of the "Will to Power".

It is composed of a seven-scene pattern, in which the first three scenes show a rising and the last three a falling movement, while the fourth, which presents a dialogue between the Church and the State, makes the central intellectual argument of the drama. Peter Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, and Richard, Earl of Warwick, the kingmaker, sum up in Scene IV Joan's position in relationship to the religious and secular powers of the Middle Ages:

Cauchon: My Lord: we shall not defeat the Maid if we strive against one another. I know well that there is a Will to Power in the world. I know that while it lasts there will be a struggle between the Emperor and the Pope, between the dukes and the political cardinals, between the barons and the Kings. The devil divides us and governs. I see you are no friend to the Church; you are an earl first and last, as I am a church man first and last. But can we not sink our differences in face of a common enemy? I see now that what is in your mind is not that this girl has never once mentioned the Church, and thinks only of God and herself, but that she has never once mentioned the peerage, and thinks only of the King and herself.

Warwick: Quite so. These two ideas of hers are the same idea at bottom. It goes deep, my lord. It is the protest of the individual soul against the interference of priest or peer between the private man and his God. I should call it Protestantism if I had to find a name for it.

(IV, 983-984)

The new idea which Joan exemplifies of the relationship between man and God is mirrored in secular terms by another heresy, which replaces loyalty to the feudal lord with loyalty to the country of birth:

Cauchon: When she threatens to drive the English from the soil of France she is undoubtedly thinking of the whole extent of country in which French is spoken. To her the French-speaking people are what the Holy Scriptures describe as a nation. Call this side of her heresy Nationalism if you will: I can find you no better name for it.

(p. 984)

The final triumph of the play, however, is not an intellectual triumph. Intellectually, Joan is defeated. She is persuaded by the lawyers of the ecclesiastical court that her voices are indeed from the devil, for they have deceived her into believing that she will not be burnt. Her powerful recantation is based not on reason but on the instinctive testimony of the senses, which convinces her that the will of God can have no part in depriving man of his freedom. This new idea of individual freedom for which Joan stands is thus finally justified, not by the testimony of the mind, but by the operation of instinctive poetic judgment. It is in the tension between intellect and intuition, between prose and poetry, between the voice of the world and the voice of God, that the drama of St. Joan inheres.

This tension is translated into action in the play in terms of a conflict between the "will to power" of men and the powerful will of God. The intellectual message contained in Act IV contrasts man's selfish desire for personal power, which means a static establishment of Church and

State, with the "higher but vaguer and timider vision"¹ of Shaw's God of Creative Evolution, who leads man into a new dimension of individual freedom. The conflict, made conscious by the discussion in the fourth act, has been already suggested by the repetitive pattern of the three preceding scenes, the scenes of rising excitement. Each scene opens with a man of apparent strength and social position attempting to dominate a weaker or younger character, who usually resists by guile rather than by direct force. The conflict is ended in each case by the appearance of Joan, whose determination to serve her cause is so powerful that worldly squabbles are swamped by the impetus of her God-directed will.

In Act I, set in the castle of Vancouleurs, Captain Robert de Baudricourt represents the secular power of the small feudal overlord, the greatest power that Joan in her worldly situation as the daughter of a small farmer would normally expect to encounter. "You know you are a greater man here than the King himself" is the way that the Captain's steward describes it. (p. 963) The weakness beneath his apparent strength, however, is suggested by Shaw in his first stage direction. De Baudricourt is a man "handsome and physically energetic, but with no will of his own, [who is] disguising that defect by storming terribly at his steward." (p. 963) The steward, "a trodden worm", is the weakling of the scene, representative of the common man who lacks tangible power in the feudal structure, but who manages his master by a mixture of subservience and deceit. Captain and steward are but tokens and caricatures of the more powerful worldly figures which appear later, and their grotesque nature is increased by the

¹Shaw, "Preface to Plays Pleasant", p. 729.

subject of their argument: the hens have stopped laying.

The episode of the eggs is the first of a series of apparently miraculous events by which Shaw strengthens Joan's position in relationship to the other characters. When, after de Baudricourt has agreed to give her a horse, armour and soldiers, the steward runs in with a basket of five dozen eggs, the effect, while amusing to a sophisticated audience, is awe-inspiring to the soldiery of Vancouleurs and to their squire. To them it is a sign from God of his approval for Joan, and they are now doubly willing to follow her to the Dauphin's court. Her dominating personality has already overcome their objections to her desire for a man's dress and a man's position; the "miracle" confirms their belief that the source of her strength is the power of God. By a significant change of style Shaw dramatizes the distinction between Joan's normal behaviour and her inspired state. When questioned about herself by de Baudricourt she chatters in typically female fashion about her first name, her surname, her father, her place of birth, her age:

Surname? What is that? My father sometimes called himself d'Arc; but I know nothing about it. You met my father. He...

When asked about her voices, the tone changes noticeably:

Robert: What did you mean when you said that St. Catherine and St. Margaret talked to you every day?

Joan: They do...I hear voices telling me what to do. They come from God.

Robert: They come from your imagination.

Joan: Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us.

Poulangey: Checkmate.

(p. 967)

Uncontrolled chatter is replaced by firm, confident statement, showing in action the superior power of the will of God over the will of man. This higher will easily achieves its desire in Act I; Joan is granted her requests, and sets off for Chinon to find the Dauphin. The miracle of the eggs, making a comic but fitting conclusion to the robust vitality of the scene, is the final stroke by which the worldly power of the feudal lord is seen as inferior to the creative power of the Life Force. The episode is more than a plot device. De Baudricourt is a soldier, but under the feudal system he is also an owner of farming serfs. Symbolically, the disappearance of the eggs suggests the weakness of an entire facet of feudal life, a weakness which has been engendered by success. Like Canute's courtiers, de Baudricourt is so blinded by a belief in human power that he thinks a show of it can achieve any desire:

Go, Bring me four dozen eggs and two gallons of milk
here in this room before noon, or Heaven have mercy
on your bones!

(p. 963)

The miracle attributed to Joan suggests symbolically that the agricultural aspect of feudal life is more dependent upon the power of the Life Force than its human lords would care to admit.

The juxtaposition of blustering human power and the miraculous power of God is repeated in Act II. The Archbishop of Rheims, representing the Church in the feudal structure, and La Tremouille, Lord Chamberlain in command of the Army, brow beat the "poor creature" who is the uncrowned King Charles the Seventh. Just as the squabble in Act I was about food, the basic concern of rural life, so these characters talk first of money, the mainspring of city existence. Robert wanted eggs from his steward;

La Tremouille and the Archbishop want money from the Dauphin. The exact parallel is not continued, however, for the "miracle" touches something closer to the true nature of the feudal occupations represented than money could do. A report is made of the death of a soldier known as "Foul-mouthed Frank", the most violent curser in Touraine. Frank, runs the story, was warned by Joan not to use such language when he was on the point of death; shortly afterwards he was drowned. The example has terrified Captain La Hive, another notorious blasphemer, into attempting to break his habit. The power of Joan to prevent swearing and obscenity in her soldiers, which was mentioned in Act I, is here shown in contrast to the weakness of the Archbishop, whose concern such things should be. From the point of view of plot, the episode's impact lies in the fulfillment of the death prophecy, which increases Joan's influence over the simple-minded. Symbolically, however, it is the theme which is strengthened. Once again the power of God, channelled through Joan, is shown triumphing over earthly institutions. Later, when she picks the Dauphin out from a crowd of courtiers, the effect is intensified. The Archbishop, though a sceptic who explains Joan's choice by natural means, can appreciate the value of the performance. Miracles, he says, are events which create faith. Whether they are genuine or contrived, it is the power of the faith created which matters. Church, State, and Army work by the same means; they dare not tell their people the plain truth; instead, they must "nourish their faith by poetry." Parables and miracles cannot deceive the initiated; "but as for the others, if they feel the thrill of the supernatural, and forget their sinful clay in a sudden sense of the glory

of God, it will be a miracle and a blessed one." (p. 972) The Archbishop, though he is publicly committed to the policy of the Church, yet feels and privately longs for the new spirit, the wider epoch, which he sees personified in Joan.

The creative power of the Life Force works even more powerfully upon the Dauphin, when Joan speaks with him alone. Overcoming his physical fear, his terror of poverty, his selfishness, and his triviality, she inspires him with the vision of a free France. The dialogue rises from the earthy level of her workaday prose ("What is my business? Helping mother at home. What is thine? Petting lapdogs and sucking sugarsticks. I call that muck.") to that of associative Biblical rhythm as the dream is put into words:

Charlie: I come from the land and have gotten my strength working on the land; and I tell thee that the land is thine to rule righteously and keep God's peace in and not to pledge at the pawnshop as a drunken woman pledges her children's clothes. And I come from God to tell thee to kneel in the cathedral and solemnly give thy Kingdom to Him for ever and ever, and become the greatest King in the world as His steward and His bailiff, His soldier and His servant. The very clay of France will become holy; her soldiers will be soldiers of God; the rebel dukes will be rebels against God; the English will fall on their knees and beg thee to let them return to their lawful homes in peace. Wilt be a poor little Judas, and betray me and Him that sent me?

(p. 975)

The echo of the Anglican baptismal service, where the child is pledged to be "God's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end", the association of the clay of France with the "holy ground" near the burning bush where Moses made a covenant with the Lord, and Joan's daring

identification of herself with Christ, strengthen the power of this vision of consecration, so that even the weakling prince is stirred by it. Inspiration is translated into action as Joan's second command from God is fulfilled, and she is given charge of the army. As in Scene I, the action closes with the saint, triumphant, and this time followed by an enthusiastic throng:

Joan: [Suddenly flashing out her sword as she divines
that her moment has come] Who is for God and
his Maid? Who is for Orleans with me?

La Hire: [carried away, drawing also] For God and His
Maid! To Orleans!

All the Knights: [following his lead with enthusiasm]
To Orleans!

(p. 976)

Scene III is the last scene which shows Joan in the ascendancy. Once again at the beginning the domineering figure bullies the weaker, though this time only in play. The Bastard, Dunois, who commands the French forces besieging Orleans, transfers his annoyance with the contrary wind to his page, threatening to pitch that "infernal young idiot" into the river. The page's calm reaction, however, shows that Dunois' blustering does not reflect his true character, which comes to the surface when he welcomes Joan. Unlike the feudal squire, priest, and politician-soldier of the earlier scenes, Dunois does not cling to power for personal satisfaction, and is not afraid to accept help from a newcomer, or to instruct her where she is inexperienced. The discussion of tactics becomes so involved that neither Joan nor Dunois notices the occurrence of another miracle. The pennant, which had streamed in a strong east wind at the scene's opening, but which dropped on Joan's appearance, is now signalling a west wind, which will allow the attacking boats to cross the river

Loire to the walls of Orleans. The power of God, mightier than that of the army commanders of France, has once more shown itself, and a miracle for the third time puts leadership into Joan's hands. Dunois gives her his baton and prepares to follow her: "You command the King's army. I am your soldier". As he encourages her forward, the mad enthusiasm which we heard in Scene II breaks out for the last time: "The Maid! The Maid! God and the Maid! Hurray-ay-ay!" (p. 978)

The middle scene of the play, which, as I have commented is its intellectual nub, strikes the first ominous note to be heard on the path of Joan's triumph. The basis of the conflict between the saint and the feudal establishment has already been reviewed. The result of the conflict, the plan to burn Joan, is made more grim by the studied impersonality of her enemies, by the deliberately "professional view", as Warwick, puts it, that they take of the need for execution. To Cauchon and Warwick, Joan is not a free individual with a mind of her own, but an object which has escaped from the system and which threatens to wreck it. She is a "baptized child of God", but "diabolically inspired" (p. 981), a heretic, a village sorceress, a beggar on horseback. Of the personal devotion which Joan has inspired in the first three scenes, or of the dislike which will surround her in the last three, there is no trace in the conversation of the great lords. To them she is only a pawn to be manipulated philosophically and despised socially. The "Will to Power" of the world shows itself at its strongest and most callous in this scene, as the mightiest symbols of Church and State join forces. Only in the voice of the people, represented by the caricature figure of Stogumber, the chaplain, is there

an echo of personal feeling, as the amazing and terrible battle at Orleans is recalled:

My lord: at Orleans this woman had her throat pierced by an English arrow, and was seen to cry like a child from the pain of it. It was a death-wound; yet she fought all day; and when our men had repulsed all her attacks like true Englishmen, she walked alone to the wall of our fort with a white banner in her hand...

(p. 980)

The real emotion felt by the chaplain, who swears his readiness to burn Joan with his own hands, is set against the hypocritical show of compassion of the men of real power, who conclude their agreement to destroy Joan with a fervent assertion that they desire to save her. Cauchon will strive for her salvation; Warwick will spare her if he can; but their real conclusion is Pilate's own: "It is expedient that one woman die for the people." (p. 984) God's voice is silent. The world triumphs.

This ominous scene, taking place at the moment of Joan's greatest victory, casts its shadow onwards to the opening of Scene V, which is ostensibly an occasion for rejoicing. The great cathedral at Rheims rings with organ music after Charles VII's coronation. The second command of God has been fulfilled, and it only remains now to finish the work of driving the English from France. This should be a time of supreme joy for the saint, but as the curtain rises she is found kneeling before one of the stations of the Cross, weeping in the chill of the empty church. To her one friend, Dunois, she can admit her loneliness, her sorrow at the jealousy of those whom she has superseded, her misery at the world's wickedness, which can only be assuaged by the heavenly voices which she hears in the church bells. As she lingers there, the truth of her

feelings is confirmed when the King and two of his army commanders show relief at her proposed return to the farm, and the Archbishop accuses her of being stained with the sin of pride, of hubris, of over-weening self-confidence. To Joan, whose only confidence has been not in her own power, but in the power of God, this is incomprehensible, and as one after another of her former supporters show that they still rely only on worldly strength, she realises herself to be utterly alone. Dunois, whose comrade she has been, still trusts more to soldierly skill than to her voices; Charles, whom she has crowned, would grudge the money for her ransom if she were captured; the Archbishop, whom she revered, tells her that the Church would burn her for witchcraft because of her pride. It is Joan's Gethsemane. As the Archbishop condemns her for conceit, for ignorance, for headstrong presumption, for impiety, in other words for failing to trust the advice of men of worldly power, she elevates her spirit beyond the reach of his attack: "I have better friends and better counsel than yours". (p. 989) Until this point in the scene, she has attempted to convince her listeners by argument; now that she realizes the uselessness of rhetoric, her inward feelings burst out with poetic intensity:

Where would you all have been now, if I had heeded that sort of truth? There is no help, no counsel, in any of you. Yes: I am alone on earth: I have always been alone. My father told my brothers to drown me if I would not stay to mind his sheep while France was bleeding to death: France might perish if only our lambs were safe. I thought France would have friends at the court of the King of France; and I find only wolves fighting for pieces of her poor torn body. I thought God would have friends everywhere, because he is the friend of everyone; and in my innocence I believed

that you who now cast me out would be like strong towers to keep harm from me. But I am wiser now; and nobody is any the worse for being wiser. Do not think you can frighten me by telling me that I am alone. France is alone; and God is alone; and what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and of my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is his strength: what would he be if he listened to your jealous little counsels? Well, my loneliness shall be my strength too; it is better to be alone with God: His friendship will not fail me, nor his counsel, nor his love. In his strength I will dare, and dare, and dare, until I die. I will go out now to the common people, and let the love in their eyes comfort me for the hate in yours. You will all be glad to see me burnt; but if I go through the fire I shall go through it to their hearts for ever and ever. And so, God be with me.

(p. 989)

The repetition of the words "alone" and "loneliness" now marks Joan as the isolated "poet-philosopher" figure whom Shaw so greatly admired, set apart from her fellows, but identifying herself with the purpose of the world (or of God) as she understands it. Until this point she has been followed, though the common people have always been more enthusiastic about her than the men of power. Now, as earthly power is re-asserting itself, and preparing to destroy her, she recognises in her repetitions the few things which will never fail her. In her loneliness, which is spiritual elevation, she is at one with France, her suffering country, and with her God. If repetition forms the poetic warp of the passage, the weft is strengthened by balance and antithesis, arranged in a careful pattern, which as this is a key speech of the play, resembles to some extent the pattern of the play itself. The speech opens with three points which are echoed in reverse just before its

conclusion, while its middle contains a statement amplified by three images representing the three stages of Joan's career. The first sentence suggests how Joan's actions have helped those who are about to betray her, while the last but one contrasts with their unjustified hatred the love of the common people in which she will seek comfort. The lack of help and counsel from her powerful worldly friends, described in the second sentence, is weighed against the friendship, counsel, and love of God and of the common people, spoken of near the end. On either side of the central statement comes an assertion of loneliness, the first Joan's, the second her country's and her God's. Now within this enclosing framework of mood comes the moment of self-knowledge, prepared by a series of kinaesthetic images. The first, contrasting the drowned Joan and her bleeding country with the guarded sheep, recalls the saint's struggle to escape the blind self-interest of rural feudalism; in the second, continuing in the pastoral convention, self-interest among the great at the Dauphin's court has become wolfish, tearing at the body which it should defend; while the third image, in which Joan laments the weakness of her supposed friends, has associations with the towers of Orleans, which fell in ruins. The moment of self-knowledge which is reached by all of Shaw's heretic-saints has come to Joan. She has grown wiser; she now recognizes that she cannot rely upon human love; loneliness is her destiny. If the centre of the speech recalls her past, its conclusion foreshadows her future. She will pass through the sanctifying flame into the eternity of God's love, which is reflected on earth only within the hearts of the common people.

The great trial scene in the castle hall at Rouen presents the most powerful interpretation of the worldly point of view that the play contains. At the beginning of the play Joan was supported only by a few soldiers, but before long the Court was behind her, and at last the whole army. Her betrayal takes place in the same way. At first only three men attack her, but in Scene V her strongest friends desert, and in the trial scene the whole power of the Church and State are ranged against the saint. Although the "secular arm" is not allowed to be present at the actual trial, the Earl of Warwick is the first character to appear in the scene, recounting his relentless attack on Joan since her capture by the Burgundians, and reminding Bishop Cauchon and the Inquisitor of the military power at his command, ready to put into execution the sentence on the heretic. The extent of Joan's danger is emphasised by his reply to the priests who talk of saving her: "Well, by all means do your best for her if you are sure it will be of no avail". (p. 991) Few even of the priests are really concerned for Joan's soul; the lesser figures, de Stogumber and Courcelles, do their best to incriminate her with a load of minor accusations; and even the leaders of the Church, Cauchon and the Inquisitor, are thinking primarily of the threat which she poses to their institution rather than of the soul's welfare with which they purport to be concerned. The Inquisitor, a "mild elderly gentleman", who recognises in Joan a pious innocent, nevertheless complains that "for two hundred years the Holy Office has striven with these diabolical madnesses." (p. 993) His fear that Joan's mannish behaviour will lead others to worse excess is matched by Cauchon's terror of individual

thought as a corrosive of established law and custom. The arguments of these prosecuting priests are ingenious and convincing, as Shaw intended them to be, for his aim here is to attack, not the right of institutions to defend themselves, but the venom with which they persecute those who differ from them. It is not their intellectual statements which show the lack of divine love within the priests of the Church, but their cruelty to the victim. Their combination of threat and argument is powerful enough to defeat even Joan, though her wit and common sense defend her for a remarkable length of time; at last, however, the thought of the fire persuades her that her voices have indeed been lying. The recantation document, in which she admits to deceit, blasphemy, unnatural violence, sedition, idolatry, disobedience, pride and heresy, and submits herself in obedience to the will of the Church, represents paradoxically the triumph of worldly over spiritual power. At the moment when Joan is, in human eyes, returning to a state of grace, she is in real terms at her furthest distance from it, as "the rebellion of her soul against her mind and body" testifies. (p. 999) From these depths no reasoning can lift her; it is the instinctive protest of her soul against the prospect of the loss of freedom which draws from her the famous "light your fires" speech (p. 1000) for which, both within and outside the play, she is at once admired and attacked.

The effect of this speech on the listeners of the court is electric; they drag her off to execution almost before sentence of ex-communication can be passed. Its effect upon critics has been mixed. Stanley Weitraub calls it a "great outburst", and comments on its

Biblical cadences.¹ T. R. Henn exposes what he considers to be its lack of rhythmic unity, clumsiness, ("You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead") and consciously poetic effect.² Henn's last point is, I think, a valid one for some parts of the speech. Joan's references to fields and flowers, to larks in the sunshine, young lambs crying, "blessed blessed church bells", and angel voices floating on the wind, spring from the same source as Caesar's "invisible children" or Mrs. George's "back of God speed". They strike an insincere note, as did Marchbanks' green and purple carpets, and for the same reason; they are not genuine Shavian imagery. Shaw's imagery is not normally visual or audile, and rarely pastoral in any but a Biblical manner. He is not a careful observer of this kind of detail, and the visual and audile effects which he attempts produce only a vague and generalised picture. When he deals with sensations, however, it is another story. Joan's feet will be chained, as they were to a log earlier in the scene; she will breathe "foul damp darkness"; she will "drag about" in a skirt. When Shaw adds to this imagery of feeling the Biblical rhythm and reference which he so often uses to deepen the significance of his serious speeches, the effect is, I think impressive. T. R. Henn's attack on the rhythm is justifiable if one attempts to scan the line "You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead" as a pentameter. The omission of the word "stone", however, would not only flatten the impact of the line's surface meaning;

¹Stanley Weintraub, "The Avant-Garde Shaw", Shaw Seminar Papers 65 (Toronto: Copp-Clark, 1966) p. 37.

²T. R. Henn, "The Shavian Machine", G. B. Shaw, ed. R. J. Kaufmann, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1965) pp. 167-168.

it would also remove an important link with the following line, which speaks of bread. Surely the juxtaposition of the two words here reminds us of Christ's question "If his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" (Matt: 7:9) precisely the behaviour of her former friends towards Joan. Even the object of the beat of the rhythm can be disposed of, if the line is considered as an example of the common Biblical six-beat sentence split into two parts. The same rhythm is found in Isaiah's "Woe to the rebellious children...that take counsel, but not of me" (Is. 30:1), the opening line of a chapter from which at least one of the major images of this speech is taken. Joan's line "Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction" is not only built on this rhythm, but echoes Isaiah's image in 30:20, "Though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction..."¹ The whole tone of Isaiah's chapter, in fact, is close to the mood and even to the events of St. Joan, speaking as it does of "a rebellious people..which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not to us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits". (30:10) The people of Israel, according to Isaiah, have trusted in the strength of foreign princes, and have despised the power of God. Their wickedness is like "a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant" (30:13), and destruction will come to them" in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall". These images, reminiscent of the weak and treacherous rulers of France, of the great battles fought by Joan, and of the duplicity of those friends whom she had looked upon as "strong towers", are followed

¹See also Psalms: 127:2, for the phrase "Bread of sorrows".

by others which remind us of Joan herself and of her voices. Only he who trusts the power of God, says Isaiah, will hear the voice of his teachers, saying "This is the way, walk ye in it!" (30:21) The chapter closes with a description of Tophet, the place of human sacrifice:

Yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath
made it deep and large; the pile thereof
is fire and much wood; the breath of the
Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth
kindle it.

(30:33.)

I do not suggest that the events of St. Joan are strongly parallel with the passages quoted. Isaiah's last verse, for example, concerns the vengeance which will be taken upon rebels against God. However, the similarity of the images (usually kinaesthetic), to some major events of the drama is interesting, and because of the probable derivation of the "bread and water" image from this chapter, I think it possible that Shaw may have had Isaiah's material in mind when other parts of the play were being written.

The references to Matthew and Isaiah are not, of course, the only Biblical associations in this passage; the most well-known is to the seven-times heated furnace in the Book of Daniel, in which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, having refused to forswear their God, walked unhurt in the midst of the fire, and with them was seen another, in form like the Son of God. (Dan.3:20-25) Joan's reference foreshadows the report of the priest Ladvenu after her martyrdom, who tells Warwick and the chaplain:

When I had to snatch the cross from her sight,
she looked up to heaven. And I do not believe
that the heavens were empty. I firmly believe
that her Savior appeared to her then in his
tenderest glory. She called to him and died.

This is not the end for her, but the beginning.

(p. 1002)

The great drama of the trial scene, which in terms of Joan's worldly tortures is the second scene of falling action, is succeeded by an ironic epilogue which completes the separation of Joan from the world. At the very moment when her work on earth is finished, when France is free, Charles a strong king, and when she herself is recognised as a saint by the Establishment against which she fought, her friends and followers perform the final act of desertion. As a symbol perfected in death, they can adore her; as a living woman they will once again cast her out. The epilogue is essential to the completion both of the technical and of the symbolic pattern of the play, which is not a tragedy, but as Shaw points out, a chronicle. The chronicle is a religious one, a parable of the operation of spiritual power in the world, which paradoxically alters the world and is at the same time rejected by it. Joan's play is a Passion Play. First simple men and then more subtle ones follow her, until outside the Cathedral the crowds prepare to shout "Hosannah" on her appearance, but inside it her former supporters are ready to betray her. Her agonized recognition of her loneliness, her trial and her execution, must be followed by resurrection and ascension after the Biblical pattern, and for this the epilogue is indispensable. For the complete portraiture of Shaw's philosopher-poet-saint it is also essential. The poet must be shown as going out alone towards eternity, as did Marchbanks, Don Juan, Keegan, and Major Barbara. Lilith at the end of Back to Methusaleh with her affirmation "It is enough that there is a beyond" and Joan with her sorrowful "How long, O Lord?" speak in the same voice, the visionary tongue of the poet seer.

CONCLUSION

My investigation into the nature of Shaw's idea of poetry and the poet suggests that, while it is valuable to discover the sources from which the dramatist derived his definition, we cannot throw much light upon the interpretation of the plays in Shaw's terms alone. If, as Shaw believed because of his admiration for Shelley, the poet is a pathfinder, one who extends the physical and moral senses of the race, who repudiates tradition and forms his own literary techniques and standards, then almost any reputable and original writer can be put in this category. That Shaw was using the term in a very general sense and was thinking more of the creative impulse at work than of the methods by which it was expressed, is suggested by his comparison of the poet with the prophet, the teacher, the musician and the law-giver. As a creative artist, Shaw was certainly a poet according to his own definition. Any critical assessment of his claim must take his own view of the subject into consideration, and it is because I believe that Mr. Park has not done this that I quarrel with the conclusions in his article.

To take Shaw seriously as a poetic dramatist however, we must investigate in depth the qualities which his criticism only suggests. Shaw felt that the poet should use a free-flowing, musical rhythm in his work, rather than the constricting metrical pattern of earlier days. In Chapter III I have suggested that Shaw uses such a rhythm, and that this rhythm is similar to and is probably derived from, the associational prose of the King James translation of the Bible. Shaw also said that instincts, passions,

and frailties were the stuff of poetic drama. In my studies of Major Barbara, Heartbreak House, and Saint Joan, I have explored the symbolic framework which I see beneath the surface of the plays, a framework which reinforces the emotional and passionate impact of the dramas, and which is derived not only from the self-examination of the main characters, but often, especially in Heartbreak House, from the subconscious soul-searching of Shaw himself. The introspection expressed in symbolism which is contained in these plays is the self-scrutiny of Yeats' definition, the poetry which is "the quarrel with ourselves". Taken in conjunction with the rhythm and imagery of the great speeches at the points of crisis, I believe that it justifies my contention that these three plays may be considered poetic drama, that some speeches in more prosaic works may also contain elements of poetry, and that Shaw is not entirely to be discounted, either on his own or on modern terms, when he claims to be a poetic dramatist.

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