THE PRISM OF WAR: SHAW'S TREATMENT OF WAR IN ARMS AND THE MAN AND HEARTBREAK HOUSE

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Abstract

Many critics examine Shaw's plays in terms of the subjects they deal with, but they often ignore what aspects of these subjects Shaw draws on or how he uses them. One subject that appears in many of his works is war. This thesis examines Shaw's treatment of war in *Arms and the Man* and *Heartbreak House*, and attempts to discover a common element between them that reveals something not only about the plays themselves, but also about Shaw's drama in general.

The chapter on *Arms and the Man* notes how Shaw makes war a highly visible element of the play, but avoids dealing with issues directly related to war. Shaw does not draw on war itself, but on its image. The sources for Catherine's and Bluntschli's impressions of both war and Sergius—Lady Butler's paintings, the military melodrama and extravaganza, Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade," and accounts of the Battle of Balaklava—indicate that the play's focus is not on war, but on how one perceives the world. This idea is further reinforced by Shaw's own views about idealism, romanticism, and realism.

Unlike *Arms and the Man*, war is an integral part of *Heartbreak House*. Shaw uses elements from the British homefront during the First World War—the wasted lives of England's youth, the lies of the government and the press, and the potential for violence both on the front and at home during the conflict—to help create
the play's deep sense of crisis and impending doom. But as with
Arms and the Man, Heartbreak House is not a play about war.
Whereas war is highly visible in the former, its presence is neg­
ligible in the latter: there are no military characters or any
clear indication that a war is in progress until the end of the
play. Moreover, Shaw does not draw on sources related only to the
war. Thus while Heartbreak House was born largely out of the
despair of the First World War, its themes go beyond that conflict
to deal with questions about the individual, the family, and the
fabric of society itself.

This thesis concludes by briefly examining Saint Joan, and
notes that it combines the two approaches to war found in Arms and
the Man and Heartbreak House, but distances its intended
audience—the English—by using a historical conflict where
Englishmen are the enemy. In comparing the three plays' treatment
of war, one can conclude that the common element in Shaw's treat­
ment of war is his distancing of an audience from the subject
itself. Moreover, one discovers that this distancing is related
to the nature of the subjects that Shaw uses for his plays. Only
subjects that he believed were complex were suitable for creating
his dramatic works. Therefore, it is fruitless for critics to
examine Shaw's plays for his opinions about a subject; they should
concentrate on how Shaw uses these subjects in his plays instead.
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Abbreviations and Texts Used

For the sake of brevity, the following abbreviations will be used in the parenthetical documentation; the abbreviations of the titles of Shaw's plays are taken from the list in the index of Collected Plays with Their Prefaces (7: 682):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Text</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A&amp;M</td>
<td>Arms and the Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DocD</td>
<td>The Doctor's Dilemma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH</td>
<td>Heartbreak House</td>
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<td>MB</td>
<td>Major Barbara</td>
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<td>MD</td>
<td>The Man of Destiny</td>
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<td>SJ</td>
<td>Saint Joan</td>
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<tr>
<td>CL1</td>
<td>Collected Letters, 1874-1897</td>
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<td>CL2</td>
<td>Collected Letters, 1898-1910</td>
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<td>CL3</td>
<td>Collected Letters, 1911-1925</td>
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In examining Shaw's treatment of war in Arms and the Man and Heartbreak House, it is important to consider the texts being used. Shaw was an inveterate reviser, working and reworking not only his manuscripts, but also the various published editions of his works. The editions used for this study will be the first published editions: the first versions that Shaw wanted to present to the public. Therefore unless indicated otherwise, the page references cited for Arms and the Man are from the Richards edi-
tion of *Plays Pleasant* (1898), and the ones for *Heartbreak House* are from the Constable edition of *Heartbreak House, Great Catherine, and Playlets of the War* (1919). The Garland facsimiles of his holograph manuscripts make it possible to examine both plays in their original forms. These texts will be indicated in the parenthetical documentation by "facs.", and will use the Garland editions' pagination rather than the British Library's.
Throughout most of Bernard Shaw's life, the Western world was engaged in war: when he was born, the Crimean War was nearing its end while the Persian War was just beginning; before he died, the world had suffered through two major conflicts, atomic bombs had exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the United States Army was fighting in Korea. One also finds war present in many of his plays. Of the fifty-two that were published, twenty-four involve war, elements directly related to war, or military characters.

For Shaw, however, war represented something more than the conflict fought between nations; for him, it was also an instrument that revealed the nature of society. In What I Really Wrote About the War, he describes how it exposes the complexity of our morality:

[I]t must be borne in mind that our morality is never a simple, single, perfectly homogeneous body of thought and sympathy, as we conventionally assume it to be. Like white light it may present that appearance at quiet times; but the prism of war splits it violently into a spectrum in which all the colors of the rainbow are contrasted. (1)

But in Shaw's drama, war acts as both the instrument and the subject: it is the prism that splits complex social issues into
elements that can be examined, and it is a complex social issue that needs to be examined.

Shaw was very interested in war. He wrote almost a hundred books and articles—from "A Word for War" in 1887 to "G.B.S. on the A-bomb" in 1950—directly on or related to the subject. But his views on war are rather complex. Shaw did not believe that war was ever necessary, and he declared his opposition to it long before the beginning of the First World War. In a letter to E. C. Chapman, he noted, "I admit that there are excellent reasons for going to war, and for retaliating upon persons who injure us. Yet I am, on the whole, strongly opposed both to war & retaliation" (29 July 1891, CL1 303). But while he was against war, he was not a pacifist. Although Shaw believed that the First World War could have and should have been avoided, he also believed that once England was brought into the conflict it could not simply back out. In Common Sense About the War, he wrote:

The war should be pushed vigorously, not with a view to a final crushing of the German army between the Anglo-French combination and the Russian millions, but to the establishment of a decisive military superiority by the Anglo-French combination alone. A victory unattainable without Russian aid would be a defeat for Western European Liberalism: Germany would be beaten not by us but by a Militarist autocracy worse than her own. (105)

The complexity of Shaw's views on war may well have had a bearing on his interest in war as a dramatic device. For Shaw, as
for any dramatist, conflict is the heart of every drama. In his preface to *Plays Pleasant,* he declares that "every drama must be the artistic presentation of a conflict. The end may be reconciliation or destruction; or, as in life itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensable: no conflict, no drama" (vii). And war is the greatest form of human conflict in terms of size and destructive power. Of course, Shaw's dramatic interest in war is not unique; playwrights since the time of the Greeks have drawn on war for the settings, characters, and themes of their works. Euripides's *The Trojan Women* opens on "a battlefield, a few days after the battle" (11), and focuses on the condition of the women of Troy after their men have been killed and they are at the mercy of their captors. Many of Shakespeare's plays have war settings: the four mature tragedies—*Hamlet, Othello, King Lear,* and *Macbeth*—have war settings, and of the ten History Plays only *Henry VIII* does not involve a battle. The heroic drama of the Restoration, like Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards* (1670), uses war-heroes and their exploits as its sources. Military melodramas were very popular in the nineteenth century, and plays dealing with the First World War were produced long after that conflict was over: the most notable of these are Sean O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie* (1928) and Shelagh Delaney's *Oh, What a Lovely War!* (1963).

But while playwrights may use war in their plays, no playwright writes a play exclusively about war. In Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part One,* for example, one sees Hotspur itching for
battle, and the King dreading it; one watches Hal grow in character on the battlefield, changing from the irresponsible prodigal to the warrior. Indeed, the play's climax is the meeting of Hal and Hotspur in the Battle of Shrewsbury. But even though war is important, it is not the sole concern of the play. In his introduction to the Arden edition of *Henry IV, Part One*, A. R. Humphreys notes:

The play is about adventure—the adventure of conflict, the adventure of Bohemianism. It is consequently also about danger—the danger of defeat, the danger of retribution. And it is consequently also about courage—the courage of self-assertion, the courage of disreputability. . . . (lvii)

An audience is as much interested in how Falstaff is going to explain his behaviour at Gad's Hill as it is in the result of the war. Even a play like O'Casey's *The Silver Tassie*, written after the First World War and meant to "counter the 'false effrontery' of R. C. Sherriff's account of the Great War in *Journey's End" (Wright 215), deals with issues that go beyond this subject. As one watches Harry Hegan go to war, become crippled, and return home to find that his girl and all meaning in life have left him, it is not simply the folly of war but also the foibles and weaknesses of mankind that are held up for all to see: "The Lord hath given," he says as he leaves the stage for the final time, "and man hath taken away" (O'Casey act 4, 129).

Therefore, neither searching for Shaw's views about war in his plays, nor proving that they are not polemic works with war as
their sole concern, would reveal much about the playwright. Instead, my thesis will focus on the elements of war that Shaw draws on for *Arms and the Man* and *Heartbreak House*, and what his choice says about his drama. I have limited my examination to two plays because, given that almost half of Shaw's fifty-two published plays involve war, it would be impossible to cover this subject comprehensively in a master's thesis. I shall, however, refer to Shaw's other plays when they are relevant to my argument.

My thesis focuses on *Arms and the Man* and *Heartbreak House* because they have very different approaches to the treatment of war: the former makes war a very visible part of the play, but the sources it draws on are used for what they say about the way one perceives the image of war rather than for what they say about war itself; the latter draws on elements directly related to issues from the First World War for its themes, but it does not allow an audience to immediately make a connection between those themes and that war. By examining these two extremes, it is possible to discover something about Shaw's handling of this subject, and to reveal something about his approach to writing plays.
The Mask of War: The Treatment of War in *Arms and the Man*

War is a highly visible element of *Arms and the Man*. The first act deals almost exclusively with Sergius's cavalry charge at Slivnitzia, and while the war between the Serbs and Bulgarians is over at the beginning of the second act, the business of war continues into the third: Sergius announces his resignation from the army (act 2, 30), Petkoff asks Bluntschli for help in drafting the orders for sending three cavalry regiments to Philippopolis (act 2, 44), and act three opens with Bluntschli writing the orders and sending Sergius and Petkoff off to give these to the messengers (act 3, 51). Moreover, the two principal male characters, Sergius and Bluntschli, never remove their uniforms, and Petkoff does not change into civilian clothing until the final act. Thus many critics have perceived war as an important theme in the play. The *New York Times* review of the 1925 Theatre Guild production of *Arms and the Man* states:

[The play] is no longer especially devastating as an attack upon militarism. In respect to campaigning the popular mood now matches Mr. Shaw's of thirty-six years ago; the languid aftermath of the great war, in which
uniforms were drab and military life in general a matter of persistence and endurance rather than brilliance, leaves most people empty of the glories and heroism of warfare. . . . At the present time most of us are innocent of this particular human peccadillo; and, accordingly, the first act of "Arms and the Man" seems trifling. We have already removed the aureole from the head of Mars. (Rev. of A&M)

A careful examination of the play, however, reveals that it is not "an attack on militarism"; nor is the play influenced by elements directly related to war, as is the case in Heartbreak House. In fact, Arms and the Man holds very little interest in the subject of war itself. Even the first act, where the main conflict involves Catherine's and Bluntschli's interpretations of Sergius's cavalry charge at the battle of Slivnitza, is more concerned with the themes related to the perception of war. Despite war's high visibility in Arms and the Man, its role as a "prism" has little to do with issues directly related to battles; its primary concern is to examine the conflict between two philosophies of perceiving the world—realism and idealism.

Although war is present throughout Arms and the Man, Shaw does not utilize its potential as a dramatic device as fully as other dramatists. The setting of the war in the play and its outcome is of little importance: one is never taken to the battlefield, as is the case in Tom Robertson's War, and neither a
late-Victorian nor a modern audience would have any interest in a war between Servia\(^1\) and Bulgaria—nor did Shaw. He openly admitted that the setting of his play is not very important. In "Ten Minutes with Mr Bernard Shaw," he writes:

> [M]y play is not an historical play in your sense at all. It was written without the slightest reference to Bulgaria. In the original MS. the names of the places were blank, and the characters were called simply The Father, The Daughter, The Stranger, The Heroic Lover, and so on. The incident of the machine-gun bound me to a recent war; that was all. ("Ten Minutes" 481)

Shaw's statement is confirmed when one examines the holograph manuscript of *Arms and the Man*. He changed his characters' names: Raina is originally called Juana, Catherine is listed only as the "Mother," Nicola is Michaeloff (see *A&M* facs. 6-7), and Louka is called Luga in the first draft and then is changed to Stanca when Shaw revised the play (see *A&M* facs. 217). He did not write down the location of the war until he had begun his revisions, and in Shaw's original description of the setting, there is only one specification: the scene is "a lady's bedchamber prettily furnished" (*A&M* facs. 3). Also the play was originally set in Servia, not Bulgaria. In a letter to Charles Charrington, Shaw noted, "I have had to shift the scene from Servia to Bulgaria, and

\(^1\) After 1894, "Servia" was changed to "Serbia," and the Standard Edition of *Arms and the Man* uses the modernized spelling. However, since I am using the Richards edition, which uses the old spelling, I will use the original spelling to avoid confusion.
to make the most absurd alterations in detail for the sake of local colour" (as qtd. in the introduction to A&M facs. xiv).

Even then, the locale is not quite set: Shaw first sets the play in "a [town?] between Sophia and in the Dragonian pass," and changes this to "a small town near the Dragonian pass" (A&M facs. 5).

Moreover, Arms and the Man, unlike other plays, does not use war to maintain suspense. It is true that the possibility of Bluntschli being caught and killed by enemy soldiers in act one keeps an audience in suspense, a tension similar to that used by the writers of military melodramas. But in Robertson's War, for example, war is used to maintain suspense throughout most of the play: act two and the first part of act three is set near a battlefield, and the dramatic tension is focused on the outcome of the battle; indeed, the final climax of the play—the revelation that Captain Sound is alive to marry Lotte—depends on it. But at the opening of the second act of Arms and the Man, the war is over, and the dramatic tension it created is gone. The play's conflict now focuses not on war, but on love. Even the most horrifying image of war in the play is used to build on the idea of love. When Raina confronts Bluntschli about his friend's indiscretion, he tells her:

BLUNTSCHLI. No: he's dead—burnt alive.

RAIN [stopping, shocked] Burnt alive!

BLUNTSCHLI. Shot in the hip in a wood-yard. Couldn't
drag himself out. Your fellows' shells set the timber on fire and burnt him, with half a dozen other poor devils in the same predicament.

RAINIA. How horrible!

SERGIUS. And how ridiculous! Oh, war! war! the dream of patriots and heroes. A fraud, Bluntschli, a hollow sham, like love. (act 3, 64-65)

The audience's attention is shifted away from the horrifying image of Bluntschli's friend being burned alive by Sergius's comment on the "hollow sham" of love.

In fact, Arms and the Man does little to present images of war on stage. The third act of Robertson's play shows "the sick and wounded" being tended in a church near a battle-field (act 3, 773). Other writers presented even more graphic and spectacular images of war and its consequences on stage; Meisel describes scenes from J. H. Amherst's Napoleon Bonaparte's Invasion of Russia; or, The Conflagration of Moscow:

The most sensational of the culminating mass spectacles was the burning of Moscow at the end of Act Two. The conflagration, worked with transparencies, appears first in the distance, and then engulfs the scene in a general chaos of French soldiers and Russian inhabitants rushing about and dying. In the end a house front collapses, and Napoleon on horseback "dashes through everything and brings [a woman and child] out in safety." . . .
the third act], a French cuirassier brings in the frozen leg of his dead horse, and the cannibalistic feast is only prevented by the exterminating onslaught of the enemy. (Realizations 215-16)

In contrast, Arms and the Man presents only one violent incident directly related to war, the bullet mistakenly fired through the window when Raina opens her shutters (act 1, 11). Even this tends towards the comic and says little about war itself. In addition, the only visual element of the reality of war is Bluntschli's dishevelled state when he enters Raina's room in act one; he is "in a deplorable plight, bespattered with mud and blood and snow, his belt and the strap of his revolver-case keeping together the torn ruins of [his uniform]" (act 1, 8). But his "deplorable plight" is designed more as a contrast to the splendid look of Sergius when he first enters in the second act than a statement about war and its effects.

One discovers that Arms and the Man does not focus on aspects of war; it deals with the idea of perception through the image of war. When the play opens, Catherine describes Sergius's great victory at Slivnitza to her daughter, Raina, in the most patriotic and romantic of terms:

You can't guess how splendid it is. A cavalry charge! Think of that! He defied our Russian commanders—acted without orders—led a charge on his own responsibility—headed it himself—was the first man to sweep through
their guns. Cant you see it, Raina: our gallant splendid Bulgarians with their swords and eyes flashing, thundering down like an avalanche and scattering the wretched Servians and their dandified Austrian officers like chaff. (act 1, 5)

Catherine's response to the Bulgarian victory presents a positive, heroic side of war, and focuses attention on the question of leadership. Sergius's success, as one can perceive it at this early stage of the play, seems admirable: by defying the orders of his superiors, he is seen as a man of action who is not afraid to take responsibility; by charging into the fray, he displays the kind of bravery associated with heroes, particularly the heroes of Romantic literature and opera. (This association becomes more significant as the play progresses.)

Contrasting Catherine's speech are Bluntschli's descriptions of cavalry charges in general and that of Sergius in particular. In this exchange between Raina and Bluntschli, battlelines for the conflict in the first act are drawn:

MAN. You never saw a cavalry charge, did you?

RAIN. How could I?

MAN. Ah, perhaps not—of course! Well, it's a funny sight. It's like slinging a handful of peas against a window pane: first one comes; then two or three close behind him; and then all the rest in a lump.

RAIN [her eyes dilating as she raises her clasped hands ecstatically] Yes, first One!—the bravest of the brave!
MAN [prosaically] Hm! you should see the poor devil pulling at his horse.

RAINa. Why should he pull at his horse?

MAN [impatient of so stupid a question] It's running away with him, of course: do you suppose the fellow wants to get there before the others and be killed?

Then they all come. You can tell the young ones by their wildness and their slashing. The old ones come bunched up under the number one guard: they know that they're mere projectiles, and that it's no use trying to fight.

The wounds are mostly broken knees, from the horses cannoning together. (act 1, 15)

The difference between Bluntschli's and Catherine's speeches involves not only the images they create, but also the style of language the two characters use. Bluntschli's simile has nothing in common with the romantically thrilling imagery she revels in: her charging horsemen come "thundering down like an avalanche" (act 1, 5); he likens them to peas being thrown against a window.

By avoiding the hyperbolic language and imagery that permeates Catherine's speech, Bluntschli seems pragmatic and realistic, and by making it clear that he has witnessed what happens in a battle, he associates the unflattering image of a charge with reality.

Thus the two characters present diametrically opposed perceptions of war. Catherine sees it in an idealistic light; she presents a thrilling, heroic, and noble image, elevating the soldier to the
level of a god: like Zeus or Thor hurling thunderbolts down on their enemies, the Bulgarian cavalry comes "thundering down" to scatter the enemy. Bluntschli presents war as being unromantic, pointless, and ignoble; it is an event where wounds are not "chest high" as with the heroes of melodrama (Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-century Theatre 186), but are at the knee and practically self-inflicted. Moreover, while Catherine sees the leader of the charge as a romantic hero, Bluntschli sees him as "the poor devil" who is pulling at his horse's reins to keep from getting killed.

Caught between Catherine's and Bluntschli's descriptions is Raina. In Arms and the Man, she acts as the battleground for the conflict between Catherine's and Bluntschli's by playing the foil to both their perceptions of war. Despite her thrill at having her own romantic ideals confirmed by Sergius's victory, her reaction to her mother's news does not repeat the same sentiments. In fact, she questions whether those sentiments belong in the real world. She tells her mother:

I sometimes used to doubt whether [our heroic ideals] were anything but dreams. Oh, what faithless little creatures girls are! When I buckled on Sergius's sword he looked so noble: it was treason to think of disillusion or humiliation or failure. . . . Well, it came into my head just as he was holding me in his arms and looking into my eyes, that perhaps we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond of reading Byron and
Pushkin, and because we were so delighted with the opera that season at Bucharest. Real life is so seldom like that!—indeed never, as far as I knew it then. (A&M act 1, 5-6)

Raina openly questions her ideals, noting that they never have, to her knowledge, become true, and yet she defends them when Bluntschli attacks Sergius's lack of professionalism in battle. When the former scoffs at Raina's fiancé for his amateurish behaviour, she reminds him that it is her own unprofessional action that has saved him from his pursuers:

RAINIA. You are my enemy; and you are at my mercy. What would I do if I were a professional soldier?
MAN. Ah, true, dear young lady: you're always right. I know how good you've been to me: to my last hour I shall remember those three chocolate creams. It was unsoldierly; but it was angelic. (act 1, 17)

Raina feels vindicated and her romantic ideals, ideals which she gained from watching opera and reading the works of writers whose lives and works seemed filled with them, are for the time confirmed. But her confession, despite her assertion that "the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance" (act 1, 6), undermines our perception of her romanticism. She is conscious of the basis of her illusion, and while she is still willing to embrace such notions at this stage of the play, it is apparent that they, like the sentimental
and unrealistic operas of Verdi\textsuperscript{2} that she prefers, are illusionary: as she points out, "Real life is so seldom like that!"

The two very different images of war that the play contrasts provide the focus of the conflict in the first act. However, the nature of this conflict is not based on issues of war, but on the varying perceptions of it. Unlike \textit{Heartbreak House}, which is strongly influenced by the First World War, neither Catherine nor Bluntschli's descriptions of cavalry charges are based on Shaw's own experiences. They are all based on second-hand accounts. Catherine's description is removed from the battlefield: her vision of war is an interpretation of Petkoff's letter describing the incident (act 1, 5). In fact, one finds that the imagery invoked by her speech has nothing to do with reality at all; when Raina points out to her mother that their idealism is caused by their fondness for "reading Byron and Pushkin" and because they "were so delighted with the opera that season in Bucharest" (act

\textsuperscript{2} In "A Word More About Verdi," published in \textit{The Anglo-Saxon Review} in March 1901, Shaw wrote:

Bellini, Donizetti, and the Italianized Jew Meyerbeer pushed the dramatic element in opera still further, making it possible for Verdi to end by being almost wholly dramatic. But until Verdi was induced by Boito to take Shakespeare seriously they all exploited the same romantic stock-in-trade. They composed with perfect romantic sincerity, undesirous and intolerant of reality, untroubled by the philosophic faculty which, in the mind of Wagner, revolted against the demoralizing falseness of their dramatic material. They revelled in the luxury of stage woe, with its rhetorical loves and deaths and poisons and jealousies and murders, all of the most luscious, the most enjoyable, the most unreal kind. (\textit{Shaw's Music} 2: 575-76)
she alerts the audience to the visual, dramatic, and literary images that influence Catherine's way of thinking, images familiar to the late Victorian theatre-goer.

Stanley Weintraub notes that *Arms and the Man* is, in part, Shaw's response to the "obsessively detailed paintings" of Elizabeth Thompson (Lady Butler) ("Exploiting Art" 64), whose reputation as an artist was made from her paintings depicting military scenes. She belonged to a school of English painters who avoided "epic and historical pretension" and whose "style has affinities with that of the *Illustrated London News*" (Meisel, *Realizations* 221n): her works sentimentalized and romanticized the "British feats during the Napoleonic and Crimean wars" (Weintraub, "Exploiting Art" 64). She became a celebrity overnight with her fourth painting, *The Roll Call*, which became "one of the three most sensationally successful pictures of the nineteenth century" (Maas 72), and Shaw notes in both a letter responding to William Archer's critique of the play ("To William Archer," 23 Apr. 1894, CL1 429) and "A Dramatic Realist to His Critics" (30) that her paintings were copied and displayed in shop windows, making them readily known to the general public.

Thompson's *Scotland for Ever!* (this painting is also known by the title, *The Charge of the Scots Greys*), depicting the charge of the Scots Greys in the Battle of Waterloo, is a painting that

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Maas names David Wilkie's *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Gazette of the Battle of Waterloo* and William Powell Frith's *Derby Day* as the other two paintings (72).
parallels Catherine's perception of the Bulgarian charge (see figure 1). Contrasted by a grey sky which is the dominant background, the cavalrymen's bright red uniforms make each member highly visible, including the ones in the rear. Most of the men hold their swords high, ready to attack, and are bent forward in an aggressive riding position. The horses, with only two exceptions, are white, and all the animals are wide-eyed, making them appear frenzied in their gallop. Lying in the foreground are the only signs of the enemy they are pursuing: headgear, a canteen, a rifle, a knapsack, and a bugle obviously dropped in retreat. The focus of the painting is the man leading the charge. With his head turned toward his mates, he leads them on with his sword raised higher than any of others'. There is no trace of fear or reluctance in his face. Even his horse seems to lack any fear: looking straight ahead, its eyes stare directly at the viewer. One could easily envision the man at the head of the charge in Thompson's work as Sergius leading the Bulgarian cavalry toward the Serbian lines; indeed, the imagery of the painting is no different from that of Catherine's speech.

Catherine's vision of war is also influenced by the theatrical treatment of war in a number of Victorian plays and extravaganzas. Martin Meisel notes that the popular military melodrama created an "idyllic picture of war in which all wounds were chest-high and the brave acquired the fair," and where war was "gloriously ennobling" (Shaw and the Nineteenth-century Theatre 186, 188). One can see parallels between her description of Sergius's
Figure 1: Elizabeth Thompson's (Lady Butler) Scotland For Ever! (1880); rpt. in Paddy Kitchen, "Seizing the Heart." This painting depicts the charge of the calvary regiment during the Battle of Waterloo. Note the remnants of the retreating army in the foreground: (from left to right) a canteen, a rifle, a knapsack, a cap, a bugle, and another cap. None of these items could belong to the charging horsemen.
charge and Sir Gervase Rokewood's description of the feeling a soldier has when going into battle in Tom Taylor's and Charles Reade's *Two Loves and a Life*:

You are a priest, father, and a priest has never a soldier's heart. Oh, if you knew what it is to stand out in the sunlight and stake all upon the sword, as our Scottish brethren are doing! The ranks move towards each other like two thunderclouds, every cheek pale, every brow bent, every eye bright. The next moment the trumpets peal along the line, and amidst smoke and dust, and the great music of drum and cannon, man and horse and steel clash together in the grapple for death or glory. (12, col.2)

Even Tom Robertson's *War*, a play that presents both the negative and positive sides of war, extols the virtue of going into battle for one's homeland. In act two, set near the battlefield, Herr Karl Hartmann—the character who denounces the glory of war as "a delusion, a snare, a cruel lie" (764) in the previous act—with "concentrated self-contained enthusiasm" declares:

[M]ay the shame of a mother's curse blight the coward who would refuse to fight when called on by his Vaterland! Let the men rise armed from the earth, as in the heathen fable. To the ranks! to the front! all men that are men. . . . And when the fight is fought, honour to the brave in misfortune, help to the fallen, and be past hatreds dead and buried, as are the thousands of heroes whose memories we weep! (772)
There are obvious links between both Hartmann's sentiment in the above passage, the style of Catherine's description, and the types of speeches that occur in the military melodrama. Catherine is ardently patriotic, using adjectives that imply a moral superiority for the Bulgarians and degeneracy for the opposing forces: the Bulgarian cavalry is both "gallant" and "splendid," while the Servians are "wretched" and their Austrian superiors are "dandified" (A&M act 1, 5). Her speech to Raina is spoken "with surging enthusiasm," and uses familiar, clichéd expressions to describe the battle: the Bulgarian cavalry "sweep[s] through [the enemy's] guns . . . with their eyes and swords flashing," and come "thundering down like an avalanche," scattering their enemy "like chaff" (act 1, 5)—descriptions that echo Rokewood's speech in Two Loves and a Life.

Yet while Catherine's speech creates a heroic and idealistic image of war using melodrama, that idealism is undercut by those same melodramatic elements. Audiences were reacting negatively to the unrealistic world of the melodrama long before Shaw began writing Arms and the Man. Booth notes that the genre had begun to decline "well before the end of the nineteenth century" (Booth 178), with Henry Byron burlesquing it as early as 1858. Shaw was aware of the late nineteenth-century audience's reaction to the emotional and patriotic speeches common to military melodrama. In his review of Cheer, Boys, Cheer!, written a year after completing Arms and the Man, he notes:

The greater part of the audience finds itself amused by the spectacle, and interested by the magazine gun-
firing, the Johannesburg hotel, the polo match, and the Worth dresses; but it would be utterly ashamed of taking the thrashing of the villain, or the "Just before the battle, mother" episode, otherwise than with its tongue in its cheek. . . . This to me is the weak point in Drury Lane melodrama. It always contains too much stuff which neither its patrons nor its authors would condescend to take seriously. . . . (Our Theatres 1: 206-07)

With melodrama already in decline during the writing of Arms and the Man, the melodramatic roots of Catherine's speech would make an audience leery of accepting her vision of war. Such descriptions, after all, are based mainly on artifice, and artistic and idealistic interpretations.

In contrast, Shaw wants his audience to see Bluntschli's description of cavalry charges as representing reality. In "A Dramatic Realist to His Critics," Shaw defends the authenticity of both Sergius's charge and Bluntschli's description with accounts and opinions written by soldiers who served in the field of battle. At one point, he cites General Horace Porter for "a precedent both for the Swiss's opinion of the heroic Bulgarian, and the possibility of a novice, in 'sheer ignorance of the art of war' (as the Swiss puts it), achieving" Sergius's victory (29):

Recruits sometimes rush into dangers from which veterans would shrink. When [General George Henry] Thomas was holding on to his position at Chickamauga on the afternoon of the second day, and resisting charge after
charge of an enemy flushed with success, General Granger came up with a division of troops, many of whom had never before been under fire. As soon as they were deployed in front of the enemy, they set up a yell, sprang over the earthworks, charged into the ranks, and created such consternation that the Confederate veterans were paralyzed by the very audacity of such conduct. Granger said, as he watched their movements, "Just look at them: they don't know any better; they think that's the way it ought to be done. I'll bet they'll never to it again." (As qtd. in "A Dramatic Realist" 29)

Shaw makes a strong case for Bluntschli's account, implying that it is the more acceptable image of war.

Yet while Shaw emphasizes the realism of Bluntschli's account, what that image reveals about war itself is not important. The important factor in Porter's description is not what he says about the misplaced eagerness of recruits: Shaw does not reveal what happened to the cavalrymen in Porter's account, and the quotation does not give a clear indication that the recruits suffered any terrible losses. What is important is Granger's statement, an interpretation of the event made from his own experiences in battle. Therefore, Bluntschli's description, like Catherine's, focuses on how he perceives war rather than on the subject itself. The importance of perception in relation to the sources of Catherine's and Bluntschli's descriptions is made clearer when one examines the one source that is common to them:
the Crimean War. In "A Dramatic Realist to His Critics," Shaw relates Porter's statement to the charge at Balaklava, dismissing his own critics' complaints overtly and Catherine's description implicitly by pointing out their lack of experience in real battle:

Imagine the feelings of the critics—countrymen of the heroes of Balaclava, and trained in warfare by repeated contemplation of the reproductions of Miss Elizabeth Thompson's pictures in the Regent Street shop windows, not to mention the recitations of Tennyson's Charge of the Light Brigade, which they have criticized—on hearing this speech from a mere Swiss! I ask them now to put aside these authorities for a moment and tell me whether they have ever seen a horse bolt in Piccadilly or the Row. If so, I would then ask them to consider whether it is not rather likely that in a battlefield, which is, on the whole, rather a startling place, it is not conceivable and even likely that at least one horse out of a squadron may bolt in a charge. (30)

Catherine's speech draws on some of the imagery of Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade." The poem, written a few months after the Battle of Balaklava, would have been familiar to late nineteenth-century theatre-goers, and it is not unreasonable to believe that many of them would recognize in her speech the images taken from this poem. In the fourth stanza, Tennyson writes:

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke
Shattered and sundered. (11. 27-36)

One can see the parallels between the poem and the imagery
Catherine uses to describe a cavalry charge: the Light Brigade
"[f]lashed all their sabres bare," and the Bulgarian cavalry have
their "swords and eyes flashing"; and both break through their
enemies' lines and force them to retreat. Moreover, battle bes-
tows honour and glory on the main subjects. Catherine proudly
declares that "Sergius is the hero of the hour, the idol of the
regiment" (A&M act 1, 5), and Tennyson’s poem ends:

When can their glory fade?
0 the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred! (11. 50-55)

Like Catherine, Tennyson never saw the incidents he describes.
His poem, written "in a few minutes, after reading ... The
Times" (Hallam Tennyson, A Memoir 1: 381), is based not on per-
sonal experience, but on what his imagination tells him a battle is like.

Bluntschli's evaluation of Sergius is based in part on what actually happened at Balaclava. Because of a "mangled order" and a series of mistakes that was precipitated by the egotism of Cardigan, "the entire brigade—half of the British cavalry in the Crimea—charged in the wrong direction" (Farwell 71). Of the approximately 700 horsemen who had joined the charge, only 195 returned: the 17th Lancers was left with thirty-seven men, and the 13th Light Dragoons "could muster only two officers and eight mounted men" (Woodham-Smith 259). In January 1856, the "Inquiry into the Supplies of the British Army in the Crimea" attributed the cavalry's destruction "to the inefficiency, indifference and obstinacy of the Earl of Lucan and the Earl of Cardigan" (Woodham-Smith 276). The press began to attack the two men, and while there were those who defended them, their reputations were tarnished. Bluntschli's assertion that Sergius and his regiment "committed suicide," coupled with the links between Catherine's description and Tennyson's poem, would remind an audience of the actions and fall of Cardigan. The only difference between the tragedy of the Battle of Balaclava and the comedy of *Arms and the Man* is the size of the enemies' ammunition. Sergius, like Cardigan, is an idiot who could have killed not only himself, but everyone with him on his operatic impulse. Shaw avoids making the incident at Slivnitzza a tragedy like Balaclava by rending the Ser-vian machine-guns useless through the stupid error of the ammunitions suppliers.
Thus the element that is common to the two views of the Battle of Balaclava and their role in *Arms and the Man* involves the idea of perception. Tennyson's poem presents a heroic and romantic picture of war, but the reports of the actual event and its aftermath present war as being wasteful and pointless. The other sources for these descriptions also focus on the idea of perception: whereas Butler's paintings and military melodramas provide a romantic, idealized image, Porter's accounts of the American Civil War present war as an event where blunders can be made. Catherine's and Bluntschli's descriptions of cavalry charges, therefore, do not focus on war itself, but on the ways in which it can be interpreted. But how one interprets something is not a simple, clear cut process. In the play's first act, which uses war as the focus of its conflict, the way the characters refer to romanticism, realism, and ideals follows the conventional definition. But Shaw does not have a single definition for any of these terms. For instance, in defining ideal, Shaw notes:

> [W]e unfortunately use this word ideal indifferently to denote both the institution which the ideal masks and the mask itself, thereby producing desperate confusion of thought, since the institution may be an effete and poisonous one, whilst the mask may be, and indeed generally is, an image of what we would fain have in its place. If the existing facts, with their masks on, are to be called ideals, and the future possibilities which the masks depict are also to be called ideals—"if,
again, the man who is defending existing institutions by maintaining their identity with their masks is to be confounded under one name with the man who is striving to realize the future possibilities by tearing the mask and the thing masked asunder, then the position cannot be intelligibly described by mortal pen. . . . (The Quintessence of Ibsenism 121)

Shaw's conception of idealism here is very different from the standard dictionary definition of a "system of thought or philosophy in which the object of external perception is held to consist, either in itself, or perceived, of ideas" ("Idealism"). It is not the ideas themselves but how they are used that differentiates the idealist or romantic from the realist. For Shaw, it is possible to be both a realist and an idealist, and to be both can be a good thing.

This complexity can be seen in the interaction between Sergius and Bluntschli. Critics often see Sergius and Bluntschli as polar opposites: the former representing romantic idealism and the latter representing prosaic realism. And most see Bluntschli and realism as the clear winners: "To a generation disillusioned by two great wars," notes Archibald Henderson, "Shaw's exposure of 'the glory of war' and demonstration that efficiency, not romance, is its mainspring, are accepted truisms" (Man of the Century 2: 536). And yet neither Bluntschli nor Sergius can be completely praised or condemned on their ideas about war, and Shaw is careful not to make either character vastly superior to the other. To do
so would create "the crude drama of villain and hero" that Shaw
abhored: "In such cheap wares," he declared, "I do not deal"
(Plays Pleasant vii).

The tendency of actors and critics interpreting Sergius is to
see him as the comic butt of the play. When Laurence Olivier
played the role, he believed the character was a "ridiculous fool
of a man" (Olivier 80). It is true that Sergius acts like a
character from an opera, and that his style of language is "like
the hero of a romantic novel" who invests "his loved one with
attributes of perfection never attained by mortal woman," and
challenges his rival "to a duel at dawn" (Mills 3). As a lover,
he professes to be a follower of the "higher love," and plays the
part of the operatic hero to Raina's operatic heroine: their
reunion is staged, with Raina listening for her cue so that she
can appear "at the right moment" (A& M act 2, 31). He uses a
romantic image from the age of chivalry to describe his love for
her: "Dearest: all my deeds have been yours. You inspired me. I
have gone through the war like a knight in a tournament with his
lady looking down at him!" (act 2, 34). In war, Bluntschli sees
Sergius as a character out of an opera trying to fight a real
battle in the real world:

He [Sergius] did it like an operatic tenor—a regular
handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and lovely
moustache, shouting his war-cry and charging like Don
Quixote at the windmills. We nearly burst with laughter
at him; but when the sergeant ran up as white as a
sheet, and told us they'd sent us the wrong cartridges, and that we couldn't fire a shot for the next ten minutes, we laughed at the other side of our mouths. I never felt so sick in my life; though I've been in one or two very tight places. And I hadn't even a revolver cartridge—nothing but chocolate. We'd no bayonets—nothing. Of course, they just cut us to bits. And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be courtmartialed for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide—only the pistol missed fire: that's all. (A&M act 1, 15-16)

Whereas Catherine sees Sergius as the embodiment of the Byronic hero, the Swiss mercenary sees the dashing Bulgarian as a comic idiot. Like Catherine, Bluntschli notes how Sergius's eyes as "flashing" with heroic gallantry, but then undercuts the "gallant" and "splendid" (A&M act 1, 5) image by associating her hero with the image of the ridiculously romantic Don Quixote futilely "charging the windmills"—an image that leaves Bluntschli choking "with suppressed laughter" (act 1, 16).

This is not to say that Sergius is simply a comic butt; on the contrary, he is a complex and difficult character to portray. The actor playing Sergius must be able to balance the contradictions within the character to allow him to be the target for com-
edy without becoming a caricature. He must be able to generate enough sympathy from an audience to make an effective rival to the Swiss. Shaw himself describes the needs of the character in the unfinished draft of a note to the director of a Paris production of *Arms and the Man*:

The most difficult part to cast is that of Sergius.

Sergius is not a ridiculous personage, sent on the stage to be laughed at, but a superb man, brave, haughty, high-spirited, magnetic and handsome. The difficulty lies, not in finding an actor with these qualifications, but in inducing him to play a part in which all his attractions are reduced to tragic absurdity, in which he marries, not the heroine but the parlormaid, in which a rival actor repeatedly makes the audience laugh at his expense. . . . Unless an actor is more intelligent than handsome jeunes premiers often are, or strong enough to feel sure that he can make his tragi-comedy as important as Bluntschli's comedy, he will either refuse the part or play it against the grain as a burlesque. . . .

("Arms and the Man: Instructions to the Producer" 270)

Sergius is a figure only a step away from tragedy: according to Henderson, Shaw saw *Arms and the Man* as "an attempt at Hamlet in the comic spirit," and that "Sergius, the Bulgarian Byron, the comic Hamlet, is perpetually mocked by the disparity between his imaginative ideals and the disillusions which constantly sting his sensitive nature" (*Man of the Century* 2: 539).
Indeed, while there is a tendency by audiences and critics to dismiss Sergius's ideas because he seems to be a romantic idiot, this does not mean that these ideas themselves should be dismissed. In his introduction to *Shaw and Ibsen*, J. L. Wisenthal notes:

The play does not weigh the opposing values of the romantic Sergius Saranoff and the prosaic Bluntschli: it exposes Sergius and endorses Bluntschli as representative of a healthy and useful outlook. If Don Juan in the Hell Scene of *Man and Superman* had said fervently, "Oh, give me the man who will defy to the death any power on earth or in heaven that sets itself up against his own will and conscience: he alone is the brave man," we would consider the statement carefully and sympathetically; when Sergius says this in the third act of *Arms and the Man* we unhesitatingly dismiss it as the foolishness of the Idealist. (34-35)

His behaviour on the battlefield is meant to be ridiculed by the audience, and yet Sergius is aware that fighting in battle is not as glorious as Catherine and Raina believe it is. His wartime experience has made him see that war is not the forum for the hero, but rather the domain of the coward. One must be practical to survive. He tells Catherine:

Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. That is the whole
secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disad-
avantage; and never, on any account, fight him on equal
terms. (act 2, 31)

It becomes clear that Sergius has become disillusioned with war
and, by implication, his ideals. He derides soldiering because it
is not the occupation of the brave who achieve glory and honor,
but "the coward's art." He bitterly notes that if he, like
Bluntschli, had bought the horses for his regiment instead of
"foolishly leading it into danger, I should have been a field-
marshall now" (act 2, 32). Even the noble sentiment of courage in
battle is suspect. Sergius admits to Louka:

Psha! the courage to rage and kill is cheap. I have an
English bull terrier who has as much of that sort of
courage as the whole Bulgarian nation, and the whole
Russian nation at its back. But he lets my groom thrash
him, all the same. That's your soldier all over! No,
Louka: your poor men can cut throats; but they are
afraid of their officers; they put up with insults and
blows; they stand by and see one another punished like
children—aye, and help to do it when they are ordered.
And the officers!—well [with a short, bitter laugh] I
am an officer. Oh, [fervently] give me the man who will
defy to the death any power on earth or in heaven that
sets itself against his own will and conscience: he
alone is the brave man. (act 3, 60)

And yet courage is not an undesirable thing, and war is where
courage can be tested. Sergius tells Louka "unaffectedly" and
with a relaxed attitude, "Yes: I am a brave man. My heart jumped like a woman's at the first shot; but in the charge I found that I was brave. Yes: that at least is real about me" (act 3, 60). Thus Catherine's perception of war is not entirely false, and Sergius's experiences with war are not entirely negative.

Sergius is a character who is defined as a romantic idealist, but whose outlook has elements of realism; in contrast, Bluntschli appears to be a realist, one who is devoid of the romantic delusions of his Bulgarian rival. He is a professional soldier who joins the army that comes "first on the road" (act 1, 12) and enters battle not out of any sense of patriotism, but for his living. As a professional soldier, he fights when he has to, but is "very glad to get out of it when" he does not (act 3, 65-66). Unlike Sergius, he does not see fighting as "an amusement" (act 3, 66). Yet the image of the experienced soldier is not very flattering. As a professional soldier, Bluntschli arms himself with what experience has told him is important, but an audience is as shocked as Raina when he reveals what this is:

MAN. I've no ammunition. What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead; and I finished the last cake of that hours ago.

RAINA [outraged in her most cherished ideals of manhood] Chocolate! Do you stuff your pockets with sweets—like a schoolboy—even in the field? . . .

MAN. . . . You can always tell an old soldier by the inside of his holster and cartridge boxes. The young
ones carry pistols and cartridges; the old ones, grub.

(act 1, 13-14)

While one may be inclined to sympathize with Bluntschli's practical and realistic outlook, the idea that he carries chocolate rather than ammunition makes him appear more comic than admirable. He seems more a child than a man: he "gobbles" the chocolate creams (act 1, 13), and in the Standard edition, Shaw makes Bluntschli seem even more childish by having him "scrape the box with his fingers and suck them" (A&M 1931, act 1, 13). And in the Battle of Slivnitzta, his practicality backfires on him: with the Bulgarian cavalry bearing down on him and his machine guns unable to fire, cartridges would have been much better than chocolate.

Moreover, Bluntschli is in many ways a less attractive character than Sergius. The former's appearance and personality add to his childish image:

[He] is of middling stature and undistinguished appearance, with strong neck and shoulders; a roundish, obstinate looking head covered with short, crisp bronze curls; clear quick blue eyes and good brows and mouth; a hopelessly prosaic nose like that of a strong minded baby. (act 1, 8-9)

He also reacts like a baby. He is frightened by the slightest noise (act 1, 13), and admits that he will cry if Raina scolds him "just as if [he] were a little boy and [she his] nurse" (act 1, 14). Even when he is "clean, well brushed, smartly uniformed, and out of trouble," he is "still unmistakeably the same man" (act 2,
42). The description of Bluntschli contrasts strongly with that of Sergius:

Major Sergius Saranoff, the original of the portrait in Raina's room, is a tall, romantically handsome man, with the physical hardihood, the high spirit, and the susceptible imagination of an untamed mountaineer chieftain. But his remarkable personal distinction is of a characteristically civilized type. ... The result is precisely what the advent of nineteenth century thought thought first produced in England: to wit, Byronism. (act 2, 28-29)

Bluntschli's behaviour is even less impressive. Sergius may bruise Louka's arm, but Bluntschli threatens Raina with his pistol even though she is unarmed. He has no qualms about holding on to her nightgown in order to prevent her from exposing him to his pursuers—an act that she condemns as being "not the weapon of a gentleman" (act 1, 10). While the Bulgarian can honestly admit that he is brave, the Swiss admits that he is a coward who can climb up waterpipes "fast enough with death behind" him, but who cannot bear even the thought of climbing down the same pipe "in cold blood" (act 1, 17).

Therefore, neither Bluntschli nor Sergius presents a single quality; they both possess admirable and questionable qualities. An audience's opinion of the two characters depends on how it chooses to perceive them. In his preface to Misalliance, Shaw deals with the same idea in discussing the idealist's and the realist's perception of both marriage and war:
One man has a vision of perpetual bliss with a domestic angel at home, and of flashing sabres, thundering guns, victorious cavalry charges, and routed enemies in the field. That is romantic imagination; and the mischief it does is incalculable. It begins in silly and selfish expectations of the impossible, and ends in spiteful disappointment, sour grievance, cynicism, and misanthropic resistance to any attempt to a better a hopeless world. The wise man knows that imagination is not only a means of pleasing himself and beguiling tedious hours with romances and fairy tales and fool's paradises (a quite defensible and delightful amusement when you know exactly what you are doing and where fancy ends and facts begin), but also a means of foreseeing and being prepared for realities as yet unexperienced, and of testing the feasibility and desirability of serious Utopias. He does not expect his wife to be an angel; nor does he overlook the facts that war depends on the rousing of all the murderous blackguardism still latent in mankind; that every victory means a defeat; that fatigue, hunger, terror, and disease are the raw material which romancers work up into military glory; and that soldiers for the most part go to war as children go to school, because they are afraid not to.

(Preface to Misalliance 103)

The relevance of this above passage to Arms and the Man is clear. In the play, one sees the romantic image of "flashing sabres,
thundering guns, victorious cavalry charges, and routed enemies in
the field," and the "spiteful disappointment" that results when it
is proven to be false. Therefore an audience's perception of the
characters should be based on whether they tear off or hide behind
their masks. Sergius is ridiculous when he tries to live in his
romantic imagination: his expressions of "the higher love" and his
challenge to fight a duel with Bluntschli (act 3, 63-66) make him
look like a fool. But when he tears off the mask—as he does the
case when he reveals the true nature of the soldier (act 3, 60)
and wonders which "of the six [Sergiuses] is the real man" (act 2,
36)—he is admirable. Raina appears foolish when she acts the
part of the operatic heroine who waits for her cue to come on
stage, but she gains credibility when she throws away her mask and
admits that she has lied more than twice in her life (act 3, 54).

Moreover, to say that Bluntschli gets the better of the other
characters because he is a realist is inaccurate. Bluntschli is
not a realist; he confesses to everyone that he is "a man who has
spoiled all his chances in life through an incurably romantic dis­
position" (act 3, 73). He even provides evidence of his romantic
nature:

I ran away from home twice when I was a boy. I went
into the army instead of into my father's business. I
climbed the balcony of this house when a man of sense
would have dived in to the nearest cellar. I came
sneaking back here to have another look at the young
lady when any other man of my age would have sent the
closet back . . . and gone quietly home. (act 3, 73)
In fact, the only character in the play who is a complete realist in the conventional sense is Nicola, who has "the soul of a servant" (act 2, 25). He is not a very appealing figure, Louka accuses him of selling his soul for "30 levas" (act 3, 58), and it is unlikely that an audience would sympathize with his servile mentality. Bluntschli's advantage over the other characters is not realism; it is what Shaw calls "realistic imagination." And it is a powerful advantage. In his preface to *Misalliance*, Shaw notes:

A very little realistic imagination gives an ambitious person enormous power over the multitudinous victims of the romantic imagination. For the romancer not only pleases himself with fictitious glories: he also terrifies himself with imaginary dangers. He does not even picture what these dangers are: he conceives the unknown as always dangerous. When you say to a realist "You must do this" or "You must not do that," he instantly asks what will happen to him if he does (or does not, as the case may be). Failing an unromantic convincing answer, he does just as he pleases unless he can find for himself a real reason for refraining. In short, though you can intimidate him, you cannot bluff him. But you can always bluff the romantic person: indeed his grasp of real considerations is so feeble that you find it necessary to bluff him even when you have solid considerations to offer him instead. (Preface to *Misalliance* 104)
It is not the realism of war that is important to Bluntschli's character, but his ability to remove the mask that hides the truth; we laugh with Sergius when he tears off his mask to show the real man behind it; we laugh at him when he decides to keep the mask on. Therefore, the importance of the interaction between Sergius and Bluntschli is dependent on the way the two characters perceive the world, and what they do with what they see.

In *Arms and the Man*, war helps to tear away the mask that hides the truth: Catherine's and Raina's romantic delusions about war crumble in light of Bluntschli's description, and Sergius realizes the "sham" of his romantic ideals of love and war. And yet it is never a part of that truth. The play's interest in war stems not from the issues it raises, but from what it can reveal about the way we perceive the world.
Whereas the presence of war is a readily identifiable element of *Arms and the Man*, its presence in *Heartbreak House* seems negligible; the play has no military characters, there is no clear indication that a war is in progress until the end of the play, and the bomb that drops into the gravel pit and kills Boss Mangan and Billy Dunn, the play's "two burglars" (HH act 3, 109), seems (at least on the surface) to be a climax that is imposed on the plot rather than a progression of it. But war is an important concern in *Heartbreak House*. Shaw had contemplated writing the play as early as 1913, but did not actually start composing it until 4 March 1916, completing the first draft in May 1917—the period in the First World War that saw the greatest loss of life. *Heartbreak House*’s ties to the First World War, however, involve more than its date of composition. Anne Wright notes that "the war is more central and meaningful than might be inferred from the obliquity of treatment" and "is at the heart" of the play (7). And while *Arms and the Man* uses war as a visible medium to explore other themes within the play without drawing on the issues of the subject itself, *Heartbreak House* does little to depict war on stage, and yet actually draws on the First World War for its themes.
Heartbreak House has a number of topical allusions to the First World War. In act one, Shotover notes the possibility of capturing "a machine gun or even a tank" with a grapnel fired from a cannon, and Hesione reminds her father that it is his "magnetic keel that sucks up submarines" that made twelve thousand pounds (40); in act three, Hector equates giving destructive power to "Mangan and his mutual admiration gang" with giving "a torpedo to a badly brought up child to play at earthquakes with" (104). The weapons mentioned by the characters became major factors in warfare for the first time during the First World War. Although the machine gun was invented in the late 1800's and their "lethal efficiency was demonstrated repeatedly in colonial campaigns" (McNeill 272), few "pre-1914 students of war recognized—or accepted—that the development of magazine rifles and machine guns had given the defensive a marked advantage" (Bond 101). The reference to tanks in Heartbreak House was an addition to the typescript (HH facs. 75) made after the British tank saw its first application on the battlefield in August 1916 (McNeill 334). Unlimited submarine warfare was also something new; Wright points out:

The "submarine peril" was felt from 1915 onwards, and with particular horror at the torpedoing of the civilian ship Lusitania in that year. Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare from 1 February 1917, and the retaliatory blockade of ports led to hardship and lasting damage. Shotover's invention of the ship with
the magnetic keel that sucks up submarines is not
totally eccentric: the various anti-submarine devices
introduced to counter the "peril" included hydrophones,
"Otter gear", depth charges, smoke apparatus, shells and
mines. (Wright 69)

Another allusion to the First World War is the song "Keep the
Home Fires Burning," published in 1914 with music by Ivor Novello
and lyrics by Lena Guilbert Ford. It was "surely the number one
home-front song of the war" (Jablener, col. 1), one that expressed
"a patriotic concern for the stable continuity of life at home, to
be kept safely for the men returning from the Front" (Wright 110-
11). The first verse tells the listener:

Let no tears add to their hardships,
As the Soldiers pass along,
And although your heart is breaking,
Make it sing this cheery song.

This song, however, is anything but cheery. It has a sense of
bitter ambiguity that unintentionally reflects the feelings of
Britons on the home-front as the war dragged on. The refrain,
usually the only segment played in productions of Heartbreak
House, is full of sombre images:

Keep the Home-fires burning,
While your hearts are yearning,
Though your lads are far away
They dream of Home;
There's a silver lining
Through the dark cloud shining,
Turn the dark cloud inside out,
Till the boys come Home.

While the refrain implores the listener to "[t]urn the dark cloud inside out" and show its "silver lining," the fact that there is a dark cloud at all implies that something ominous lurks on the horizon.

And there was something ominous in the skies over Britain during the First World War. German zeppelin attacks were a real concern in England; as early as 26 October 1915, the Daily News and Leader offered its readers zeppelin and accident insurance paying up to 250 pounds in "the event of the residence of a subscriber being struck by a ... bomb thrown from an enemy airship or aeroplane" (Liddle 33). These attacks occurred enough times near Shaw's home in Ayot St Lawrence that he jokingly thought of capitalizing on his supposed popularity in Germany by inscribing the following message in luminous paint on his roof:

HIER WOHN'T DER DICHTER SHAW
BITTE
FAHREN SIE WEITER.¹

("To Hugo Vallentin," 20 Oct. 1917. CL3 505)

And in a letter to Beatrice and Sidney Webb written in 1916, he describes the attack of the Potters Bar Zeppelin:

¹ "HERE LIVES THE POET SHAW[.] PLEASE DRIVE FURTHER." (my translation).
It made a magnificent noise the whole time; and not a searchlight touched it, as it was the night-out of the Essenden and Luton lights. And not a shot was fired at it. I was amazed at its impunity and audacity. . . .

What is hardly credible, but true, is that the sound of the Zepp's engines was so fine, and its voyage through the stars so enchanting, that I positively caught myself hoping next night that there would be another raid. I grieve to add that after seeing the Zepp fall like a burning newspaper, with its human contents roasting for some minutes (it was frightfully slow) I went to bed and was comfortably asleep in ten minutes. One is so pleased at having seen the show that the destruction of a dozen people or so in hideous terror and torment does not count. "I didn't half cheer, I tell you" said a damsel at the wreck. Pretty lot of animals we are!

(5 Oct. 1916. CL3 425-26)

The parallels between this incident and the mysterious attack at the end of Heartbreak House are easily seen. Mrs Hushabye "emerges panting from the darkness" and says to Ellie, "Did you hear the explosions? And the sound in the sky: it's splendid: it's like an orchestra: it's like Beethoven" (HH act 3, 107). Her feelings toward the mysterious attacker echoes Shaw's own sentiments about the sound of the Potters Bar Zeppelin. The same unsettling tones of "the damsel at the wreck" are heard in Nurse Guinness's "hideous triumph" (act 3, 109) at the deaths of Mangan
and Dunn. And like Shaw, Ellie is left with the hope that the unidentified enemy will return (act 3, 110).

The attack from the air at the end of the last act is *Heartbreak House*’s most overt link to the war. When Nurse Guinness announces that the household will be "summoned [by the police] if we don't put that light out" (act 3, 106), it is clear that the play has, at least at this moment, a wartime setting. The servants, Mangan, and Billy Dunn have all run for cover; and the other characters brace themselves for an attack. The identity of the unseen enemy is never revealed, but Shaw’s conception of the set for the third act has a zeppelin-like object flying in the sky (see figure 2), a visual allusion to an incident he witnessed while he was writing the play. But while these elements present a definite connection between actual events of World War One and *Heartbreak House*, they do not make up a large portion of the play.

Yet the influence of the war pervades the atmosphere of the play. Anne Wright notes that *Heartbreak House* is marked by "a deep sense of crisis and impending doom," and "[t]he mood of the play, dark, mysterious, savage and poignant, expresses both regret at the passing of an era, and bewilderment in the face of the darkness beyond" (107). Even a Broadway production housed in "a glittering theatre, performed by a glittering cast, and given a glittering production" organized "so that no gloom may tarnish the chromium shine" (Brustein 20) cannot hide the disturbing quality of Shaw’s work. In his review of the 1959 production of *Heartbreak House* at the Billy Rose Theatre, Robert Brustein writes:
Figure 2: Shaw's concept of the set for act three of *Heartbreak House* (HH facs. 208). Note the drawing of the zeppelin-like object in the upper-left-hand corner.
Broadway maintains an affection for Shaw when it can disguise him as a witty but romantic old sage with a soft spot for young lovers, and the present production labors to perpetuate this fantastic delusion. Yet, somehow, *Heartbreak House*, though it can be made to look dull, will not be reduced to a comfortable equation. Even in this production, Shaw remains dangerous. In a time when our own middle classes are obsessed with the cultivation of their pleasures, when our own government is in the hands of the practical businessmen, and when our own ingenuity has led us to the doors of destruction, even a glossy version of the play is enough to make us shift uneasily in our chairs. (21)

Unlike *Arms and the Man*, the foreboding atmosphere of fear and destruction in *Heartbreak House* has direct connections to emotions and events related to the First World War.

Waste is one element in the play's atmosphere that is closely linked to World War One. Shaw noted that the recruitment of the young men of England for the war was condemning them to death. Commenting on the military's recruiting methods during the war, he stated that "men are wanted to make up for 14,000 casualties a day (ducksy, ducksy, come and be killed)" ("To C. H. Norman," 4 Nov. 1915. CL3 328). And when he learned of James Barrie's loss of his adopted son George, Shaw "uncharacteristically and unabashedly wept as he read the letter. 'Such waste', he muttered to Charlotte, 'such utterly damnable waste'" (Laurence). But the real
loss was not simply the loss of life, but the loss of England's creative minds. Weintraub notes:

The sons of his friends were being wasted in battle—if not their lives, their talents. Lady Gregory, then en route to visit Shaw, had a son flying for the British in Italy and had lost a young nephew (and surrogate son), Sir Hugh Lane, on the Lusitania. (Shaw, who knew Lane well and also mourned him, had not let the loss alter his sense of proportion over the greater carnage in the trenches.) G.B.S. had just watched two protégés go into uniform, Barker and Ervine, and a surrogate son closer to him than anyone but Barker, the twice-wounded Robert Loraine, was with a flying unit in France. Shaw's neighbor James Barrie, one of whose godsons had already been killed at Ypres, had another, Peter Llewelyn Davies, evacuated home as a shell shock victim. Other friends and friends' sons were at the front or en route there, where expectations for survival were no better than expectations for peace. (Journey to Heartbreak 191-92)

The nation was wasting its youth, thereby risking the loss of its chance for renewal. Just as the war was wasting Britain's chances, the characters in the play waste their own, which in turn heightens Heartbreak House's disturbing atmosphere.

The relationships involving Ellie Dunn are complex and anxiety-ridden. She is the only young character in the play; the
only one actively seeking marriage and, by implication, children. Indeed, her crisis focuses on her search for a suitable husband. As the plot of *Heartbreak House* progresses, the question of whom Ellie will marry is made even more urgent. There is a need for marriage to fulfill its traditional role at the end of a comedy. In romantic comedies, marriage usually holds the promise of society's renewal. At the beginning of *Heartbreak House*, the marriage plot seems to fit this mold: a young woman (Ellie) is seeking marriage, knows and desires a suitable man (Marcus Darnley), but is blocked by an alazon figure (Mangan). But the traditional structure of this marriage plot soon falls apart. Marcus Darnley turns out to be a fraud, and there is no one who can take his place. The field of candidates is unappealing: Hector is a liar who admits that he cannot fall in love again and is already married, Randall is an idler who suffers from the same kind of raging jealousy that afflicts Ellie's favourite Shakespearean hero (Othello), Mangan is "too old" for her (act 1, 26), and Shotover is older than Mangan. In fact, the captain is almost "a mummy" (act 3, 98). Yet Ellie is engaged to Mangan, is in love with Marcus Darnley (Hector's alter-ego) and still wants to be near Hector even after learning about the truth.² Eventually she marries Shotover.

By choosing Shotover as her husband, Ellie not only eliminates the possibility that she will find someone beyond the

² "I want to be near your friend Mr Hushabye," she tells Mangan. "I'm in love with him" (Act 2, 47).
the play; she also abandons the idea of having children. She is and will likely remain *virgo intacta*; in a letter to Lillah McCarthy, Shaw stressed that Ellie is "born to immaculate virginity" (as qtd. in McCarthy 203), and he calls her counterpart in *Shakes versus Shaw* "THE VIRGIN" (*SvS* 476). The only character in the play who is capable of producing new life abandons what is the "point for a young woman of" her age (act 3, 104), and laments to Mrs Hushabye, "You have stolen my babies" (act 2, 61), emphasizing the fact that there will be no children—no renewal—coming to Heartbreak House. Thus an audience waiting to see comedy's traditional promise of renewal through marriage at the end of *Heartbreak House* will be disappointed. Wright notes:

The significance of [Ellie's] childless spiritual marriage to the eighty-eight-year-old Shotover is emphasised by Lady Utterword's reminder, "The point for a young woman of your age is a baby" [act 3, 104]. Yes, indeed: this is the underlying "point" in the marriages which, conventionally and ritualistically, end comedies. But there will be no baby for *Heartbreak House* (and, for that matter, there is no young man of Ellie's age to father one). (Wright 90-91)

And yet Shotover's house is in dire need of the things Ellie's children would bring. The majority of the characters in *Heartbreak House* are either old, or becoming old: Shotover is eighty-eight, and believes that his "last shot was fired years ago" (*HH* act 3, 105); Mrs Hushabye, Lady Utterword, Randall, and Hector are
over forty, and Mangan is "about fiftyfive" and "[n]ot ablebodied" (act 1, 25); Mazzini Dunn is "a little elderly man" (act 1, 12), and Billy Dunn is "old and villainous looking" (act 2, 66). The characters sense the need to revive the house with youth, something the captain perceives very early in the play: "Youth! beauty! novelty! They are badly wanted in this house. I am excessively old. Hesione is only moderately young. Her children are not youthful" (act 1, 9). In rejecting the chance of having children, Ellie rejects the possibility of bringing that badly needed youth and novelty, thereby wasting her youth. This in turn creates a part of the anxiety in the play.

The anxiety over waste created by Ellie's rejection of the "point" of her life is heightened by the wasted relationships of the other characters. The group in the play with the most potential for sexual activity is the foursome involving Hector, Mrs Hushabye, Randall, and Lady Utterword. In his revisions to the typescript, Shaw altered the ages of these characters to give their flirtations a greater degree of sexual interest. Shotover's age when Lady Utterword was born is changed from thirty-two to forty-six, making her forty-two instead of fifty-nine (HH facs. 10) and Mrs Hushabye forty-four instead of sixty-one (HH facs. 17). Hector remains fifty (HH facs. 37), and Randall is changed from an "elderly gentleman" to one who "on closer inspection is found to be at least over forty" (HH facs. 49). All these characters are capable of producing children. But the sexual activity among the four characters is in itself a source for conflict.
Randall tries to flirt with Lady Utterword, but she is his brother's wife; Lady Utterword flirts with Hector, but he is her sister's husband. Under conventional western morality, these relationships are doomed from the start: in the Bible it is noted that if "a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless" (Lev. 20.21). And these extra-marital relationships are childless. Randall's flirtatious activities never succeed: he pays the price for loving "this demon" (act 2, 86), but is bilked "when pay-day comes around" (act 2, 87). Lady Utterword manages to get her "claws deeper into" Hector than he had intended (act 1, 35), but he hates her and finds his fascination with her hell (act 1, 36). In fact, he cannot fall in love, and laments that he gets "landed in all sorts of tedious and terrifying flirtations in which I'm not a bit in earnest" (act 1, 35). The sexual flirtations of these characters, therefore serve no purpose. They are all wasted efforts.

Moreover, the sanctioned marriages between Hector and Hesione, and Hastings and Ariadne have little potential of producing any more children. The spouses have lost interest in each other. Mrs Hushabye speaks to Hector in the past tense when she thinks about their love for one another, and she invites "all sorts of pretty women to the house on the chance" that he will fall in love with them (act 1, 36). Hastings Utterword is a man who likes "to work sixteen hours a day at the dullest detail," and is "only too thankful to anyone who will keep [Lady Utterword] in
good humor for him" as long as she keeps him "fed regularly" (act 2, 82).

The other relationships in the play are also futile. Billy Dunn ran out on Nurse Guinness, and she would rather kill him than have him back. When the explosion kills him at the end of the play, she feels "hideous triumph" rather than remorse. Mrs Hushabye's sentiments about Mangan are not much better. She refers to him as "that thing" and "that object" (act 1, 51 and 59), and does not think that he has a heart until she breaks it (act 2, 62). Even then, she notes that he has only "a whimpering little heart" and asks, "What business has a Boss with a heart?" (act 2, 63). Thus Mangan's desire to be with Hesione is wasted: her motive for making herself attractive to Mangan—an act that disgusts her—is not sexual interest; it is her desire to prevent him from marrying Ellie. But Ellie never had any intention of marrying Mangan (act 3, 97), so Hesione's efforts are also a waste of time. Her flirtation with Mazzini Dunn is even more pointless. It is a "safe" relationship that lacks any real interest in both parties, and goes nowhere:

I never have been a favorite with gorgeous women like you. They always frighten me.

MRS HUSHABYE [pleased] Am I a gorgeous woman, Mazzini?
I shall fall in love with you presently.

MAZZINI [with placid gallantry] No you wont, Hesione.
But you would be quite safe. Would you believe it that quite a lot of women have flirted with me because I am
quite safe? But they get tired of me for the same reason.

MRS HUSHABYE [mischievously] Take care. You may not be so safe as you think.

MAZZINI. Oh yes, quite safe. You see, I have been in love really: the sort of love that only happens once. [Softly] That's why Ellie is such a lovely girl.

MRS HUSHABYE. Well, really, you are coming out. Are you quite sure you won't let me tempt you into a second grand passion?

MAZZINI. Quite. It wouldn't be natural. The fact is, you don't strike on my box, Mrs Hushabye; and I certainly don't strike on yours.

MRS HUSHABYE. I see. Your marriage was a safety match.

(act 2, 55)

Mrs Hushabye flirts with Dunn merely for the sake of flirting with him, and this liaison is over almost as soon as it is started.

Another link between the atmosphere of the play and the First World War is the anxiety over how everything will end. Hector's question, "How is all this going to end?" (act 3, 104), is not only applicable to the happenings in the play, but is also relevant to the period when Shaw was composing it. Wright notes that the play "yearns for an ending, but its end-anxiety cannot be satisfied. . . . How is this play to end? It cannot of itself end the war: in that sense, there is in 1916 or 1917 no ending for Shaw to write" (74). In one sense, the play has no ending:
Ellie's and Hesione's hope that the mysterious attacker in the sky will return the next night (HH act 3, 110) makes the audience wonder if, as Hector notes, their turn will be next (act 3, 109). The question dominating the minds of people as the First World War dragged on was also "How is all this going to end?" People began to wonder whether the war could ever end; the following rhyme was found among the papers of a couple engaged in raising comforts for soldiers on active service:

Absolute evidence have I none,
But my Aunt[']s charwoman's sister[']s son
Heard a policeman on his beat
Telling a maid in Downing Street
That he'd got a sister who'd got a friend
Who knew for a fact when the war would end.
(as quoted in Liddle 8)

Fussell notes that the "possibility that the war might be endless began to tease the mind near the end of 1916"; Queen Mary hinted in a letter to Lady Mount Stephen that "even her expectation of an expeditious and rational conclusion was beginning to weaken" (Fussell 71). The endlnessness of the war in 1916 clearly parallels the incomplete conclusion of Heartbreak House.

Another element of Heartbreak House that was influenced by the war is the importance of lies. Heartbreak House is, as J. L. Wisenthal notes, "the home of the unreal" and a "Palace of Lies" (The Marriage of Contraries 138). The home-front during First World War was also inundated with false stories. The reports of
German atrocities were largely untrue. Battles were depicted in glorious and noble images reminiscent of Catherine's description of the Bulgarian victory in *Arms and the Man*: R. Caton Woodville's illustration for the *Illustrated London News* presents a young man ready to go over the barricade and engage the enemy (see figure 3). The real nature of the war—the conditions encountered in trench warfare, and the horrifying effect of modern weapons—was suppressed by both the British government and the press. But the truth could be seen if one wanted to look for it. Shaw saw the dichotomy between the reality of life on the battlefield and the home-front's image of it. In a letter to Robert Loraine, Shaw noted:

> Charlotte made inquiries during your active service as to what ought to be sent to officers in the field. At the shops they knew all about it, and proposed silver-mounted dressing-cases, dispatch-boxes, baths, roasting jacks, and arm chairs. Then she asked men who had come back from the front. They all said: "Bromo paper [a leading brand of lavatory paper]. Nothing else. And disguise it as much as possible in the packing, or it will be stolen." ("To Robert Loraine," 13 Dec. 1914. CL3 278-79)

Hector's fantastic stories, especially of Marcus Darnley being "in three revolutions fighting on the barricades" (act 1, 21), has the same kind of romantic image as Woodville's illustration. And like Woodville's romantic image of battle, Hector's stories of heroism
Figure 3: Detail from R. Caton Woodville's "The Winning of the First V.C. Awarded to a Territorial: An Heroic Exploit on Hill 60," in the 17 July 1915 edition of the Illustrated London News (81). This illustration typifies the idealized way that the war was presented to people on the home-front. Under the title, which is emblazoned over two pages, is a caption noting that the artist was not at the scene of the battle, but used "MATERIAL SUPPLIED BY PARTICIPANTS IN THE ACTION."
are not real.

But Boss Mangan is a greater liar than Hector. He boasts that he can call any man who makes a hundred thousand pounds a year a brother, but soon has to admit that he is a "half-brother only" (act 1, 26). In fact, his wealth turns out to be a sham: the reality of Mangan's millions, Hector points out, is "a couple of thousand pounds in exchequer bills, 50,000 shares worth tenpence a dozen, and half a dozen tabloids of cyanide of potassium to poison yourself when you are found out" (act 3, 100). Through Mangan, Shaw vents his frustration with the politicians who he believed were mainly at fault for the war. He declares that "the war is the inevitable result of Grey's diplomacy (as he doubtless calls his imbecility)," and that the first step in opening the eyes of the people to the truth would be to "emphasize the fact that Asquith and Grey told the country a thundering lie" ("To Beatrice Webb," 12 Aug. 1914. CL3 245).

The "thundering lie" was the Asquith government's concealment of an agreement with France from the House of Commons and the British people, and its assertion that the country had not been committed to war even though it really was. In a letter to the Daily Citizen, Shaw noted:

I have shown that the official mistrust of the people, which led the diplomatists to conceal their plans from

3 Sir Edward Grey (1862-1933), Viscount Grey of Fallodon, was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Asquith government from 1905 to 1916.
the nation with a completeness which may be gauged by a reference to Mr. Gardiner's article in support of non-intervention in the *Daily News* (a Government organ) before Sir Edward Grey owned up to having practically already declared war by engaging the co-operation of the Fleet to France without asking the leave of the House of Commons, was unnecessary as regards the people of England, who were perfectly willing to go to the rescue of France and fight Potsdam on the respective merits of Republicanism and Potsdamnation without any lawyer's excuses, and most mischievous as regards Germany, where the concealment of our intentions and preparations produced an impression of treachery which has cost many an Englishman his life and done no good whatever. ("Call You This Discipline?" 161)

The situation left Shaw rather bitter. In a letter to Archer, Shaw writes, "It is a sickening business this sending lambs to the slaughter because we are governed by bloody fools wirepulled by damned thieves" ("To William Archer," 11 Nov. 1914. CL3 265).

Mangan is both the thief and the bloody fool. Like Asquith and Grey, he bases his power on lies: his wealth is an illusion,

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4 A.G. Gardner was the editor of the *Daily News*, and a supporter of Asquith's conduct of the war.

5 Shaw draws a link between Mangan and Lord Devonport. In a letter to Hugo Vallentin, he places Mangan's name in brackets immediately after Devonport's (27 Oct. 1917, CL3 513). But in respect to the subject of lying in *Heartbreak House*, I believe that the connections between Mangan and Grey are more relevant.
but Ellie was going to marry him because he was wealthy. And both Grey and Mangan bungle the chances for peace for egotistical reasons. In commenting on Grey's decision to keep the agreement with France a secret, Hermann Lutz states, "we are bound to feel a conviction that Grey's main reason for not placing the matter before the Cabinet was a foreboding that the majority of the Cabinet would not agree with his point of view" (82). Mangan expects to save the country, but is unable to do this himself. Therefore, instead of helping others, he consciously hinders their plans:

Well, I dont know what you call achievements; but Ive jolly well put a stop to the games of the other fellows in the other departments. Every man of them thought he was going to save the country all by himself, and do me out of the credit and out of my chance of a title. I took good care that if they wouldnt let me do it they shoudnt do it themselves either. I may not know anything about my own machinery; but I know how to stick a ramrod into the other fellow's. And now they all look the biggest fools going.

HECTOR. And in heaven's name, what do y o u look like? MANGAN. I look like the fellow that was too clever for all the others, dont I? (act 3, 94-95)

Of course Mangan does look like a fool, and like Grey's influence on foreign affairs, he eventually disappears from the scene:

Mangan is destroyed by the bomb; Grey's power begins to dissolve
when Asquith's coalition government collapses and David Lloyd George becomes prime minister in December 1916.

The characters' obsession with violence and anger in *Heartbreak House* provides a further link between the war and the play. Many of Shaw's plays written before the war have elements of violence: Julia Craven lunges after Grace Tranfield in *The Philanderer* (act 1, 81), Frank is prepared to shoot Crofts in *Mrs Warren's Profession* (act 3, 214), Napoleon threatens to use force on the Strange Lady in *The Man of Destiny* (179), Pothinus is murdered by Ftatateeta on Cleopatra's orders and the queen's maid is herself murdered by Rufio in *Caesar and Cleopatra* (act 4, 182 and 192), and *Major Barbara* has many references to war and killing. But the violence in *Heartbreak House* runs deeper and is more pervasive than in the earlier plays. Critics like Margery M. Morgan see a parallel between Shotover and *Major Barbara'*s Andrew Undershaft. She notes:

Like Undershaft in *Major Barbara*, Shotover is possessor of the latent dionysiac energy symbolized by dynamite. In his cultivation of the "seventh degree of concentration", in order to discover "a mind ray that will explode the ammunition in the belt of [his] adversary," he is the traditional philosopher-mage, a Faustus, or a Roger Bacon, or a Prospero, seeking that mastery of the material world and physical forces that the scholar, or contemplative, apparently renounces. Ironically, and perhaps ominously, he finds the destructive aspect of
his power easier to exploit than the creative; though he is hostile to negation and destruction, material greed and cruelty, he seems compelled to borrow their own means to attack them. (201)

One can certainly see some connections between the two characters. Shotover's income, like Undershaft's, depends on his ability to invent implements for war: he received twelve thousand pounds for his ship with a magnetic keel "that sucked up submarines" (act 1, 40), but his "patent lifeboat"—a life-saving invention—brought in only five-hundred (act 1, 39). In both Major Barbara and Heartbreak House, the material rewards are greater if one can increase war's ability to destroy: Mrs Hushabye tells her father that he "cannot afford life-saving inventions" and must "think of something that will murder half Europe at one bang" (act 1, 40);

Undershaft tells Charles Lomax:

The more destructive war becomes the more fascinating we find it. No, Mr Lomax: I am obliged to you for making the usual excuse for my trade, but I am not ashamed of it. I am not one of those men who keep their morals and their business in water-tight compartments. All the spare money my trade rivals spend on hospitals, cathedrals and other receptacles for conscience money, I devote to experiments and researches in improved methods of destroying life and property. . . . Your Christianity, which enjoins you to resist not evil, and to turn the other cheek, would make me a bankrupt. (MB act 1, 208-09)
But to say that there is a definite parallel between Shotover and Undershaft is misleading. In *Heartbreak House*, the perception of violence and war is very different from that in *Major Barbara*. While both men desire to kill those who feed off the better elements of society, they differ in how they feel that this power to kill can be used. Undershaft sees killing as the means to achieving social change: "When you vote," he tells Cusins, "you only change the names of the cabinet. When you shoot, you pull down governments, inaugurate new epochs, abolish old orders and set up new" (*MB* act 3, 283). Yet while Shotover sees a need to kill the "hogs to whom the universe is nothing but a machine for greasing their bristles and filling their snouts" (*HH* act 1, 37) and who "kill the better half of ourselves every day to propitiate them" (act 1, 38), he also is prepared to "blow up the human race if it goes too far" (act 1, 32). To him, killing is a means for both liberating the human race and for punishing it. The two characters also differ in how they perceive their means of income. Undershaft can find himself in "a specially amiable humor" because his gun "blew twenty-seven dummy soldiers into fragments" where before it "destroyed only thirteen" (*MB* act 1, 208), and his motto is "Unashamed" (act 1, 194). Shotover, however, is not unashamed of his trade: when Hector asks if he wants the light turned up to work on his new invention for war, the old man replies, "No. Give me deeper darkness. Money is not made in the light" (*HH* act 1, 42). And while Shotover's war inventions are not like Undershaft's destructive ones—Shaw changed Shotover's money—
making invention in the typescript of Heartbreak House from "an improvement to shrapnel" to the ship's magnetic hull (HH facs. 73)—the destructive capability of Shotover's dynamite is more immediately apparent. The gunpowder shed in Major Barbara does not explode; the dynamite in the gravel pit does, and kills Mangan and Billy Dunn in the process.

In Heartbreak House, all the characters seem on the brink of committing some violent act, and all of them possess a barely subdued rage that threatens violence. Men like Mangan "have the power to kill," and have "millions of blacks over the water for them to train and let loose an us" (act 1, 38). Mangan himself is poised to commit suicide with "half a dozen tabloids of cyanide of potassium" if the truth of his wealth is discovered (act 3, 100). Hastings Utterword rules his colonies with bamboo sticks, and if given the chance will use the same technique on the "British native" (act 3, 95). Hector may wish to spare men like Mangan "in simple magnanimous pity" (act 1, 38), but he too calls for blood: he threatens to kill Ariadne if she persists in flirting with him (act 1, 36), and he mimes "a desperate duel with an imaginary antagonist, and after many vicissitudes runs him through the body up to the hilt" (act 1, 36-37). Guinness asks Mazzini, "Why didnt you shoot him [Billy Dunn], sir? If I'd known who he was, I'd have shot him myself" (act 2, 72). Shotover dreams of creating a "psychic ray that will explode all the explosives at the will of a Mahatma" should the human race go too far (act 1, 32), and in an exchange with Hector, he sees killing as the only solution to "the human vermin" of the world:
There is enmity between our seed and their seed. They know it and act on it, strangling our souls. They believe in themselves. When we believe in ourselves, we shall kill them. (act 1, 37)

And threat becomes action. When Mangan wakes up from hypnosis "in a fury" and "kicks the chair violently back out of his way" (act 2, 61). Mazzini Dunn almost kills Billy Dunn with one of Hector's dueling pistols (act 3, 63), and Hector grips Ariadne's throat and threatens to choke her when she begins to play her "cat-and-mouse game" with him (act 2, 86).

The language of Heartbreak House is also associated with violence and anger. Ellie uses "kills" to describe the result of her heartbreak (act 2, 58), Billy Dunn (and by association Mazzini Dunn) is described as a "thief, a pirate, and a murderer" (act 1, 32), and Nurse Guinness calls the unseen enemy in the sky "murdering blackguards" (act 3, 109). Randall "howls when [Lady Utterword] twists his heart, just as Mangan howls when [Mrs Hushabye] twists his" (act 3, 103). Hector's invocation to heaven at the end of act two is, "Fall. Fall and crush" (act 2, 88); and Shotover's warning of what happens when one drifts is filled with violent imagery:

[T]he smash of the drunken skipper's ship on the rocks, the splintering of her rotten timbers, the tearing of her rusty plates, the drowning of the crew like rats in a trap. (act 3, 105)

To some degree, these elements of violence and anger in Heartbreak House draw on what was happening in Britain during the
First World War. Britons had to contend with the threat of attacks from submarines and zeppelins. Moreover, when Shaw was writing *Heartbreak House*, the number of casualties was appalling. The period between 1916-17 saw probably "the most terrible fighting" of the First World War, with 60,000 casualties in the first day of the Somme offensive alone, and the greatest loss of life during the entire conflict. By the end of 1916, the French had suffered 3,350,000 casualties, the Germans, 2,460,000, and the British over 1,000,000 (Bond 116). The war also saw the use of anti-German propaganda, which "affected the civilian population most of all" (Haste, 79). This type of propaganda, originally designed to justify both the war and Britain's part in it, stirred up an anger and hatred that soon became "an indispensable part of civilian morale" (Haste, 81). A British recruiting poster declared:

Germans have wontonly sacked Cities and Holy Places.
Germans have murdered thousands of innocent Civilians.
Germans have flung vitriol and blazing petrol on the Allied troops. Germans have killed our Fisherfolk and deserted the drowning. Germans have inflicted unspeakable torture by poison gases on our brave Troops at Ypres. Germans have poisoned wells in South Africa.
Germans have ill-treated British Prisoners. Germans have assassinated our wounded. THESE CRIMES AGAINST GOD AND MAN ARE COMMITTED TO TRY AND MAKE YOU AFRAID OF THESE GERMAN BARBARIANS. (Haste, illus. 27)
The images created in the poster can be found in the play. Shotover notes that England has broken the laws of God (act 3, 106), and describes the drowning of men. The rectory is destroyed in act three (106), and Hector asks the captain if he is prepared to murder Hector's father's "innocent grandchildren" (act 1, 38).

Thus it becomes clear that *Heartbreak House*, unlike *Arms and the Man*, draws on issues directly influenced by the war. Yet with all its connections to the First World War, the play's presentation of war on the stage is rather oblique, thereby making its relation to wartime issues vague. There are no military battles or sieges mentioned in the play, nor is there a readily identifiable enemy like the Serbians in *Arms and the Man*, and one cannot be certain that war is an element of the play until the final moments of the last act. The setting is a house in the English countryside. None of the characters has any military status, and they react in ways that suggest that *Heartbreak House* takes place in peacetime rather than during a war. Certainly if the play has a wartime setting, Mazzini Dunn would not be able to assert that "nothing will happen" if English society is allowed to drift (*HH* act 3, 106).

There are, in fact, other influences on the atmosphere and themes in *Heartbreak House* that have nothing to do with the First World War. For instance, the ideas of judgement, of a nation needing to learn navigation or "be damned" (act 3, 106), and a final explosion that rocks society has as much to do with the writings of Thomas Carlyle as the atmosphere of the war. Indeed,
Carlyle's *The French Revolution* (1837) presents a number of themes that parallel those in *Heartbreak House*:

The French Revolution is an event that lends itself to Carlyle's interpretation of it as the only possible result of falsity and disbelief. The philosophical scepticism of the intellectuals, the poverty and ignorance of the lower classes, the selfish incompetence of the ruling class, and the faithlessness of the clergy are in his eyes responsible for its occurrence and its destructive violence. His history is an elaborate illustration of his conviction that human events are directly related to the laws of God. Because France is Godless, she must suffer. "Ye and your fathers have sown the wind, ye shall reap the whirlwind. Was it not, from of old, written: The wages of sin is death" [Carlyle 2: 48]. Carlyle blames the rationalism and the scepticism of the eighteenth century for the final destruction of faith, but the responsibility for violent revolution must be shared by all classes of society.

(Waring 87)

The society in *Heartbreak House*, like that of *The French Revolution*, is godless: the rector's home is destroyed and he has no place to spend the night, an event that provokes Shotover to say, "The Church is on the rocks, breaking up. I told him it would unless it headed for God's open sea" (act 3, 106). As for Mangan and Billy Dunn—the "two thieves"—their sins are punished by death.
The play's anxiety for an ending can also be traced to Carlyle's writings. The question of judgement and the search for salvation, of "[l]ife with a blessing" as Ellie defines it (act 3, 99), is the main focus of *Heartbreak House*. Ellie needs to be saved from marrying Mangan and from poverty, Hector must be saved from Lady Utterword, the world must be saved from "hogs" like Mangan and Randall, and men must be saved from women like Hesione and Ariadne. The development of this question in the play eventually leads to a larger issue: who will save England? The answer is unclear. The political men—Randall, Mangan, and Hastings—offer no hope, and Hector is powerless to effect change. Ellie accepts a sterile marriage with Shotover. Shotover has shot his last bolt long ago, and is left with only echoes. And yet the crisis is great: the captain of the ship of England is "in his bunk, drinking bottled ditch-water; and the crew is gambling in the forecastle. She will strike and sink and split" (act 3, 106).

Wisenthal notes that Shotover's metaphor of the ship has links to the passage contrasting Sir Jabesh Windbag with Cromwell in Carlyle's *Past and Present* (see *The Marriage of Contraries* 158). The concern of all the characters over the fate of England, therefore, is not tied solely to the war.

One can also attribute the play's forboding atmosphere to other playwrights. Shaw wrote a new section on Ibsen's last four plays for the 1913 edition of *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. In it, he noted:

And yet the shadow of death is here; for all four, except Little Eyolf, are tragedies of the dead, deserted
and mocked by the young who are still full of life. The Master Builder is a dead man before the curtain rises: the breaking of his body to pieces in the last act by its fall from the tower is rather the impatient destruction of a ghost of whose delirious whisperings Nature is tired than of one who still counts among the living. Borkman and the two women, his wife and her sister, are not merely dead: they are buried; and the creatures we hear and see are only their spirits in torment. "Never dream of life again," says Mrs Borkman to her husband: "lie quiet where you are." And the last play of all is frankly called When We Dead Awaken. Here the quintessence of Ibsenism reaches its final distillation: morality and reformation give place to mortality and resurrection. . . . (173)

Shotover, like the characters of Ibsen's last plays, is practically dead. He is a "mummy" who fears dreams and awakes "tired, tired of life" (act 2, 80). His moments of impassioned, philosophical thought, he notes, are "nothing but echoes" (act 3, 105). Another dramatic influence on Heartbreak House is Shaw's favourite Shakespearean play: King Lear. In Shakes Versus Shav, the connection between Shakespeare's tragedy and Shaw's comedy is clearly drawn:

SHAKES. Where is thy Hamlet? Coulds thou write

    King Lear?

SHAV. Aye, with his daughters all complete. Couldst
thou

Have written Heartbreak House? Behold my Lear.

A transparency is suddenly lit up, shewing Captain Shotover seated, as in Millais' picture called West Passage, with a young woman of virginal beauty [Ellie].

(SvS 475-76)

Weintraub notes the parallels between the two plays:

Without offering any explanations for them, critics have long pointed to tantalizing hints of Lear in Shaw's play. As one notes, it is "apocalyptic. Captain Shotover is eighty-eight and mad. His two daughters have an aspect in which they are fiends. Boss Mangan, the businessman driven to a frenzy by Heartbreak House, proposes [like Lear] to strip himself naked. 'Poor wretch!' Hector Hushabye exclaims at the end of the second act—and adds, as 'he lifts his fists in invocation to heaven': 'Fall. Fall and crush.'" (This parallels, perhaps, Albany's similar gesture and invocation, "Fall and cease!" near the close of Lear.) Even the air raid that brings the play to a violent conclusion seems a modern embodiment of the great storm in Lear. "These reverberations," J. I. M. Stewart observes, "are not insignificant. For Heartbreak House is the play in which Shaw confronts, for the first time in his imaginative writing, the small extent of his faith in man. What lies just beneath the play's surface is despair."
It is thus in intention, or impulsion, radically different from almost all the rest of his work. . . ."

(Weintraub, *Journey to Heartbreak* 336-37)

Nor can one attribute the character's violence and anger solely to the First World War. While these elements have connections with wartime Britain, they also represent symptoms of European society before the war. Long before the first shot was fired, a kind of bloodlust enveloped Europe. George Steiner notes:

[0]ne thing is plain: by c. 1900 there was a terrible readiness, indeed a thirst, for what Yeats was to call the "blood-dimmed tide." Outwardly brilliant and serene, *la belle époque* was menacingly overripe. Anarchic compulsions were coming to a critical pitch beneath the garden surface. . . . The arms race and the mounting fever of European nationalism were, I think, only the outward symptoms of this malaise. Intellect and feeling were, literally, fascinated by the prospect of purging fire. (Steiner 27)

Indeed, Shaw makes it clear in the preface to *Heartbreak House* that the play represents "cultured, leisured Europe before the war" (preface to *HH* vii; my emphasis).

The question of how to interpret the role of war in *Heartbreak House* is, therefore, complex. Critics like Wright and Berst state that *Heartbreak House* has strong links to war: Berst asserts that "[o]nly in a limited aspect is [Shaw's] play about cultured,
leisured Europe. Far more profoundly it is about the anguish and despair of a sensitive consciousness facing the vanity, stupidity, wileness, and insanity of social and historical realities" (223-24). Yet one cannot point to war as the main influence working in the play. One cannot determine a definite time for the action of the play: characters act in ways that reflect the period during the First World War; on the other hand, they behave in a manner that is totally inconsistent with a war-time setting. For Desmond McCarthy, this ambiguity is a serious flaw in the play:

As a picture of behaviour and talk in an English country house during the summer of nineteen-fifteen or sixteen or seventeen, or whenever the action is supposed to take place, the play has no relation to reality. Whatever cogency it might have had as an exposure of the fecklessness of the upper-class in England before the war, at the time when the characters and situations were conceived by the dramatist, has been falsified by his post-dating it in order to exhibit Nemesis in the form of falling bombs. (153)

On the contrary, this ambiguity is not a flaw. An audience is not meant to perceive the play as a depiction of pre-war or wartime Europe. Wisenthal notes:

The vagueness of historical background seems to me to be a deliberate technique on Shaw's part, to contribute to the dreamy atmosphere of the whole play, and more especially to give the bombing at the end a wider reference.
It is a symbol of the outbreak of the war, but at the same time it is thunder from the heavens, a sign of divine wrath. (The Marriage of Contraries 164-65)

The play instead creates an atmosphere of crisis: one that is applicable not just to a world at war, but to one that is, for the moment, at peace. It extends a universal warning that goes beyond the dangers of war, using the elements of war to help create its hothouse atmosphere.

Heartbreak House is influenced by the writings of Carlyle, Ibsen, and Shakespeare as much as it is by the First World War. Parts of the play make use of the war only for what it can contribute to an atmosphere that has its roots in pre-war Europe. That is why one finds in Heartbreak House Shaw keeping war at arms' length. He utilizes his experiences of wartime Britain, but incorporates them in a way that avoids making the play's connections to war clear. This is not to say that one should ignore the influence war has on the overall theme of Heartbreak House. It was born largely out of the despair Shaw felt during its composition, but goes beyond the Great War to deal with themes that touch on the individual, the family, and the very fabric of society itself.
The Patterns of War and Other Subjects

In drawing a conclusion about Shaw's treatment of war in *Arms and the Man* and *Heartbreak House*, one can choose a number of approaches. It is possible to show how the differences between the two plays show the diversity of Shaw's technique as a playwright. On the other hand, one could examine the similarities between the two plays to demonstrate the common elements in Shaw's approach to playwrighting. My approach, however, falls between the two. The two plays are very different in their treatment of war. In the first act of *Arms and the Man*, the audience's attention focuses on the image of war: Catherine presents a romantically idealistic picture, while Bluntschli presents a prosaic one. In contrast, *Heartbreak House* uses no clearly discernible images of war until the enemy in the sky explodes the dynamite in Shotover's gravel pit. Moreover, whereas *Arms and the Man* concentrates on philosophies for perceiving the world rather than on war itself, *Heartbreak House* uses issues raised by the First World War: violence, waste, and the need for lies. But careful examination of the reasons for these differences reveals a common purpose. The important point that must be considered concerns not the elements of war, but the way they are used on stage.

Shaw balances a play's need to draw on sources related to war with his desire to deal with themes that go beyond it. In *Arms*
and the Man, an audience is forced to concentrate on the idea of perception. The play makes war a visible element, but avoids dealing with war's issues by shifting the focus from war to love. This shift emphasizes that it is not what the characters perceive, but how they perceive it that is important. In Heartbreak House, a clear connection between the issues drawn from First World War England and the war itself is obscured. The atmosphere is influenced by the anxieties of wartime England, but the characters' behaviour, coupled with the play's setting, is not always consistent with the sentiments of that period. Thus Shaw achieves the same effect in both plays: his audience is never allowed to focus their attention on war itself. They are forced to concentrate on other issues: that is to say, they must use war only as a prism.

At this point, I could end by saying that Shaw does not write plays about war, but as I noted in my introduction, this is not a great revelation about Shaw or any other playwright. What is interesting is what one can say about Shaw's treatment of war in relation to his technique of writing plays. Shaw told Henderson that the "play develops itself. I only hold the pen" (Table-Talk of G.B.S. 75). Bernard F. Dukore observes that Captain Brassbound's Conversion is Shaw's only play that was "planned and plotted" (18). Thus it is not surprising that Shaw does not have a single, formulaic approach to using war in his plays. As one can see in Heartbreak House and Arms and the Man, how Shaw deals with it varies according to the dictates of the play: it can be a
part of the main theme, or it can simply be a device to explore a theme.

Or it can do both. One example of this combination is Saint Joan. Unlike Arms and the Man and Heartbreak House, the way that Saint Joan uses war is influenced by historical fact. This type of drama presents a unique set of problems and concerns from those of a play based mainly on the playwright's own ideas. In a letter to Archer, Shaw outlines the constraints imposed on him in writing a play with a similar origin, Caesar and Cleopatra:

The defects of "C & C" seem to me inherent in the genre Chronicle Play. I tried cutting & compression; but when I came to read the play to people I found myself forced to restore the cuts—even the most apparently harmless ones. The fact is, when you come to do these things, you find out that the peculiar characteristics of the Shakespear chronicle play are not due to his neglect or failure to construct them like Othello, but are produced by the technical conditions of the feat. You say in the chronicle play "I will accept character and story from outside the drama—-from History, not from my own dramatic invention & the needs of the dramatic appetite; and I will make the best play I can out of them. (27 July 1899, CL2 93-94)

1 For a detailed account of the sources Shaw draws on for Saint Joan, see Brian Tyson's The Story of Saint Joan. Of particular interest is the play's faithfulness to the various historical accounts of Joan's trial.
In *Saint Joan*, Shaw must deal with the historical figure's image as a warrior. In the preface to the play, Shaw writes:

She is the most notable Warrior Saint in the Christian calendar, and the queerest fish among the eccentric worthies of the Middle Ages. Though a professed and most pious Catholic, and the projector of a Crusade against the Husites, she was in fact one of the first Protestant martyrs. She was also one of the first apostles of Nationalism, and the first French practitioner of Napoleonic realism in warfare as distinguished from the sporting ransomgambling [sic] chivalry of her time. (v)

The importance of the historical perception of Joan makes war a crucial part of the play. This is not to say that the play blindly follows history to recreate this image; *Saint Joan* has broader interests than war or the soldier-saint. Yet Shaw cannot distance *Saint Joan* from war by obscuring its presence as he does in *Heartbreak House*. It must be a visible element of the play because history dictates that Joan's character must be to a large degree defined by her role as a soldier.

Shaw solves this dilemma by combining the two types of treatment of war found in *Arms and the Man* and *Heartbreak House*. As is the case in *Arms and the Man*, war is a very visible element of *Saint Joan*. Set in France during the Hundred Years War, this conflict is the main concern of the characters for the first five scenes of the play. In the first scene, the English have France
at their mercy. Bertrand de Poulengey tells Robert de Baudricourt:

If we had any commonsense we should join the Duke of Burgundy and the English King. They hold half the country, right down to the Loire. They have Paris. They have this castle: you know very well that we had to surrender it to the Duke of Bedford, and that you are only holding it on parole. The Dauphin is in Chinon, like a rat in a corner, except that he wont fight. We dont even know that he is the Dauphin: his mother says he isnt; and she ought to know. Think of that! the queen denying the legitimacy of her own son!

... I tell you that nothing can save our side now but a miracle. (scene 1, 8-9)

In the second scene, Joan tries to convince Charles of the need for courage and to fight the "goddams" that occupy France. Scene three is set at the French camp that is across the river from Orleans. The wind is blowing the wrong way, and Dunois is pleading with it to change direction, but without success. He even endows the wind with the nationality of his enemy: "Change, curse you, change, English harlot of a wind, change" (scene 3, 33). In scene four, the venue switches to the English side after their defeat at the city. The Chaplain is outraged that the English army is being defeated:

THE NOBLEMAN [supercilious] What is the matter?

THE CHAPLAIN. The matter, my lord, is that we English have been defeated.
THE NOBLEMAN. That happens, you know. It is only in history books and ballads that the enemy is always defeated.

THE CHAPLAIN. But we are being defeated over and over again. (scene 4, 39)

In scene five, the focus of the debate between Joan and the other characters is her plan to mount a siege of Paris. Thus war is more visible in Saint Joan than in Arms and the Man in that the former makes war an important part of the play for almost the entire play rather that just the first act.

But war is not simply an image that is present on the stage in Saint Joan; like Heartbreak House, the play depends directly on aspects of war for its themes. Just as history's perception of the real Joan is based on her image as the "Warrior Saint," an audience's perception of the title character of Saint Joan is influenced by war. Her passion to change people—a trait that one can find in most of Shaw's heroic figures—is strongly linked to it. She tells the Dauphin, "Thou must fight, Charlie, whether thou will or no. I will go first to hearten thee. We must take our courage in both hands: aye, and pray for it with both hands too" (scene 2, 30). Her plans, however, go beyond converting the king. She intends to convert all the social classes in France:

Our soldiers are always beaten because they are fighting only to save their skins; and the shortest way to save your skin is to run away. Our knights are thinking only of the money they will make in ransoms: it is not kill
or be killed with them, but pay or be paid. But I will
teach them all to fight that the will of God may be done
in France; and then they will drive the poor goddams
before them like sheep. You and Polly will live to see
the day when there will not be an English soldier on the
soil of France; and there will be but one king there:
not the feudal English king, but God's French one.

(scene 1, 13-14)

In these speeches, one immediately sees that Joan is brave and
loyal. An audience admires the simplicity that allows her to be
comfortable with both a king and the common soldier; indeed, she
treats them in much the same way.

While war influences one's perception of the character, it is
also an important part of the play's theme. *Saint Joan* is not
primarily about her triumphs—her success at Orleans, her crowning
of Charles, and her canonization. It deals with the reasons why
she had to die. War is at the root of her downfall. Her approach
to battles has some similarities to Sergius's: both fail to grasp
the complexities of their situation. What makes Joan's mistake
tragic is that she, unlike Sergius, is given a clear warning of
her folly. Dunois tells her:

Do not think, any of you, that these victories of ours
were won without generalship. King Charles: you have
said no word in your proclamations of my part in this
campaign; and I make no complaint of that; for the
people will run after The Maid and her miracles and not
after the Bastard's hard work finding troops for her and feeding them. But I know exactly how much God did for us through The Maid, and how much He left me to do by my own wits; and I tell you that your little hour of miracles is over, and that from this time on he who plays the war game best will win—if the luck is on his side. (scene 5, 62)

Joan does not understand why she must play this game. Her only philosophy is to attack. She tells those around her:

You never know when you are victorious: that is a worse fault [than never knowing when one is beaten]. I shall have to make you carry looking-glasses in battle to convince you that the English have not cut off all your noses. You would have been besieged in Orleans still, you and your councils of war, if I had not made you attack. You should always attack; and if you only hold on long enough the enemy will stop first. You dont know how to begin a battle; and you dont know how to use your cannons. And I do. (scene 5, 61)

Her simple tactics stir one's soul with the strength of the faith behind them, but they are clearly too simple for Dunois's "war game." To have this kind of simplicity in a complex world leaves no doubt that Joan will lose. Despite her triumph in becoming a saint at the end of the play, an audience's final image of her is one of defeat: the Epilogue ends with her cry of anguish and near-despair—"O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be
ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"
(Epilogue 114)—after she is abandoned by her worshippers "as she
was left isolated and unsupported during her life" (Wisenthal The
Marriage of Contraries 186).

Thus war is a highly prominent and visible feature of the
Saint Joan, and plays a crucial part in conveying both her image
to the audience and certain aspects of the main theme. But even
though war is both a prism and a subject in the play, Saint Joan
still maintains a distance between its audience and war. Like
Arms and the Man, the play shifts its focus away from war. Scene
six focuses on Joan's trial and away from the war and its outcome.
Moreover, Joan's patriotism, a patriotism closely linked to war,
distances the audience from actual concerns of war itself. Joan
is the character who elicits the audience's sympathy, a sympathy
created in some measure by her ardent form of patriotism—her con­
cern for the welfare of France and God's will. Her speeches
involving this sentiment invoke a great deal of emotion. Before
the siege of Orleans, she tells Dunois:

Is this the time for patience? Our enemy is at our
gates; and here we stand doing nothing. Oh, why are you
not fighting? Listen to me: I will deliver you from
fear. . . .

DUNOIS. Be quiet, and listen to me. If I were in
either of those forts with only ten men I could hold it
against an entire army. The English have more than ten
times ten goddams in those forts to hold them against
us.
JOAN. They cannot hold them against God. God did not give them the land under those forts: they stole it from Him. He gave it to us. I will take those forts.

(scene 3, 35-36)

Her concern for the welfare of France echoes Hector's concern about the state of England. But in *Saint Joan*, England is the enemy, and the principal audience for which the play was written is English. To sympathize with Joan, it must distance itself from the war in the play, or else it must identify with Joan's enemies—an unlikely occurrence.

Thus the common element in Shaw's treatment of war is the need to distance the audience from the very element of war the plays draw upon. This distancing is indicative of Shaw's choice of other subjects for his plays. Shaw touches on some of the issues related to medicine in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. An artist, Louis Dubedat, is dying of tuberculosis. He is left in the care of Sir Ralph Bloomfield Bonington ("B.B."), a fashionable consultant who has no real skill in medicine. Because of the doctor's incompetence, Dubedat's condition is accelerated, and he soon dies in his wife's arms. But the play's conflict does not focus on the ability of the doctors as much as on moral issues. The artist is in the care of a competent doctor, Sir Colenso Ridgeon, who is experimenting on a new cure for tuberculosis. But the physician is faced with a dilemma: he can save only one of two people—Dubedat, a dishonest blackguard who is a gifted artist, and the honest and decent Dr. Blenkinsop, who has no talent at all. He
chooses to save Blenkinsop and leaves the artist in Bonington's hands. Ridgeon's motives are not, however, entirely honourable. He reveals to Sir Patrick Cullen his desire to marry Dubedat's wife, Jennifer:

Well, if I let Blenkinsop die, at least nobody can say I did it because I wanted to marry his widow.

SIR PATRICK. Eh! What's that?

RIDGEON. Now if I let Dubedat die, I'll marry his widow.

SIR PATRICK. Perhaps she won't have you, you know.

RIDGEON [with a self-assured shake of the head] I've a pretty good flair for that sort of thing. I know when a woman is interested in me. She is. (DocD act 2, 51)

The play's conflict focuses not on Shaw's opinion of doctors, but on a question of ethics that is not specifically linked to medicine at all.

A pattern about how Shaw uses different subjects in his plays begins to emerge. As noted in my introduction, Shaw had a strong interest in the subject of war, but his views about it are complex. One finds this is much the same with his opinion of doctors. In Doctor's Delusions, Crude Criminology, and Sham Education, he wrote:

There should be no such thing as a poor doctor and no such thing as an ignorant one. The great majority of our doctors today are both poor and ignorant with the conceited ignorance of obsolete or spurious knowledge.
Our surgeons obtain the highest official qualifications without having had a single hour of specific manual training: they have to pick up the art of carving us as paterfamilias picks up the art of carving a goose. The general education of our citizens (the patients) leaves them so credulous and gullible, that the doctor, to whom they attribute magical powers over life and death, is forced to treat them according to their folly lest he starve. (xi)

Yet while he condemned many doctors' methods, Shaw believed that they had an important role in society: "Please do not class me as one who 'doesn't believe in doctors,'" he writes in Doctor's Delusions; "One of our most pressing needs is a national staff of doctors whom we can believe in, and whose prosperity shall depend not on a nation's sickness but on its health" (xi).

Shaw's views about both doctors and war are not clear cut, but these subjects make their way into Shaw's plays. But subjects for which he had strong and clear opinions rarely, if ever, enter into his dramatic works. For instance, Shaw wrote a number of articles condemning vivisection, which he believed was a barbaric practice. In "Vivisection," he states:

I am the last man alive to deny that vivisection has led to discoveries. I could fill columns with an account of all the mare's nests it has discovered during my own lifetime. Much has been learnt during the same period from war, from earthquakes, from plague, pestilence, and
famine; battle, murder, and sudden death. But if any class of persons devoted themselves to the artificial production of such calamities on the offchance of learning something from them I should advocate their painless but prompt extirpation. They would no doubt denounce me as an enemy of Science. They would be mistaken: I know the difference between science and scoundrelism: that is all. (136-37)

None of Shaw's plays uses this subject in a substantial way. One can, therefore, conclude that the large percentage of plays dealing with war in Shaw's dramatic canon is in some degree linked to the complexity of the playwright's feelings about the subject.

What is clear is the fact that whatever subject Shaw chooses to present in his plays—whether it is war in *Arms and the Man* and *Heartbreak House*, medicine in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, or prostitution in *Mrs Warren's Profession*—a critic should not focus on the subject itself. Far too often, critics search in vain for Shaw's opinions rather than dealing with how a subject is used in a play. Shaw's treatment of war in *Arms and the Man* and *Heartbreak House* shows us that his technique for creating his plays, if one can call it that, does not depend on a controversy over a specific issue, but on that issue's ability to act as a prism to reveal more universal themes. War is an ideal subject for Shaw's drama because of the nature of his opinions on it: there is not a single side to war, but a spectrum that provides both the means to explore other themes, and the basis for a theme. The prism of war
in Shaw's plays, therefore, reveals more than the spectrum of society; it reveals his diversity and complexity as a playwright.
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