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## The Matter and Purpose of G.B. Shaw's Saint Joan--A "Play of Ideas"

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THE MATTER AND PURPOSE OF G.B. SHAW'S  
SAINT JOAN--A "PLAY OF IDEAS"

by

Jerome B. Coll, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfilment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

May

1953



## VITA AUCTORIS

Jerome B. Coll, S.J. was born in the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, July 28, 1928.

After receiving his elementary education at Saint Lawrence O'Toole Grammar School, he attended Central District Catholic High School. Upon graduation from there in June, 1946, he entered the Society of Jesus at the Novitiate of Saint Isaac Jogues at Wernersville, Pennsylvania. During his four years there he was connected academically with Woodstock College, Maryland.

In the autumn of 1950 he transferred to West Baden College of Loyola University, and received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in June, 1951. He was then enrolled in the Graduate School of Loyola University.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

From a mere consideration of the quantity of literature which has appeared on George Bernard Shaw, it is an obvious fact that no more than a few people have ignored him. Many modern liberals agree with the Irish-born Englishman. But those who challenge him are far more numerous. In either case, Shaw has been a towering figure so that most men have been forced to turn their attention to him at one time or another. Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn sums up well the prominent place Shaw has taken in the place of unforgettable characters.

But he must be a poor creature indeed who is not stirred by the luminous sagacity, the daring thought, the intellectual passion of Bernard Shaw. It is not necessary to agree with him at any point. Or, it is possible, as in my own case to agree with him in a hundred details most heartily and not at all in his ultimate conclusions or his final aims. It is possible, in a word, to do anything but ignore.<sup>1</sup>

In these pages Shaw is not going to be ignored. But, somewhat like Mr. Lewisohn, the criticism levelled at Shaw here will indicate various points of disagreement with the playwright's final conclusions.

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1 Ludwig Lewisohn, The Modern Drama, New York, 1905, 199

The problem of this thesis begins in a series of articles appearing in the New Statesman and Nation during March 1950. They concern the dramatic writing of Bernard Shaw. In a sense these articles are a photographic miniature of the overall literature on Shaw written within the last fifty years. For they reflect on a small scale the faithful following who defended Shaw, alongside of the group of enthusiastic opponents who accused him. Within eight issues of the above mentioned periodical Shaw finds friends who acclaim his genius and serious critics who belittle his efforts.

The dispute began when Mr. Terence Rattigan labelled the dramatic writings of Shaw as "plays of ideas." The somewhat derogatory meaning of this term is evident as Rattigan calls the "plays of ideas" a "heresy founded on the false notion that ideology equals intellect."<sup>2</sup> He believes that idle theorizing is at the base of most of Shaw's plays. According to Rattigan, Shaw, in the midst of his theorizing, has sacrificed the intelligent plan or mental outline of plot, character, and action. But it is just this mental blueprint, drawn up carefully and followed faithfully, which is at the base of all good plays.

This paper will show that Shaw, at least in one play,

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<sup>2</sup> Terence Rattigan, "Concerning the Play of Ideas," New Statesman and Nation, London, XXXIX, March 4, 1950, 241, citing Shaw in the Saturday Review, for 1895.

Saint Joan, justly deserved the censure he received from Mr. Rattigan. An analysis of Saint Joan will show that Shaw is mainly interested in establishing his thesis. The nature of this thesis will be explained later on. Such things in the play as character, plot, and action are only of secondary importance to Shaw.

But the case against Shaw is not universal. For among the contemporary critics and playwrights who defended Shaw in this series are such men as Sean O'Casey, James Bridie, Peter Ustinov, Ben Levy, and Ted Willis. Their method of defense was to attack directly the article written by Rattigan.

Shaw too has something to say in his own defense. Writing a few weeks after Rattigan, Shaw takes a stand against his accuser.

Now there are ideas at the back of my plays; and Mr. Rattigan does not like my plays because they are not exactly like his own, and no doubt bore him; so he instantly declares that plays that have any ideas in them are bad plays, and indeed not plays at all, but platform speeches, pamphlets, and leading articles. <sup>3</sup>

In the same article, Shaw firmly states that "the quality of ~~the~~ quality of the play is the quality of the ideas."<sup>4</sup> In other words, for him the ideas determine the intrinsic value of the play.

So much for Shaw's own defense. Mr. Ben Levy wastes no words in rejecting Rattigan's criticism.

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<sup>3</sup> George Bernard Shaw, "The Play of Ideas" New Statesman, XXXIX, March, 1950, 510

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Now although these critics (and dramatists who have heeded them) confuse the so-called drama of ideas with a propaganda drama, there is no reason why Hattigan should fall into the same error, and still less for supposing that Shaw ever did.. In fact, of course, Shaw was the avowed foe of propaganda drama.<sup>5</sup>

It can be seen that there is not entire agreement on the type of play which Shaw wrote. These few quotes suggest that the opinions on Shaw and his plays which are found in his biographies and in commentaries on his plays vary. Such is the case. For many critics who wrote on Shaw long before these articles were published have maintained contrary views on the playwright. Thus the issue in the New Statesman is rather an outcome of the discussion about Shaw which has been going on for the last generation.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of the continuous controversy on G.B.S. definite appraisals of various plays by Shaw have been made by some critics. Although the expression "play of ideas" was not employed so freely at that time as it is now, some critics and biographers recognized many of Shaw's plays for what they were: propaganda pieces, pulpit oratory, or soap-box campaigning. For example, Widowers' House, his first significant play, is simply an under-

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<sup>5</sup> Ben Levy, "The Play of Ideas," New Statesman, XXXIX, March 25, 1950, 338.

<sup>6</sup> Writing on drama, such men as John Gassner, Eric Bentley, Cleanth Brooks, and Ludwig Lewisohn have discussions on Shaw's "Plays of ideas." Archibald Henderson and William Irvine, biographers of Shaw, also treat at some length the "plays of ideas."

mining, daring attack on current morality, an affront to "middle class society."<sup>7</sup> The characters are no more than "disembodied voices or abstract points of view."<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Warren's Profession is written by Shaw the economist, striving to remedy the prevailing social degradation and rampant prostitution. Archibald Henderson dismisses the play as a "powerful sermon true enough, and thoroughly moral in its purpose."<sup>9</sup> Concerning Arms and the Man Shaw admitted that his wit caused the play to have an "insane success, undesired on his part. The delightful comedy was so completely enjoyed that the audience never once adverted to his message."<sup>10</sup> Raina and Captain Bluntschli won the audience. They were too-life-like. Shaw was disappointed by the fact that his own cleverness distracted from the "idea" or "point" he wished to convey. In Napoleon Bonaparte the unrecognizable general seems to be more the mouthpiece of Shaw's own philosophy than the soldier known so well in history. As Patrick Braybrooke sees Napoleon, he is merely Shaw. "[I]t is Shaw all the time who is speaking, he is not so much the playwright as the dialectician."<sup>11</sup> The Devil's Disciple

7 Archibald Henderson, Bernard Shaw, Playboy and Prophet, New York, 1932, 340.

8 Martin Ellehauge, The Position of Bernard Shaw in European Drama and Philosophy, Copenhagen, 1931, 24.

9 Henderson, Bernard Shaw, 411.

10 Ibid., 474.

11 Patrick Braybrooke, The Genius of Bernard Shaw, J.P. Lippincott Co., 1925.

and The Doctor's Dilemma are two clear examples of the playwright's preoccupation with his thesis, resulting in a depreciation of dramatic integrity. In Major Barbara Shaw forgets his characters in his desire to emphasize poverty as a crime. Henderson recognized the play as political criticism of economic society. It paves the way for socialism as "a powerful sermon [in which] great social, philosophical, and moral lessons have to be driven home."<sup>12</sup> If the former plays all contain discussion, Getting Married is nothing but discussion. Shaw satirizes the institution of marriage. The only conflict lies between the various theories on marriage.<sup>13</sup> With Man and Superman Shaw gained for himself the title of socialistic philosopher. The sub-title is "A Comedy and a Philosophy"; thus it is not difficult to see the playwright's solution for the enigmas of the world. Shaw presents his ideas through his mouth-pieces; Tanner, Ann, and Don Juan. But the crowning point of Shawian philosophy is seen in Back to Methuselah. This play is the mature development and logical consequent of the Life Force theory proposed in Man and Superman. According to Henderson, "this play demonstrated to the public that Shaw is a philosopher in the cosmic sense, with a wealth of religious feeling, and a burning desire

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12 Henderson, Bernard Shaw, 523.

13 Although it would be interesting to set down Shaw's teaching on marriage, this is no place for a criticism of his moral radicalism. His oft-quoted remark is telling: "Marriage is the most licentious of institutions."



for race improvement."<sup>14</sup> However, Henderson agrees with most of Shaw's critics when he says that Back to Methuselah adds nothing to Shaw the dramatist, but rather prevents one from justly calling him a dramatic artist. Braybrooke comments that it is taken for granted that the play is meant to be a philosophical disquisition. Therefore question about character portrayal is not even raised.<sup>15</sup>

These few plays seem to be a fair sampling of Shaw. Each of them manifests some characteristic of "plays of ideas." Yet, as far as can be ascertained, no one has subjected any of previously mentioned plays to a critical analysis to prove, as far as is possible, just how any of them are "plays of ideas." Perhaps the critics thought they would be emphasizing the obvious were they to prove in detail their accusations. They seem satisfied to generalize on all of Shaw's plays, with the all-inclusive statement that Shavian drama is chiefly concerned with the ideas at the base of the plays. For example, Braybrooke's general criticism is aimed at the subordination of character, action, and dialogue to the thesis of the play.

Shaw's drama --let me say it again-- is the drama of idea: intellectual drama, drama that is psychologic in that its aim is to reveal character in the cause of an idea, and therefore doctrinaire, in that through dialogue, scene and action it desires to maintain, set forth, and bring home a theory.<sup>16</sup>

14 Henderson, Bernard Shaw, 535.

15 Braybrooke, Genius of Bernard Shaw, 152.

16 Ibid., 242.

Henderson also holds up Shaw as a promoter of ideas and discussion. However, he fails to indicate where or how Shaw employs these discussions in any particular play.

Shaw was virtually alone in his attempt to open the windows of the theatre to a fresh and vivifying current of ideas. To Shaw, to dramatize was to philosophize.<sup>17</sup>

He shows that Shaw fully intended to attack any existing idea or institution with a counteracting discussion. "It is an instinct with me personally to attack every idea which has been full grown for ten years, especially if it claims to be the foundation of all society."<sup>18</sup>

Samuel Chew, states that "Shaw's aim has not been to tell a story, but to convey ideas."<sup>19</sup>

From these various opinions on Shaw's plays the general problem is clear. Are Shaw's plays actually "plays of ideas"? In this thesis the general problem will be focused into the specific problem. The point of focus, as mentioned above, will be Saint Joan. Is Saint Joan a "play of ideas"?

Now that the scope of this thesis has been set forth there are a few definitions of technical terms which should be given here. "Idea" means the mental image or picture of an object.

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17 Henderson, Bernard Shaw, 340.

18 Ibid., Henderson quoting Shaw.

19 Albert C. Baugh, ed., A Literary History of England, New York, 1948, 1525.

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This image acts as the pattern, plan or outline which must be followed. In the case of the playwright, the idea will be the mental outline which he realizes concretely in his dialogue and stage directions. "Theory" is any attempted explanation of some fact, or any possible solution offered to explain the "Why" of things. The idea is distinct from the theory. For while the former is only the pattern to be followed in working out the solution of some problem, the latter is the solution itself. Thus the idea is the topic point of the discussion. The solution of this discussion is always that of the playwright. His solution is his theory. For example, the basic idea of the discussion in Getting Married is the institution of marriage. The solution of the problem is to do away with conventional marriage. This is Shaw's theory.

The technical expression "play of ideas" indicates that type of play in which ideas are furnished, discussed, and evolved. The validity of the proposed idea is discussed by the characters of the play. In Getting Married, for example the various "characters" argue with one another on the worth or worthlessness of marriage. Closely allied with the "play of ideas" is the "thesis play." Some authors identify the two.<sup>20</sup> In both types the dramatist is more concerned with proving his point than he is with telling the truth about life. In fact the dramatist thinks that

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<sup>20</sup> Barrett H. Clark, A Study of the Modern Drama, New York, 1934, 251.

his point is the truth about life. Whether or not others agree with him is beside the point, as far as he is concerned. Again in both types, characters and dramatic structure are usually subordinated to the message or "theory" which the playwright intends to convey. Since the message is so important there is plenty of dialogue. Action is comparatively unimportant.

In the "propaganda play" the playwright shows a closed mind to the case at hand. The dramatist has destroyed the possibility of a problem play by prejudicing the solution according to his own designs. In the propaganda play the playwright is not satisfied to offer a theory to explain the facts. He goes a step further. In order to make his audience wholly sympathetic towards the hero, the author usually paints him lily white. Completely evil forces are embodied in the characters opposing him.

At the base of the play with an idea there is always some human conflict. The mere discussion of a few ideas by a number of characters does not fulfill the requirements of this type of drama.

The blueprint in the mind of the playwright is as essential step in the formation of this type of play also. But within that mental pattern some consideration has been given to characters so that they appear human. The plot is probable. The action is motivated with dramatic foreshadowing and successful characterization.

Another difference between the "play of ideas" and the play with an idea lies in the difference of theory and truth. The playwright might openly attack some custom or tradition accepted by a large part of the human race, as Shaw does in Getting Married. On the other hand, he may be satisfied merely to condemn poverty as a crime, as in Major Barbara. Far from empty speculation, he may sincerely believe that he has caught the truth of life--that poverty is a crime, marriage a licentious institution. But it is always true that in "plays of ideas" the notions or ideas of the playwright are proposed to be discussed by his characters. The element of truth disappears as the author presents each solution according to his own convictions. But the truth of poverty does not lie in the discussion of it. The truth is in the fact that as a result of poverty widespread human grief and conflict spring up.

The truth of life is the basis for the play with an idea. There is no by-passing of truth in order to get to the discussion of the thesis.

Any well-known drama by Shakespeare exemplifies the play with an idea. The plot of Othello, for example, was formed according to the mental outline of Shakespeare. It is evident that jealousy and complete self-confidence were ideas that formed part of this mental blueprint. But Shakespeare always thought of these moral faults as intimately connected up with Othello himself. The playwright never disembodied the ideas for the sake of discussion.

Rather Shakespeare shows the human tragedy resulting from these moral faults. The idea of jealousy and self-confidence exist for the sake of the conflict, not the conflict for the sake of the ideas.

Shakespeare did not allow a personal bias to color his characters. He presented what human nature supplied. Shaw, on the other hand, presumes everything but the discussion. These discussions, which he insists are essential to the modern play, allow him to have the last word. According to Herbert Skimpole, these conversations are not really dialogue, but only discussion.<sup>21</sup>

If Saint Joan can be shown to belong to the category of "play of ideas" it will be much easier to understand why many other plays by Shaw also deserve the same classification. The basis for this conclusion rests on the fact that most of the critics believe that Saint Joan is one of Shaw's best plays, if not the best. Therefore, if this play is basically another concrete presentation of Shavian discussion then his other plays probably have the same defect to a greater degree. There is no attempt in this paper, however, to give conclusive proof that the plays of Shaw other than Saint Joan are "plays of ideas." No thorough, internal examination of them is made here. It would even be pre-

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21 Herbert Skimpole, Bernard Shaw, The Man and His Work, London, 1918, 135.

umptuous to state that there is conclusive proof that Saint Joan is a "play of ideas." For no matter how thorough the analysis of the play, at most, it should be concluded that all of the evidence points this way; or, that as far as can be ascertained, Saint Joan is a "play of ideas" because Shaw is propounding his theories for his audience. The nature of this type of study prohibits a strict categorical statement one way or another.

The procedure in the study of this play will begin by noting how Shaw seems to be interested in ideas for their own sake. Along with what he says in the play itself, Shaw's preface will throw some light on the matter. There is evidence that Shaw is conscious of his imposition of ideas on the play. For many times in his preface he asserts his personal belief in the ideas expressed in the play. Thus the preface is of some importance. But this study deals mainly with the play itself, which, of course, includes the epilogue. Since the critics have said little on Saint Joan in reference to the problem at hand, they will be used sparingly.

By specifically treating Saint Joan from the aspect of matter and purpose--the matter Shaw used, and the purpose he intended--a better understanding of his own view of the play will be achieved. A fuller explanation of these two terms is left for the following chapter.



## CHAPTER II

### MATTER AND PURPOSE

#### A DEFINITION

The title of the thesis itself indicates the manner of approach to the problem: from the viewpoint of matter and purpose in relation to Saint Joan.

Although the general notions of both matter and purpose are so basic as to need no explanation in themselves, there is a much more definite, almost technical meaning for both terms when they refer to literature.

By matter in literature is usually meant all that goes into a piece of literature except the purpose for which it was written. Thus, any historical data used as a foundation for a story are part of the matter. For example, many documents were consulted in preparing the movie "Joan of Arc" in order that it might be a close representation of the true history of the Maid. Many authorities prepared and checked the scenarios for accurate and detailed agreement with authentic history.

Beside history, any experience of the author, or any impression left on him that goes into the literary piece he is writing is part of the matter. The ideas themselves which he conceived



and logically ties together are the matter of the piece. For they fit the definition of matter or material cause: "that out of which a thing comes to be."<sup>1</sup>

Working upon this matter from history, the writer performs the function of artist inasmuch as he is seer and maker. That is the artist must be a philosopher who realizes the universal incidents or occurrences which are latent in the particular facts of history. In this sense the artist "sees" the universal in the particular. As maker he concentrates on what life should be, or on what must happen in accord with the laws of probability and necessity. Imitating nature as it should be, the artist creates a person who, on a certain occasion, will speak or act according to the law of probability. However, it may happen that the artist is dealing with history, as in the case of Jeanne d'Arc. But his primary concern remains the probability and universal characteristics of that history. Thus, both the historian and artist may be treating the same set of facts. But the former's interest never goes beyond the facts, while the latter penetrates to the basic meaning. Thus, the artist has "made" the situation, even though he has imitated the facts of history. Through this whole process the artist has been working on what is referred to above

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, Physics, 2, 194b, The Works of Aristotle, ed. W.D. Ross, II, Oxford, 1930. (There are no page numbers in this edition.)

as his matter.

Applied to Saint Joan, matter means, first of all, the historical background of the play. Shaw consulted various accounts of Joan's life before and during her campaign against the English in the Hundred Years War. From his reading he formed many ideas of Joan, of the Catholic Church, and of the countries of France and England at that time. In short, he acquainted himself to some degree with everything that centered about the famous life of Jeanne d'Arc, Maid of Orleans. In doing all this Shaw acted as historian. Beside these particular facts, however, it must be realized that many of Shaw's personal convictions--whether right or not is not to the point here--on such things as Church authority, on saints of the Church, and on mystical experience, were deeply imbedded in his mind before he came to write Saint Joan.

When Shaw the artist became interested in Joan's life, he looked upon her as an artist would, not as an historian. He sought for the probability and necessity which were bound up in Joan's life. He kept the facts about her. But in searching for the universal characteristics contained in these facts, he idealized certain phases of her history. Here Shaw allowed many subjective impressions to color his artistic representation of The Maid. In this way the personal convictions and feelings of Shaw entered into the subject matter for the play. The basic reason for Shaw's exaggeration of the history of Joan is an essential

factor in labelling Saint Joan a "play of ideas."

Concerning purpose in literature, it is clear that there are any number of reasons why a piece of literature is written. The author may intend nothing more than the money which will accrue to him. He may simply desire to entertain by his story, not caring at all about the money. His purpose may be to commemorate some outstanding political figure. Finally, he may write for any other purpose that can be imagined.

Shaw states definitely that his purpose is not to make money, nor to write just for the sake of writing.

There is nothing of the doctrine of 'Art for Art's sake' about him. "For art's sake alone," he says, "I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, two possible intentions which he might have had are already excluded. J.P. Hackett quotes Shaw to the effect that money is not a concern to his playwriting.

I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion on these matters....I am not dependent on the theatre for my livelihood.<sup>3</sup>

Not to gain money, then, but to preach and teach seems to be the primary intention of Shaw's playwriting.

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<sup>2</sup> Renee Deacon, Bernard Shaw An Artist-Philosopher, New York, 1910, 86, quoting Shaw.

<sup>3</sup> J.P. Hackett, Shaw, George versus Bernard, New York, 1937, 140.

It has already been suggested in the introduction that this paper will show Shaw's purpose here in Saint Joan to be a desire to convey his theories, his ideas on the Catholic Church, on Joan, and on the Church authorities in France at that time. This statement of Shaw's purpose is not a prejudgment of the case. For the proof of this statement is the precise burden of the coming chapters.

The reason for analyzing Saint Joan on the basis of matter and purpose is that from this approach the attitude of the playwright towards his play becomes clear. For the matter of the play reveals both the playwright's ideas and the way he expresses them in the play. The purpose indicates Shaw's attitude toward the play. This sort of analysis enables observers to look at Saint Joan in a manner as close as possible to the way in which Shaw looked at it.<sup>4</sup>

Before proceeding with the play, however, a short summary of it might be useful here in order to have a backdrop against which the whole criticism of Saint Joan can be viewed.

Written in 1923, the play is about a French country girl who hopes to save France from the English by driving them from the land. In the first scene Joan appears before Captain Baudricourt

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<sup>4</sup> Although Shaw tells us that he did "nothing but arrange her for the stage," clearly he is not serious. For his whole preface argues to the contrary. Confer Henderson, Bernard Shaw, 543.

of the French army. She pleads for a horse and a few soldiers to accompany her to the Dauphin for whom she has a message. After winning her request and making the journey, Joan appears in the court of Prince Charles, the Dauphin. She wins him over, gets command of the French army, and gathers under her banner many of the soldiers about the court as they shout, "For God and His Maid."<sup>5</sup> As Joan arrives at the site of Orleans, the wind which has been preventing the French from crossing the river suddenly changes in their favor. As they cross the cry is again, "The Maid! The Maid! God and the Maid."<sup>6</sup> Some days after the victory Joan leads the Dauphin to Rheims for the coronation. But after the ceremonies are over, as the day wears on, the Maid indicates her desire to continue her attacks on the English. King Charles and some of Joan's comrades in arms try to dissuade her, showing how foolish any further fighting would be. When Joan goes against their advice and is later captured at Compiegne by the Burgundians, she is led to Rouen and prison. She is accused of being a witch, sorceress, and heretic. After many days of relentless questioning, Joan is convinced by the Church authorities that she is in error, a wanderer from the Church. At this point she recants all that she pro-

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5 G.B. Shaw, Nine Plays, with Prefaces and Notes, ed, Dodd, Mead, and Co., New York, 1937, 1067. All references to Saint Joan and its preface will be from this edition.

6 Ibid., 1073.

fessed in previous questioning about her voices and visions. Only a few minutes later, however, when Joan learns that she must do penance for her wrong by spending the rest of her life in jail, eating bread and water, and never seeing the light of day, she tears up her confession. By her act of disobedience, Joan shocks all the court, and is proclaimed a relapsed heretic. The Maid is taken off to be burned for her crimes against God, His Church, and France. The epilogue of the play shows Joan returned from the dead, twenty years after her execution. All the persons of the play who helped in Joan's burning appear, admitting that Joan was right in her protests. Finally, all leave, while Joan wonders how long it will be before the earth is ready to receive the saints of God.

## CHAPTER III

### CHURCH AND CLERGY IN SAINT JOAN

This chapter concerns itself with Shaw's presentation of the Catholic Church and her clergymen, in Saint Joan. The reason for starting with the Church is simply that this institution, as Shaw considers it, seems to be of utmost importance from the beginning of the play until the final line of the Epilogue. All the evidence seems to indicate that Shaw uses his presentation of the Church as the unifying element for the forwarding of all his ideas which appear in the play. The presentation of the Church as an entirely human organization is the fundamental idea about which his theory revolves, while all the other ideas are subordinated to it. Each one contributes in some way to make the predominant theory still more convincing to the reader or viewer.

In a word, then, the main issue with Shaw is not that he believes Joan to be a military genius, not that he desires to naturalize her voices, not that Joan was the first protestant; rather, it is this: while the Church as an institution had no right to interfere with the individual and his relations with God, and therefore was usurping power that in no way belonged to her, nevertheless, the clergy or administrators of this institution



were only normal human beings acting according to their conscience, judging this Maid according to the Church's laws. Thus Shaw places all the injustice of the burning of Joan on the Church as an institution, and on her unreasonable laws. He allows the clergy to go entirely free. Here is Shaw summing up the whole case. It is clear that he is interested in vindicating the officials.

Still, there was a great wrong done to Joan and to the conscience of the world by her burning. Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner, which is the Devil's sentimentality, cannot excuse it. When we have admitted that the tribunal was not only honest and legal, but exceptionally merciful in respect of sparing Joan the torture which was customary when she was obdurate as to taking the oath, and that Cauchon was far more self-disciplined and conscientious both as priest and lawyer than any English judge ever dreams of being... the human fact remains that the burning of Joan of Arc was a horror, and that a historian who would defend it would defend anything.<sup>1</sup>

But this cursory statement of the purpose of this chapter, again, is not a prejudgment of the case, for the entire chapter is aimed at proving (1) that Shaw imposes this personal theory of Church and clergy upon his readers, (2) that he does so by selecting and heightening very definite facts about the Church, and (3) that his presentation of the Church is the unifying idea of the whole play, since it is the most important phase of his theory.

This chapter, it will be seen, makes a specific contribution to the thesis as a whole inasmuch as it shows one partic-

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw, *Nine Plays*, 1013.



ular instance of Shaw's predominant interest in his ideas, his theories, his feelings towards Church and clergy.

It is obvious that Shaw has definite reasons for showing us such men as the Bishop of Beauvais, and the Archbishop in Charles' court, in a certain biased way. After studying the play itself, a further confirmation of just what his purpose is concerning the clergy will be gathered from the preface to the play.<sup>2</sup> It would be misleading to find his position on the Church as stated in the Preface, and then impose this position as an interpretation of the lines in the play. For this paper is primarily an examination of the play Saint Joan and not the preface to it. However, when Shaw has said something that corroborates the result of an objective analysis of the play, he is confirming what he writes, giving us one additional argument in favor of the conclusion of this paper.

In order to verify the statements already made about the Church and clergy, the best method of exposing Shaw's presentation will be to indicate various sources in the play.

In the early parts of the play when the Archbishop in Charles' court is discussing the Maid with the king, this Church

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<sup>2</sup> In the prefaces Shaw makes numerous confirmations of what he writes in the plays, as Ellehauge observes: "In Shaw the disproportion between the preface and the play is so great that sometimes the play impresses the reader almost as an anti-climax to the preface." Position of Shaw in European Drama, 331.

dignitary quickly labels Joan as an unrespectable woman. How then could she be a saint, if she were a "cracked" farm girl?

The Archbishop. I should have expected more commonsense from De Baudricourt.

He is sending some cracked country lass here....

You cannot be allowed to see this crazy wench.

.....

This creature is not a saint.

She is not even a respectable woman.

She does not wear women's clothes.

She is dressed like a soldier, and rides round the country with soldiers.

Do you suppose such a person can be admitted to your Highness' court?<sup>3</sup>

This is the first hint of the attitude the Church is going to take against Joan.

The Chaplain of the English is the next Churchman to defame her. He desires to punish Joan as a wicked traitor of the Church. "By God, if this goes on any longer I will fling my cassock to the devil, and take arms myself, and strangle the accursed witch with my own hands."<sup>4</sup> Cauchon joins in with an implicit accusation of Joan as a sorceress who must be burnt unless she repents. This Joan, he affirms, is possessed by the devil. "If the devil is making use of this girl--and I believe he is..."<sup>5</sup>

Unless this impetuous, ignorant Maid is stopped, claims

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3 Ibid., 1055.

4 Ibid., 1075.

5 Ibid., 1079. Confer 1080, "She is inspired, but diabolically inspired."

Cauchon, she will become as Mahomet (sic), and take off many children of the Church into some erring sect, no longer recognizing the supreme authority of the Church of Rome. Joan is making herself supreme while she places the Church in a secondary position. Therefore, kill off this infected heretic.

Cauchon. The Pope himself at his proudest dare not presume as this woman presumes. She acts as if she herself were the Church. She brings the message of God to Charles; And The Church must stand aside. She will crown him in the Cathedral of Rheims: She, not The Church.

. . . . .  
Who has turned it [her head]? The devil.  
And for a mighty purpose. He is spreading this heresy everywhere....  
Let all this woman's sins be forgiven her except only this sin; for it is the sin against the Holy Ghost; and if she does not repent in the dust before the world, and submit herself to the last inch of her soul to her Church, to the fire she shall go if once she falls into my hand.<sup>6</sup>

In the above passage, and as is apparent below, Cauchon is represented as the defender of Church authority. Convinced that he is right, he will do away with Joan. For this ignorant peasant is interfering, overthrowing the Church. She never mentions the Church, but only God, as if the established authority of the Church were completely divorced from God. She is a rebel against the Church and State; and therefore, against God, no matter

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6 Ibid., 1082-1084.

what she herself says. She must die.<sup>7</sup>

Up to this point in the play, all these indications of increased concern for, and indignation over Joan have been addressed to one or another of the authorities, such as Cauchon, Warwick, of the English Army, the Archbishop, or the English Chaplain. Now these same men turn to Joan as she receives her first direct reproach for her supposed rebellious attitude concerning Church authority. The scene is the court of Charles as Joan first visits there. The Archbishop has the first words against her.

The Archbishop. If I am not so glib with the name of God as you are, it is because I interpret His will with the authority of The Church and of my sacred office. When you first came you respected it, and would not have dared to speak as you are now speaking...<sup>8</sup>  
You have stained yourself with the sin of pride.

The Inquisition, arriving on the scene after Joan has been captured and prepared for trial at Rouen, speaks in very definite terms of reproach against the Maid. She is considered one of the greatest heretics of the time.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 1085, 1087, 1088. It is fairly obvious that Shaw is representing Cauchon as sincerely convinced of his opinions. But while the Bishop is justified, the whole implication is that the Church laws are in themselves completely unjust.

Chesterton notices that Shaw is taking great pains to exonerate the judges of Joan. "I have already mentioned Saint Joan, which any atheist might have made a eulogy on the Saint, but only Shaw would have made a defense of the Inquisition." Gilbert Keith Chesterton, George Bernard Shaw, London, 1948, 264

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1093, 1094.

Inquisitor. But having been present at...the examination, I must admit that this seems to be one of the gravest cases of heresy within my experience.<sup>9</sup>

The Inquisitor will try to save her, but realizes he will fail, for Joan will condemn herself from her own mouth.

Inquisitor. You need have no anxiety about the result, my lord. You have an invincible ally in the matter: one who is far more determined than you that she will burn...The Maid herself, Unless you put a gag in her mouth you cannot prevent her from convicting herself ten times over every time she opens it.<sup>10</sup>

But, throughout the whole conversation between the dignitaries of the Church and the English nobles, before the trial begins, no personal malice against Joan is shown. The only concern of the ecclesiastical judges is to vindicate Church authority which, they say, is above every individual. They do not consider themselves cruel in condemning Joan, but would be so if they allowed her to go unrepentant, to infect other children of the Church.<sup>11</sup>

Supporting the Inquisition, Cauchon claims that no private judgment can be above Church authority.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the trial proceedings, men are shown to be continually anxious to carry out justice, while they seek for a way to save Joan from the burning. At one time they think they

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9 Ibid., 1104.

10 Ibid., 1105.

11 Ibid., 1111.

12 Ibid., 1112.

have won her over. But when Joan relapses into her heresy, inasmuch as she will not accept the conditions of her life-sentence, these same dignitaries rise and solemnly read out the official proclamation of condemnation, as Joan is dragged off to be burned.

(They wait. There is a dead silence. Cauchon turns to the Inquisitor with an inquiring look. The Inquisitor nods affirmatively. They rise solemnly, and intone the sentence antiphonally.)

Cauchon. We decreed that thou art a relapsed heretic.

The Inquisitor. Cast out from the unity of the Church.

Cauchon. Sundered from her body.

The Inquisitor. Infected with the leprosy of heresy.

Cauchon. A member of Satan.

The Inquisitor. We declare that thou must be excommunicate.

Cauchon. And now we do cast thee out, segregate thee, and abandon thee to the secular power.

The Inquisitor. Admonishing the same secular power that it moderate its judgment of thee in respect of death and division of the limbs.<sup>13</sup>

Thus far, Shaw has represented these authorities only as intelligent, prudent human beings, who have condemned a person whom they sincerely considered an infected heretic. Out of context, the above lines may not seem to reveal that Shaw intends to show these officials as acting justly and sincerely. But if the dialogue is read with the play as a whole, there is little doubt that Shaw, up to this point, had made a selection of details concerning the clergy indicating that their procedure with Joan as the only consistent course. For an insignificant peasant girl has

13 Ibid., 1126.

practically denied the authority of the Church, placing herself above the Church.

This, then, is the matter Shaw employs, the ideas which constitute the presentation of the Church and clergy in the play proper. Of course, the Epilogue, along with the play, enters into the presentation of the problem here, just as Shaw insists that this Epilogue must be a part of the actual presentation of one play in any theatre.<sup>13a</sup> Without the Epilogue the picture is not complete, is out of proportion and not entirely true. For in the Epilogue, Shaw continues his presentation of the matter of the Church and clergy, yet with a slightly different twist. In the play proper, the clergy is set down as a group of judges proceeding in justice according to their norm: Church law, in the Epilogue, these same men are shown to have been wrong inasmuch as the principles they were following were wrong. Thus, he brings out explicitly the objective error of the human institution called the Catholic Church in condemning Joan to the death of a heretic. Although they proclaim that their procedure was just according to the guiding light of their conscience, and according to the prin-

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<sup>13a</sup> His reason for keeping the Epilogue in the stage production is exactly the reason for using it in the study of this play: without it the play is not complete. Shaw writes in his preface, "As to the epilogue, I could hardly be expected to stultify myself by implying that Joan's history in the world ended unhappily with her execution, instead of beginning there.... So I am afraid the epilogue must stand." Shaw, Nine Plays, 1033.



principles they were following, nevertheless they admit that they were wrong in the final analysis, wrong in condemning Joan. A later amplification will show as a fact that Shaw's position and purpose in the play is that Joan, in the final analysis, was justified in her revolt against established authority.

Therefore, Shaw's matter or material concerning the judges takes on a completely different tone here. After pointing out from the lines of the Epilogue this "about face" of the Church officials, the reason why Shaw uses this new approach will be determined in order to conclude (1) if Shaw is carrying out the presentation of his theory on the Church; (2) if so, why this part of the theory - his view of the Church - is most important in the play.

As the Epilogue opens, it is twenty-five years after the burning of Joan. Her trial of rehabilitation is just completed, reinstating Joan, condemning the judges who previously sentenced her.<sup>14</sup> As King Charles lies in his bed, Ladvenu, a Churchman who was connected with Joan's execution, appears to the King telling him the results of the trial: Joan is now justified on earth as she has been for so long in heaven.<sup>15</sup> Ladvenu then humbly admits

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<sup>14</sup> Of course this trial was an acknowledgement that Joan's coronation of Charles was, in every way, valid. In the Epilogue, Charlie has this comment to make: "They can no longer say I was crowned by a witch and a heretic...Good. Nobody can challenge my consecration now, can they?" Ibid., 1133, 1134.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 1133



that he was wrong in his opinion of Joan, but he does not let God, or King Charles, forget that he and the others acted according to the light of their conscience. Joan will support him in this.

As Joan appears before "Charlie" he becomes frightened. But Joan quiets him before telling him that her judges were "an honest lot of poor fools", doing what they thought just.<sup>16</sup> Inasmuch as they thought they were acting justly, Joan recognizes their innocence. But her very presence here, the fact that she has come from heaven, that she is to be canonized three hundred years from now, is Shaw's dramatic way of saying that when the dust settled after twenty five years it became clear that the Church and clergy had been wrong in following the Church's precepts, while Joan had been right, a saint of God, in no way a heretic or witch.

With strong insistence throughout the Epilogue Shaw reiterates that Joan's judges were no more unjust than the men of today who must sentence a person who has violated an unjust law. Thus Shaw is attacking The Church itself, placing all the blame for Joan's death upon it and its laws. His aim, it seems, is to bring out his belief that nothing human, no human institution has the slightest right to interfere with the individual and his religious feelings, whatever they may be.<sup>17</sup> He has Joan call the

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16 Ibid., 1136.

17 Henderson notes that Shaw is setting up Joan as the first protestant. "Shaw makes Joan the first great Protestant insisting upon the private right of conscience in matters of faith and conduct." Bernard Shaw, 543 Also confer Shaw's defense of protestantism and individual interpretation throughout the preface.

judges "an honest lot of poor fools", when actually the trial records show that Joan said, "Bishop, I die through you."<sup>18</sup> Joan actually realized that Cauchon was not such an honest fool as Shaw would have him.

But Cauchon has something to say in his own defense. "I was faithful to my light", he tells Joan, "I could do no other than I did."<sup>19</sup> The only interpretation of these lines seems to be that Cauchon believed himself helpless to do anything other than he did since Joan impressed him as a bold rebel who would not accept the highest authority on earth. According to his convictions he had to condemn her. But the bishop admits his final mistake quite clearly - a mistake, of course, for which he is not responsible - when he realizes that God is in control over all, the Church, clergy, and layman alike. He did here what he thought was right. But now, after death, he sees that Joan was actually a saint--really inspired by God. Cauchon did not know the ways of God and, consequently, mistakenly judged Joan to be a heretic.

Cauchon. Ay! Put the blame on the priests. But I, who am beyond praise and blame, tell you that the world is saved neither by its priests nor its soldiers, but by God and His Saints. The Church Militant sent this woman to the fire; but even as she burned, the flames whitened into the radiance of the Church Triumphant.<sup>20</sup>

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18 W.P. Barrett, ed., trans., The Trial of Jeanne D'Arc, Gotham House, New York, 1932, 498

19 Shaw, Nine Plays, 1137.

20 Ibid., 1138.

Joan closes the Epilogue by stating that she belongs to God alone, in no way to anything human, any Church or any authority.<sup>21</sup> Her last words are addressed to God, who has led her to victory through all the human obstacles set in her path: "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive Thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"<sup>22</sup> When she speaks of the earth as not being ready to accept the saints of God, Joan is including the Churchmen who put her to death as a rebellious heretic, since they were only unenlightened human beings following their conscience.

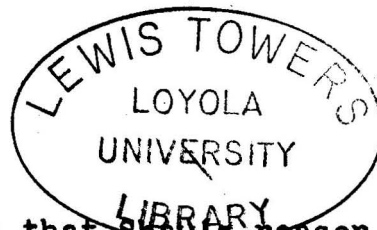
Now, in order to reveal how this matter is intentionally imposed upon the play, it will be necessary to determine if Shaw's opinion is the ordinary one agreed upon by most people in any way familiar with Joan of Arc. Clearly it is not.<sup>23</sup> The qualified opinion of one reputable historian states that the Church and her judges of the ecclesiastical court were corrupt and unjust in their proceedings, determined to do away with Joan for safeguarding their personal prestige.<sup>24</sup> The trial of condemnation has been

21 Ibid., 1142.

22 Ibid., 1147.

23 It has already been shown that Shaw's reason for writing the play, all of them, is to bring people around to his opinions. Confer above, footnote 3, page 17.

24 "The Procès de Condemnation of Jeanne d'Arc is a masterpiece of partiality under the appearance of the most regular of



shown by recent scholarly investigation to have been corrupt; and it is sad to say, the personal character of Church dignitaries, such as Cauchon, was selfish enough to defame a country lass in order to advance in the honors of worldly dignity.<sup>25</sup> T. Lawrason Riggs in his small, but nevertheless imposing book on Jeanne d'Arc, explains that Cauchon's action and therefore the whole trial was illegal. He says, "Of course, this complete demolition of Cauchon's claim to jurisdiction is sufficient by itself to prove the illegality of the trial."<sup>26</sup> Riggs is basing his arguments on the official Recollectio by Jean Brehal, Grand Inquisitor of the Trial of Rehabilitation.

Riggs relies on Brehal again to show how partial and harsh Cauchon was towards Joan.

In excoriating terms, Brehal enumerates eighteen ways in which Cauchon showed that he took charge of and conducted the

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procedures." Pierre Champion, "Essay on the Trial of Jeanne d'Arc and the Dramatis Personae" in The Trial of Jeanne D'Arc, ed. Barrett, 480.

25 "Ambitious, violent, and at the same time pliable, farseeing, adept in all manner of diplomacy, Pierre Cauchon was a superior man, a partial man, and "Dangerous," as a lawyer of the Parlement of Paris is to say of him..." Champion, Ibid., 498.

26 T. Lawrason Riggs, Saving Angel, Milwaukee, 1943, 82. This Recollectio is a masterly summing up of the rehabilitation process, but it relies just as much on the official record of the Rouen trial of condemnation. The author, Jean Brehal, Grand Inquisitor at the rehabilitation, includes theological briefs of the legality of the rehabilitation, and the illegality of the trial of condemnation, and the judges of that trial. This Recollectio was the basis for the judges decision in the rehabilitation.

trial 'with corrupt and inordinate bias' in favor of the English, and twenty-eight instances of his personal animosity to Joan.<sup>27</sup>

Other plays about Joan, such as Maxwell Anderson's Joan of Lorraine,<sup>28</sup> show forth the unscrupulous character of her judges.

The recent movie "Joan of Arc" whose scenario, although not authoritative but advised by Paul Donceur, was based on manuscript documents of her life and trial, definitely leaves the impression that the executors of Joan's trial were in no way justified, proceeding to destroy this girl on motives such as personal ambition and wounded pride.<sup>29</sup>

The stage production of Saint Joan has the over-all effect that, at the end, one either feels a disgust and anger because he realizes the whole case has been misrepresented by Shaw building up the Church authorities; or, if one is completely unfamiliar with Joan of Arc and her life, he will feel that Joan was entirely wrong in acting as she did with Cauchon and the Inqui-

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27 Ibid.

28 Maxwell Anderson, Joan of Lorraine, Washington, D.C. 1946. Yet, it is not to be thought that Mr. Anderson is an authority on Jeanne d'Arc.

29 Paul Donceur, S.J., who was brought to Hollywood because of his reputation as an authority on the history of Jeanne d'Arc, says in his article in The Month that all the judges from the bishop to the assessors were paid by the Lord of Bedford, whom Warwick represented at the trial. Donceur also observes that Cauchon would not let Joan escape, but condemned her contrary to every principle of Church law. Confer "Joan of Arc in Fact and Film", The Month, I (new series), May 1949, 313-322.

sition. In neither case is there any resemblance to what the normally discriminating reader understands about Joan.

Clearly, therefore, Shaw has his own radical ideas on the history of Joan, and in particular, on the Church in reference to her. However, since the purpose of this thesis is only to show that Shaw propounds the theory, nothing more than the fact that he is wrong will be considered. To determine the degree of error would be completely beyond this thesis.

But in order to determine if Saint Joan is actually a "play of ideas", it is necessary to find out Shaw's purpose. If he had not twisted and colored the historical matter concerning the Church and Joan, it would be quite probable that he was doing nothing more than writing the drama of a saint of France with whom the Church was closely connected, and therefore, had to be represented as such. But when Shaw does twist the historic opinions of the case, his purpose, clearly, is something more than the mere presentation of a drama. After realizing that this playwright has drawn an entirely new picture of the Church and clergy in this play, it is an obvious conclusion that he wished to present a theory of his own, to put in his play the Shavian interpretation of the Catholic Church, her clergymen, and Joan of Arc.

However, there is more to this Shavian theory than a debunking of Church authority. This is only the explicit part of the theory. The implicit side of it is much more occult than his



dealing with Cauchon and the others. Shaw is completely for the individual who should be unconditionally free when it comes to religion.

Not only is the institution wrong in interfering, but also any individual is going beyond his rights when he steps between God and another man. Shaw is simply stating in another way what he has said elsewhere: established religion is no help, but only a hindrance between the individual and the powers above him, whether one call this power God, or Life-Force, as Shaw does himself.

The statement here of both the explicit and implicit phases of his theory is corroborated by Shaw in the various remarks quoted below from his preface to the play.

First of all, Shaw proposes that the Church authority had to punish Joan just as it had to kill Hus sometime before Rouen.

But when the Church was not offering her her favorite luxuries, but calling on her to accept its interpretation of God's will, and to sacrifice her own, she flatly refused, and made it clear that her notion of a Catholic Church was one in which the Pope was Pope Joan. How could the Church tolerate that, when it had just destroyed Hus...?<sup>30</sup>

The clergy making up, in his opinion, an honest tribunal, filled with conscientious men of authority such as Cauchon, tried her justly, finding her guilty of heresy.<sup>31</sup> He goes on to affirm that

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30 Ibid., 1010.

31 Ibid., 1013.



the historian who thinks of the Inquisition as unjust, and considers Cauchon and the other judges of Joan as corrupt officials of the law, is completely changing the picture, misrepresenting the acts.<sup>32</sup> Shaw writes that the Church, according to its laws and customs, could do nothing else as far as it was concerned, for the Church had encountered an immovable object in Joan.

She was in a state of invincible ignorance as to the Church's view; and the Church could not tolerate her pretensions without either waiving its authority or giving her a place beside the Trinity during her lifetime and in her teens, which was unthinkable. Thus an irresistible force met an immovable obstacle, and developed the heat that consumed poor Joan.<sup>33</sup>

Since Joan claims such authority for herself, it is easy to see how Shaw tells us, why the Church must have her completely submit, or, if she remains perseveringly adamant, have her condemned to the death of a heretic.<sup>34</sup>

Was this an unjust attitude toward the Maid. It was, Shaw replies, for the norm according to which Joan was judged was unjust. The Church's law is no law, according to Shaw. But he nevertheless points out that the Inquisition displayed far greater justice towards Joan than some courts would today.

[B]ut can any of the modern substitutes for the Inquisition... claim that their victims have as fair a trial, as well considered a body of law to govern their cases, or as conscientious

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32 Ibid., 1008.

33 Ibid., 1011.

34 Ibid., 1025.

tious a judge to insist on strict legality of procedure as Joan had from the Inquisition...?

Joan was persecuted essentially as she would be persecuted today. The change from burning to hanging or shooting may strike us as a change for the better...but as far as toleration is concerned the trial and execution in Rouen in 1431 might have been an event of today...<sup>35</sup>

But Shaw undoubtedly shows that, despite the sincerity of conviction on the part of Church authorities, despite the fact that the judges were proceeding according to their consciences, nevertheless, in the final analysis, it was wrong to have burned Joan.

He calls the case of Joan an appalling blunder on the part of the Church, for it acted as if it were the Church Triumphant.

When the Church Militant behaves as if it were already the Church Triumphant, it makes these appalling blunders about Joan...<sup>36</sup>

When, twenty-five years after Joan's burning, the Church came out with Joan's rehabilitation, then in 1920 admitted to the ranks of canonized saints, the Church, according to Shaw, was making public acknowledgment of the fact that it had erred in condemning Joan as a heretic. It is as if Shaw were saying that the Church was willing to pay homage to the Maid only after her inno-

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35 Ibid., 1022, 1009.

36 Ibid., 1016.

cence was established.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, for Shaw, Joan's canonization is Rome's act of raising a protestant to the realm of sainthood. "[H]er canonization was a magnificently Catholic gesture as the canonization of a Protestant saint by the Church of Rome."<sup>38</sup> For Shaw, Joan is the first protestant martyr. "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."<sup>39</sup> "Protestant" here for Shaw is not to be taken in the sense that Joan was the precursor of any particular sect of the numerous protestant churches. Rather his understanding of this term is a human being who protests against any sort of dictation from a human institution which tries to disrupt the individual's contact with God. Thus, Shaw directly implies that the Church does interfere with the individual and God. Therefore, protestant should be understood with a small "p".

Here, then is Shaw's actual confirmation of all the previous observations made from the play itself.<sup>40</sup>

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37 Ibid., 1012.

38 Ibid., 1017.

39 Ibid., 983.

40 Although his theory and beliefs expressed here on Joan and the Church are historically and theologically in error, there will be no attempt to point out why this is so. Our purpose, as repeatedly stated, is only to show that Shaw is propounding a definitely radical theory, and imposing it will full deliberateness on his play.

Bringing this theory into the brightest light by means of the above analysis of the matter and purpose, all the evidence seems to indicate that Shaw's real mind towards the Church in this play has become completely open. Although the full theory of Shaw in reference to the play has not yet been set forth nevertheless, it seems that the treatment of the Church as an institution has been shown to be the most important part of the theory for Shaw, the unifying thread of the theory, the predominating idea. The reason for stating the treatment of the Church as most important for him is this: first of all he spent nearly the entire Epilogue showing how the Church as an institution was objectively wrong in condemning Joan. Secondly, Shaw devotes a great portion of his preface to a consideration of the Church, explaining the whole problem.

This chapter has shown sufficiently already that Saint Joan can be classified as a "play of ideas", inasmuch as all the evidence shows that the playwright has shown an inordinate interest in his theory.

other saints of her visions are simply vivid products of her imagination, all easily explainable on the natural level. By 'military' Shaw means that Joan had great skill in the art of war, leading men successfully because of her strategy rather than any inspired enthusiasm.<sup>2</sup>

The dialogue shows how realistic Joan appears in the play. Without a doubt, Shaw's creative genius has given life to the Joan of his imagination, for the character lives nearly every line she says. There is nothing dull or heavy in the way she answers the authorities of both Church and State. In order to remain consistent with the historical character that he borrowed from his sources, Shaw wrote natural, simple, quick-flowing lines for Joan. He supplied stage directions for her, all indicating how natural and real she was. This dialogue is one of the important materials which Shaw employed to create a real Joan in his play. Some of the lines are quoted here to show that Shaw has made Joan live.

Poulengey. (Gravely) Sit down Joan.

Joan. (checked a little, and looking to Robert) May I

Robert. Do what you are told.

(Joan curtsies and sits down on the stool between them.)

Robert. What is your name?

Joan. (chattily) They always call me Jenny in

Lorraine. Here in France I am Joan. The soldiers call me the maid.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Although a complete analysis of Shaw's "realistic" and "natural" Joan is given further on in this chapter, confer the Preface to the play, pages 991-993, and 998-1007 for Shaw's statements on his Joan.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 1046.

The lines and stage directions impress upon the reader the fact that they are witnessing a simple girl who spoke and moved in real life just as she is doing here.

This means of dialogue and stage directions to point up the reality of Joan is employed by Shaw consistently through his play. The scene where Joan first meets the Archbishop displays once more how simple, real and convincing she is.

Joan. Coom, [sic] Bluebeard! Thou canst not fool me.

Joan. (releasing him and bobbing him a curtsey)  
Gentle little Dauphin, I am sent to you to drive the English away from Orleans, and from France, and to crown you king in the cathedral at Rheims, where all true kings of France are crowned.

Charles. (to Joan) But if you want me to be crowned at Rheims you must talk to the Archbishop, not to me. There he is (he is standing beside her)!

Joan. (turning quickly, overwhelmed with emotion)  
Oh, my Lord! (she falls on both knees before him, with bowed head, not daring to look up) My Lord: I am only a poor country girl; and you are filled with the blessedness and glory of God Himself; but you will touch me with your hands, and give me your blessing won't you?

Archbishop. Child, you are in love with religion.

Joan. (startled, looking up at him) Am I? I never thought of that. Is there any harm in it?<sup>4</sup>

These lines show the simple French peasant girl, speak-

ing with great respect and utmost candor before the dignified

Archbishop.<sup>5</sup> Here is another representation of Joan in which Shaw

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1061.

<sup>5</sup> Henderson speaks of her thus: "This Joan is an unforgettable personality. Simple, naive, illimitably courageous..." Bernard Shaw, 544.

believes he shows her as the Maid of real life.

But the fact that Shaw has given Joan this lively dialogue does not necessarily mean that his "real" Joan is the closest facsimile or re-creation of the Maid who fought at Orleans and was tried at Rouen. Furthermore, it is not necessary to consider Shaw's Joan as the most accurate and realistic representation of her in literature, even though he reiterates that she is the actual Joan of history. For it will be shown that Shaw has twisted and colored the history of the Maid to fit his own ideas of her. Even though he has set down a realistic character, nevertheless Shaw's Joan is not the historical Joan. He has selected and heightened certain parts of her life which fit in with his overall theory in the play. He believes that Joan herself is a Shavian in revolt, a genius who can see into the future far better than the foolish officials of Church and State.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, it must be admitted that his Joan is more realistic than some of the other representations of her in literature. Thus when Shaw, in his preface to the play, convinces the reader that he has created a much more accurate, realistic, imaginable character than Shakespeare did in his Joan of Henry VI, or Schiller in his Jungfrau von Orlean, he is actually doing nothing more than making a comparison.

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<sup>6</sup> Documentary proof that Shaw departs from the authentic history of the Maid appears below.



Concerning the romantic Joan in the play by Schiller, Shaw insists that his own Joan is a character much more in accord with history. In the preface to the play Shaw indicates how his own creation differs from the romantic Jungfrau.

Schiller's Joan has not a single point of contact with the real Joan, nor indeed with any mortal woman that ever walked this earth. There is really nothing to be said about this play but that it is not about Joan at all, and can hardly be said to pretend to be; for he makes her die on the battlefield, finding her burning unbearable.<sup>7</sup>

It is easy to see by simply reading his play that Schiller is much further from the historical Joan. Schiller has sacrificed historic truth for romantic imagination to a much greater degree than Shaw has ever done.

When he speaks of Shakespeare's Joan in Henry VI, Shaw states his dislike for any representation of Joan either as a romantic heroine, or defamed witch and harlot.

The impression left by it [Henry VI] is that the playwright having begun an attempt to make Joan a beautiful and romantic figure, was told by his scandalized company that English patriotism would never stand a sympathetic representation of a French conqueror of English troops, and that unless he at once introduced all the old charges against Joan of being a sorceress and a harlot, and assumed her to be guilty of them all, his play could not be produced.<sup>8</sup>

These comparisons are attempts by Shaw to make his audience believe

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7 Shaw, Nine Plays, 1004.

8 Ibid., Note that this is just Shaw's interpretation of Henry VI, which may or may not be correct in itself. Whatever the case, it is clear that Shaw has given us a more realistic Joan

that his Joan is completely realistic. But, in fact, he alters the facts just a little. Some of the critics believe that Shaw is shining through Joan at times in the play, since he is so anxious to spin out his theory with Joan as its spokesman.<sup>9</sup> Skimpole admits that even though Shaw has a better than average character representation in Joan, still she is not entirely free from the stamp of a Shavian mouthpiece.

Though not so apparent as in many of his plays, quite often Saint Joan is Shaw, and Shaw is Saint Joan. I would not, though, suggest that Shaw has in any way used Joan he used Tanner or Dubedat as projectors of his philosophy. But nothing Shaw has ever written is entirely impersonal.<sup>10</sup>

Mr. J. M. Robertson, who has published a thorough study on the historical veracity of Shaw's Saint Joan, recognizes the stamp of Shaw on his Joan, even though the playwright affirms that he is representing her true to life.

Mr. Shaw's own aim--or his most frequently recurring aim--is to make her wholly a human being. Unfortunately he "felt obliged" to re-create her in one or more of his own moulds. And in so doing, like Benevenuto Cellini with the casting<sup>11</sup> of his statue, he has thrown in some very queer material.

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9 Confer the commentary on Shaw by Edward Wagenknecht, A Guide to Bernard Shaw, New York, 1929, 27, 28.

10 Herbert Skimpole, Bernard Shaw, The Man and His Works London, 1918, 146. If Shaw had taken history just as he found it, his Joan would not have been the Shavian that Shaw makes her out to be. Therefore he does change all of the history somewhat. Confer William Irvine, The Universe of G.B.S., New York, 1949, chapter on Joan.

11 John Mackinnon Robertson, Mr. Shaw and "The Maid", London, 1925, 20.

Thus, despite Shaw's protests, it seems that even into one of his best characters he puts something of himself. If Joan is to be a Shavian, she must act like one. He presupposes his conclusion. But all the while Shaw must insist that his Joan is the real Joan of history, for his whole purpose in the play is to establish his belief that Joan of Arc--even if she did not realize it herself--was one of the first protestants and Shavians. He is not saying that he has created a Shavian Joan somewhat like to the real historical character. Rather, he insists that his Joan is the real Joan; he is showing here that she was also a real Shavian.

Of more importance than Joan's realistic appearance, however, is Shaw's conviction that she is "natural." By "natural" in this context is meant fully understandable on the natural level without necessarily resorting to the supernatural. Shaw is referring to her voices, for he is quite unwilling to believe that they were anything more than the products of her vivid imagination.<sup>12</sup> He expresses this opinion in the play as well as in the preface. Obviously in naturalizing her voices in the play Shaw is attempting to make his personal theory about Joan stand out more clearly.<sup>13</sup>

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12 Shaw, Nine Plays, 991-993. The dialogue between Robert de Baudricourt, military squire of Vaulcouleurs, and Joan, in which the natural explanation of her voices is set down, will be quoted below.

13 It seems there has always been some doubt as to the authenticity of Joan's voices and visions. But at the time Shaw wrote Saint Joan (1923-24), after Joan's canonization, only the Materialist and sceptic challenged the validity of the voices.

There are people in the world whose imagination is so vivid that when they have an idea it comes to them as an audible voice, sometimes uttered by a visible figure. Criminal lunatic asylums are occupied largely by murderers who have obeyed voices. Thus a woman may hear voices telling her that she must cut her husband's throat and strangle her child as they lie asleep; and she may feel obliged to do what she is told.<sup>15</sup>

Shaw argues to prove Joan's sanity in following her voices. Proof lies in the fact that her voices effected good results such as the capturing of Orleans, and the crowning of Charles in Rheims.

Certainly the average person does not believe that Joan was insane in respect to her voices. But it is interesting to see how quickly Shaw considers himself the last word on just what these voices were. The only possible interpretation of Shaw's opinion is that he knows the voices were not supernatural in origin. They were not the malfunctionings of a lunatic. But they are just what he says they are: natural phenomena. Here is Shaw ex cathedra.

The soundness of the order proves that she was unusually sane; but its forms proves that her dramatic imagination played tricks with her senses. Her policy was also quite sound: nobody disputes that the relief of Orleans, followed up by the coronation at Rheims of the Dauphin as a counterblow to the suspicions then current of his legitimacy and consequently of his title, were military and political masterstrokes that saved France. They might have been planned by Napoleon

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 991. Confer Joan's lines, "All the things that you call my crimes have come to me by the command of God. I say that I have done them by the order of God: it is impossible for me to say anything else." Ibid., 1117.

or any other illusion-proof genius. They came to Joan as an instruction from her Counsel, as she called her visionary saints; but she was none the less an able leader of men for imagining her ideas in this way.<sup>16</sup>

Clearly the emphasis he places on the natural explanation of Joan's voices is not necessary for the dramatic presentation of the Maid. To explain them away on the natural level is over and above dramatic demand. For if the lines from the play quoted above,<sup>17</sup> in which Joan admits her voices to be somehow from her imagination, were entirely omitted, neither Joan's character nor the play would suffer in the least. But as the precursor of Shavianism, Joan must be fundamentally in agreement with everything Shaw sets forth to teach to the world. Yet, Shaw does not believe in the visions and voices of saints. Therefore, the case must be explained naturally.

I cannot believe, nor, if I could, could I expect all my readers to believe, as Joan did, that three ocularly visible well dressed persons, named respectively Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, and Saint Michael, came down from heaven and gave certain instructions with which they were charged by God for her. Not that such a belief would be more improbable or fantastic than some modern beliefs which we all swallow; but there are fashions and family habits in belief, and it happens that, my fashion being Victorian and my family habit Protestant, I find myself unable to attach any such objective valid-

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16 Ibid., 992-993. When this well-wrought prose is stripped of its trimming, Shaw is simply saying that the pious country Maid misinterpreted her genius; but this mistake in no way discredits the clever manoeuvres that resulted from these voices or genius--call it what you will. It is obvious that Shaw has a definite purpose behind this materialist presentation of the Maid.

17 Confer footnote 12, page 48.

ity to the form of Joan's visions.<sup>18</sup>

He cannot believe in the voices and visions. Therefore, in his play he will always represent them as something naturally explainable.

There is one final passage in the preface that clarifies Shaw's opinion of Joan. Again it concerns those who consider Joan as either mad or a liar concerning her voices. The point of interest is, however, that he is firmly convinced that he is right, and, by play and preface, hopes to bring others around to his way of thinking.

It is one thing to say that the figure Joan recognized as St. Catherine was not really St. Catherine, but the dramatization by Joan's imagination of that pressure upon her of the driving force that is behind evolution which I have just called the evolutionary appetite. It is quite another to class her visions with the vision of two moons seen by a drunken person or with Brocken spectres, echoes and the like. Saint Catherine's instructions were far too cogent for that; and the simplest French peasant who believes in apparitions of celestial personages to favored mortals is nearer to the scientific truth about Joan than the Rationalist and Materialist historians and essayists who feel obliged to set down a girl who saw saints and heard them talking to her as either crazy or mendacious.<sup>19</sup>

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18 Ibid., 993. It seems fairly obvious that Shaw is not serious here, for as one of the most independent of men, he did not base his beliefs on his family background and Victorian heritage.

19 Ibid., 994. Shaw would look on this quote as a good argument in his favor; for our purpose, however, it is just another confirmation that he is more interested in his theory than in his dramatic art. He is most interested in his "ideas."



It is interesting to note that Robertson, who finds "the most materialistic presentment of the Maid" known to him is just Shaw's own,<sup>20</sup> has detected a contradiction in Shaw's opinion of Joan's voices. Shaw explains that it was Joan's "dramatic imagination" that was responsible for her hearing voices and seeing visions. Yet, he also attributes his ability to write lively drama to his "dramatic imagination." It seems to be the same quality in both cases. Of course, Shaw does not mean the same thing in both cases, but the logical interpretation of his statements leads Robertson to make the following conclusion: either Shaw is having the same kind of hallucinations as Joan, or Joan is lying about her visions. Now Shaw repeatedly insists that Joan is not lying. Robertson states the dilemma thus.

But the queerest achievement of all is his explanation that Jeanne had her visions and her voices in virtue of a superior gift of "dramatic imagination."

That proposition may fairly be held to prove Mr. Shaw's courage. What it negates is his judgment. By his own account he uses dramatic imagination to create his plays. Then we have this pleasing dilemma. Either his mental processes are what he declares Jeanne's voices and visions to have been, hallucinations, or Jeanne did not actually hear and see the voices and visions she alleged. Thus the one modern publicist who gives support to the charge of mendacity against her is Mr. Shaw! Of course, he had no such intention. He merely delivered himself of what he fancied to be an effective stroke, without heed to logical consequences.<sup>21</sup>

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20 Robertson, Mr. Shaw and "The Maid", 18.

21 Ibid., 46. It should be noted, however, that Robertson, in a sense, has missed the point here. For Shaw does not say that the facts or results are delusion, but merely that the source is wrongly named.



Certainly Robertson is reading more into Shaw's words than they actually warrant. If Shaw had a chance to defend himself on the charge, he would make great sport of Robertson's reasoning. What is to our purpose, however, is that Robertson has detected that Shaw is dogmatically explaining away the voices of Joan, and that he is imposing his theory on the play. Thus, though Robertson's insight into Shaw's opinion is somewhat strained, it shows that another facet of the playwright's theory about Joan of Arc is being added to his "play of ideas."

The final section of this chapter deals with Shaw's interpretation of Joan as possessing great military talent.

As far as can be ascertained, nowhere in his writing--certainly not in his preface to the play--does Shaw say that he used one definite history of Joan. He does mention in the preface, however, that he was helped by reading some authors and historians of Joan, while he would not even consider other historical and popular opinions of the Maid.<sup>22</sup> Concerning primary sources, the playwright refers to and praises the work of Jules Quicherat who edited the testimony of Joan's trial of 1431, as well as the Trial of Rehabilitation, held between 1450 and 1456, more than twenty years after her death.

So far, the literary representations of the Maid were legendary. But the publication by Quicherat in 1841 of the

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<sup>22</sup> Some indication of Shaw's references appear on page 1005, 1006 of the Preface. A section from these pages is quoted below.

reports of her trial and rehabilitation placed the subject on a new footing. These entirely realistic documents created a living interest in Joan which Voltaire's mock Homeric and Schiller's romantic nonsense missed.<sup>23</sup>

Besides using Quicherat in studying Joan, there are indications in the preface pointing to a number of secondary sources. Shaw consulted many, found some that he agreed with, and others which he considered to be in error. Among, the latter, Shaw mentions Anatole France's work, which presents Joan as a supernaturally inspired leader of men rather than a girl of extraordinary military talent.

Later on, another man of genius, Anatole France, reacted against the Quicheratic wave of enthusiasm, and wrote a Life of Joan in which he attributed Joan's ideas to clerical prompting and her military success to an adroit use of her by Dunois as a mascotte: in short, he denied that she had any serious military or political ability.<sup>24</sup>

Along with France, Andrew Lang's work is considered. Shaw finds this study to be more in agreement with him on the question of Joan's capabilities as a leader in war. "Lang had no difficulty in showing that Joan's ability was not an unnatural fiction to be explained away as an illusion manufactured by priests and soldiers, but a straightforward fact."<sup>25</sup>

The playwright does not stress the fact that Joan in-

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23 Shaw, Nine Plays, 1005.

24 Ibid., 1006.

25 Ibid.

wind, wanton wind, wilful wind, womanish wind, false  
wind from over the water, will you never blow again?

.....  
Mary in the blue snood, kingfisher color, will you  
grudge me a west wind?<sup>27</sup>

The conversation deliberately concentrates on Joan's anxiety to begin the battle and on her seeming familiarity with the smoke, ladders, and guns of war. She firmly asserts that the soldiers just do not know how to use the weapons they have. She seems to say that she will show them how to use the guns. Also Dunois has nothing to say here in disfavor of Joan's ability; the impression is allowed to carry through. Rather he adds to the scene, more clearly emphasizing that Joan is gifted with military talent and courage. Shaw is supporting his theory by having the subordinate characters allow Joan to pass for just what she says she is.

Joan speaks of her own strength that is superior to that of the English soldiers, strength which seems to make her insensible to the danger of war and battle with the infamous Black Prince.

Joan. You must not be afraid, Robert.

Robert. Damn you, I am not afraid. And who gave you leave to call me Robert?

Joan. You were called so in church in the name of our Lord. All the other names are your father's or your brother's or anybody's.

Robert. Tcha.

Joan. Listen to me, squire. At Domremy we had to fly to the next village to escape from the English soldiers. Three of them were left behind, wounded. I came to know these three poor goddams quite well. They had not half my strength.<sup>28</sup>

27 Ibid., 1068, 1069.

28 Ibid., 1048.

These lines appear early in the play before Joan has encountered anyone in battle. Although when read for the first time they seem to be mere groundless boasting, still Shaw continues to convey the impression that she possesses great strength. He emphasizes her ability to lead others in battle.

Finally, in the Epilogue Shaw makes the best of his last opportunity to stress the idea that Joan surpassed the French officers when they were in battle together.<sup>29</sup> Dunois, the French officer, appears in the bedroom of Charles VII, while Joan is talking with the latter. Immediately the Frenchman and Joan begin discussing the battles against the English, fought after Joan was burned.

Joan. Tell me all about the fighting, Jack. Was it thou that led them? Wert thou God's captain to the death?...And you fought them my way, Jack, eh? Not the old way, chaffering for ransoms; but The Maid's way: staking life against death, with the heart high and humble and void of malice, and nothing counting under God but France free and French. Was it my way, Jack?

Dunois. Faith, it was any way, that would win. But the way that won was always your way. I give you best, lassie.<sup>30</sup>

Not satisfied with Dunois' tacit recognition of Joan's talent

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29 As if Shaw were not certain that he conveyed his idea clearly in the play itself, he makes sure that he does so now by using this final scene of the Epilogue.

30 Ibid., 1138. Even though Joan's approach to battle seems somewhat romantic rather than realistic, Shaw would not admit such an interpretation.

during the play proper, here in the Epilogue, Shaw has him state directly that it was Joan's way that won. Dunois yields to the Maid not only as to an innocent martyr, but primarily as to a great leader in war. Dunois, it is to be understood, is here the spokesman for all the military leaders who were in any way connected with Joan in battle.

This is an adequate picture of Joan from the play itself. There are found in the preface also numerous instances in which Shaw supports his opinion of Joan as endowed with military talent. The following quote seems to be a defensive measure for his opinion, after he establishes his point here. Later he will compare Joan with Wellington and Napoleon, implying that she fits into their category as far as things military are concerned.

If anyone doubts this, let him ask himself why a maid charged with a special mission from heaven to the Dauphin...should not have simply gone to the court as a maid, in women's dress, and urged her counsel upon him<sup>in</sup> a women's way...Why did she insist on having a soldier's dress and arms and sword and horse and equipment, and on treating her escort of soldiers as comrades?...Why did she give exhibitions of her dexterity in handling a lance, and of her seat as a rider? Why did she accept presents of armor and chargers and masculine surcoats, and in every action repudiate the conventional character of a woman? The simple answer to all of these questions is that she was the sort of woman that wants to lead a man's life.<sup>31</sup>

Now, after his attempt to show Joan as a manly woman of military prowess, Shaw goes on to compare her military genius with that of Wellington and Napoleon.

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31 Ibid., 999, 1000.

In war she was as much a realist as Napoleon: she had his eye for artillery and his knowledge of what it could do. She did not expect besieged cities to fall Jerichowise at the sound of her trumpet, but, like Wellington, adapted her methods of attack to the peculiarities of the defence; and she anticipated the Napoleonic calculation that if you only hold on long enough the other fellow will give in: for example, her final triumph at Orleans was achieved after her commander Dunois had sounded the retreat at the end of a day's fighting without a decision. She was never for a moment what so many romancers and playwrights have pretended: a romantic young lady.<sup>32</sup>

Shaw is insisting that this Joan, as a military commander, is better than Dunois himself, on a par with Wellington, and anticipating the tactics of Napoleon. Rather high praise for a country lass, used to herding sheep. The importance of this passage, however, is that it substantiates the opinion that Shaw, in the play, represents Joan as militaristic. The dialogue could possibly be falsely interpreted, but not when the author clearly sets down in his own words his attitude towards Joan.

Now that Shaw's opinion on Joan as a soldier has been clarified, it is important to find whether Shaw is again imposing his theory on the play, or simply presenting the commonly accepted opinion on the point.

Andrew Lang, who devoted his entire book to a refutation of Anatole France's history of Joan, is of the opinion that Joan was a born leader who attracted people to follow her.<sup>33</sup> But

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 1001.

<sup>33</sup> Andrew Lang, The Maid of France, New York, 1909, 152-155, and notes.



clearly, Shaw is demanding much more than leadership in Joan,

Anatole France does not believe Joan had any superior military talent. But he claims that Joan had some kind of supernatural magnetism about her that drew men into battle under her banner.<sup>34</sup> He has been criticized by Lang and Shaw, as mentioned above. Yet, while Lang challenges France on this explanation of Joan's leadership, Lang does go to the opposite extreme to claim that she had great military talent.

Mr. Robertson who undertook his study in order to criticize Shaw's Saint Joan, has weighed the historical evidence on the Maid. His conclusion is, first of all, that Quicherat's opinion of Joan was the popular one of the day. "The view of Jeanne as possessing military genius was widely popular in France in the eighteenth century...Quicherat merely developed a long current opinion."<sup>35</sup> Yet he does not think this opinion the correct one.

[E]very record of her victories tells (not of a special skill in war but) of a specific enthusiasm roused by her in her followers - enthusiasm in the primary Greek sense of an ostensible divine possession.<sup>36</sup>

He claims that Anatole France is incorrect when he infers

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34 Anatole France, Vie De Jeanne d'Arc, Paris, 1908. Confer Robertson on page 28. His opinion of Anatole France is quoted below.

35 Robertson, Mr. Shaw and "The Maid", 24.

36 Ibid., 40, 41. Robertson relies on the idea, popular among the protestant sects today, that God has a personal connection with each individual, dealing with no two persons in exactly the same way. Confer Ronald Know's Enthusiasm.



that Joan was under the influence of priests who filled her with great ideals for achievement for the Catholic Church in France.

[A]nd it [France's] book outgoes historical warrant when it treats as a certainty, after putting as a conjecture, the inference being that Jeanne in her early teens had been influenced by a priest or priests who saw that she could be made use of.<sup>37</sup>

Robertson does not agree entirely with Lang on his interpretations of Joan. Lang is "something of a partisan, guided chiefly by his repulsions and his affections...Yet he took abundant pains to clear up the history of Jeanne at many points."<sup>38</sup>

The value of this analysis consists precisely in this, that Robertson's opinion on Quicherat, France, and on Lang, along with their own qualified opinions, shows at least that Shaw does not have a common interpretation of the Maid.<sup>39</sup> He has sacrificed historical fact and consciously colored his presentation. It is obvious that he is imposing his theory on the play. For his presentation of Joan is unwarranted. His "matter" for Joan has been his own ideas and theory, which, for the most part, seem contradictory to the facts. Therefore, the conclusion is that Shaw's purpose representing Joan as he does is simply to give voice to his theory, to impose it on the audience through the play. And

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37 Ibid., 27, 28.

38 Ibid., 113.

39 To point out this fact was the primary intention of these pages, since it helps to substantiate the conclusion that Saint Joan is a "play of ideas."

for those who desire, he offers a personal confirmation of his theory in the preface. The thesis of the play is more important for Shaw than the play itself.

In order to tie together all that has been said here about Shaw's presentation of Joan as a real character, as a wholly natural person, and as a military genius, a brief summary will be helpful. Shaw has been insisting, in effect, that he has represented Joan as she really was. Those who have set her down in a way other than his have not been dealing with the real Joan. He has explained her voices and visions as natural phenomena of an overactive "dramatic imagination." Anyone who believes that they came directly from some supernatural beings, or believes that Joan was lying about them, simply has not seen the light about her. He has drawn the military-minded Joan just as she was. Any other version is unintelligible.

The Shavian theory, therefore, has definitely been advanced by the playwright within the play. That his purpose was to break down what he considered false notions about Joan, and to bring people around to his way of thinking, seems to be beyond question now. Though this theory on the Maid is subordinate to his main theme on the Church, nevertheless, it is essential to the story, as Shaw believes; for by it he has established Joan as a part of the Shavian world, which he intended to do, from the beginning.

## CHAPTER V

### JOAN'S TRIAL AND EXECUTION

Little has been said about Joan's trial of execution, as Shaw sees it. But since her burning was the crowning point of her life, one is likely to suspect that Shaw has something definite to say about this "pretentious savagery."<sup>1</sup> Although the clergy as a whole has been considered in Chapter III, something will be said here in addition about Pierre Cauchon, Bishop of Beauvais. Being consistent with his presentation of Cauchon, Shaw now presents him at the trial as justice and kindness personified. Therefore, whatever is said here about Cauchon will merely indicate more definitely how determined Shaw is to whitewash this Bishop in particular, and the clergy in general. Throughout Scene IV of the play, in which Cauchon, the Inquisition, and the English war-lords heatedly discuss Joan's burning, Shaw is preparing the groundwork for his presentation of Cauchon at the trial. From the beginning

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<sup>1</sup> Shaw, Nine Plays, 1013. A brief summary of Shaw's opinion of Joan's burning is found in a letter of his to Charles Sarolea, quoted by Henderson. "When Joan said 'God must come first.' that is, before the Church, there was nothing for it but to burn her or canonize Wycliff and Hus." 544. The logic of Shaw's conclusion here is highly questionable.

of the scene when Shaw has one of the British pages call him "pious Peter" until the end when Cauchon himself says, "I will strive to the utmost for this woman's salvation",<sup>2</sup> the impression conveyed is that Cauchon is the only friend of the accused, among all these blood-thirsty war-mongers. Cauchon is "determined that the woman shall have a fair hearing."<sup>3</sup> Notice how angry he is when the British speak of letting Joan slip through their English fingers: "Will you not add, God grant that she repent and purge her sin?"<sup>4</sup>

Here is Shaw's Cauchon, the one person who objects to torturing Joan. The historical data which are supposed in the following speech cannot be verified in the records of the trial, but only in Shaw's mind.

Cauchon. (decisively) It [torturing Joan] will not be done today if it is not necessary. Let there be an end of this. I will not have it said that we proceeded on forced confessions. We have sent our best preachers and doctors to this woman to exhort and implore her to save her soul and body from the fire: we shall not now send the executioner to thrust her into it.<sup>5</sup>

He warns Joan again and again. "Woman: you have said enough to burn ten heretics. Will you not be warned? Will you not under-

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2 Ibid., 1088.

3 Ibid., 1104.

4 Ibid., 1112.

5 Ibid., 1115.

stand?"<sup>6</sup> Even the other persons represented in this trial scene do much to enhance the humanitarian spirit placed in Cauchon by Shaw. Witness the English Chaplain's bold address to the Bishop after Joan recants for the time being.

The Chaplain. (rising, purple with fury)... I know what the Earl of Warwick will do when he learns that you intend to betray him. There are eight hundred men at the gate who will see that this abominable witch is burnt in spite of your teeth.<sup>7</sup>

It is almost as if there were an angel in Shaw's vindicated Cauchon. It could be shown much more in detail how Cauchon is always the gentle judge with a kind heart; but it is obvious from what has already been indicated that Shaw has a particular bias in favor of the Bishop.

In the preface Shaw completely denounces those who dare refer to Cauchon in a disparaging way. As the authority of the time--self appointed--he denies that Cauchon was an "unconscionable scoundrel."<sup>8</sup> He calls Andrew Lang's opinion of Cauchon and the trial "absurd."<sup>9</sup>

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6 Ibid., 1117.

7 Ibid., 1122.

8 Ibid., 1008. Shaw believes that Cauchon was most sincere in his judgments against Joan - no personal, ulterior motives.

9 Ibid., 1011. Although Shaw believes that Lang, in answering France's book on Joan, showed Joan's military talent to be a true fact (confer the preface 1006), still he thinks Lang's Scottish background bigoted him against the officials of the Catholic Church, especially those who tried and executed heretics as

Despite Shaw's anger over those who cannot see the picture as he does, all evidence concerning Cauchon seems to portray him in an unfavorable light. Lang considers this Bishop to be unscrupulous in his presumption of what his rights were as judge of Joan.<sup>10</sup> Pierre Champion, one of the best informed modern authorities on the history of Joan of Arc, has this to say of Cauchon.

Ambitious, violent and at the same time pliable, farseeing, adept in all manner of diplomacy, Pierre Cauchon was a superior man, a partial man, and "dangerous," as a lawyer of the Parlement of Paris is to say of him; so one must expect to find him a man rich in resourcefulness. Jeanne certainly was conscious of his occult role and of his great intelligence; she feared him: "I tell you, mind well what you pretend, you who are my judge" (10th session). "Bishop, I die through you," she will cry at the stake.<sup>11</sup>

Champion is here giving us a little more proof that Shaw is going against history when he tries to justify Cauchon and the clergy.

Another estimation of Joan's judges is given by Riggs as he summarizes Brehal.

To study the Recollectio is to perceive that its condemnation of the Rouen trial is above all based on the prejudiced and inhuman spirit which vitiated that process from start to finish. Brehal does, indeed, lay considerable stress on formal illegalities, but his main argument, supported by countless references to authorities, is directed against the unjust animus which characterized Cauchon's prosecution of Joan.<sup>12</sup>

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Protestants . Confer the preface, page 1007.

10 Lang, The Maid of France, 254, 255.

11 Pierre Champion, "Essay on the Trial and Dramatis Personae", in Barrett, The Trial of Jeanne D'Arc, 498.

12 Riggs, Saving Angel, 87, 88.



In a further observation of Joan's judges, Champion again implies that Shaw has a most unwarranted opinion of the character of Cauchon.

In the last analysis, Jeanne and her judges had a common faith; and it was for the variations of doctrine, inaccessible to the young girl of nineteen years, that they persecuted and condemned her so cruelly. They examined her like sceptics, psychiatrists, or sectarians. Although the good faith of the young girl was so evident, even in that which was erroneous in their eyes, they saw nothing but simulation, falsity.<sup>13</sup>

It can now be seen that the judges, Cauchon in particular, are not considered to be as just as Shaw would have believed. History, for the most part, considers them as greedy men who were more interested in their own self-advancement than in executing the laws of the Church.<sup>14</sup>

The questions of the trial are another important concern for Shaw. Shaw, consistent with his stand on the judges, affirms that it is nonsense to say that the questions were "traps to ensnare and destroy her."<sup>15</sup> Robertson, however, claims just the opposite.

To the question put to her: "Do you know yourself to be in the grace of God?" Jeanne very wisely replied...that if she

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13, Champion, Trial of Jeanne d'Arc, 509.

14 It is worth recalling what Paul Donceur had to say in his article on the history of the Maid, in preparation of the movie scenario. He states that all judges, bishop down to assessors, were paid during the trial by the Lord of Bedford. Confer above, page 35, footnote number 29.

15 Shaw, Nine Plays, 1008.



were not in grace she hoped it would be vouchsafed to her, and that if she were she hoped she might be preserved in it. To deny that the question was a trap is but to close the eyes to the nature of the procedure.<sup>16</sup>

Robertson goes on to say that Shaw has simply not allowed himself to see the whole truth of this matter of questions at the trial.

It is nonsense, says Mr. Shaw, to allege that the ecclesiastical jurists "laid traps" for Jeanne. It is blantant nonsense to say that they did not. Let any reader go to the records and see for himself. It was their business to lay traps for her, as it was the business of the Inquisition to do so with alleged heretics in all cases that came before it. Maitre Jean Lohier, a famous Norman clerk, not of Jeanne's party, told the Bishop of Beauvais that the trial was void as to form; and added, "They will catch her if they can in her words...I perceive that the dominant sentiment which actuates them is one of hatred. Their intention is to bring her to death." His pronouncement counts for considerably more than Mr. Shaw's.<sup>17</sup>

Along with Robertson as he disagrees with Shaw's opinion of the trial is Pierre Champion. He affirms that the trial of Joan is, without a doubt, a great smudge on the name of justice.

The Proce<sup>s</sup> de Condemnation of Jeanne d'Arc is a masterpiece of partiality under the appearance of the most regular of procedures.

Rarely has injustice taken the likeness of justice, to this degree; rarely has an assembly seemed so little imbued with zeal for the safety of the soul and body of a poor and saintly girl; rarely has one invoked with such hypocrisy its own partiality and shown likewise a false goodwill towards helping an unlettered woman to defend herself. And the judges at Rouen clothe themselves moreover in the opinion of that almost celestial light of the time--of the entire world--the learned University of Paris. What cowardly opinions were screened behind decisions entirely political, but so

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16 Robertson, Mr. Shaw and "The Maid", 80, 81.

17 Ibid., 79.

sagely argued, by the Faculties of Theology and Law!<sup>18</sup>

Thus, it seems that the objective analysis of competent historians and authorities of Joan of Arc completely shatters Shaw's attempt to justify the judges of Joan. If Shaw's opinion on the trial is to be accepted, then the scientific inquiries into the history of Joan must be completely over-looked. For Shaw is in direct opposition to their conclusions. He thinks the trial of condemnation was legal. Brehal, the official Inquisitor has this to say in his official record.

It is evident that a sentence of this sort proceeds, not from discretion...but from the voluntary haste of a vengeful man, and is, therefore, null.<sup>19</sup>

What could Shaw's purpose be, therefore, in deviating from the historically verifiable accounts of the trial and the judges? It seems obvious that he is just making another attempt to forward his thesis in one more instance. Cauchon must be exonerated, the trial must be without "traps" if the playwright is to be consistent with what he has previously affirmed. And so he is. In the play the entire dialogue seeks to exonerate Cauchon in every way. Also, in the preface, Shaw has gone to great length in arguing to prove--as he thinks--that his views on Cauchon are correct. Thus, Shaw is accountable on two charges: (1) that he

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<sup>18</sup> Champion, "Essay on the Trial," in Barrett, The Trial of Jeanne D'Arc, 480.

<sup>19</sup> Riggs, Saving Angel, 98, quoting the Recollectio.

has misinterpreted history; (2) that he has imposed his ideas on the drama. The result is that another facet of the over-all theory presents itself, to be set down for the audience and reader, His purpose is to convert them to the playwright's way of thinking, and to destroy the long-existing false notions about Joan and her trial. Joan must appear as the Shavian she truly is.

Closely connected with the matter just treated is the question of Joan's relapse into heresy, after she had once recanted, or submitted to her judges. However, to read the trial documents of her relapse is entirely different from hearing or reading the dialogue of Shaw's play relating this incident. In the original documents,<sup>20</sup> much is made of the fact that Joan is found again in male attire, after she was told to dress as a woman, which she did for a few days. In the play, the question of wearing male dress after once laying it aside is hardly elaborated at all. The reason seems to be that in the play it is not possible to have a time interval between Joan's recantation and her subsequent relapse. History, however, records that Joan had been confined in the Rouen prison for some days after her trial, before the authorities again found her in male costume.

The alteration in time, however, presents no problem

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20 That is, Jules Quicherat's original French documents, Procès de Condemnation de rehabilitation de Jeanne d'Arc, Paris, Aperçus Nouveaux, Paris, 1850; and Barrett's translation of the original French and Latin documents into English.

according to Shaw. For he explains the necessity of cutting the time interval of days down to a few minutes in order to meet the demands of dramatic unity. It is worth noting that Shaw, in the following passage from the preface, is ambiguous in his use of the unity of time. Also, it is clear that he does not attempt to follow the classical unity of time in his play. Furthermore, he makes reference to this convention as an excuse for his manoeuvres; yet he would be practically the last playwright to confine himself to any convention, just for the sake of the convention.

It [the play] contains all that need be known about her; but as it is for stage use I have had to condense into three and a half hours a series of events which in their historical happening were spread over four times as many months; for the theatre imposes unities of time and place from which Nature in her boundless wastefulness is free. Therefore, the reader must not suppose...that her excommunication, recantation, relapse, and death at the stake were a matter of half an hour or so.<sup>21</sup>

What he says about dramatic economy may be quite true. Nevertheless, cutting the time serves to eliminate the introduction of some historical data. The actual time sequence might yield a very telling blow against his theory that Joan relapsed for a reason altogether different from "male attire." His opinion will be explained below, but it is clear that Shaw is tailoring the facts to fit his theory. For reasons other than dramatic economy, he has omitted the historically verified reason because of which Joan actually relapsed.

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<sup>21</sup> Shaw, Nine Plays, 1028.

Robertson notices that Shaw has changed Joan's motivation for her relapse in order to fit his theory.

With equal assurance he suppresses facts and obtrudes fictions. He...has given in his play a wilfully false account of her final abjuration and of the execution. He presents her as abjuring in fear of life imprisonment, whereas she was ready to face that provided she was not left in English hands.<sup>22</sup>

Although Robertson here does not specifically mention Shaw's alteration of the time interval, Shaw's purpose is obvious. His emphasis on life imprisonment as the principal motive for Joan's recantation would seem to stand on first sight. A closer examination of the facts, however, shows that Joan was not too much concerned over her sentence of life imprisonment. Rather she resented the other punishment which accompanied this sentence.

Again the theory of the Shavian world is shining through the play as Shaw polishes to fine detail all the contributing factors of the "play of ideas" in Saint Joan. The fact that this chapter along with the two previous ones, has shown Shaw primarily concerning himself with his ideas in the play, indicates that from nearly every possible angle of consideration, Saint Joan seems to be a "play of ideas". Many other aspects of the Shavian theory that lie between the lines of this play could be examined in much the same manner as has been done here. However, the various notions that have been analyzed have been chosen because they seemed to be the most important parts of that obvious theory. They es-

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22 Robertson, Mr. Shaw and "The Maid", 29.

pecially clarify Shaw's treatment of the Church as an institution, which treatment provides a unity for every other idea that appears in the play.

As far as can be ascertained, therefore, the conclusions from the various chapters, taken all together, offer convincing evidence that Shaw has manifested in Saint Joan the same characteristics which Rattigan and so many others affirmed of his drama in general: a preoccupation with theory and ideas.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, despite Shaw's literary astuteness and lively presentation of character, when the last analysis is made, Saint Joan like so many other plays by Shaw, seems to have those characteristics that make it a "play of ideas."

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23 Confer the Introduction to this thesis, and the various opinions of Shaw quoted there.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEPRECIATION OF DRAMATIC ART IN SAINT JOAN

In spite of all that has been said in the previous chapters it is an established fact that many critics and editors of Shaw's plays find Saint Joan one of the best, if not the best, of all his dramatic works.<sup>1</sup> But it is generally agreed that a predominance of "idea" in a play depreciates its possible dramatic effectiveness. However, since it would be an entirely new thesis to show the dramatic short-comings of Saint Joan, only some of the more obvious defects will be pointed out here.

It must be admitted that Shaw has a striking brilliance in his dialogue, which has carried over from his razor-sharp polemic prose. This is the prose with which as dramatic critic, he attacked and declaimed against the plays not only of his contemporaries, but also of such sacrosanct dramatists as Shakespeare him-

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<sup>1</sup> When summarizing many plays of Shaw, critics usually pay special notice to this play. Confer the treatment of Saint Joan in Chesterton, Irvine, Fuller, Braybrooke, Skimpole, and Wagenknecht. For example, Henderson in his biography says, "I have repeatedly read the text. I have no hesitation in pronouncing Saint Joan the greatest drama since Shakespeare." Bernard Shaw, 540. However, Shaw himself thinks it not so great. "Many Shavians maintain that it is his best play; neither Shaw nor I agreed with them...." Blanche Patch, Thirty Years With G.B.S., London, 1951, 44.



self.<sup>2</sup> Few critics care to challenge Shaw on his dialogue. Rather, most of his opponents, while attacking him on various other scores, usually pave the way by praising Shaw's genius with a pen. Father Gillis in his exposé of Shaw as "false prophet," is not so narrow as to pass over what seems to be true genius in Shaw. "One thing seems certain. He knows how to write. His dialogue snaps and crackles and scintillates. His wit is unquestioned. He is a master, not only of paradox, but of epigram..."<sup>3</sup>

But dialogue is not the only point on which a play either stands or falls. For even more essential to drama than dialogue--which appears even in Plato's philosophical discussions, surely not drama--is the requirement that the characters speak propria persona. However, Shaw has no hesitation in admitting, "not that I disclaim the fullest responsibilities for his opinions and for those of all my characters, pleasant or un-pleasant. They are all right from their separate points of view, and their points of view are, for the moment, mine also."<sup>4</sup> Thus, according to Shaw, the ideas of the characters and the ideas of the playwright can be

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2 "With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Walter Scott, whom I can despise so entirely as I despise Shakespeare when I measure my mind against his." G.B.S., "Blaming the Bard", The Saturday Review, Sept. 26, 1896, quoted by Henderson, Bernard Shaw, 320. The title of Chapter XXXI in Henderson's biography is "Shaw and Shakespeare - Blaming the Bard".

3 James M. Gillis, False Prophets, New York, 1927, 1.

4 Ibid., 17, Gillis quoting Shaw.

identified. This makes the character little more than a Shavian idea that has been given a name, and set in a dramatic dialogue. Thus, Shaw not only "shines through" his characters as is so often stated, but, more often than not, he actually takes their places. Braybrooke notices this characteristic in the person of Joan, though she is not so much Shaw, as many of his other characters are. "Though not so apparent as in many of his plays, quite often Saint Joan is Shaw, and Shaw is Saint Joan."<sup>5</sup>

In making this identification of the ideas of playwright and the character there is bound to be some loss in what is commonly accepted as dramatic procedure. For if the playwright intends to speak or preach to his audience, he should not adulterate dramatic art, but rather should publish his opinions in the form of a preface, or even tracts for the time. Although Shaw has realized his duty in this regard, still there is a special reason why he chose the drama rather than the soap-box: he believed those witnessing a play are in a much more docile mood than the usual street-corner crowd.

As has been previously shown, Shaw has also carefully subordinated certain facets of the main plot so that all parts contribute a supporting element to the theme, rather than detract

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<sup>5</sup> Braybrooke, The Genius of Bernard Shaw, 145, 146. It is clear that such persons as Tanner and Don Juan are more consistent projectors of Shaw's philosophy than is Joan of Arc.

from the chief point of interest. Despite the soap-box oratory which recurs frequently, the plot holds together in a unity which is not common to most of the other plays of Shaw.<sup>6</sup> However, the possible dramatic interest in Joan would have been enhanced if the recurring speeches of the playwright would not break through the play setting. Without them, Joan would be more the Joan who lived in sixteenth century France. But Shaw--according to his principles--has to enter the picture, throwing the whole somewhat out of focus.

As a part of the plot, the struggle between the opposing forces--Joan and the Church as an institution--results in an inevitable clash, since each side sincerely thinks that his own position is the correct one. Yet it seems that the playwright is not being dramatically fair to all his characters. For by selecting and heightening certain details of the history of Joan, and by lending his personal sympathy to such persons as Cauchon and the Inquisition, Shaw presents an unbalanced picture with the Church and clergy in the ascendancy. Joan on the other hand, appears as a rebel and an unsubmitive, disobedient subject. It is not so much a question of dramatic action here, as it is of distorting the truth. For Shaw has conveyed a wrong impression about Joan,

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<sup>6</sup> Irvine notices that the plot of this play holds together better than most of the other plays because there are not so many distracting elements in it. Confer The Universe of G.B.S. 320, 321. Henderson also makes the same observation in his biography.

the clergy, and the institution of the Church, as has been shown in the previous chapters. Although the dramatist is allowed some leeway in his choice of details, he can never sacrifice truth for dramatic conflict, especially if he insists that he is offering true history in his play.

Yet, Shaw will shift the scene in the Epilogue, showing the Church to be wrong, and the rebel Joan, the herald of Shavianism, to be right.

Granville-Barker has noticed the feeling of the audience towards a play of this type, in which the dramatist has not been fair with all his characters, and in which he uses some of these characters as his mouthpiece. This well-known dramatic critic claims that the playwright cannot long fool the audience. "For the fraud...will be at once detected, unless the audience is as gullible as the dramatist is dishonest. And the characters so indulged will at once lose their dramatic integrity."<sup>7</sup>

While the ordinary spectator feels a sympathy for Joan all during the play as she is being crushed in the powerful grip of Church and State, Shaw is content to let her suffer so long as she persists in her views. But in the Epilogue, the realization of the Shavian spirit in Joan is brought out. For she conquers, ultimately, just as Shaw believes that everything Shavian will

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<sup>7</sup> Harley Granville-Barker, The Use of the Drama, Princeton, 1945, 51.

conquer. Certainly, this prejudice of the playwright that overshadows the play hinders the most fundamental purpose of drama: to tell a story disinterestedly.

Concerning drama there is a good deal to be said in praise of action which is interior, doing away with useless, senseless, back and forth physical motion across the stage. Shaw, of course, is a strong apostle of interior action since it suits his dramatic "discussions" so well. However, the discussion found in the scene previous to Joan's execution can hardly be called even "interior action." For as the varying opinions on the necessity of Joan's death fall from the lips of Church dignitaries and English nobles, there is no other evident purpose than to set forth the various opinions on the case--hardly what is meant by interior action.

But Shaw is satisfied to understand interior action as the "discussion" which is a part of the essence of Shavian drama.<sup>8</sup> Eric Bentley shows that this discussion is a part of the Shavian theory for drama. "The theory of Shavian drama is, on the positive side, a defense of the drama of discussion, and on the negative

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<sup>8</sup> Henderson in Bernard Shaw, 564, quotes Shaw on discussion as part of his plays. "In response to my request, to state the difference between a modern and an old-fashioned play, Shaw said among many other things: 'A play with a discussion is a modern play. A play with only an emotional situation is an old-fashioned one.'" Eric Bentley notes the importance of discussion for Shavian drama. The Playwright as Thinker, New York, nd, 156.

side, an assault upon all other drama."<sup>9</sup>

Concerning dramatic convention, it is only natural to expect that much of the accepted convention will be ignored when the Shavian discussion is introduced. But Shaw throws out even the accepted procedure of his own time, which, as Granville-Barker notes, every playwright should respect.

As the dramatist writes for the theatre of his own time, he begins always by accepting the theatrical traditions which he finds established, and as he seeks to interest the spectators, he has no hesitation in utilizing the conventions which he finds in favor with his audience.<sup>10</sup>

But Shaw makes himself an exception to this customary procedure. John Gassner affirms that the reason behind this disregard of any convention except Shaw's own peculiar drift of mind is the discussion in his plays. "Shaw...evinced scant respect for conventional or 'sound' dramaturgy...giving as much time as necessary to his polemical disquisitions as he found necessary while the plot was left cooling its heels in the wings."<sup>11</sup>

Along with this discussion and consequent disregard for dramatic convention comes a revolutionary type of drama. This drama should not be called "modern," for that would confuse it with so much of the present day stage which is quite unlike Shaw. His type of drama is recognized as drama in the real meaning of the

9 Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker, 141.

10 Granville-Barker, Use of the Drama, 132.

11 John Gassner, Masters of the Drama, New York, 1940, 587.



term by no one except Shaw. Thus, as Cleanth Brooks remarks, the nature of dramatic art is missing no matter what the form of the writing appears to be. Brooks wisely sees no objection to the artist's forwarding his ideas in whatever way he wishes, but he expects that the mere vehicle for the forwarding of these ideas be called something other than a play.<sup>12</sup> The issue, he claims, is whether or not the play treats any problem in the manner of a tract. He believes that Shaw has these tracts to some extent, in Saint Joan. Shaw certainly does so in his other plays. Thus, Brooks suggests that they be called tracts and not plays, if man is still a respecter of words and their meanings.

Behind all this matter of discussion in Saint Joan lies Shaw's opposition to the existing opinions of ordinary people throughout the world. Even the unassuming spectator, as mentioned above, realizes there is some conflict with the accepted traditional truth concerning the Maid of Orleans. But if someone were to read Shaw's preface to the play there could be no doubt for him that Shaw expressly has in mind to set forth his own original thought. This realism, according to Shaw, is to counteract the romantic deception of our times, as he calls it.

Saint Joan, it must be admitted, is good "box-office",

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12 Cleanth Brooks, Robert B. Heilman, Understanding Drama, New York, 1945, 477. "As his preface [to Major Barbara] indicates Shaw is obviously interested in ideas for their own sake."



as are many other plays of Shaw. But Shaw's plays seem to be successful more on account of their bold affrontery, radicalism, and originality, than because of their dramatic and artistic values. There is a universal appeal in his expression of thought, but the universality, oddly enough, is one of opposition. Many are interested in Saint Joan because Shaw is attacking, casting a slur on the traditional representation of Joan. That Shaw intends this attack, according to his own words, is sufficient warrant for finding fault with the dramatic art of Saint Joan.<sup>13</sup> But inasmuch as the opposition makes itself felt in the ordinary theatre-goer, proof is had that there is something fundamentally unartistic about the whole play.

Shaw's originality, which has been variously interpreted,<sup>14</sup> is an undesired, offensive imposition on the play. And this imposition is fully intended by Shaw, whether or not the people call it his "wit." Gassner remarks that the English have accepted Shaw, or better still, have tried to excuse his offensive, polemic

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13 The greater part of the preface to Saint Joan is devoted to this attack. Also Shaw tells us, "I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion in these matters." G.B.S., "The Political Principle at Stake", in Statement of the Evidence in Chief, etc., quoted by Henderson, Bernard Shaw, 528.

14 "I dare not deny that he is brilliant. But if one asks me to confess that Shaw is an original thinker, I demur... Shavian 'originality' is ready made. He follows a formula. The formula is to ridicule what the human race reverences, and to extol what the human race abominates." Gillis, False Prophets, 5.

oratory. Though he was "stigmatized as a clown, he also entertained a serious destructive purpose."<sup>15</sup> By quoting a letter of Shaw to Frank Harris, Father Gillis cautions the reader about Shaw's seriousness of purpose in his views.

I had only to say with simplicity what I really meant and everyone would laugh. I know that my opinions appear extravagant and insincere, but if the British people only knew how much I am in earnest, they would make me drink the hemlock.<sup>16</sup>

Surely this great extent of didactic seriousness will not allow the dramatic elements of any Shavian play to remain unaffected.

Concerning the characters of a play, and character portrayal, Granville-Barker observes that all characters should have an "independence of the author" in order that a degree of what he calls "dramatic integrity" may be maintained.<sup>17</sup> For there is no integrity of this sort, but an abuse of the audience, when the author hides behind the make-up of his characters, especially when that author has the reputation of a polemic orator. This integrity is missing in Saint Joan. For Joan has not received the "independence of the author" as this paper has tried to show.

Gassner offers some objective comment on Shaw's charac-

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15 Gassner, Masters of the Drama, 587.

16 Gillis, False Prophets, 5.

17 Granville-Barker, Use of the Drama, 51. "There must be no fraudulent tipping of the scales by the dramatist in favor of this one or that...And the characters so indulged will at once lose their dramatic integrity."

ter portrayal. He observes that Shaw can be a master of characterization when the occasion calls for it.

It has often been maintained that Shaw has been incapable of creating living characters. But though it is true that his dramatis personae frequently speak like their author,...and that he has been himself the greatest character...he has actually been a master of characterization whenever the art was called for by the nature of the play.<sup>18</sup>

Saint Joan is one of the plays that called for good characterization primarily because Joan has been kept alive before the minds of most of the world especially since her canonization in 1919. Certainly, Joan appears more life-like than nearly any other Shavian character, but the conscious effort of the author to make a Shavian out of her does seem to have warped her character in no small way. Cauchon's character also has been tailored to fit the circumstances. For as Shaw himself says, he does not disclaim any of the opinions found in his characters. Joan and Cauchon are historical characters, it is true, but because of the lack of dramatic integrity or freedom from the author, Shaw holds them first of all as puppets who must dance as he sees fit.

It is easy to see how Shaw's determined purpose to set down a didactic drama has an obvious influence on character portrayal, for these people in the plays are the mouthpieces of his teaching. But despite the fact that they are teachers of Shavian-

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18 Gassner, Masters of the Drama, 596.

ism, they must have some natural, appealing qualities.<sup>19</sup> These characters are to take their place in the theatre which, as Irvine remarks, Shaw wishes to make into cathedrals where people can find, or learn about, the deeper and purer realities that they are unwilling to face in life.<sup>20</sup> Because he makes his theatre a cathedral, his characters, consequently, become didactic. And since characters cannot appear nowadays in the Shakespearean manner and still be realistic--according to Shaw--they must be didactic in the modern way, the Ibsen way, the austere way. This sort of didacticism, which goes far beyond the mere artistic presentation of a realistic story of human life, consists in a determined tendency to teach, and in the case of Saint Joan, to teach according to the mind of Shaw.

There is necessarily an artistic devaluation in a play of this sort, as Victor Hamm points out.

Artistically, didacticism destroys the unity of a work when it separates the concrete and the abstract, makes a story rather an example or analogue than an organic narrative or poem...Didacticism spoils the delight of contemplation which it is the reader's right to enjoy, by injecting into that delight disturbing elements of unsublimated matter. Like lumps of carbon in imperfectly refined steel, such protrusions

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19 "The large number of his personages are instinct only with the life of intelligence, and are but the mouthpieces of the author." Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian. A History of English Literature, New York, 1935, 1353.

20 Irvine, The Universe of G.B.S., 193. According to Irvine, Shaw considered the theatre as the opium den where the people could escape from reality.

of didactic intent mar the texture of a literary work of art.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, since so much has already been said about Shaw's purpose in writing the play, it will be sufficient to mention here that his didacticism can be sanctioned only by Shaw's personal theory of what drama should be. Thus, if Shaw's dramatic theory were wholly acceptable to the modern patrons of the drama--playwrights, critics, and playgoers--there would be nothing dramatically offensive in Saint Joan. If, however, Shaw and his theory are rejected by many as not being art, not being drama--and they seem to be rejected--because of his ultimate purpose of teaching the plays, the norm for this rejection is the law of the arts. Basically the law affirms that didacticism as such has no place in art, and in this case, no place in dramatic art.<sup>22</sup>

Despite all the saving qualities of the play, therefore, Saint Joan seems to have suffered dramatically and artistically because of the reasons mentioned here. Thus, it falls short not because it is Saint Joan, but rather because it belongs to the "plays of ideas," which are not able to maintain a high level of dramatic and artistic worth, even though, for the present, they

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21 Victor Hamm, The Pattern of Criticism, Milwaukee, 1951, 81.

22 Yet, Shaw, in his preface to Pygmalion, writes, "Pygmalion is so intensely and deliberately didactic, and its subject esteemed so dry, that I delight in throwing it at the heads of the wiseacres who repeat the parrot cry that art should never be didactic. It goes to prove my contention that art should never be anything else." Selected Plays of Bernard Shaw, ed. Dodd Mead and Co., New York, 1919, I, 194.

may be "good box-office."

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **Jerome B. Coll, S.J.** has been read and approved by three members of the Department of **English.**

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

May 24, 1953

Date

J. S. Hughes S.J.

Signature of Adviser