CHAPTER VI

Prefaces to the Minor One Act Plays
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Under the heading Minor One Act Plays, the following plays could be included:

- How He Lied to Her Husband
- The Dark Lady of the Sonnets
- Overruled
- Great Catherine
- O'flaherty V.C.
- Augustus Does His Bit
- The Inca of Perusalem
- Annajanska, the Bolshevik Empress
- The Six of Calais
- Cymbeline Refinished
- Shakes Versus Shaw

The playlet How He Lied to Her Husband was written in 1904 and the prefatory note prefixed to the play is one of the briefest.

In the prefatory note Shaw rejects 'doctrinaire romanticism' and says that in How He Lied to Her Husband he has filled in 'the most hackneyed stage framework' with 'an observed touch of actual humanity'. He also says that he has produced an 'original play' out of the stale convention of triangular love and 'knockabout farce', instead of plagiarising Othello and other romantic authors who are guided by 'Othello's romantic assumptions and false point of honour'.

The play presents an ordeal of a romantic lover. Two kinds of jealousy have been presented in the play. They are, sister-in-law Georgina's jealousy towards Mrs Bompas and the romantic lover's jealousy towards Mr Bompas. The preface does not say anything about a sister's jealousy against the sister-in-law. In the preface to Overruled written in 1912, Shaw maintains that jealousy is an 'inculcated passion' and 'independent of sex' and that is proved by 'its intensity in children, and by the fact that very jealous people are jealous of everybody without regard to relationship of sex, and cannot bear to hear the person they "love" speak favourably of anyone under any circumstances (many women,
for instance, are much more jealous of their husband's mothers and sisters than of unrelated women whom they suspect him of fancying.\footnote{1} It would not be, perhaps, right to say that the sister-in-law Georgina's jealousy against Mrs Bompas has no sexual basis.\footnote{2} Mrs Bompas is irritated beyond measure at the jealousy of her sister-in-law and suspects her of stealing the poems in order to put her in difficulty. Georgina's jealousy leads her to remark, "There ought to be a law against a man's sister ever entering his house after he's married." (p. 453).

The jealousy of Henry Apjohn, the young romantic lover, against Mr Bompas is proved by his attempts to hide his real feelings about Mrs Bompas. The husband is infuriated when the lover pretends 'complete coldness' and 'indifference' towards his wife. He finds it unbearable that his pet property should be slighted and underrated in this manner. The husband assaults the young lover and the young man makes a clean breast of his love for Mrs Bompas in a fit of revengeful anger. The husband, instead of being offended, is delighted at the fresh proof of his wife's irresistible power of attraction. He says to his wife, "They can't resist you; none of em. Never knew a man yet that could hold out three days" (p. 459). The husband also proudly declares that it is because of her wonderful power of attraction that three first-rate actor-managers, one Cabinet minister, one professional poet and the eldest son of a Duke offer to do favours to her. All these make the husband feel that he has an invaluable property in his wife. The young man's jealousy against the husband gets revealed when he says to the husband:

\footnote{1}{The preface to Overruled (The Complete prefaces of Bernard Shaw, 1965), p. 107.}

\footnote{2}{In this connection Bertrand Russell may be quoted who said, "Much envy that seems purely professional really has a sexual source" (The Conquest of Happiness (Unwin, London, 1978), p. 71.}
that he is "a sordid commercial chump, utterly unworthy of her"
(p.59). The husband considers his wife as his permanent private
property deserving of high flattery and admiration from others.
Hence, he offers to print the love poems addressed to his wife as
an advertisement of his wife's uncommon power of attraction.

In the preface Shaw says that in *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*
he has presented triangular love in a novel way in defiance of
"Othello's romantic assumption and false point of honour". The
romantic young lover is puzzled over the equanimity of the husband
who is cocksure about the permanence of his marriage with his wife
although she has numerous admirers. Unlike Othello, he does not
strangle his wife for indulging in extra-marital relation with the
lover, or attempt to kill the lover for falling in love with his
wife. On the Contrary, the increase in the number of his wife's
admirers only gratifies his sense of owning a valuable property.

It will be seen that though the preface has focussed attention
on the unromantic motif of the play, still it has not commented at
all upon the reasons which lead to the husband's peculiar
behaviour in the playlet. It also does not say anything about the
jealousy which could be called the theme of the play.

*The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* is an one act piece written in
1910 and the nineteen-page preface (P. H. ed.) prefixed to it
(dateless) appears to be written in the same year. The preface is
followed by a postscript and a New Prologue written in 1933 and
1938 respectively.

At the beginning of the preface Shaw discusses why in his
play he has acted on the theory of Thomas Tyler in which he has
identified Mary Fitton as the Dark Lady and Mr W. H. as the Earl
of Pembroke. Shaw, then, devotes a large part of the preface to a criticism of Frank Harris's play on Shakespeare in which he has portrayed Shakespeare as "tragic, bitter, pitiable, wretched and broken" personality (pp. 763-64). Among other matters discussed in the preface are Shakespeare's relation with the Dark Lady and the Earl of Pembroke, Shakespeare's attitude to the public, his political outlook and the need of a National Theatre in England.

In the preface Shaw holds that Shakespeare's love for the Dark Lady was not 'idolatrous' (p. 762) and the relation between Shakespeare and the Dark Lady was analogous to that of Jupiter and Semele. The play tries to present the same sort of relation between Shakespeare and the Dark Lady. Shakespeare praises the 'real beauty and real majesty' of Queen Elizabeth in front of the dark Lady and calls her 'black-haired, black-eyed, black-avised devil' to her face (p. 649). The Dark Lady is also critical of the fast-changing emotions of Shakespeare in respect of his relation with her. The Dark Lady gives vent to her exasperation when she says, "I am tired of being tossed up to heaven and dragged down to hell at every whim that takes him" (p. 649). She is so much cut up at the cruel description of her by her lover that she leaves the scene "most deject and wretched".

In the preface Shaw rejects the idea that Shakespeare was sycophant in his attitude to the earls. Shaw finds no proof of sycophancy in the sonnets in his relation with the Earl.

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1 Referring to the striking similarity between Shaw's own life and the life of Shakespeare as drawn in the preface in respect of matters such as, education, social position, political attitude and attitude towards the public, Maurice Colbourne observes that "in his hands, William Shakespeare takes on a close likeness to Bernard Shaw." The Real Bernard Shaw (London, Dent & Sons, 1949), p. 167.
play, in the exchange with Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare speaks of his noble descent from the Ardens and 'gentle blood' of his father. He calls Henry the Eighth an 'inordinate man' who married six times while his father, Strafford's worthiest alderman, married only once. He also declares that his works are superior to the marbles and 'the guilded monuments of princes'. Elizabeth finds in Shakespeare 'an overweening conceit' instead of sycophancy.

In the preface Shaw refers to the tragic consequences of Shakespeare's dependence on the ignorance and the ill-tastes of the British public. The vulgar tastes of the British public forced him to write 'the genial vulgarities' like As You Like It and Much Ado About Nothing and save the theatre from ruin. Shaw says that Shakespeare had a 'real grievance' in surrendering his art 'to the tyranny of the box office'. It is because of the lack of demand from the public that his serious plays without bravura parts had to lie long on the shelves neglected and unstaged. Accordingly, in The Dark Lady of the Sonnets Shakespeare in his talk with Elizabeth gives vent to his tragic experiences as a playwright and narrates how he had to compromise his art for satisfying the low tastes of the theatre-going public and relegate serious art to the background. Hence, he urges the Queen to endow a theatre out of the public revenue and save the higher art from the whims and caprice of the ignorant public. The Queen, however, leaves the work to posterity because it will be three hundred years before the British public realise the importance and necessity of a National Theatre.

In the play Shakespeare is presented as an artist who notes down in his tablet every musical word or phrase that he bears from people engaged in practical conversation. Accordingly, he takes
down a number of words and phrases uttered by the Beefeater, Elizabeth and the Dark Lady that struck his musical ear. Shaw does not say anything in the preface about Shakespeare's love of word-music but has denounced the critics as unfit to be his contemporaries for maintaining that Shakespeare has been deprived of his 'originality' by making him pick up phrases from practical conversation (p. 770).

The preface establishes good link with the play by focussing light on matters like Shakespeare's social standing, Jupiter-Semele relation between Shakespeare and the Dark Lady, Shakespeare's self-awareness and his non-sycophantic attitude towards his social superiors and the need of a National Theatre which form parts of the theme of play. The discussions in the preface about Thomas Tyler and his Mary Fitton theory, and the discussion about Shakespeare's pessimism and his political attitude in the course of the criticism of Frank Harris's play on Shakespeare could be called discussions about associated topics which do not have direct hearing on the playlet.

Overruled was written in 1912 and the preface to it (undated) appears to be written in the same year.

The subject of the preface is artificial morality and natural morality in sexual relations. Among other topics discussed in the preface are jealousy in sexual relations, retribution for artificial morality, pseudo sex plays, the relation between art and morality, the evasion of subjects by farcical comedy, the difference between the French stage and the English stage in presentation of sexual relations, the problem of scenery, and how to hold the dramatic mirror up to nature.

At the beginning of the preface Shaw states that Overruled
is a 'clinical study' of how polygamy actually occurs among the quite ordinary people, innocent of all unconventional views concerning it" (p. 706). A close study of natural sexual attraction and relation has been made through four characters of opposite sexes. The characters are two married pairs--one is Mr and Mrs Lunn and the other is Mr and Mrs Juno. Both the couples get tired of their monogamic marriage and seek relief outside their marital bonds by falling in love in a criss-cross way.

Gregory Lunn loves Mrs Juno, but is shocked when he comes to know that she is not a widow, but the wife of Mr Juno. In his talk with Mrs Juno he condemns conventional morality that prohibits extra-marital sexual relation. The prohibitive sign-board of monogamy declaring "Trespassers will be prohibited" has killed his power of falling in love with the married ladies 'really and wholeheartedly'. But he feels that his falling in love with Mrs Juno has been for him an astonishingly natural affair. It is only after a bout of natural loving that they come to know that both of them are married and married to different persons. Gregory's conscience pricks him, but he is disinclined to consider himself guilty. He says, "No, I should rather describe myself as being guilty in fact, but not in intention" (p. 712). Mrs Juno appears bold enough to accept what is natural to her and what happens to her naturally. She does not feel any remorse for the liberty she allowed herself in the bout of love with Mr Gregory. She says, "I have always been rather severe on this sort of thing; but when it came to the point I didn't behave as I thought I should behave. I didn't intend to be wicked; but somehow or other, Nature, or whatever You choose to call it, didn't take much notice of my intentions" (p. 713). Mr Juno suffers from his inhibitions and
refuses to drag the thread of his experiences to its logical end. He refuses to defend his sexual aberrations (p. 712). He says, "I dont defend it; and theres an end of the matter". He admits his sexual licence to be true, but he refuses to 'defend' them. Mrs Juno calls this attitude 'footling'.

Mrs Juno is ready to accept her extra-marital sexual relationship with Gregory as 'human' whatever is the opinion of conventional morality about it. Mrs Lunn is the most natural and human among the four characters. She calls her bout of love with Mr Juno mere 'trifles'. This shocks Mr Juno into exclaiming, "Trifles- I have fallen in love with a monster" (p. 712). She regards Juno's love with her as mere amusement. She is ready to accept whatever is human and natural. Artificial sexual morality revolts her. She says in annoyance "...These two men, with their morality, and there promises to their mothers, and their admissions that they are wrong, and their sinning and suffering, and their going on at one another as if it meant anything, or as if it mattered, are getting on my nerves" (p. 713). She says that she would be obliged to Mrs Juno if she takes her 'sentimental' husband off her hands occasionally and, in turn, she also offers to do her best to 'amuse' Mr Juno when Mrs Juno finds him 'tiresome'; All such extra-marital affairs are to her quite 'innocent things'.

Mr Gregory's relation with Mrs Juno becomes so much natural that he gets 'hopelessly confused' as to which one of the two ladies is his real wife. His wife has to set him right.

Implicitly or explicitly, all the characters defy the iron rule of monogamy. Both the pairs get sick of their monogamous life and decide to disengage themselves and take 'holiday' from each other in order to relieve their monotony.
In the preface Shaw has strongly advocated the necessity of founding the sexual relations between men and women on a realistic basis. He holds that our sexual morality does not have any relevance to real life. He says that a healthy sexual morality can never grow until the gulf between the conventional sexual morality and the real life is properly bridged. Shaw says, "We shall never attain to a reasonably healthy public opinion on sex questions until we offer, as the data for that opinion, our actual conduct and our real thoughts instead of a moral fiction which we agree to call virtuous conduct, and which we then...pretend is our conduct and our thought" (p. 108). *Overruled* shows a conflict of our 'actual conduct and 'real thought' with the 'moral fiction' of the conventional 'virtuous conduct'.

In the preface Shaw deals with the question of jealousy in sexual relations and maintains that jealousy is 'independent of sex' and an 'inculcated passion'. In the play both Mrs Juno and Mrs Lunn appear to have completely conquered the green-eyed monster in their extra-marital relations. Only Mr Juno, a slave of artificial morality, finds it difficult to allow his wife to carry on the extra-conjugal relation with Mr Gregory. Mr Juno's attitude appears to be the result of his inhibition, not jealousy.

Mr Gregory recognises his extra-marital relations as quite natural and human but does not have courage enough to speak out against the conventional morality. He suffers from the prick of his 'artificial conscience'. Mr Juno, on the other hand, like a

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1 - About the practice of viewing sex as sinful, Bertrand Russell comments, "As a matter of fact, the sense of sin, so far from being the cause of good life, is quite the reverse. It makes him feel unhappy and it makes him feel inferior" *The Conquest of Happiness* (Unwin, London, 2nd ed. 1978), p. 82.
bi-faced man openly admits his extra-marital relationship but refuses to 'defend' them under any circumstances. In the preface Shaw has condemned the hypocrisy of the class of Junos in society, and says that "no necessary and inevitable operation of human nature can reasonably be regarded as sinful at all, and that a morality which assumes the contrary is an absurd morality, and can be kept in countenance only by hypocrisy" (p. 113).

In the preface Shaw has criticised the artists who, in their pseudo sex plays, present a distorted picture of sexual relations for the sake of their artificial morality. Shaw has also criticised the conventional farcical comedies in which 'the inevitable conjugal infidelity' and its consequences are always evaded. Shaw says that the farcical comedies, instead of bothering people with divorce cases of the unfaithful husband and the unfaithful wife or the stratagems employed by such husband or wife for avoiding such divorce cases, should let the unfaithful husband and unfaithful wife tell people why they are unfaithful.

In Overruled, presented by Shaw as a variation from the conventional farcical comedy, the unfaithful couples do not try to conceal their conjugal infidelity. Rather, the couples frankly admit their extra-marital relationship and frankly discuss among themselves how they are led to such relationship. They face facts, instead of concealing them. It will be seen that the preface has strong thematic links with the play. The discussions in the preface about the limitations of stage presentation of sex phenomenon, the difference between the French stage and the English stage in presentation of 'the physical incidents of sex' and the problem of scenic illusion can be viewed only as discussions on associated matters.
Great Catherine, another one act play, was written in 1913 and the preface to it (dateless) appears to be written in the same year.

In the preface Shaw maintains that he is interested not in the diplomacy, conquests and campaigns and the liberal reforms of Great Catherine, but in Catherine as a woman who had 'plenty of character' and 'no morals'. Shaw declares that his playlet does not attempt at a historical portraiture of Great Catherine, the Russian Tsarina, but at a human portraiture of her, "whose gallantries provide some of the lightest pages of modern history". Shaw also declares that his playlet "grew out of the relations which inevitably exist in the theatre between authors and actors" (p. 811). He says that the virtuosity of actress Miss Gertrude Kingston moved and inspired him to write this playlet. More than half the preface is devoted to a discussion about the interdependence of the actors and the playwrights in the composite art of drama.

The play is an attempt to illustrate the manner in which Catherine II of Russia tried to fulfil her eroticism. The play presents a barbarous and savage character in Patiomkin, the counsellor and friend to the Empress. With drunken Patiomkin always in the habit of using physical force on all people that come near him, and the Sergeant and soldiers always in ready attendance, the Empress appears to lead a most uncivilized and barbarous private life. Catherine's erotomania is sufficiently dramatised through the episode of the English captain, Edistaston, with her, who is initially thrown into her presence by the physical force of Patiomkin. The intrigues and the methods to which the queen resorts to get the company of Edistaston have clearly displayed the
The English captain's outlook on life is puritanical while Catherine's outlook appears to be a hedonistic one. However, Catherine's eroticism is only an unimportant part of her greater life; that is why she offers to have the Captain as an item of her museum without a thought of regret or unease. Referring to the sexual overtones in the behaviour of patiomkin and Varinka towards Edstaston and Claire, Catherine says, "There is no help for it, Captain. This is Russia, not England." (Scene IV, p. 817). The preface does not say anything about the puritanism of Captain Edstaston or hedonism of Catherine. Catherine's amorousness dramatised in the play may be taken as a sample of her 'gallantries' referred to in the preface.

In the preface Shaw declares that it was actress Gertrude Kingston's talent which inspired him to bring the play into existence. Referring to Miss Kingston's contribution in writing Great Catherine, Shaw says, "History provided no other queen capable of standing up to our joint talents" (p. 811). This declaration in the preface informs a reader that playing the role of Great Catherine requires special talent or virtuosity on the part of the actress. Also Shaw's declaration in the preface that Great Catherine is a 'bravura piece' helps a reader in viewing the roles of Catherine, Patiomkin and Edstaston in proper perspective. It will be seen that the preface to Great Catherine has only background importance for the play.

O'Flaherty V.C. was written in 1915, that is, during the first world war and the short preface (dateless) appears to be written in the same year. The preface discusses the difficulties that
plagued the question of recruiting Irish soldiers for fight in behalf of the English and their allies in the first world war.

This is the second play on the life in Ireland by Shaw; as such, it could be called a supplement to *John Bull's Other Island*. Minimising the number of characters only to four, Shaw has employed the question and answer method effectively for achieving his purpose.

In the preface Shaw refers to the aggrieved sense of slavery of the Irish people under the colonial rule of England and the reluctance of the Irish soldiers to fight in favour of England. Shaw says that the Irish people get recruited not because they have any burning sense of love for England, but because they are compelled by the dehumanising poverty of Ireland and its boredom to go out of Ireland in search of better life, although the immediate prospects are the hazards of war. Shaw says in the preface, "I knew by personal experience and observation ..... that all an Irishman's hopes and ambitious turn on his opportunities of getting out of Ireland" (p. 475). The play has highlighted the heart-breaking poverty of Ireland which forces people to emigrate to other countries. The soldiers get recruited and go out to fight because such recruitment brings them several allowances—personal allowance, domestic allowance, separation allowance and also wound allowance. O'Flaherty joins the French side because he gets there ten shillings a week, which is the biggest allowance for a soldier in the European war market. The 'thieving blackguards' knock half a crown off Mrs O'Flaherty out of that ten shillings a week. Miss Teresa is a girl of 'fortune' with ten pounds in her possession. He joins the army because war promises him better life. He refuses to pay for the masses said for the souls of the German soldiers killed in the war, because he believes, war is the business of the
English king and it is the responsibility of the English king to pay for the masses. He does not know what the war is about. The inhuman killings at the battle field have destroyed his faith in the high politics that led to wars. He says to Sir Pearce, ".... Don't talk to me or to any soldier of the war being right. No war is right". It is his firm conviction that "you'll never have a quiet world til you knock the patriotism out of the human race" (p. 823). The monotony and the dullness of the poverty-ridden lower middle class life of Ireland destroys O'Flaherty's all love for Ireland and he almost decides to settle down in France as a farmer. He loses his love for his Irish beloved Teresa and his love for his ignorant and prejudiced mother is also greatly eroded. Mrs O'Flaherty is a typical old Irish lady with typical Irish sentiments and superstitions. She, 'the wildest Fenian and rebel', shares the common Irish hatred for the English people and the English rule and advocates clearing them out like so many 'snakes'. She is offended with her son for fighting in behalf of the English.

In the preface Shaw says that the British officer does not like the Irish soldiers, but still, he tries to have a certain proportion of them in his battalion, because "Irish soldiers give impetus to those military operations which require for their spirited execution more devilment than prudence" (p. 475). O'Flaherty tells General Sir Pearce Madegan that he won Victoria Cross not because of any extra-ordinary bravery on his part; he killed the Germans like mad because he felt that if he did not kill them, they would have killed him. The others were as much afraid of him as he was of them. He killed them for his own survival and there was no other cause for him to fight for. He owes his bravery to his mother who used to whale him if he ever ran away from any
encounter and disgrace the blood of the O'Flaherty's. He knows that if he holds out long enough, the enemy would lose heart and run away.

In the preface Shaw says that another potential reason for Irish soldiers' penchant for going abroad is the miserable domestic atmosphere worse confounded by permanent quarrels and squabbles indulged in by the ill-natured members. The miserable economic condition is the root cause of this sorry state of affair. The sounds of the explosion of shells and firing of guns are insignificant compared to hellish noise and ferocity of domestic life created by the "tyrants, and taskmasters, termagants and shrews" (p. 476). The violent verbal fight between Mrs O'Flaherty and Teresa over the gold chain with all possibilities of its developing into a physical fight convinces O'Flaherty beyond a shadow of doubt that war front is far, far, quieter than the Irish domestic life. According to O'Flaherty, the English king is not 'half the tyrant' his mother Mrs O'Flaherty is.

In the preface Shaw says that the Irish are, for the most part, Roman Catholics and hence, from the English point of view the Irish are "heretics and rebels" (p. 475). The religious hatred between the English and the Irish forms no part of the theme of the play. But in the play only a reference has been made by O'Flaherty to the catholic orthodoxy of his mother.

It is the poverty of the Irish people which leads to their vicious domestic life and to their voluntary enlistment for fighting abroad. The preface to O'Flaherty V.C. does not elaborate this point, but in the preface to John Bull's Other Island Shaw shows his awareness of the importance of the economic factor when he says, "It is true that I had occasion to point out that Marx was not
infallible; but he left me with a strong disposition to back the
economic situation to control all other situations, religious,
nationalist or romantic in the long run.\(^1\)

It will be seen that the short preface to O'Flaherty V.C. has both thematic and background importance for the play.

The one-act play, The Inca of Peruselem was written in 1916 and the preface to the play (dateless) appears to be written several years after the play as its contents suggest.

In the prefatory note Shaw says that in the portrayal of the character of the Inca (the German Kaiser, Wilhem II), he did not allow himself to be guided by any political hatred. He says that he has tried to present the Kaiser as a human being with natural faults and foibles instead of portraying him as an unmixed evil as people seized with war-hysteria expect. He also says that he has taken care not to introduce any 'foul blow' in the play against an enemy when he is already 'down'.

The character of the Inca is drawn sympathetically, revealing both his virtues and vices, strength and weaknesses. The Inca has his conceit and vanity which lead him to declare that it is his 'divine right' that his realm should extend to "the confines of the world". The same conceit makes him believe that it is the duty of the sixty millions of people of his country to 'die for him at the word of command" (p. 83\(^4\)). The Inca is invested with the power of political vision and analysis in the play. It is this analytical power that leads him to declare that he kept peace in the world for so many years with his "tongue and his moustache."

\(^1\) The preface to John Bull's Other Island (The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw, 1965), p. 474.
The Inca is bitter about the failings of his contemporaries and calls his sons 'young degenerates', his generals 'incapables' and his relatives all 'duffers'. The Inca considers hereditary monarchs outdated and advocates rule by 'man of genius'. He envies the American democracy which invests the American President with tremendous power. The Inca does not consider himself responsible for the start of the war. He attributes it to his superstitious countrymen's love of war. The Inca confides to Ermytrude, "You talk of death as an unpopular thing. You are wrong: for years I gave them art, literature, science, prosperity, that they might live more abundantly; and they hated me, ridiculed me, caricatured me. Now that I give them death in its frightfullest forms, they are devoted to me" (p. 839). The satirical portrait of the Inca causes much laughter with the reference to the Inca's moustache called a 'political barometer' and his prospects of banishment to St Helena. His economic bankruptcy which renders him unfit for the hand of the widowed daughter of the Archdeacon, aims at pleasing the British audience. Colin Wilson feels that this playlet "reads like an attempt to regain favour with the English public", and calls it "an incept piece of anti-German propaganda". Shaw's investment of the Inca with deep political knowledge and foresight and his sense of humour frees Shaw from the charge of undue hatred against the Inca (the German Kaiser). In the prefatory note Shaw assures the readers that he would have put the play in the fire if it contained a word against the defeated enemy that he would not have written before the war began. Thus Shaw appears to stand at a dubious position: between his anxiety to maintain intellectual...
Augustus Does His Bit was written in 1915 and the brief prefatory note (dateless) appears to be written in the same year.

The playlet is a satire on the English army officials who were on war duty in the first World War. The preface notes the favourable reaction the playlet earned from the government departments and officials who viewed the class of Augustuses as "well-meaning, brave, patriotic, but obstructively fussy, self-important, imbecile, and disastrous".

The playlet portrays Lord Augustus Highcastle, a colonel as a tomfool of an officer. The other two characters in this playlet about war are, Horatio Floyd Beamish, the clerk and the Lady. The clerk is more intelligent than the Colonel and Colonel Augustus is such a fool that he cleanly gets outwitted by the 'attractive' and the 'intelligent lady'.

Lord Augustus is a pretentious, blunt-headed dunderhead who does not know how to make a speech for recruitment, and was once captured by the Germans in consequence of a foolish attack. He is proud of the fact that "for centuries the younger sons of the Highcastles have had nothing to do but fascinate attractive females when they were sitting on royal commissions or on duty at Knightsbridge barracks." (p. 845). The present Highcastle is out of his wits when he is confronted with the 'attractive' lady and the lady also takes away the important list about gun emplacements from the table at ease. Prior to that, Augustus left "it on the coffee-room breakfast table". He boasts of the "ability of the governing class", to which he belongs, in the matter of guiding war. He offers to show the confidential list to the lady which is already put into the wallet by the lady without his knowledge. Augustus
hits at the truth in his ignorance when he says, "...We have strong heads, we Highcastles. Nothing has ever penetrated to our brains" (p. 844). The affair with the lady clearly shows how thick-headed the Augustus in question is.

Augustus says to the lady that the Highcastles are indispensable in war. Regreting the want of the sufficient number of Highcastles, Augustus says, "There are hardly Highcastles enough at present to fill half the posts created by this war." (p. 845). The Augustuses were vain, foolish and inefficient, but they could not be dispensed with at a time when the country was locked in a fateful war with the Germans. Shaw remarks in the preface, "But Augustus stood like Eddystone in a storm and stands so to this day" (p. 478). It is sheer conceit that leads Augustus to think that Augustuses are indispensable in war, but the emergencies of war proved the truth of his remark despite the massive failings of Augustuses.

The exchange between Horatio Floyd Beamish the clerk and Augustus reveals how people caught by war frenzy believe that during war all conventional beliefs and the conventional way of life get reversed. Drinking has to be stopped, sweeping the streets has to be stopped, and transport and communication for the civilians have to be stopped. The brief preface to Augustus Does His Bit does not say anything about the abnormal behaviour of the people during war. In the preface to Heartbreak House Shaw has dwelt upon war hysteria under the impact of which people cease to do the normal things, and begin doing all sorts of unusual things in the name of patriotism. Shaw says, "But the ordinary war-conscious civilian went mad, the main symptom being a conviction
that the whole order of nature had been reversed". In *Augustus Does His Bit* the clerk says to his Augustus, "We're at war now; and everything's changed" (p. 841).

The comments on the class of Augustuses in the preface has links with the theme of the playlet; still, one feels that the brief prefatory note is not sufficiently expressive as a guideline note for the same.

*Annajanska,* the Bolshevik Empress was written in 1917 and the prefatory note prefixed to it is quite a brief one. The prefatory note declares that the playlet was written as a 'bravura piece' and to serve as a 'turn' at the modern variety theatre which demands little plays called sketches for its shows.

The preface does not comment on the theme of the play at all. By calling the playlet a 'bravura' piece, the dramatist means to say that the roles of the Grand Duchess Annajanska and general Strammfest were written specifically to provide scope for superacting, or in the dramatist's own words, "dazzling appearance".

The playlet, *The Six of Calais* was written in 1934 and the preface to it was written on May 28, 1935. In the preface Shaw has sharply reacted to the ignorance of the London journalists as expressed in their criticism of the Shavian portrayal of Edward III in the play as "unnatural and indecent" because king Edward III in the play publicly cries, rages, curses, growls and snarls like a savage dog without any touch of refinement in his behaviour. Shaw also has declared in the preface that *The Six of Calais* bears no moral and it is simply written as 'an acting piece' on the specific purpose of supplying an exhibition of the art of first rate acting.

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Shaw says that the principle followed in the play is that of picking out the key situations of life in a significant order so as to make a particular life or lives intelligible. The primitive savagery and sarcasting humour of the king and the incorrigibly scurrilous tongue of Peter in a trying situation of life provide clue to the nature of their respective character. One could easily see that the three characters, king Edward III, queen Philippa and Peter have been drawn with special care and attention in order to make the play 'an acting piece'. The short preface does not say anything about the theme of the play, but the declaration that the playlet is an 'acting piece' informs a reader about the spirit in which the playlet has to be viewed.

Cymbeline Refinished is the last Act of Shakespeare's Cymbeline re-written by Bernard Shaw in 1937 and the preface to the playlet was written in December, 1945, eight years later.

In the preface Shaw maintains that plot has been always 'the curse of serious drama and indeed of serious literature of any kind" (p. 869). He holds that Shakespeare could not invent plots and his borrowed plots got him into trouble towards the end of several plays, especially in The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Cymbeline. Shaw charges that Cymbeline, one of the finest of Shakespeare's later plays, "goes to pieces" in the last act. He says that the characters lose "all their vitality and individuality" in the last act and have nothing to do but identify themselves by moles on their necks or explain why they are not dead. To maintain that the last act is a 'cobbled-up affair' by several hands is to Shaw an "unpardonable stupidity". He says that the last act is 'genuine Shakespeare' in language and workmanship.

Commenting upon the last act of Cymbeline by Shakespeare, Shaw says in the preface that Posthumus is the only character that
remains 'alive' in the last act. The ether characters are like dolls being moved about like glass balls in the game of solitaire. Hence, Shaw makes no apology for bringing back the other characters to 'dramatic activity and individuality' in his version. Shaw refuses to share the 'infantile joys' found in the Shakespeare's version in the revelation that Polydore and Cadwal are Imogen's long lost brothers and Cymbeline's long lost sons and in Imogen's ready forgiveness of Posthumus for his past attempt to get her murdered and in Iachimo's sudden transformation from a crooked individual to a penitent one. Shaw says that he was interested in Iachimo, in Imogen, and in the long lost princes, and wanted to see how the characters, with their original vitality and emotions intact, could react to the critical situation that follows the battle. Shaw says that the only way to satisfy his curiosity was to re-write the last act as "Shakespeare might have written if he had been post-Ibsen and post-Shaw instead of post-Marlowe" (p.870). Shaw has his reservations about the practice of meddling with the works of the great artists as the results of such meddling are not always satisfactory. Shaw refers to Mozart's additions to the score of Handel's Messiah and Wagner's additions of trombone parts to the choruses of Spontini as satisfactory and successful variations of great art. As for his own variation of the last act of Cymbeline Shaw maintains that he stands "in the same relation to Shakespeare as Mozart to Handel or Wagner to Beethoven" (p. 870).

In practice, in the fifth act or in the last act of a drama, the complications are resolved, the knots are untied and derailed things are put on the rails again. In Cymbeline Refinished Shaw has attempted a different kind of resolution of the complications of Cymbeline by Shakespeare without harming the comedic structure
and the intent of the play. The Shavian version is the shortened variation of the original act. A variation has no meaning unless it is an improvement on the original work or a useful variation of the same. Several things of the original version have been dropped in the Shavian version. The march of the two armies in the opposite directions for a confrontation, the capture of Cymbeline and his subsequent rescue, the capture of Posthumus and his imprisonment in the custody of two gaolers are dispensed with in the Shavian version. Thus the Shavian version suffers from a lack of pageantry. The dream-scene and the appearance of Posthumus's parents and brothers as apparitions and also the appearance of Jupiter are all dropped in the Shavian version. The appearance of Cornelius and the ladies to announce the news of the queen's death is dropped in the Shavian version because Shaw thinks that at this stage "nobody can possible care a rap whether she is alive or dead" (p. 869). The fight between Posthumus and Iachimo following their meeting after the war is a Shavian innovation. In the Shavian version there is no reference to Posthumus's ring and Guiderius's mole. In the Shavian variation Posthumus and Imogen know each other from their voices, but in Shakespearean version, they do not know each other until everything about their past is disclosed. In Shakespeare's version the reconciliation between Posthumus and Imogen is hasty and unnatural, but in the Shavian version the reconciliation between Posthumus and Imogen has been made natural by allowing them sufficient dialogue to let out the pent-up sense of injury. In the Shavian version the Soothsayer and Posthumus's riddle are dispensed with. Guiderius and Arviragus are projected as unambitious persons in respect of royal pomp and power. Guiderius is Shavianized by investing him with impatience against parental domination.
Every writer has to be viewed in the context of his or her age. A playwright has to take into account the attitude of the people to life and its problems, the tastes of the people, their morality, the scope of leisure in the life of the people, speed or tension of life and lot of such other things. Shakespeare’s love of details as shown in the last act of Cymbeline by way of fights, march of the armies, introduction of ghosts, introduction of Jupiter with his thunderbolts, introduction of Cornelius and Ladies as messengers and Gaolers and references to ring and mole for solution of complications, has to be viewed from the context of his age. One misses in the Shavian version the Shakespearean ring, Shakespeare’s rhetoric, Shakespearean craft and Shakespearean rhythm. Shaw fails to escape his language, his idiom, his rhetoric and his personal outlook on life. Shakespearean soil and Shakespearean literary plants are different from those of the Shavian soil and transplantation is a risky business. Dr Sen Gupta rightly expresses his apprehension saying that even if Shakespeare had been post-Shaw, he would not have given such an ending to the play.¹

Shakes Versus Shay, a brief one act piece was written in 1949. This could be called Shaw’s last play as his actual last play Why She Would Not remained unfinished. With this playlet, Shaw’s seventy-year long literary career practically comes to an end. In the preface Shaw calls it his "last play and the climax" of his eminence.

Around the sunset of his career Shaw has taken the opportunity of this puppet play to judge himself from a comparison of his own

life and achievement with those of Shakespeare. In the playlet, the gems of creations by Shakespeare and Shaw have been compared and contrasted. Macbeth, the great Shakespearean tragic hero, has been compared with Walter Scott's Rob Roy. King Lear is pitted against Captain Shotover of *The Heartbreak House* by Shaw. As a musical force Shakespeare is compared with Adam Lindsay Gordon. As a comic genius, Shaw pits himself against Shakespeare and finds "more fun in heaven and earth", than is 'dreamt of' in Shakespeare's philosophy. Shaw's humility is expressed towards the end of his puppet play where he considers himself a transient force and says, "For a moment suffer
My glimmering light to shine".

Shaw wants to say in the play that neither Shakespeare nor Shaw is the last word in the eternal history of experimentation by the Life Force. Though both are 'mortal', still Shaw allows Shakespeare a superior place and makes him have the last word, "Out, out, brief candle".

The short preface does not contain any repetition of the earlier Shavian criticism of Shakespeare. A tone of sympathy and a sense of affinity with Shakespeare mark the apparently last lines about Shakespeare in the preface. In the preface Shaw notes down his interest in Shakespeare since his childhood days and says that Shakespeare was a "well-read grammar-schooled son in a family of middle class standing, cultured enough to be habitual playgoers and private entertainers of the players" (p. 917).

The getting of a coat of arms by Shakespeare's father and subsequent economic reverses in the family following John Shakespeare's business failure have resemblance with the economic hardship of the once-affluent Shaws of Dublin. Shaw finds so much
similarity between his own struggling career with that of Shakespeare that he declares, that the real Shakespeare might have been like himself.¹

The brief preface records Shaw's sense of identity with Shakespeare and does not at all comment on the theme of playlet, that is, the comparative position of Shakespeare and Shaw in the timeless history of creative writing.

¹ Referring to the prefatory note to Shakes Versus Shay, Albert H. Silverman observes that in the said note "one can discern the deep feeling of identity with Shakespeare that Shaw must always have felt, and especially felt in the twilight of his long life when he could already claim "a brief immortality". "Bernard Shaw's Shakespeare Criticism", PMLA, Vol. 72, No. 4, p. 736.