GEORGE BERNARD SHAW AND THE MALVERN FESTIVAL

SOUDABEH ANANISARAB

BA, MA

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Abstract

The Malvern Festival was established by Sir Barry Jackson in association with the lessee of the Malvern Theatre, Roy Limbert, in 1929. The Festival continued for ten seasons as an annual event until the outbreak of World War II in 1939, and then returned for one final season in 1949. The Festival was initially dedicated to the works of George Bernard Shaw with the repertoire of the first season wholly composed of the plays of this playwright. While during its twelve seasons the Festival fluctuated in the extent of its association with Shaw, in total the Festival presented two world premieres of Shaw's plays and four British premieres. Furthermore, in addition to its dramatic productions, the Festival also featured other activities such as talks and exhibitions and attracted an impressive list of visitors and speakers including Allardyce Nicoll and Gabriel Pascal as well as performers such as Cedric Hardwicke and Stephen Murray.

This thesis explores the development of the Malvern Festival, an event which has thus far given rise to scant academic scholarship. I argue that rediscovering the Malvern Festival has the potential to reorientate common critical understanding of early twentieth-century English theatre and its key locations. While much of the British theatre scholarship of this period has been concerned with drama in the capital, this study of Malvern demonstrates that regional theatres at this time had the capability of offering experimental drama which often failed to attract the attention of theatre managers in London. As the high prices of rent in the metropolis limited the financial risk accepted by many theatre managers in the early twentieth century, individuals such as Shaw and Jackson amongst others turned their attention away from London to the regions for new opportunities in staging a more

experimental repertoire.

This study of the Malvern Festival demonstrates that while Jackson and Shaw initially considered the Festival as the solution to their troubles with playhouses in London's West End, the Festival soon became entangled with those familiar debates of venue and repertoire, and ultimately failed after twelve seasons. In the organisation of the Festival, there were a number of damaging contradictions, some of which were also evident in the ventures preceding the Festival such as the movement for building a National Theatre in England and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre. The Festival had simultaneous links with both the non-metropolitan, as a result of its location in Malvern, and the urban, through its target audience of the metropolitan elite. Thus while the Festival was held in Malvern, as a result of Jackson's guiding philosophy much of the local population in Malvern were excluded from the activities included in the Festival. Additionally, the identity of the Festival was intertwined with both a sense of nostalgia for the past and an outlook towards the future. While Jackson emphasised less well-known classics in the repertoire of the Festival, he also flew critics into Malvern, and Limbert extended the activities of the Festival by presenting modern talkies. Other contradictions included Jackson's pursuit of critical praise for the Festival's productions and his desire to experiment away from theatrical norms, in addition to the lack of certainty surrounding the focus of the Festival which fluctuated between an emphasis on a star playwright, Shaw, and Jackson's aim to celebrate the literary canon. Moreover, some of these clashes were then exacerbated by the Shavian drama performed as part of the Festival. It was the difficulties in reconciling such contradictions which resulted in the Festival's failure to remain as an annual event. However, in this thesis I argue that regardless of the

Festival’s lack of financial and popular success, the Malvern Festival allowed Shaw the creative space to write some of his most experimental work, which was then explored in production as part of the Festival on the stage of the Malvern Theatre.

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Introduction

The Malvern Festival, established in the August of 1929, was a major theatrical event of the interwar years. The Festival began with a season dedicated to the plays of George Bernard Shaw, and was initiated by Sir Barry Jackson, the founder and then Director of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, in association with the lessee of the Malvern Theatre, Roy Limbert. This first season included a prestigious English premiere of Shaw's new play, *The Apple Cart*, alongside less-frequently revived works such as *Back to Methuselah*, *Heartbreak House* and *Caesar and Cleopatra*. The Festival became an annual event and continued for ten seasons before the outbreak of World War II in 1939. It returned for one final season in 1949.

Jackson also expanded the repertoire following its first season as he introduced the work of playwrights other than Shaw as early as 1930: ultimately it presented sixty-five plays by forty different authors, which included twenty different Shaw plays consisting of six British premieres, two of which were world premieres.[1] These productions often featured an impressive cast of some of the Birmingham Rep's most well-known performers such as Cedric Hardwicke, Edith Evans and Scott Sunderland. In addition to the plays, the Festival also offered accompanying events such as balls, exhibitions, tea-time talks and lectures involving a list of influential participants and speakers such as Allardyce Nicoll and Lascelles Abercrombie. During this time, the Festival

[1] The plays to receive their British premieres in Malvern were *The Apple Cart* (1929), *Too True to be Good* (1932), *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1935) and *Buoyant Billions* (1949). *Geneva* (1938) and *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939) also had their world premieres in Malvern. I have not included *Shakes versus Shav* in the numbers presented here as this play was not included in the official repertoire of the Festival but as I will explain in Chapter Five, this is a play shaped by Shaw's involvement with Malvern.

attracted both national and international visitors and was covered by the press both in England and abroad. Furthermore, the output of the Festival also influenced the theatrical scene in London's West End as a number of its productions were subsequently transferred to London, with some holding successful runs in their new homes in the capital.[2]

According to Jackson, the concept of a drama festival in Malvern emerged during a discussion between Jackson and Shaw in Blackhill near Malvern where Jackson resided in 1928. Jackson explained in an interview in 1951 that Shaw expressed immense enthusiasm for the idea and promised to write a new play for the event which ultimately resulted in *The Apple Cart*: 'My proposition met with something more than the customary twinkling enthusiasm which has been of unfathomable help to innumerable adventurers. "I must write you a play," he immediately said.'[3]

This proposition was then presented to the lessee of the Malvern Theatre, Roy Limbert. Limbert, born in Surrey in 1893, had begun his career in theatrical management in 1911, and became general manager for a production of *The Girl in the Train* between 1912 and 1913. He then toured with his own concert parties before joining the army as he served the Bedfordshire regiment between 1914 and 1919. In 1923, he formed Advertisers Ltd., the company through which he leased the theatre in Malvern.[4] By 1929, Limbert was the lessee and manager of the Malvern Theatre and a director of a number of playhouses in Sussex

[2] For instance, Rudolf Besier's *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* which received its world premiere in the 1930 season of the Festival had 530 performances at the Queen's Theatre.
[3] *Drama: The Quarterly Review of Theatre*, n.s.20 (Spring 1951), 29-31, quoted in George Bernard Shaw and Sir Barry Jackson, *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Barry Jackson,* ed. by L. W. Conolly (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 35.
[4] 'Mr. Roy Limbert', *The Times*, 30 November 1954, p. 11.

and elsewhere.[5] Limbert assumed a central role throughout the twelve seasons of the Festival. The Festival books announced the first seven seasons as developed by Jackson in association with Limbert and as the correspondence between Jackson and Limbert analysed in Chapter Four demonstrates, Limbert was involved in making key decisions regarding the development of the Festival during this time. Jackson and Limbert then formed the Malvern Festival Ltd. in 1936 in order to avoid Entertainment Tax and according to the Festival books both managers acted as the company's directors. Following the 1937 season and Jackson's departure, Limbert assumed sole control of the Festival and presented the Festival's three final seasons.[6] Moreover, Limbert transferred some of the plays from the Festival including Shaw's *Geneva*, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* and *Buoyant Billions* to theatres in London.[7]

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[5] *Malvern Festival Book 1929*, p. 35.

[6] The Festival books for the seasons in 1938 and 1939 announce the Festival as presented by Roy Limbert in association with Cedric Hardwicke (I have not been able to locate a copy of the book for the Festival in 1949 in order to determine if this trend continued in this final season). However, there is very little evidence to suggest that Hardwicke assumed an active role in organising the Festival. For instance, the *Observer* reported in 1939 that: 'Mr. Roy Limbert will direct the Festival as he has up to recently in conjunction with Sir Barry Jackson. Management this year is described as being "in association with Cedric Hardwicke". I asked what exactly this implied, seeing that Sir Cedric is 4,000 miles away in Hollywood. The answer is that Sir Cedric hoped to take an active part in the direction of the Festival, but that at last moment his Hollywood commitments prevented him from doing so. He has, however been in touch with Mr. Limbert by cable. Next year he hopes to take part in the direction in person' ('The Malvern Festival: Mr. Shaw and Charles II', *Observer,* 30 July 1939, p. 9). In my research, I have not found any records of the specifics of Hardwicke's involvement with organising the Festival. This seems to suggest that Hardwicke's reputation and profile was used by Limbert for generating interest in the Festival and adding to its prestige rather than the presence of a working partnership between these two individuals similar to that between Jackson and Limbert in the previous seasons.

[7] Limbert presented *Geneva* at the Saville in 1938, *In Good King Charles's Golden Day* at the New Theatre in 1940 and *Buoyant Billions* at the Princes in 1949. In addition to these Shavian productions, Limbert presented 'a number of West End stage successes' in his career and also worked with Jack Hylton in some of his productions in London ('Mr. Roy





From left to right, Fig. 1. Sir Barry Jackson (*Malvern Festival Book 1929*, p. 16), Fig. 2. George Bernard Shaw (*Malvern Festival Book 1929*, p. 4) and Fig. 3. Roy Limbert (*Malvern Festival Book 1929*, p. 35).

Although Jackson's recollection of the establishment of the Festival presents the concept of a festival dedicated to Shaw in Malvern as a natural and organic development, there were many contradictions between Shaw's public image and that of Malvern. The following quote reported in the *Malvern Gazette* in 1929 from the *Irish Times*, in which the writer expressed surprise at Shaw's arrival in Malvern is a useful way to begin. The views of this particular correspondent signify some of those disparities between Shaw and Malvern, and as a result introduce key points of tension between the Festival with Shaw as its central figure and Malvern as its location:

> One wonders whether there is not implied irony in the setting of a Bernard Shaw Festival in such a setting as one finds here […] This is a city of infinite quiet; no rattle of tram cars strikes the ear or irritates the nerve and the only noise of

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Limbert', *Manchester Guardian*, 30 November 1954, p. 8). For a list of Limbert's productions in London see 'Limbert, Roy', in *Who Was Who, A & C Black, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing plc*, < http://www.ukwhoswho.com/view/article/oupww/whowaswho/U239868, accessed 27 April 2016> [accessed 15 April 2016]). Limbert's interest in the West End is also apparent in his involvement with the Festival. As I will demonstrate in Chapter Four, he aimed to create a more popular festival in Malvern than Jackson's policies allowed with the hope of transferring Malvern productions to London.

> modernity is the hum of the touring motor-car or lordly bus [….] And the scarlet of thousands of geraniums gives the only suggestion that the author of "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism" is the object of a festival. How far Shaw's fame has carried him from the hated and feared revolutionary of twenty years ago may be gathered when he is feted in the quiet respectability of Shakespeare's England. Malvern is no city of youth, everything here points to the past.[8]

The location of this quote in the *Irish Times* is significant, as it highlights the lack of prior connection between Shaw and Malvern. Shaw was born in Dublin and, by contrast to the festival dedicated to William Shakespeare in Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon, the connection between Shaw and Malvern was unclear.

Moreover, the *Irish Times* also drew an implicit contrast between Malvern and Shaw, the 'fellow of infinite jest'. By 1929, Shaw was a well-known playwright and politician. Some of Shaw's most publicly successful plays had by this point been performed in London including *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), *Pygmalion* (1914) and *Saint Joan* (1924), turning Shaw into a household name. Amid rising political tension in Europe during the interwar years, Shaw also became increasingly vocal in expressing his views on events in the continent. Shaw's views on the political landscape in Europe during this period often sparked controversy in the English press with some commentators identifying Shaw as a fascist sympathiser. For instance in October 1927, a series of correspondence involving Shaw was published which included

[8] 'The Recent Festival: Dublin's Comments', *Malvern Gazette*, 13 September 1929, p. 3.

a letter to the secretary of the Secretariat of the Labour and Socialist International, Friedrich Adler, dated February the same year. In this letter, Shaw praised Mussolini's efforts in realising a socialist state and explained: 'Some of the things Mussolini has done and some that he is threatening to do go further in the direction of socialism than the English Labour Party could yet venture if they were in power.'[9] This letter sparked a fierce exchange between Shaw and Adler amongst other critics who opposed Shaw's evaluation of Mussolini's achievements. Thus in 1929 and ahead of the first season of the Festival, Shaw's reputation as a controversial and opinionated playwright and politician which had surrounded the dramatist from his earlier days as a result of plays such as *Widowers' Houses* was now even stronger. Consequently, the public image of Shaw as a rambunctious revolutionary figure of the latter part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century as constructed through his plays and politics clashed with the image of Malvern as a 'city of infinite quiet'.

1. Malvern Prior to the Festival

This image of Malvern as a 'city of infinite quiet' is a reasonably accurate depiction of this town in the early twentieth century. During the Victorian era and as a result of the rise of the water cure industry in this town, Malvern had been a tourist destination. While by the early twentieth century such tourism had declined, Malvern, with its reputation as a health resort, continued to attract an older group of visitors.[10] The water cure in Malvern was developed in the mid-nineteenth century by two doctors, James Gully and James Wilson, who

[9] 'Mr. Shaw and Mussolini: Fascist Leader Finds an Unexpected Apologist', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 October 1927, p. 11.
[10] Brian Smith, *A History of Malvern* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1964), p. 234. Malvern retains this cachet to this day as you can still purchase 'Malvern' bottled water.

modelled Malvern on German spa towns such as Silesia and enjoyed great success in this enterprise as Wilson reportedly earned £10,000 a year at the height of his career.[11]

Malvern is today comprised of four major areas: Great Malvern in the centre, Malvern Link in the north, and West Malvern and the Malvern Wells in the South (see map in Figure 4 below). Each of these areas was once a separate community but the four regions gradually merged to form the boundaries which currently exist. Prior to the rise of the water cure in the nineteenth century, the Malvern Wells were the main area of focus for visitors who travelled to the region in order to use its water which already had a reputation for possessing healing qualities. However, as a result of the establishment of the water cure which required patients to remain in Malvern for weeks, Great Malvern soon became the centre as most hotels and services were concentrated in this area.[12]

The popularity of the water cure continued until the late nineteenth century when visiting numbers began to gradually dwindle. Wilson's death in 1867 marked the beginning of the end for this profession as it lost one its most famous makers. This loss accompanied by a decline in interest in the cure as a result of a wave of scientific questioning about its reliability gradually deprived the town of the trade brought in by the visitors as the area's main source of income.[13]

It was amid this context that the Malvern Council decided to establish a theatre in Malvern in order to attract more visitors to the town. Thus, as Malvern did not possess a theatre until 1928, the town possessed few theatrical credentials to justify the existence of a high profile drama festival. The Malvern Council purchased the Assembly

[11] Smith, p. 197.
[12] Smith, p. 186.
[13] Smith, p. 210.

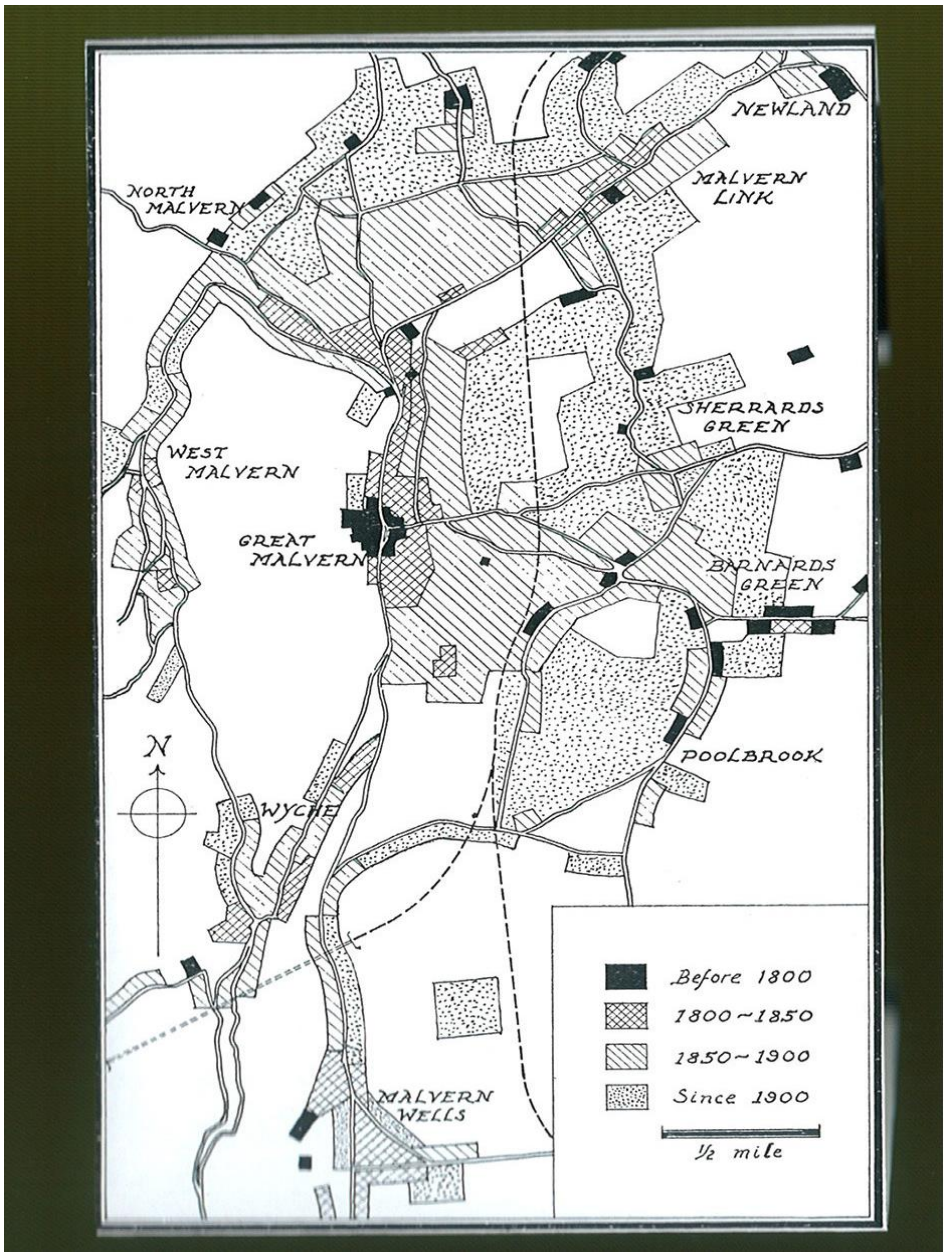


Fig. 4. ‘The Growth of the Town’, taken from Smith, p. 216.

Halls and adjoining Gardens for £17,000 each in 1927 in order to pave the way for the construction of a new playhouse to rent to theatre managers. The Council then commissioned drastic changes to be made to the Assembly Halls: the auditorium floor was raked, a circle was added, and the proscenium arch was widened. Furthermore, a stage tower was erected and a new entrance for the public was built.[14] The Council's decision to establish a new theatre in the town, however, was met with strong local opposition in Malvern as many questioned the money spent on the project, and such questioning ultimately led to a public inquiry. The evidence which remains of the speeches made at this inquiry suggests that representatives of the Council struggled to justify the establishment of a playhouse in Malvern especially amid accusations of overspending. In defence of the decisions made, Whatley, a clerk for the Council asserted:

> Throughout there had been no lavish expenditure in any direction, and while they would not call it a theatre for a provincial town, it was theatre of a very high-class and one certainly in keeping with a place like Malvern. It was hoped it would draw people from outside the Malvern district, and that it would be entirely satisfactory to the residents in the place, and be a great advantage to the people outside, who would come there and tell their friends, and thus perhaps add to the population of the place.[15]

[14] Gerald Morice, *A Brief History of the Malvern Festival Theatre*, 1978. (A copy of this leaflet is available in the Malvern Library among the documents related to the Festival).
[15] 'Ministry Surprised: Malvern Assembly Rooms', *Malvern Gazette*, 1 March 1929, p. 4.

It is precisely this incongruity between the theatre created and its regional location which raised questions regarding the money spent. The small population in Malvern compared to the larger towns and cities in England such as London and Birmingham in which such theatres already existed could not justify the appeal of the new theatre.[16] Furthermore, as Whatley's explanation also indicates, there might be little visible economic benefit for most inhabitants of the town as a result of the theatre. Whatley failed to demonstrate the manner in which adding to the 'population of the place' would benefit the local people of Malvern, which accompanied by his use of 'perhaps' indicates his own uncertainty over the benefit of this new theatre for the town. Furthermore, this lack of economic potential in the theatre is reflected in the inspector's report regarding the finance of the future theatre as he argues that as a result of the loan charges for the theatre which were placed at around £3400 a year, it would cost approximately £4000 to keep the theatre going. This

[16] As Chapter One will demonstrate, the interwar period was a difficult time for theatres as few playhouses were built and many larger theatres were transformed into cinemas. There were, however, a few regional theatres built such as the Oxford Playhouse established in 1923 and the Festival Theatre, Cambridge which opened in 1926. Both playhouses were, however, in contrast to Malvern and the involvement of the Malvern Council, built by wealthy benefactors. Alfred Ballard paid for building the Oxford Playhouse and Terence Gray commissioned the renovation of Theatre Royal, Barnwell, and transformed it into the Festival Theatre. Furthermore, while Malvern is a small town compared to Oxford and Birmingham, the Malvern Theatre was eventually larger than the playhouses in the mentioned cities. Both the Oxford Playhouse and the Birmingham Rep seated approximately five hundred people while Malvern's theatre had a capacity of nine hundred seats. The theatre in Malvern was also larger than some of the few newly built theatres in London during this period. For instance, according to the *Observer*, the Fortune Theatre, opened in 1924, seated only between six hundred and seven hundred people ('New London Theatre: Opening of the Fortune', *Observer*, 9 November 1930, p. 15.) However, there were some larger theatres built in the West End in 1930 such as the Prince Edward Theatre seating 1650 (see 'The Prince Edward: A Surprise Theatre in Soho', *Observer*, 16 March 1930, p. 11.) and the Cambridge Theatre with the capacity of 1200 people (see 'The Cambridge Theatre: Modernity in Seven Dials', *Observer*, 31 August 1930, p. 9. Also see Rebecca D. Monte, *British Theatre and Performance 1900-1950* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 97) for a list of newly built theatres in the interwar period).

would be difficult as the rent agreed with its first manager, Limbert, was only £1425 a year.[17]

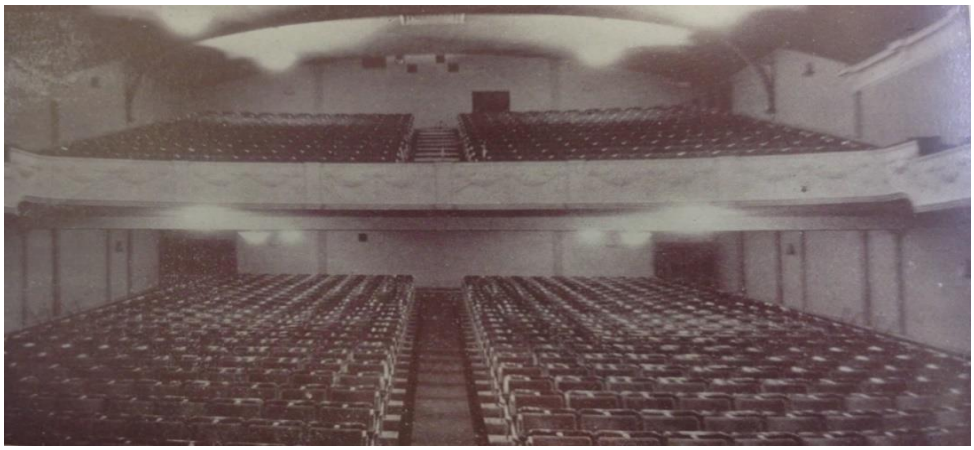


Fig. 5. A view from the Malvern Theatre taken from 'Malvern Theatre', *Malvern Festival Book 1929*, pp. 37-39 (p. 38).



Fig. 6. A view from the Malvern Theatre taken from 'Malvern Theatre', p. 38.

[17] 'Ministry Surprised', p. 4. The Little Theatres mentioned, as Chapter One will demonstrate, also struggled financially. The Birmingham Rep was only able to continue as a result of Jackson's financial support.



Fig. 7. A view from the Malvern Theatre taken from 'Malvern Theatre', p. 39.



Fig. 8. The entrance to the Malvern Theatre taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1930*, p. 44.

The high rate of unemployment in the town towards the end of the 1920s intensified opposition to the Council's decision to invest financially in the establishment of a theatre in Malvern. As with many other areas in England that suffered as a result of the Great Depression, Malvern struggled with rising unemployment. The *Malvern Gazette* reported in March 1929 that: 'The local labour position remains very grave, as 303 persons are still registered as unemployed whereas a year ago the number was only 190, which sufficiently indicates the serious position now.'[18] Furthermore, the dramatic rise in Malvern's population also contributed to this high rate of unemployment. As demonstrated by the following table which presents the population figures of Malvern in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while the town's population hardly increased between 1901 and 1911 and remained at around 16,500, by 1921 it had risen to 17,812. Most of this increase occurred in the Link, the Wells and West Malvern.[19] Great Malvern had previously expanded at a higher rate compared with other areas of the town as most buildings of significance to visitors such as the hotels were concentrated in this area.[20] In addition to possessing a similar level of business opportunities as Great Malvern, the Link was also the site for the first series of council housing estates which would indicate a higher level of working-class population residing in this area.[21]

[18] 'Malvern Unemployment', *Malvern Gazette*, 1 March 1929, p. 6.
[19] Smith, p. 252.
[20] Smith, p. 186.
[21] Smith, p. 252.

Year	Population
1881	13,216
1901	16,449
1911	16,513
1921	17,812
1931	15,634
1939	18,459

Table 1. Figures taken from *A History of Malvern*, p. 232, p. 252, p. 260 and 'Malvern UD Through Time', Population Statistics, *A Vision of Britain Through Time* <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10042537/cube/TOT_POP> [accessed 16 August 2015]

In 1929, the majority of those unemployed were labourers previously employed in sectors such as painting, road works and the quarrying industry.[22] Indeed, the quarrying industry in Malvern would potentially provide jobs for the majority of those unemployed as it offered work to those also previously employed as stonemasons and steam lorry drivers. In contrast, the tourist industry was only likely to provide work for a small number of those unemployed in 1929 as only six were awaiting employment as hotel workers. Consequently, some local residents in Malvern pursued the strengthening of the quarrying industry as the solution to the issue of unemployment; in a letter to the *Malvern Gazette*, dated January 1929, one of those of the many unemployed expressed his interest in the prospects of the new year as he 'eagerly await[s] the much-desired revival of the industry and

[22] The list of professions and number of men waiting employment in each sector as published on 1 March 1929 in the *Malvern Gazette* is as follows: 12 carpenters, 18 bricklayers, 44 builders' labourers, 4 stone masons, 28 painters, 25 road labourers, 40 general labourers, 4 electricians, 6 motor mechanics, 9 hotel porters, 5 grooms, 3 coal carters, 4 steam lorry drivers, 11 motor drivers, 30 quarry labourers, 2 bakers, 4 shop assistants.

consequent employment'.[23]

2. The Festival 1929-1948

In addition to the incongruities between the public images of Shaw and Malvern, the development of the Festival following its first season presents further questions for both Shavian scholars and theatre historians. Although the Festival began as an event dedicated to Shaw, it adopted many new and fundamentally different identities throughout its history. The Festival introduced its first non-Shavian play in the second season in 1930 with Rudolf Besier's *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. This trend of presenting plays by writers other than Shaw continued in the following seasons, with the Festival including sixty plays by forty different playwrights in its twelve-season duration and Shaw's drama entirely absent from the seasons of 1931 and 1933. Thus, the Festival which began as an event dedicated to Shaw, fluctuated in the extent of its association with this playwright.

Just as with the differing relationships of the Festival with Shaw's work, so Jackson's support also did not remain as a constant feature of the Festival. The Malvern Festival was originally produced by the Birmingham Rep in association with the lessee of the Malvern Theatre, Limbert. However, a series of disagreements between the two managers - discussed in more detail in Chapter Four - ultimately led to Jackson's departure from the Festival in 1937 as Limbert assumed sole leadership of the event. Following Jackson's departure, which resulted in the termination of his financial support of the Festival, Limbert confronted increasing financial difficulties in presenting a festival which failed to produce sufficient income to be self-sustaining. Where Jackson pursued a policy of reviving lesser-known classics, Limbert's change to present

[23] 'Correspondence', *Malvern Gazette*, 18 January 1929, p. 4.

seasons compiled of solely new plays was also unsuccessful in generating sufficient public interest in the event. Consequently, while the Festival returned for a final season in 1949 following a hiatus caused by the outbreak of war in 1939, the Festival ultimately failed amid much opposition to the endeavour from local residents and a lack of funding from the Council.

As the only festival dedicated to this playwright in England, Malvern's fluctuating level of association with Shaw and its ultimate failure in remaining as the only festival focused on the works of this playwright in England is particularly noteworthy in relation to the playwright's contemporary public reception in this country. The only location currently holding an annual and professional Shaw festival is Ontario in Canada, where a Shaw festival modelled on the Malvern Festival was established in 1962. While a number of Shaw festivals were established in England immediately following the playwright's death in 1950, none of these were successful in remaining as a permanent feature on the English theatrical landscape, a failure that went hand-in-hand with a decline in Shaw's critical reputation in the second half of the twentieth century.

3. Malvern and the Critics

Despite the incongruities and paradoxes discussed above, the Malvern Festival has received little critical attention from either theatre historians or Shavian scholars. In critical studies of English theatre of the early twentieth century and the interwar period, the Festival is often absent or briefly mentioned. For instance, while in the introduction to the third volume of *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* Dennis Kennedy identifies the Festival as 'this most successful British dramatic festival

prior to the creation of the Edinburgh Festival in 1947',[24] the Festival is then absent from the remainder of the book, an absence which is especially emphatic in Viv Gardner's chapter, 'Provincial Stages, 1900-1934: Touring and Early Repertory Theatre'.[25]

The Festival has however received more substantial analysis in the context of discussions of the Birmingham Rep. In *The Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain*, George Rowell discusses the Festival in his chapter, *The Inter War years*. In the paragraph dedicated to the Festival which immediately follows a study of the development of the Birmingham Rep, Rowell provides a brief account of the development of the Festival, with a focus mainly on the years in which the Festival was managed by Jackson. Rowell identifies the audience of the Festival as 'highly sophisticated' and 'homogeneous' and refers to Jackson's aims in educating visitors to Malvern through lectures and tea-time talks and a 'strongly intellectual' repertoire.[26] However, Rowell fails to mention the incongruities between the public images of Shaw and Malvern and the disagreements between the co-managers of the Festival which led to Jackson's departure in 1937. Rowell's account, as with much of the scholarship surrounding the Festival, omits Limbert's role in the development of this venture and views the Festival as solely Jackson's endeavour.

T. C Kemp and J. C. Trewin offer more detailed accounts of the development of the Festival in their studies of the Birmingham Rep.

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[24] 'British Theatre, 1895-1946; Art, Entertainment, Audiences - an Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre: Volume 3, Since 1895,* ed. by Baz Kershaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 3-34 (p. 30).
[25] 'Provincial Stages, 1900-1934: Touring and Early Repertory Theatre', in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre: Volume 3*, ed. by Kershaw, pp. 60-68.
[26] The Inter-War Years', *The Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain*, ed. by George Rowell and Anthony Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 54-76 (p. 58).

Kemp has dedicated an entire chapter to the Festival and offers high praise for the Festival's achievements. However, Kemp overlooks the incongruities between the public images of Shaw and Malvern and describes the selection of Malvern as the location of the Festival as both 'happy' and 'obvious'.[27] Trewin presents a similar account of the establishment of the Festival in which Malvern is a predictable choice of location for a festival of drama as he argues that 'England has no hills more theatrical than the nine-mile ridge of the Malverns'. Moreover, he identifies the Festival as 'another outlier of the Birmingham Repertory' without acknowledging the differences between these two ventures.[28] While the Festival was closely associated with the Birmingham Rep, with many of Malvern's productions later transferred to Birmingham or the work of the Rep produced as part of the Festival, the Festival was in many ways a unique phenomenon. As a result of its location and format as an annual festival dedicated to a living patron, the Festival possessed many different characteristics to the work of the Birmingham Rep that was produced at the company's home base and in London.

A detailed analysis of the development of the Malvern Festival is also largely absent from Shavian studies. Brief references to the Festival are common; however, they are often included as merely biographical information on Shaw or in recording the setting of the first production of a particular play. In 'The Later Shaw', T. F. Evans analyses Shaw's later plays many of which received one of their first performances in Malvern such as *The Apple Cart*, *Too True to be Good* and *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*. While Malvern is mentioned on multiple occasions in the article, this is only to refer briefly to the first productions of specific

[27] *The Birmingham Repertory Theatre: Playhouse and the Man* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers Limited, 1943), p. 28.
[28] *The Birmingham Repertory Theatre: 1913-1963* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), p. 100.

plays as these plays are then analysed outside the context of these initial performances.[29] A similar pattern is repeated by other writers such as Judith Evans in *The Politics and Plays of Bernard Shaw* and in Gale K. Larson's article on Shaw's *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, ' '"In Good King Charles's Golden Days": An Imaginative and Truthful History'.[30] Moreover, as Peter Gahan explains, the criticism on Shaw's later plays is 'scant' and mainly 'negative'.[31] Thus, as these plays have been neglected or dismissed by many Shavian scholars, the significance of their connection with Malvern has also been largely overlooked. However, as I will argue in Chapter Five, Shaw's later plays are some of the dramatist's most avant-garde work and Malvern played a crucial role in their development.[32]

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[29] 'The Later Shaw', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Christopher Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 240-48.

[30] Judith Evans, *The Politics and Plays of Bernard Shaw* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2002), and Gale K. Larson, '"In Good King Charles's Golden Days": An Imaginative and Truthful History', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 19 (1999), 149-59.

[31] 'The Achievement of Shaw's Later Plays, 1920-1939', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 23 (2003), 27-35 (p. 27).

[32] In early critical studies of Shaw, these later plays are often either neglected or presented as an indication of Shaw's failing mind and loss of vigour as a playwright in the latter part of his life and career. Eric Bentley, for instance, in his biography of Shaw published in 1950 and immediately following the final season of the Festival, only briefly mentions two of the plays from this period, In *Good King* and *The Simpleton*. Bentley argues that in *The Simpleton*, Shaw uses some of the techniques he demonstrated in *Heartbreak House*, however, he concludes that this play is inferior to its predecessor as in *The Simpleton*, Shaw 'reduces the complex figures of *Heartbreak House* to allegorical symbols' (*Bernard Shaw* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1950), p. 163). Bentley's argument echoes similar sentiments expressed by Maurice Colbourne a year earlier when he described the period between 1929 and 1939 as a time in which the best of Shaw's work was behind him as 'the voice of the preacher' is heard in many of the plays of this era in order to repeat much of that which had been 'said before and better' (*The Real Bernard Shaw* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1949), p. 108). Other critics such as Margery Morgan (*The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw* (London: Methuen, 1972)), Gahan ('The Achievement of Shaw's Later Plays'), Martin Meisel (*Shaw and Nineteenth-Century Theatre* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963)), T. F. Evans ('The Later Shaw') and Leon Hugo

In 'Shaw and the Popular Context', Robert G. Everding presents a more detailed analysis of the Festival which begins to consider the impact of this event on Shaw's legacy.[33] Although the discussion on the Festival is brief and mainly consists of an overview of its history, Everding argues that the Malvern Festival inspired the creation of other Shaw festivals which followed. Everding extends this argument and offers a more detailed account of such festivals in his article, 'Planting Mulberry: A History of Shaw Festivals'.[34] In this article, Everding identifies festivals in America and Canada which replicated the model at Malvern. As Everding highlights, the absence of a British contribution to a discussion of Shaw festivals is particular noteworthy. However, Everding only briefly considers the questions which the development of such festivals and their locations pose in relation to Shaw's legacy as the purpose of the article is to provide a survey of Shaw festivals during and

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(*Bernard Shaw: Playwright and Preacher* (London: Methuen, 1971)) have since defended the plays from this form of criticism. The critical writing on this part of Shaw's career continues to be significantly less numerous than earlier periods. For instance, in the past five years only seven academic articles were published in which at least one of these plays were discussed: (*The Apple Cart*) Bernard F. Dukore, 'How to Win an Election', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 31 (2011), 179-191, (*Too True to be Good*) Christopher Wixson, '"These Noxious Microbes": Pathological Dramaturgy in George Bernard Shaw's Too True to be Good', in *Modern Drama*, 56.1 (Spring 2013), 1-18 and Yeong-Yoon Seo, 'Reading Bernard Shaw's Too True to Be Good: Illness and Vision for the Remedy', in *Journal for Modern British and American Drama*, 24.2 (August 2011), 111-38, (*The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*) Matthew Yde, 'Shaw's Stalinist Allegory: The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles', in *Modern Drama*, 56.1 (Spring 2013), 19-37, (*The Millionairess*) Laurie Douglas, 'Katherine Hepburn and The Millionairess', in *The Independent Shavian*, 46.1 (2010-2011), 32-35 and Matthew Yde, 'Building the City of God: Shaw's Provisional Superman', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 32 (2012), 117-132, (*Shakes versus Shav*) Christopher Wixson, 'Authorship and Shaw's Shakes versus Shav', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 33 (2013), 79-94). On the other hand, in the same period of time, there have been twenty seven articles published which discuss Shaw's first three plays; *Widowers' Houses*, *The Philanderer* and *Mrs Warren's Profession*.

[33] 'Shaw and the Popular Context', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Innes, pp. 309-33.

[34] 'Planting Mulberry: A History of Shaw Festivals', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 18 (1998), 67-93.

after Shaw's lifetime and thus Everding avoids considering such questions in detail. Furthermore, while Everding mentions the Malvern Festival's financial difficulties, the article paints a similar picture of the Festival as those offered by Kemp and Trewin, in which Jackson is presented as a champion of artistic innovation: 'The financial responsibility was assumed by Jackson, a wealthy theatrical visionary who fortunately measured success artistically more than economically.'[35] As this thesis will demonstrate, the development of the Festival presents a more complex picture of Jackson's time in management than one in which he single-handedly defended artistic innovation against a commercialised theatre.

Vivian Elliot offers the most comprehensive study of the Festival in her article 'Genius Loci: The Malvern Festival Tradition' in which she provides a detailed overview of the development of the Festival throughout its twelve seasons.[36] This survey includes a range of information on the plays, performers and organisers involved in addition to an overview of the activities accompanying the performances. Thus, this article is a valuable source of information for constructing an overall picture of the development of the Festival. However, similarly to other studies of the Festival mentioned thus far, many of the questions and incongruities present in the establishment and development of the Festival as previously outlined also remain unaddressed in Elliot's study. For instance, Elliot's view of the Festival adheres to the narrative discussed in which the Festival is presented as a 'magical theatrical experience' with few impediments:

> Despite Bernard Shaw's assertion that they were making a

[35] 'Planting Mulberry: A History of Shaw Festivals', p. 67.
[36] 'Genius Loci: The Malvern Festival', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 3 (1983), 191-218.

> theatre at Malvern, when Sir Barry Jackson of Birmingham Repertory Theatre fame established the Malvern Festival in 1929, far more than a theatre was being made in Worcestershire. Jackson was creating a magical theatrical experience – a dramatic festival set in near-idyllic rural surroundings and devised as a tribute to the genius of a living dramatist.[37]

Moreover, Elliot attributes the reason for the demise of the Festival to Jackson's decision to withdraw his support: 'Although in 1939 and 1949 James Bridie, J. B. Priestley and H. K. Ayliff would act as Malvern Festival rallying points, and the Shavian dramatic presence could afford a measure of Malvern continuity, much of the Festival's magic disappeared with the withdrawal of the man who had made his festival dream a reality.'[38] This evaluation of the Festival disregards the financial difficulties with which the Festival was confronted during its entire twelve seasons, including the time in which the Festival was managed by Jackson. During Jackson's time managing the Festival, his financial support allowed the Festival to continue, but following Jackson's withdrawal, the Festival's lack of funds ultimately resulted in its demise.

4. Regionalism

Although the Malvern Festival has thus far received little critical interest, in recent years there has been a wave of academic scholarship focused on regional theatres and performance. In response to Marvin Carlson's 'Become Less Provincial', in which he argues that theatre scholars should

[37] Elliot, p. 191.
[38] Elliot, p. 213.

adopt a 'more global perspective', both Jo Robinson and Ros Merkin present the case for the inclusion of the local into theatre history scholarship.[39] Robinson argues that in a time in which theatre historians are encouraged to think global, a 'combination of the local and global' is the 'most useful stance'.[40] This outlook is then reflected in her research into the performance culture of Nottingham in the Victorian era through the 'Mapping Performance Culture: Nottingham 1857-1867' project.[41] Merkin extends Robinson's argument beyond globalisation to also include the 'old binary of the metropolitan and the local', highlighting the exclusion and neglect of regional theatres from historical accounts of British theatre such as Michael Billington's *The State of the Nation: British Theatre since 1945* and other works as evidence to insist:

> This is not to argue that the broadening and widening of theatre history that has taken place is not welcome, but to ask what we might be missing in what can become a stampede to follow fashions and trends in theatre history. If an inclusive history of world theatre is not to leave out Times Square or Bunraku, why exclude Liverpool?[42]

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[39] 'Become Less Provincial', in *Theatre Survey*, 45. 2 (November 2004), 177-180 (p. 179).
[40] 'Becoming More Provincial? The Global and the Local in Theatre History', in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 23.3 (August 2007), 229-240 (pp. 239-240).
[41] See http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mapmoment/. Also see articles and chapters such as 'The Performance of Anti-Theatrical Prejudice in a Provincial Victorian Town: Nottingham and its New Theatre Royal, 1865', in *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and Film*, 35. 2 (2009), 10-28, 'Mapping the Field: Moving through Landscape', in *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 15.4 (2010), 86-96 and 'Mapping the Place of Pantomime in a Victorian Town', in *Victorian Pantomime: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Jim Davis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 137-54 for Robinson's research into Nottingham's Victorian performance culture.
[42] 'Liverpool', in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, ed. by David Wiles and Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 91-103.

Merkin has attempted to fill this gap through her research on the Liverpool Playhouse which in addition to this article also includes a book length study, *Liverpool Playhouse: A Theatre and Its City*.[43]

Other recent studies into regional performances and theatres include Jill Sullivan's research into pantomime productions in Birmingham, Nottingham and Manchester between 1860 and 1900.[44] Furthermore, in *Regional Modernisms*, a collection of essays which explores the local affiliations of various modernist writers, James Moran explores the work of a number of regional reps and the ways in which they adopted the model initially established by Yeats at the Abbey Theatre.[45] Finally, in *The Glory of the Garden: English Theatre and the Arts Theatre Council 1984-2009* various scholars examine the work of a variety of regional theatres such as the Birmingham Rep, Bristol Old Vic, Liverpool Everyman and Nottingham Playhouse amongst others, allowing a comparative context to develop.[46]

This thesis follows such research in order to explore both the Malvern Festival as a regional theatrical event and also Shaw's local connections. Although Shaw's metropolitan affiliations have been widely discussed by critics through the research conducted into Shaw's work both in London and Dublin in addition to his transnational reputation, scholarship into Shaw's involvement with the regional reps and the

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[43] *Liverpool Playhouse: A Theatre and its City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).
[44] *The Politics of the Pantomime: Regional Identity in the Theatre, 1860-1900* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011).
[45] 'Pound, Yeats, and the Regional Repertory Theatres', in *Regional Modernisms*, ed. by Neal Alexander and James Moran (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 83-104.
[46] *The Glory of the Garden: English Theatre and the Arts Theatre Council 1984-2009*, ed. by Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010).

Malvern Festival remains scarce.[47] Furthermore, much of the scholarship into English theatre of the interwar years is focused on the capital and particularly the West End. Thus this thesis seeks to fill this gap in both Shavian scholarship and theatre history. I aim to widen the geographical scope of Shaw studies by focusing upon Malvern and regional theatre. Moreover, a study of the development of the Malvern Festival also extends the range of locations which academic literature has thus far identified as places where significant dramatic projects were occurring in this period. As this thesis demonstrates, the Malvern Festival and the regional reps were significant in promoting Shaw as a playwright and in staging his plays at times prior to their arrival in London. Furthermore, the Malvern Festival was a key event in the interwar years in which experimental theatre was offered in a repertoire which on many accounts differed from the selection of plays presented in the West End.

5. Methodology

In order to piece together the development of the Festival and Shaw's involvement with this venture, I have consulted a number of archives such as the documents relating to the Birmingham Rep and Jackson held at the Library of Birmingham, the Shaw collections at the British Library and local documents and newspapers at the Malvern Library.[48]

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[47] For instance in 2012 *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies* focused as its theme on 'Shaw and the City'. The articles in this collection considered Shaw's associations with locations such as London, Dublin and Chicago.

[48] The Barry Jackson archive in the Library of Birmingham consists of thirty boxes (with the reference number MS 978) which include a series of documents related to Jackson and the Birmingham Rep such as correspondence, publications, lectures, and information on plays and artists. There is a large collection of material associated with Shaw held in the archives at the British Library. In this research, I have consulted letters and meeting minutes related to Shaw's involvement with the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee (MS 50679 and RP 4010). The documents on the Malvern Festival at the Malvern Library

Consequently the direction of this thesis is shaped by the nature and limitations of this material related to the Festival. As much of the information related to the events of the Festival only survives in newspaper reports, it is impossible to create a complete picture of the shape of the Festival and its audience. These are reviews and pieces written by critics who present their views and observations on the Festival according to their own personal interests and opinions. While I have also used national newspaper reports in order to develop a broader understanding of the Festival and the context in which it occurred, this has only reduced the limitations involved in using newspaper articles and thus these challenges continue to inform my research project.

While the documents available at the archives in Birmingham, Malvern and London contain much useful information on the Festival, there are gaps in the evidence that exists. Unfortunately, the financial ledgers of the Malvern Festival do not appear to be extant, so I have been unable to locate any specific information on the finances of the Festival. Therefore, I have made deductions from other sources (such as correspondence between Shaw, Jackson and Limbert, as well as newspaper reports) in order to assess the commercial viability of the Festival at various points. Thus, despite the absence of specific and detailed records about costs and takings of individual productions, it has nonetheless been possible for me to use other data in order to acquire a general understanding of the Festival's finances.

There also some ambiguities and gaps present in the information available on one of the central figures in the organisation of the Festival, Limbert. While there is a brief biography on Limbert included in the Festival books and repeated in the *Malvern Gazette*, no more substantial

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are uncatalogued but include festival books, photographs and newspaper articles.

or detailed accounts of his life have ever been published. Moreover, I have encountered only two pieces of writing indicating Limbert's wider national profile in the form of brief obituaries published in *The Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* announcing Limbert's death in 1954. Consequently, I have used Limbert's policies in managing the Festival following Jackson's departure in 1937 and his stances on the issues discussed in his correspondence with Jackson and other members of the Birmingham Rep as evidence to draw my conclusions on some of the intentions behind Limbert's involvement with the Malvern Festival.

Some of the information I have gathered is taken from the available correspondence between major figures involved with the Festival which has presented its own limitations. At times there are ambiguities regarding this evidence as, for instance, the identity of the writer or receiver of the letters is unclear. However, the content of the letters and the style of writing and presentation of the correspondence has clarified many of these uncertainties.[49] A larger challenge in regards to this evidence has been the gaps present in the documents available. The content of the surviving letters reveals that they formed merely a part of a broader correspondence between Shaw, Jackson and Limbert, which is now partly lost. However, a small collection of these letters remains at the Library of Birmingham (the correspondence between Limbert and Jackson is the result of my work in the archives while the writing between Jackson and Shaw is taken from *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Barry Jackson* which has been edited by Leonard Conolly). As a result, responses to certain letters are not available while long periods of time are sometimes not represented in

[49] When I have not been able to identify the writer, I have made that clear in my writing. However, as this has been the case only for letters from third parties to Limbert or Jackson, this has not affected my arguments regarding the sentiments expressed by these two individuals in Chapter Four.

the correspondence which exists. In order to overcome this difficulty, I have looked to known events in the lives of these individuals and their actions as likely indications of their responses to the contents of these specific letters.

However, it is often a difficult task to determine Shaw's stance on the issues discussed in this thesis as this dramatist is well known for presenting a variety of different views on the same issue, at times contradictory and paradoxical. In order to present a more nuanced view of Shaw's opinions and thoughts which considers these difficulties, I have attempted to contextualise his expressed views. This has involved placing his words alongside his actions to determine to what extent Shaw's opinions on a particular issue can be taken seriously when considered alongside the events in his life. As Shavian scholars know full well, we need to be wary about decontextualized quotations, as Shaw made very different statements about precisely the same issues at different periods in his life.

The resources available to me for conducting this research have also influenced the shape and focus of this project. In this thesis, I explore both the development of the Festival and Shaw's involvement with this venture. Thus for instance, in Chapters Two and Three I discuss Shaw's plays, *The Apple Cart* and *Too True to be Good* respectively, while in Chapter Four, I examine the conflicts between Limbert and Jackson as co-managers of the Festival. As information regarding the Festival is limited, this is partly due to the nature of the documents I have uncovered and then used in my research. However, I also argue that the development of the Festival as an event in the history of early twentieth-century English theatre and its involvement with Shaw are intertwined. I hope that this research is of interest to both theatre historians and Shavian scholars as in this thesis I use the Malvern

Festival as a case study for a wider series of debates in early twentieth-century English theatre, such as the role of theatre in society and its modes of administration, while linking these debates to Shaw's position, as an influential playwright and theatre critic of this period, on these issues.

6. Terminology

At this point, it is fruitful to explain two terms which appear in this thesis. Firstly, I have selected to use the term 'regional' in place of 'provincial' when discussing productions and playhouses positioned outside the major urban areas. As a number of critics have demonstrated, the term 'provincial' possesses pejorative connotations and as a result, I use the term 'regional' in order to avoid such associations.[50]

Secondly, in the discussions on the Festival and its audience in this thesis, I use the term 'elite' and its various forms such as 'elitist' and 'elitism'. The term 'elite' was first popularized by the engineer and later writer on economics and political sociology, Vilfredo Pareto in the early twentieth century. In *The Rise and Fall of the Elites*, originally published in Italian in 1901, Pareto defines 'elite' as the 'strongest, the most energetic, and most capable'. Pareto presents the thesis that power in society always resides with the elite as leadership is exchanged and at times shared between different elite groups but never transferred to the 'oppressed': 'The history of man is the history of continuous replacement of certain elites: as one ascends, another declines.'[51]

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[50] For instance Neal Alexander and James Moran discuss this outlook on the term 'provincial' in their introduction to *Regional Modernisms* (p. 9).
[51] *The Rise and Fall of the Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology* (New Jersey: The Bedminster Press Incorporated, 1968), p. 36.

A study of the elite later also appeared in the work of Gaetano Mosca in his writing on what he identifies as the 'ruling class'. As Mosca describes and analyses a series of political events and movements in history, like Pareto, he also identifies two distinct 'classes of people': 'a class that rules and a class that is ruled'.[52] According to Mosca in all types of society from those that are 'very meagrely developed' to 'the most advanced and powerful societies',[53] this type of classification is inevitable as 'democratic, monarchical and aristocratic principles function side by side in every political organism'.[54] As George Lowell Field and John Higley observe, embedded in the writing of these early theoreticians on the elite is an acceptance of 'elitism as a moral point of view and as a respectable intellectual orientation'.[55] Thus at a time in the early twentieth century when such sentiments were not uncommon as demonstrated by the dominance of modernist literature by central figures such as T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and D.H. Lawrence, who all possessed contempt for democracy, Pareto and Mosca presented elitism as an acceptable and in many ways inevitable form of the dissemination of social and political power in society.

I argue that this theoretical framework around the concept of the elite is useful for explaining and analysing some of the events in and sentiments around theatre in England in the early twentieth century. As this thesis will demonstrate, in this period, there was a general consensus among many theatre practitioners,

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[52] *The Ruling Class*, trans. by Hanna D. Kahn, ed. and rev. by Arthur Livingston (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1939; repr. Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 50.
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] Mosca, p. 52.
[55] *Elitism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1989), p. 3.

including Jackson and Shaw, that theatre in England also required leadership by an elite minority in order to implement the series of reforms pursued by these individuals. I use the definition of 'elitism' outlined by Morton W. Bloomfield as 'the attitude of mind that believes in the necessity of specialization and hierarchy of specialists and experts' to describe the approach pursued by Jackson and Shaw towards the organisation of early twentieth-century English theatre.[56] I argue that this group of theatre practitioners advocated a similar need for 'specialists and experts' to regulate and reform popular taste in theatre.

For these individuals the superiority of this minority over the majority which underlies the definition of the term 'elite' offered by both Pareto and Mosca, is that which a later writer on this concept, Charles Wright Mills, describes as 'moral' or 'psychological'. Mills argues that while the elite are at times an economic or social group, they sometimes 'quite simply, are people of superior character and energy'.[57] According to this understanding of the elite, the rest of the population is considered as a 'mass' that 'sluggishly relaxes into uncomfortable mediocrity'.[58] I will demonstrate in this thesis that as Jackson and Shaw presented individuals like themselves as the elite required to govern and reform theatre, the rhetoric they employed emphasised the psychological and more specifically intellectual superiority they supposedly held over the general population. As a result, they scorned and criticised popular taste in drama which they argued had forsaken the intellect for an interest in spectacle.

To position the debates surrounding early twentieth-century

[56] 'Elitism in the Humanities', *Daedalus*, 4. 103 (1974), 128-37 (p. 128).
[57] *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 11.
[58] Mills, pp. 13-14.

English theatre amid this theoretical framework around elites and elitism thus helps to explain some of the difficulties experienced by those seeking a reform of English theatre during this period. As I will demonstrate in this thesis, there were a series of ventures throughout the early twentieth century preceding the Malvern Festival, such as the Independent Theatre Society and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court theatre through which individual organisers also attempted to present a more experimental repertoire than that offered in London's West End. However, like the Festival, these events also failed to become permanent fixtures on the English theatrical landscape. Looking again to the theorisation of elites and elitism might help to explain why this is the case. In discussions around elitism, there is an emphasis on the exclusivity of the elite as Mills argues members of elite groups are 'aware of themselves as a social class', which ultimately causes them to 'close their ranks to outsiders'.[59] Despite this evident split between elite and non-elite groups, Field and Higley argue that it is the manner in which the elite tackle this divide which determines their level of success in exercising dominance over the non-elite. Field and Higley question the elitist paradigm described by Pareto and Mosca who argue that the elite have monopolized all social and political power. Instead, they argue that the elite is consistently 'checked by non-elites' whose support the elite groups require in order to implement their plans.[60] Thus according to Field and Higley, elites are always manoeuvring their plans amongst those of non-elite groups and require some level of support from these groups in order to

[59] Mills, p. 11.
[60] Field and Higley, p. 19.

implement their decisions. Events in early twentieth-century English theatre support this argument: as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, it was the inability of the likes of Shaw and Jackson to reconcile their views on theatre with that of the wider public as reflected in the lack of popularity of the ventures mentioned which resulted in their failure. Moreover, more developed definitions of the term 'elite' as those suggested by Field, Higley and Mills compared to those offered by Pareto and Mosca, emphasise the significance of the ability of the elite to exercise social and political influence in the distinction between such groups and the non-elite. While supporters of this movement for the reform of English theatre during this period emphasised their role as the elite to achieve the changes required, they lacked any substantial wider social and political influence outside of their exclusive social group and clique. It was this lack of influence which curbed many of their plans as they fought (often with little success) for the support of the government and private benefactors to fund and support their campaigns.

Furthermore, the work of Mills in the 1950s and Bourdieu later in the 1970s also help us to analyse and critique the approaches of Jackson and Shaw for reforming English theatre. Both Mills and Bourdieu argue that any supposed superiority of the elite over the non-elite is never innate and is instead a direct result of circumstances. Mills connects the moral or psychological traits of the elite to their social experiences to argue that 'the kind of moral and psychological beings men become is in large part determined by the values they experience and the institutional

roles they are allowed and expected to play'.[61] Moreover, in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu connects social and economic power to the cultural tastes and preferences of an individual in order to argue that taste is a marker of class:

> The science of taste and of cultural consumption begins with a transgression that is in no way aesthetic: it has to abolish the sacred frontier which makes legitimate culture a separate universe, in order to discover the intelligible relations which unite apparently incommensurable 'choices', such as preferences in music and food, painting and sport, literature and hairstyle.[62]

As the evidence on the demographics of the audience of the Festival discussed in Chapter Two will demonstrate, I argue that this confluence between economic and cultural power was also apparent amongst those attending the Festival who themselves often constituted a distinct economic and cultural elite. As my analysis shows, those participating in the Festival were able to afford the expense and time required to travel to Malvern and remain in the town for the duration of the Festival. Furthermore, the interest of this group of individuals in Shaw and the work of the Birmingham Rep, which in the guiding philosophy of the Festival were positioned in opposition to the repertoire offered in the West End, demonstrates that those attending the Festival had formed another cultural elite. These were individuals who

[61] Mills, p. 15.
[62] *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 6.

consciously positioned their dramatic tastes outside mainstream West-End theatre to pursue that which the guiding philosophy of the Festival identified as a supposedly more sophisticated and mentally stimulating repertoire of plays. However, as the work of Mills and Bourdieu demonstrates, this supposed superiority of taste was a direct result of the audience's social and economic status: this is a theme that runs through my exploration of the reception, and the financial sustainability of the Festival in the chapters that follow.[63]

[63] A number of scholars have discussed the notion of elitism in relation to Shaw's life and work both as a politician and playwright. For instance, when discussing Tanner's pamphlet in *Man and Superman*, Judith Evans observes: 'But towards the end of the pamphlet an element of elitism creeps in. In the days when Shaw was writing about empire, elitism was, of course, inherent in the concept of an imperial race. Now Tanner perceives the need for an elitist corps within Britain.' (See *The Politics and Plays of Bernard Shaw*, p. 56). Gareth Griffith points to an elitist aspect of Fabian ideology which 'points to an outlook on the public realm which can be characterised as a form of technical elitism; where politics is dominated by the technicians of social reform, experts, bureaucrats, social engineers; where the chief demand is for 'brains and political science', as Shaw announced in *Fabianism and the Political Empire* (1900); where socialism is more a matter of legal rules than virtues'. (See *Socialism and Superior Brains: The Political Thought of Bernard Shaw* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 6). While Griffith questions a tendency by previous scholarship to view only this particular aspect of Fabianism in order to offer a more complex and comprehensive understanding of Shaw's political ideology, Griffith highlights an increase in Shaw's elitist attitudes to politics in the 1930s when discussing *Too True to be Good*: 'Suddenly, it seemed all that was worst in Shaw's technocratic elitism, state-worship, the tendency to divide the species according to some form of differential rationality-came to dominate his outlook, just as arrogance and vanity took control of his public persona' (p. 135). Furthermore, when discussing Shaw's religion of Creative Evolution and one of Blanco Posnet's speeches in *The Shewing up of Blanco Posnet*, Nicholas Grene argues: 'There is so much in the world that is so evidently disordered, so much that causes pain, and suffering, and death, that we are bound to find ways of putting it right, and this specifically human drive toward improvement is the principle of evolution that Shaw calls God. To be converted is to find one's own role within that drive. Not everyone is capable of such conversion: Shaw is elitist enough to think that it is only exceptional individuals who can achieve such self-discovery.' (See 'Shaw and Conversion', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 27 (2007), 59-68 (pp. 66-67)). Indeed, this notion of elitism is present in Shaw's writing as early as *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* in which Shaw divides a community of a

7. Thesis Outline

Chapter one of this thesis begins by examining Shaw's involvement with English theatre prior to the establishment of the Malvern Festival in 1929. This chapter explores Shaw's involvement with a number of ventures and playhouses in London, the regions and Europe. In this chapter, I argue that during this period experimental and non-commercial theatre begins to emerge outside London through the work of a number of regional playhouses and amateur dramatic societies. Thus as Shaw experienced difficulties in having his plays performed in the capital as demonstrated through the activities of the Independent Theatre, the Stage Society and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre, he became interested in cooperating with regional playhouses for the opportunities they offered for the performance of his work in England. This coincided with the development of high art festivals in Europe such as the Bayreuth Wagner Festival; a festival which Shaw knew and admired. I argue that it was the combination of these factors which made Jackson's concept of a Shaw festival in a location such as Malvern appealing to Shaw.

In the first chapter of this thesis, a series of tensions emerge in the organisation of the London ventures which I argue then reappear in the Malvern Festival. In Chapter Two, I explore the confusion surrounding the Festival's target audience since Jackson, as with ventures such as the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre, also pursued an exclusive audience of a metropolitan set. In Malvern, this policy marginalised the local

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thousand people into 700 philistines, 299 idealists and one realist whom he identifies as the 'man strong enough to face the truth the idealists are shirking' (*The Quintessence of Ibsenism: Now Completed until the Death of Ibsen*, 3rd edn (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1929), p. 22).

population of the town from the events in the Festival. I argue that this elitism, present in the guiding philosophy of the Festival, echoed the onstage attitude of Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, a play in which Shaw rejects democracy as an adequate form of government and advocates leadership by an elite minority.

In Chapter Three, I examine the irreconcilable tension between the simultaneous representations of nostalgia for the past and an embracing of twentieth-century modernity and technology present in the organisation of the Festival. This chapter is concerned with the reception of Shaw's *Too True to be Good* as I argue that while Jackson attempted to present a glorified image of England's past and its contributions to world theatre through his 'Survey of English Drama', in 1931 Shaw's *Too True to be Good* offered a dismal evaluation of the country's contemporary situation following World War I. It was the clash of these images and the Festival's emphasis on lesser-known plays which alienated both the local population in Malvern and also eventually the Festival's initial patron, Shaw.

Chapter Four of this thesis is focused on the tensions present in the Festival's management as its co-managers, Jackson and Limbert clashed as a result of their opposing visions of the Festival's future. In contrast to Jackson, Limbert pursued a more inclusive model for the Festival as he attempted to produce a more commercially successful theatrical event. Thus, as we will see, the debates explored in Chapter One regarding the tension between presenting experimental drama and producing sufficient financial income in order to maintain a theatrical venture also appeared in discussions surrounding the Festival. As with the theatrical endeavours it followed such as the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the

Court Theatre, the Malvern Festival failed to sustain a continuing presence on the English theatrical landscape, due to the irreconcilability between the Olympian detachment of its guiding philosophy from the outset and the necessity for the Festival, as with any dramatic project, to generate financial income.

The thesis concludes by examining the legacy of the Festival. Although the Festival failed after twelve seasons and did not achieve some of its initial aims as thus far discussed, I argue that the Festival presented some of Shaw's most experimental plays and was a key contributor to the formation of Shaw's late oeuvre. This chapter explores three of Shaw's plays completed during this period and presented at the Festival: *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* and *Shakes versus Shav*. As the analysis of the plays and their initial productions in Malvern will demonstrate, the Festival offered Shaw the opportunity to present his plays in productions which involved the cooperation of key theatre makers and performers such as H. K. Ayliff and Cedric Hardwicke. As some of these plays required complex productions, the involvement of the individuals mentioned and also Shaw's direct supervision of the rehearsals guaranteed good quality productions which presented a close replication of Shaw's vision on stage. Furthermore, in the case of *Shakes versus Shav*, Shaw's involvement with Malvern directly influenced the shape of the play in terms of its use of puppet theatre, length and also its subject matter, which revolved around the rivalry between Shaw and Shakespeare as festival playwrights.

Chapter I: Shaw and Early Twentieth-Century English Theatre

Introduction

As Shaw began his career writing plays in the late nineteenth century, he experienced many difficulties in locating and securing venues in London for the performance of his drama. Stage managers in London's West End were often reluctant to produce Shaw's work due to the fact that the plays were often much longer than more conventional pieces, besides which Shaw's scripts demanded the performers to speak for long periods of time and tackled controversial subjects. Shaw alongside a whole series of other theatre practitioners in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (which included Sir Barry Jackson, Harley Granville Barker and William Archer) sought to reform some of the common practices of London's West End such as the long run and actor-manager system in order to pave the way for a more experimental repertoire of plays. The development of new and in some ways unconventional ventures in the capital such as the Independent Theatre Society, the Stage Society and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre during this period all testify to the development of this movement in English theatre. However, as this chapter will demonstrate amid the gradual demise of all these ventures in London, Shaw began to focus on regional theatres in pursuit of opportunities for the performance of his plays. This coincided with developments in transportation and middle-class leisure activities which had resulted in greater ease and willingness amongst this class for recreational travel. As a result of these changes, from the mid-nineteenth century there was a rise of interest in visiting places of purely literary and cultural significance including the dramatic festivals emerging across Europe. I argue that it was the culmination of these changes and Shaw and

Jackson's discontent with London's West End which resulted in the establishment of a prestigious theatre festival outside of the capital in Malvern.

This chapter explores theatre in multiple locations across London, the regions and Europe which all inspired and contributed to the model developed at the Malvern Festival. I begin with a study of theatre in London in order to determine some of the common practices in playhouses in the capital which regional theatres later defied. This section also explains some of the obstacles confronting the staging of experimental drama in London which persuaded the likes of Shaw and Barker to engage with regional theatres.

The work of the Independent Theatre signified the beginning of a movement for reform of theatre in London's West End. It was through the work of the Independent Theatre, the Stage Society and later the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre which the New Drama as represented in the plays of Ibsen was first introduced to England. Cary M. Mazer defines the New Drama, which Shaw advocated as the suitable alternative to the plays dominating the West End, as plays which explored social and political issues and rejected plot devices of more conventional contemporary drama. These were 'contextually and scenically realistic' plays that were centred on discussion and debate and would also be available in print for 'readers of serious modern literature'.[1] While demands for reform in London were gradually increasing, the lack of success in sustaining such ventures in the capital ultimately demonstrated the many obstacles confronting any manager pursuing an alternative model to the dominant long-run system in London playhouses.

[1] 'New Theatres for a New Drama', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. by Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 207-21 (p. 208).

The chapter then proceeds to examine regional theatres at the beginning of the twentieth century through the work of amateur societies and the repertory movement. The intention of this chapter is not to suggest that the beginning of the twentieth century signaled a complete decentralisation of theatre in England. However, I argue that the work of certain regional theatres and amateur societies based in the regions signify the development of a federated theatrical culture during this period, in which non-commercial and theatrically experimental drama projects can be seen to take root outside the capital.

I conclude this chapter by examining the development of high art dramatic festivals in Europe. These festivals which included the Wagner Festival in Bayreuth and the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford-upon-Avon were major theatrical events which took place outside of the European capitals and with which both Shaw and Jackson were familiar. As I will demonstrate, at a time in which the future of the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford appeared uncertain but other dramatic festivals in Europe attracted visitors, Jackson and Shaw began making plans for creating their own prestigious summer festival in England.

1. London

> It was the existence of the Independent Theatre that made me finish that play [*Widowers' Houses*], and by giving me the experience of its rehearsal and performance, revealed the fact (to myself among others) that I possessed the gift of "fingering" the stage. Everything followed from that: the production of *Arms and the Man* by Miss Horniman and Florence Farr at the Avenue Theatre, Miss Horniman's establishment of Repertory Theatres in Dublin and Manchester, the Stage Society, H. Granville Barker's tentative

> matinees of *Candida* at the Court Theatre, the full blown management of Vedrenne and Barker, Edie Craig's Pioneers, and the final relegation of the Nineteenth-century London theatre to the dust-bin by Barrie.[2]

As Shaw explained in a letter in 1921 to J. T. Grein, the work of the Independent Theatre was the catalyst for a series of events both in London and the regions which in Shaw's view signified major changes in many of the practices common in late nineteenth-century English theatre regarding the type of plays staged and the manner in which they were produced. Extensive assessments of the importance of the Independent Theatre to the development of drama in England are available elsewhere: here I highlight the key issues and approaches that influenced the development of Shaw's career as a playwright and Jackson as a producer, and which eventually led both to their association with the Malvern Festival.[3] Prior to 1891 and the performance of Shaw's first play, *Widowers' Houses* by the Independent Theatre, Shaw had written three novels, all with little public or critical success, and worked as a music critic through his writing for *The Star* under the pseudonym Cornetto di Bassetto and his work as G.B.S for

[2] 'Letter to J. T. Grein', *Shaw on Theatre,* ed. by E. J. West (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1958), pp. 134-38 (p. 137).
[3] For instance, in addition to Mazer's 'New Theatres for a New Drama' also see Anna Irene Miller, *The Independent Theatre in Europe: 1887 to the Present* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1966), Jean Chothia, *English Drama of the Early Modern Period* (London: Longman, 1996), Tracy C. Davis, 'The Show Business Economy, and its Discontents', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. by Powell*,* pp. 36-51, Anthony Jackson, 'First Steps: The Beginnings of a Movement', in *The Repertory Movement: A History of Regional Theatre in Britain*, ed. by George Rowell and Anthony Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 16-35, Allardyce Nicoll, *English Drama 1900-1930: The Beginnings of the Modern Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) and Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of Late Nineteenth-Century Drama, 1850-1900*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

The World. While Shaw's main occupation during this period was as a music critic, in the late nineteenth century he also began his involvement in politics and specifically the Fabian Society; an association which would continue for the remainder of his lifetime. Shaw joined the Fabian Society in 1884 and it was to this group which he delivered his first version of what would later become *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* in 1890.

Although Shaw had not yet written a play, in *The Quintessence* and through his writing on Ibsen, he began to wage his fierce attack on the plays and theatres of London's West End which he would later repeat and extend through his drama. In *The Quintessence* (later extended and published in 1891), Shaw celebrated the rise of the New Drama in the continent and praised the work of Ibsen as one of the movement's most famous playwrights. Shaw embraced the idea of discussion in Ibsen and his engagement with current social debates through three dimensional characters who defied stereotypes as he argued that Ibsen's technical novelties include; 'the introduction of discussion and its development' as the main point of action in the play , 'making the spectators themselves the person of the drama' and liberating drama from the 'old stage tricks' through which audiences were 'induced to take an interest in unreal people and improbable circumstances'.[4] In *The Quintessence*, Shaw argued that the dominant practices of London's West End prevented the production of Ibsen's drama in the capital as the novelties of Ibsen's technique were in tension with some of the policies pursued by London theatre managers. According to Shaw, Ibsen's characters were particularly badly suited for playing within the actor-manager system that dominated English theatre

[4] *The Quintessence of Ibsenism: Now Completed until the Death of Ibsen*, 3rd edn (London: Constable, 1922), p. 205.

in the latter half of the nineteenth century and which had resulted in the rise of the social position of the performer.[5] During this period, the actor managers became the focus of productions in which they were the star performers. For Shaw, these actors failed to understand Ibsen's complex characterisation, which defied conventional understandings of morality, and thus these actors were reluctant to play such roles and produce Ibsen's drama. In an appendix to *The Quintessence*, only published in the 1891 edition of the text, Shaw explained: 'The more experienced he [the conventional actor] is, the more certain he is to de-Ibsenize the play into a melodrama or farcical comedy of the common sort'.[6] This led Shaw to conclude that the resistance to the plays by 'old playgoers' is 'supported by the elder managers, the elder actors, and the elder critics'.[7] Thus Shaw's praise for Ibsen was closely intertwined with a demand for change in the dominant and, in his view, superannuated practices of the West End.

The Independent Theatre was a product of a series of demands made during the late nineteenth century by theatre practitioners which included Shaw's criticism in *The Quintessence,* as these individuals emphasised the significance of liberating English theatre from the inanity inherent to a purely commercial approach to the stage. An increased interest in theatre during the latter part of the nineteenth century was accompanied by an increase in the commercialisation of London theatres as ticket sales now, more than ever, determined the plays performed. This is evident in the use of the long-run system during this period as plays were often staged as long as they continued

[5] Dennis Kennedy, 'British Theatre, 1895-1946; Art, Entertainment, Audiences- an Introduction', in *The Cambridge History of British Theatre: Volume 3, Since 1895*, ed. by Baz Kershaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 3-34 (p. 7).
[6] 'Appendix to *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*', in *Shaw on Theatre*, ed. by West, pp. 1-18 (p. 1).
[7] 'Appendix to *The Quintessence of Ibsenism'*, p. 8.

to attract an audience. For instance, the actor manager, Henry Irving, staged *Faust* for sixteen months beginning in December 1886, later touring this production in towns such as Nottingham, Birmingham and Glasgow.[8] Moreover, in addition to the long run, the actor-manager system common in London theatres further limited the type of plays staged in such playhouses. It was common practice among such figures to alter the plays selected for performance according to personal taste and in order to provide ample opportunity for the presence of the actor manager on stage. Shaw referred to this tendency among the actor managers in *The Quintessence* as he insisted that the only issue preventing the actor managers from rewriting Ibsen's plays, like they did with the source-texts of Shakespeare's works, was that the characters would lose their 'fascination'.[9]

The policies of the Independent Theatre were aligned with Shaw's commitment to reforming some of the common practices of the West End and his dedication to introducing the plays of Ibsen to the English theatre-going public. The Independent Theatre was established by Grein, who arrived in London in 1885 to take up an appointment as a tea merchant. According to Leon Hugo, upon taking up residence in London, Grein was confronted with a 'theatrical scene of mind-numbing puerility' in the form of numerous melodramas dominating London theatres.[10] It was in this context that Grein used the money he acquired from the Royal Theatre in Amsterdam, for his assistance in introducing Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones to the theatre and his translation of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, to establish the Independent

[8] 'Sir Henry Irving', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 October 1905, p. 11.
[9] 'Appendix to *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*', p. 3.
[10] *Edwardian Shaw: The Writer and his Age* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 93

Theatre in London modelled on André Antoine's Théâtre-Libre in Paris.[11] Like the Théâtre-Libre, those involved with the Independent Theatre were also able to produce new plays which had been refused licenses by the censor through maintaining their performances as private events for members of the society. While this exempted the Independent Theatre from the obligation to gain a license for its productions, it created an exclusive and coterie audience of theatre enthusiasts with an already established interest in the New Drama attending the performances. For the public outside of the theatre, the productions were often highly controversial as the press reports on the performances emphasised the provocative nature of some of the issues discussed. For instance, *Ghosts* resulted in uproar outside the theatre in the English press due to the presence of inherited syphilis as one of the play's major themes. The critic for the *Sporting and Dramatic News* wrote: 'ninety-seven per cent of the people who go to see *Ghosts* are nasty-minded people who find the discussion of nasty subjects to their taste in exact proportion to their nastiness' and thus presented a clear division between the audience of the performance and the public outside the theatre.[12]

The Independent Theatre followed *Ghosts* with its production of Shaw's *Widowers' Houses*, which as suggested in the quote above, Shaw credited as his introduction to having his drama staged. *Widowers' Houses*, with its discussions of slum landlordism, received a similar reaction from the English press as those prompted by the performance of *Ghosts*. Shaw later commented on this reaction: 'The play occupied the press for weeks after its production to an extent which, in a really

[11] Hugo, p. 94.
[12] St John Ervine*, Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends* (London: Constable & Company Limited, 1956), p. 242.

healthy and active phase of dramatic art, would have been absurd.'[13] Shaw followed *Widowers' Houses* by offering *The Philanderer* and *Mrs Warren's Profession* to Grein, who declined them both, a decision which Shaw blamed on the censor.[14]

Mrs Warren's Profession was ultimately performed by the Stage Society; another dramatic club functioning on similar principles to those pursued by the Independent Theatre. The Stage Society was established by, in the words of Shaw, the 'energetic Fabian', Frederick Whelan.[15] It was developed based on a 'circular letter' sent to about 150 individuals 'known to be interested in dramatic art' signed by Whelan and the stage performers, Charles Charrington and Janet Achurch.[16] While the membership increased in later years to around five hundred persons, the Stage Society always maintained its status as a private dramatic club whose performances were not open to the public. Thus, as with the Independent Theatre, the Stage Society also possessed a limited and as Shaw described it 'coterie' audience for its productions which it also presented as private performances in order to escape the influence of the censor.[17] Moreover, the Stage Society also opposed some of the conventional practices of the West End through its emphasis on simplicity as the plays were staged 'without scenery' and 'in draped backgrounds' in comparison to the West End's emphasis on the use of realistic detail in scenery and costume. Moreover, the performers participating in the productions worked without receiving any salaries.[18]

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[13] George Bernard Shaw, 'Plays Unpleasant', in *The Complete Bernard Shaw Prefaces* (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1962), pp. 716-28 (p. 709).
[14] 'Plays Unpleasant', p. 720
[15] *Collected Letters: 1856-1950*, ed. by Dan H. Laurence (London: Reinhardt, 1972), p. 148 (to Ellen Terry, 9 February 1900).
[16] Charles Benjamin Purdom, 'Stage Society', in *Bernard Shaw's Letters to Granville Barker*, ed. by Purdom (London: Phoenix House, 1956), pp. 1-17 (p. 3).
[17] *Collected Letters*, p. 148.
[18] Purdom, p. 3.

As with the Independent Theatre, the Stage Society also became a hub for a series of like-minded theatre enthusiasts which included Shaw to implement and demonstrate some of their plans for reform of the West End and particularly the emphasis of London's established theatre district on commercialism. Thus, in accordance with Morton W. Bloomfield's definition of elitism - explained in the introduction to this thesis as 'the attitude of mind that believes in the necessity of specialization and hierarchy of specialists and experts' - these were elitist ventures through which some of their organisers and supporters aimed to gather individuals opposing many of the dominant practices of London's West End with the hope of using such projects to influence and ultimately reform more mainstream theatre.[19]

However, while these private dramatic societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were influential in introducing the New Drama to England, their performances were confronted with many obstacles and limitations of which Shaw was acutely aware. Without a permanent base, these societies had to hire temporary venues in London for their performances. However, locating venues whose managers were prepared to allow the performance of prospectively controversial plays which had been refused a license often proved to be a difficult task. For instance, 'thirteen theatres, three hotels, two music halls and the Royal Society of British Artists' refused to allow the performance of Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* which dealt with controversial issues such as the existence of brothels and prostitution.[20] This lack of a permanent home for the societies also affected the quality of the productions as it resulted in little rehearsal time for the performers. Moreover, while the smaller size of some of the

[19] 'Elitism in the Humanities', *Daedalus*, 4.103 (1974), 128-37 (p. 128).
[20] Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw: The One-Volume Definitive Edition* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 309.

stages used for the performances liberated the directors from contemporary stage conventions, this also in many ways limited the directors in their approach to the plays. In a letter to Mrs Patrick Campbell in 1901, Shaw explained that the management for the Stage Society ultimately 'settled' for the 'small stage of the Lyric Club' for the upcoming production of *Mrs Warren's Profession* in 1902 as an act of 'desperation' implying that this stage was inadequate and unsuitable for the performance.[21] Shaw's complaints about the staging of his plays by the Stage Society were not limited to *Mrs Warren's Profession* as he admitted to Ellen Terry in 1900 that the Society's production of *You Never Can Tell* in 1899 at the Royalty Theatre 'might have been worse' indicating that according to Shaw this performance was not particularly impressive.[22]

It was ultimately through the work of the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre that Shaw was introduced as a playwright in the early years of the twentieth century. Barker had been one of the performers cooperating with the Stage Society and it was in this society's production of *Candida* which Shaw first saw Barker. In a letter to Archer in 1900, Shaw described Barker as 'very young, but very expert' and the 'success of the piece'.[23] This was the beginning of a working relationship which would culminate in the now famous seasons at the Court beginning in 1904. Archer recommended Barker to J. H. Leigh of the Court Theatre who was searching for a director to produce Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Barker agreed on the condition that he would also be permitted to hold six matinees of

[21] *Collected Letters*, p. 240 (22 November 1901).
[22] *Collected Letters*, p. 148.
[23] *Collected Letters*, p. 175 (8 July 1900).

Candida which had not yet had a public performance.[24] The success of the mentioned matinees resulted in the extension of this season, and soon the Court Theatre was transformed into a hub of unconventional and political drama. During these seasons, the Court Theatre produced new drama by both British and European writers; however, its main dramatist was Shaw whose plays formed the majority of the theatre's repertoire. By the end of the final season in 1907, 701 of the 998 performances staged at the Court had been penned by Shaw.[25] Thus, the Vedrenne-Barker seasons transformed Shaw from a largely unperformed playwright, whose work had only been previously staged by small stage societies, to a well-known name in the British dramatic scene. The reputation of the Vedrenne-Barker seasons grew with the presence of influential political figures at the performances. The Conservative Prime Minister in 1905 Arthur Balfour, attended a matinee performance of *John Bull's Other Island*, which was followed by a special evening performance of the same play for King Edward VIII 'who laughed so belligerently that he broke the special chair Vedrenne hired for the evening and, in falling, flung Shaw's dramatic reputation high into the air'.[26] In addition to providing plays for the seasons, Shaw was also involved in directing his own plays which allowed him to experiment and develop his ideas but also provided him with the opportunity to supervise the performance of his plays.

The Vedrenne-Barker seasons introduced a series of new practices to English theatre which were then later adopted by other theatres across the country and specifically the regional repertory movement. Firstly, the acting at the Court during this period differed significantly

[24] Jan McDonald, 'Shaw and the Court Theatre', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Christopher Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 261-82 (p. 264).
[25] McDonald, p. 261.
[26] Holroyd, p. 311.

from that found in the West End. The theatre societies before the Vedrenne-Barker seasons had nurtured a group of actors who were committed to reform in theatre, and were interested in more challenging roles than those they could find in the West End.[27] Thus they were willing to accept such roles at smaller salaries than they would receive elsewhere. This trend continued at the Court and was especially the case for female actresses who had found more exciting roles in the New Drama performed at the Court than in the well-made plays dominating the West End.[28] In addition to the more challenging roles offered by the plays produced at the Court, actors and actresses were also attracted to the high standard of acting dominating such productions which felt to be more 'natural' and 'lifelike' than anything previously performed on stage. This sense of realism reflected Barker's skills in directing.[29] One of the main attributes of the Vedrenne-Barker seasons which differentiated them from other theatres in London was their abandonment of the actor-manager system. Instead, Barker insisted on 'ensemble acting' which was a theory of collaboration between the actors as Barker insisted that he viewed the actors as 'a company rather than as individuals [...] it is the playing together of a good company which makes good performances'.[30] Moreover, the use of the short-run system

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[27] Chothia, p. 55.
[28] This attitude is evidenced by the Court actress Lillah McCarthy who 'turned down a £30 a week contract from Charles Frohman to keep her Court "twelve-pound look,"' itself a reference to a play by J. M. Barrie, and 'willingly accepted a drop in salary in return for interesting work with serious-minded and talented fellow actors' (McDonald, p. 266).
[29] Holroyd, p. 154. For instance in regards to the Court Theatre's production of John Galsworthy's *The Silver Box*, the correspondent for the *Observer* wrote that the 'fine quality of the play reflects on the players' as 'each one holds the attention by a performance as accurate in detail as the piece itself' ('The Silver Box at the Court Theatre', *Observer*, 30 September 1906, p. 8).
[30] Dennis Kennedy, *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 31. This is an idea which Bertolt Brecht would later use in his conception of actors as

instead of the long run resulted in more enthusiastic actors who were offered the opportunity of taking new roles in new productions before becoming bored with their existing parts.

As with the Independent Theatre and the Stage Society, the challenging of West End trends by the Vedrenne-Barker seasons also produced a different and more exclusive audience attending its productions than was found in other London playhouses. This is evident in the review of one critic after watching Shaw's *Getting Married* in which he discussed the possible disappointment felt by audiences 'accustomed to follow a story' with Shaw's emphasis on 'conversation' in the play: 'they have no right in any case to be disappointed; for they have had full warning, in advertisements, in interviews, and now in notices, that if they go to the Harrison-Vedrenne-Barker matinees they must leave preconceived notions at home.'[31]

The Court's repertoire mainly consisted of plays that included political themes and could not be found among the plays performed at the playhouses in London's West End. In addition to the work of Shaw, the Court also produced Barker's plays. As a socialist, Barker 'brought topics of current debate onto the stage in the four plays he wrote in this period, as well as in his direction of the works of other writers.'[32] The political themes of the plays at the Court were reflected in its audience, which Chothia argues consisted of the educated middle class who 'talked about books, music, education, politics and included liberals and socialists, feminists and university-educated women'.[33]

Despite the strength of directing and acting at the Court theatre,

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'partners'. See John J. White, *Bertolt Brecht's Dramatic Theory* (Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2004), pp. 224-25.
[31] 'At the Play: "Getting Married." A Conversation', *Observer*, 17 May 1908, p. 5.
[32] Chothia, p. 58.
[33] Chothia, p 56.

the Vedrenne-Barker seasons ended in 1907 as they failed to attract adequate public interest. After three successful seasons at the Court, Barker decided in 1907 to transfer the seasons to a larger location, and moved to the Savoy Theatre in the heart of London's West End. This was a decision not welcomed by Shaw, but he nonetheless offered his support by making a 'substantial financial investment'.[34] The Vedrenne-Barker season at the Savoy did not receive a similar reception as its predecessor at the Court. The Savoy Theatre, which included an additional 350 seats in comparison with the Court, 'made intimate playing difficult, and the pioneer audience felt uncomfortable in the heart of theatre land.' The bigger theatre also included higher rents and higher costs, which resulted in higher risks for each production.[35] As a result, the audience did not follow the theatre to London's West End, and the identity of the seasons pioneered at the Court began to disappear as Shaw's following comment in a letter to Barker in 1907 demonstrates:

> I learn with disgust and horror that you played the National Anthem and made the audience stand up on Monday. I ask you: is Y.N.C.T. a pantomime? Is the Savoy Drury Lane? Is Stier Glover? Have you any notion of the extent to which your sworn supporters are republicans or aristocratic souls with a loathing for public demonstrations? A hideous solecism - a symptom of vital decay - of pothouse politics. Shame.[36]

The Vedrenne-Barker seasons, which had gained fame through performing politically charged drama that often presented anti-

[34] MacDonald, p. 278.
[35] *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre*, p. 28.
[36] *The Shaw-Barker Letters*, p. 104 (23 September 1907).

establishment social views, and had thus formed a middle-class audience whose members were equally willing to defy social norms (as demonstrated by the decision of its female audience to not wear the customary hats required at a matinee) were now performing the national anthem before its productions.[37] Thus, as a result of these changes in location and policy the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Savoy failed to garner adequate public interest in order to continue with the work began at the Court Theatre and ceased their activities following just one season.

Although the success of the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court offered optimism for individuals such as Shaw and Barker and their visions for the future of theatre, the subsequent failure at the Savoy demonstrated the challenges still confronting unconventional drama in England. In an interview in 1908, Shaw appeared disheartened by this outcome and expressed obvious frustration when asked about the lessons learnt at the Court and Savoy:

> The real moral of it is in that Vedrenne and Barker, having shown what can be done, find that it is not worth their while to go on doing it. They have made a little money and a great reputation. But the consequence is that the great reputation is now worth a good deal more than the little money.[38]

The Vedrenne-Barker seasons battled financial difficulties throughout their time at the Court Theatre. Indeed, Shaw had assisted the survival of the venture through his personal financial support of the scheme, which according to a letter from Shaw to Barker in 1911 amounted to

[37] *Granville Barker and the Dream of Theatre*, p. 11.
[38] 'Mr. Bernard Shaw on the Theatre: Striking Interview', *Observer*, 26 June 1908, p. 7.

£5250.[39] However by 1907, it was no longer feasible to continue with this financial assistance as it had become clear both to Barker and Shaw that such a venture was not practical in London.

Following the Vedrenne-Barker seasons, Shaw cooperated with a number of similar ventures which all produced comparable results to events at the Court. In 1910, the American businessman, Charles Frohman, sponsored a season of repertory theatre at the Duke of York's Theatre. Barker selected the plays for the season which included his own *Madras House* and Shaw's *Misalliance*. However, just as with some of the drama produced at the Court, the plays failed to attract sufficient public interest. For instance, Shaw's *Misalliance* was dropped following eleven performances. The season was closed to mark the occasion of the death of Edward VII and was then never revived.[40] As Purdom explains, Shaw and Barker also entertained schemes for reviving the Court spirit at the Coronet Theatre, Notting Hill for some time; plans which never came to fruition.[41] In a separate venture, Barker's first wife, Lillah McCarthy, assumed control of the Little Theatre in 1911 with Shaw acting as producer of the productions. Shaw's *Fanny's First Play* was produced as part of this season on 19 April and was hugely successful as it was then transferred to the Kingsway for a sum of 624 performances, giving Shaw his first long run.[42] While Shaw's witty *Fanny's First Play*, in which the playwright poked fun at London critics was successful, McCarthy refused Shaw's more sombre next play, *The Doctor's Dilemma*. As Purdom highlights, *The Doctor's Dilemma* was more

[39] *The Shaw-Barker Letters*, p. 171 (1 March 1911). In the same letter, Shaw accepts a cheque of only £484: 3: 10 as 'a full discharge of the indebtedness of the firm of Vedrenne & Barker' to Shaw in regards to the £5,250 he contributed to the scheme.
[40] Eric Salmon, *Granville Barker: A Secret Life* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), p. 129.
[41] *The Shaw-Barker Letters*, p. 168.
[42] Holroyd, p. 408.

expensive to stage than *Fanny's First Play*, making it difficult for McCarthy to produce.[43] Thus, although by this time Shaw was now a well-known playwright, it was a limited number of his plays that were offered the opportunity of performance by London stage-managers. This is an issue which would continue to affect Shaw throughout his career. For instance, while *Pygmalion* was performed in England at His Majesty's Theatre under the management of Sir Beerbohm Tree in 1914, where it remained for three months (only to be brought down because Tree grew tired of it), *Back to Methuselah* only arrived in London following and as a result of Jackson's decision to produce the play at the Birmingham Rep in 1923.[44]

2. Regional Theatres

While Shaw continued to experience difficulties with the performance of his plays in the capital in the early twentieth century, his work proved popular with a variety of regional theatrical ventures during this period. Shaw's plays were consistently included in the repertoire of amateur dramatic societies which had risen in numbers significantly during the early twentieth century as indicated by the establishment of the British Drama League in 1919. The Stockport Garrick Society established in 1901 claimed to be the first amateur group to produce the plays of Ibsen and Shaw at a time in which the works of these playwrights were seldom seen in professional playhouses in London.[45] This emphasis on the New Drama was a pattern emulated by other amateur groups such as the People's Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne, whose early reputation

[43] *The Shaw-Barker Letters*, p. 177.
[44] T. F. Evans, 'Introduction', in *George Bernard Shaw: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by T. F. Evans (London: Routledge, 1976), p. 12.
[45] 'Amateur Theatre', in *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth-Century Theatre*, ed. by Colin Chambers (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 20-23 (p. 20).

was built on its productions of plays by Ibsen, Shaw, John Galsworthy and John Synge.[46] The Newcastle People's Theatre was an offshoot of the National Association of Clarion Dramatic Clubs which was founded in 1912, and was dedicated to 'forming a library of plays dealing with Labour and Socialist subjects'. It was initially formed in order to raise funds for the British Socialist Party before extending its activities to include 'propaganda sketches and full-length plays on "advanced" subjects'. Shaw's drama was an early inspiration for the group, with nine of the eleven plays included in the first season being scripted by him.[47]

While many amateur theatre groups continued as non-professional dramatic bodies, the efforts of some of these groups culminated in the development of professional repertory companies in their local regions. These repertory theatres which developed in locations such as Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Glasgow aimed to produce a more experimental repertoire of plays than those available in London

[46] 'Amateur Theatre', p. 20.

[47] Raphael Samuel, 'Worker's Theatre: 1926-36', in *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama: Aspects of Popular Entertainment in Theatre, Film and Television 1800-1976*, ed. by David Bradby and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 215-31 (p. 215). Shaw refers to the People's Theatre, Newcastle Upon Tyne, in a letter to Jackson dated 31 January 1924 when he mentions their letter requesting a performance of *Back to Methuselah* following its performance in Birmingham. In this letter, Shaw acknowledges their dedication to his work in a distinctively Shavian manner: 'Have you any views on *Methuselah* in the provinces? I have just had an application from a crew of desperadoes who call themselves The People's Theatre of Newcastle-on-Tyne, and who keep steadily acting my plays and any others equally advanced without the slightest regard to their own chronic destitution or the age, sex, colour or culture of themselves as performers. But they pull it off somehow. They now want to attempt *Methuselah*; and before letting them loose on it I should like to know whether it has ever occurred to you to tour it. It is the last thing I should advise you to do; but I don't like to take any decisive step without letting you know in time'. Jackson's reply has not survived but Jackson did not tour *Back to Methuselah* and the People's Theatre opened with another play in October 1924. (see George Bernard Shaw and Sir Barry Jackson, *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Barry Jackson,* ed. by L. W. Conolly (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 10).

and as a result the works of Shaw were regularly performed by these companies. The first of these repertory companies was established by the wealthy patron of theatre, Annie Horniman. In 1894, having recently inherited a large sum of money from her grandfather and organised and funded the rituals of the Golden Dawn, she sponsored a season of drama at the Avenue Theatre, London. This included plays such as W. B. Yeats' *The Land of Heart's Desire* and Shaw's *Arms and the Man* which was the first performance of Shavian drama outside the circle of private societies.[48] Horniman continued her support for the theatre through her support for the Abbey Theatre in Dublin on which she spent £13,000 and then allowed the Irish Players to use for free.[49] As a result of disagreements over the emphasis on national drama, Horniman separated from the Abbey. However, as James Moran argues, Horniman's later establishment of the repertory seasons at the Manchester Gaiety Theatre was largely influenced by her experiences in Dublin.[50]

Horniman began her work in Manchester with a trial season at the Midland Hotel Theatre before moving to the Gaiety Theatre the following year. From the beginning, the guiding principles in Horniman's Manchester experiments emphasised a commitment to providing a platform for playwrights struggling to stage their work elsewhere, accompanied by an opposition to the long-run system. In a letter to the press preceding the opening first season in 1907, Horniman and her artistic director, Iden Payne, explained their aims as follows:

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[48] Rex Pogson, *Miss Horniman and The Gaiety Theatre*, *Manchester* (London: Rockliff, 1952), p. 8.
[49] Pogson, p. 11
[50] James Moran, 'Pound, Yeats, and the Regional Repertory Theatres', in *Regional Modernisms*, ed. by Neal Alexander and James Moran (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 83-104 (p. 90).

(a) A repertory theatre with a regular change of programme, not wedded to any one school of dramatists, but thoroughly catholic, embracing the finest writing of the best authors of all ages and with an especially widely open door to present-day British writers, who will not now need to sigh in vain for a hearing, provided only that they have something to say worth listening to, and say it in an interesting and original manner

(b) A permanent Manchester stock company of picked front-rank actors

(c) Efficient productions

(d) Popular pieces[51]

This promise to accept work based on merit, or merit as acknowledged by the company, rather than other factors such as the familiarity of the play were fulfilled in the company's support for unknown local dramatists. The Manchester Rep developed the 'Manchester School' of plays which included work by Mancunians such as Stanley Houghton and Harold Brighouse.[52] Soon, a number of cities inside and outside England followed the example in Manchester and repertory companies were formed in cities such as Glasgow, Liverpool, Bristol and Birmingham. By 1911, Horniman expressed her happiness with events in Manchester and the stimulus which her repertory company had provided for similar ventures in other cities:

> I am gratified that a rival to the Gaiety at Manchester has already taken form at Liverpool and I hope before long to

[51] Pogson, p. 26.
[52] George Rowell, '1907-1918: Manchester to Birmingham', in *The Repertory* Movement, ed. by Rowell and Jackson, pp. 35-54 (pp. 44-43).

> welcome another rival at Birmingham. Glasgow is going along all right, and the sooner the other big cities of England make up their minds to do likewise the better.[53]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Shaw was involved with the repertory movement from its early years with his work often featured in the repertoires of such theatres. In 1902, Shaw identified his plays as 'repertory plays' which 'command an audience for about two to three weeks': 'Look at *Arms and the Man*, that would have been a financial success if it had not run for too long. No, my public can only be reached by means of a theatre that produces repertory plays, or through books'.[54] Shaw's plays which as the production of *Arms and the Man* demonstrated, were unlikely to be able to sustain a long-run were, however, frequently featured in the repertoire at Manchester. The earliest production was Shaw's *Widowers' Houses* in 1908 which was then followed in subsequent seasons with plays such as *Candida* (1909), *How He Lied to Her Husband* (1911), *The Devil's Disciple* (1912) and *Major Barbara* (1914). Indeed, Shavian drama was often also included in the repertoire of other repertory theatres, as the *Observer* reported on the first season of the Glasgow Repertory Theatre in 1910: 'It has produced no less than fourteen wholly new pieces, and the same number of pieces hitherto in London, in addition to eight other plays chiefly Mr. Bernard Shaw's'.[55]

Shaw's involvement with the repertory theatres was mutually beneficial for both Shaw and the repertory companies involved. The theatres profited as Shaw provided them with suitable plays which

[53] 'The Repertory Theatre in the Regions: How Miss Horniman Started it', *Observer*, 26 March 1911, p. 5.
[54] 'Mr. Bernard Shaw on Plays', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 May 1902, p. 12.
[55] 'Dramatis Personae', *Observer*, 17 April 1910, p. 8.

offered alternatives to the London trends of the long run and star system, and in turn the repertory companies offered Shaw venues for the staging of his plays as he at times struggled to secure performances in London. Moreover, as the theatrical relationship between the capital and the regions was becoming a more mutual exchange in place of a one way system where London was the sole producer and the regions always the consumer, a number of Shaw's plays reached London through tours by repertory companies to the capital. For example the Manchester Gaiety Theatre transferred its production of *Widowers' Houses* to the Coronet Theatre in 1909 and again in 1912.

The most significant instance of this cooperation between Shaw and the repertory theatres both in regards to the focus of this thesis and the plays produced is of course Shaw's involvement with Jackson's theatre in Birmingham. Jackson, born on 6 September 1879, had developed a passion for the theatre from an early age. Jackson's father, George Jackson, a merchant and the founder of the Maypole Dairies, was a wealthy man with a passion for the stage. He visited the theatre regularly and bought books and pictures which he encouraged his family to view. Consequently, Barry Jackson, named after his father's favourite actor, Barry Sullivan, was introduced to a wide range of drama from pantomimes to the works of Shakespeare.[56] Soon Jackson, who had entertained and then abandoned the idea of a career as an architect to pursue his passion for the stage, began to form ideas for establishing his own theatre company. He and the small group of other enthusiasts around him which included the poet and playwright, John Drinkwater, began their work with private performances in the garden of Jackson's home, The Grange, which included a production of Shakespeare's

[56] J. C. Trewin, *The Birmingham Repertory Theatre: 1913-1916* (London: Barrie & Rocklliff, 1963), pp. 3-4.

Twelfth Night in 1904.[57] These modest early performances eventually culminated in Jackson's group becoming formally established as the 'Pilgrim Players', which began its work with a production of *The Interlude of Youth* in 1907.

From their very first productions, the work of the Pilgrim Players was distinguished from some of the dominant trends governing the drama of London's West End; an examination of the group's practice reveals an early indication of Jackson's views on the purpose of theatre as well as his aesthetic concerns**.** Like Shaw, Jackson opposed the commercialism of London's established theatre district, aiming to produce a more experimental repertoire of plays in order to, as he emphasised 'serve an art instead of making that art serve a commercial purpose'.[58] Thus among the list of plays performed by the Pilgrim Players prior to the establishment of the Birmingham Rep, less familiar works such as *The Interlude*, a medieval morality play that Jackson had encountered in the 'course of his reading', and *Eager Heart*, a play by E. A. Buckton based on the story of nativity, amongst other works by Jackson and Drinkwater are evident.[59] Moreover, as Jackson opposed the emphasis on the star actor in West-End productions, the names of the performers participating in the production of *The Interlude* were not published in the programme and the audience was instructed not to applaud the actors. This production was staged with 'exceeding simplicity', the stage setting including only 'bright green curtains hung in a semi-circle'.[60] This setting not only reflected the limited resources available to the group but provides an early demonstration of Jackson's

[57] Trewin, p. 7.
[58] Sir Barry Jackson, 'Introduction', in Bache Matthews, *A History of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1924), pp. xi-xv (p. xiv).
[59] Matthews, p. 2.
[60] Matthews, p. 6.

wider aesthetic vision as he aimed to liberate the plays from unnecessary emphasis on lavish staging and the providing of spectacle that dominated many of the productions in the West End. This was a concern he shared with Shaw and would maintain throughout his career as demonstrated through the Birmingham Rep's controversial and influential productions of Shakespeare in modern dress. In these productions Jackson and his team aimed to liberate the plays from the emphasis on meticulous historical accuracy in costume and set that dominated West-End productions.

The work of the Pilgrim Players resulted in the establishment of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the first purpose built theatre for a repertory company in the country, in 1913. In addition to the type of plays performed, in the building of the theatre, Jackson also broke away from some of the established theatrical conventions of his time. Contrary to the experiences of the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the 964-seat Savoy in 1907, the building which housed the Birmingham Rep was suitable for a repertory production of plays with a capacity of only 464 seats. This allowed for a more intimate atmosphere and also reflected modest and realistic expectations of public interest in the plays offered. As with the size of the auditorium, the theatre also had a relatively smaller stage which was 42 feet deep and 28 feet wide.[61] There were only two doors placed near the front row and at the 'top of the house' which resulted in 'maximum embarrassment' for the late arrivals entering the theatre. Moreover, as Jackson opposed viewing drama as merely a social pastime and encouraged a more serious approach to its significance, the building had no bar and the beginning of the show was

[61] Cochrane, p. 6. As a point of comparison, Cochrane mentions the stage of the Theatre Royal which was 46 feet deep and 72 feet at its widest.

signaled with the sound of a gong allowing performances to begin on time.[62]

Jackson's generosity with his inherited wealth funded the company's many experimental ventures which included the production of a number of plays penned by Shaw. Between the theatre's first season in 1913 and the establishment of the Malvern Festival in 1929, the Birmingham Rep performed eleven of Shaw's plays, ranging from the more well-known works such as *Candida* to other much less familiar plays including *Press Cuttings*. Shaw visited the Birmingham Rep in 1916 where he watched Oliver Goldsmith's *The Good Natured Man* in this theatre on 19 September following a visit to the Theatre Royal the previous evening for the production of *Fanny's First Play*. Shaw again visited the Birmingham Rep in 1923 for its production of *Heartbreak House* and it was on this occasion that Shaw and Jackson met for the first time. *Heartbreak House* had concluded a disappointing run at the Court Theatre ending after sixty-four performances and meeting with negative press reviews by critics who were baffled by its structure.[63] Despite this discouraging turn of events, however, Jackson commissioned a production at the Birmingham Rep which reflected his dedication to staging new and experimental plays. The production was a 'distinguished affair' directed by H. K. Ayliff, with Cedric Hardwicke as Captain Shotover and Eileen Beldon as Ellie Dunn.[64]

The Birmingham Rep's production of *Heartbreak House* was the beginning of a working relationship between Jackson and Shaw which resulted in the premiere of Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* in England in October 1923. Following the production of *Heartbreak House* which had

[62] Cochrane, p. 7.
[63] Leonard W. Conolly, 'Introdution', in *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Conolly, pp. xi-xxxvii (p. xxiii).
[64] Thomas C. Kemp, *The Birmingham Repertory Theatre: Playhouse and the Man* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers Limited, 1943), p. 41.

left Shaw impressed with the work of the Birmingham Rep, Jackson requested the playwright's permission to stage *Back to Methuselah*. Shaw replied to the gay director in true Shavian fashion asking: 'Mr Jackson, are your wife and children provided for?'[65] This reflected the difficulties inherent in staging the play, a cycle play consisting of five Acts which as a result of its length requires to be staged over multiple occasions. Moreover, the play covers a wide range of locations and time periods beginning in 4004 B.C. in the Garden of Eden and concluding in 31,920 A.D. on a 'sunlit glade at the southern foot of a thickly wooded hill'.[66] It was these difficulties with the play which had left *Back to Methuselah* unperformed in England by 1923, despite having been produced in New York by the Theatre Guild at the Garrick Theatre in 1922. Thus Jackson's decision to support the production using his own personal funds was a rare and welcomed opportunity for Shaw.

Back to Methuselah received its British premiere in Birmingham over four days between 9 and 12 October; the cycle was then repeated for another two weeks. The production was the result of a rigorous eight-week rehearsal process which had begun in early autumn.[67] The play required a large cast of performers and as a result the entire company at the Birmingham Rep were employed amongst a series of dancers, flute-players, and other instrumentalists.[68] As the performers rehearsing for the production were also acting in other plays during the evening, no actor participated in more than three of the play's five parts.[69] Shaw was present for the dress rehearsal to offer his input and also attended the first cycle of plays which he concluded with a speech praising the

[65] Matthews, p. 106.
[66] *Back to Methuselah*, in *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1952), pp. 855-963 (p. 938)
[67] Matthews, p. 107.
[68] Matthews, p. 108.
[69] Matthews, p. 107.

work of Jackson describing the experience as the 'most extraordinary' of his life and the performances as 'magnificent'.[70]

Shaw's praise for the production was not mere flattery or an expression of gratitude for the opportunity provided by Jackson but also reflected the results produced by the working relationship between Jackson, his stage director Ayliff and scenic artist Paul Shelving to stage a production with which Shaw was evidently impressed. Ayliff, who directed *Back to Methuselah*, had studied Arts at The Royal Academy Schools and in Paris and had also trained as a painter prior to his arrival in Birmingham. In addition to an understanding of painting and specifically landscapes and portraits, Ayliff was also familiar with acting and he first collaborated with the Birmingham Rep as an actor, appearing in this theatre's production of Sierra's *Two Shepherds* in 1921 in the role of the priest, Don Antonio. In early 1922, when A. E. Filmer went on temporary leave as a result of exhaustion, Ayliff took over as the Birmingham Rep's Producer ('"Director" in present terms').[71] As both J. C. Trewin and Claire Cochrane highlight, Ayliff had a talent for nurturing new performers, playing a significant role in developing the early careers of some of the Rep's most renowned performers including Hardwicke.[72] Ayliff, a 'scholarly' and 'fastidious' man with a keen eye for detail, was involved in some of the Rep's most well-known productions including all the Shakespearean plays in modern dress staged by this theatre in the 1920s.[73]

Shelving had joined the Birmingham Rep as scenic artist in 1919 after Filmer secured his release from the army. Shelving was a talented

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[70] Conolly, p. xx.
[71] David Ayliff, 'Henry Kiel Ayliff and Paul Shelving', in *Paul Shelving (1888-1968) Stage Designer*, cat. and ed. by Tessa Sidey (Birmingham: Birmingham City Council Department of Leisure & Co, 1968), p. 25.
[72] Trewin, p. 64 and Cochrane, p. 86.
[73] Cochrane, p. 86.

artist, a perfectionist who designed his sets 'to the last details of costume, furniture and properties'.[74] He replaced naturalist back-cloth paintings with a more abstract and stylised approach. This is evident in the background he designed for Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, the first production with which he was involved at the Birmingham Rep. Matthews describes the frustration of the audience with the set which was 'not true to nature' as Shelving used a 'bold drawing' and 'brilliant colours'.[75] This comment reflects Shelving's distinct use of colours where he used a wide range of 'pure' and 'bright' shades.[76] As a result, it was often not possible to obtain material in the colours he specified and thus most of the materials were dyed in the theatre.[77] Shelving's fascination with colour reflected his approach to set design where, like the work of Gordon Craig, his scenery suggested rather than depicted. He used colour to create the atmosphere and mood of a scene rather than present a set which pretended to be a particular location. Shelving's approach was key to the innovative designs for Shaw's *Back to Methuselah*. For the first scene, for example, Shelving used a combination of bright colours as he presented a drawing of a tree in mustard yellow around which an emerald serpent was wrapped, a rock on stage in purple, and a lemon yellow sky.[78] Shelving dressed Edith Evans as the Serpent in a 'tight-fitting purple and green-scaled jersey costume with a wire frame for the hood' and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies as Eve wore a 'shredded costume with leaves'.[79] As Mathews argues, the colours Shelving used suggested a 'feeling of essential youth' that was

[74] Cochrane, p. 74.
[75] Matthews, p. 83.
[76] Matthews, p. 138.
[77] Matthews, p. 139.
[78] Matthews, p. 106.
[79] Tessa Sidey, 'Paul Shelving – A Life in the Theatre', in *Paul Shelving (1888-1968) Stage Designer*, ed. by Sidey, pp. 13-22 (p. 16)

appropriate to this early scene depicting the Garden of Eden.[80] As a result of his impressive work in *Back to Methuselah*, Shelving acquired a 'position at the top of his profession' with his designs receiving a gold medal from the *Exposition International des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris.[81]

Ayliff complemented Shelving in his approach to directing as he also demonstrated a keen understanding of colour which as his son, David Ayliff, argues was a result of the director's initial training as a painter. Ayliff was responsible for 'all the technical detail of positioning and angling of lamps' and the 'choice of colours' used in the productions which he directed. He used lighting to create the 'nearest possible imitation of natural daylight', mostly using shades of pink and blue, in order for Shelving's scenery and costumes to be 'seen by the audiences as the designer intended and without distortion'.[82]

The approach pursued by these artists was well-suited to Shaw's later plays, some of which the dramatist described as 'extravaganzas'. As Shaw moved away from the realism of some of his earlier plays, he also diverged from the realistic method of staging these works which emphasised using detailed sets depicting the locality of the scenes. For a play such as *Back to Methuselah*, which covers a wide range of time periods and localities, producing detailed sets which attempt to mimic reality would have been inappropriate.

Moreover, it was not only Shaw's later plays which benefited from the approach adopted at the Birmingham Rep as demonstrated through this theatre's production of Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* in 1925. Johnston Forbes Robertson had first produced this play at the Grand Theatre, Leeds in 1907 before taking the production to the Savoy which

[80] Matthews, p. 138.
[81] Sidey, p. 16
[82] Ayliff, p. 25.

was then under the Vedrenne-Barker management. After Robertson's farewell tour of America between 1913 and 1916, the 'elaborate settings' for the play were 'discarded' as due to tariff regulations in America it was forbidden for the material to leave the country. As a result, *Caesar and Cleopatra* was not performed again in England until the production in Birmingham. Despite the limitations of the stage at the Birmingham Rep, Shelving was able to create the Egyptian palace required for this play with 'busy detail'.[83] When depicting the Egyptian landscape, he used 'curtains with severed angled buildings' accompanied by 'wide open empty spaces' and 'silhouettes of sphinx and pyramids'. While Shelving's 'shallow painted backcloths and curtains' contributed to the designer's aesthetic vision on stage, they were also a 'practical necessity' as they allowed the play to be staged in its entirety on the small stage of the Birmingham Rep.[84] With Shaw's cooperation, Ayliff was also successful in his approach to directing the play as through Ayliff's influence, the performers managed to maintain the attention of the audience for the duration of the play which lasted for four hours and included only one interval.[85] As we will see in the following chapters, this rewarding collaboration between Jackson, Ayliff, Shelving and Shaw which began at the Birmingham Rep would continue at the Malvern Festival.

While Jackson and his team and other reps around the country were often successful in delivering a more experimental repertoire than theatres in the West End, these companies also continually experienced financial difficulties similar to those suffered by the ventures that preceded them. In 1912, the *Manchester Guardian* reported on the experiences of the Glasgow Repertory Theatre in its three seasons thus

[83] Kemp, p. 10.
[84] Sidey, p. 18.
[85] Kemp, p. 10.

far, portraying a bleak image of the company's finances: 'There had been a loss on three years' working of about £3,000 and this figure, owing to the coal strike, was being daily increased'. The manager of the company, Alfred Wareing, connected this financial deficit to the company's struggle in attracting audiences to its productions: 'One obstacle in the way was the prejudice that repertory theatres were places of education, and therefore places of dullness, and the popular attitude was to resent anything imposed over and above the amusement it was necessary to gild the pill, if pill there was'.[86] By 1913, events in Manchester revealed a similar pattern: 'Possibly in no previous season have so many entirely brilliant plays been produced. Yet they have too often been produced to empty benches'. The public in Liverpool was also accused of a similar disregard for the productions of their local repertory company as reportedly they 'steadfastly ignored them all'.[87] The outbreak of World War I in 1914 and the rise of the cinema with its cheaper ticket prices caused and intensified the financial troubles of the repertory movement in England. Wartime conditions hindered public interest in the offerings of the repertory theatres and consequently many of such theatres ceased their activities.[88] By 1914, the 'brief flowering' of the repertory movement was reaching its end as the Glasgow Repertory ceased activity and Liverpool pursued a more 'conservative programming' which the correspondent for the *Observer* argued reflected a wider lack of public interest in the theatre throughout the country.[89] The Manchester Rep struggled on until 1917 when its

[86] 'Repertory Theatres: The Experience of Glasgow', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 March 1912, p. 10.
[87] 'The Sick Theatre: London and the Regions Suffer Alike', *Observer*, 17 August 1913, p. 5.
[88] '1907-1918: Manchester to Birmingham', p. 51.
[89] Moran, p. 97.

agreement with the Gaiety Theatre expired and was not renewed.[90] The Liverpool Rep, on the other hand, continued into the 1920s but with a much less experimental repertoire and longer runs of the plays staged than expected for a repertory company.[91]

Thus it was mainly through the work of the Birmingham Rep - which benefited from the ongoing financial support enabled through Jackson's inherited wealth – that the repertory movement in England continued its activities. However, by 1924 even the generosity of Jackson was wearing thin as he threatened to cease his support due to a lack of adequate public interest in the theatre's productions.[92] In terms of audience attendance, Jackson had a disappointing year in 1923. In most performances of *Back to Methuselah* one third of the seats were empty and for George Kaiser's *Gas*, the average number of people attending the performances were around one hundred and nine people which was lower than the number of those engaged in the production. This was the 'last straw' for Jackson, who had long been unhappy with the public reception of his theatre's productions in Birmingham.[93] Through the efforts of the Birmingham Civic Society, a scheme was drawn up in which Jackson promised to re-open the theatre if four thousand members of the public were willing to purchase tickets to attend the theatre once every fortnight for three months. The deadline was for the end of June and even with a potential target audience of millions in the area, the four thousand goal was not reached. It was not until July that year that the guarantee was considered significant enough for Jackson to agree to continue his work in Birmingham.[94]

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[90] Pogson, p. 172.
[91] Andrew Davies, *Other Theatres: The Development of Alternative and Experimental Theatre in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 83.
[92] Trewin, p. 79.
[93] Matthews, pp. 111-12
[94] Kemp, p. 6.

The tensions which erupted in 1924 were not indicative of the emergence of new hostilities between the theatre and the city but were the culmination of strains in this relationship which had been mounting since the establishment of the Birmingham Rep in 1913. The poor attendance at some of the performances at the Birmingham Rep that led to Jackson's decision in 1924 demonstrated that many in Birmingham felt detached from the theatre. These sentiments were then exacerbated and confirmed for many through some of Jackson's policies and the attitudes of those involved with the Birmingham Rep; attitudes which can be seen to connect back to the ideas of elitism explored in the introduction to this thesis. In *A History of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre*, Matthews, who was the theatre's first Business Manager, presents an elitist vision of the audience attending the performances. As with Bloomfield's outlook on elitism as an approach with an emphasis on the significance of a hierarchy of leaders and experts, Mathews dismisses popular taste in drama and highlights the role of the Birmingham Rep in reforming wider public interest in theatre. Matthews describes the audience of the theatre as the 'more intelligent of all classes';[95] an exclusive entity whose gatherings on the foyer of the theatre resembled 'private parties' due to the 'comparatively small numbers, similarity of tastes, and the regularity with which the same people meet together'.[96] According to Matthews, those involved with the theatre were the elite working to improve public taste as he noted one of the achievements of the Birmingham Rep as 'a growth of critical ability and understanding' amongst its audience.[97] The Birmingham Rep, like all other reps in the country, the independent theatre societies and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons in the capital struggled to reconcile an

[95] Matthews, p. 146.
[96] Matthews, p. 150.
[97] Matthews, p. 147.

evident disdain for popular taste and the need to attract audiences in order to ensure its survival. It is perhaps not surprising then that tensions in Birmingham would again resurface in the thirties, as I discuss in Chapter Four below. Moreover, as public appetite for cinema (which now also included sound) grew, it created further difficulties for the reps and the types of plays which they offered.[98] Thus by 1929, although repertory companies in Oxford and Cambridge, uniquely positioned in university towns, pursued similar policies of staging experimental work in the regions, the repertory movement had lost much of its initial vigour.

3. Festivals

> An entirely new vein of thought was opened to me only this last summer by a performance witnessed in Geneva (Fete). This, combined with experience of the pageants in England, the attitude of an audience at Shakespearean performances at Stratford, leads one to hope and suppose that one escape from the labyrinth in our country today could be brought about by Festivals of Drama in some rural district where an audience would gather together for no other purpose than to witness certain plays.[99]

In a speech delivered in 1924, Jackson expressed his interest in a new form of playgoing emerging in Europe as he voiced his support for regional festivals of drama. In order to understand the development of dramatic festivals in Europe and thus Jackson's interest in such

[98] George Rowell, 'The Interwar Years', in *The Repertory Movement*, ed. by Rowell and Jackson, pp. 54-76 (p. 72).
[99] *Ten Years of the Theatre*, The Library of Birmingham, MS 978, Box 26, No. 16, p. 12.

ventures, we must return to the mid-nineteenth century to analyse some of the developments in leisure and tourism during this period. In the mid-nineteenth century, the manner in which Victorians viewed and conducted leisure activities was radically transformed. As Peter Bailey observes, the larger economic security of this era and consequently the 'time, services and commodities' which it produced caused the Victorian middle classes to engage on a much larger scale with ways to spend their now increased economic wealth and free time.[100] This coincided with developments in technology such as the expansion of the railway system, printed press and cheap advertising which all encouraged the middle class to seek new adventures and experiences.[101] The Victorian middle class adopted a variety of different recreational activities such as reading, music, private theatricals, games and quizzes. However, while many of these activities were positioned in the home, there was also an increase in travel for leisure during this period. One of the recreational activities of the middle class from the mid-nineteenth century onwards was the family holiday as improvements in transportation allowed people 'a new mobility in leisure'.[102]

This increase in travel and attention to recreation directly influenced the ways in which the public engaged with the arts. Simon Goldhill argues that advances in transport and printing in the nineteenth century transformed the status of the writer as their work now 'circulated swiftly across Europe and America'. As a result of this 'media revolution' and the appearance of a 'new reading public', writers were transformed into 'superstars'. It was during this era and as a result of these changes that a new phenomenon emerged, 'the tour to visit

[100] *Leisure and Class in Victorian England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 57.
[101] Bailey, p. 59.
[102] Bailey, p. 60.

writer's houses'.[103] In *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture*, Nicola Watson supports this view and argues that while prior to the nineteenth century 'aristocrats and would-be aristocrats', who went on the Grand Tour, had already demonstrated enthusiasm for visiting sites of 'purely literary interest', in the nineteenth century this 'itinerary expanded both socially and geographically, as both highbrow and middlebrow readers embarked on pilgrimages to literary destinations within Britain, and rather later in the century, in America'. This included trips to the 'graves, the birthplaces, and the carefully preserved homes of dead poets and men and women of letters'.[104]

However, in the late nineteenth century, travelling to sites of literary significance was not exclusive to the types mentioned by Watson and also included the dramatic festivals appearing across Europe. Dennis Kennedy extends these observations on wider cultural tourism, which he also traces back to the rise of the Grand Tour at the end of the seventeenth century, to include the emergence of dramatic festivals in the nineteenth century. According to Kennedy, these festivals that possessed 'high art appeal' and 'demanded travel' were based on festivals in ancient Greece which combined religion and art.[105] These festivals were occasions, like their ancestors in ancient Greece which were 'wrapped in a fervent longing for the primitive', to merge the present with the past.[106] This was a concern which Kennedy argues

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[103] *Freud's Couch, Scott's Buttocks, Bronte's Grave* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 7.
[104] 'Introduction'', in *Literary Tourism and Nineteenth-Century Culture,* ed. by Nicola J. Watson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1-13 (p. 3).
[105] 'Shakespeare and Cultural Tourism', in *Shakespeare and his Contemporaries in Performance*, ed. by Edward J. Esche (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 3-19 (p. 4).
[106] Dennis Kennedy, 'Memory, Performance and the Idea of the Museum', in *Shakespeare, Memory and Performance*, ed. by Peter Holland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 329-45 (p. 333).

stemmed from sentiments amongst some thinkers and artists from the mid-nineteenth century to revive the relationship between 'performance and the life of the spirit' that modernity had erased and which the quasi-religious festivals of ancient Greece possessed.[107] One of the most influential examples of these festivals was the festival dedicated to Wagner established in Bayreuth in 1876 which demonstrates this escape from cosmopolitan modernity to the past in the rural location selected for this event. Three years later, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre was established in Stratford to house the Shakespeare Festival which had developed fifteen years earlier. Another notable instance of such festivals is the drama and music festival in Salzburg established by Max Reinhardt and Richard Strauss in 1920. These festivals conform to our current understanding of the term 'festival' which implies an event that occurs periodically, contains a 'series of coordinated events', and involves the participation of a whole community which are bound in these cases by their artistic preferences and interests.[108] These festivals with their high ticket prices attracted the upper classes who were then presented with a repertory of high art.[109]

3.1. Bayreuth

Both Jackson and Shaw were aware of and familiar with these dramatic festivals emerging in Europe. As the quote with which this section began demonstrates, in the 1920s and prior to the development of the Malvern Festival, Jackson expressed his interest in the concept of regional drama festivals. Two decades later, and when Jackson took over as the Director

[107] 'Memory, Performance and the Idea of the Museum', p. 332.
[108] Alessandro Falassi, 'Festival: Definition and Morphology, in *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, ed. by Alessandro Falassi (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), pp. 1-10 (p. 2).
[109] 'Memory, Performance and the Idea of the Museum', p. 333-34.

of the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, he again demonstrated his continuing interest with such festivals when he compared Stratford to Salzburg in a conversation with the director, Peter Brook: 'I think we could turn this into another Salzburg, don't you?'[110]

For Shaw, however, it was the festival in Bayreuth with which he was most familiar. Moreover, it is perhaps the unique qualities of this festival which are closest to the model replicated in Malvern. Similar to the festival in Stratford which was based on a direct link between the location of the festival and the figure at its centre, Salzburg is also the birthplace of Mozart.[111] However Wagner specifically selected Bayreuth, with which he possessed no previous affiliations, as the site for the establishment of a new theatre and festival dedicated to his operas. This decision was intertwined with his pursuit for suitable locations for the performance of his works in the manner in which he intended. Wagner founded the Bayreuth Festival as a result of experiencing similar challenges when attempting to stage his work in Germany to those with which Shaw was confronted in London's West End. As Robert Hartford explains:

> Even in Germany, concerts were a haphazard affair, with small incompetent orchestras led (more often than not) by a conductor who could read no more than the first violin part of the score […] Concert programmes demonstrate that public appetite was fed with what satisfied it most easily; a

[110] Sally Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 167.
[111] However, even the festival in Stratford was also influenced by events in Bayreuth. In designing the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, opened in 1932, Elisabeth Scott was inspired by the theatre in Bayreuth (see Tony Howard, 'Blood on the Bright Young Things: Shakespeare in the 1930s', in *British Theatre Between the Wars: 1918-1939*, ed. by Clive Barker and Maggie B. Gale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 135-162 (p. 145)).

> symphony was more readily digested if the gaps between the movements were filled with sugary songs or trivial display pieces.[112]

Geoffrey Skelton supports this view, arguing that Bayreuth was a 'necessity' for realising Wagner's ideas in practice.[113] The first season of the festival occurred in 1876 in a newly built playhouse whose design reflected much of Wagner's ideas regarding the staging of his operas. This new playhouse was devoid of all distractions in order to obtain maximum dedication from the audience to Wagner's works.[114] The exterior of the theatre was simple while every aspect of its interior was carefully selected in order to enhance the effect of the performances. While in 'the old Italian style opera houses with their tiers of showy boxes, their gilded ornamentation, plush furnishings and brilliant chandeliers, [...] the audience was more interested in displaying itself than in what was happening on stage',[115] at Bayreuth the audience was 'persuaded to forget its social self' through the shape of the auditorium where 'every seat gave an uninterrupted view of the stage'. Furthermore, in order to enhance the effect of the music, the orchestra was concealed from view which shifted the attention away from the musicians to the drama depicted on stage.[116]

In addition to the unique qualities of the theatre, the setting of the festival in Bayreuth also assisted Wagner in fulfilling his aim to present to the audience a 'spiritual experience' rather than a 'social occasion'

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[112] *Bayreuth: The Early Years, An Account of the Early Decades of the Wagner Festival as Seen by the Celebrated Visitors and Participants* (London: Victor Gollancz LTD, 1980), pp. 15-16.
[113] Geoffrey Skelton, *Wagner at Bayreuth: Experiment and Tradition* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1965), p. 10.
[114] Skelton, p. 33.
[115] Hartford, pp. 16-17.
[116] Skelton, p. 33.

through his operas.[117] In regards to selecting a location for his festival, Wagner wrote:

> I have in mind one of the smaller German cities, favourably located and adapted to the entertainment of distinguished guests, and particularly a city in which there would be no collision with a larger permanent theatre, and where, consequently a strictly metropolitan theatrical public with its well-known customs would not present itself.[118]

Bayreuth fulfilled these criteria as it did not already possess a theatre and its smaller size compared to larger cities in the country indicated that the 'strictly metropolitan theatrical public' which Wagner attempted to avoid would not be present. Furthermore, the festival setting in which performances lasted for the whole day allowed for long intervals during which the audience could 'refresh themselves in quiet and idyllic surroundings'.[119]

Shaw was among the visitors to the Bayreuth Festival as he attended the festival on multiple occasions while working as a music critic during the 1880s and 1890s. In a review for the *English Illustrated Magazine* in 1889, Shaw's main praise for the festival was regarding some of the mentioned artistic achievements made in building the playhouse: 'The artistic success of this innovation in theatre-building is without a drawback. The singers and the players are easily and perfectly heard […] The concentration of attention on the stage is so complete that the after-image of the lyric drama witnessed is deeply engraved in

[117] Skelton, p. 33
[118] Hartford, p. 20.
[119] Skelton, p. 21

the memory, aural and visual'.[120] However, while Shaw's description of the playhouse was laudatory, he insisted that the festival could be easily emulated in England and that any such attempts to produce a similar event would surpass Bayreuth. In the same article for the *English Illustrated Magazine* in 1889 Shaw wrote: 'Before Wagner, the qualities which distinguish the Bayreuth performances were rarer in Germany than they are now in England. His work inspired them there: what is to prevent it doing so here? No more Bayreuth then: Wagnersim, like charity begins at home.'[121] In addition to insisting on the potential in London to surpass Bayreuth in producing Wagner, Shaw also used the festival in Bayreuth to further the cause for the New Drama in England. In the same article, Shaw argued for building a London Wagner Theatre which would in addition to presenting the works of Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner and Goetz also stage spoken drama: 'But there is no theatre in London which is the natural home of the plays they want to see. Shakespeare's plays, Schiller's, Goethe's, Ibsen's (*Peer Gynt* and

[120] George Bernard Shaw, *Wagner in Bayreuth* (London: Broadsheet King, 1976), p. 7.

[121] *Wagner in Bayreuth*, p. 12. Shaw's concern with England surpassing Bayreuth is also reflective of the imperial sentiments which had by then entered discourse around culture including drama. The manner in which William Shakespeare was used in Ireland during this period to both support and dispute the influence of the British Empire demonstrates this intertwining of culture and political dominance as James Moran notes: 'The unionist newspaper, the *Irish Times*, was particularly galled that Germany should be making a grab for "unser Shakespere" while "the native wood-notes wild will not be heard next month on the boards of any theatre in Ireland". Meanwhile, Irish nationalists gleefully noted Germany's claim to Shakespeare, with Francis Sheehy Skeffington comparing the soliloquies of Connolly's *Under Which Flag?* To those of the "great English Dramatist who is more honoured in Germany than in his own country"' (*Four Irish Rebel Plays* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), p. 19). In this opposition, Shaw made his feelings clear by declaring that the 'the anti-Englishman is making himself and his country ridiculous just at present by declaring for Germany on the ground that Germany is anti-English' (George Bernard Shaw, *The Matter with Ireland*, ed. by David H. Greene and Dan H. Laurence (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), p. 89).

Brand), Browning's what chance have we at present of knowing these in the only way in which they can thoroughly be known?'[122]

By 1923 and the publication of the fourth edition of *The Perfect Wagnerite*, Shaw's views on the superiority of English talent and the necessity of a similar venture in England to that in Bayreuth remained unchanged. However, the lack of success in establishing a Wagner Theatre in London since his reviews at the end of the nineteenth century had resulted in Shaw's interest in the regions for producing a rival to the Bayreuth model. This was largely due to the development of a festival of music and drama in Glastonbury by the English composer Rutland Boughton in 1914 which Shaw identified as the 'only one serious attempt to establish a Bayreuth in England'.[123] Boughton dedicated his festival to English music which included his own works among other composers such as Matthew Locke and Edgar Bainton. Despite Boughton's initially more lavish plans, the festival was achieved with modest means in the assembly rooms of Glastonbury with a piano in place of an orchestra.[124] Shaw embraced Glastonbury's lack of pretension which he interpreted as closer to the Wagnerian spirit than the work of 'fashionable commercial professionalism'. Shaw then used the model in Glastonbury to highlight the potential in the countryside to provide worthwhile recreation which would include art in some form. He referred to the growth of summer schools in the countryside and explained:

> During the twentieth century an important social development has transformed that costly and deleterious

[122] *Wagner in Bayreuth*, p. 9.
[123] George Bernard Shaw, *The Perfect Wagnerite: A Commentary on the Nilbung's Ring* (London: Dover, 1967), p. 133.
[124] Pippa Drummond, *The Provincial Music Festival, 1784-1914* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 1988), p. 162.

> bore, the British holiday, into a genuinely recreative change. Under the title of Summer Schools, voluntary associations of artistically minded students of sociology, theosophy, science, history, and what not - shall we say people who take life, or some department of life, seriously, and cannot be happy unless they are using brains and learning something in the intervals of dancing and singing for pure fun?- now appear every autumn in the prettiest districts.[125]

Here Shaw is also highlighting the significance of amateur initiatives and the need for wider participation in the arts, which are of course fundamentally different in form from the Malvern Festival. However, Shaw's fascination with Bayreuth as a summer festival in rural settings which initially opposed mainstream operatic productions in Germany indicates his interest in establishing a similar venture in England dedicated to 'English music and English drama'.[126] More than a decade later, in 1938, Shaw would again directly connect the Malvern Festival and his pursuit of suitable locations for the performance of his works, with the festival in Bayreuth when recounting his first meeting with Jackson which led to the Birmingham Rep's production of *Back to Methuselah* in 1923:

> I had written and published a play, or rather a cycle of five plays, called *Back to Methuselah*, in which I had discarded all thought of a production until perhaps fifty years after my death in a theatre like the Festival Playhouse, which made

[125] *The Perfect Wagnerite*, p. 135.
[126] *Ibid.*

> Wagner's *Ring* possible in Bayreuth, should such a one be established in England.[127]

Shaw's fascination with Bayreuth would also dominate his later discussions with Jackson in 1928 regarding the establishment of the Malvern Festival to which Shaw referred as 'the Malvern Buhnenfestspiel', 'after Bayreuth, with himself as Richard Wagner'.[128]

3.2. The Stratford Shakespeare Festival

While Jackson and Shaw looked to events in Europe for inspiration when planning the Festival in Malvern in 1929, by this time England already possessed a similar dramatic festival dedicated to a single artist in Stratford. The Shakespeare Festival established in the reign of Queen Victoria, alongside the reps, was another location for theatre in the regions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The festival began in 1864 in order to celebrate Shakespeare's tercentenary. By 1879, Stratford possessed its own Shakespeare Memorial Theatre which opened with a performance of *Much Ado About Nothing*.[129] Shakespearean productions of the West End had also been affected by the commercialisation of theatre. The actor-managers edited and altered source texts as they wished, which Shaw denounced by writing: 'His (Shakespeare's) plays were presented in mutilated fragments, divided into acts with long waits in between, in which form they were so horribly boresome, being mostly unintelligible, that only the most powerful

[127] Conolly, p. xix.
[128] Conolly, p. xxvi.
[129] Daniel Rosenthal, *The National Theatre Story* (London: Oberon Books, 2013), p. 4.

personal fascination could induce playgoers to endure them.'[130] In an essay in 1919 on the subject of cutting the source texts of Shakespeare's works, Shaw vividly expressed his disapproval at the West End's tendency to alter these texts based on the argument that the author, in this case Shakespeare, knows more than any other individual about the play. In recent years, Shakespearean scholars have increasingly problematized any notion of an original text – seeing Shakespeare's plays instead as fluid and dynamic – but Shaw certainly felt that certain modern adaptations could be claimed as coming closer to Shakespeare's intentions than others.[131] According to Shaw, productions such as Irving's *King Lear* remain forgotten as a direct result of the producer's tendency to supposedly 'improve Shakespeare' by cutting the source text as he pleased.[132] However in contrast to Irving's staging of Shakespeare at the Lyceum, according to a speech by the Chairman of the Governors of the festival, Alderman A. D. Flower, the productions at Stratford Upon Avon and especially the work of Frank Benson, promised a more authentic experience by 'getting the true spirit of the plays, emphasizing the spoken word, with well-balanced performances instead of a single star, and building up a permanent organisation under which a constant supply of well-trained players could be provided'.[133]

In addition to the quality of the productions, the festival also boasted the attractions of its surroundings and the events accompanying the plays. The *Observer* reported in 1912:

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[130] 'Letter to J. T. Grein', p. 136.
[131] For instance, *King Lear* is included twice (*The History of King Lear* and *The Tragedy of King Lear*) in *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (ed. by Stanley Wells and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)) as the existing source texts contain significant variations.
[132] 'On Cutting Shakespeare', first published in *The Fornightly Review,* August 1919, republished in *Shaw on Theatre*, pp. 122-26 (p. 122).
[133] 'Close of Shakespeare Festival: A Record Success', *Manchester Guardian*, 21 May 1923, p. 10.

> And no one who has not attended a Stratford Festival can have any idea what a varied and delightful time can be spent there. It is not only a question of the beauty of a wonderfully lovely old place in the spring time, of Stratford's antiquities, her river her surroundings […] There are May Day revels, lectures, banquets, exhibitions, any number of branches of the activity which is spreading all over England from the centre at Stratford Upon Avon.[134]

Thus, as the quote above suggests, the festival at Stratford aimed to break new ground and introduce innovations with its work at the centre of the changes proposed in place of theatre in London. Shavian drama also accompanied the Shakespearean productions as for instance in 1912, for the first time Shaw had 'a place in the bill' with a performance of *You Never Can Tell* at Stratford and again in 1923 when the Birmingham Rep presented *Getting Married* in the festival. The *Manchester Guardian* reported in 1926 that Shaw had himself not missed a single production since Bridges-Adams began directing the festival in 1919.[135]

While national newspapers in England emphasised the unique qualities and success of Stratford, the festival had a turbulent history in the early decades of the twentieth century. The festival was closed between 1916 and 1919 due to the outbreak of World War I, and in 1919, its producer Frank Benson, under whose direction the festival had experienced most of its success, left his role. Following Benson's

[134] Shakespeare Festival: Mr. Benson's Plans for Stratford-Upon-Avon', *Observer*, 14 August 1912, p. 11.
[135] 'Shakespeare Memorial Theatre', *Manchester Guardian*, 29 March 1926, p. 6.

departure, the festival suffered another setback as the Festival Theatre in Stratford was destroyed in a fire in 1925. As Bridges-Adams explained, the damage to the theatre was extensive:

> Our most serious task […] was to replace in five weeks scenery, properties, and wardrobe which had taken more than five years to accumulate. (In the case of the wardrobe, perhaps twenty-five years would be nearer the mark). Nearly all of this was destroyed, and to provide for new productions on the scale to which our public is accustomed has been a stiff battle against time.[136]

Here, Adams is referring to plans concerning the 1926 season of the festival immediately following the destruction of the theatre. The Festival began its spring season in April as usual after relocating to the local cinema. Bridges-Adams explained the events as a demonstration of sheer will power and determination: 'From the immediate point of view that disaster seemed final: there was every legitimate reason to abandoning this year's festival. But I do not think that such an idea entered for one moment into the minds of those responsible.' However, in addition to the unsuitability of the conditions of the cinema for a drama festival, the 1926 season also highlighted the inadequacies of the festival theatre prior to the fire. When addressing some of such criticism made by 'practically every London paper', Bridges-Adams explained:

> I will admit that when I gazed on the ashes my feelings were not altogether unmixed. But what these critics forget is that,

[136] 'Shakespeare Among the Ruins: Plans for the Festival', *Observer*, 28 March 1926, p. 17.

> ugly as this generation holds it to have been, cramped and inadequate as it undoubtedly was, at the time of its erection it was up to date and embodies from an aesthetic point of view, the spirit of its age.[137]

Thus in a defense of the theatre, Bridges-Adams also identified serious issues with the venue such as its lack of adequate space and as a result undermined its suitability as the location for a festival which expected both national and international audiences.

Circumstances for Stratford and consequently for professional drama festivals in Britain which it represented became particularly embarrassing when the town began collecting funds for building a new theatre for the festival. In 1926 only £20,000 of a required £250,000 was collected, which led to complaints in the British press regarding the lack of cooperation from English businessmen:

> It is a humiliating fact that rich men in England do not readily part with their money for fine purposes unless they are bribed with titles for doing so. An American millionaire, who can hope for no such reward as that will give generously and largely to laudable things, but *our* millionaires, though they will squander large sums on worthless enterprises, will shudder if you suggest to them that they spend a thousand pounds to the funds for the Memorial Theatre or the Sadler's Wells Theatre.[138]

[137] 'Shakespeare Among the Ruins', p. 17.
[138] 'At the Play: The Stratford Festival'*, Observer*, 18 April 1926, p. 13.

This lack of cooperation from Englishmen led to a direct appeal to the Americans for rebuilding the theatre which promised humiliating prospects for the future: 'Will it not be a dreadful humiliation for us if we find him announcing that most of the money required for rebuilding the theatre had been subscribed by Americans?'.[139] The new Festival Theatre was not built until seven years later in 1932.[140] Thus in 1929 and prior to the establishment of the Malvern Festival, the future of the Stratford Festival, which had in its history until then demonstrated instances of the potential in similar ventures to attract visitors, was bleak.

Conclusion

Upon his arrival in Malvern in 1929, Shaw highlighted the significance of the municipalities rather than London for the future of theatre in England as he recounted the struggle for building a National Theatre in the capital and then commented:

> Our government unlike those of other countries has no Ministry of Fine Arts, but the Malvern Council has its committee which looks after the municipal Theatre and Gardens. You can therefore imagine the feelings with which I turn to that local body here which gives us a thing London has absolutely refused to do.[141]

Thus, following a long and laborious battle with London's West End, Shaw arrived in Malvern with the hope that it was the regions and their

[139] 'At the Play: The Stratford Festival', p. 13.
[140] Rosenthal, p. 24.
[141] 'Open Air Theatre: Mr. Shaw's Suggestion and a promise', *Manchester Guardian*, 31 August 1929, p. 16.

governing bodies with which the hope for future experiments in theatre rested. This expression of faith in the significance of the regions was not mere optimism by Shaw. Indeed, it was substantiated by events earlier in the century. As demonstrated in this chapter, from the beginning of the twentieth century, regional theatres in England, with the help of wealthy patrons, sought independence from the pervasive influence of the West End. The growth of amateur societies opposing London trends, the establishment of repertory companies in some of the major industrial cities, and the development of the Shakespeare Festival in Stratford demonstrated the potential in regional locations for nurturing major theatrical ventures both in terms of artistic and public interest. Shaw was aware of and involved with such initiatives as his work was often used by both amateur and professional regional ventures. Thus, throughout the early twentieth century, Shaw used regional theatres as platforms for staging his work, which as I have discussed, at times struggled for performance in London.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and later during the interwar years, which led to a significantly tougher economic climate for theatres, many such ventures began to struggle financially. A number of the repertory companies founded at the beginning of the twentieth century disappeared altogether while others continued but with less experimental repertoires. It was only the Birmingham Rep which continued its work on many of its previous principles due to Jackson's financial support. However, as we have seen in this chapter, Jackson also struggled with a lack of public interest in some of the Birmingham Rep's productions, leading him to announce the closure of the theatre in 1924. By 1929 and the establishment of the Malvern Festival, the Shakespeare Stratford Festival was also struggling as it now lacked a theatre to stage its productions. Thus, although earlier in the century

such ventures had demonstrated the potential for producing experimental drama in the regions, their demise during the interwar years indicated the necessity for a new endeavour.

However, the contradictions present in ventures such as the regional reps and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons explained in this chapter, which caused such endeavours to only achieve temporary success, reappeared in the organisation of the Malvern Festival. As the following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate, there were a number of irreconcilable contradictions in the guiding philosophy behind the Festival. As with the challenges confronting the Directors of the various regional reps in attracting wider public support for their efforts, during his time as a co-manager of the Festival, Jackson also struggled to reconcile his interest in appealing to an exclusive group of a metropolitan set with a need to gather wider public support for the Festival amongst the local population in Malvern and the Malvern Council. While the Festival was held in Malvern, Jackson pursued an audience of national and international visitors and thus marginalised many of the local residents of Malvern from the events included in the Festival. In addition to these ambiguities surrounding the target audience of the Festival, both Jackson and Limbert also failed to present a clear and coherent sense of direction and identity for the Festival through its repertoire. Jackson emphasised the importance of staging less familiar classics, and Limbert pursued a more popular festival presenting new plays. Thus, as Chapter Three of this thesis will demonstrate, the Festival fluctuated between an emphasis on Shaw as its star playwright and a celebration of the English literary canon. These opposing visions for the future of the Festival ultimately led to a series of disagreements between the two co-

managers and consequently the organisation of the Festival lacked a clear sense of leadership. As Chapter Four will demonstrate, it was the presence of these irreconcilable tensions in the guiding philosophy of the Festival which led to the Festival's lack of public and financial success.

Chapter II: The Opening Night

Introduction

At 8 pm on 19 August 1929, the actor Wallace Evennett delivered the line 'What was your father?' in Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, and so inaugurated the very first night of the Malvern Theatre Festival.[1] There was a sense of excitement surrounding the performance as 'Full House' notice boards were displayed outside Malvern's newly built, nine hundred seat theatre, and Shaw sat in the front row of the orchestra stalls alongside Sir Edward Elgar.[2] This was Shaw's first new play for half a decade, not since *Saint Joan* first produced at the New Theatre in March 1924 had audiences watched a new script by the dramatist. The performance in Malvern was the first production of the play in English and it marked the beginning of a run which was already confirmed to extend to the Birmingham Rep and later London.[3] The performance, which lasted for more than three hours, was a Birmingham Rep production and included an impressive list of some of the main performers of the company on stage and its central figures behind the scenes. The well-known performers, Cedric Hardwicke and Edith Evans

[1] This performance of *The Apple Cart* marked the official opening of the Festival. However, as I will explain in more detail later in this chapter, this production was preceded by a private performance of the play the previous evening. Moreover, prior to this private performance the journalists especially invited for reviewing the production gathered for a luncheon with members of the Urban District Council. The chairman of the Council welcomed the journalists in a speech in which he attempted to present the Festival as a significant theatrical venture that had resulted in 'exceptional' interest amongst the public and the press: 'The interest aroused by the Festival has, for months past, been exceptional, and I may tell you that visitors from all over the world have bestowed their patronage upon it. By your attendance you have […] shown that you attach great importance to the Festival' ('Malvern Festival: Big Week at the Theatre', *Malvern Gazette*, 23 August, p. 8).
[2] 'Malvern Festival: Big Week at the Theatre', p. 4.
[3] The play had already received its world premiere at the Polish Theatre in Warsaw in June to lukewarm reviews. However, the Malvern production remained the play's first production in English and as a result generated interest in the English press.

took the main parts, as King Magnus and Orinthia respectively. Hardwicke had 1324 performances of *The Farmer's Wife* under his belt, and Evans was emerging as a well-known Shavian actress following her performance as the Serpent, the Oracle, the She-Ancient, and the Ghost of the Serpent in the Birmingham Rep's production of *Back to Methuselah* in 1923.[4] The cast for the production included other famous names such as Scott Sunderland, one of the initial members of Jackson's Pilgrim Players, in the role of one of the King's private secretaries, Sempronius. *The Apple Cart* was produced by H. K. Ayliff with Paul Shelving as the stage designer, two individuals, who as we have seen in Chapter One, were integral to the success of the production of Shaw's earlier plays at the Birmingham Rep.[5] Shaw had also been involved with the production, as the *Observer* reported in July that Shaw was busy at the Old Vic rehearsing with the company for the Malvern production of his new play in an article which demonstrates the growing anticipation for the production in the press.[6]

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[4] Both Hardwicke and Evans were highly praised by critics for their performances. The *Daily Express* applauded Hardwicke's 'quiet dignity' and 'splendid utterance' through speeches of 'nothingness' delivered mainly sitting down. Edith Evans was also praised for bringing to life a difficult interlude as the *Daily Chronicle* described Evans' performance as a 'superb exhibition of imperious vanity' ('Malvern Festival: Bits from Criticisms', *Malvern Gazette*, 23 August 1929, p. 8.). Indeed, praise for acting was to become a constant feature of the reviews of the Festival. Furthermore, the Festival also helped to develop the careers of some of the actors involved. For instance, the Festival's production of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* in 1930 was then transferred to London where it had a long and successful run and ultimately gave Hardwicke the 'popular acting opportunity of his life' (see Vivian Elliot, 'Genius Loci: The Malvern Festival', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 3 (1983), 191-218 (p. 26)).

[5] Both Ayliff and Shelving would remain closely associated with the Festival throughout its twelve seasons as Ayliff directed and Shelving designed the scenery and costumes for all the plays presented during the first five seasons of the Festival, and again in 1938 and 1939. Ayliff also directed two plays for the 1937 season. In addition to directing the plays he also performed on stage in the role of the Elder in Malvern's 1932 production of *Too True to be Good.*

[6] 'Dramatis Personae', *Observer*, 28 July 1929, p. 11.

Once the curtains were drawn and Shaw's political extravaganza unfolded on stage, it would become evident to the audience that *The Apple Cart* advocated elitism in government and as this chapter will argue this elitism was also apparent in the guiding philosophy behind the Festival setting in which it was performed. This chapter thus picks up the thread of the discussion of elitism that was foregrounded in the introduction to this thesis and shows how, as with the earlier attempts to reform the theatre in England discussed in Chapter One, the Malvern Festival was inflected with elitist tendencies from its opening season, brought centre stage by this production but also reflected in the setting and promotion of the Festival and the audience which it attracted to Malvern. Like Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca, who accepted elitism as a suitable form of government insisting that a minority demonstrating variable superior qualities will always rule the inferior majority, Shaw also used *The Apple Cart* to reject democracy as being an ineffective form of government. In this play, Shaw justified this viewpoint through dismissing the masses as a group lacking in intellect and who thus required leadership by an elite minority he identified as the 'strong man'.[7] I will argue that the elitism which the politics in *The Apple Cart* advocated, and which subsequent reviewers criticised, was also apparent in Jackson's organisation of the production's festival setting. As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, elite groups are based on exclusivity as their members consider themselves as a 'social class' and are aware of specific qualities which distinguish them from those outside the group, and as a result ultimately 'close their ranks against

[7] *The Apple Cart*, in *Bernard Shaw: Political Plays*, ed. by Dan H. Laurence (London: Penguin Books, 1986), pp. 7-139 (p. 56). (Further citations from this book are provided in the text and marked by parenthesis).

outsiders'.[8] This sense of exclusivity is apparent in many of Jackson's policies in Malvern, which were directed at maintaining a coterie and specifically exclusive audience for the Festival. In contrast to Wagner's aim to avoid 'a strictly metropolitan theatrical public' at the festival in Bayreuth as I discussed in the previous chapter, Jackson hoped to attract the metropolitan elite who possessed a comfortable level of financial security in order to visit the Festival.[9] This is evidenced by the fact that the audience were able to afford the time and expenses involved in attending the Festival in Malvern. Furthermore, the ticket prices for the productions of the Festival were significantly higher than those of performances staged in the Malvern Theatre during the remainder of the year.[10] The sought after audience was a group of individuals who already had a keen interest in theatre and particularly the more avant-garde work produced by theatres outside London's West End such as the Birmingham Rep. Furthermore, their interest in Shaw demonstrates that this audience were comfortable with the expression

[8] Charles Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 11.

[9] Robert Hartford, *Bayreuth: The Early Years, An Account of the Early Decades of the Wagner Festival as Seen by the Celebrated Visitors and Participants* (London: Victor Gollancz LTD, 1980), p. 20.

[10] The tickets for the Festival were sold at a significantly higher price than those for other productions at the Malvern Theatre during the remainder of the year. The prices for the stalls included, 12s., 8s. 6d., 5s. 9d. and 2s. 4d while the fee for circle seats were 12 s., 5s. 9d. and 2s. 4d. In comparison with ticket prices for the Malvern Shakespeare Festival by the Stratford-upon-Avon Festival Company the following summer in June 1930, the prices of the Malvern Festival in 1929 are significantly higher. The average price for stall tickets during the Shakespeare Festival is 3 s. 6 d. with the highest price at 5s. 9d. while the average circle ticket is 4 s. 7d. with a highest price of 5s. 9d. However the average of stall and circle prices for the Malvern Festival a year before are respectively 7 s. 2 d. and 6s. 8d. Furthermore, unreserved circle, pit-stalls and pit tickets were available for the Shakespeare Festival with prices as low as 1d. 3s. which were not included in the Malvern Festival. The absence of these low-priced tickets and the existence of ticket prices of 12s., which implies a difference of almost 6s. between the highest ticket prices among the two festivals, indicate that the audience of the Malvern Festival was in the main more financially secure and different from the local audience attending the theatre during the remainder of the year.

of unconventional political and religious views on stage which might be less appealing to more conventional and conservative spectators. Consequently, this was a group who possessed a similar taste in drama to Jackson and Shaw and thus whose interest in theatre was in many ways positioned outside of the more popular and mainstream drama offered in London's West End.

The establishment of this festival in Malvern, however, resulted in opposition among some of the residents in the town. Many in Malvern felt isolated by the elitism in the organisation of a festival which demonstrated little potential for tangible benefits to their daily lives while excluding the local people from the performances and accompanying events in the Festival which were directed at an audience of national and international visitors. As we will see, this local opposition extended to include a level of hostility in Malvern towards Shaw, whose reputation as a socialist clashed with the political views of many in Malvern which was in this period a stronghold for the Conservative political party.

This chapter argues that the local opposition to both Shaw and the Festival in Malvern indicates that, at least in this particular context, Shaw's public image and some of his oeuvre fundamentally resonated with specific metropolitan elites and lacked mass appeal. As a result, for those situated outside this particular elite present inside the theatre, the plays and a festival dedicated to Shaw possessed little relevance. The local reaction to Shaw in Malvern is significant as in addition to illuminating Shaw's public image in the interwar period, it also sheds light on Shaw's contemporary public reception. In *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, Raymond Williams argues that Shaw's plays fail to extend beyond the time period in which they were written and possess relevance for later audiences. Williams does praise Shaw for efforts in

reforming English theatre and Shaw's campaigns against the censor. However, according to Williams, Shaw continued to embody what he terms as Shaw's 'epoch' long after this period in time had passed which leads Williams to conclude: 'Shaw's dynamic as a dramatist has now largely weakened, and it is difficult to believe that it ought, as a major force, to survive the period of which he was a victim.'[11] While Williams' assessment of Shaw's career is highly debatable for a range of reasons, events in Malvern demonstrate that at least part of Shaw's oeuvre is closely intertwined with the socio-political debates of its time and approaches these debates in such a manner in which the plays fundamentally speak to a specific elite and thus lack mass appeal.[12] Consequently this analysis of events in Malvern show that as well as appealing to a specific time period, Shaw also struggles to extend beyond the intellectual middle class to whom his plays initially appealed. Thus, even in the period in which the plays were first performed, these works attracted a selective group of people and often alienated those outside of the elite to which they appealed. This is specifically true of Shaw's later plays such as *The Apple Cart* which are self-consciously highly political in content and many of which engage with the unique political landscape of the interwar period. As Shaw appealed to a particular metropolitan elite who viewed the play and its politics in the interwar period, the gradual disappearance of this target audience has also resulted in a lack of interest in some of Shaw's plays.

[11] *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London: Hogarth Press, 1968), p. 258.
[12] For instance, in consideration of the length of Shaw's career, identifying Shaw's epoch is extremely problematic (see Soudabeh Ananisarab, *Shaw and the Critics* (unpublished master's dissertation, The University of Nottingham, 2011)).

1. *The Apple Cart* and the Critics

In *The Apple Cart*, Shaw infused realism with fantasy in order to create a dystopian image of England's future which commented on some of the contemporary political issues of the time. Thus*, The Apple Cart* followed *Back to Methuselah* in its rejection of the realism of Shaw's earlier plays such as *Widowers' Houses* and *Pygmalion* for a more experimental form. In *The Apple Cart*, Shaw presented a vision of England's future where the intelligent ruling monarch, King Magnus, finds himself in a struggle for power with the Prime Minister, Proteus, and his disarrayed ruling cabinet who attempt to reduce the King to a constitutional monarch. Through this farcical image of England's future, Shaw's *The Apple Cart* commented on the unstable politics of Shaw's contemporary England, which according to the play, would ultimately result in the bleak future depicted. *The Apple Cart's* premiere in Malvern followed swiftly on from the election in May 1929. In that election, Labour won a shaky victory as while it failed to secure the majority of the votes cast, it acquired the most number of seats in parliament. Consequently, the Prime Minister, Ramsay McDonald, formed a minority government as a result of which it was necessary for him to acquire the support of the Liberal MPs to pass legislation.[13] At the same time, across Europe new forms of leadership were emerging, with the rise of a socialist state in Russia and Benito Mussolini's victory in Italy in 1922. This political instability is reflected in *The Apple Cart*, in which government and the pursuit for an efficient and effective form of leadership is a major theme. In this play, Shaw criticises democracy through depicting a squabbling cabinet which lacks authority and leadership. The seven ministers present, who are

[13] Chris Cook and John Stevenson, *A History of British Elections since 1689* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. 143.

democratically elected representatives of the public, spend the majority of their time on stage arguing, ridiculing one another, 'making scenes' and often failing to reach unanimous decisions (p. 68). Thus similar to the results of the 1929 elections which had culminated in the formation of a government which lacked the sense of authority associated with a strong election victory, in *The Apple Cart* a confused King Magnus mocks the cabinet and asks: 'Which Prime Minister? There are so many of them in the cabinet' (p. 67).

Following the Malvern production in which King Magnus outwitted and ultimately defeated a cabinet of fools 'fancy dressed in green and gold', *The Apple Cart* was criticised for Magnus' victory which many critics interpreted as Shaw's rejection of democracy and support for leadership by an elite minority.[14] The *Malvern Gazette*, which reported widely on the reception of the play, published an article, 'Bits from Criticisms', a few days following the opening night which contained snippets of largely negative reviews of the play. The *Daily Telegraph*, which identified the play as 'not one of Mr. Shaw's best plays', argued that *The Apple Cart* indicated Shaw's belief in the aristocratic principle: 'that is, that the success of any system of government depends not on the system but on the men who administer it. For democracy, if that is to mean the rule of the second-rate, he has plainly no use at all'.[15] The correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* reiterated these claims in a review in which, referring to Shaw's play of the same name first performed in 1897, Shaw was labelled as the 'Devil's Disciple':

> Mr Shaw has continually confused the idea of democracy with any form of it which happens at the moment to be

[14] 'Mr Shaw's New Play: The Apple Cart, G.B.S as Devil's Disciple', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 August 1929, p. 11.
[15] 'Malvern Festival: Bits from Criticisms', p. 8.

> vulnerable, and his defence of autocracy, […] turns out to be feeble, negative stuff, the moment you look below the pleasant, dialectical virtuosity with which he can so easily clothe it. To cartoon your elected persons until they are mere gargoyles and to idealise your unelected monarch is a pitiful approach to political philosophy.[16]

Thus the journalists present in Malvern condemned Shaw's criticism of democracy and support for that which resembled dictatorship as Shaw ridiculed the elected cabinet and praised the unelected King Magnus in the play.

The atmosphere surrounding the Malvern performance of the play, as depicted above, provides the basis for the argument advanced in this chapter as this critical reaction demonstrates the manner in which Shaw's play provided a marginalised and a much less mainstream political stance.[17] As the description of Shaw as a 'law to himself' by the *Daily News* following the Malvern production suggests, *The Apple Cart* was not designed to possess mass appeal and thus attracted a more exclusive audience.[18] The remainder of this chapter specifically focuses on this quality of elitism to which the critics referred and which I argue extends beyond the play and includes the festival setting in which it was performed. This chapter first focuses on the production of the play in the

[16] 'Mr Shaw's New Play', p. 11.
[17] Official records of BUF memberships are scarce and as a result there are various and at times largely different estimations of the popularity of British Fascist parties during the interwar period. However, even in the most optimistic estimations, this membership does not exceed 100,000 members and Thomas Linehan argues in his evaluation of the BF: 'the BF survived on a painfully thin membership during its lifetime'. Thus as these numbers demonstrate, Shaw's views which correspond with some of the opinions of members of the BUF were not a mainstream and popular political viewpoint (see *British Fascism 1918-39: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 150-153).
[18] 'Malvern Festival: Big Week at the Theatre', p. 8.

context of Malvern through discussing two major themes in *The Apple Cart* which demonstrate and advocate a sense of elitism. This includes the play's rejection of the masses as infatuated with appearances and lacking intellect and its support for leadership by the 'strong man' (p. 56) in opposition to democracy as an effective form of government. The chapter then continues to explore the setting of the Festival as it discusses the private performance of *The Apple Cart* prior to the opening night and the accompanying events in the Festival for the visitors. In these sections, this chapter will demonstrate that both the play *and* the Festival exuded elitism which then isolated those outside the exclusive audience of the Festival and its opening night. As a result, many in Malvern opposed the arrival of both the Festival and Shaw as both Shaw's play and its festival setting failed to demonstrate any direct relation to the everyday lives of many in the town.

2. *The Apple Cart*

2.1. Mass Ignorance

2.1.A. The Country and the City

The inadequacy of the cabinet in governing the country as depicted in *The Apple Cart* can be seen as a direct reflection of Shaw's views on the intellect of the voting public, as in this play he presented the supposed ignorance of the masses as a major obstacle towards the success of democracy. In *The Apple Cart*, the masses are depicted as a people infatuated with the spectacular and thus with appearances over substance. This view of the masses is a recurring theme in the play introduced as early as the first scene. The production in Malvern opened in an office in the royal palace decorated only with two tables and a number of chairs with Evennett and Sunderland in the roles of the King's

two private secretaries, Pamphilius and Sempronius, discussing Sempronius' deceased father. During the conversation which ensues between these two men on stage, Shaw immediately sets up a dichotomy between the country and the city and the manner in which these settings affect their inhabitants. This distinction is succinctly summed up in a poem by Lord George Byron that Pamphilius recites in the beginning of Act I. This poem is in two stanzas of which only the first is mentioned in the play. In this first stanza, Byron describes an unpopulated countryside where it is possible to 'trace the forest's shady scene' that 'mortal foot hath ne'er or rarely been'. In this emptiness of the countryside, the individual is then able to 'converse' with nature' (p. 46). The second stanza, omitted in the play, reveals that a real sense of 'solitude' with its negative connotations of loneliness is in fact to be found in the city where the tired crowds roam the streets without any communication with 'none who bless us' and 'none whom we can bless'.[19]

Shaw's play supports a similarly polarised view of the city and the country and the people occupying them as is expressed in Byron's poem. The city, where Sempronius' father and 'millions like him' (p. 45) reside, including most likely the majority of the Festival audience sitting in the theatre whom the adverts for the 1932 season would describe as 'town dwellers'- is a place of large hollow spectacles.[20] The audience learns that Sempronius' father, a 'Die hard Ritualist', organised pageants and public ceremonies including the last two coronations (p. 43). He lived in a world where he was infatuated with appearances; thus he enjoyed such spectacles which he could imagine were 'divine and holy'

[19] *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron: With Explanatory Notes and a Life of the Author*, ed. by Thomas Moore (New York: Johnson, Wilson and Company, 1867), p. 21.
[20] 'Display Ad 35', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 June 1932, p. 4.

as long as they 'looked splendid enough' (p. 44). Just as Byron describes the city as a place where communication ceases to exist, Sempronius describes his father as a man who never exchanged a thought or a word with those around him. However, he was dependent on the presence of others for his happiness as he paid 'oceans of money' for 'ghastly sports' where he was amused by other people. The country, on the other hand, where Sempronius' father resided during the final days of his life, is presented as a place with a positive sense of solitude. It is shown to the audience as the perfect location for thinking and where the protagonist of the play, King Magnus, would have lived happily amid the hills with nothing but his 'own thoughts' and enjoyed nature in its raw form rather than the manufactured kind (p. 47).

This was a viewpoint of the country which the adverts for the Festival also expressed. The adverts for the 1929 season described Malvern as 'the haven for all tired people' in addition to using phrases such as 'exhilarating air' and 'gentle uplands'.[21] Thus, as with the King and a selective group of others such as the two secretaries who would have also enjoyed the country as a place for rest and respite from the city, the visitors to Malvern were encouraged to view the Festival as a getaway from their exhausting daily lives in the city. These individuals, however, seem to be the exceptions as we learn that Sempronius' father, who is representative of millions of others who live a similar lifestyle, died from solitude as the country lacked the crowds and hollow spectacles in the city to which he was accustomed. Consequently, the play could be read by the individuals in the audience of the opening night as praising them as visitors to the Festival who were also an exclusive group distinguished from millions of others in crowded cities in their supposed ability to reject the spectacular and enjoy the quiet life of

[21] 'Display Ad 43', *Manchester Guardian*, 19 June 1929, p. 18.

the country which according to the play offered opportunity for contemplation.

Events in Malvern, however, demonstrate that Shaw's outlooks on the country and city encroached on one another as Shaw's views on the countryside as expressed in *The Apple Cart* in many ways contradicted the everyday experiences of those living in Malvern. Some local residents in Malvern were unconvinced by this idyllic representation of the country as expressed in the play and the Festival. Both *The Apple Cart* and Byron's poem seem to depict an uninhabited country devoid of residents which solely exists for the pleasure of the city population. This outlook on the rural disregarded the everyday experiences of those residing in the country who in the context of Malvern, presented a vastly different image of this space than that presented by the play and the Festival. For instance in a letter to the *Malvern Gazette* during the first season of the Festival, one resident wrote:

> If, however, the Festival has in many ways opened up in Malvern, I hope that the first step the Council will take will be that of providing the streets in Malvern with electric light. Many towns in England and Scotland, with a far smaller population than that of Malvern, are lit with electricity, and yet Malvern, which is supposed to be such a wonderful place, and indeed is a beautiful place, is only lit with gas. Surely something could be done about this.[22]

Although the organisers emphasised the rustic elements of the countryside, this correspondence demonstrates the difficulties which a lack of amenities caused for the daily lives of the residents in Malvern.

[22] W. E. C., 'Correspondence', *Malvern Gazette*, 6 September 1929, p. 4.

Similar clashes between the organisers of the Festival and some of the local population in the town is also apparent in the discussions surrounding the quarrying of the Malvern Hills during this period. In these debates some of the local population supported the preservation of the Hills while others regarded the quarrying industry as a major and necessary form of employment for the town. Shaw vigorously campaigned for an end to the quarrying industry, writing to *The Times* on 8 October 1929:

> Visitors from Worcester used to see the unspoiled North Hill with an indescribable pleasure. They now see it hideously disfigured by three gigantic scoops reaching so nearly to the top of the ridge that they bring home with a shock the appalling conviction that before very long the scoop will go right through leaving a couple of enormous jagged teeth of hill, which will presently be blasted away in their turn changing the Malvern Hills into the Malvern Flats.[23]

Thus Shaw justified his stance in the debate based on the inconvenience caused by the quarrying industry to the view presented to visitors to the town. This outlook disregarded the significance of the quarrying industry for many in Malvern who depended on the industry for their livelihood, which was reflected in the correspondence of some of those unemployed to the *Malvern Gazette*. For instance in one of these letters earlier in 1929, one resident expressed his interest in the prospects of the

[23] 'The Malvern Hills: Destruction by Quarrying', in *The Letters of Bernard Shaw to 'The Times' 1898-1950,* ed. By Ronald Ford (Dublin: Irish Academy Press, 2007), pp. 192-94 (p. 192).

New Year as he awaited eagerly 'the much-desired revival of the industry and subsequent employment'.[24]

Thus while on the opening night the dialogue of *The Apple Cart* might seem to have praised the audience within the theatre for their appreciation of the countryside as they, unlike millions of others, had selected to holiday in Malvern and participate in the Festival, many outside the theatre complained of the disregard demonstrated by festival organisers to the daily lives of those inhabiting this space in the country. As Raymond Williams demonstrates in *The Country and the City*, the city and the country are interrelated entities whose 'network of relationships' affect each other.[25] Similar to the tendency which Williams observes towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century in the work of George Gissing to view the country as a retreat from the expanding city whose population Gissing views in a 'single way' as 'masses', Shaw and the guiding philosophy of the Festival also viewed Malvern as an escape from the city.[26] However, as the events described demonstrate, preserving the countryside in Malvern for the benefit of the city population visiting the town was only made possible at the expense of entrapping the local population in Malvern in a glorified sense of the past which was problematic amid the process of twentieth-century modernisation.

2.1.B. Politics

The criticism of the lives of the city dwelling masses in *The Apple Cart* focuses on their infatuation with spectacles and this can also

[24] 'Correspondence', *Malvern Gazette*, 18 January 1929, p. 4.
[25] *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 7.
[26] *The Country and the City*, p. 222.

be seen to be reflected in Shaw's views on the manner in which the masses approach politics and exercise their right to vote. Ironically, in a period in which the right to vote was extended to include a wider spectrum of people as the parliament passed a bill to allow all women over the age of twenty-one to vote in 1928, *The Apple Cart* questioned the whole process of election as a suitable method for electing leaders. While Magnus insists that he does not support the return of the old governing class, however, the old system at least 'stood above the tyranny of popular ignorance' (p. 87). Magnus argues that aristocrats have lost interest in politics due to a lack of understanding and appreciation of their efforts by the public: 'We get no thanks for it because ninety-nine hundredths of it is unknown to the people, and the remaining hundredth is resented by them as an invasion of their liberty or an increase in their taxation' (p. 86). In the words of Magnus, this is a multitude who understands talk rather than work (p. 57). Thus the mass population is easily deceived by speeches while it complains about those worthwhile efforts of politicians which at times result in a rise in taxes. In 1929, rates of unemployment in Malvern were high and many in the town were struggling amid the economic difficulties posed by the Great Depression. The *Malvern Gazette* reported in January:

> The high record of 336 registered unemployed in Malvern this week, reflects only too well the severe depression existing in all local trades, it is certainly disquieting that Malvern should suffer to this severe extent in its trades and industries […]

with all the distress and privation which these conditions entail.[27]

Thus, on the stage of the Malvern Theatre that same year, a depiction of the economic worries of the public as the protests of the foolish masses that lack any understanding of politics and leadership might have seemed to dismiss and undermine the financial struggles of many residents of Malvern.

2.1.C. Theatre and Performance

Events in the play support Magnus' views on the masses as politicians and the press repeatedly deceive a public whose opinion is constantly swayed from one end of the spectrum to the other. As C. Brook Miller argues, the characters in the play are performers and politics is shown to be 'populist theatre' with little correlation with reality.[28] In Act I, Amanda, one of two female members of the cabinet who unlike the male members tend to demonstrate a sense of respect for the King, describes the manner in which she used performance to win the support of the public over a political opponent:

AMANDA I'll tell you. He opened his campaign with a great Saturday night speech against me in the Home Lovers' Hall to five thousand people. In that same hall a week later, I faced a meeting of the very same people. I didnt argue. I mimicked him. I took all the high-falutin

[27] 'Malvern Unemployment', *Malvern Gazette*, 25 January 1929, p. 5.
[28] 'Late Capitalism and the United States in The Apple Cart', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 26 (2006), 118-34 (p. 123).

> passages in his speech, and repeated them in his best manner until I had the whole five thousand laughing at him. Then I asked them would they like me to sing; and their Yes nearly lifted the roof off. I had two songs (p. 93).

Thus rather than debating ideas and policies, both politicians staged performances designed to impress the audience. Amanda engaged in a 'music hall' performance of impressions and singing which ultimately captivated her audience and resulted in her victory.[29] In Act III, once Proteus and his cabinet sense a triumph as the King announces his plans to abdicate, Proteus 'rises' in the manner of 'a conventional House of Commons orator'. The male members of the cabinet immediately 'compose themselves' and prepare for the performance as they 'listen with grave attention, as if in church' (p. 129). Thus on a metatheatrical level, the characters in the play create their own performances, shown to the offstage audience to be illusions designed to deceive their onstage audiences. The mass population, who like Sempronius' father, are infatuated with spectacle and present little interest in thinking and analysing events, offer their support to politicians based on the appearance of the performances rather than their substance.

Thus *The Apple Cart* functions not only as a criticism of politics and democracy but also as a critique of popular forms of entertainment such as music hall performances which, according to the play lack substance and are only pleasing to the eyes and ears but not the mind. Such a presentation then situates *The Apple Cart* as a form of theatre superior

[29] Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw: The One Volume Definitive Edition* (London: Vintage, 1997), p. 574.

to the more popular performances which it mocked. The establishment of the Festival generated much interest in the press, thus the metatheatre depicted on stage was particularly noteworthy for the audience of the opening night. As I have shown in the previous chapter, the Malvern Festival was developed by Jackson and Shaw in order to provide a platform for more experimental work which failed to attract the attention of London theatre managers who engaged with more popular forms of drama and performance. As a result, the audience of the opening night would distinguish themselves from the masses duped by those music hall performances which the play criticised. The audience in Malvern had specifically travelled to this town in order to watch a different kind of theatre which according to *The Apple Cart*, engaged the mind rather than providing only hollow spectacles. Thus, the metropolitan elite present in the theatre were effectively praised by the dialogue of the play for their taste in drama as demonstrated through their attendance at the Festival while those interested in other kinds of performance were mocked for their lack of intellect and sophistication.

2.1.D. Culture and Traditions

In *The Apple Cart*, the lack of intellect among the masses is also shown to have assisted that which the play observes as an erosion of English culture and traditions. The real crisis of the play arrives in the form of the American ambassador, Vanhattan. As Vanhattan's name, a mixture of Valhalla (one form of the afterlife in Norse mythology) and Manhattan, suggests, Vanhattan represents the threat of the growing Americanisation of past traditions and cultures in the early twentieth century. Vanhattan has arrived to deliver the news of the decision of the American president, Bossfield, to abolish the declaration of independence and merge with England to create a new empire. This

proposal, which is revealed to be the suggestion of the Irish Prime minister, would reduce England to just another American state and diminish its independence and individuality. Thus, in politically uncertain times, when tensions in Ireland were high and the British Empire was shrinking with Australia, Canada and South Africa now recognised as autonomous, Shaw played on already existing apprehensions in English society about the country's future and influence abroad.

The play depicts a world in which national differences are gradually blurred as countries move towards a universal monoculture with America as its main advocate and prescient. Such mores were also reflected in the planning and marketing of the Festival through which the Festival was presented as a way to oppose the development of this monoculture and preserve English traditions. Jackson considered the Festival as an opportunity to offer American tourists a sample of English culture. The Festival was specifically scheduled for August, a period which Jackson described as the 'off-season' for theatre in England, in order to provide drama for American tourists visiting the country during this time of the year. As he explained in an interview in 1929 ahead of the first season: 'It should interest the American visitors who often come to England in the theatrical "off-season," and get little chance of seeing what we can do over here'.[30] As the *Manchester Guardian* reported in August 1929, Jackson was successful in achieving this aim: 'Among the foreigners attending the Festival Americans naturally predominate, but there is a good sprinkling of Germans.'[31]

Consequently, to an audience consisting of many Americans, Shaw presented Vanhattan, who enters the stage with a 'stereotypically

[30] 'The Malvern Theatre: Sir Barry Jackson's Plans', *Observer*, 27 January 1929, p. 11.
[31] 'Malvern Festival: Will it become an Annual Event?', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1929, p. 13.

American rudeness'[32] and shakes the Queen's hand with 'her hands being vigorously wrung and waved up and down all the time' (p. 101). The play resembled Shaw's earlier unfavourable writing on America; however, the play was not designed specifically to mock and ridicule Americans and thus cause offence.[33] Instead of criticising a particular nationality, in Vanhattan, Shaw criticises the emergence of a new 'universal' culture which affected both America and Europe. When the Queen insists that England has its own distinct culture, Vanhattan, alluding forward to ideas of globalisation, replies: 'The United States maam, have absorbed all the great national traditions, and blended them with their own glorious tradition of Freedom into something that is unique and universal' (p. 120). This new universal series of traditions is shown to be a direct result of the commodification of culture in a world where culture is manufactured into material products and exported and as a result is no longer unique to a specific location. For instance, Vanhattan describes his local cathedral which was removed from Cambridge in England and shipped to New Jersey. This is not only a one way exchange of 'material works of art' whereby England exports its cathedrals and country houses, but is instead shown to be a mutual exchange as Americans also offer their financial assistance and expertise to the building of new structures in England. The building which now stands on the former site of the cathedral exported to New Jersey was designed by an American architect and built by the Synthetic Building Materials Trust and as a result was an 'international affair' (p. 120).

I argue that through Vanhattan, Shaw in fact praised the Americans sitting inside the theatre on 19 August 1929 as he aligned this group

[32] Miller, p. 128.
[33] See Miller's article for a summary of Shaw's views on America and Americans.

with those whom Vanhattan describes as the true preservers of English culture. In the play, Vanhattan describes a situation comparable with the efforts for the re-building of the Shakespeare Festival Theatre in Stratford, which as discussed in the previous chapter, by 1929 was largely reliant for financing on American businessmen. Like the comments on those efforts in the English press, mentioned in Chapter One, in which the critic expressed his disapproval of what he interpreted as a total lack of interest in the venture by the wider English public, Vanhattan also insists that the majority of the English population are quite comfortable with this new universal culture:

> VANHATTAN Believe me, the English people, the real English people who take things as they come instead of reading books about them, will be more at home with us than they are with the old English notions which our tourists keep alive (…) Your people get up the show [of English culture] for him because he pays for it, not because it is natural to them (p. 121).

Vanhattan attributes to the majority of the English people a lack of education and intellect: they 'take things as they come' without further questions and lack any interest in reading and extending their knowledge. It is this kind of mentality he suggests, that is then comfortable with a manufactured and easily digestible sense of culture and traditions which brings tangible financial return. Like those who positioned blame for the situation in Stratford not on the American businessmen but the English public, Shaw's main concern in the play is also not Vanhattan: rather, Vanhattan is shown to be only taking

advantage of a bigger problem- that is the ignorance of the masses that show little interest in preserving their culture and traditions. Thus, the Americans inside the theatre on 19 August 1929 were praised by the events in the play rather than mocked: they were affiliated with the tourists whom Vanhattan described as the true guardians of English culture as they expressed their interest in this new cultural event, the Malvern Festival.

However, as opposition to the Festival increased in Malvern, those opposed to the Festival and outside the theatre were considered as the English public who supposedly 'take things as they come' and would indeed, later be treated as such by Jackson. In a letter to Shaw dated 6 April 1948 and following the Festival's hiatus during the war years, Jackson wrote: 'Malvern is neither better nor worse than any other place. If it ever resumes its festival activities (which I doubt), the incentive will not be local for, beyond the possibility of putting some money in their pockets, the inhabitants have not the least notion of what it is all about.'[34]

2.2. Leadership and the 'Strong Man'

As *The Apple Cart* mocks the masses and as a result dismisses democracy, it also presents a new model of leadership in the form of governance by the 'strong man' (p. 56). The play's only glimmer of hope amid the chaos is the presence of King Magnus who Frederick P. W. McDowell describes as 'the realist with a vision', comparable to Shaw's

[34] George Bernard Shaw and Sir Barry Jackson, *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Barry Jackson*, ed. by L. W. Connolly (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 173.

Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny* and *How He Lied to Her Husband*.[35] Magnus' significance was also emphasised in the Malvern production of the play as the casting of Cedric Hardwicke for the role immediately transformed the King into the star of the play. Unlike the quarrelling members of the cabinet, or the masses with their interest in financial gain and pleasing spectacles, Magnus is shown to possess a high level of intellect and foresight, which is demonstrated in his repeated outmanoeuvring of the cabinet. In his first conversation on stage with Boanerges, the King uses flattery to gain Boanerges' support: 'Do not deceive yourself, Mr Boanerges. You are very far from being a plain man. To me you have always been an Enigma' (p. 51). As a result, Magnus avoids confrontation with Boanerges but is also successful in influencing his rival. Thus later in the same Act, Boarnerges repeats the ideas planted in his mind earlier by Magnus. Boanerges insists that the King cannot act as an 'indiarubber stamp' as he is a 'live man' (p. 61) which reiterates Magnus' earlier comments that a monarch is a 'living soul' (p. 54). In Act II, an interlude set in Orinthia's boudoir which many critics in 1929 argued possessed little connection to the remainder of the play, Magnus, unlike the masses in the play demonstrates an ability to look beyond appearances. In this Act, Orinthia, Edith Evans in the Malvern production, tempts the king to leave his wife and consider making her the new Queen of England. Orinthia is frustrated by Magnus' decision to select a 'cabbage', referring to Queen Jemima, over her, the 'rose' (p. 100). Magnus, however, demonstrates his pragmatism by rejecting Orinthia's romanticism and refusing her advances. Orinthia belongs to 'fairyland' and the pragmatic King who, unlike the majority of

[35] '"The Eternal against the Expedient": Structure and Theme in Shaw's The Apple Cart', in *Modern Drama*, 2.2 (Summer 1959), 99-113 (pp. 100-01).

the population prefers reality to hollow spectacles, prefers to avoid scandal and remain with his current wife. It is these qualities in Magnus which create a worthy leader and position his opinions above others as 'one man that has a mind and knows it can always beat ten men who haven't and don't' (p. 61).

In the context of 1929, against the backdrop of emerging dictatorships and totalitarian governments across Europe in countries such as Italy and Russia, Shaw's solution and model for government in *The Apple Cart* possessed concerning resonances for its audience. While the play was not directed at the local residents of Malvern in terms of the audience within the theatre, their resonances would have been especially disconcerting for this group, who would be aware of some of the general themes of the play through reports in the local newspaper. In the 1920s, Malvern was a stronghold for the Conservative political party and according to an article published in the *Malvern Gazette*, the only location where the Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay McDonald, had been greeted with theatrical boos and jeering in 1924.[36] This Conservative outlook had already resulted in opposition amongst some of the residents in Malvern towards the Festival based on Shaw's reported political affiliations as a socialist. The views of this group were represented in a letter to the *Malvern Gazette* in reaction to an article expressing surprise at the establishment of a festival in Malvern for Shaw based on the playwright's political views. The correspondent insisted that Malvern was selected as the location for such a festival by a 'small group of people' and that the Festival was 'thrust upon Malvern whether it wanted it or not'.[37] In May and during a speech delivered in

[36] Hannen Swaffer, 'Malvern in 1924 and Now', *Daily Express,* 28 August 1929, quoted in the *Malvern Gazette*, 30 August 1929, p. 4.
[37] W. E. C. Watkinson, 'Correspondence: Malvern Festival', *Malvern Gazette*, 6 September 1929, p. 4.

Malvern, a member of the Conservative political party and Member of Parliament, Crawford Greene explained that socialism meant 'nationalisation': 'under it not only will everything be nationalised, but you and me and your homes and husbands. We shall all be state slaves and the country ruined, the same as Russia is ruined'.[38] It was amid this context of fear and unfamiliarity of socialism that *The Apple Cart* confirmed those views expressed by this Conservative candidate that socialism, or at least in the views expressed by one of its most prominent supporters in England, advocated greater government control (or those worthy rulers approved by Shaw) and dismissed public opinion.

The play itself concludes ambiguously, as while King Magnus possesses the intellect and foresight that the masses in the play lack, he is restricted by the system of government in the country in making any changes or implementing any of his plans. The conflict between the King and the cabinet is settled; however, the real threat which Vanhattan's proposal posed remains unresolved at the end of the play. The cabinet, who until this point have proved their incompetence, once again demonstrate their inferiority in comparison to the King in their failure to grasp the significance of America's plans for England. As Magnus asks for the opinion of the ministers, Proteus insists: 'By your Majesty's leave, we will take the question of the ultimatum first' (p. 124). This lack of certainty and sense of pessimism with which the play concludes indicates the need for a substantial change in the manner in which the country is governed. This is only reinstated by the fact that the play indicates that this most recent conflict between the King and the cabinet belongs to a larger pattern of such crises as Sempronius insists: 'There

[38] 'Women's Mass Meeting: Conservatism Versus Socialism', *Malvern Gazette*, 10 May 1929, p. 3.

has been a crisis every two months since he came to the throne; but he has always been too clever for them' (p. 48). Consequently, the King is caught in a cycle of petty squabbles with the cabinet while the real threats to the country are left unaddressed.

Thus in 1929, when across Europe new forms of government were emerging with the rise of fascism in Italy and communism in Russia, in *The Apple Cart*, Shaw seemed to be advocating the need for an equally substantial change in English politics. The emergence of these new and unfamiliar movements, socialism, fascism and communism, was deemed threatening by many who feared the emergence of similar tendencies in England. A study of the *Malvern Gazette* leading up to the elections in May 1929 reveals the fear and uncertainty which events in Europe had instilled in the country as the Conservatives associated their Labour opponents with Russia and declared socialism as an 'enemy greater than Germany'.[39] As the Conservative representative declared socialists as anarchists who believed the way to correct the current situation 'was to blow everything up and start afresh', only a few months later Shaw's play, *The Apple Cart*, seemed to insist on the futility of democracy and elections on the boards of the Malvern stage.[40] It seemed that Shaw had finally lost all hope in the Fabian policy of permeation and parliamentary reform and was advocating a more destructive and revolutionary approach. Thus as Cedric Hardwicke declared on stage: 'Many men would hardly miss their heads, there is so little in them. Still, killing is a serious business: at least the person who is to be killed is usually conceited enough to think so' (p. 52), members of the audience in the Malvern Theatre on the

[39] 'Unionist Concert Meeting: Lively Campaign at Malvern Link', *Malvern Gazette*, 1 March 1929, p. 2.
[40] *Ibid.*

night of 19 August 1929, might perhaps have wondered at the worrying consequences of the changes proposed by Shaw.

3. The Festival

The idea of elitism which I have identified in the themes and performance of *The Apple Cart* were not however just confined to the stage of the theatre. The elitism advocated on stage on the opening night was also apparent in the organisation of the Festival, which exuded exclusivity. The official opening night was scheduled for Monday 19 August; however, the Festival actually commenced its activities the previous afternoon with a private performance of *The Apple Cart* for a group of specially invited guests. In an attempt to demonstrate the significance of the Malvern Festival in the English theatrical calendar, Jackson and the Urban District Council transferred journalists from London and the British regional press in addition to guests from America and other parts of the world to Malvern by a special train from London. The journalists were greeted by the Chairman of the Urban District Council and treated to a luncheon at the Winter Gardens in Malvern where they listened to music and indulged in an impressive menu of ox tongue, roast lamb and salmon. Following the luncheon, the journalists watched a performance of *The Apple Cart* alongside Shaw and his wife, Charlotte. The *Malvern Gazette* reported a crowded theatre with all seats occupied for the performance which indicates a high number of journalists and specially invited guests present in Malvern.[41]

Across its two weeks' duration, the Festival featured many similar events exclusively for the visitors to the Festival. These social gatherings, which offered opportunities for socialising between the visitors and also those involved in organising the Festival, varied from

[41] 'Malvern Festival: Big Week at the Theatre', p. 8.

exhibitions to garden parties and talks. During the first season, this included an exhibition of material related to national, American and continental productions of Shaw's plays. Similar to the luncheon, the opening of the exhibition was an equally prestigious event with Shaw and Jackson present. Sir Edward Elgar, who resided in Malvern at the time, opened the exhibition while offering much praise for Shaw. Elgar commended Shaw on his abilities as both a dramatist and music critic and also his character, describing the playwright as the 'most amiable of men'.[42] In addition to the exhibition, a ball was also organised as part of the Festival which was held at the Priory Park and attended by actors and organisers of the Festival. Similar to the events on Sunday and the manner in which journalists were transferred to Malvern, a special train was also organised to transfer visitors seeking to leave Malvern following the ball at 2.30 am. In this first season, the Chairman of the Urban District Council entertained Shaw and Jackson at a garden party organised for specially invited guests to meet the artists of the Festival. The attendees, who included Shaw, the Chairman of the Urban District and the Dean of Worcester spent a few hours walking and conversing on the lawns of one of the Ladies Schools in Malvern while listening to music played by a live orchestra.[43] Such activities would expand in the 1931 season to include lectures and tea-time talks, which in addition to opportunities for socialising fulfilled an educational purpose.

The events accompanying the Festival were, however, targeted only at those visiting the Festival and were designed to accompany the performances from which, as I have earlier argued, most of the local population in Malvern were excluded. There is some evidence to suggest that these accompanying events disturbed the everyday life of some of

[42] 'Malvern Festival: Big Week at the Theatre', p. 8.
[43] 'Malvern Council Supper: Mr. Bernard Shaw Attacks the Quarries', *Malvern Gazette*, 6 September 1929, p. 8.

the local residents. Following the first season, the *Malvern Gazette* quoted an article from the *Birmingham Post* in which this newspaper's dramatic critic, Raymond Compton Rhodes, discussed the limitations which the '11 o'clock hour rule' in the town posed for the Festival:

> Actors, authors and journalists are night-owls and, for the most part exceedingly active conversationalists. At Malvern there appears to be a rule, […], that lights should be out at 11 o'clock […] It is quite true that most of us keep earlier hours than was the custom twenty years ago, but supper-parties and talking-parties are an essential part of the social side of a festival. Under the stimulus of a festival performance many people feel impelled to talk: twice already have I still sat at two in the morning […] with others of similar reprehensible tastes and habits discussing Shaw in general and *The Apple Cart* in particular.[44]

This quote firstly indicates that the accompanying events in the Festival were causing disturbance for the routine of everyday life in Malvern, and the writer's justifications for altering the rule indicates that such disturbances were met with some level of opposition in Malvern. Secondly, the writer's description of those participating in the events as 'actors, authors and journalists' and those with similar 'reprehensible tastes and habits' indicates that these individuals were a group separate from the local residents of Malvern and were indeed outsiders both as they were visitors and also for their taste in drama. Thus, the accompanying events in

[44] 'Malvern and Stratford: Some Afterthoughts', published in the *Birmingham Post* and quoted in the *Malvern Gazette*, 27 September 1929, p. 8.

the Festival were clearly not targeted at the local population of Malvern. These events were intended to appeal to the visiting audience of metropolitan elite who demonstrated a distinct and unconventional taste in drama.

This elitism in the setting of the Festival attributed a sense of superiority to its visitors which watching *The Apple Cart* on its opening night would surely have confirmed. The sense of exclusivity in the events accompanying the Festival effectively transformed the audience into members of a private club as in addition to watching the plays, they dined and socialised with the cast and organisers of the Festival. They were theatre enthusiasts who had dedicated up to two weeks of their year to travel to Malvern in order to be present for the English premiere of a new Shaw play. Thus as Magnus mocked and ridiculed the cabinet and the masses, the audience in their laughter immediately distinguished themselves from those mocked, aligning themselves with the protagonist of the play, King Magnus. This sense of intimacy felt towards the protagonist of the play was then reinforced when the audience socialised with the actor playing the King, Hardwicke, following the performance. The accompanying events of the Festival blurred the lines between spectator and performer, and the setting of the Festival indicated that similar to Magnus, they were also interested in substance and intellect rather than talk and spectacle. It was this sense of superiority which had resulted in their participation in a festival which emphasised the distinction between its exclusive theatre and the more popular forms of entertainment that the play mocked in the form of its critique of music hall performances as highlighted earlier in the chapter.

It was this selectiveness and exclusivity of the Festival and the clear divide between its target audience and those residing in Malvern that resulted in local opposition. The events of that first Sunday were

uncommon in England as one resident highlighted in a letter to the *Malvern Gazette*. These events, according to the correspondence, resembled a continental Sunday which the 'disgusted resident' insisted was highly undesirable for the working classes in Malvern for whom it indicated the prospect of a seven days working week.[45] This letter is not alone, and another letter was quoted in the *Malvern Gazette* on 13 September as a different resident criticised the performance from a religious perspective insisting: 'Why throw away the day which tradition had put aside for spiritual effort?'.[46]

In addition to political conservatism, Malvern was also religiously conservative in this period. In a town with a population of approximately twenty thousand people, there were forty seven churches and chapels listed in 1930 with an overall capacity of approximately fifteen thousand individuals, which covered a wide spectrum of Christian belief with Anglican, Catholic and Non-Conformist places of worship.[47] As a result, in addition to the Sunday performance, the criticism of religion in Shaw's *The Apple Cart* is likely to have also been controversial in the context of Malvern. In *The Apple Cart*, Shaw alludes to the Oxford Movement and the splits in the Church of England, which were also present in Malvern as demonstrated by the variety of churches present, in the form of his critique of Sempronius' father as a 'ritualist in religion' (p. 43). Furthermore, the name of Shaw's gullible President of the Board of Trade, Boanerges, carries religious connotations as it also refers to the name given by Jesus to his disciples James and John. Thus in addition to the Sunday performance included in the Festival, the content of Shaw's

[45] 'Correspondence: Sunday Theatrical Performance', *Malvern Gazette*, 30 August 1929, p. 4.
[46] F. T. W. Lewis, 'Correspondence: Sunday Observance', *Malvern Gazette*, 13 September 1929, p. 4.
[47] *Stevens' Annual for 1930* (Malvern: M. T. Stevens Ltd., 1930) held at the Malvern Library.

The Apple Cart is also likely to have offended the more religiously orthodox residents of Malvern.

The complaints regarding the Sunday performance were extensive and the Malvern Council eventually wrote to the London *Daily Mail* to defend its decision to hold a Sunday performance. In this letter the Malvern Council described the performance as a full dress rehearsal for an audience composed mainly of members of the press, the Urban District Council and some residents specially invited for the production which as a result exempted the theatre from any requirements to apply for a permit.[48] While the Festival returned for a second season in 1930, the local opposition increased in subsequent seasons. This, as we will see in the following chapters, was a key contributing factor towards Jackson's decision to halt his management of the Festival in 1937.

Conclusion

As this chapter's analysis of *The Apple Cart* has demonstrated, the play's lack of mass appeal was not only a result of its avant-garde form or of the themes discussed but was itself a concept which the play embraced and advocated. This was directly linked to some of the political events of the period in which Europe witnessed the beginnings of the emergence of fascism in addition to other totalitarian regimes such as that in Russia. Indeed, in 1931 Shaw visited the USSR, where he expressed his approval for Stalin's politics. As Matthew Yde indicates, Shaw's support for totalitarianism was also apparent in Shaw's writing on theatre as early as *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* in 1891 and *The Perfect Wagnerite* in 1898.[49] The elitism which accompanied such support was also evident in Shaw's attitude towards theatre audiences,

[48] 'Sunday Plays at Malvern', *Malvern Gazette*, 30 August 1929, p. 4.
[49] *Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism: Longing for Utopia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 5.

which we have already encountered in Chapter One in the context of Shaw's criticism of the West End, as Shaw claimed that the conditions of theatres in London had resulted in an audience of which he strongly disapproved:

> The nineteenth century has left our cities stuffed with pestiferous playgoer barrels in which the unfortunate playwrights and actors were expected by sheer force of entertaining power to set up an attraction that would counterbalance the greatest discomfort of the greatest number.[50]

The articles published in the Festival book, and thus Jackson in his guiding philosophy behind the Festival also expressed a similar distaste for the audiences in London and emphasised the need for leadership in educating audiences which echoed Shaw's distaste for the masses and emphasised the need for leadership by an elite minority as expressed in *The Apple Cart*. In a piece for the Festival book in 1935, the writer, actor and director, Val Gielgud wrote:

> My belief is that they do want it [theatre], but that they do not realise that there is any urgency about their showing what they want. If the cinema kills the theatre in the country - and for its death local theatrical managers will not be able to be held guiltless of various sins, principally of omission - living drama, no matter what may happen in London, will be

[50] 'Playhouses and Plays', *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 November 1926, quoted in *Shaw on Theatre*, ed. by E. J. West (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1958), pp. 177-83 (p. 177).

> a thing of the past. People will then wake up and long for drama that has not come out of a can, and they will be surprised and hurt when they find that there are no longer actors, producers, or managers to give it to them.[51]

The Malvern Festival was designed by Jackson and Shaw to provide an opportunity for the gathering of a different kind of audience for Shaw's plays to those commonly visiting the theatres in London. This was a more financially affluent audience who could afford the trip to Malvern in addition to paying the relatively higher prices demanded for tickets. Furthermore, the audience already possessed a keen interest in theatre and specifically the works of Shaw. This festival with its elitist audience and repertoire of plays which defied some of the trends in the popular theatres of London's West End, was then presented as a model for Shaw and Jackson's vision of a new form of theatregoing.

However, as the local opposition to the Festival and Shaw demonstrates, for those outside the theatre and the exclusive group of audience viewing the opening night, both the play and the Festival possessed little relevance. On the one hand, the Festival failed to offer any potential for positive change in the everyday lives of many local residents, and little economic benefit for those struggling amid the Great Depression. Furthermore, as the Festival was targeted at a visiting audience of national and international visitors, the majority of the local residents in Malvern were excluded from the performances and accompanying events of the Festival. On the other hand, *The Apple Cart* also undermined, and at times ridiculed, some of the general socio-

[51] 'The Theatre in the Country', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1935*, p. 23.

economic concerns of large sections of the English public which also included the working class in Malvern.

Since its production in Malvern in 1929, *The Apple Cart* has received attention in recent scholarship which attempts to re-evaluate the themes and techniques present in the play. McDowell argues that as a result of the 'thematic suggestiveness', 'technical dexterity', 'dialectical skill', 'inclusive and good natured wit and satire', and 'imposing yet humane protagonist' of the play, *The Apple Cart* is one of the 'more satisfying' of Shaw's less well-known works.[52] Furthermore, T. F. Evans mentions subsequent revivals of the play which resonated with the contemporary political debates of their location: Evans argues that, 'certainly it always speaks to the public mind when there is a mood of disillusion with politicians and when Shaw's view of the decay of parliamentary democracy appears to be gathering public acceptance'.[53] This outlook on the play follows Shaw's defence of *The Apple Cart* following its production in Malvern, when Shaw argued that the play was largely misunderstood by critics: 'the conflict is not really between royalty and democracy. It is between both and plutocracy […] in short, those critics of mine who have taken *The Apple Cart* for a story of a struggle between a hero and a roomful of guys have been grossly taken in' (p. 16). As I have briefly expressed in this chapter, Shaw's later plays including *The Apple Cart* demonstrate Shaw's experimental use of form which anticipates some of the techniques used by writers later in the twentieth century and this is a theme that I return to in my final chapter. Moreover, aspects of the political debates of *The Apple Cart*, such as its critique of plutocracy, continue to possess relevance for

[52] '"The Eternal Against the Expedient", p. 113.
[53] 'The Later Shaw', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Christopher Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 240-48 (p. 244).

audiences today. However, as Michael Billington argued in his review of the 1977 revival of the play by Patrick Garland's Chichester Festival, the sense of elitism in the play is undeniable and disturbing especially in a world which remembers the atrocities that led to the World War II: 'It is hard to love a play that talks of the "tyranny of popular ignorance" […] what worries me is the blinkered elitism at the heart of Shaw's political extravaganza'.[54]

In *The Apple Cart*, Shaw criticises a society in which democracy is an illusion as the English people are led to believe that they are in control when in reality in a capitalist state in which the politicians are performers and mere puppets of those controlling big businesses, the real power lies elsewhere. In the play this power is in fact shown to lie in the hands of the Breakages Limited, the biggest industrial corporation in the country with which members of the cabinet are affiliated. For instance, at the end of Act I, when Magnus questions the viability of Crassus' decision to leave politics, Crassus replies: 'Only too glad to be well out of them, if Breakages will let me. They shoved me into it; and I daresay they'll find another job for me' (p. 135). Thus it is Breakages Limited for which the politicians in the play work rather than the public who voted for such individuals. Nonetheless, while Shaw criticises plutocracy and thus government by a wealthy elite which is a critique that continues to possess relevance in the twenty-first century, Shaw's solution in replacing those in power with his exclusive group of supermen is equally elitist. As demonstrated by events in Malvern, the elitism advocated in the play and also evident in the organisation of the Festival fundamentally alienated many in Malvern and ultimately led to strong local opposition to a Shaw festival in the town.

[54] 'Apple Cart', *Guardian*, 27 July 1977, p. 8.

The local reaction to the Festival and Shaw as its central figure is significant as it also sheds light on Shaw's contemporary public reception. The situation in Malvern, in which a large section of the local residents reacted with hostility towards Shaw, demonstrates how his plays might appeal to a specific metropolitan elite, and at the same time potentially alienate those outside this exclusive group. *The Apple Cart* achieved a successful run in London in 1929 following its performance in Malvern. However, as the original audience to which it appealed and the unique interwar political landscape with which it engaged has disappeared, the play like many other Shaw works now struggles to generate continuing interest.[55] The events in Malvern indicate that parts of Shaw's oeuvre fundamentally resonated with a particular elite of the time. As a result, perhaps, these plays have subsequently struggled to endure through time amid the disappearance of the group and the political landscape to which they initially appealed.

Furthermore, the elitism which Shaw's public image, the Festival and *The Apple Cart* embodied and advocated continues to surround Shaw's contemporary public image. For instance, as part of an interview for the show, *Theatre Talk*, the *New York Post*'s theatre columnist, Michael Reidle asks the actor, Philip Bosco, whether Bosco finds that Shaw's plays still absorb audiences, to which Bosco replies:' Absolutely, if it's done well, if it is spoken reasonably well, you can't avoid being caught up in it if you have brain that, you know, is inquisitive and wants to be engaged in something'.[56] This is reminiscent of the attitudes of Shaw and Jackson in Malvern earlier in the century, where both the

[55] A survey of Shaw revivals in England in the past five years reveals a list consisting mainly of Shaw's earlier plays such as *Pygmalion*, *Candida* and *Widowers' Houses*. *The Apple Cart* was last revived in 2009 by the Peter Hall Company at the Theatre Royal, Bath.
[56] *Theatre Talk: Life and Work of Playwright Bernard Shaw*, < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ws-oNJaCxes> [accessed 9 February 2015].

Festival and its repertoire were deemed to appeal to the audience only if the audience possessed sufficient intelligence to appreciate the theatre offered. Thus, the elitism which surrounded Shaw's public image and plays earlier in the century continues to exist in the discourse surrounding Shaw's legacy as Shaw's plays are still positioned in a similar elitist framework to that which the Festival placed Shaw. Thus as Williams argues the plays struggle beyond the time period and class at which they were initially targeted.

The following chapter will continue to trace the exclusivity advocated by Jackson's guiding philosophy of the Festival, a quality of the Festival which this thesis argues in fact increased in subsequent seasons. During the seasons between 1931 and 1933, Jackson presented what he described as 'A Survey of English Drama'. This survey covered a time period of up to four hundred years and included plays from different eras in English history extending from the medieval period to the twentieth century. One of Jackson's aims in offering this survey was to familiarise the audience with plays which he felt had been largely disregarded, and thus he selected lesser-well known works to represent each period. Consequently, the Festival acquired an overarching educational purpose, which Jackson's decision to incorporate lectures on the plays and time periods into the Festival only intensified. As the following chapter will demonstrate, in these subsequent seasons, it was no longer only those amongst the local population in Malvern who felt excluded by the Festival. Shaw was also left increasingly disappointed by the progression of a festival in which he felt his plays were now largely displaced.

Chapter III: Shaw and Four Hundred Years of Drama

Introduction

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, Jackson and Shaw initially established the Festival with a shared outlook regarding its form and aims. However, while Jackson at first dedicated the Festival to Shaw, in the following seasons, despite opposition from Limbert, he presented a repertoire mainly concerned with staging lesser-well known classics. As a result, the Festival, which at first appeared to Shaw as the solution to his commercial and artistic troubles with theatres in the West End, also possessed its own inadequacies regarding its suitability as the location for the performance of his plays and specifically his later oeuvre in terms of their political content. This current chapter is concerned with those seasons of the Festival that were managed by Jackson between 1931 and 1937; in looking at the events of those seasons I argue that Shaw's increasingly dystopian visions of England's future as depicted in his later plays, clashed with Jackson's organisation of a festival through which he sought to present a glorified sense of England's past to an audience of international visitors by means of an emphasis on less well-known classics in English theatre.

During the seasons between 1931 and 1937 and as a result of Jackson's policies, I argue that the Festival demonstrated an imperialist outlook as it attempted to present the past glories of English drama to an audience of mainly foreign visitors. In these years, the Festival was focused on a sense of a historical England which was particularly evident in the seasons between 1931 and 1933 as Jackson presented what he identified as 'A Survey of English Drama'. In this survey, each play in the repertoire of the Festival was representative of a particular time

period in English history beginning in the medieval era and extending to the twentieth century. This repertoire, composed of less well-known classics, was designed to demonstrate the significance of English drama in the history of world theatre. In addition to the repertoire of the Festival which emphasised a sense of a historical England, Malvern as the location of the Festival, throughout Jackson's time in management, was also presented to the visitors with an emphasis on its connections to the past. The Festival books presented Malvern as an 'unchanging' landscape which connects its current and past guests in order to supposedly 'repair' the 'jaded' souls and bodies which 'modern life' creates.[1]

At the same time, alongside this celebration of the historical aspects of Malvern, the Festival also attempted to embrace twentieth-century modernity. During this period, the Festival books emphasised the modern features of the Malvern Theatre such as the technology available in the playhouse, especially as following the 1931 season, and in addition to drama, the Festival also presented a repertoire of talkies. Although the inclusion of talkies in the Festival was managed by Limbert, Jackson also included aspects of twentieth-century modernity in his management of the Festival. Similar to the season in 1929, journalists were transferred to Malvern specifically for reviewing the Festival during its 1932 season. However, in place of a journey by train, in 1932, critics were flown into Malvern for the English premiere of Shaw's *Too True to be Good*.

It is this 1932 season - and the performance of *Too True to be Good* as part of the Festival - which is the main focus of this chapter, in which I argue that Shaw's drama both highlighted and contributed to

[1] Major C. L. Conacher, 'Sublime Malvern', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1930*, pp. 13-19 (p. 15).

the failure of the Festival to reconcile its simultaneous presentation of images of a historical and modern England. This season has been specifically selected as it is one of the seasons between 1931 and 1933 in which Jackson presented 'A Survey of English Drama'. Moreover, it is the only season during this period in which a Shaw play was staged to represent twentieth-century drama. In contrast to other ways in which drama was used during this period - such as in pageants in other English towns like Tewkesbury where an emphasis on the past was reconciled with the present through a sense of continuity between the two - *Too True to be Good* depicted the past as irrelevant amid a post-World War I context where many of the structures governing society were now dismantled. In *Too True to be Good*, Shaw presents a dystopian vision of England where notions of national identity, gender roles and class are fluid concepts which are subject to change. The play presents mobility in society as inevitable as it reflects on the atrocities of war and the inadequacies of current social, political and religious institutions governing society in explaining the horrific incidents witnessed. The characters in the play, who are all struggling with the 'abyss' left behind by the war, thus offer very contrasting images to those pursued by Jackson in presenting the glories of English drama.[2] I further argue that while the context of the Festival, and at times Shaw also, attempted to impose a sense of hope and direction for the future onto the play, *Too True to be Good* must be seen as a declaration of a sense of despair and hopelessness rather than as a visionary's proposals for action for building a brighter future.

Although Jackson abandoned his idea for a pageant of English drama following the 1933 season, the Festival continued to struggle to

[2] *Too True to Be Good*, in *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams Press, 1952), pp. 1131-68 (p. 1157). Following references will be provided in parentheses in the text.

reconcile the elements of modern and historical England that were simultaneously present in its organisation and repertoire until Jackson's departure in 1937. Consequently, the Festival failed to establish a coherent and clear sense of identity which negatively affected both its critical and commercial success. From 1933 onwards, the Festival presented a mixture of old and new plays from different periods in English history which was reflective of the conflicting outlooks of its two managers. Although Jackson continued to emphasise the significance of the inclusion of less well-known classics, Limbert pursued a more commercially successful festival through the inclusion of modern and more well-known plays. As this chapter will explain, amid this chaos, Shaw was to some extent left unconvinced by the Festival and its suitability as a platform for his drama. This was, as we have seen, a period in Shaw's career in which Shaw's plays presented a strongly political content which, as he described, were unfitting for the Malvern air. Thus ironically, while initially a festival dedicated to his works may have appeared as an opportunity for Shaw to experiment with his drama away from the commercial pressures of London's West End, in reality the incongruity between the guiding philosophy of the Festival and the content of the plays hindered Shaw's visions of the effect of his works on the audience.

This chapter begins with a return to the question of Shaw's public image in the 1920s immediately prior to the establishment of the Festival. So far this thesis has foregrounded the period of Shaw's career from Shaw's work as a literary critic in the 1880s to his arrival in Malvern in the late 1920s. Since Shaw's career extended across such a lengthy period of time and Shaw was constantly presenting different and at times conflicting images of himself, it is fruitful to consider Shaw's public image immediately prior to the establishment of the Festival. I

will argue in this section that Shaw's political activism during this period had reinforced and magnified his public image as a controversial figure and as a result Shaw divided public opinion on a larger scale than previously. Later in this chapter, I will then compare this with the ways in which the infusion of history and culture and specifically drama were used during this period to create a sense of national unity amid politically tense times. While in Stratford, Shakespeare was used to represent constancy in reaction to the uncertainty created as a result of Europe's political landscape during this period, Shaw's political views at this point embodied the insecurity with which England was battling.

I will then discuss the seasons prior to 1932, presenting a brief account of the Festival's move away from Shaw as its central figure and the Festival's replacement of its Shavian focus with the inclusion of 'A Survey of English Drama'. This section will consider the events included, Shaw's role, and the critical and public reaction to the Festival. As Jackson insisted that the plays selected reflected the time in which they were written, the chapter will then continue by exploring the manner in which Shaw's images of England in *Too True to be Good* clashed with those presented by the setting of the Festival and its accompanying plays and events which will revolve around three main themes: religion, the empire and what I argue was a binary between change and continuity.

I then compare events in Malvern with the Shakespeare birthday celebrations in Stratford and the modern pageants, an instance of which occurred in nearby Tewkesbury. In this section I argue that Shakespeare's image and the use of his drama by the organisers of the celebrations in 1932 connected Shakespeare to modern England through presenting this playwright as an immortal poet whose works embodied timeless values shared by many. As a result, Shakespeare was viewed

as a unifier of the nation while his influence on world literature was also emphasised; Shakespeare thus offers a direct contrast to the public image of Shaw during this period. This chapter will then compare the Malvern Festival with the pageants common in this period which on the surface implied a sense of democracy in their organisation. While modern pageants used history in order to indicate a sense of continuity as their depiction of past victories while avoiding controversial subject matters was designed to inspire hope for the future, I argue that the Malvern Festival failed to achieve a similar effect as a result of the clash between its use of history to present past glories and Shaw's depiction of a hopeless future in *Too True to be Good.* The chapter concludes with a discussion of Shaw's changing attitudes towards the Festival, in order to argue that gradually Shaw became disenchanted with some aspects of Jackson's guiding philosophy of the Festival.

1. Shaw in the 1920s

The 1920s were not a productive period for Shaw in terms of dramatic output and his work became increasingly political in content during this time. Shaw completed *Back to Methuselah* in 1920 which was followed by *Saint Joan* in 1923 before a hiatus until 1929 and the production of *The Apple Cart*. When compared with Shaw's dramatic output in similar lengths of time during other parts of his career, this is a significantly lower number of plays. Between 1910 and 1920, there were fourteen new plays and between 1930 and 1940, Shaw wrote nine plays.[3]

[3] Shaw's lack of enthusiasm for writing new plays during this period has been used by Leonard Conolly to support the notion that by this time Shaw had become increasingly frustrated with the state of theatre in England. It was then the idea of the Malvern Theatre Festival, Conolly suggests which inspired Shaw's return to playwriting with his promise to write *The Apple Cart* for the first season of the Festival ('Introduction', in George Bernard Shaw, and Sir Barry Jackson, *Selected Correspondence*

Nonetheless, while Shaw was not active in playwriting during this period, he instead produced a substantial piece of non-theatrical writing which directly engaged with politics. This was in response to a request by his sister in law, Mrs Mary Cholmondeley, in 1924 for a few of his ideas on socialism. Shaw's response to this modest request was a 463 page book entitled *An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*. In this book, Shaw aimed to present an explanation of economics 'as far removed as possible from conventional works on economics and politics and allied subjects' as the great majority of which 'were written in dry and unreadable academic jargon'.[4]

In addition to the publication of this book and due to rising political tensions in Europe, Shaw also increasingly became an active commentator on political events in the continent such as the rise of fascism and the state of the Soviet Union. During this period, Shaw expressed interest in events in the USSR often voicing support for its policies. As Michael Holroyd has noted: 'For over a decade G.B.S. conducted an advanced Fabian course on Soviet Communism', and Shaw concluded that 'Lenin had candidly admitted his mistakes - or "atrocities", as they were sometimes called - and scrapped them.'[5] Shaw's expressed support for the USSR ultimately resulted in an invite from the Russian government requesting that Shaw visit the country; a visit which occurred in the summer of 1931. On his seventy-fifth birthday in 1932, Shaw reflected on his time in Russia and explained:

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of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Barry Jackson, ed. by L. W. Conolly (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), pp. xi-xxxvii (p. xxv)).

[4] T. F. Evans, 'The Later Shaw', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Christopher Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1998), pp. 240-48 (p. 240).

[5] *Bernard Shaw: The One Volume Definitive Edition* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 618.

> It is a real comfort to me, an old man, to be able to step into my grave with the knowledge that the civilization of the world will be saved … It is here in Russia that I have actually been convinced that the new Communist system is capable of leading mankind out of its present crisis, and save it from complete anarchy and ruin.[6]

While Shaw's support for fascism and in particular Mussolini was much more ambiguous than his dedication to the cause of the Soviet Union, Shaw's comments were used by the English press to also present him as an advocate for Fascism. For instance, in response to a letter from Sylvia Pankhurst in 1928, in which Pankhurst requested Shaw to make representations to the fascist authorities for a case she had brought to his attention, Shaw insisted: 'I am afraid I can do nothing to help […] As I am a Socialist and the Socialists in Italy, who seemed to be really disgruntled Liberals, are prosecuted by the Fascists.' This response, however, failed to convince Pankhurst as she replied:

> I should certainly have thought that a request from you to the Fascist Government would receive a most cordial assent, for none has defended the Fascists and their leader with the vigour and ingenuity shown by yourself, and certainly no one else with the pretensions to the holding of advanced opinions is willing to say so much as a good word for the Black Shirt Dictator.[7]

[6] Holroyd, p. 629.
[7] 'Mr. Bernard Shaw and Mussolini: Letter to Miss Sylvia Pankhurst', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 January 1928, p. 14.

As Holroyd observes, Shaw's divisive and controversial comments on the political events of the period led Churchill to conclude in regards to Shaw:

> When nations are fighting for life, when the Palace in which the Jester dwells not comfortably, is itself assailed, and everyone from Prince to groom is fighting on the battlements, the Jester's jokes echo only through deserted halls, and his witticisms and commendations, distributed evenly between friend and foe, jar the ears of hurrying messengers, of mourning women and wounded men.[8]

Thus according to Churchill, at a time in which unity was required Shaw's criticism of politicians at home and abroad failed to achieve anything but confusion. As I will later suggest, culture and specifically drama was used at this time to create this sense of unity to which Churchill refers and to offer hope; such an approach I suggest, is in direct contrast with Shaw's use of drama and his public image during this period.

2. The Festival prior to 1932

2.1. 1929-1930: A Shaw Festival

As Chapter Two made clear, the Malvern Festival began as an exclusively Shavian event in 1929. The first season of the Festival lasted for two weeks between 19 August and 31 August and staged four Shaw plays which included *The Apple Cart*, *Heartbreak House*, *Back to Methuselah* and *Caesar and Cleopatra.* Thus, the Festival began with a

[8] Holroyd, p. 616.

focus on modern drama which Jackson presented at the time as the major characteristic which distinguished the festival in Malvern from that in Stratford: 'It is not to be a rival to Stratford, for we shall do modern plays- I hope it will be regarded as its complement'. Jackson further highlighted this emphasis on modern drama in the Festival in the manner in which he described the main attraction of the first season, Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, as an 'ultra-modern political play' and 'as unlike *Saint Joan* as anything can be'.[9]

This emphasis on modern and Shavian drama continued in 1930 as the Festival returned in the final two weeks of August that year with its second season. The plays for this season were *Candida, The Admirable Bashville*, *Widowers' Houses*, *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, *Getting Married*, *Heartbreak House* and *The Apple Cart*. In addition to these seven plays by Shaw, the Festival also featured its first non-Shavian play in the form of the premiere of Rudolf Besier's chronicle play *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, for which Jackson again transferred critics from London to Malvern by special train. As with the first season, Shaw was present both for the rehearsals and the events of the Festival as he sat alongside Besier in the audience viewing the premiere of *The Barretts*.[10] Cedric Hardwicke also returned and appeared in the roles of Edward Moulton-Barrett in *The Barretts*, Leeckcheese in *Widowers' Houses*, Captain Shotover in *Heartbreak House* and the Bishop of Chelsea in *Getting Married*. *The Barretts* was a success as the correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* identified the play as 'one of the most exciting chronicle plays written in our time' and the production in Malvern was eventually transferred to the Birmingham Rep in

[9] 'The Malvern Theatre: Sir Barry Jackson's Plans', *Observer*, 27 January 1929, p. 11.
[10] 'A Play about the Brownings: Malvern Festival Success', *Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1930, p. 9.

September for a two-week run before moving to London for a long-run of five hundred and thirty performances at the Queen's Theatre.[11]

2.2. 1931: A Survey of English Drama

Although Jackson's premiere of *The Barretts* was a success, as early as April 1930, prior to the second season of the Festival, Jackson was already contemplating a change in direction for the Festival in its third season:

> And now according to a press interview, Sir Barry Jackson is thinking of celebrating the richness of our dramatic history by putting on a "survey" of the English theatre at Malvern, beginning with one of the moralities and ending with Tom Robertson. With that excellent idea he gets back to the real purpose of a dramatic festival. These summer gatherings ought to aim at putting before the public some significant point about the theatre, some definite idea or tendency, which would otherwise be missed in the haphazard presentations of the commercial stage.

This anonymous reporter for the *Manchester Guardian* then continued by criticising the upcoming season of the Festival in 1930 for being 'rather pointless' since 'most of the plays have been seen a hundred times up and down the country, and there seems no particular reason for reviving them'.[12] Consequently, as many of the plays performed in Malvern were easily accessible to view in repertory theatres across the

[11] 'Malvern Festival: Mrs. Browning's Father', *Manchester Guardian*, 21 August 1930, p. 18.
[12] 'The Malvern Festival', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 April 1930, p. 8.

country, only the opportunity to witness plays exclusive to the Festival could justify a pilgrimage to Malvern.

In addition to the commercial logic present in Jackson's pursuit of a new direction for the Festival, this change in policy in Malvern also reflected Jackson's changing ideas around the target audience of the Festival and also its purpose. Although the Festival had aimed to attract a foreign audience since its first season, this emphasis on overseas visitors was strengthened following the announcement of plans for presenting a pageant of English drama as mentioned. The emphasis on overseas visitors is evident in the way in which the Festival was promoted during this third season as in May 1931 Jackson insisted:

> As we are definitely catering for students a course of lectures has been arranged for the first week of the Festival […] The lectures have been introduced chiefly because parties of students are coming over especially from American and Canadian universities. The response from abroad this year has been extremely gratifying, and makes me feel that a festival of this kind - probably the first held in this country- is serving an important purpose.[13]

In addition to reflecting the growing emphasis of the Festival on overseas visitors, Jackson here also demonstrates the academic atmosphere which accompanied the changes in policy at the Festival. With the introduction of two lectures, one on the play and the other on its time period, which accompanied each piece, Jackson attributed an

[13] 'Old and New Plays for Malvern Festival: Interview with Sir Barry', *Observer*, 3 May 1931, p. 19.

educational purpose to the festival which was then reflected in its target audience of students and academics.

In 1931, the Festival included seven plays which covered a period of over four hundred years: the earliest play, *Hick Scorner* (unknown), dated from 1513 and the most current, *The Switchback* (James Bridie), was written in 1929. The remaining plays included *Ralph Roister Doister* (Nicholas Udall, 1552), *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (Thomas Heywood, 1603), *She Would if She Could* (George Etherege, 1668), *A Trip to Scarborough* (Richard Brinsley Sheridan, 1777) and *Money* (Lord Lytton, 1884). Arguably the most striking characteristic of the list of plays which are selected to represent the periods in which they were written is the attempt to include lesser-known classics in place of the more well-known plays of each period. For instance, the early modern stage is represented by works from Udall and Heywood while Shakespeare is excluded from the repertoire. This is an issue which Jackson addressed at the time in May 1931:

> All the pieces are representative of their periods, but I have purposely chosen the lesser-known classics. At the outset I was undecided whether to present the lighthouses of English drama, to let *Hamlet* represent the Elizabethan age, *The Way of the World* the Restoration, and *Caste* the Victorian; but there were obvious reasons against doing so. There were many reasons against doing so. There were many works even by some of the famous dramatists that were hardly known at all.[14]

[14] 'Old & New Plays for Malvern Festival', p. 19.

In consideration of Jackson's earlier comments in 1929, in which he insisted on distinguishing between the Festival in Malvern and that in Stratford, a repertoire of lesser-known classics would allow Jackson to clearly differentiate the Malvern repertoire of plays from that in Stratford while abandoning the concept of offering a selection of modern plays as pursued in previous seasons. However, Jackson's interest in the classics was also an expression of his artistic vision as his preoccupation with lesser-known classics is evident in his work of writing outside of his involvement with the Festival. In an undated speech titled *What We Did*, Jackson explained:

> There is more than a possibility that were the dust-laden volumes now lying idle more frequently studied, we should enjoy greater plays, and in consequence, greater acting. In case this statement should leave the impression that good modern plays never come to light, nothing is further from my thoughts, but the fact remains that good modern plays are extremely rare. We find our poets, our historians, our novelists, constantly studying the old masters.[15]

Jackson's shift in policy in managing the Festival belonged to a continuing preoccupation with the classics in his career as a theatre manger which reflected his belief in the superiority of the 'old masters' compared to contemporary writers.

However, while the list of plays included in the Festival point to the past, the Festival book demonstrates an evident attempt on behalf of Limbert to attribute a more modern perspective to the Festival. There is a section dedicated to the Malvern Theatre in the Festival book which

[15] *What We Did*, The Library of Birmingham, MS 978, Box 26, p. 7.

emphasises this playhouse as possessing the latest technology: 'The new Theatre is among the most charming and the best equipped in the provinces.'[16] Furthermore, not only was the theatre one of the best in regional England, it was also comparable with those in large cities and especially London as the book emphasised: 'In January 1930, in accordance with the policy of maintaining Malvern Theatre in the van of the foremost houses of entertainment, it was found necessary to follow the example set both in London and the larger cities of wiring the Theatre for talking films.'[17] It was these talking films which added to the modern aspects of the Festival as alongside the drama, in the 1931 season, Limbert also held a festival of talkies which included Shaw's first talking picture, *How he Lied to her Husband*.

Moreover, this conflict between a nostalgia for the past and an embracing of twentieth-century modernity is also evident in the manner in which Malvern is described in the book: 'Its environment combines the delights of a long range of hills and a vast plain where the enthusiastic student of history can take almost any period from the beginning of time and find enough links with his chosen age.'[18] Thus while Great Malvern is a 'fine modern town with wide streets of attractive houses, hotels and shops', the Malvern Hills provide even the 'least active visitor' with the opportunity to 'learn more of English history in a few minutes than hours of study could teach'.[19] Consequently, in this book Malvern is presented as simultaneously possessing links with both the past and present without any attempts made at resolving the tensions between these two contradictory images of the town offered.

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[16] 'The Malvern Theatre', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1931*, pp. 43-49 (p. 43).
[17] 'The Malvern Theatre', p. 49.
[18] 'The Malverns', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1931*, pp. 7-11 (p. 9).
[19] 'The Malverns', p. 10.

3. *Too True to be Good* and England Then

This tension between the Festival's simultaneous links to both the past and the present continued with the following season in 1932. As with the previous year's season, the Festival's repertoire consisted of plays from different periods in English history which included *The Play of Weather* (John Heywood, 1533), *Ralph Roister Doister* (Nicholas Udall, 1552), *The Alchemist* (Ben Jonson, 1610), *Oronooko* (Thomas Southerne, 1695), *Tom Thumb the Great* (Henry Fielding, 1730) and *London Assurance* (Dion Boucicault, 1841). In this season, the play representing the twentieth century was not a comedy like Bridie's *The Switchback* performed in 1931 but instead Shaw's more sombre *Too True to be Good*.

As with *The Apple Cart*, in *Too True to be Good* Shaw once again presents a play drastically different from his earlier more realistic plays. *Too True to be Good* does begin in a realistic setting in 'one of the best bedrooms in one of the best suburban villas in one of the richest cities in England' (p. 1131). However, the presence of a microbe, 'made of a luminous jelly with a visible skeleton of short black rods' (p. 1131), in the room immediately reveals to the audience that realism is not to be expected. In this Act, a female patient is introduced whose illness is caused by her mother's incessant need to confine her daughter in the room with the windows sealed. Act I concludes with the patient escaping from the house with the help of her servant, Sweetie, and the servant's burglar accomplice, Aubrey, to what she anticipates will be a life of freedom. The following two Acts trace the patient's new life on what seems to be a foreign island which is part of the British Empire. As Shaw introduces new characters such as Colonel Tallboys and Aubrey's father who engage in lengthy speeches discussing their various forms of

disillusionment with a variety of issues including religion and politics, the playwright reveals that the patient's new life in what she suspected was the 'loveliest earthly paradise' (p. 1140) is in fact one of dullness and boredom. The play concludes with the characters, each in some way left individually disillusioned with her or his previously held views, exiting the stage in pursuit of something new.

As the following analysis of the play demonstrates, the content of *Too True to be Good* clashed with the guiding philosophy of the Festival as presented by Jackson in 1932. While Jackson's festival attempted to present a happy and stable England through its repertoire of past comedies which were presented as demonstrating the glories of English culture and its contribution to world literature, the modern England depicted in *Too True to be Good* is a dysfunctional society whose ideals have been dismantled by World War I. Thus, while the Festival sought to present a glorified image of England to its foreign visitors, Shaw's play critiques the values and principles supporting England and predicts the gloomy future which the adherence to such systems will bring. *Too True to be Good* has been interpreted by critics in the past as a dream play in which the dream belongs to either the patient or the microbe.[20] This is however, not a pleasant dream but a dystopian vision of an unidentified time and location. As Peter Edgerly Firchow argues, any vision of a utopia or dystopia is in essence a critique of the present. Firchow presents visions of utopias and dystopias as intertwined and in dialogue with one another, with dystopias holding 'traces of their utopian origin'. Frichow describes dystopias as:

[20] See Rodelle Weintraub, 'Too True to be Good: The Bottomless Abyss since World War I', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 19 (1999), 119-27, and Christopher Wixson, '"These Noxious Microbes": Pathological Dramaturgy in George Bernard Shaw's *Too True to Be Good*', *Modern Drama*, 56.1 (2013), 1-18.

> They are, as all of these designations suggest, 'bad' places, though they are always bad in very special ways. In other words they are not just some random ugly and unhealthy place - such as, say, Gary, Indiana, but bad places that were once and perhaps still are considered to be 'good' places, though only by a relatively small number of people.[21]

This is an argument which other critics also support. In *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility,* Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley and Gyan Prakash describe dystopias as 'a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a segment of society […] dystopias resemble the actual societies historians encounter in their research'.[22] In light of this argument, viewing *Too True to be Good* as Shaw's dystopian vision of England and the British Empire is then ironically also a critique of the utopian and idealistic images of this country which, as argued, were present in the guiding philosophy of the Festival. Thus, the performance of Shaw's play in the context of the Malvern Festival season in 1932 can be seen to in fact have satirised the Festival itself. This was especially apparent in Shaw's criticism of the concepts of religion and the empire which in the context of Malvern were also critiques of their application and presence in the Festival.

Following its premiere in Boston in March 1932, *Too True to be Good* was heavily criticised for its lengthy speeches and lack of plot. The critics interpreted this as a sign of Shaw's loss of vigour as a playwright amid old age as the correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* reported on the reception of the play following its premiere:

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[21] *Modern Utopian Fictions from H.G Wells to Iris Murdoch* (Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 2008), p. 4.
[22] 'Introduction', in *Utopias/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility,* ed. by Michael D. Gordin and others (Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 1-21 (p. 1).

> J. Brooks Atkinson, the critic of the *New York Times* says that 'Shaw seems to have yielded to the promise to write without having a subject.' He calls the play 'this rambling and indifferently tedious conversation,' and while conceding that 'as usual there is a trend of a gleaming of common sense under these long festoons of banter,' he believes the play is Mr. Shaw's confession that 'he has little that is new to give now in the fullness of his years.[23]

Jackson was aware of such criticism which he attempted to address in order to attract interest in the play prior to its performance in Malvern. Ahead of the Festival, Jackson referred to the criticism received in America through comparing the reception of *Too True to be Good* with *The Apple Cart* and insisted on Malvern's ability to excel any American production of this play:

> The play had been produced in New York, so there not need be a great deal of secrecy, press notices showed that the critics were not too delighted, but it would be remembered that the foreign press was not too pleased with *The Apple Cart*. It remained for Malvern to show that it was a very amusing and diverting piece of work.[24]

Nonetheless, the English premiere of the play in Malvern, which occurred on 7 August 1932, was overshadowed by Jackson's decision to fly London critics into the town, as a result of which the production

[23] 'Too True to be Good: Mr G. B. Shaw's New Play', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 March 1932, p. 9.
[24] 'Malvern Development Association: Visit of Sir Barry Jackson', *Malvern Gazette*, 20 May 1932, p. 6.

began with a delay of approximately three quarters of an hour. Jackson's stunt left many of the critics unconvinced as they interpreted his actions as unnecessary and misplaced within the context of the Festival. For instance Ivor Brown, in his review of the play published in the *Manchester Guardian*, wrote:

> The transportation of a few critics (many were already at Malvern) had been arranged by aeroplane. Malvern is 118 miles from London by road, and a motor-coach could have done the journey as rapidly as the cumbrous business of flight from Croydon to Gloucester and transhipment thence by car. The silly stunt of flying the aeroplane over Malvern before it went to Gloucester was also included-another waste of time.[25]

The entrance of the critics into Malvern by plane contrasted explicitly, and perhaps unhelpfully, with the Festival's emphasis on the past which was apparent in the Festival's repertoire, or with the characteristics of Malvern as a location representing the best of the historic English countryside. This is a sense which, as the following analysis of the play demonstrates, the content of *Too True to be Good* also reinstated.

3.1. Religion

In his surveys of European theatre which he presented at various lectures to different theatre societies around the country prior to the Festival, Jackson emphasised the role which religion had played in the development of drama. In an address to the Birmingham Civic Society in

[25] 'The New Shaw Play: Malvern Production "Too True to Be Good"', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 August 1932, p. 9.

1922, Jackson identified religion as the source of the achievements attained by Greek Theatre: 'The corner stone of Greek drama was its religious character, a character which ensured the greatest seriousness and earnestness of mind from the masses.'[26] This is a view which is reiterated in the souvenir book accompanying the 1932 season in which religious interludes are identified as the source of English drama, and Malvern 'as a religious centre for centuries' is thus presented as an ideal location for the Festival.[27]

In *Too True to be Good*, Shaw also discusses religion, but in fundamentally different terms to that expressed in Jackson's views, as Shaw questions the relevance of conventional systems of belief in a post-war context. In the play, the religious establishment is presented in the form of Aubrey Bagot. Aubrey is a priest with a passion for sermonising who prefers form to content when delivering his often lengthy speeches. For Aubrey as long as the sermon is eloquently spoken and organised, the content is irrelevant:

> AUBREY I feel I must do it if only the doctrine is beautiful and subtle and exquisitely put together. I may feel instinctively that it is the rottenest nonsense. Still, if I can get a moving dramatic effect out of it, and preach a really splendid sermon about it, my gift takes possession of me and obliges me to sail in and do it (p. 1147).

[26] *The Theatre and Civic Life*, The Library of Birmingham, Ms 978, Box 26, p. 3.
[27] Maxwell Frazer, 'The Malverns', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1932*, pp. 7-11 (p. 7).

Thus, Shaw presents Aubrey as a performer whose preaching is a form of playacting, as opposed to the more traditionally accepted views of the priest's message as a transmission of a higher, clearly defined and irrefutable truth. The play concludes with Aubrey performing yet another one of his speeches and the manner in which Shaw presents Aubrey's delivery of the speech demonstrates its futility. The patient 'claps her hands' and 'mischievously encourages' Aubrey to speak as though to entertain those surrounding him (p. 1166). However, as Aubrey begins to perform his speech, other characters desert him and ultimately Aubrey remains alone on stage. Fog surrounds the priest until he is no longer visible to the audience and gradually the words he speaks are also unintelligible. As with the other characters whose exits to a better future seem uncertain, Aubrey also disappears into the 'abyss' (p. 1157). Moreover, although some critics, following the Malvern and New York productions, attempted to present this final act of preaching as a reflection of Shaw's belief in the significance of sermonising, the play's structure resists such explanations. Aubrey's final speech is an endless monologue on a variety of unrelated topics failing to reach a conclusion as both the preacher and the message gradually disappear and consequently the play closes without providing a resolution. As Rodelle Weintraub indicates, at the end of the play the audience remains uncertain as to whether the performance has indeed concluded.[28] Thus as Aubrey's speech fails to offer any contributions in terms of providing resolutions in its content and place within the structure of the play, Shaw undermines both Aubrey's role as a priest and the act of preaching.

Shaw's critique of religion is also evident in his depiction of the character of a sergeant who is introduced in Act III holding copies of

[28] Weintraub, p. 122.

both the Bible and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. As the sergeant explains, both texts have failed to reflect the atrocities of war and as a result he can no longer completely accept the message presented in either of the works: 'There it is: not a story in a book as it used to be, but God's truth in the real actual world. And all the comfort they get is "Flee from the wrath to come". But where are they to flee to?' (p. 1156). As the sergeant positions the Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress* alongside one another, he indicates that both are indeed fictions which as a result of their status as literature and their specific content fail to correspond with reality. Thus, the Bible is the provider of the imaginary tales which the priest then performs. Furthermore, in a post-war context some of these stories, such as those involving 'slaughtering' and 'offering up human sacrifices' (p. 1156), now appear as deeply concerning.

While both Jackson through his guiding philosophy of the Festival and Shaw in *Too True to be Good* highlighted a connection between the church and drama, their treatment of this connection thus achieved effects which contradicted one another. On the one hand the Festival formed a connection between the two to offer credibility to drama and as a result emphasised the role of theatre as a force for reinforcing conventional senses of morality. However, through connecting drama and the church in *Too True to be Good*, Shaw debates the notion that the church holds any sense of the 'truth' and has anything more to offer beyond eloquently spoken sermons. This is a sense which is reinforced by the role of Aubrey as not only a priest, but also a thief, who is introduced as 'half-auctioneer and half clergyman' (p. 1140).

But if religion is shown to be failing in *Too True to be Good*, Shaw also presents science as having failed to provide answers for the questions confronting a post-war world. Aubrey's father is an atheist

who scorns his son for being a priest, but is however equally disillusioned by his own beliefs as he is with the religion which his son preaches. Belief in Christianity and atheism are indeed shown to be similar in the play as atheism is presented as just another system of faith. Hence in a language resembling religious discourse the Elder insists: 'And now look at me and behold the supreme tragedy of the atheist who has lost his faith--his faith in atheism, for which more martyrs have perished than for all the creeds put together' (p. 1159). The similarities between faith in Christianity and atheism are then further reinforced by the family ties between Aubrey and the Elder, a father and son, as the representatives of each of these systems of belief.

It was this aspect of the play and its interrogation of current scientific theories such as natural selection that one of the churches in Malvern focused upon in 1932 in their response to the Festival. In a sermon delivered in the town, the Archbishop of Worcester disregarded the play's criticism of religion in order to offer his interpretation of the play as one which advocated the return of faith to humanity. The *Malvern Gazette* quoted from the priest's speech and reported:

> 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but to those who listen to its message the power of God, and the wisdom of God,' adding, 'That is what St. Paul said to the people of his age, which in many respects resembled our own- the age Mr. Bernard Shaw has endeavoured to hold up before us as in a

> mirror in his new play, *Too True to be Good*, which some of you have seen, and all have read about.[29]

As the Dean disregarded the play's criticism of religion, he interpreted the play as a critique of the 'lack of faith'. The Dean used the last lines of the play: 'I have nothing to say unless some pentecostal flame of revelation of the spirit will descend on me and inspire me with a message, the sound whereof shall go out into all lands, and realise for us at last the Kingdom and the power and the Glory, for ever and ever, Amen' (p. 1168), to present his view that the 'pentecostal flame' to which Shaw refers is indeed the 'Spirit of God'. However, as the previous analysis of this speech demonstrated, I argue that despite the Archbishop's attempts in reconciling the content of Shaw's play and the guiding philosophy of the Festival regarding the issue of religion, his sermon remains unconvincing in light of the content of the play and its robust criticism of the church. In *Too True to be Good* Shaw criticises the church and science alike. Furthermore, in consideration of Shaw's beliefs regarding Creative Evolution and the Life Force which Shaw had by then explicitly discussed in many of his plays, it is evident that if Shaw is advocating any sense of faith, it is not any conventional definition of this term by the church. As the Doctor in Act I insists, all conventional senses of faith, whether religious or scientific are 'humbug' as it is the force within us which possesses the real power: 'You see, it's easier to believe in bottles and inoculations than in oneself and that mysterious power that gives us our life and that none of us knows anything about' (p. 1134).

3.2. The Empire

[29] 'Too True to be Good: Dean of Worcester and G.B.S.', *Malvern Gazette*, 19 August 1932, p. 8.

In addition to the concept of religion, in *Too True to be Good*, Shaw also scrutinises the state of the British Empire and its influence abroad. In Act II Shaw transports the audience to 'a sea beach in a mountainous country' and while the precise location of this landscape remains unidentified, the audience is aware that it is a 'military cantonment' (p. 1141) and presumably a colony of the British Empire. The natives of this land are never depicted on stage and their actions are only reported. The only representatives of the native's language and culture are the patient's comic efforts at dressing as a native in 'headdress, wig, ornaments, and girdle', which is 'proper to no locality on earth except perhaps the Russian ballet' (p. 1144), and the patient's use of 'English back slang' (p. 1151). The identities of the coloniser and the colonised have merged as Shaw ridicules and consequently undermines signifiers of nationality such as culture and language. When Colonel Tallboys asks the patient whether she is a 'native', Moppy replies: 'Yes, a native of Somerset' (p. 1153). Shaw's positioning of the terms 'native' and 'Somerset' alongside one another challenges the concept of the natives as the 'other' and consequently the coloniser as in any way superior to the colonised. As Christopher Wixson observes, in this Act, through the cross-dressing performances of a number of characters such as the patient, Aubrey, Sweetie and Meek, Shaw subverts 'identities and notions of constructed difference' and proposes that the English view themselves '*as* rather than merely *through* the subaltern' and consequently dismantles any notions of the colonised as distinctively different to the coloniser.[30] Furthermore, although Act I concludes with the patient anticipating a life of bliss outside of the confinements of her home in England, life in this exotic and unfamiliar territory proves to be just as problematic. In Act III, the patient explains:

[30] Wixson, p. 7.

THE PATIENT Popsy stole my necklace, and got me to run away with him by a wonderful speech he made about freedom and sunshine and lovely scenery. Sweetie made me write it all down and sell it to a tourist agency as an advertisement. And then I was devoured by parasites: by tourist agencies, steamboat companies, railways, motor car people, hotel keepers, dressmakers, servants, all trying to get my money by selling me things I dont really want; shoving me all over the globe to look at what they call new skies, though they know as well as I do that it is only the same old sky everywhere (p. 1161).

In Acts II and III, the characters discuss their identities and their sense of disillusionment as English men and women in a setting outside of their country of birth. As Shaw dismantles the patient's utopian images of this new land in Acts II and III, he undermines any notion of these occupied territories as means of escape as the characters take their post-war anxieties and concerns with them to this new setting. While such concerns seem to contrast explicitly with Jackson's aims for his surveys of English drama that were the foundation of the Festival at this time, they also ironically satirise the festival-going habit. In the Malvern production of *Too True to be Good* in 1932 - and thus before an audience of mainly tourists, as discussed in Chapter Two - Shaw

criticised the concept of escaping to 'sunshine' and 'lovely scenery' and questioned the worth of 'tourist agencies', which no doubt many of those present in the Malvern Theatre had employed in order to arrive at the premiere.

In *Too True to Be Good*, Shaw depicts this colonised land as a contributor to the concerns confronting the characters in the play as in addition to systems of belief such as religion and science, Shaw also depicts England's influence abroad as another crumbling concept and thus illusion. Colonel Tallboys, who is the military figure in control of the forces in his region, is presented as incompetent and removed from reality. He scorns Meek for lacking fighting spirit and insists that as a result, Meek is an incompetent soldier: 'Your nerves! What business has a soldier with nerves? You mean that you are no use for fighting, and have to be put to do anything that can be done without it' (p. 1149). However, regardless of Tallboys' opinion of Meek, Meek is shown to be an intelligent and capable individual as in Act II, it is Meek who suppresses an attack by the natives. As it is later revealed that Tallboys is included in the Honours list for a K.C.B only because according to him 'the Government is preparing for a general election, and has had to make the most of these modest achievements' (p. 1163), Shaw seems to ridicule England's military achievements and undermine any notion of England's influence abroad as sturdy and permanent. The uprising which Meek is successful in combating signifies the presence of tension between the colonisers and the colonised. However, although in this specific instance, the English manage to claim victory, as Tracy Davis

indicates, it is unclear for how long the natives will continue to be supressed by flying maroons into the sky.[31]

The notion of the British Empire as depicted in *Too True to be Good* is, I would argue, in direct contrast with the imperial outlook of the Festival. In the 1932 season of the Festival, as with those already discussed, there was a strong emphasis on foreign visitors especially those arriving from Canada and America. Furthermore, Jackson planned to transfer some of the plays from Malvern to Canada in what can be described as an imperial venture: 'Sir Barry gave me another interesting piece of news. "I am not only bringing Canadian visitors to England, but in the autumn I am sending plays to Canada"'.[32] Indeed, in an untitled broadcast from the Birmingham Rep in 1931 Jackson described Canada as an ideal location for the performance of English drama and consequently presented theatre as a suitable method for extending England's imperial ties with this country: 'Canada is a wonderfully exhilarating place, and I firmly believe that just as we share our ancestry in common, one with the other, so our culture is essentially the same. Nowhere in the Empire is there more active loyalty and cooperation with the Mother Country than in the Dominion'.[33] Jackson, entirely at home with this language of territory and possession in a way that Shaw can never be, presented the Festival as an opportunity to improve international relations as he held a party for the overseas visitors as part of the 1932 season. This led the *Malvern Gazette* to

[31] Tracy C. Davis, 'Shaw's Interstices of Empire', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Innes, pp 218-239 (p. 231).
[32] 'Old & new Plays for Malvern Festival', p. 19.
[33] A Broadcast from the Birmingham Rep, 13 November 1931, The Library of Birmingham, MS 978, Box 22, p. 5.

conclude that 'Sir Barry can truthfully be looked upon as our chief Ambassador in the cause of international friendship'.[34]

While the Malvern Festival was a regional theatrical event, Jackson used Malvern as the location of the Festival and its associations with Englishness as described in the Festival book ('To think of Malvern is to envisage all that is loveliest in our English countryside'[35]) and the repertoire of the Festival to present his vision of a wider national cultural identity which fundamentally differed from the ideas presented by Shaw in *Too True to be Good*. Jackson considered Malvern rather than London as a metonym for England, even though, as demonstrated by Jackson's own engagement with theatre in the capital, London provided a cultural, economic and creative hub that could scarcely be altogether ignored by the theatre maker. Jackson's use of the Festival as a way to extend England's influence abroad and especially in Canada clashed with Shaw's depiction of an England transferring into a post-colonial world in which the country must confront the prospect of the loss of its empire.

3.3. Change versus Continuity

The tension between continuity and a need for change is at the core of Shaw's dystopian vision presented in Act II and Act III of the play. In *Too True to be Good*, Shaw laments the long lasting and poignant effects of World War I. In Act II and in regards to Sweetie's dismissal of accepted gender roles and a conventional sense of sexual morality, Aubrey insists:

AUBREY Since the war the lower centres have become vocal. And the effect is that of an

[34] 'Malvern's World Famous Festival: Another Triumph for Sir Barry Jackson', *Malvern Gazette*, 5 August 1932, p. 5.
[35] *Malvern Festival Book 1931*, p. 14.

> earthquake. For they speak truths that have never been spoken before - truths that the makers of our domestic institutions have tried to ignore. And now that Sweetie goes shouting them all over the place, the institutions are rocking and splitting and sundering. They leave us no place to live, no certainties, no hell, no commandments, and no God (p. 1149).

Aubrey's assessment appears accurate as the characters occupy a world where religion and science are 'sundering' institutions and national identity and social class becoming fluid concepts. In *Too True to be Good*, Shaw presents characters that adopt new identities and reside in a world that, in the words of Moppy's mother, 'is just the opposite of what I was told about' (p. 1165). This is a world where in a reversal of commonly accepted scientific views, the microbe is made ill by the patient - a patient who then in Act II swaps roles with her nurse and poses as a native maid. Shaw's preoccupation with crumbling institutions and defying expectations as expressed in the content of the play is also reflected and as a result emphasised in the manner in which *Too True to be Good* is structured. Act I concludes with the microbe attacking the play and informing the audience that *Too True to be Good* 'is now virtually over; but the characters will discuss it at great length for two acts more. The exit doors are all in order. Goodnight' (p. 1141). According to the microbe, the play is now falling apart as watching the subsequent Acts is pointless and all has now been said. Moreover, the structure of the play adheres to Mrs Moppy's observation that everything is the opposite to that which it should be as the microbe

suggests that this beginning Act is the conclusion of the play while, as discussed, the ending of the play will later appear as uncertain. As a result of his deconstruction of the structure of the well-made play and the content of *Too True to be Good*, Shaw thus refuses to provide any resolutions to the questions posed in the play.

Nonetheless, in the absence of any clear solutions, *Too True to be Good* succeeds in emphasising the need for change as opposed to stability. As Shaw will also later emphasise in another play of this period, *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, in a world where nothing is certain but uncertainty, one can only embrace change. Shaw's interrogation of the systems governing society indicates their inadequacy and the need for 'mobility', as Aubrey explains to Sweetie: 'Fickleness means simply mobility, and mobility is a mark of civilization. You should pride yourself on it' (p. 1148).

Shaw's views can be placed in direct contrast to the desire for a sense of stability which a rise in interest in history during this period indicates. In *The Place of the Past in English Culture*, Paul Readman dismisses the 'view that English culture became markedly less interested in history before 1914' to argue for the 'continued prominence of English history in contemporary English cultural discourse'.[36] Readman supports this argument by presenting various forms in which English society in the early twentieth century engaged with the past such as through the rise of the historical novel and centenary celebrations. Readman concludes that these forms of engagement with the past were a direct result of a need for stability amid changing times as he argues: 'Rather, the heterogeneous concern for the past described in this article should be seen, on the whole, as an accommodative response to contemporary

[36] 'The Place of Past in English Culture', in *Past and Present*, 186 (February 2005), 147-209 (p. 149).

experience. For turn-of-the-century English men and women, a sense of continuity with the national past provided rootedness and belonging at a time of change'.[37] While Readman is mainly discussing events at the beginning of the twentieth century, the following section of this chapter explores two events occurring near Malvern in 1932 which used history to inspire a similar sense of 'rootedness'. This section will then compare these events – Shakespeare's birthday celebrations in 1932 and the rise of the Tewkesbury pageants - with events in Malvern and specifically Shaw's role in the contrasting effects which were achieved in the Festival.

4. Malvern Compared: Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations and the Pageants

This section of the chapter will explore two events occurring near Malvern, which as with the Festival, also used history to present a cultural event that held links with the past. However, the results achieved by the incorporation of history into these events were contradictory to the effects created in the Festival and I argue that as a result of these differences these events were more successful in attracting wider public interest and support. I first focus on the celebration of Shakespeare's birthday in Stratford in 1932 which coincided with the official opening of the Memorial Theatre in the town, in order to explore the image presented of Shakespeare by the celebrations. I argue that Shakespeare's role as depicted in these festivities was that of an immortal poet and unifier of the nation whose work embodied timeless and universal values. This is in direct contrast to Shaw's image during this period as a controversial and divisive figure whose work and in particular *Too True to be Good* offered a critique of

[37] Readman, p. 199.

contemporary society and advocated social change. I will then discuss the rise in the phenomenon of contemporary pageants, an instance of which occurred in nearby Tewkesbury, examining their use of drama to argue that the manner in which these pageants were organised, to include mass participation, simple language and lavish costumes, transformed them into communal events. Furthermore, as a result of their depiction of past glories of a particular location and their avoidance of controversial subject matter, such pageants also instigated a sense of national unity and continuity which was an attempt to inspire hope amid changing times. As a result, this section will demonstrate the manner in which other events which included drama in this period succeeded in reconciling their images of England's past and present, while Malvern failed to achieve such an effect.

4.1. Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations

In April 1932, a series of celebrations were held in Stratford to commemorate Shakespeare's 368th birthday and the opening of the new Memorial Theatre. Through these celebrations, Shakespeare was presented as a unifier of the nation whose work could also connect the various countries in the empire with England as its centre. When compared with Shaw's controversial and divisive opinions as expressed in both *Too True to be Good* and his wider political speeches, the view presented of Shakespeare in these celebrations were in direct contrast to Shaw's public image during this period. Thus in contrast to the effects achieved by the Festival, the organisers of the events in Stratford in 1932 succeeded in connecting the past to the present through constructing an image of Shakespeare as a writer expressing universal truths which extended beyond time and location.

Shakespeare's birthday celebrations in Stratford were also in the form of a festival of drama which involved the participation of international figures. The Prince of Wales began the festivities as he was 'surrounded by a distinguished company of representatives of many nations, and the ceremony was preceded by the flying of flags of all nations'.[38] This was an international event in a wider sense too: the Prince's speech was broadcast from all BBC stations and relayed to America. As a result, Shakespeare was presented as an international figure whose work dealt with and extended beyond England and inspired all regardless of their nationalities. Thus as with Jackson's imperial outlook in organising the Festival, the organisers of the festivities in Stratford in 1932 also used the figure of Shakespeare as a way to strengthen England's imperial connections.

Nonetheless, although Shakespeare was presented as a figure of international significance, his status as an 'Englishman' was also emphasised as the Festival highlighted Shakespeare's ties with his country of birth. In his speech, the Prince insisted that Shakespeare was 'above all things an Englishman. His verse not only breathes the air of the countryside, but strikes back into the very heart of our history with all its pageantry and daring.'[39] Shakespeare is an Englishman, one located in a historical and rural England which the Festival emphasised was now retraceable in Stratford:

> Shakespeare was not only an Englishman, but he was an English countryman, and that was implicit in every line of his plays. For those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, they

[38] 'Stratford Memorial: Plans for Prince's Visit', *Malvern Gazette*, 22 April 1932, p. 6.
[39] 'The New Shakespeare Theatre: Prince of Wales's Speech', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 April 1932, p. 5.

> will find, from the first page of his plays to the last, a most intimate acquaintance, not only with everything that belonged to the countryside, but to all the sports, venery, falconry, archery and everything one would expect a countryman to be familiar with.[40]

Furthermore, it is this image of England which the festival attempted to present to its foreign visitors:

> 'Welcome home.' All true English-Americans. What is it in England that they want to see? They go to London, that constantly changing London, where still they can find much of the past, and where the old names live. But the England they want to see is the country village from which, if they have the record, their ancestors went forth to seek their fortune.[41]

Stratford was also presented as a location which preserved a sense of a historical England; a sense of a happier time in which Shakespeare lived:

> And happy, indeed, was Shakespeare in his time. In a manner of speaking, the time was not unlike the present. It is true that in England the Renaissance was blooming afresh, and imagination had been freed, perhaps as it had never been before or since. But there was a great change coming over the world, even as it is coming today - a change from one era into another - and it requires some imagination on

[40] 'The New Shakespeare Theatre', p. 5.
[41] 'The New Shakespeare Theatre', p. 5.

> our part to throw our minds back into a period when England was a land of music and of song, and when the Bible - translated by the infinite mercy of Providence, at a time when the English language was at its best and noblest and purest - was the reading of the common people of this country, and when their lives and conversations were coloured by it, just as today they are coloured by the penny Press and the cinema. And, in those beautiful words of Froude: 'Now that age is to men like an unsubstantial pageant, faded.' […] That is true as far as it goes, but the Englishman in Shakespeare remains, and thank God there still remains in England corners of that land which he would recognise, and in which he would feel at home.[42]

This extended quote taken from the Prince's speech suggests that the celebrations presented the Elizabethan era as a golden age for England. It was a time in which art and literature flourished and became intertwined with the everyday lives of the 'common people'. While this is an era which differed from the twentieth century, however, the Prince highlighted the similarities between the two time periods. A transition into a new era had once loomed over the Elizabethans as it now was in the twentieth century. It was amid such a time of change that England required a return to the classics in order to recover a sense of the glories of its past. In the midst of twentieth-century modernity, Stratford with its pastoral settings and connections to Shakespeare provided this link to England's history – or so the Shakespeare Festival sought to claim. The festival was thus presented as a time for advocating unity and friendship and celebrating England's glorious

[42] 'The New Shakespeare Theatre', p. 5.

history whose influence could promise a brighter future. This was a sense achieved through presenting Shakespeare as an immortal poet with universal significance that has deep connections with the peaceful rural surrounding in which the celebrations are held.

This image of Shakespeare is, as we have seen, in direct contrast with Shaw's public image during this period both as a result of Shaw's political involvements and his drama as I have thus far discussed in this chapter. While Shakespeare is 'immortal', in the quote below from an article by the author and literary critic Osbert Burdett published in 1933, Shaw is clearly situated, rather critically, as a product of his time whose works resemble journalism rather than timeless depictions of human truths:

> The bulk of Bernard Shaw's followers consist of earnest folk, often women, who, accepting his leadership (or enjoying his fun) on one or more of his current topics, confuse their pleasure and his personal popularity with the pleasure of art and the reputation of a great author. Our incapacity for art and our appetite for journalism, like a taste for tonics and indifference to wine, explain the nature, and the extent of this success.[43]

Burdett's trenchant criticism was not isolated: as I have previously shown, Shaw was a controversial and divisive figure during the interwar period. This is in direct contrast with the image presented of Shakespeare as a unifier of the nation who embodies all virtues common among this country's citizens. Such contrasts were made evident in the

[43] 'Osbert Burdett on Shaw's Popularity', first published in *London Mercury*, June 1933, quoted in *Shaw: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by T. F. Evans (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 333-35 (p. 334).

following comment, in which Shaw's presence in Shakespeare's celebrations is interpreted as a potential disturbance of the peaceful atmosphere of the festival: 'Sir Archibald […] in a humorous reference to the fact that the gathering was about to be linked up with the outer world by the microphone for the principal speeches, he warned the assembly that they must take care that no ribald remarks, "even from Mr Bernard Shaw" were uttered.'[44]

4.2. Pageants

Another type of cultural event which combined history and drama during this period in the regions with contrasting results to those achieved by the Festival was the modern pageant. The rise of modern pageantry is traced back by critics to the work of Louis Napoleon Parker in Sherborne in 1905. While teaching at Sherborne School in the 1870s and 1880s, Parker contemplated the idea of presenting a musical "folk-play" in the school courtyard, and thirteen years after his departure from the school, he was provided with this opportunity. The occasion of the twelve-hundredth anniversary of the school allowed Parker to develop his plans of creating a folk play which would celebrate past glories of the town. The plans began modestly; however, they soon developed as originally 'starting with a hundred performers', they 'ended with nine hundred'.[45]

The events in Sherborne set the model for the pageants which followed across the country as they all shared a common aim of depicting historical events related to the location of the pageant in the form of episodes with the site of the pageant as their centre as an early historian of these pageants, Robert Withington, explores: 'Each scene,

[44] 'The Bard of Avon: World Homage to Shakespeare', *Malvern Gazette*, 29 April 1932, p. 3.
[45] Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline Vol II* (London: Benjamin blom, 1926), pp. 196-97.

which relates some past event in the history of the place, is called an "episode"- it is not unlike an act in a play, the plot of which is the history of the town'.[46] Another key feature of the pageants was their dependence on local participation – not just of performers but also writers and organisers - with the aim of presenting the event as a democratic venture: 'Mr. Parker thereupon insisted that everyone he asked should perform in the pageants he directed; he would take no refusal from anyone. All classes were called on, and all responded amazingly'.[47] Moreover, in order to increase public participation, Parker's pageants selected small towns as their locations: 'Mr. Parker feels that the small place is the only fit place for a pageant. There are so many interests in a big city, that everyone cannot give his attention and energy to it; and unless a town gives its whole life to a pageant, the pageant is nothing'.[48] The popular interest in the pageants was also enhanced by their simple dialogue and combining of drama, procession and dance.[49]

While pageants were popular in the beginning of the twentieth century, by 1914, according to Parker the public's interest had declined. However, as Mick Wallis observes, pageants, such as the Kenilworth Castle pageant held in 1939 continued to appear across the country during the interwar years. Wallis describes the typical characteristics of this interwar pageantry as follows:

> The Kenilworth Castle Pageant typifies the inter-war historical pageant in many ways. It is strictly episodic, predominantly amateur, aims to unite and memorialise a

[46] Withington, p. 210.
[47] Withington, p. 202.
[48] Withington, pp. 202-03.
[49] Withington, p. 211.

> community around a sense of local history, connects the consolidated local with the national, the warmth of folk to the majesty of high persons and events; avoids recent conflict, mixes historical document with romantic fantasy; incorporates masque elements as special episodes and processions as a matter of course; involves spectacle, fetish, copiousness and variety.[50]

Thus the pageants held during the interwar years demonstrated similar characteristics to that of the Parkerian pageants such as amateur participation and – key for the discussion here - a consolidation between the local and the national.

In 1931, Tewkesbury became the location for a pageant in which nearby Malvern also participated. This pageant was organised by the pageant master, theatre producer and actress, Gwen Lally and was an ambitious event of a large scale as it lasted for four days, involved two thousand performers and aimed to cover 'the spirit of England through 800 years'.[51] Similar to the Parkerian pageants, the Tewkesbury pageant also depended on the local participation of performers in the episodes, two of which were dedicated to Malvern. The Tewkesbury pageant was widely reported on in the *Malvern Gazette* and described as an 'artistic triumph', 'beautiful' and 'packed with historic interest'. Furthermore, the correspondent for the *Malvern Gazette* reported that in the finale, eight thousand people participated as in addition to the performers, many took the 'cheap trains and buses' available to watch the pageant. Following their arrival in Tewkesbury and in between watching the

[50] Mick Wallis, 'Delving the Levels of Memory and Dressing up the Past', in *British Theatre between the Wars: 1918-1939*, ed. by Clive Baker and Maggie B. Gale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 190-215 (pp. 193-94).
[51] 'Display Ad', *Malvern Gazette*, 3 July 1931, p. 7.

episodes, a commentator described their activities: 'Between chocolates, cigarettes and conversation, it was amazing how quickly the time passed.'[52]

The episodes included in the pageant followed conventions outlined by Parker as they included large spectacle and elaborate costumes. One of the 'most popular scenes' of the pageant was the battle scene which excited the audience: 'Why does everyone so love a fight?', asked the local newspaper, 'it seems like a comment on the Disarmament Conference from which we are all hoping so much. But there was no doubt it was cheered to the echo, and how the combatants enjoyed it!'[53] Moreover, the Malvern episode presented a melodramatic scene of the merry occasion of the wedding between a little maid with the Earl of Abergavenny which crossed class barriers complete with 'flower like costumes' and 'dancing'.[54]

While Jackson sought to incorporate an element of history in the Malvern Festival through the survey of English plays which he presented in chronological order, it is clear that the Festival differed from pageants and their use of drama significantly, resulting in the lack of support demonstrated towards the Festival by the local population in Malvern. The pageants placed great emphasis on local and mass participation in all aspects such as performing and organising the episodes; thus, regardless of the role of the pageant master and the specific images presented they attempted to create a democratic atmosphere for both performers and audience within each location. The Festival, on the other hand, isolated the local population in Malvern by emphasising visitors as its target audience and thus presented itself as I have argued

[52] 'The Great Pageant: Closing Scenes', *Malvern Gazette*, 24 July 1931, p. 7.
[53] 'The Great Pageant', p. 7.
[54] Cynthia M. Skine, 'Tewkesbury Pageant: A Tale of the Malvern Episode', *Malvern Gazette*, 3 July 1931, p. 8.

throughout this thesis, as a more evidently elitist and exclusive event. The pageants presented the past glories of a specific location to its contemporary citizens in order to imply continuity and thus inspire hope for the future. As a result, the pageants inspired a sense of unity and community spirit which the Malvern Festival with its emphasis on foreign and wealthy visitors and subsequent highlighting of class divisions lacked. Furthermore, Shaw's later plays introduced controversial and divisive political debates to the Festival such as the opposition between democracy and autocracy in *The Apple Cart* and Shaw's criticism of religion in *Too True to be Good*. Instead of drawing on a shared past, these plays reflect the fragmented English society of their period, thus creating a much more sombre atmosphere for the Malvern Festival than that surrounding the pageants.

5. Shaw on Malvern

While the Malvern Festival, as Chapter Five will demonstrate, significantly contributed to the formation of Shaw's late plays in many ways, it will have by now become clear to the reader that there were many incongruities between the differing artistic visions of Shaw and Jackson and as the following chapter will demonstrate, Limbert, for the Festival. Prior to his arrival in Malvern, in November 1928 and ahead of the first season of the Festival, Shaw wrote to Jackson suggesting the production of Harley Granville Barker's new play *His Majesty* for the Festival.[55] This was again followed by another letter in January in which Shaw made a similar suggestion: 'But I am rather apologetic about being the only fish in your basket. Remember that you are a full generation younger than I, and that even in Malvern it is not wise to

[55] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, pp. 35-36 (21 November 1928).

worship the setting sun, especially on the east side of the hills. What about that play of Barker's?'[56] However, this was a suggestion apparently dismissed by Jackson, as Barker's work never appeared in the Festival. Moreover, in the Festival book in 1936, Shaw once again emphasised the significance of modern drama in the Festival's repertoire: 'The ideal programme for Malvern would be of new plays by new men.'[57] Shaw's desire to create a suitable location for the performance of modern drama was also present in his writing prior to his involvement with the Festival and was thus a persistent concern for the dramatist. For example, the emphasis placed on classics in the plans of the committee pursuing the establishment of a National Theatre in England had been a major point of disagreement between Shaw and other supporters of the movement. In a letter to the drama critic J. Comyns Carr in 1908, Shaw insisted that he would not sign the latest report to be sent to the Executive Committee due to a clause emphasising the classics in the repertoire of the proposed National Theatre:

> Did the committee realise that what the clause means is that out of the three plays which are to constitute the weekly repertory of the theatre, two must be old plays: one of them at least thirty years old and the other at least three hundred. At the same time that we make this monstrous stipulation, we have not imposed a single obligation to produce any new English work.[58]

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[56] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, p. 38.
[57] 'This year's Program', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1936*, pp. 8-9 (p. 8).
[58] Letter from George Bernard Shaw to J. Comyns Carr, 12 December 1908, The National Theatre Archives, smnt 2/1/4. There is an element of self-interest here as due to the limited productions staged by the

Consequently as Jackson pursued similar policies in his guiding philosophy of the Festival to those which Shaw criticised in this letter, by 1933, Shaw was left largely disenchanted by the Festival's progress as he presented his evaluation of Jackson's Survey of English Drama:

> After Hick the Scorner the Renaissance plays, the Rocco plays, the early Victorian plays, though they were entertaining enough in their way, could not take us in. As pictures of life they were the most amazing trash, but very instructive trash, too. Their idealism is still doing as much mischief off the stage as it did before the terrible onslaught of Ibsen exposed its danger and falsehood on stage. It may be that in the end they will become unbearable, and be driven out of the Malvern Festival by medieval drama and post-Ibsen modern drama.[59]

Thus for Shaw who had spent a large part of his life advocating the cause of Ibsen and battling against the well-made plays dominating London theatres at the end of the nineteenth century, Jackson's festival had transformed into a reiteration of the sense of idealism Shaw abhorred.

In his piece for the Festival book in 1936, Shaw expressed his sense of estrangement from the Festival due to the political content of his later plays when referring to his play *On the Rocks*, which was one of

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proposed National Theatre, Shaw must have felt a sense of competition with dead playwrights.

[59] George Bernard Shaw, 'Dramatic Antiquities at Malvern', first published in the *Malvern Festival Book 1933* reprinted in *Shaw on Theatre*, ed. by E. J. West (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1958), pp. 226-28 (p. 227).

the Shaw plays presented that year (the others being the better known *Saint Joan* and *Pygmalion*):

> And it is a wholly political play (the scene is in the cabinet room in 10, Downing Street throughout); and though it has proved a striking example of how very funny a political play can be without ceasing to be true to life, I wish I could present something fresher and fitter for the Malvern air. Unfortunately, the play on which I am at present engaged, entitled *Geneva*, goes to the very depths of politics. Besides, it is not finished.[60]

It was the performance of *Geneva* during the 1938 season which presented Malvern with its first world premiere of a Shaw play. This was, however, following Jackson's departure in 1937 and under the management of the Festival by Limbert which had marked another change in direction for the Festival as the following chapter of this thesis will explore.

Conclusion

The evidence offered in this chapter suggests that during Jackson's management between 1929 and 1937, the Malvern Festival failed to develop a coherent and clear sense of identity. It began as a festival dedicated to Shaw which included in its repertoire some of the less frequently performed of Shaw's plays. Moreover, much of the excitement surrounding the Festival was a direct result of the English premiere of a new Shaw play, *The Apple Cart*. However, as the Festival entered its second season lacking the promise of a Shavian premiere, it

[60] 'This Year's Program', p. 8.

was soon accused of replicating the productions produced in other parts of the country for which such a pilgrimage was unnecessary. Between 1931 and 1933, Jackson therefore transformed the Festival into a pageant of English theatre as he shifted the focus of the Festival from Shaw to what he identified as 'A Survey of English Drama'. As a result, the Festival became preoccupied with English history; a focus which was not unique to Malvern and is clearly evident in other forms of cultural activities during this period such as Shakespeare's birthday celebrations in Stratford in 1932 and the rise of other national pageantry such as that in Tewkesbury. While Jackson soon abandoned such plans following the 1933 season, the repertoire of the Festival continued to include pieces from many different periods in theatre history such as *Doctor Faustus*, *Volpone* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. Furthermore, Malvern as the setting of the Festival was consistently presented by the Festival book as harbouring links to a past and rural England.

The Festival, however, failed to reconcile its images of England's past and present as presented in its repertoire and accompanying events. This was a sense which the inclusion of Shaw's later plays both highlighted and extended. Although the Festival attracted a foreign audience and used the glorification of English culture in order to reinforce and advance imperial ties, Shaw's *Too True to be Good* in the 1932 season painted a gloomy image of modern England for the Festival's audience. The England which Shaw presents in this play is left hanging between a past which it now considers irrelevant amid the catastrophic consequences of World War I and a hopeless future which it will fail to salvage if it continues to manoeuvre within the structures previously supporting society. Other cultural activities in the period, such as the pageants discussed in this chapter, worked to reconcile historical England with its modern counterpart through emphasising a

sense of continuity designed to inspire hope for the future. The Malvern Festival, however, with its conflicting images of the past and present reinforced and highlighted already existing anxieties about the future rather than offering a convincing image to its visitors of a nation with either a past with which it was proud or a hopeful present and future.

In the following chapter of this thesis, I explore the effects of Jackson's policies in organising the Festival, as explored in this chapter, on his working partnership with the co-manager of the Festival, Limbert. As I have demonstrated in this chapter and Chapter Two of this thesis, Jackson aimed to attract an exclusive metropolitan set to the Festival. However, as this guiding philosophy behind the Festival failed to reconcile the desire to experiment with the need to generate financial income for the venture, Limbert pursued a more popular model as he aimed to create a festival which possessed wider public appeal. In Chapter Four, I analyse the conflicts which ensued as a result of these contradictory visions between these two managers, a series of disagreements which ultimately led to Jackson's departure from the Festival in 1937.

Chapter IV: The Malvern Festival and Theatre Economics

Introduction

Following the 1933 season, the Festival continued for another six seasons from 1933 until the outbreak of World War II in 1939 caused an interruption - it then returned for one final season ten years later in 1949. During the following seasons, the Festival experienced multiple changes in its identity as a result of internal conflicts and opposing views on the shape of the Festival amongst its two founding managers Roy Limbert and Sir Barry Jackson. These internal conflicts, which were the result of opposing attitudes on a range of issues such as the target audience, repertoire and marketing policies of the Festival, ultimately resulted in Jackson ceasing his association with the Festival following the 1937 season. Throughout its history, the Festival organisers grappled with financial difficulties. During Jackson's involvement, such issues were resolved due to his personal wealth. However following Jackson's departure, Limbert pursued the support of the Malvern Council for financial assistance in maintaining the Festival. While the Festival returned for a final season in 1949, amid local opposition and a lack of financial guarantees offered by the Council, no subsequent seasons followed.

This chapter argues that the Malvern Festival failed to sustain itself and as a result remain as a continuing presence in the English theatrical calendar due to the irresolvable tension between Jackson's emphasis on limiting the scope of the Festival's target audience and the status of theatre as a commercial enterprise. The Malvern Festival, which I argued in Chapter One, seemed initially to offer a solution to the challenges confronting Jackson and Shaw in staging experimental drama

in London, became entangled with those same problems that it attempted to resolve. Events in Malvern can thus be seen as indicative of a wider tension in early twentieth-century theatre between the desire of some theatre makers for experimentation and the financial repercussions of such aims for playhouses. The Festival also manifested the tension between 'what the theatre was and what theatre activists wanted it to be' which Cary M. Mazer discusses in relation to both the movement for building a National Theatre in England and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre where theatre makers such as Harley Granville Barker attempted, paradoxically, to create a new type of theatre which existed both within and outside of the structure governing English theatre.[1] In other words, in the management of the Malvern Festival, Jackson also struggled to create a theatre which rejected popular participation within a structure for the organisation of theatre which was necessarily based on selling tickets and generating income.

This tension is evident in the opposing attitudes of Limbert and Jackson in managing the Festival. This chapter uses a series of previously unpublished and academically unexplored correspondence involving the two managers and also other members of the Birmingham Rep to explore and analyse the manner in which Limbert pursued a more inclusive model with a sense of commercial awareness while Jackson aimed to create an elite festival which survived based on Jackson's personal financial support as its benefactor. Moreover, in consideration of scholarship such as the work of Mazer, Michael R. Booth, David Mayer and Jacky Bratton which acknowledge and critique the existence of a binary in academic discourse on drama and theatre

[1] 'New Theatres for a New Drama', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*, ed. by Kerry Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 207-21 (p. 210).

history between that which some identify as 'high' art and the more 'popular' forms of performance, this chapter reassesses the conflict between Jackson and Limbert. In the rare instances where the Festival is discussed in academic literature, Limbert is often portrayed as an opportunistic businessman while Jackson is praised as a visionary and champion of plays of artistic quality.[2] Through an analysis of the correspondence mentioned, this chapter questions this tendency to praise Jackson's pursuit of autonomous control of the Festival and rejection of popular interest in the venture which follows the same elitist narrative constructed by Shaw and Jackson earlier in the century through their criticism of the West End. Through a consideration of this correspondence, I argue that this vision of theatre and its role in society as pursued by Jackson in Malvern was an illusion which fails to consider the practicalities involved in maintaining a theatrical venture. This is demonstrated in the failure of the Malvern Festival, similarly to a number of other ventures which it emulated, to financially sustain itself and continue its existence.

This chapter begins by analysing the different models pursued by Jackson and Limbert through a consideration of the correspondence: organised around two themes on which the two managers of the Festival disagreed, the target audience and repertoire of the Festival. This is followed by a discussion of the events leading up to Jackson's departure viewed through the correspondence. Through this analysis, this chapter demonstrates that the disagreements between Jackson and Limbert were more complex than a simple disagreement between an opportunistic businessman and a self-sacrificing visionary but in fact

[2] As the following sections demonstrate this is a view presented by critics such as Vivian Elliot in her article 'Genius Loci: The Malvern Festival', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 3 (1983), 191-218, and T.C. Kemp in his book *The Birmingham Repertory Theatre: Playhouse and the Man* (Birmingham: Cornish Brothers Limited, 1943).

revolved around a struggle for power and control over the Festival. This chapter then considers the years following Jackson's departure in 1937 in which Shaw attempted to mediate between Jackson and Limbert in order to maintain a key platform for the performance of his plays in Malvern. Limbert pursued a more inclusive festival presenting new plays influenced by the theatre in the West End and also attempting to return to a stronger emphasis on Shaw. As Limbert's involvement with the West End following Jackson's departure from the Festival demonstrates, he pursued a more popular and financially successful festival as he sought to take productions from the Festival to the West End, where longer runs and undeniably larger revenues were possible.[3] However, a combination of the outbreak of war, the local opposition to the Festival and the inability of Shaw's later plays to generate sufficient public interest resulted in the Festival's demise. This demonstrates that similar to Jackson, while Shaw on the surface rejected and criticised the influence of finance in theatre, he was also deeply absorbed in the same discourse he rejected. Despite Shaw's protestations to the contrary, his involvement with the Festival demonstrates his pursuit for better opportunities for the performance of his work which reveals many similarities between Shaw's involvement with theatre and that of the 'businessman', he often criticised. Within a structure where financial income is at the core of the survival of any playhouse, claims for the rejection of money and an emphasis on solely 'artistic' aims is unrealistic. Thus, while Shaw and Jackson attempted to present their involvement with the Festival as solely based on an objective interest in

[3] As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, Limbert presented a number of plays in the West End during his career which included productions of Shaw's *Geneva*, *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* and *Buoyant Billions*.

drama and theatre, they both also at times necessarily pursued personal and financial gains.

1. A Quest for Reform

Prior to their arrival in Malvern, as demonstrated in Chapter One, both Jackson and Shaw struggled with what they insisted was an overemphasis on the monetary value of productions in West-End playhouses which as a result left little potential for experimenting with the type of plays often produced. In addition to the ventures mentioned in this beginning chapter, such as the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre and the regional reps, Shaw was involved with the movement for the establishment of a National Theatre in England which also aimed to create opportunities for presenting drama which failed to attract the attention of many London theatre managers.[4] The plans for the establishment of a National Theatre in England were intertwined

[4] The aims pursued by the advocates of the establishment of a National Theatre are varied and complicated. For instance some of its supporters also pursued an improvement in the quality of acting and the overall presentation of the productions in their association with the movement. Furthermore, there were also disagreements between those involved surrounding the emphasis on the New Drama and the position of classics in the repertoire. For instance in *Schemes and Estimates for a National Theatre,* Barker and Archer presented a repertoire for their proposed theatre mainly composed of the classics and a few well-known modern plays and insisted: 'We have purposely excluded from this specimen repertory all plays of the class which may be called disputable, designing to show that there was ample material at the command of the Theatre without travelling beyond the range of universally accepted classics, and modern work which has proved its attractiveness for the English public' (*Schemes and Estimates for a National Theatre* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1907), p. 44). However as explained in Chapter Three through Shaw's letter to J. Comyns Carr in 1908, Shaw firmly opposed such attitudes. An overall examination of the history and aims pursued by supporters of the National Theatre requires extensive discussion which is not of direct relevance to this thesis. However, the movement for a National Theatre in England demonstrates a wider interest in reforming public taste and providing opportunities for the presentation of productions which were often excluded from the repertoire of West-End playhouses due to lack of guarantees regarding their financial success which is also present in the involvement of Jackson and Shaw with the Malvern Festival.

with the aim of providing opportunities for the performance of the New Drama in the country as Mazer connects supporters of the New Drama as having an affinity with those pursuing a New Theatre governed by the principles of the Vedrenne-Barker seasons: 'Supporters of the New Drama were invariably supporters of the New Theatre and vice versa, seized with the conviction that only a New Theatre could provide a theatrical home for the New Drama which would encourage a new generation of playwrights to write for the theatre.'[5] However, as the Vedrenne-Barker seasons at the Court Theatre demonstrated, the New Drama lacked sufficient public appeal and thus any theatre heavily emphasising such plays in its repertoire financially struggled. For Shaw, however, the aim was to pursue private funding for the theatre in order to avoid the 'commercial considerations' involved in rejecting popular taste as he advocated a policy of gradually coercing the public into appreciating the repertoire offered:

> Without regard to strict commercial considerations, a National Theatre should be able to do the best work in the best way and not go in for that horrible policy of giving the public what it likes […] There was needed some institution to give the public the best until they learned to like it.[6]

The movement's lack of success in realising its vision reflected the absence of a strong economic logic in the concept of coercion and education of the masses on which much of its initial plans were based

[5] Mazer, p. 208. As discussed in Chapter Three, there was a debate amongst supporters of the National Theatre regarding the emphasis placed on the New Drama as opposed to the classics in the repertoire of the proposed playhouse with Shaw campaigning for the production of the New Drama.
[6] Geoffrey Whitworth, *The Making of a National Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), pp. 176-77.

and were also outlined in Shaw's support of the scheme.[7] The plans of the group responsible for pursuing the establishments of the National Theatre, the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee, were based on creating a playhouse which initially appealed to an exclusive audience with the aim of ultimately changing public taste and opinion. As a result of this lack of popular appeal, the plans for establishing a National Theatre in England were constantly confronted by issues surrounding a lack of funding as it was evident that any playhouse governed on the model proposed would fail to sustain itself financially.[8]

The correspondence between Jackson and Limbert demonstrates a similar tension between the founding co-managers, focused on the conflict between Jackson's desire to often defy public taste and present a festival pursuing an exclusive group of audience and the financial repercussions of such decisions as outlined by Limbert. Thus, Jackson's policies in Malvern can be seen to be a reflection of Shaw's aims in supporting the National Theatre movement. As the following sections demonstrate, like Shaw, Jackson also aimed to use the Festival as an outlet for producing experimental drama with little regard for its popularity. His policies towards issues such as the target audience,

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[7] While the concept for such an institution was posed as early as 1903 by Richard Badger and arguably earlier in 1848 by Effingham Wilson in *A House for Shakespeare: A Proposition for the Consideration of the Nation*, the National Theatre was not officially established until 1963.

[8] For instance, one of the main aims of the SMNT committee was to collect money towards a £100,000 fund for building a theatre in London. Its main policy for raising the funds necessary was based on pursuing the support of wealthy individuals whose financial assistance would accelerate the progress of the scheme. For instance, Shaw drafted a letter to be sent to millionaires across the country in order to raise their interest in the plans of the committee as he insisted the sums necessary for the plans 'cannot be wholly or even largely raised by five pound notes from men of moderate means, or by shillings and half crowns from poor lovers of Shakespeare' (*Memorandum*, G. B. Shaw Papers: Series II. Vol. LXXXVII (ff. 399), London, The British Library Archives and Manuscripts, MS 50679). Such requests, however, failed to materialise and the SMNT continued to struggle to collect the funds necessary for executing its plans.

marketing strategies and repertoire of the Festival exhibit little consideration for public taste. Consequently, Jackson's strategy in Malvern and his stance on the issues mentioned can be seen to be indicative of the opinions expressed and aims pursued by a wider movement for reform of theatre in England of which Shaw was also a key part.

2. The Correspondence

Roy Limbert was the first lessee of the Malvern Theatre following its opening in June 1928. Initially Limbert, who in addition to managing the Malvern Theatre was also the director of a 'chain of theatres and picture houses in Sussex and elsewhere', hired the playhouse in Malvern to rent to other theatre managers; thus in 1929 alongside the Festival, theatre companies such as the Stratford Upon Avon Festival Company also visited the theatre.[9] Claire Cochrane indicates that this form of managing playhouses was common in the beginning of the twentieth century as 'building ownership or long-term lesseeship passed out of the hands of creative artists to business interests which profited from subleasing theatres to short-term producing managements.'[10] This description of an individual with mainly business interests and little theatrical experience managing a playhouse, on the surface, appears to correspond with Limbert's activities prior to his management of the Malvern Theatre. In a brief biography of Limbert, the Festival book for the 1929 season emphasised the co-founder's achievements in the

[9] 'Malvern Festival: Who's Who at the Festival', *Malvern Gazette*, 23 August 1929, p. 3.
[10] *Twentieth-Century British Theatre: Industry, Art and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 54.

military as prior to his involvement with theatre, he served with the Bedfordshire Regiment between 1914 and 1919.[11]

Jackson, on the other hand, had by the time of his establishment of the Festival developed a reputation, both amongst other theatre makers and the theatregoing public, as a theatre manager and director with a taste for unconventional and experimental drama. This was largely due to his work at the Birmingham Rep, as discussed in Chapter One, which included a production of Shaw's *Back to Methuselah* in 1923 and a modern dress staging of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in 1925. The Festival book in 1929 also emphasised the experimental nature of Jackson's previous theatrical endeavours in a section on the work of the Birmingham Rep: 'since its first production of *Twelfth Night* on February 15th, 1913, the theatre has remained open: new plays have been produced or old ones revived fortnightly throughout each year, with the result that up to date the Birmingham Repertory Theatre has presented nearly 300 different plays and operas, many of them for the first time on any stage.'[12]

Thus, on the surface, the co-managers of the Festival, Jackson and Limbert appear as polar opposites in their attitudes towards theatre. Indeed, Jackson's many unflattering references to the role of the 'businessman' in English theatre of the early twentieth century foreshadow the tension which was to erupt in his later working partnership with Limbert. Some years prior to the Festival, in December 1922, Jackson expressed such criticism clearly:

> The businessman was not in the theatre for very long before he discovered what type of play brought him the biggest

[11] *Malvern Festival Book 1929*, p. 35.
[12] 'The Birmingham Repertory Theatre', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1929*, pp. 16-17 (p. 17).

> success. The public was on his side since he created directly for their tastes, the actor's natural desire to appeal in great roles was easily overcome, and as for the author, well it was not even necessary to put his name in the advertisement.[13]

These views were – with Limbert now as focus – repeated by Jackson following the failure of the joint endeavour, when in a letter to Shaw in 1948, Jackson described the events leading up to the establishment of the Festival. According to Jackson Limbert, startled at first at the proposition of a festival, agreed once feeling reassured that 'he would receive a very adequate rental rehearsal cut to allow him to use his Super Talkie machinery' and with the condition that 'all printing carried the phrase, "in association with"'.[14]

Previous scholarship on the Festival supports this image of Jackson and Limbert's nine years co-managing the Festival as a time in which – in accordance with Jackson's evaluation - the Festival struggled between a model emphasising financial profit and another insisting on the artistic quality of the productions with the latter presented as the superior and more praiseworthy model. For example, T. C. Kemp offered praise for Jackson while criticising Limbert as a businessman with little interest in theatre of supposed real artistic value. In a review of the activities of the Festival published in 1943 and thus prior to the final season of the Festival in 1949, Kemp wrote:

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[13] *An Address to Birmingham University Students*, The Library of Birmingham, MS 978, Box 26, p. 24.
[14] George Bernard Shaw, and Sir Barry Jackson, *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Barry Jackson*, ed. by L. W. Conolly (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 173 (6 April 1948).

> Mr. Limbert has announced that he intends to revive the Festival. Is Malvern to become a shop window for London, or is it to be a discriminating selection from the tested as well as the tried? Is it to be a festival or an exhibition? On its past achievements alone it stands as one of the brave imaginative gestures in the modern English theatre, and the debt to its founder, Sir Barry Jackson, is admitted by all who have shared in the delight offered by a week's playgoing in the shadow of the ancient hills.[15]

Similarly, Vivian Elliot presented a glorified image of the years in which Jackson was involved with the Festival as she insisted:

> Although Shaw dominated the Malvern limelight, it was Sir Barry's festival, he setting its format, style, and tone. He brought his many famous friends to Malvern to take part in its events. Their presence on the street corners, at garden parties, by the pool, on the Hills and terraces, or in the theatre itself gave a very special magical quality to the place, not to be duplicated elsewhere.[16]

Furthermore, while Elliot discusses the financial struggles of the Festival, she identifies the first few seasons as an 'artistic' and 'social'[17] success largely due to the policies of Jackson whom she praises as a 'visionary'.[18]

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[15] Kemp, p. 37.
[16] Elliot, p. 216.
[17] Elliot, p. 198
[18] Elliot, p. 212.

This absolute praise offered to Jackson for his work in the Festival has been undermined as a result of the late twentieth-century emergence of scholarship which sought to redefine the manner in which theatre activity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is validated and praised. This scholarship has questioned the hierarchy between that which Mayer identifies as the 'popular' and the 'aesthetic'.[19] Mayer undermines this hierarchy through his work on western popular theatre in order to extend the parameters for research into drama beyond the playscript to also include popular forms of performance as he argues that we must 'look for evidence other than the script and that we recognise tests other than the aesthetic for the existence and viability of dramatic occasions'.[20] Similarly, Booth emphasises the significance of popular theatre in his 1991 evaluation of Victorian theatre audiences as he reflects on the lack of critical attention offered to the work of theatres in London's East End. Booth insists that the understanding of modern theatre historians of Victorian theatre is in fact dependent on the observations of middle-class writers who considered the popular theatre of the East End with its appeal to the working class as possessing little significance for the West End vision of theatre as constructed by the same writers and according to their middle-class points of view. However, according to Booth, there is no correlation between this lack of academic understanding of East End theatrical activity and the significance of such performances as he argues: 'The life of the Victorian urban theatre in poorer districts, carried on though it was in critical

[19] 'Towards a Definition of Popular Theatre', in *Western Popular Theatre*, ed. by David Mayer and Kenneth Richard (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1977), pp. 257-77 (p. 257).
[20] Mayer, p.276.

darkness, was extraordinarily vigorous and not the less interesting and significant for being a manifestation of popular taste and working-class culture.'[21] Finally, Mazer uses such scholarship to argue that 'theatre activity is no longer valid solely on the basis of its canonical value as "literature"' and is instead 'most culturally and socially meaningful at its most popular'; as a result he concludes that supporters of the New Drama and the New Theatre in the early twentieth century failed 'both in reorganizing the structure of the theatre industry and in creating a theatre that could co-exist within the existing structures'.[22]

More recent scholarship including the work of Bratton and Tracy C. Davis extends such arguments and highlights the existence of an academic and institutional bias towards that which is identified as 'high' art and positioned on the opposite end of the spectrum from more popular forms of performance. In *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914*, Davis identifies a tendency both in Britain and America to categorise 'theatre with "enlightened" goals' as 'the "other" to commercialised entertainment'.[23] Bratton uses Davis' observation to also highlight a binary between 'high and low, elite art and the "the popular"' and argues that 'the British critical assumption is still that commercialised entertainment is the Other of the art of theatre' which according to Bratton ultimately influences 'current thinking'

[21] *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 5-6.
[22] Mazer, p. 210.
[23] *The Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 5.

surrounding the arts while interacting in significant ways with the historiography of theatre.[24]

Although much of this scholarship is concerned with nineteenth-century English theatre, the presence of this binary as discussed in academic discourse surrounding the performing arts is relevant to understanding and analysing events in Malvern during the interwar years. Once we acknowledge this academic bias towards 'high' art often characterised by a sense of austerity and in opposition towards more popular and thus commercially successful forms of performance, we are then able to re-evaluate and re-assess the development of the Festival. It is amid this new framework of assessing theatre activity that the internal conflicts in the management of the Malvern Festival acquire a more complex and multi-faceted nature than that which previous research into the Festival has depicted. As the following analysis of the correspondence demonstrates, the managers came into conflict over a range of issues such as the target audience, repertoire and marketing policies of the Festival. Amid such disagreements, a unanimous expression of academic praise for Jackson's pursuit of a festival for an exclusive audience and thus rejection of popular taste is now questionable; indeed, defining the Festival as a success during Jackson's management is also seen to be problematic. During its first nine seasons, while the Festival managed to present less well-known plays from a temporal spectrum of five hundred years and thus can be said to have offered an experimental repertoire, the Festival struggled financially and was able to sustain itself only as a result of

[24] *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 8.

Jackson's financial support.[25] Thus, in light of recent scholarship that has re-defined the parameters for the evaluation of the success of theatre activity, Jackson's management of the Festival is not altogether a story of his many accomplishments.

This correspondence demonstrates that regardless of Jackson's protestations to the contrary, his policies in managing the Festival were not just motivated by his artistic interests in drama and theatre. Indeed, at the heart of the conflicts between Jackson and Limbert which led to Jackson's departure from managing the Festival is a struggle for control and power. Unlike the model that Cochrane discusses, as referred to earlier, in which individuals leased and sub-leased theatres with little interest in artistic policies, Limbert was in fact involved, and actively sought to be so, in key decisions regarding the direction of the Festival much to the dismay of Jackson. As with Jackson's elitist organising policy of the Festival which this chapter argues is irreconcilable with the importance of financial stability in sustaining a theatrical venture, Jackson's pursuit of autonomous control in managing the Festival also proved problematic in Malvern as he failed to reconcile his views and opinions with the Council, the local people of Malvern and Limbert.

[25] To my knowledge, no figures or accounts of the financial records of the Festival remain. However, both the correspondence and the work of Elliot suggest that the Festival was struggling financially throughout its twelve seasons. Elliot writes that Jackson had lost 'considerable money' as 'presenting half a dozen different plays in a four week season simply did not pay' ('Genius Loci', p. 23.).

2.1. Conflicting Models

2.1.A. Audience

The conflicts between Limbert and Jackson began as early as the second season of the Festival in 1930. While the Malvern Festival was as I argued in Chapter One, strongly influenced by summer festivals in Europe, such as Bayreuth, its initial two-week duration was shorter than its European counterparts. The issue of the length of the Festival quickly became a point of disagreement between Limbert and representatives of the Birmingham Rep, as they disagreed over a date for the beginning of the Festival. In relation to bringing the Festival date forward, Limbert wrote in 1930:

> As a matter of fact, moving the Festival forward in effect a fortnight, is not in the least helpful to Malvern, i.e., the town is already full during the first fortnight in August -- it is during the third week in August that people begin to fall away from a Town's point of view, then the value of the Festival becomes much greater. August Bank Holiday will be an extremely difficult time for festival comers to find accommodation.[26]

Jackson's General Manager, Cyril Phillips, and through him Jackson, were not convinced and ultimately finalised their plans for beginning the Festival on 3 August, insisting that later in the month would be 'useless

[26] From Roy Limbert to Cyril Phillips, 27 October 1930, The Library of Birmingham, MS 978, Box 23. All the correspondence used are taken from the same location unless stated otherwise. Last names only will be employed after first reference.

for overseas visitors'.[27] Disagreements regarding the dates set for the Festival continued: in 1934, Limbert suggested an extension of the Festival to six weeks but the suggestion was not considered seriously by Jackson. Limbert wrote to Phillips:

> I feel this will not be the view of Sir Barry as, when in the course of conversation this morning, I ventured the opinion that the surprise of last years' festival was the success of the fourth week, he, in reply rather gave me the impression that he felt the success of that extra week was in the nature of perhaps chance or a fluke.
> I do NOT agree.[28]

Thus Limbert's justification for extending the Festival was based on its success, as he implied that interest in the Festival would justify its extension. As the plays performed at Malvern during the first week were repeated in the following weeks, the two weeks duration of the Festival resembled the short-run system practised by the Birmingham Rep while Limbert's emphasis on a longer-run system based on the demand for the plays can be seen to be more aligned with the policies pursued in London's West End. Furthermore, Limbert's emphasis on an extra week for the Festival reflected his interest in attracting a more general public in addition to the 'regular festival pilgrims': 'All through I fought for that extra week - as you know - being confident that the impetus of the early weeks with their regular Malvern Festival pilgrims bring forth a new and more general public for such later weeks as remain in the season.'[29] However as indicated in Phillips' earlier letter, Jackson was content with

[27] From Phillips to Limbert, 29 October 1930.
[28] From Limbert to Phillips, 22 October 1934.
[29] *Ibid*

the 'regular festival pilgrims', a large proportion of which were overseas visitors.

Limbert's interest in attracting a 'new' and 'more general public' to the Festival was also reflected in his marketing plans over which he again clashed with Jackson. Limbert regularly experienced difficulties in making announcements for the Festival and publishing publicity material. In December 1934, for example, he insisted on the significance of making early announcements regarding the plans for the 1935 season as he declared that: 'Meanwhile, quite a number of people, seeing no announcements concerning the Festival, are coming to the conclusion there is not going to be one'.[30] Limbert's struggle with Jackson and representatives of the Birmingham Rep regarding publicity resulted in Limbert calling for 'a policy of publicity' to be set in motion in 1935.[31] For Limbert, publicity was crucial as the Festival had suffered a reduction in bookings, and Limbert feared that the Festival was failing to attract new visitors: 'My real worry, as I have told you, is that the bookings we are receiving are, in the main, only from old patrons - there is little new blood'.[32] Jackson's rejection of 'flamboyant publicity' was also a feature of his management of the Birmingham Rep in which he maintained a 'defiantly austere artistic policy' which preceded all other concerns.[33] The plays performed at the Birmingham Rep were not expected to appeal to the wider public and thus did not require the form of publicity used by commercial theatres in London. Consequently, as Jackson and Limbert pursued different theatre models in their management of the Festival, their views on the significance of publicity

[30] From Limbert to Jackson, 13 December 1934.
[31] From Limbert to Jackson, 6 December 1934.
[32] From Limbert to Phillips, 5 June 1935.
[33] Cochrane, p. 70.

also diverged, with Limbert pursuing a more robust marketing policy in place of Jackson's lack of concern with advertising.

Limbert's emphasis on the need for a 'policy of publicity' reflected his desire to develop a festival which appealed to a larger and more general audience. However, Limbert's numerous reminders to Jackson regarding the static demographics of the Festival's audience and Jackson's lack of interest in any serious form of advertising for the Festival demonstrates little consideration dedicated to this issue on behalf of Jackson. Jackson's satisfaction with the 'regular Malvern Festival pilgrims' indicates his desire to maintain the audience of the Festival as an economically, socially and critically exclusive and selective group with little room for further expansion beyond that elite. This policy, which suggests an elitist outlook to the Festival's construction, as I have argued throughout this thesis, could only ever be a short-term plan for managing the Festival. The inability of a festival to nurture new generations of audiences, and its dependence on its already existing group of visitors would result in an uncertain future. This is especially relevant for a festival such as Malvern which required its audience to travel to the location of the Festival, and was thus affected by factors such as the age of its audience, their ability to travel long distances and their financial circumstances, and consequently could only expect a short time dedication to the Festival from its audience which is reflected in the reduction of bookings in later seasons as referred to by Limbert.

2.1.B. Repertoire

In addition to disagreements over the target audience of the Festival, Limbert and Jackson also clashed regarding its repertoire. For Limbert, one of the most significant attractions of the Festival was its connection

to Shaw, the premiere of whose plays almost guaranteed an interest in the Festival in the press. In 1934, and thus following the three seasons in which Jackson presented a range of lesser-known plays and only one play by Shaw, *Too True to be Good*, Limbert expressed his delight at the prospect of the Festival including three plays by Shaw, a production of *Fanny's First Play*, the English premiere of *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* and the world premiere of *The Millionairess*, as he insisted, 'here we stand on safe ground.'[34] Limbert's emphasis on the involvement of Shaw as a major contributor to the success of the Festival is also evident in Limbert's organisation of a film festival which accompanied the theatre festival from 1931 and began with the inclusion of Shaw's first talkie, *How he Lied to her Husband*, which was then followed by the premiere of a full length talkie of *Arms and the Man* in 1932. Furthermore, following Jackson's departure in 1937 and during his exclusive management of the Festival, Limbert attempted to revive the Festival's connection to Shaw which had gradually decreased over the previous seasons as Jackson placed a greater emphasis on providing a survey of English theatre than pursuing Shavian drama. In the book for the 1938 season, Limbert wrote: 'on another page is printed a list of all the plays performed at Malvern through successive festivals: eighteen of them come through the pen of Bernard Shaw to whom the Festival is dedicated in perpetuity'.[35] Thus during Limbert's time in management, a number of Shavian plays were staged as part of the Festival - a production of *Saint Joan* and the world premiere of *Geneva* in 1938, the world premiere of *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* in 1939 - a play which reappeared in the final 1949 season alongside *The Apple Cart* and the English premiere of *Buoyant Billions*.

[34] From Limbert to Jackson, 6 December 1934.
[35] Roy Limbert, 'The First Decade', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1938*, pp. 11-13 (p. 11).

Furthermore, Jackson and Limbert also disagreed on the Festival's emphasis on classical plays. In 1938, Limbert presented a repertoire solely composed of new plays with the intention of then transferring the productions to the West End. In the Festival Book for the 1938 season, Limbert outlined a change in direction for the Festival:

> Our fare this year will stand comparison with anything presented on previous occasions, but - above and beyond that - it constitutes a further landmark in the history of the Festival by its inclusion of five entirely new works. Hitherto while programmes have been Shavian, or chronological, or modern, they have never contained more than two plays not performed anywhere else.[36]

Thus this season of the Festival included world premieres of plays by contemporary writers such as J.B. Priestley (*Music at Night*), Lord Dunsday (*Alexander*), and James Bridie (*The Last Trump*) in addition to Shaw's *Geneva*. This was a policy which Jackson heavily criticised in a letter to Shaw written in 1948 as he claimed that the possibility of presenting a festival composed solely of new plays marked the end for the Festival: 'Directly I heard that Malvern - perhaps on Bridie's suggestion for he had proposed to me a festival devoted to six original plays - was to be turned into a shop-window for the possible exploitation of at least one play in the West End, I knew the end was in sight'.[37]

While Jackson indicated here that his disapproval of the new policies is based on distaste for the plays offered by the West End, at

[36] 'The First Decade', p. 11.
[37] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw,* p. 187 (19 June 1948).

the heart of such disagreements was a struggle for control over the Festival as Jackson attempted to retain the Festival's connection to the Birmingham Rep. For Jackson, the repertoire of the Festival was directly connected to his additional theatrical activities in Birmingham and London. Jackson's playhouses were interconnected and often plays from one theatre would reach others. Thus, while Jackson criticised Limbert for considering the potential for transferring Malvern productions to London playhouses when organising the Festival, Jackson himself was happy and willing to use the reception of plays in Malvern as an indication of their level of likely success elsewhere and ultimately transferred plays between Malvern, Birmingham and London. For instance, *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* by Rudolf Besier, premiered in the second season of the Festival in 1930, and was then transferred to Birmingham before reaching Jackson's Queen's Theatre in London for an extended run. Shaw's *The Apple* Cart, the attraction of the 1929 season as discussed in Chapter Two, was also performed in Birmingham before beginning its long run at the Queen's, which lasted for 285 performances, on 17 September 1929.[38] While some of the premieres at Malvern reached Birmingham and London, more often they were the premieres at Birmingham that were then transferred to other theatres: Trewin argues that 'Malvern joined London as another outlier for the Birmingham Repertory'.[39] A comparison of the repertoire of Malvern and the Birmingham Rep supports Trewin's statement, as plays such as *On the Rocks* (Shaw), *Like the Clandestine Marriage* (David Garrick and George Colman)*, Jane Eyre* (Helen Jerome), *The Brontes of Howarth Parsonage* (John Davison), and *Lady Precious Stream* (S. I. Hsiung) had

[38] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, p. 45.
[39] *The Birmingham Repertory Theatre* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), p. 100.

all been performed in the spring of 1936 in Birmingham before reaching Malvern that summer. Thus it is undeniable that Jackson benefited from such connections as he was able to transfer entire productions from one theatre to another.

2.2 A Struggle for Control

The struggle between Limbert and Jackson for control intensified following the 1935 season and finally led to Jackson ceasing his association with the Festival in 1937. Throughout their time working in partnership, Jackson and Limbert attempted to disassociate the Festival from each other's additional theatrical activities undertaken outside their involvement with the Festival. In 1934, for instance, Limbert expressed his concern for the Festival's dependence on the work of the Birmingham Rep in a letter to Phillips:

> In regard to your remarks concerning a West-End company, London producer and designer etc. -- it would be an excellent thing for the future of the Malvern Festival if this could be fixed, as you must know there has been great criticism the last two years of the fact that we are charging West-End prices for a company which has from time to time been referred to being Birmingham rather than London.[40]

In order to limit the Festival's connection to the Birmingham Rep, Limbert attempted to present Malvern and its theatre as the unifying and most significant factor in the identity of the Festival. As a result, Limbert established the Malvern Company; a repertory theatre company which rehearsed in the Malvern Theatre but

[40] From Limbert to Phillips, 5 June 1935.

toured towns around the country. From 1933, the Malvern Company appeared in the Festival books alongside the Birmingham Rep as a theatre company to which a few pages of the books were dedicated. In 1938, regarding the purpose of mentioning the Malvern Company in the Festival book, Limbert wrote: 'This note is included in the Festival book because visitors have often asked what happens in the theatre at other seasons of the year.'[41] Through mentioning of the company in the Festival books and raising interest in the theatre as a significant part of the Festival, Limbert attempted to distinguish the identity of the Festival from the Birmingham Rep as the production company responsible for the plays and emphasise the location of the Festival which would consequently strengthen his connections to the Festival.

Limbert was not alone in his attempts to gain extended control of the Festival. Throughout his time co-managing the Festival, Jackson complained regarding various inadequacies of the theatre as a venue for the Festival which according to Jackson presented considerable difficulties for his company when using the theatre. While these complaints are substantiated by the Ministry of Health's ultimatum in 1947 that the town must refurbish the theatre or cancel plans for any future festivals, the correspondence demonstrates that Jackson often used any issues with the theatre as a justification for his requests for autonomous control of the Festival.[42] Thus, underlying Jackson's concerns regarding the lack of ventilation or accommodation for scenery among other issues with the playhouse in Malvern, was his incessant need for sole authority in all matters regarding the Festival, and that sense of control necessitated Limbert's withdrawal from his duties.

[41] 'The Malvern Company', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1938*, p. 71.
[42] '£3,000 Expenditure on Theatre Sanctioned: Minimum Requirements for Festival Revival in 1948', *Malvern Gazette*, 11 October 1947, p. 1.

The most vivid example of Jackson's unhappiness with Limbert, and the rates charged for the theatre, is demonstrated in Jackson's letter to the Malvern District Council in 1936. In this letter, in which Jackson identified 'the financial aspect' and the 'comfort of the audience' (which included 'accommodation for scenery, properties and personnel connected with the stage') as obstacles to the success of the Festival, he also made indirect references to Limbert and his role. Firstly, Jackson insisted that while the Festival was bringing income to the town, he had suffered a loss of £800, and 'unless some very material readjustments of finance can be agreed upon, I do not propose to incur such a risk again'. Furthermore, Jackson also referred to the state of the theatre and its potential as a 'theatre for a dramatic festival of world-wide repute'. With this in mind, Jackson criticised the playhouse's lack of accommodation in addition to the comfort of the audience for which 'equally drastic improvements are essential.' Jackson's complaints about the building continued in 1936 as he eventually declared it inappropriate and beyond repair for his purpose. Jackson ended his letter by once again drawing attention to his financial loss and the gain of others from the Festival:

> In conclusion, the Festival having become more or less established, largely through the efforts of myself and my staff, I feel that those who have benefited materially during the past years should be able to overcome what are insuperable difficulties in the way of my future

participation.[43]

Here, Jackson was referring to the town of Malvern which he believed had gained from the income brought by the Festival. Jackson's comments also indicate that Limbert as the lessee of the theatre had made a profit while Jackson had suffered a loss.

Jackson's assertion that only Limbert and the people of Malvern gained from the Festival is highly debatable for a number of reasons. Firstly as discussed earlier, Jackson often transported all scenery, costumes and props used in the performances at Malvern when transferring complete productions to other theatre venues in Birmingham and London. This is a point to which a member of the Malvern Council referred in 1948 when insisting that Jackson had made a profit of £50,000 after transferring *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* to London.[44] Furthermore, the correspondence demonstrates that Limbert was also affected when the Festival suffered a financial loss as he wrote to Jackson in 1935: 'Last week at Malvern was a success artistically, but financially - well the total receipts amounted to 88.15.7., which put me square on the company's and the Author's fees - but left me a little cold where orchestra theatre rent rates, light, heats, staff, front of house, stage staff, etc. ad nauseam were concerned!!'[45] Finally as the previous two chapters of this thesis have demonstrated, the Festival offered little potential for financial benefit to Malvern. This is supported by the debates in the town regarding the economic value of the Festival for Malvern, as discussed in the following section of this chapter, which ultimately led to the Council's refusal to offer a guarantee fund for any

[43] From Jackson to the Chairman of the Malvern District Council, 16 December 1936.
[44] '"People should be Told the Facts": Council and Capt. Limbert to Receive Deputation?', *Malvern Gazette*, 17 April 1948, p. 1.
[45] From Limbert to Jackson, 6 December 1934.

subsequent seasons following the Festival in 1949.

Jackson's insistence that financial loss was a major factor contributing to his uncertain future in Malvern is further undermined by events in 1936. Amid rising personal disputes and financial difficulties due to the losses suffered as a result of the 1936 season, a 1937 season of the Festival appeared uncertain. Different solutions were then suggested in order to make the event viable. Limbert offered a guarantee of £500 towards the 1937 season which Jackson rejected in a letter to W. J. C. Kendall:

> After a day's deliberation over the suggestions put forward on Monday at Mr Dyson Perrins', their impracticability becomes more and more apparent. If Limbert guarantees £500 towards next year's working he naturally wants some control over the expenditure, and admitting this, there is no reason why all individuals who it is proposed should augment this guarantee should not also wish to have some control. I see no end to the complications caused by this proceeding and I do not propose to associate myself with it.

Thus while Limbert offered to contribute to the expenses of the Festival, such guarantee was not accepted by Jackson as he felt that it would ultimately increase Limbert's control. Jackson then proposed that the Council 'approach the lessee and rent the theatre' which would in effect halt any direct dealings between the Festival and Limbert as Jackson would then rent the theatre from the Council. It is unclear as to how this would reduce the cost of the Festival but Jackson insisted:

> I assure you that the questions raised have had my careful

> thought and I see no way other than a drastic re-arrangement of terms with a fixed rental of the theatre, leaving me unhampered as to its conduct. If the Festival is to be continued, I must be given a greater rather than a more complicated control.[46]

Jackson's reasoning behind this solution was thus his desire for greater control in conducting the theatre, and this reasoning rather undermines his previous claims of suffering a loss at Malvern and suggests that underlying such claims was in fact a stronger desire for autonomous control over the Festival, with financial concerns at times merely used as an excuse. In a letter to Shaw in 1939 which immediately followed his abandonment of the Festival, Jackson vividly described his desire for complete control of the Festival:

> Through circumstances over which I had no control my daemon has been able to go his way with a loose rein. In consequence I should have imagined that those drawing some sort of income from the stage would have argued in this wise:- Here is a hare brained individual who only materialises once in many generations; let us be thankful he has happened in ours; let us exert every power to avoid awakening him from his dreams; although he is doing things for us today he may be able to accomplish even more tomorrow and as we are always wealthier through his sleep walkings it behoves us to be wary how we tread.[47]

[46] From Jackson to W. J. C. Kendall, 11 November 1936.
[47] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, p. 102 (13 March 1939).

Thus, Jackson required the absolute trust of others and according to this letter, he vainly considered this level of trust and support natural when dealing with an individual like himself.

Although Jackson's situation at Malvern was significantly different to his position at Birmingham where he had ultimate control and influence in all decisions made at the theatre, the troubles he experienced in Malvern were reminiscent of similar difficulties in Birmingham during the 1930s. As we have already seen in Chapter One, Jackson threatened to close the theatre in 1924 due to financial troubles which signified a lack of sufficient public interest in the work of the theatre. While this issue was resolved through the efforts of the Birmingham Civic Society and Jackson continued his work, the same debates reappeared in 1934 as Jackson announced that he was unwilling to present an autumn season. In the story of what led up to Jackson's announcement, it is possible to identify striking similarities between the situation in Birmingham and the difficulties which this chapter has explored between Jackson and Limbert in Malvern.

Prior to Jackson's announcement, Emile Littler had taken over as manager from Bache Matthews in 1931. Like Limbert, Littler also introduced policies which were designed to attract a wider public to the theatre. He reduced ticket prices, brightened up the printed programmes making them yellow and green, redecorated the auditorium from cream and brown to a cloth of gold, brought the currently concealed orchestra out in the open and emphasised that entertainment as well as edification was a factor in selecting plays.[48] Thus as in Malvern, in Birmingham also Jackson was confronted with a drastically different attitude to managing the theatre to that of his own approach as Littler, like Limbert, placed a much greater emphasis on the commercial

[48] Trewin, p. 104.

success of the theatre opposed to Jackson's emphasis on the aesthetic value of the productions. Despite the changes introduced by Littler, however, by 1934 Jackson was still unhappy with the level of interest demonstrated towards the work of the Birmingham Rep and thus announced his plans to close this theatre. Jackson's health (he had undergone an operation the previous year), his commitments in Malvern and the financial loss he continued to suffer in Birmingham cast a shadow over the future of the Birmingham Rep. This opened up a debate in Birmingham, where those supporting the theatre emphasised its cultural value for the city while the opposition who viewed the Birmingham Rep as a 'rich man's hobby' reintroduced 'old arguments' regarding 'coteries and commercialism'.[49] Thus the opposition considered the theatre as an elitist venture which consciously only targeted the financially affluent and presented a repertoire appealing to a distinct minority. Eventually, and as a result of the efforts of the Civic Society under its Chairman, Sir Gilbert Barling, the Birmingham Rep was transferred to a board of trustees in 1935. It, however, continued to be run on the principles dictated by Jackson during his lifetime out of deference for the founder.[50] Thus, events in Malvern were in many ways a repetition of Jackson's experiences in Birmingham as he also battled with a lack of public support in regards to some of his policies and encountered financial deficits during his management of the Birmingham Rep.

While in Birmingham Jackson eventually reached a compromise with the city and its people, in Malvern the conflicts ensued and resulted in his departure from the Festival in 1937. While Jackson and Limbert eventually reached an agreement regarding the Festival ahead of the

[49] Kemp, pp. 56-57
[50] Kemp, p. 57.

1937 season based on a fixed rent of £1600 paid to the theatre, Jackson continued in his pursuit for increasing his control of the venue of the Festival as he suggested purchasing the lease for the theatre from Limbert and insisted, 'If this were possible, even with their charge it's quite conceivable that the Festival could be run without any interference and possibly at a profit.'[51] Consequently while the profit made by the Festival is only a possibility, it was more significant that the Festival was run without interference and Jackson was granted complete control. Nonetheless, Limbert rejected this offer and insisted that the price for the lease was beyond any amount Jackson was prepared to pay.[52] In June 1937, Limbert wrote of his 'regret' at Jackson's decision to not use the Malvern Theatre. He continued by expressing his desire to 'record in writing' his offer 'to consider the question of alteration and/or reconstruction to the present Malvern Theatre', to which Jackson had replied by insisting that 'he did not consider it possible to make such alterations to the Malvern Theatre as would commend its suitability to him for future Malvern Festivals that he might be interested in'.[53] While Limbert eventually agreed to meet Jackson's conditions regarding the refurbishment of the theatre, by then Jackson had decided against continuing his cooperation with Limbert and would no longer consider terms for a new deal.

3. A Post-War Festival

Despite Limbert's changes in policy in presenting new plays, the Festival continued to struggle to attract sufficient public interest and the prospect of a revival of the Festival following the end of the war in 1945

[51] From Jackson to Limbert, 19 November 1936.
[52] From Limbert to Jackson, 31 May 1937.
[53] From Limbert to Norton [first name is not specified in the letter], 9 June 1937.

was met with resistance in Malvern both from local residents and members of the Malvern Council. While compared to some of Jackson's lesser-well know classics, Shaw's work provided a financially safer option, Shaw's later plays were also far from becoming box office hits. This is the case beyond Malvern: as Conolly notes, in November 1948 the authorities in Stratford refused to allow Limbert to produce *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* at the Memorial Theatre, insisting that they did not believe Shaw could attract audiences and thus preferred 'lighter plays' in the theatrical off-season.[54] This was important because, as with the circumstances in which the Festival was initially established, amid difficult economic conditions for Malvern following the war the Malvern Council were understandably concerned to debate the possible financial consequences of the revival of the Festival for the town. The situation for supporters of the Festival was made exceptionally difficult as the Ministry of Health demanded that refurbishments valued at £25,000 be made to the theatre ahead of any potential future seasons of the Festival. As a result, once again the value of the Festival to the everyday lives of the people of Malvern was at the forefront of the debates, and in 1947 a member of the council, G. T. Baldwin insisted seventy per cent of the town were against the Festival and that 'in this time of national emergency better use should be found for timber, steel and labour'.[55] Shaw directly entered such debates when he wrote in 1948 condemning the attitudes of the people of Malvern towards theatre in a similar tone to his previous speeches regarding theatre in London: 'Are the citizens going to throw it away just to appease those ratepayers who are too small-minded to appreciate its value, as they do that of American

[54] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw,* p. 189.
[55] 'Festival Theatre Improvements: £12,440 Scheme May Get Ministry Sanctions', *Malvern Gazette*, 8 November 1947, p. 1.

cinema films and hares?'[56]

In a time in which Shaw struggled to see his works staged and as the prospect of public funding seemed unlikely, Shaw attempted to mediate between Jackson and Limbert in order to secure the revival of the Festival. In June 1948, Shaw wrote to Jackson: 'What would suit me personally would be you putting down the £13,000 to repair the Malvern theatre, and resume the Festival there.'[57] However, Jackson refused Shaw's many requests, based on his experiences with the Malvern Council and Limbert: 'Nothing but complete demolition and re-building will ever make the place worthy of the seed we sowed together. Even if this gigantic task were achieved, the question of control would arise and this would be attended with all the thorns and dangers […] associated with the job.'[58]

Jackson's response to Shaw was not only caused by his experiences in Malvern but also reflected his time as Director of the Festivals in Stratford as in this new post he was experiencing similar difficulties to those he had battled in Malvern the previous decade. In Stratford, Jackson pursued policies comparable with those he established at Malvern. He began as Director of the Festivals in 1946 but was soon also made Director of the Theatre which extended his control of events in Stratford as now in addition to the festival he was also responsible for the hire of the playhouse during winter.[59] Jackson then used his influence in Stratford to implement a series of changes to the direction and policies followed by the town's theatre. During his time as Director of Festivals, Jackson insisted on a young company and on the

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[56] 'G.B.S. Says "Wake up Malvern!"', *Malvern Gazette*, 3 April 1948, p. 1.
[57] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, p. 185 (16 June 1948).
[58] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, p. 186 (19 June 1948).
[59] Sally Beauman, *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 179.

'impossibility and undesirability of bringing stars to Stratford'. Moreover, in parallel with events in Malvern, Jackson also promoted an educational atmosphere in the festival through his contacts with academics such as Allardyce Nicoll.[60] Jackson also took risks with the productions as he involved young directors such as Peter Brook and Eric Cozier who were both regarded as 'adventurous' in their approach.[61] The combination of these policies left many both on the board at the theatre and the general public in Stratford unhappy with Jackson's management especially as during this time the theatre had suffered considerable financial losses. The locals in Stratford objected many of Jackson's policies including the increased seating prices for the performances and the fewer plays performed which they argued affected the livelihood of the hoteliers. Members of the board, on the other hand, were unhappy with Jackson's policies which they felt diverged from their vision of the theatre as a 'world-class and prestigious' playhouse.[62] Thus once again and as with events in Malvern, Jackson was struggling to reconcile his plans and ideas with those of his colleagues and the wider public and the commercial success of Jackson's approach played a significant role in these disputes. Similarly to Malvern, these conflicts ultimately resulted in Jackson's departure and he resigned in 1948 as he felt confident that his contract would not be renewed. Shaw's request for Jackson's support in Malvern thus came at an inopportune time: Jackson had suffered a similar outcome in his management at Stratford to his experiences in Malvern and as a result he refused Shaw's requests to re-enter a situation which promised a repeat of the problems with which by now he was all too familiar.

Despite the revival of the Malvern Festival in 1949 following the

[60] Beauman, p. 188.
[61] Beauman, p. 177.
[62] Beauman, p. 180.

Council's agreement to undertake the refurbishments necessary, by 1950, both models of funding the theatre – either through the Malvern Council or a private benefactor had failed. The Malvern Council was no longer prepared to offer a guarantee fund to the Festival and Shaw's efforts in securing Jackson's financial assistance had failed to produce any results.

Conclusion

As Jackson's guiding philosophy behind the Festival emulated the similar aims pursued by the SMNT, the success of the Malvern Festival in remaining as a permanent annual event was always in doubt. While the Festival was established outside London and thus away from the challenges surrounding the staging of experimental drama in the West End, apart from its new location the Festival pursued many similar policies to that of the preceding ventures in the capital on which it was based. As with Shaw's aims expressed in supporting the National Theatre movement, Jackson's organising policy of the Festival rejected popular appeal. The elitism present in Jackson's management of the Festival - established in the previous chapters - resulted in the Festival's lack of popularity amongst many of the local residents of Malvern. Furthermore, a festival which failed to present substantial financial profit for the town also struggled to gain the support of the Malvern Council, just as the SMNT struggled in gathering state funding for its plans.[63] The only remaining option for both ventures, of which Shaw was acutely aware, was the support of a private benefactor. However, as Jackson's involvement with the Festival demonstrated, the pursuit of such a model presented issues surrounding power and artistic control. Although the

[63] For instance, state funding for the National Theatre was debated in the House of Commons on 23 April 1913 (see Rosenthal pp. 19-20).

Malvern Festival was supposedly liberated from adhering to the vices of popular taste as outlined by its pioneers, it was instead constrained by the theatrical preferences of its financial benefactor, Jackson. Thus, on the one hand, the aims of figures such as Shaw and Jackson in changing the organisation of theatre in England in the early twentieth century is praiseworthy for its rejection of the influence of capitalism on theatre. However, the model which such figures presented as a potential replacement was scarcely unproblematic.

In addition to re-evaluating the history of the Festival through the correspondence between its managers, this chapter also provided a re-assessment of the nature of the involvement of the three central figures of the Festival - Jackson, Limbert and Shaw - with this venture. In 1948 in a letter to Shaw, Jackson insisted that the Festival had resulted in 'the association of two individuals by nature as remote from each other as Uranus and Earth'.[64] However, the involvement of both Jackson and Shaw with the Festival indicates many similarities between these two individuals and Limbert. Jackson denied any financial gains made through his management of the Festival; however, it is undeniable that the possibility of transferring complete productions from Malvern to Birmingham and later London presented a lucrative financial proposition. Similarly, for Shaw, the Festival also presented opportunities for personal gain as it provided a platform for the performance of his later plays at a time in which Shaw was struggling to stage his works. Thus, in accordance with his views as expressed in the 1890s that 'as a prudent man, I always make friends with able desperadoes, knowing that they will seize the citadel when the present garrison retires', Shaw found it worthwhile to work with both Jackson and Limbert for the

[64] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, p. 173 (6 April 1948).

opportunities which they could offer in providing venues for his plays.[65] Jackson and Shaw's emphasis on their involvement with the Festival as purely based on a selfless interest in theatre, as the correspondence demonstrates, at times fails to correlate with the reality of the Malvern Festival. This reflects the status of the Festival as both an artistic and a business venture. The discourse of finance and economic profit is central to the organisation of theatre as a commercial enterprise. Thus, although Jackson and Shaw emphasised their rejection of any personal interest in theatre, as the correspondence demonstrates, they both often engaged in the same discourse they rejected. Consequently, their rejection of financial interest in theatre was unrealistic both for its failure to sustain the Festival and because Shaw and Jackson were in fact often also engaged in pursuing financial profit despite their denunciation of the figure of the supposedly opportunistic businessman in theatre.

While as this chapter demonstrated, both Jackson and Limbert struggled to generate sufficient public interest in the Festival to justify its existence, the Malvern Festival did achieve a valuable success, and lasting legacy, through the opportunities which it provided Shaw for writing and staging some of his most experimental work. In the following chapter of this thesis, I explore a number of Shaw's later plays which were performed in Malvern in order to argue that the existence of a festival ready to perform any new Shaw play with the involvement of well-known and experienced theatre makers provided the incentive Shaw required for writing these avant-garde plays. Thus as a result of the valuable gains made to Shaw's career as a playwright by the Festival, Shaw campaigned vigorously for the survival of the Malvern

[65] George Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties: Vol II* (London: Constable, 1932), pp. 19-20.

Festival.

Chapter V: The Legacy of the Malvern Festival

Introduction

Between 1929 and 1949, Shaw wrote and completed thirteen plays, nine of which were produced at Malvern.[1] Some of these were world premieres (*Geneva* (1938) and In *Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939)), whilst others were English premieres (*The Apple Cart* (1929), *Too True to be Good* (1932), *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1935) and *Buoyant Billions* (1949)), and in the case of *The Millionairess* and *On the Rocks*, although the productions in Malvern were not premieres, these performances were still amongst the first occasions on which these works were staged.[2] Together these plays, which represent the latter part of Shaw's career as a playwright, are some of Shaw's most neglected works both in terms of critical reception and the frequency with which they are revived. Like the two performances examined in Chapters Two and Three and as explained in the introduction to this thesis, in the reviews immediately following the productions in Malvern and much of the subsequent criticism, the critical reception of the plays was largely negative; the plays are often criticised for lacking form, adequate characterisation and a clear narrative and message. Furthermore, at least in England, these plays are rarely revived.

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[1] The plays not produced at Malvern are *Village Wooing*, *The Six of Calais*, *Cymbeline Refinished* and *Farfetched Fables*. These plays also feature some of the techniques Shaw uses in other plays of this period performed at Malvern. For instance *Village Wooing*, has a similar focus on discussion to the plays considered in this chapter, revolving around three separate conversations between two figures only identified as A and Z. Furthermore, In *The Six of Calais*, as with *In Good King*, Shaw subverts commonly accepted historical narratives as he reveals his version of the Siege of Calais in 1346.

[2] *Shakes versus Shav* was not officially part of the 1949 season of the Festival. However, as this chapter will demonstrate it was performed during this twelfth season of the Festival and was created as a direct result of Shaw's involvement with Malvern.

This chapter argues that this latter part of Shaw's career requires a re-assessment. In *On Late Style*, Edward Said discusses 'artistic lateness' not as late works which 'crown a lifetime of aesthetic endeavour' demonstrating 'harmony and resolution' but as a style characterised by 'intransigence, difficulty and unresolved contradiction'.[3] It is this lateness in which Said is deeply interested as he argues that while such works may defy artistic conventions of the period in which they are written, they often anticipate the techniques used by future artists. For instance in the case of Beethoven's late style, Said explains that 'in a completely paradoxical way, Beethoven's immobilized and socially resistant final works are at the core of what is new in modern music'.[4] I argue that Shaw's late style can also be seen as an example of the form which Said explores as it is riddled with difficulty, characterised by a lack of harmony and resolution and often a complete breakdown in communication as Shaw defies the theatrical conventions of his time in refusing to provide clear narratives and characterisation. These later plays, however, can be seen to be some of Shaw's most avant-garde work, foreshadowing some of the techniques used by later playwrights. Shaw's use of fragmented narration and characterisation, his refiguring of conventional forms and genres and his refusal to present clear resolutions to the plays anticipate the techniques used by future playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and other absurdist writers later in the century, as well as Bertolt Brecht.

I further argue that, although as I have shown in Chapter Three, the Malvern Festival was far from the ideal platform that Shaw desired for the performance of his works, the Malvern Festival made crucial contributions in bringing to life Shaw's new aesthetic and artistic

[3] *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2006), p. 7.
[4] Said, p. 13.

concerns as expressed in these later plays. As the following analysis of the productions in Malvern demonstrates, it was the existence of a festival ready to perform any new Shaw play, with the further potential for transfers to and runs in other regional theatres and London which allowed Shaw the freedom to experiment with form and new techniques. Despite Shaw's criticism of the productions accompanying his plays in the Festival, as explained in Chapter Three, Shaw was often optimistic regarding the production of his own plays as part of the Festival. The Malvern Festival included the collaboration of well-known theatre makers such as H. K. Ayliff and Jackson who often worked closely with Shaw in preparing the performances. Consequently, the Festival guaranteed Shaw good quality productions which he was often able to also supervise. At a time when Shaw felt increasingly disillusioned by the state of playhouses in England, it was these qualities of the Festival which encouraged Shaw to experiment with his writing and produce his later plays. Thus, although as the previous chapters have demonstrated the Festival ultimately failed to sustain itself and remain as an annual event following its final season in 1949, it left behind a valuable legacy in terms of staging impressive productions of some of Shaw's most experimental work in addition to providing encouragement and incentive for Shaw to write these later plays.

This chapter begins with an analysis of Shaw's activities in the decade prior to his arrival in Malvern. This section argues that during this period as Shaw began to experiment with his dramatic techniques and form to produce works such as *Heartbreak House* and *Back to Methuselah*, he struggled with finding venues willing or able to produce such plays in England. The following sections will then analyse three plays from the period of the Malvern Festival, *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1935), *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939)

and *Shakes versus Shav* (1949). As I have already discussed *The Apple Cart* and *Too True to be Good,* as representative productions in the earlier seasons of the Festival, in chapters Two and Three of the thesis respectively, I have selected these other three plays which belong to different seasons of the Festival to discuss in this chapter in order to allow for a detailed analysis of each play. Nonetheless, many of the characteristics I have thus far highlighted and will continue to emphasise in relation to these specific three plays are applicable to the rest of Shaw's late oeuvre.

From the analysis of the plays, a series of themes emerge in regards to the contributions made by the Festival to the latter part of Shaw's career. As my examination of the context of the Malvern productions will demonstrate, the Festival often included the participation of an impressive list of performers and theatre makers involved in staging the plays. Furthermore, the performances in Malvern attracted Shaw enthusiasts who waited with anticipation for any new Shaw play regardless of its reception outside Malvern, and are reported to have responded with enthusiasm for the Shavian drama offered. Finally, Shaw was directly involved with producing the productions and was thus able to influence the decisions made in order to implement his artistic vision on stage. Limbert and Jackson then supported Shaw's input in directing regardless of the plays' potential for financial success. These factors combined to form an opportunity for Shaw to experiment with his dramatic techniques as the close analysis of the plays presented in this chapter aims to demonstrate.

1. Shaw Prior to Malvern (1919-1929)

As Chapter Three argued, the decade prior to Shaw's arrival in Malvern was a relatively unproductive time for Shaw in terms of producing new

plays. This was a period in which Shaw wrote only three major works (*Heartbreak House*, *Back to Methuselah* and *Saint Joan*), a much smaller number of plays compared to the previous decade in which he wrote fourteen. Instead during this decade he immersed himself in politics and produced the 463-page long *The Intelligent Women's Guide to Socialism*. Shaw's increasing interest in and focus on politics during this time was not only a result of rising political tension across Europe but is also an indication of Shaw's increasing dissatisfaction with English theatre in this period as highlighted in the early chapters of this thesis. In the plays of this decade, Shaw diverged from his earlier realism as depicted in plays such as *Pygmalion* and began experimenting with form. In *Heartbreak House*, first presented on 10 November 1920 by the New York Theatre Guild at the Garrick Theatre, Shaw abandons his earlier use of realism. This play begins in a room unusually 'built so as to resemble the after part of an old-fashioned high-pooped ship' before gradually losing all sense of reality and ultimately, in a manner that anticipates the geographical instability of Sarah Kane's *Blasted*, entering that which resembles a war zone.[5] Shaw followed *Heartbreak House* with his cycle play *Back to Methuselah* which begins in the Garden of Eden and concludes in 31,920 A.D. The various parts of *Back to Methuselah* received their world premiere between February and March 1922 at the Garrick Theatre in New York and in productions by the New York Theatre Guild. It was ultimately Jackson and his Birmingham Rep who produced *Back to Methuselah* for its European premiere in Birmingham in October 1923 much to Shaw's delight and surprise as explained in Chapter One. Shaw's surprise at Jackson's interest in *Back to Methuselah* demonstrates that as Shaw's work became increasingly

[5] *Heartbreak House*, in *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1952), pp. 758-803 (p. 758).

experimental, he was sceptical towards the possibility of staging such plays in England. It was the Birmingham Rep and Jackson's enthusiasm for Shaw which resulted in *Back to Methuselah's* premiere in England, a pattern which was emulated during the Malvern Festival.

In an article published in the *New York Herald Tribune* in November 1926, Shaw further explained his new aesthetic vision for the theatre and his difficulties in realising such plans in England. This article reflects Shaw's views on constructing the playhouses of the future which according to Shaw would also affect the type of plays written and performed. Shaw depicted a theatre which demonstrates an amalgamation of influences from the early modern stage, the stage used in a circus and the cinema to produce a playhouse which rejects nineteenth-century conventions and resembles a theatre-in-the-round equipped with the latest modern technology:

> The auditorium must combine the optics and acoustics of a first-rate lecture theatre and a first-rate circus. There must be a forestage extending on occasion to the occupation of all the floor level (what is called the ring in an equestrian circus), and the backstage must be easily curtained off and provided with modern machinery capable of doing its work noiselessly whilst the play is proceeding on the forestage.[6]

According to Shaw this 'all-dominating stage' must be constructed in such a manner as to allow the playwright to write plays which reject the conventional unity of place and produce works which incorporate 'rapid succession of scenes' if the theatre is to compete with the cinema for

[6] 'Playhouses and Plays', *New York Herald Tribune*, 14 November 1926, quoted in *Shaw on Theatre*, ed. by E. J. West (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1958), pp. 177-83 (p. 181).

audiences.[7] As the following sections demonstrate, the Malvern Festival aided Shaw in incorporating some of his ideas, such as multiple changes in scenery, in his later plays. Amid Shaw's increasing disillusionment with theatres in England in terms of their ability to implement these ideas, the Malvern Festival with its dedication to Shaw and the involvement of influential theatre makers allowed Shaw the freedom to produce plays which reflected, at least in parts, his new vision.

2. *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*

As the Festival gradually moved away from its earlier focus on presenting less familiar classics, as part of Jackson's surveys of English drama from 1931 to 1933*, The Simpleton* received its English premiere as part of the seventh season of the Festival on 19 July 1935. This play, composed of a prologue in three scenes followed by two Acts, is set on an island which is identified as being part of the British Empire albeit in an unidentified time period. The play, which lacks a clear plot line, consists of multiple incidents concerning English visitors to the island (a male and female tourist, a young woman, an immigration officer and clerk and the clergyman, Iddy) and the island's native inhabitants (the priest and priestess, Pra and Prola respectively). The various incidents in the play include the clerk's suicide at the end of the first scene, a native pushing an emigration officer from a cliff in the second and the meeting of the tourists with Pra and Prola in the third scene. This meeting initiates the beginning of a eugenic experiment to infuse the flesh and spirit of the East and the West as the English and native characters form a family composed of six parents to produce four children who emerge in Act I. The play ends with the arrival of an angel and the beginning of

[7] 'Playhouses and Plays', p. 180.

Judgment Day where those who are unable to justify their existence simply disappear.

Prior to the production in Malvern, the play had already received its world premiere in New York at the Guild Theatre on 18 February 1935, to largely 'censorious' reviews.[8] Critics attacked *The Simpleton* for its structure, describing it as 'feeble' and confusing: 'If this report looks muddled and inconclusive, it is largely because those are the most flagrant infirmities of Mr Shaw's script'.[9] Shaw was also criticised for producing a play which according to some critics lacked action and only consisted of talk. Percy Hammond wrote in the *New York Herald Tribune* that: 'Like a dignified monkey, Mr. Shaw climbs his tree and pelts us with edifying coconuts', while the *New York Times* reported: 'Once Mr. Shaw was the most fulgurant writer of prose in English. Now his words are for the most part automatic and prattling. Words cease to have meaning in theatre when they come in a flood'. Furthermore, the critics were also unimpressed with the quality of the production with the correspondent for the *New York Times* insisting that the majority of the roles were 'sententiously played'.[10] Shaw was equally dissatisfied with the production as in March 1935 he sent photographs of the performance to Jackson ahead of the production in Malvern and wrote: 'The dresses are frightfully wrong: the four [Indian deities] are simply nude cabaret dancers. The Guild did its very best, with pejorative results'. Ultimately, the run at the Guild Theatre was a 'flop' which only lasted for forty performances.[11]

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[8] 'Shaw's New Play: Mixed Reception in New York', *Manchester Guardian*, 20 February 1935, p. 9.
[9] Brookes Atkinson, 'The Play: Mr Shaw's "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles" Has World Premiere at Guild Theatre', *New York Times*, 19 February 1935, p. 27.
[10] Quoted in 'Shaw's New Play', p. 9.
[11] George Bernard Shaw and Sir Barry Jackson, *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and Barry Jackson,* ed.

It was amid this context of a largely negative reception to Shaw's new play and its production in New York that Jackson attempted an English premiere of *The Simpleton* in Malvern in 1935, the Festival's seventh season under the co-management of Jackson and Limbert. In this year, the Festival lasted for three weeks and presented a repertoire with a strong Shavian presence as half of the six plays produced were written by Shaw (*The Simpleton*, *Fanny's First Play* and *Misalliance*). Jackson had previously also considered a world premiere of *The Millionairess* for this season, however, as a suitable actress of whom Shaw approved was not secured for the Festival in time, *The Millionairess* eventually premiered on 4 January in German by the Burgtheater at the Akademie Theater, Vienna.[12] As with earlier productions such as *The Apple Cart*, Shaw was also directly involved with the Malvern production of *The Simpleton*. In contrast to the New York production of this play with which Shaw was unhappy, Shaw was enthusiastic about the upcoming festival performances as the *Observer* reported: 'Mr. Shaw, who has been in command at Malvern, was so pleased with a dress-rehearsal that took place early last week, that he decreed there should be no more rehearsal before the opening performance.'[13] Shaw's feelings regarding the production were a reflection of the work of the cast which included the young Stephen Murray in the role of Iddy, with Murray's performance being much praised by critics: 'The best thing about the sermon of *The Simpleton* judged as a piece of theatre, is the Simpleton himself […] Mr. Stephen

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by L. W. Conolly (London: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p. 75 (13 March 1935).

[12] The play was first performed in English on 7 March, 1936, by the McMahon Players at the King's Theatre, Melbourne. *The Millionairess* premiered in England on 7 November, 1936, in a production by the Matthew Forsyth Repertory Company at the De La Warre Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex.

[13] 'Dramatis Personae', *Observer*, 28 July 1935, p. 11.

Murray, a young actor of high promise, made a really good thing of the modest, frustrated curate'.[14]

Despite the impressive cast working on the production under Shaw's supervision, following the performance in Malvern, the English press proved equally critical of *The Simpleton* as the American critics of the world premiere in New York. This negative criticism revolved around the play's structure, ending and characterisation. Ivor Brown attacked the play's fragmented structure describing it as a 'shepherd's pie' when compared to Shaw's earlier play, *Fanny's First Play*, which was also staged as part of the Festival in 1935. Brown also criticised Shaw's characterisation in *The Simpleton* and insisted that 'Mr. Shaw once filled his theatre with people, now he writes moralities in which, as in the Medieval specimens, the characters are abstractions'.[15] Other reviews considered the play's ambiguous message and ending as its main weakness: 'But the play is strange because the social sermon which is expected to arrive wanders around so many points without coming decisively to any one'.[16] Ultimately, as a result of a lack of interest in the play following the performance in Malvern, Jackson was unable to transfer the production to London. Indeed, *The Simpleton* is one of Shaw's least revived plays and has only been staged in London at a Theatre Club and is yet to arrive in the West End.[17]

In contrast to these reviews of the Malvern production and much of the criticism on the play which followed, I want to argue that some of

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[14] Ivor Brown, 'The Week's Theatres: The Malvern Festival', *Observer*, 4 August 1935, p. 7.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] 'Mr. Shaw's New Play: The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles', *Manchester Guardian*, 30 July 1935, p. 10.
[17] T. F. Evans, 'The Later Shaw', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Christopher Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 240-48 (p. 246). This is perhaps surprising considering the play's resonance with today's debates about genetic engineering.

the techniques Shaw adopts in *The Simpleton* such as a fragmented structure and characterisation in addition to the play's ambiguous ending are in fact fundamental in highlighting the main concern at its centre which is the total uncertainty with which Shaw frames human existence in this play.[18] In the preface to *The Simpleton*, Shaw discusses his scepticism towards science and criticises the 'credulity' of those who have transferred their faith in religion to scientific discoveries: 'The shift of credulity from religious divination to scientific invention is very often a relapse from comparatively harmless romance to mischievous even murderous quackery'.[19] In this world where both science and religion, according to Shaw, must be viewed with scepticism, Shaw attempts to offer an 'up-to-date vision of judgment' which is strongly informed by his own eugenic enthusiasms:

> Hence the fable of *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*. In it I still retain the ancient fancy that the race will be brought

[18] Edmund Wilson describes *The Simpleton* as the 'only play of the author's which has ever struck me as silly' (*The Triple Thinker* (Middlesex: Pelican Books, 1962), p. 220). Eric Bentley argues that this play built on themes discussed in *Heartbreak House* but is inferior to its predecessor as it 'reduces the complex figures of *Heartbreak House* to allegorical symbols' (*Bernard Shaw* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1950), p. 163). Martin Meisel offers a brief but more positive analysis of the play in which he connects *The Simpleton* to Shaw's views on the state of the empire and his criticism of Utopias (*Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theatre* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963) pp. 423-27). T. F. Evans also briefly mentions *The Simpleton* in 'The Later Shaw' describing the play as 'odd' (p. 246) and one which has been 'seriously neglected' (p. 247). More in depth analyses of the play include Margery M. Morgan's analysis in *The Shavian Playground* (London: Methuen, 1972, pp. 286-302) and Rodelle Weintraub's 'Bernard Shaw's Fantasy Island: Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles' in which she identifies *The Simpleton* as a 'dream play' (*SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 17 (1997), 97-105). In recent scholarship, Matthew Yde considers *The Simpleton* in relation to Shaw's relationship with totalitarian politics and specifically the USSR (see both 'Shaw's Stalinist Allegory: The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles' in *Modern Drama*, 56.1 (Spring 2013), 19-37 and *Bernard Shaw and Totalitarianism* (London: Palgrave, 2013), pp. 173-82).

[19] 'The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles', in *The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw* (London: Paul Hamlyn Ltd, 1965), pp. 635-45 (p. 636).

> to judgment by a supernatural being, coming literally out of the blue; but his inquiry is not whether you believe in Tweedle-dum or Tweedledee but whether you are a social asset or nuisance and the penalty is liquidation.[20]

As often is the case with Shaw's prefaces, this is a simplistic description of the events in the play which conceals their ambiguity. While in the preface Shaw demonstrates optimism in his new vision and ability to offer an alternative explanation for the purpose of human existence, in the play he depicts an uncertain world and a sense of despair with which this uncertainty is accompanied. This is a world where both traditional and new structures for comprehending our environment are no longer applicable and where we must expect the unexpected at all times. Shaw, I argue, reflects this sense of uncertainty onto the structure of the play which, as a result defies nineteenth-century expectations and understanding of the shape and function of drama. Thus, the techniques used by Shaw in *The Simpleton* are not unintentional or signs of a failing and ageing mind but are, rather, integral to achieving its desired effect. As Alison L. Hopwood observes in relation to Shaw's late oeuvre which includes *The Simpleton*, to dismiss Shaw's techniques in these plays is easy only when 'grasp of reality is confused with naturalism, and control with familiarity of technique'.[21]

In 1937, and following the production in Malvern, Shaw wrote to William Armstrong at the Liverpool Rep in an attempt to persuade Armstrong to produce *The Simpleton*: 'It [*The Simpleton*] is a lovely

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20 'The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles', p. 642.
21 '"Too True to be Good": Prologue to Shaw's Later Plays', in *The Shaw Review*, 11.3 (September, 1968), 109-21 (p. 109).

play; and you can let yourself go on the production.'[22] Shaw's comments here reflect his complete disregard for many of the tenets of the well-made play when composing *The Simpleton* as Shaw 'let' himself 'go' to produce this, in his own words, 'ultra-fantastic oriental modern futurist play' which when staged well can result in lively and entertaining performances.[23] In *The Simpleton,* Shaw refuses to present a clear structure or line of narrative which presents a plot with a beginning, middle and conclusion. Instead Shaw adheres to his vision of a play with multiple scenes as the play's prologue, demonstrated by the Malvern production's 'slick manner of scene changing',[24] is composed of fast-paced self-contained episodes which possess little 'causal' relationship with one another.[25] For instance, the first scene concludes the story of the clerk presented in this section with his suicide; a suicide which is not mentioned again and bears little effect on the remainder of the play. Furthermore, in *The Simpleton*, Shaw offers little contextual information on the time and the geographic location in which the play is set. The stage directions only reveal that the play is set at a 'tropical port in the British Empire'[26], and that Act I occurs twenty years after the prologue and Act II takes place 'some years' later (p. 1233). In *The Simpleton*, the audience is abandoned in a setting where its conventional modes for understanding and analysing the world, such as spatial, temporal and

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[22] Quoted in Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw: The One Volume Definitive Edition* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 690. Shaw's letter failed to persuade Armstrong as Holroyd insists that in contrast to Malvern by then 'repertory theatres had settled into a routine of some dozen Shavian comedies, histories and pleasant plays'.
[23] Holroyd, p. 687.
[24] 'The Drama Festival in Being', *Malvern Gazette*, 3 August 1935, p. 6.
[25] Morgan, p. 290.
[26] *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, in *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams Press Limited, 1952), pp. 1220-47 (1220). Following citations will be provided in the text and in parentheses.

causal explanations, are undermined as there is little sense of the past, present and future and the relationships between them.

Thus as Shaw initially presents a utopian image of the Unexpected Isles, the audience is transported to a bizarre and exotic land filled with, as the island's title suggests, unexpected surprises. This was a sense of the play which the production in Malvern captured as the correspondent for the *Malvern Gazette* described the production as 'enormous fun'.[27] This was largely due to the costumes and sets used in the production. As Jackson insisted in July 1935 and in anticipation of the Festival in an interview quoted in the *Observer*: 'It (*The Simpleton*) is by no means an easy play, scenically, to get on the stage. The prologue itself demands three scenes - each more complicated than the other.'[28] As Jackson explained, the play requires complex scenery as it begins in a realistic setting in an office in scene one before transporting the audience to a 'grassy cliff top overhanging the sea' (p. 1222) in scene two and in the third scene, a 'shelf of rock' on a cliff forming an 'esplanade between the seas and a series of gigantic images of oriental deities in alcoves cut in the face of the wall of rock' (p. 1223). Thus while such scenic demands creates a potentially complicated production, as the correspondent for the *Malvern Gazette* implied when insisting that 'one trembles to think how this play might, with all its difficulties of production, be held up in the hands of inexperienced interpreters', it can also result in a picturesque and visually exciting performance.[29] Furthermore, in addition to the sets, the Malvern production used elaborate and exaggerated costumes. The correspondent for the *Malvern Gazette* praised the production's costumes and sets for their 'artistic

[27] 'The Drama Festival in Being', p. 6.
[28] 'The Malvern Festival: Barry Jackson's "Mixed Bag"', *Observer*, 14 July 1935, p. 13.
[29] 'The Drama Festival in Being', p. 6.

inventiveness' and described the costumes worn by the four youths and products of the eugenic experiment as 'cleverly got up like the figures on a Benares vase, or on a frieze from a Burmese temple.' The correspondent concluded the report by referring to the debt owed by Shaw to Jackson for the production: 'Mr. Shaw and his 'Simpleton' owe a big debt to Sir Barry Jackson and his Company which he will be the first to acknowledge.'[30]



Fig. 9. A scene from Act I of the Malvern production in 1935 depicting from left to right, Maya, Kanchin, Janga and Vashti. Taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1935*, p. 32

[30] 'The Drama Festival in Being', p. 6.

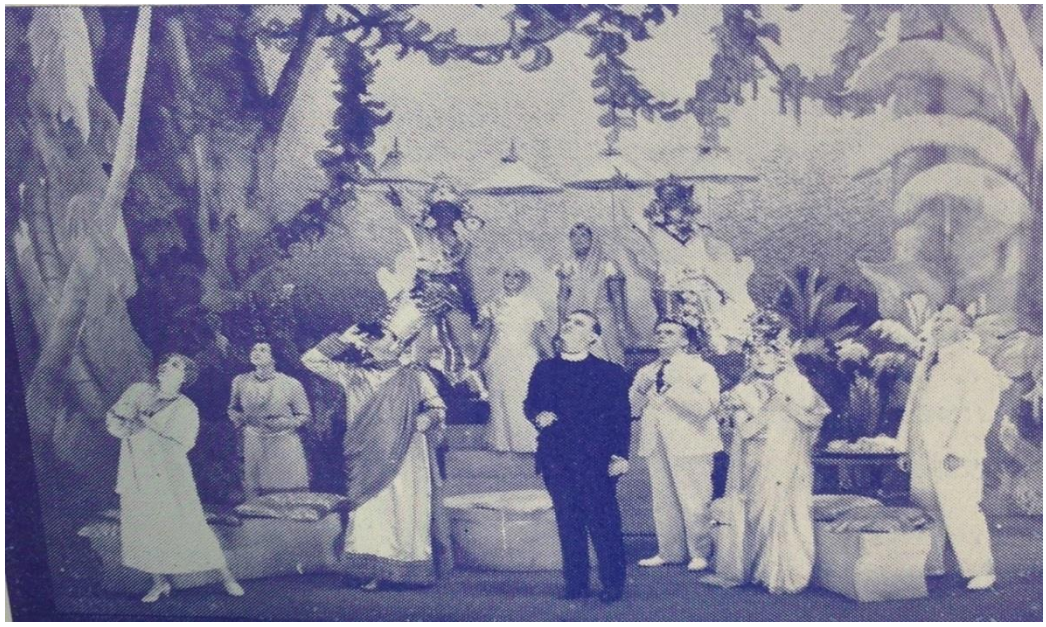


Fig. 10. A scene from Act II of the Malvern production in 1935. Taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1935*, p. 32.



Fig. 11. A scene from Act II of the Malvern production in 1935. Taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1935*, p. 32.

If these earlier events indicate that the island is a place which breeds tragedy, those expectations are also soon shattered. The third scene presents the island as a Shavian utopia where sensual and spiritual pleasures co-exist harmoniously and in unconventional ways. The Unexpected Island is a place where its inhabitants, like Shaw, are vegetarians (Pra reveals that he 'shall not offer' any meat as 'we don't eat it' (p. 1224)) and are deeply spiritual with a strong faith in the 'forces of nature' (p. 1224) rather than more conventional forms of religious practice. Indeed Shaw presents Christianity, which the Lady Tourist is propagating to the natives - asking them 'would you mind accepting and reading this little tract?' (p. 1225) - as grossly out of place and futile. The male and female English tourists are soon mesmerized by the natives and abandon their preaching to join the priest and priestess in a cave for an implied sexual liaison. Thus the spiritual guides of this island, where both the spirit and the body are seen to be nourished in abundance, with a 'feast of fruit and bread and soft drinks' seen alongside 'images of oriental deities' (p. 1223) in the stage directions, ironically use sex as an act of spiritual conversion. Following this encounter, the tourists conform to the native's way of life, with the audience later learning that the tourists have selected to remain on the island and participate in a polygamous marriage. Even the depressed emigration officer appears much happier following his contact with the priest in the previous scene as he emerges from the island's waters cleansed and with a new sense of perspective insisting: 'Theres nothing of the man you met this morning left except his skin and bones. You may regard me as to all intents and purposes born again' (p. 1224).

The mood of the play changes in the second half as the utopian images of the island thus far presented are gradually subverted. As a

result, this oriental island which initially appeared as an ideal new home for its English visitors is revealed to harbour its own hostilities and uncertainties. As Shaw dismantles the images of the island initially presented which offered optimism, he also undermines, as expressed in the preface, complete faith in religion and scientific experiments. In Act I, the Simpleton of the island, Iddy, arrives. Iddy is a character which embodies both the spiritual and the scientific. He is a clergyman, an aspect of his character emphasised in the Malvern production as Murray was dressed in 'curate's black'.[31] However, while Iddy is a curate, he knows very little of his Christian faith. He describes his religion as: 'Oh, to me it [Christianity] means everything that is good and lovely and kind and holy. I don't profess to go any further than that' (p. 1228). As Bernard F. Dukore highlights, this reflects the similar hollow and meaningless speeches which are delivered by the four youths, products of a eugenic experiment to join the East and the West by encouraging copulation between the English and the natives.[32]

Iddy is equally inadequate in the role he assumes in this scientific experiment conducted by the inhabitants. While the parents in the eugenic experiment use Iddy, an individual 'saturated with nitrogen from his cradle' (p. 1231), to provide the moral conscience the youths lack, as with Shaw's scepticism towards science expressed in the preface, by Act II, it is evident that this scientific experiment has also failed. Thus, Iddy's presence both as the island's pastor and a vital component of the scientific experiment has not produced any results and the four youths are far from perfect as their initial physical descriptions suggested. They are idealists who value talk over action and enjoy speech which is filled with vague and often meaningless slogans. Thus they present little value

[31] 'The Week's Theatres: The Malvern Festival', *Observer*, 4 August 1936, p. 7.
[32] *Shaw's Theatre* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), p. 225.

to the lives of those around them as Prola later orders the four to 'do anything that is dirty and grubby and smelly enough to show that you live in a real world and not in a fool's paradise' (p. 1239). Consequently in accordance with Shaw's views as expressed in the preface, through Iddy, Shaw demonstrates the inadequacies present both in a complete faith in Christianity or in the modern tendency to fully accept the scientific theories provided for explaining the world which we occupy.

The play's climax is the arrival of Judgment Day and the angel of death in Act II. As Morgan observes, however, Shaw presents this culmination of events in the play in an anti-climactic manner. Shaw's angel arrives in a manner which mocks more conventional representations of such figures in literature such as the angel in *The Hour Glass* by Shaw's contemporary W. B. Yeats. Yeats's angel is a majestic sight as it appears 'in a dress the colour of embers, and carrying a blossoming apple bough' while possessing a 'gilded halo about his head'.[33] Shaw's angel in *The Simpleton*, on the other hand, is so far removed from such glorified images that it is first mistaken by the island's inhabitants for an albatross. As it descends onto the island, the four youths wonder at the lack of correspondence between this seemingly quiet conclusion to life on earth and their apocalyptic images of Judgement Day which resemble those explained in the Bible.[34] Maya asks 'where are the seven wonders?', while Janga refers to the absence of 'the four horses' (p. 1241). Furthermore, the angel's exit is also equally unspectacular as it struggles to fly and requests a 'parapet to take off from' (p. 1241). Consequently, through the manner in which Shaw depicts this angel, he undermines the images provided by Christianity and other forms of organised religion of Judgement Day.

[33] *The Hour-Glass,* in *The Collected Plays of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1952), pp. 297-325 (p. 307).
[34] Morgan, pp. 299-300.

While the man in Yeats's *The Hour Glass* is compelled to repent following his encounter with the angel, the characters in Shaw's *The Simpleton* are left underwhelmed by the appearance of the angel and thus continue with their daily lives following its departure.

In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw wages a fierce attack on the well-made play through his characteristically Shavian representation of Ibsen. In this work, Shaw argues for the incorporation of discussion in the play until 'it so overspreads and interprets the action that it finally assimilates it'. As a result, according to Shaw, the modern playwright disregards the well-made play's concern with narrating events and developing a clear dramaturgy:

> The writer who practices the art of Ibsen therefore discards all the tricks of preparation, catastrophe, denouement, and so forth without thinking about it […] Never mislead an audience, was an old rule. But the new school will trick the spectator into forming a meanly false judgement, and then convict him of it in the next act, often to his grievous mortification.[35]

Shaw applies these principles, first discussed as early as 1891, in the manner in which he structures *The Simpleton* in 1935. In *The Simpleton* Shaw abandons the usual development of the play's narrative, concluding in a denouement, in favour of an ambiguous ending. However, this ambiguity of the ending and lack of a clear resolution can then be seen to undermine Shaw's own alternative vision of Judgement Day. Thus, on the one hand through his representation of Judgement

[35] *The Quintessence of Ibsenism: Now Completed Until the Death of Ibsen* (London: Constable and Company Ltd., 1929), p. 203.

Day in *The Simpleton*, Shaw undermines the predictions of the end of the world as presented by Christianity. However, Shaw also simultaneously renders the sense of optimism expressed in the preface in his image of a day in which the idle and useless are liquidated and thus the practice of eugenics ineffective. The four youths disappear and the audience is unsure which other characters will join them. As Daniel J. Leary highlights, Shaw's vision of Judgement Day reflects a sense of hollowness in human existence as humans and institutions simply 'dissolve' with no trace: 'At most such institutions and people were simply tropistic reactions to existing conditions. There is only the surface, only the appearance.'[36] Thus according to Shaw, images which Christianity and other forms of organised religion offer of the day of judgement are inaccurate; however, Shaw's alternative vision is also devoid of the optimism he describes in the preface. The sense of that which Leary describes as an 'open-ended Nothing'[37] present in the play and its descriptions of Judgement Day is deeply unsettling as the 'disappearance of most of the world's population foreshadows the possible disappearance of all'.[38]

The play concludes with the wisest characters in the play, Pra and Prola, lamenting this uncertainty in a monologue to the audience which is reminiscent of Aubrey's speech at the end of *Too True to be Good* which I discussed in Chapter Three. In *The Simpleton*, Shaw criticises conventional religion, however, the faith in eugenics and as a result scientific (or pseudo-scientific) experiments are also undermined. Thus as previous structures for understanding the world crumble around

[36] 'About Nothing in Shaw's "The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles"', in *Educational Theatre Journal*, 24.2 (May 1972), 139-48 (p. 146).
[37] Leary, p. 139.
[38] Leary, p. 141.

them, Pra and Prola reflect on the uncertainty of life as they discuss their failed experiment:

> PRA No. We are awaiting judgement here quite simply as a union of a madwoman with a fool.
>
> PROLA Who thought they had created four wonderful children. And who are now brought to judgement and convicted on having created nothing (p. 1246).

According to Prola, the most useful way to manage one's existence in this hostile world, in which according to the angel man satisfies his need for spectacle by creating atrocities, is to confront life as it comes: 'Remember: we are in the Unexpected Isles; and in the Unexpected Isles all plans fail […] We are not here to fulfil prophecies and fit ourselves into puzzles, but to wrestle with life as it comes. And it never comes as we expect it to come' (p. 1246). The attitudes of Pra and Prola as expressed in this scene might be seen to foreshadow Martin Esslin's assessment of the approach to life demonstrated in the type of drama he identifies as Theatre of the Absurd:

> It aims to shock its audience out of complacency, to bring it face to face with the harsh facts of the human situation as these writers see it. But the challenge behind this message is anything but one of despair. It is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is, in all its mystery and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly; precisely because

> there are no easy solutions to the mysteries of existence, because ultimately man is alone in a meaningless world.[39]

In the light of this analysis, the suicide of the clerk in scene one which initially appeared absurd through its combination of tragedy and comedy suddenly acquires a sense of dignity. The clerk, desperate and exhausted by events he fails to comprehend, takes his own life while ensuring that his surroundings are clean and his appearance presentable.

Thus as with future playwrights such as Beckett and Eugene Ionesco who would attempt to 'achieve a unity' between their themes including 'the senselessness of the human condition' and the form of their plays, Shaw incorporates his concern with the 'unexpected' nature of life into the techniques he uses in *The Simpleton*.[40] In this play, Shaw builds our expectations in terms of the content of the narrative in one scene only to shatter them in the next. Furthermore, he uses forms incongruent with the emotional charge of the events in the play, often combining tragedy with comedy. Shaw refuses to contextualize his characters with a sense of past and ultimately substitutes a clear resolution with a highly ambiguous ending. Consequently, in *The Simpleton*, Shaw frustrates the concerns of nineteenth-century naturalism and twentieth-century realism with providing a clear plot, characterisation and resolution. However, while the critics of the play in New York and London found the play shapeless, the playwright uses these techniques intentionally to reflect a world which, according to

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[39] 'Introduction', in *Absurd Drama* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1965), p. 23. Leary also draws attention to the similarities between Shaw's *The Simpleton* and the work of absurdist writers. For instance he compares Shaw's subversion of the audience's expectations regarding plot, motivation, action and genre to Ionesco's anti-theatre (p. 146).
[40] Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 24.

Shaw, also lacks meaning and is equally hostile to comprehension and analysis.

3. *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*

In Good King received its world premiere at the Malvern Festival to a 'crowded auditorium' on 13 August 1939.[41] This was the second season following Jackson's departure and as the Festival continued to perform Shaw's plays under the management of Limbert, *In Good King* was the second world premiere of a Shaw play presented at Malvern following the premiere of *Geneva* the previous year. Indeed, the performers from the Malvern production of *Geneva* re-appeared in *In Good King*. *The Times* reported in June 1939 that *Geneva* was to be withdrawn from its run at the Saville Theatre in order to allow the production's producer, Ayliff, time to prepare for the production of *In Good King* in which 'most members of the *Geneva* company are to appear'.[42] In the words of Ayliff, this was the sort of cast 'one dreams about' and 'the best cast ever taken to Malvern'.[43] The list of performers was certainly impressive as it included Irene Vanbrugh (Catherine of Braganza), by that time an established actress famous for her roles in Arthur Wing Pinero's plays such as Nina Jesson in the 1906 St James's production of *His House in Order*, Ernest Thesiger (Charles II), a regular at Malvern with roles including the microbe in the 1932 production of *Too True to be Good* in addition to a three year run as Bertram Tully in W. W. Ellis's *A Little Bit of Fluff* in London, and Yvonne Arnaud (Barbara) who was a well-known theatre and film actress having previously appeared in roles such as Mrs Pepys in James B. Fagan's *And So to Bed* (1926) on stage and a number

[41] 'Malvern Festival: Successful Second Week', *Malvern Gazette*, 19 August 1939, p. 3.
[42] 'Geneva to be Withdrawn', *The Times*, 3 June 1939, p. 10.
[43] 'The Malvern Festival: Mr. Shaw and Charles II', *Observer*, 30 July 1939, p. 9.

of films including *The Gay Adventure* (1936). The press greatly anticipated the new play and in July in an article discussing the forthcoming performances, the *Observer* reported that the production had already 'attracted overwhelming attention to itself' as a result of Shaw's 'world eminence'.[44] Shaw then used the Festival book to generate further interest in the play as according to Ivor Brown, Shaw's note in the book 'aroused curiosity' regarding Shaw's 'realistic treatment' of Charles opposed to the usual 'romantic picture'.[45]

Following the production in Malvern, the critical reception of *In Good King* was again mixed. In his report for the *Sunday Times*, James Agate wrote: *'In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, produced this afternoon at Malvern before a crowded house, and with enormous success, contains nothing to which the most conservative playgoer could refuse assent'.[46] As with reviews of *The Simpleton* mentioned above, however, other critics attacked *In Good King* for its supposed lack of theatricality and plot. The correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* described Shaw as 'bored with the sheer mechanic of writing a play for the stage' which according to the writer includes the 'craft of narrating events' and 'developing character in effective theatrical terms'; all of which Shaw's play supposedly failed to achieve. Furthermore, this critic also criticised the play for its lack of historical accuracy in proposing a meeting between Charles II, Isaac Newton, George Fox and Godfrey Kneller: 'Judged as a history lesson, which is what Mr. Shaw calls it in the programme, this play is preposterous. There is no proof and it is

[44] 'The Malvern Festival: Mr. Shaw and Charles II', p. 9.
[45] 'New Play by G.B.S.: Charles II from a Fresh Angle', *Observer*, 13 August 1939, p. 11.
[46] 'Notice', *Sunday Times*, 13 August 1939, quoted in *Shaw: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by T. F. Evans (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), 360-62 (p. 360).

very improbable that Charles II ever met George Fox the Quaker and that Fox ever met Sir Isaac Newton'.[47]

This concern with comparing the events in *In Good King* with their depiction in historical records is also evident in the critical writing on the play which has since followed the production in Malvern. In *Shaw and Isaac Newton*, Lord Keynes writes: 'With wild departures from known facts he [Shaw] describes Newton as he certainly was not in that year. But with prophetic insight into the possibilities of nature he gives us a picture which would not have been very unplausible thirty years later'.[48] Gale K. Larson, however, argues that Shaw's depiction of Charles II and other characters in the play is substantiated by historical records as he insists that Shaw's views were 'well corroborated by other writers on Charles II and his times'.[49] Matthew H. Wikander, on the other hand, in his study of Shaw's historical plays in which a brief discussion of *In Good King* is also included, argues that in his history plays, Shaw draws the audience's attention to the 'artificiality and arbitrariness of the kinds of historical narratives they tend uncritically to accept' and emphasises the potential in drama to present a 'more immediate truth'.[50]

I agree with Wikander's approach and argue that to attempt to attack or defend Shaw's use of history in *In Good King* is irrelevant to a play which is concerned with a deep sense of scepticism towards history as a discipline. In the subtitle of *In Good King*, Shaw presents a paradox as he identifies the play as 'a true history which never happened' and

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[47] A. D., 'The Malvern Festival: Mr. Shaw's History Lesson', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 August 1939, p. 11.
[48] 'G.B.S. and Isaac Newton', in *G.B.S. 90: Aspects of Bernard Shaw's Life and Work*, ed. by Stephen Winsten (London: Hutchinson, 1946), pp. 106-10 (p. 106).
[49] '"In Good King Charles's Golden Days: An Imaginative and Truthful History", in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 19 (1999), 149-59 (p. 149).
[50] 'Reinventing the History Play', in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, ed. by Innes, pp. 195-217 (p. 213).

thus positions history alongside fiction. In this play, Shaw presents any claims by historians to present a sense of a past reality as inaccurate and demonstrates that as with the artist, the historian also constructs narratives. Furthermore, Shaw undermines this preoccupation with the 'real' and defends fiction and specifically drama for offering what Roland Barthes would later describe in 'Discourse of History' as 'imaginary narratives', which according to Shaw possess the potential to present more valuable insights into life than supposedly historically accurate accounts.[51] *In Good King* requires a re-assessment as Shaw's dismissal of accepted historical understanding of the events described in the play is intentional and follows a clear purpose. Shaw's aim in this play is, not to accurately represent history, but rather to undermine the binary between history and fiction in which the former is associated with reality and the other with the imagination and with fiction considered as inferior to history.

In a manner which foreshadows the work of future playwrights, Shaw, in *In Good King*, fuses history and fiction on stage. As with *Top Girls* (1982) in which Caryl Churchill begins with an imaginary meeting between a collection of historical and fictional characters from different time periods and locations, in *In Good King* Shaw also presents a fictional gathering between a number of historical figures. For both Shaw and Churchill, the aim is not to offer a historically accurate account of the lives of the figures on stage but to instead use the characters to draw parallels with contemporary concepts and concerns. Both playwrights use their engagement with history to imply a sense of continuity between different time periods in their approach to key issues at the heart of the plays, female independence in *Top Girls* and

[51] Roland Barthes, 'Discourse of History', trans. by Stephen Bann, in *Comparative Criticism: A Year Book*, ed. by E. S. Shaffer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), III, pp. 3-21 (p. 7).

government and the qualities of a good ruler amongst other issues in *In Good King*. Thus both playwrights view the past through a deliberately distorting modern prism, as the characters in both texts are loosely connected to the time periods and locations to which they belong. For instance in *Top Girls*, although Churchill presents characters from a wide temporal and spatial spectrum such as Pope Joan from the ninth century and Lady Nijo, an Emperor's courtesan and later Buddhist nun, there is little in the playtext to differentiate the manner in which the characters speak. Furthermore, this sense of continuity between the different time periods is then further emphasised as the performers in Act I adopt the roles of the modern figures of the remainder of the play; characters that in ways parallel the historical figures presented in the beginning of the play. Shaw's depiction of the Restoration period is also devoid of historical detail as the characters' speech is modern and they also at times make references to future events. For instance as Brown indicated in a review of the play, prompted by the release of its first printed edition, Charles in his conversations with James set in 1680 is 'repeatedly and correctly outlining the history of the English crown for the next forty years'.[52] This is an aspect of the play which Ayliff clearly understood when preparing the Malvern production as the *Observer* reported in July 1939: 'The Caroline period often seems to induce a peculiar "stageyness" in dramatists who handle it. Mr. Ayliff says that Mr. Shaw has avoided this. "The style of its writing? - just good plain English; you don't notice particularly if it's modern or 'period.'"'[53] This outlook was then reflected in the set used for the production as other than the costumes of the characters on stage, there was little else to imply a particular time period. The production used a painted backdrop

[52] 'At the Play: In Good King Charles's Golden Days', *Observer*, 26 November 1939, p. 13.
[53] 'Dramatis Personae', *Observer*, 16 July 1939, p. 13.

of Cambridge (whose neo-classical architecture made it difficult for audiences to place in terms of a precise chronological setting) and the props on stage as suggested by Shaw's text were only a table, a few chairs and some bookshelves, none of which specifically connected the setting of the play to the Restoration period.[54]

In *In Good King*, Shaw implements his preoccupation with discussion which he first highlighted in *The Quintessence*, as he presents a play wholly composed of a series of debates. Through their multiple speeches, the characters offer and support their individual points of view on a variety of issues. The Malvern production used a checkerboard pattern on the floor, and as with a game of chess, each character made a move presenting their opinion before retreating to the background and allowing another figure on stage the opportunity to speak. Reviewers of the Malvern production condemned Shaw for this quality of the play as according to the correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* the performers were provided with little to remain occupied when not engaged in the debates: 'In his second [Act] he keeps two brilliant actresses, Miss Arnaud and Miss Beldon, sitting dumb throughout the conversazione of which the act is almost wholly composed of.'[55] In Shaw's fixation with thought and its depiction on stage, this was an on-going concern; as the following section will argue, Shaw eventually found a solution in his use of puppets in *Shakes versus Shav* at Malvern.

[54] This information is taken from a number of photos of the 1939 Malvern production held at the Malvern Library.
[55] 'The Malvern Festival: Mr. Shaw's History Lesson', p. 11.

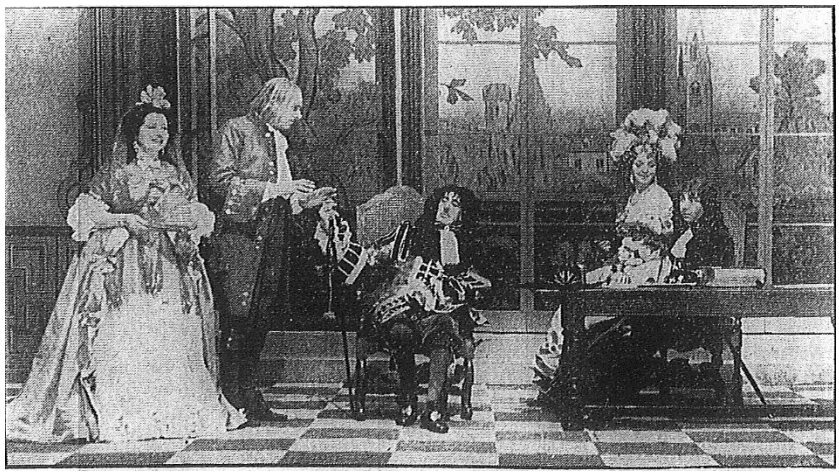


Fig. 12. A scene from the Malvern production in 1939. Taken from 'Malvern Festival: Successful second Week', p. 3

Shaw uses these speeches as a mode of exposition of character as he attempts to offer new interpretations of some of the historical figures depicted than those commonly found in historical narratives. For instance, in this play, Shaw demonstrates the type of opposition which the introduction of the female performer to the stage instigated in the Restoration period to offer a re-evaluation of the actress, Nell Gwyn. Mrs. Basham insists that: 'Mr. Shakespeare would have died of shame to see a woman on the stage. It is unnatural and wrong. Only the most abandoned woman would do such a thing'.[56] However, as Newton explains when he offers Nell praise for her 'remarkable mental powers', there is much to be admired in this actress: 'You repeat long parts from memory in the theatre. I could not do that' (p. 25). Furthermore, while ironically some of Charles's other mistresses such as Barbara are constantly engaged in melodramatic and exaggerated performances of emotions (at one point Barbara 'rises to fly at Nell' in rage (p. 28)), Nell is usually composed in her responses: 'He [Charles] talks to me about

[56] *In Good King Charles's Golden Days*, in *Last Plays*, ed. by Dan H. Laurence (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 7-75 (p. 23). Subsequent citations will be provided in the text and in parentheses.

everything, dear, because I let him get in a word occasionally, which is more than you do' (p. 27). Indeed, Shaw's re-evaluation of Nell is an aspect of the play which Eileen Beldon appears to have grasped in her performance of this character as the correspondent for the *Malvern Gazette* described Beldon as 'most convincing' but 'occasionally more refined than would have been expected'.[57]

In *In Good King*, Shaw acknowledges that his account is not historically accurate as judged by traditional accounts of past events but instead is an amalgamation of history and fiction with the lines between the two blurred. In the preface, Shaw explains his sense of the play's appeal: 'But when we turn from the sordid facts of Charles's reign, and his Solomonic polygamy, to what might have happened but did not, the situation becomes interesting and fresh' (p. 9). In Shaw's view, his play combines history and fiction to produce something more valuable than history in its contemporary usage is able to offer: 'Catherine of Braganza, his wife, has been made to appear as a nobody, and Castlemaine, his concubine, almost a great historical figure. When you have seen my play you will not make that mistake, and may therefore congratulate yourself on assisting at an act of historical justice' (p. 11).

Shaw's belief that fiction and thus imagined narratives possess the potential to reveal more valuable insights than historical accounts is also evident in his defence of theatre in this play. In *In Good King*, Shaw presents a direct correlation between the theatre and reality. In Act I, Shaw demonstrates the manner in which the performers base their performances on real life when Nell, responding to Barbara's request that she should leave Newton's house, claims: 'I stayed only because I wanted to see you in one of those tantrums of yours that Rowley so often tells me about. I might copy them on stage' (p. 27).

[57] 'Malvern Festival: Successful Second Week', p. 3.

In addition to the stage world infringing on and borrowing from the real world, Shaw reveals in the play that this relationship functions both ways as the lines between reality and the stage are blurred. A major concern for Shaw in *In Good King* is the act of performance as the play features multiple performances in which the characters address both the audience on and off stage. However, in addition to these direct representations of playhouse acting by Nell and Charles, other characters in the play also engage in performance in various ways. In response to Fox's criticism of the stage ('Now do you tell me that living men and women, created by God in His likeness and not in that of gibbering apes, can be bribed to utter such trash, and that others will pay to hear them do it when they will not enter a meeting house for a penny in the play to hear the words of God Himself?' (p. 50)), James highlights the similarities between the recitals presented by Charles and Nell and the speech used by priests: 'Is it worse than the fustian that passes the lips of the ranters in your conventicles?' (p. 50). James's attitude towards the clergy repeats Charles's earlier description of priests as 'mostly dull dogs' who 'with a little disguise and ritual[…]will pass as holy men with the ignorant' (p. 29). As Fox agrees that the 'preachers are a greater danger than the players' (p. 50), he undermines his earlier criticism of the actors for performing the words of the poet rather than the truth.

As with the clergy, Charles also engages in performance in his role as the King. In the last Act of the play which focuses on a conversation between Charles and his wife, Catherine, Charles explains his tendency to put on a façade in order to manipulate the wider public and maintain his position as the King of England. Shaw's depiction of Charles II in *In Good King* is thus reminiscent of King Magnus in *The Apple Cart*, discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Charles has lost the

battle that Magnus was fighting in *The Apple Cart* as following the restoration he acts only as a constitutional monarch with little power and influence. However, despite the protestations to the contrary expressed by his brother, James, in the previous Act, there is much wisdom and skill involved in maintaining this status amid politically tense times. Charles's success in saving his head, unlike his father, is a direct result of his ability to manipulate the public, as similar to Magnus, Charles is an able and wise man. In his conversation with Catherine, Charles explains: 'Why am I a popular King? Because I am a lazy fellow. I enjoy myself and let the people see me doing it, and leave things as they are, though things as they are will not bear thinking of by those who know what they are. That is what the people like. It is what they would do if they were kings' (p. 72). While Charles is aware of some of the broader issues with which England is confronted, however, he chooses to perform a constructed public persona in order to maintain the peace. This performance is fully equipped with an appropriate costume as at the end of the play, Catherine 'puts the wig on him [Charles]; then the hat' and declares: 'Now you look every inch a king' (p. 74).

Thus, despite Mrs. Basham's criticism of the female performer and Fox's dislike of playhouses, according to events in the play, performance is in many ways a useful and necessary aspect of life. Playacting is incorporated in many professions other than those associated with the theatre. However, as Louise explains, in contrast to religion, the value of drama is in its acknowledgement of its status as fiction in opposition to attitudes displayed by religious figures who insist on their authority and association with a higher truth: 'All the less harmful, monsieur. They are not meant to be taken seriously; and no one takes them so. But your Huguenot ranters pretend to be inspired: and foolish people are deluded

by them. And what sort of world would they make for us if they got the upper hand?' (p. 51). It is this concealment of the act of performance which has the potential to present dangerous consequences as it prevents the audience from critiquing that which is said. Drama on the other hand, allows the audience to analyse the events depicted on stage as the viewers are aware that which is displayed is fiction.

Shaw's interpretation of the relationship between history and fiction foreshadows the views of some postmodernist thinkers later in the century. In the 'Discourse of History', Barthes also questions whether history, as 'the narration of past events', is in the form of some 'specific trait' different from the mode of narration operating in 'imaginary narrative' such as those found in the epic, the novel and the drama. In Barthes' view, while our trust in history arises from a concern with the 'realistic effect' also found in specific genres such as the realist novel or documentary literature, a historical narrative is also an interpretation and a reading of an event rather than an accurate replica of a past reality as Barthes insists that the 'real is never any more than a meaning' which is revoked and subverted according to the needs of the society.[58] In *In Good King*, Shaw demonstrates a similar approach to history as he undermines the ability of historical narratives to accurately retrieve the past. It is amid this outlook on history which I argue that *In Good King* requires a re-evaluation.

4. *Shakes versus Shav*

Thus far this thesis, in its discussion of Shaw's later dramatic output, has demonstrated the Festival's contribution to the formation of these plays and argued that the Malvern Festival presented beneficial opportunity and circumstances for Shaw in writing some of his most

[58] Barthes, p. 18.

experimental work. However, in the case of *Shakes versus Shav*, Shaw's last play except for *Why She Would Not* published in 1950, the connection between the Festival and this piece is more direct. This play was shaped for and by Shaw's involvement with Malvern, as *Shakes versus Shav*, Shaw's first and only puppet play, was written at the request of Waldo Lanchester for a small scale production at his Lanchester Marionette Theatre based in Malvern. Furthermore, as its subject matter, the play focuses on the rivalry between Shaw and Shakespeare as two festival playwrights, the former associated with Malvern and the latter with Stratford.

Shaw's involvement with the Lanchester Marionette Theatre began a number of years prior to the production of *Shakes versus Shav* in 1949. Jackson opened the theatre in 1936 and during that season marionette shows were included in the Festival in the mornings, afternoons and evenings.[59] In 1937, a page of the Festival book was dedicated to Lanchester and his theatre with an image of Shaw alongside two marionettes.[60] This finally led to the collaboration between Shaw and Lanchester as the puppeteer sent figures of two puppets, Shakespeare and Shaw, requesting that Shaw supply a play for them. Thus, Lanchester, through providing the protagonists for Shaw's latest creation, directly influenced the subject of *Shakes versus Shav*. Furthermore, Lanchester also determined the length of the play specifying that it should last for ten minutes.[61] As a result, *Shakes versus Shav* in its use of marionettes and a small scale production was shaped for performance in Lanchester's theatre. Indeed, Shakespeare in

[59] 'Drama and Films: Malvern Festival - Australian Revue', *Manchester Guardian*, 18 July 1936, p. 15.
[60] 'The Lanchester Marionette Theatre', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1937*, p. 61.
[61] 'Shakes versus Shav', in *The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw*, pp. 916-17 (p. 916).

his initial speech on stage addresses an audience based in Malvern first claiming that 'now is the winter of our discontent made glorious by the Malvern summer sun' and then referring to the viewers as 'citizens of Malvern'.[62]

Although Shaw's decision to write a puppet play was influenced by Lanchester's suggestion, the use of marionettes on stage in many ways both contribute and adhere to Shaw's aesthetic vision. In the preface to the play, Shaw discusses the potential in puppets to appear as 'invisible' when not directly involved in a conversation, an effect which according to Shaw actors find difficult to achieve: 'Living actors have to learn that they too must be invisible while the protagonists are conversing, and therefore must not move a muscle nor change their expression, instead of, as beginners mostly do, playing to them and robbing them of the audience's undivided attention.'[63] The use of puppets was the culmination of Shaw's views concerning the play of ideas. The issue which critics expressed, for instance in regards to *In Good King* as mentioned above, concerning the performers appearing redundant on stage when not engaged in conversation becomes less apparent when using marionettes with their fixed expressions and ability to remain completely motionless. Furthermore, at a time in which the rise of film and television threatened the existence of theatre, for Shaw puppets possessed a 'fascination of their own'.[64] As modern technology harboured the potential to excel the stage in achieving naturalism's aim in offering a realistic depiction of life, Shaw's resurrection of puppet theatre was a step away from any attempt at naturalism as Shaw

[62] *Shakes versus Shav*, in *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw*, pp. 1403-04 (p. 1403). Subsequent citations are provided in the text and in parentheses.
[63] 'Shakes versus Shav', p. 916.
[64] *Ibid.*

desired to regain and highlight a fascination in live performance absent from film and television.

In addition to these correspondences between the use of puppets and some of Shaw's dramatic techniques, *Shakes versus Shav* has a direct predecessor in Shaw's drama and specifically in the epilogue to *Saint Joan*. In this epilogue, Shaw presents an imagined gathering between Joan and a number of characters encountered in the play in addition to new figures as they all lament Joan's legacy and her trial following her death. The atmosphere Shaw creates in this scene foreshadows the meeting between Shakespeare and Shaw in *Shakes versus Shav* as in Charles's room, 'lighted by candles'; multiple figures abruptly appear and then disappear.[65] Indeed as many characters are simultaneously present on stage and the newly introduced figures are two dimensional individuals characterised by their professions, such as the Soldier or the Gentleman looking 'clerical' dressed in 'black frockcoat and trousers, and tall hat, in the fashion of the year 1920', it is possible to imagine this epilogue staged as a form of puppet theatre.[66]

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[65] *Saint Joan*, in *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw*, pp. 963-1009 (p. 1003).

[66] *Saint Joan*, p. 1007. *Shakes versus Shav*, in both its use of puppets and depiction of both Shaw and Shakespeare on stage, has another predecessor in E. M. Barling's *Back to G. B. S.* or *A Midsummer Nightmare: Shaw Tercentenary Celebration, Malvern A. D. 2156,* a play published by the Malvern Theatre and sold 'side by side' with the souvenir book of the Festival in 1932 ('Malvern's World Famous Festival: Another Triumph for Sir Barry Jackson, *Malvern Gazette*, 5 August 1932, p. 5.) and then re-published in the Festival book for 1936. This short play, which as the title suggests depicts the Malvern Festival in A. D. 2156, is mostly concerned with discussions between visitors to the Festival who all present different evaluations and at times comic misconceptions regarding Shaw and his drama. The play ends with the appearance of the shades of the two festival playwrights to whom the name of the play alludes on stage to reflect on the manner in which they feel misunderstood. Shakespeare complains of the neglect he feels as to the 'multitude' he is now only a 'myth'. Shaw, on the other hand, reflects on the inability of most to comprehend the 'truth' concealed behind his 'jests'. The play ends as both playwrights repeat Joan's concluding lines 'How long, O Lord, how long!' (*Malvern Festival Book 1936*, p. 37.).

As with the epilogue to *Saint Joan* in which Shaw explores Joan's legacy following her death, in *Shakes versus Shav* Shaw considers and compares his legacy with that of Shakespeare. In this play, the figures of Shakespeare and Shaw, similar to Joan in the epilogue, reflect on their careers retrospectively as the former playwright was by then dead for over three hundred years and the latter viewed this piece as his last creation. Thus as Shakespeare claims that 'death' will 'finish' Shaw (p. 1403), Shaw laments the future of his plays following his death and questions whether they will endure the same level of longevity as the works of Shakespeare. The play features four battles between the two playwrights, one physical and three artistic duels. In the initial boxing match, Shaw, 'a full three hundred years' younger and thus able to 'carry a heavier punch' than Shakespeare is victorious (p. 1403). While this physical skirmish provides slapstick comic relief, the real battle between the two playwrights that occupies the remainder of the play revolves around the quality of their writing. Unlike the boxing match in which the trait of youthfulness determined the winner, in these artistic battles, it is the longevity of the lines which reflects success as Shaw insists that his writing will 'outlive' Shakespeare's 'powerful rhymes' (p. 1403). In *Shakes versus Shav*, Shaw thus explores the notion of the immortality of the writer through their writing, a concept which is then reflected in the form of the play and specifically its use of puppets. The marionettes used to portray Shaw and Shakespeare were life-like representations of the two playwrights which demonstrated an uncanny resemblance to Shaw and well-known images of Shakespeare. Thus the use of puppets presented the opportunity to produce strikingly true to life representations of the two figures on stage. Furthermore, in addition to the possibility of producing the 'best image' of a figure in puppets, puppets also possess

the ability to outlive their creators and in contrast to actors maintain their original form.[67] Thus for a play which explores Shaw's legacy, Lanchester preserved Shaw's image and immortalised the playwright through producing a life-like marionette of Shaw which as Shaw insists in the play will 'replay' the 'scene' for 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' (p. 1404).

In order to settle the dispute and in a similar fashion to the manner in which the figures in the epilogue to *Saint Joan* emerge, the two playwrights, like magicians, then conjure apparitions of fictional characters who will fight on their behalf. Through these following battles, Shaw contrasts his use of comedy with Shakespeare's tragedies and emphasises the humour present in his writing as its enduring quality. For instance in response to Shakespeare's recitation of 'The shardborne beetle with his drowsy hum' from *Macbeth*, Shaw quotes Adam Lindsay Gordon's line: 'The beetle booms down the gloom/and bumps among the clumps' causing Shakespeare to roar with laughter (p. 1404). In addition to the comedy of the words, the form of the play as puppet theatre allows Shaw's emphasis on humour to find vivid expression. As the marionettes are able to move in more ways than actors, Shaw stages quick paced comic scenes such as the beheading of Macbeth in addition to the boxing match already mentioned. Furthermore, the magic which Shaw associates with the act of writing as the two writers sit and conjure apparitions is also reflected in the fascination which Shaw attributes to puppets. As with Shakespeare and Shaw, who created characters such as Macbeth and Captain Shotover, presented in this play, Lanchester also brings to life wooden replicas of these figures.

[67] George Latshaw, *The Complete Book of Puppetry*, 2nd edn. (London: Dover, 2000), p. 28.

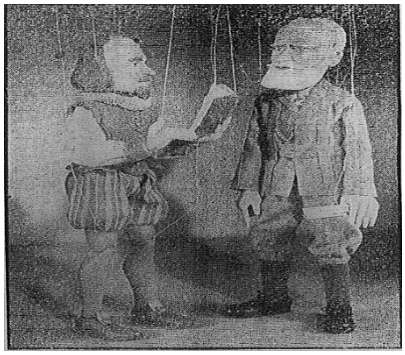


Fig. 13. A scene from the 1949 Malvern production. Taken from 'G.B.S's Last Play: Shakes vs. Shav', *Malvern Gazette*, 12 August 1949, p. 3.

The play begins with Shakespeare's address to the audience in which he inquires about the whereabouts of 'this caitiff', Shaw. In this speech, Shakespeare immediately refers to the festivals in Stratford and Malvern. For Shakespeare, while the festival in Stratford is designed to honour the playwright 'for all time', the Malvern Festival is a 'presumptuous mockery'. Malvern is where Shaw planted a 'mulberry' as a sign of his connection to the town which is only an artificial connection compared to Shakespeare's strong links with Stratford (p. 1403). This evaluation of the two festivals in fact echoes Shaw's sentiments as expressed in the Festival book in 1937. In a piece titled, 'Bernard Shaw on the Festival Habit', Shaw also reflected on his lack of connection with Malvern and mocked his act of planting a mulberry tree outside the Malvern Theatre: 'I am a booster of festivals because they are markets for my plays. I have actually planted a mulberry tree in Malvern, and thereby created the general impression that I was born there. In course of time visitors will be shewn for six pence the room in which my first cries were heard'. While Shaw considered the Festival an asset ('Thus will I become a source of wealth to Malvern in return to the extent to which it has become a source of wealth to me'), his sarcastic tone in the article reflects his uncertainty regarding its future and Shaw's overall

scepticism regarding the literary tourist industry.[68] The establishment of the Festival in Malvern was influenced by the festival in Stratford; however, Shaw was deeply aware of his lack of connections with Malvern when compared to Shakespeare's position in Stratford. Thus, the words spoken by Shakespeare at the beginning of *Shakes versus Shav* are indeed a reflection of Shaw's concerns regarding his situation in Malvern. Amid growing local opposition to the Festival and consequently the uncertainty surrounding its future, in *Shakes versus Shav*, Shaw is pessimistic about the prospects awaiting his plays. Although the festival in Stratford continues to provide a platform for the performance of Shakespeare's works, Shaw is aware that the time for 'his [Shaw's] glimmering light to shine' may only be a 'moment'. As with the play which ends with Shakespeare sending the stage into darkness, Shaw's 'moment' in the limelight concluded with this final season in 1949.

5. Malvern and Shaw since 1949

Shaw's presence in Malvern following the final season of the Festival in 1949 reveals Shaw's concerns regarding his legacy and specifically the future of the Festival as described in *Shakes versus Shav*. Since the final season, Shaw's connections to Malvern have gradually faded. There have been multiple attempts over the years at reviving the Festival which have all failed, as did the initial festival, due to a lack of funding. The first glimpse of a resurgence of Malvern's connection to Shaw was in 1951, immediately following Shaw's death in 1950, when the Malvern Little Theatre Society Limited presented a pageant directed by Gwen Lally in which one of the episodes was titled 'George Bernard

[68] 'Bernard Shaw on the Festival Habit', in the *Malvern Festival Book 1937*, pp. 7-9 (p. 8).

Shaw' and featured characters such as Eliza, Ceasar, Androcles, and King Magnus among others. This was then followed, in 1956, by a visit by the Birmingham Rep and Sir Barry Jackson to commemorate Shaw's centenary in a week of performances of *Caesar and Cleopatra* accompanied by talks and exhibitions closely modelled on the Festival established in 1929. Despite this visit by the Birmingham Rep, the Festival's revival did not arrive fully until more than two decades later. Eventually, in 1977, the Festival was renovated and revived in a new format. This new festival focused on the figures of both Shaw and Elgar with images of the two men used in the logo. The Festival was a mixture of music and drama and often featured plays by Shaw; between 1977 and 1993, the Festival included nine Shavian productions - *Man and Superman* (1977), *Misalliance* (1979), *Heartbreak House* (1980), *The Devil's Disciple* (1981), *Getting Married* (1982), *Pygmalion* (1984 and 1989), *Mrs Warrens' Profession* (1990) and *Arms and the Man* (1991). But as the Festival again experienced financial difficulties, the inclusion of expensive dramatic productions in the Festival's schedule became increasingly challenging. In 1993, it was only Elgar's image which appeared on the logo as the Festival was largely concentrated on music and eventually in 1996 the Festival's name was changed to the Malvern Elgar Festival which now focused on Elgar and his contemporaries. The most current cultural events to commemorate the Festival have been the Malvern Autumn Festival in 2012 which revolved around the Malvern Festival as its main theme. In this season, the Festival included talks by Michael Holroyd and other speakers on the history of the Festival and aspects of Shaw's life and career. This festival also commemorated the Birmingham Rep's centenary in 2013 with exhibitions of material related to the Birmingham Rep including the Rep's productions in Malvern.[69]

[69] The information in this section is taken from the various festival books

Apart from the two events mentioned, Shaw does not possess a strong contemporary presence in Malvern. Upon visiting Malvern today, one may find a small leaflet or two in the tourist information centre or stumble across the board in the museum all dedicated to explaining Shaw's presence in Malvern and the history of the Festival. In terms of Shaw's drama, however, the connection is limited to occasional touring productions of Shaw's plays visiting the theatre.[70] Thus while Elgar's bust adorns the foyer of the theatre, the only indication of Shaw's presence in this playhouse are transient posters of possible upcoming productions. Furthermore, as the brief description of the productions performed in Malvern since 1949 demonstrates the image of Shaw presented in the town thus far is not the 'Shaw' who visited Malvern in the latter part of his career. The later plays which emerged through Shaw's connection with Malvern have never since been revived in the town as it is Shaw's earlier productions such as *Pygmalion*, *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman* that are most often staged. This follows a familiar pattern, highlighted in Chapter Two, in other parts of the country where a limited group of Shaw's plays are usually revived.

Thus although in Malvern, Jackson and Shaw created an opportunity to experiment away from some of the pressures of London's West End, I would suggest that the legacy of the Festival and Shaw in the town indicate how a playwright's reputation and longevity will always struggle to be seen aside from the determining role played by audiences in the larger cities and specifically the capital. Shaw alluded to this when he explained his reasons for offering Warsaw the world

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held at the Malvern Library.

[70] For instance, in 2015 the Malvern Theatre presented the Royal Theatre of Bath's production of *Pygmalion* and the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham's production of *Mrs Warren's Profession*.

premiere of *The Apple Cart* in place of Malvern writing in a letter to Jackson in 1939:

> Now get a map of Europe large enough to make Worcestershire perceptible on it, and stick a pin into the Malvern Hills. Then contemplate Poland, and stick a pin into Warsaw. Compare the two. Reflect on their relative histories, their magnitudes, the parts they have played in the development of Christian civilization, and anything else that may occur to you.[71]

As Shaw indicates, the location in which a play is first performed is significant as this directly influences the impact which a play makes in terms of critical reception and its performative legacy. Shaw's success is determined through his contribution to London's West End, and this is demonstrated by the selection of plays and talks given today in Malvern which attempt to raise interest in the playwright by emphasising his work prior to Malvern. For instance, in addition to the repertoire of Shavian plays offered in Malvern, Holroyd's talk in 2012 also focused on Shaw's earlier years as it discussed Shaw's relationship with Mrs Patrick Campbell and the play *Pygmalion*.

Malvern allowed Shaw to experiment away from the commercial pressures of London and to produce some of his most experimental work. However, as this chapter demonstrated, the significance of these plays both in terms of their contribution to Shaw's career as a playwright and the wider context of early twentieth-century English theatre is often overlooked. I would argue that our common critical understanding of early twentieth–century English theatre which largely

[71] *Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw*, p. 100 (10 March 1939).

considers London and other major cities as locations in which experimental drama was staged during this period has affected this lack of critical attention in these later plays. As this thesis has demonstrated, the Malvern Festival was a key location in which experimental drama was offered during the interwar years when London managers resisted experimenting and taking financial risks. If we reorientate our dominant critical understanding of early twentieth-century English theatre and its key locations then we can begin to view Shaw's late oeuvre afresh and unpack some of the innovative techniques used by Shaw in these plays; a task which I have attempted to tackle in this chapter.

As Said observes in relation to the late style he identifies in Beethoven which he explains as 'late to the extent that they are beyond their own time, ahead of it in terms of daring and startling newness', Shaw's late oeuvre, although misunderstood in its contemporary period, also anticipates some of the techniques used by future playwrights.[72] Shaw's plays produced during the time in which he was involved with the Malvern Festival often defy many of the conventions of nineteenth-century naturalism. In these plays, Shaw presents disjointed and at times episodic narratives with ambiguous conclusions occurring in unfamiliar territories occupied by figures with a fragmented sense of characterisation. As this chapter demonstrated, the techniques Shaw uses in these plays foreshadow the work of future playwrights including Beckett and other Absurdist writers and contemporary dramatists such as Churchill. Furthermore, as the initial reviews of works such as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, John Osborne's *Look in Back in Anger* and Kane's *Blasted* demonstrate, avant-garde drama often receives a hostile critical reception when first performed. While the re-evaluation of these works has taken place relatively quickly, Shaw's experimental work has

[72] Said, p. 135.

clearly taken far longer to be reassessed. However, I argue that Shaw's late oeuvre deserves further academic interest and ultimately a re-evaluation as to simply dismiss Shaw's later plays is to disregard some of the dramatist's most experimental work.

Epilogue

In January 1929 and ahead of the first season of the Festival, the *Observer* quoted Jackson as explaining: 'I feel to centralize the theatre in London is a mistake. In Germany there are a dozen and more towns beside Berlin in which there are theatres producing original work. I am hoping that the Malvern Festival will be such a success that it will be an annual event'.[1] As this thesis has demonstrated, the concept of a drama festival in Malvern emerged out of the frustrations of Jackson and Shaw with playhouses in the capital, which according to these two theatre-makers, resisted staging experimental drama due to an emphasis on the commercial value of the plays produced. At a time in which non-commercial drama was taking root outside the capital and in regional theatres such as Jackson's Birmingham Rep, the establishment of the Malvern Festival initially appears to adhere to Jackson's aim in producing a new model for organising theatre in England through strengthening playhouses outside of the capital. Thus as with the manner in which Jackson explained playhouses in Germany were governed, the establishment of the Malvern Festival by Jackson and Shaw was designed to aid a wider movement for the decentralisation of theatre from London through demonstrating the potential in regional theatres to produce 'original work'.

Although these initial aims in establishing the Festival indicate a more democratic organisation of English theatre as pursued by Jackson and Shaw, events in Malvern reveal a number of incongruities between such an evaluation and the guiding philosophy of the Festival. As chapters Two and Three demonstrated, the Festival was aimed at an

[1] Quoted in Vivian Elliot, 'Genius Loci: The Malvern Festival', in *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 3 (1983), 191-218 (p. 197).

exclusive group of national and international visitors and excluded the local population in the town. In Jackson's vision for the Festival the drama produced was not intended for the viewing of the local people of the region but for visitors to the town who arrived from large cities such as London. As a result, the Festival did not produce wider accessibility to theatre but instead provided an opportunity for audiences who similar to Jackson and Shaw were dissatisfied with the repertoire offered in the West End to pursue their interests outside of the capital. This sense of exclusivity was then reflected in the repertoire offered as the Festival initially focused on Shaw's lesser-known plays before continuing with a selection of relatively unknown classics.

The guiding philosophy behind the Festival ultimately failed to reconcile this desire to experiment with the need to gain financial income and thus guarantee the Festival's survival. Throughout its twelve seasons, the Festival struggled with issues surrounding funding as it failed to sustain itself. Initially such issues were resolved as a result of Jackson's financial support; however, as Chapter Four of this thesis demonstrated this led to a series of disagreements between Jackson and the manager of the Malvern Theatre, Roy Limbert. As the two managers battled to increase their control of the Festival, they clashed on a range of issues such as the repertoire and target audience of the Festival with Limbert pursuing a more popular model for organising the Festival. As the Festival failed to present a coherent identity and model for generating sufficient financial income in order to continue its activities, amid local opposition and a lack of support from the Malvern Council, the Festival disappeared after twelve seasons.

Events in Malvern are indicative of a wider struggle in early twentieth-century English theatre for those pursuing opportunities for staging non-commercial and experimental drama. The Malvern Festival

followed a series of similar ventures earlier in the century such as the movement for building a National Theatre in England, the Independent Theatre Society and the Vedrenne-Barker seasons through all which supporters of such schemes attempted to exchange the more popular repertoires offered at West End playhouses for a more experimental offering. As with Malvern, these ventures also struggled to reconcile the desire to experiment and pursue non-commercial drama with the need to locate sufficient funding for their schemes. While this thesis explored these tensions in the context of Malvern and this wider movement belonging to the twentieth century, questions regarding funding the arts continue to possess relevance. In a time in which austerity defines the government's economic plans and reducing state funding of a variety of projects and organisations is high on the agenda, questions regarding the future of the arts is also heard.[2]

However, despite the brief duration of the Festival, Jackson was successful in achieving his aim to produce 'original work' in Malvern as the Festival presented some of Shaw's most experimental plays. As Chapter Five demonstrated, the Festival in Malvern made significant contributions to the formation of Shaw's later plays. The existence of the Festival ready to perform any new Shaw play under the supervision of the dramatist and with the involvement of influential theatre-makers and performers such as H. K. Ayliff and Cedric Hardwicke allowed Shaw to incorporate and extend some of the more avant-garde techniques used in plays such as *Heartbreak House* and *Back to Methuselah.* Consequently, in contrast to the manner in which most scholars have thus far viewed the Festival as merely insignificant contextual information for the initial productions of these later plays, the work in

[2] See for instance Robert Hewison, *Cultural Capital: The Rise and Fall of Creative Britain* (London: Verso, 2014).

this thesis aimed to highlight the significance of the Festival in Shaw's dramatic career.

The Malvern Festival's legacy extends beyond Shaw's career as a playwright as the Festival also influenced the wider cultural scene in both in Britain and overseas. Events in Malvern inspired a series of Shavian festivals as following Shaw's death in 1950, in addition to the revivals in Malvern, a number of other festivals dedicated to Shaw emerged. These festivals included Basil C. Langton's summer Shaw festival on the Island of Martha's Vineyard (Massachusetts) in 1951 and a Shaw festival in London during the same year at the Arts Theatre.[3] Moreover, the Malvern Festival possesses a direct descendent in the Shaw festival in Ontario, Canada, established in 1962. This festival was initially formed by Brian Doherty, a lawyer, producer and playwright who used local actors to present a festival which included plays such as *Candida* and *Don Juan in Hell* during its first season. The festival's organisers have since incorporated in the festival's repertoire the work of Shaw's contemporaries and recently more contemporary writers.[4]

In Britain, the Malvern Festival anticipated the post-war festival boom which developed and that also includes one of the world's most well-known festivals today, the Edinburgh Festival. The Edinburgh Festival was established in 1947 based on many of the same principles on which Jackson, Shaw and Limbert developed and presented the concept of the Malvern Festival. The festival in Edinburgh embodied the new values associated with culture in a post-war context such as providing a 'means of spiritual refreshment' and a 'way of reasserting

[3] Robert G. Everding, 'Planting Mulberry: A History of Shaw Festivals', *SHAW: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, 18 (1998) 67-93 (p. 72).
[4] The festival's most current season in 2015 included the work of playwrights such as Carly Churchill and Henrik Ibsen alongside Shaw.

moral values' and of 'rebuilding relationships between nations'.[5] As this thesis demonstrated, these were attributes attached to culture and specifically the Malvern Festival prior to World War II and in the beginning of the twentieth century as expressed in the discourse surrounding the Festival which includes the opinions voiced by both the organisers of the Festival and members of the English press.

Thus while the contradictions present in the guiding philosophy behind the Festival were never resolved and ultimately led to the Festival's failure, the Malvern Festival as a regional dramatic event was able to influence the wider metropolitan and national theatrical landscape. Events in Malvern demonstrate that the relationship between theatre in London and the regions in the interwar period is more complex than that which previous scholarship has demonstrated. During the interwar period, Malvern was a key location in which an experimental repertoire of plays was offered; a number of which were penned by Shaw. Furthermore, the Malvern Festival in its format anticipated the many festivals which emerged in Britain and also overseas. Thus the Malvern Festival is a key theatrical venture of the interwar period, the study of which sheds light on both the wider theatrical landscape of its time and beyond.

[5] Angela Bartie, *The Edinburgh Festivals: Culture and Society in Postwar* Britain (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 2.

Appendix

1929 Season (19 August-31 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *The Apple Cart* (G.B.S.), *Heartbreak House* (G.B.S.), *Back to Methuselah* (G.B.S.), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (G.B.S.)

Performers: Cedric Hardwicke, Edith Evans, Scott Sunderland, Matthew Boulton, Wallace Evennett, Charles Carson, Clifford Marquand, Julian D' Albie, Aubrey Mallalieu, Frank Moore, Dorothy Holmes-Gore, Eileen Beldon, Barbara Everest, Eve Turner, James Carew

Other Activities:

- Exhibition – Shaw Exhibition at the library related to national and international performances of Shaw's work
- Festival Ball
- Garden Party

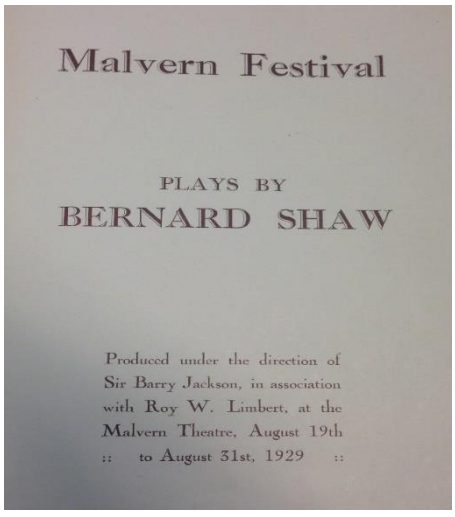


Fig. 14. An image of the cover of the *Malvern Festival Book* in 1929.

1930 Season (18 August-30 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *Candida* (G.B.S.), *The Admirable Bashville* (G.B.S.), *Heartbreak House* (G.B.S.), *Widowers' Houses* (G.B.S.), *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* (G.B.S.), *Getting Married* (G.B.S.), *The Apple Cart* (G.B.S.), *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* (Rudolf Besier)

Performers: Cedric Hardwicke, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Phyllis Nielson Terry, Marjorie Mars, Scott Sunderland, Joan Barry, Eileen Beldon, Marian Spencer, Isabel Thornton, Harry Wilcoxon, Margaret Chatwin, Molly Leu, Daphne Heard, Winifred Izard, Rita John, Dorothy Peters, C W. Carelton-Crowe, Julian D' Albie, Phyllis Shand, E. Bellenden Clarke, Sidney Renneff, H. Browning, Leonard Trollope, Susan Richmond, Douglas Quayle, Leonard Bennett, Nell Carter, Bryan Coleman, Hugh Moxey, Wilson Coleman, Aubrey Mallalieu, Alex Scott, Ernest Lynds, Milton Vaughan, Wilfrid Caithness, Caton Woodville, Derrick de Marney, Kenneth Fraser, Matthew Forsyth, Godfrey Baxter, Barry K. Barnes, Reginald Gatty, Oliver Johnston, Stanley Groome, Muriel Sterling, Anthony Marshall

Other Activities:

- Private viewing of talkie made by Shaw
- Supper given to the Festival Company by the Malvern Council

1931 Season (3 August-22 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *Hick Scorner* (Unknown), *Ralph Roister Doister* (Nicholas Udall), *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (Thomas Heywood), *She Would if She Could* (George Etherege), *A Trip to Scarborough* (Richard Brinsley Sheridan), *Money* (Lord Lytton), *The Switchback* (James Bridie)

Performers: Gillian Lind, Ernest Thesiger, Edgar Norfolk, Frances Carson, Ralph Richardson, Eric Stanley, Isabel Thornton, Harry Wilcoxon, Charles Leighton, Sidney Rennef, Anne Kasmir, Frank Moore, Gilbert Davis, Margaret Chatwin, Jack Carlton, Frances Ross-Campell, Miriam Adams, Peggy Morton, Howell Davies, Grosvenor North, Phyllis Shand, Leslie Holland, Eileen Shand, Richard Riddle, Tony Bruce, Robert Donat, Donald Eccles

Other Activities:

- Lectures- Medieval and Tudor Stage (W. J. Lawrence), Early Medieval and Tudor Drama (F. S. Boas), Elizabethan Stage (W. J. Lawrence), Elizabethan Drama: 1550-1600 (F. S. Boas), Restoration Stage (W. J. Lawrence), Jacobean and Caroline Drama: 1600-1660 (F. S. Boas), Restoration Drama: 1660-1700 (Bonamy Dobree), 18th Century Stage (Allardyce Nicoll), 18th Century Drama: 1770-1780 (Bonamy Dobree), 19th Century Stage (Allardyce Nicoll), Modern Drama: 1780-1931 (Bonamy Dobree), Contemporary Stage (Allardyce Nicoll)

- British Film Festival - *How he Lied to her Husband*, *The Skin Game*, *Dreyfus*, *Tell England*, *Glamour*, *Uneasy Virtue*, *Keepers of Youth*, *Tell England*
- Exhibition of Theatrical Art – Collection of models, prints, drawings, and manuscripts related to the whole epoch from which the plays of the 1931 season were taken from.



Fig 15. Ernest Thesiger – Taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1931*, p. 26.

1932 Season (1 August-20 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *The Play of Weather* (John Heywood), *Ralph Roister Doister* (Nicholas Udall), *The Alchemist* (Ben Jonson), *Oronooko* (Thomas Southerne), *Tom Thumb the Great* (Henry Fielding), *London Assurance* (Dion Boucicault), *Too True to be Good* (G.B.S.)

Performers: Cedric Hardwicke, Ernest Thesiger, Leonora Corbett, Scott Sunderland, Ellen Pollock, Margaret Halstan, Ralph Richardson, Isabel Thornton, Vivienne Chatterton, Eileen Beldon, Charles Leighton, William

J. Rea, Frank Moore, Vernon Kelso, Sybil Borsdorf, Walter Fitzgerald, Ralph Truman, Mary Gaskell, Walter Hudd, Frank Wood, Phyllis Shand, Esme Barton, Barrie Livesey, H. Powell Lloyd, Howell Davies, Hubert Langley, Eileen Shand, Bobby Kerrigan, Elsie Price, Martin Woodehouse, Richard Maxwell, Paul Dornhorst, Nora McManus, Appleton Moore, T. G. McBenn, Peter Hoar

Other Activities:

- Lectures – Nicholas Udall and *Ralph Roister Doister* (Lascelles Abercrombie), Udall's Contemporaries: Drama in the Sixteenth Century (F. S. Boas), Ben Jonson and *The Alchemist* (F. S. Boas), Jonson's Contemporaries: Drama in the Early Seventeenth Century (Allardyce Nicoll), Thomas Southerne and *Oroonoko* (Boonamy Dobree), Southerne's Contemporaries: Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (Lascelles Abercrombie), Henry Fielding and *Tom Thumb* (F. S. Boas), Fielding's Contemporaries: Drama in the Eighteenth Century (Lascelles Abercrombie), Dion Boucicault and *London Assurance* (Bonamy Dobree), Boucicault's Contemporaries: Drama in the Nineteenth Century (Allardyce Nicoll), George Bernard Shaw and *Too True to be Good* (Allardyce Nicoll), Shaw's Contemporaries: Some Aspects of Modern Drama (Bonamy Dobree)
- Pageant of British Film - *Indiscretions of Eve*, *Fires of Fate*, *The Last Coupon*, *Arms and the Man*, *After Office Hours*, *Lucky Girl*

1933 Season (24 July- 12 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (William Stevenson), *The Fair Maid of the West* (Thomas Heywood), *All for Love* or *The World Well Lost* (John Dryden), *The Love Chase* (James Sheridan Knowles), *The Dancing Girl* (Henry Arthur Jones), *A Sleeping Clergyman* (James Bridie)

Performers: Ernest Thesiger, Dorice Fordred, Robert Donat, Eileen Beldon, Evelyn Roberts, Sophie Stewart, Phyllis Shand, Pamela Carme, Bruce Belfrage, Arthur Hambling, Isabel Thornton, Frank Moore, Beatrice Fielden-Kaye, Reginald Gatty, Alexander Sarner, Charles Leighton, H. A. Powell Lloyd, Molly Leuw, John Rea, Wilson Coleman, Lola Gordon, Walter Roy

Other Activities:

- Lectures - From Miracle Play to Interlude: *The Conversion of St. Paul* (Lascelles Abercrombie), The University Playwrights and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (F. S. Boas), Thomas Heywood and *The Fair Maid of the West* (F. S. Boas), Heywood's Contemporaries: Drama in the Early Seventeenth Century (Allardyce Nicoll), John Dryden and *All for Love* (Bonamy Dobree), Dryden's Contemporaries: Drama in the Late Seventeenth Century (Lascelles Abercrombie), Sheridan Knowles and *The Love Chase* (Lascelles Abercrombie), Knowles's Contemporaries: Drama in the Early Nineteenth Century (F. S. Boas), Henry Arthur Jones and *The Dancing Girl* (Bonamy Dobree), Jones' Contemporaries: Drama in the Late Nineteenth Century (Allardyce Nicoll), The Author of the New Play and his

Work (Allardyce Nicoll), Contemporary Playwrights: Some Aspects of Modern Drama

- Malvern Festival Concerts
- Pageant of British Film - *My Wife's Family*, *Love Lies*, *Almost a Honeymoon*, *The Middle Watch*, *Atlantic*, *The Maid of the Mountains*, *Unknown Island*, *The Man from Toronto*, *King's English*, *The Prince of Wales*, *The Changing Year*, *Hawleys of the High St., A Symphony of the Sea*, *Facing the Music*, *London to the Cape*
- Malvern Festival Club – This club was established in 1933 and offered the opportunity to its members to meet in the Winter Gardens and the Priory Park following each performance. The activities of the club would later expand to include dances and buffets.

1934 Season (23 July-18 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *A Man's House* (John Drinkwater), *Interlude of Youth* (Unknown), *Doctor Faustus* (Christopher Marlowe), *The Marvelous History of Saint Bernard* (Henry Gheon - adapted by Sir Barry Jackson), *The Moon in the Yellow River* (Denis Johnston), *You Never Can Tell* (G.B.S), *Mutiny* (David Stewart)

Performers: Reginald Tate, Joyce Bland, Scott Sunderland, Cecily Byrne, Basil Radford, Patricia Burke, Laidman Browne, Curigwen Lewis, Guy Verney, Stanley Lathbury, Geoffrey Toone, Wilfrid Caithness, Hilda Sims, W. E. Holloway, Godfrey Kenton, Margaret Chatwin, Jack Allen,

Olive Melbourne, William Heilbronn, Margaret Hood, Mavis Walker, Vernon Harris, Mary Mills, Stephen Murray, Richard Caldicott, Stewart Cooper, Bertram Heyhoe, Errol Flynn, Gerard Tyrrell, John Robinson, Reginald Gatty, Peter Slade, Antony Bazell, Eric Micklewood, Hal Burton

Other Activities:

- Lectures – Past and Present in Historical Plays (A. E. Morgan), The Plays of John Drinkwater (Lascelles Abercrombie), The Faust Legend and Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* (F. S. Boas), The Faust Legend after Marlowe (Lascelles Abercrombie), The Play of St. Bernard and Religious Drama (A. E. Morgan), *Youth* and the English Morality Plays (F. S. Boas), W. B. Yeats, Synge, and the Abbey Theatre Movement (F. S. Boas), *The Moon in the Yellow River* and other Recent Irish Plays (Bonamy Dobree), Bernard Shaw: The Early Plays (Lascelles Abercrombie), Bernard Shaw: The Later Plays (Bonamy Dobree), The Idea of Conflict in Modern Drama (Bonamy Dobree), The Younger Dramatists of Today (A. E. Morgan)
- Tea Time Talks: Poetry and the Theatre (John Drinkwater), The Critic and the Theatre (Horace Shipp), Pageantry and the Theatre (Gwen Lally), The Onlooker and the Theatre (Gabrielle Enthoven), The Actress and the Theatre (Irene Vanbrugh), The Theatre in France (Robert De Smet), Literature and the Theatre (Hugh Walpole), Radio and the Theatre (Val Gielgud)
- Pageant of British Film – *Facing the Music*, *A Southern Maid*, *You Made Me Love You*, *Letting in the Sunshine*, *The Middle Watch*, *The Maid of the Mountains*, *The Western Highlands*, *Stars of Destiny*, *Those Were the Days*, *The Good Companions*, T*he Midshipmaid*, *I Was a Spy*, *Jack's the Boy*, *The Flag Lieutenant*, *A*

Cuckoo in the Nest, *Around the Snowdonia*, *Stars of Destiny*, *Love at Second Sight*, *Pathetone Parade*, *Wings Over Everest*, *The Luck of a Sailor, Britain's Palaces*, *From Sand to Sideboard*

- Malvern Festival Concerts
- Malvern Festival Club

1935 Season (29 August-24 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (G.B.S.), *Volpone* (Ben Jonson), *Fanny's First Play* (G.B.S.), *Trelawny of the Wells* (Arthur Pinero), *Misalliance* (G.B.S.), *1066 and All that* (Book and lyrics by Reginald Arkell, Music by Alfred Reynolds, From the book by R. J. Yeatman and W. C. Sellar)

Performers: Wilfred Lawson, Vivienne Bennett, Julian D'Albie, Godfrey Kenton, Eileen Beldon, Stephen Murray, Curigwen Lewis, Cecil Trouncer, Isabel Thornton, Elspeth Duxbury, Clifford Marle, Olive Milbourne, Harcourt Williams, Elspeth March, Arthur Ridley, Richard Lonscale, Mavis Walker, Donald Eccles, Harold Chapin, Norris Stayton, Reginald Gatty, Alan Robinson, Derek Prentice, Tony Halfpenny, Wallace Evennett, Vera Robson, Dave R. Walters, Robert McQueen, Lee Fox, Wilfred Jones, David Bird, Hamilton J. Evans, Charles Victor

Other Activities:

- Lectures: Bernard Shaw (Maurice Colbourne), *Volpone* and Ben Jonson (F. S. Boas), Costume (James Laver), *Trelawny* and Pinero (F. S. Boas), Scenery (James Laver), Burlesque (Allardyce Nicoll)

- Tea Time Talks – No information available
- Pageant of British Films: *My Old Dutch*, *The Games Are Coming*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Things Are Looking Up*, *The Iron Duke*, *Evergreen*, *Nell Gwyn*, *Catherine the Great*, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, *That's a Good Girl*, *Lilies of the Field*, *Bitter Sweet*, *The Immortal Gentleman*, *R.A.F.*, *My Song Goes Around the World*, *Blossom Time*, *Sing as We Go*, *Royal Cavalade*
- Malvern Festival Concerts
- Malvern Festival Club

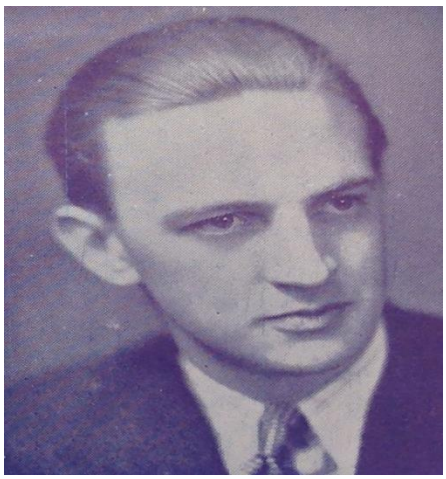


Fig. 16. Stephen Murray - Taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1935*, p. 31.

1936 Season (25 July-22 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *Saint Joan* (G.B.S.), *On the Rocks* (G.B.S.), *The Clandestine Marriage* (David Garrick and George Colman), *The Brontes of Haworth Parsonage* (John Davison), *Pygmalion* (G.B.S.), *Jane Eyre* (Helen Jerome), *Lady Precious Stream* (S. I. Hsiung)

Performers: Ernest Thesiger, Wendy Hiller, Reginald Tate, Curigwen Lewis, Marie Ault, Stephen Murray, Yvette Pienne, Elspeth March, Susan Richmond, Nell Carter, Cecil Trouncer, Wilson Coleman, James Stewart, Marjorie Lane, Hilary Wontner, Ronald Kerr, Richard Parry, Frank Tickle, Isabel Thornton, Arthur Ridley, Alan Robinson, Russell Waters, John Harrison, Betty Percheron, Peter Standfast, Alan Chadwick, Brenda Bruce, Derek Prentice, Mavis Walker, Jasmine Shushtary, Joan Heath, Hester Paton Brown, Charles Victor, Eric Gifford Stacey

Other Activities:

- Lectures: *On the Rocks* (Sir Barry Jackson), *The Clandestine Marriage* (F. S. Boas), *The Brontes of Haworth Parsonage* (Ifor Evans), *Pygmalion* (A. E. Morgan), *Jane Eyre* (F. S. Boas), *Saint Joan* (A. E. Morgan)
- Tea Time Talks: No information available
- British Film Pageant: *Whom the God Love*, *The Tunnel*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Guv'nor*, *Fighting Stock*, *Forever England*, *First a Girl*, *Turn of the Tide*, *No Monkey Business*, *The Amateur Gentleman*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Escape Me Never*, *Brewster's Millions*, *Sunshine Ahead*
- Malvern Festival Concerts
- Malvern Festival Club



Fig. 17. Wendy Hiller – Taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1936*, p. 54.

1937 Season (26 July-21 August)

Produced under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson in association with Roy W. Limbert

Plays: *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (William Stevenson), *Tom Thumb the Great* (Henry Fielding), *The School for Scandal* (Richard Brinsely Sheridan), *The Apple Cart* (G.B.S.), *The Millionairess* (G.B.S.), *Return to Sanity* (Gerald Wynne Rushton and T. South Mack)

Performers: Elspeth March, Helena Pickard, Scott Sunderland, Eileen Beldon, Stewart Granger, Julian D'Albie, Hugh Miller, Raymond Huntley, Isabel Thornton, Margaret Chatwin, Phyllis Shand, Gwen Nelson, Bertram Heyhoe, Alan Robinson, Hilary Wontner, Donald Eccles, Jasmine Shushtary, Brenda Bruce, Renee Ascherson, Mavis Walker, Joan Heath, Aldra Vasco, Donald Gordon, Bobbie Kerrigan, Russell Waters, Wensley Russell, John Harrison, Kenneth Ellis, Peter Standfast, Gavin Dyer, Edward Jewesbury, Charles Victor, Harold Chapin

Other Activities

- Lectures: *The Millionairess* (Ifor Evans), *Susana* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (F. S. Boas), *The Apple Cart* (A. E. Morgan), *The School for Scandal* (A. E. Morgan), *Return to Sanity* (Ifor Evans), *Tom Thumb the Great* (F. S. Boas)
- Tea Time Talks: No information available
- Pageant of British Films: *Tudor Rose*, *Rhodes of Africa*, *East Meets West*, *Head Over Heels*, *Land Without Music*, *This'll Make You Whistle*, *Peg of Old Drury*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *The Ghost Goes West*, *Sanders of the River*, *Escape Me Never*, *Nell Gwyn*, *A Spy of Napoleon*, *The Man in the Mirror*, *Laburnum Grove*, *Love from a Stranger*

- Malvern Festival Concerts
- Malvern Festival Club



Fig. 18. A Festival Club garden party taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1937*, p. 63.

1938 Season (1 August-27 August)

Presented by Roy Limbert in Association with Cedric Hardwicke

Plays: *Geneva* (G.B.S.), *The Last Trump* (James Bridie), *Coronation Time* (C. K. Munro), *Alexander* (Lord Dunsany), *Music at Night* (J. B. Priestley), *Saint Joan* (G.B.S.)

Performers: Elisabeth Bergner, Jean Cadell, Ernest Thesiger, Helena Pickard, Donald Wolfit, Lydia Sherwood, Alec Clunes, Eileen Beldon, R. Stuart Lindsell, Frank Pettingell, Marie Ault, Cecil Trouncer, Daphne Heard, Phillippa Gill, Julian D' Albie, H. R. Hignett, Phyllis Shand, Mignon O' Doherty, Maitland Moss, Reginald Jarman, Hazel Terry, Wilson Coleman, Margaret Watson, Marjorie Taylor, Norman Woodland, Wilson Barrett, Donald Eccles, J. O. Twiss, Cyril Gardiner, Kenneth Villiers,

Hugh Butt, Harold Chapin, Jasmine Shushtary, Cyril Wheeler, Frederick Biron, Anne Wintle, Joseph Chelton, Edward Bonfield, John Bowen, Frank Linson, Kathleen Frankiss, E. Rayson-Cousens, Henry Ingram, Derek Blomfield, Edgar Owen, Flora Britton, Lucille Steven, Joy Frankau, Kathleen Mackenzie, Mary Pemberton, Dorothy Stevenson

Other Activities:

- Lectures - The Malvern Plays: 1929-1938 (F. S. Boas), J. B. Priestley: Critic, Novelist & Dramatist (F. S. Boas), C. K. Munro: The New Realism (A. E. Morgan), Lord Dunsany: Poetic Dramatis (A. E. Morgan), James Bridie: Realism and Fantasy (B.E.C. Davis), St. Joan in Shakespeare, Schiller and Shaw (F. S. Boas)
- Tea Time Talks – The Conditions of the Theatre (J. B. Priestley), The Dramatic Art (Lord Dunsany), Décor in the Theatre (Horace Shipp), Shakespeare a Good Companion (Sir Archibald Flower), Giants of the Past (Horace Annesley Vachell), Opera at Glyndebourne (John Christie), The Theatre and Life (Hubert Griffith), Side Lines (Ernest Thesiger)
- Pageant of British Films – *O-Kay for Sound*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *O.H.M.S.*, *The Frog*, *Doctor Syn*, *Oh! Mr. Porter*, *The Dark Journey*, *Farewell Again*, *Fire Over England*, *The Amateur Gentleman*, *Storm in a Teacup*, *Elephant Boy*, *South Riding*, *Bank Holiday*, *John Halifax, Gentleman*, *Victoria the Great*, *School for Husbands*, *Chips*
- Malvern Festival Concerts

1939 Season (7 August-2 September)

Presented by Roy Limbert in Association with Cedric Hardwicke

Plays: *What They Say* (James Bridie), *The Professor from Peking* (H. I. Hsuing), *Old Master* (Alexander Knox), *Big Ben* (Evadne Price & Ruby Miller), *Dead Heat* (Robert Vansittart), *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (G.B.S.)

Performers: Irene Vanbrugh, Yvonne Arnaud, Helena Pickard, Ernest Thesiger, Alastair Sim, Eileen Beldon, Cecil Trooouncer, Sylvia Coleridge, Herbert Lomas, Daphne Heard, Anthony Bushell, Alexander Sarner, Ronald Ward, Norman Wooland, R. Stuart Lindsell, H. R. Hignett, Isabel Thornton, Rosemary Scott, Julian d' Albie, Jack Raine, Olive Milbourne, Betty Marsden, Maitland Moss, Phyllis Shand, Margaret Withers, June Melville, Harold Chapin, Edward Hardwicke, Judy Wooland, Peter Johnston, Margery Pickard, Frederick Bradshaw, Fred A. Essex, Dorothy Smith, Antony Crane, Lucille Steven, Alex McCrindle, Geoffrey Lumsden, E. Rayson Cousens, Michael Darbyshire, Jenifer Dix, Pieter Cammaerts, Shiela Thompson, Mary Monicer

Other Activities:

- Tea Time Talks – My Shaw Pictures and their Cultural Significance (Gabriel Pascal), The Professional Little Theatre (Ashley Dukes), Some Parts I Have Played (Irene Vanbrugh), Casting – Stage, Screen & Radio (Bruce Belfrage)
- Malvern Festival Concerts
- Pageant of British Films – *Hold My Hand*, *Black Limelight*, *Lassie from Lancashire*, *Yellow Sands*, *Marigold*, *Over She Goes*, *Stolen Life*, *Pygmalion*, *The Ware Case*, *The Mind of Mr. Reeder*, *A Royal Divorce*, *I Met a Murderer*, *Around the Town*

- Malvern Festival Club



Fig. 19. Irene Vanbrugh – Taken from the *Malvern Festival Book 1939*, p. 63.

1949 Season (8 August-3 September)

Presented by Roy Limbert (Newspaper reports confirm that Limbert managed the Festival, however, as no book survives in the collections held at the Malvern Library, it is unclear whether the Festival carried Hardwicke's name in this season)

Plays: *Richard of Bordeaux* (Gordon Daviot), *The Apple Car*t (G.B.S.), *Buoyant Billions* (G.B.S.), *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (G.B.S.), *The Tressinghams* (Lewis Wood), *Max* (Dennis Cannan)

Performers: Frances Day, Dermot Walsh, Donald Eccles, Jane Aird, Peggy Burt, John Roberts, Sylvia Coleridge, Denholm Elliott, Jasmine Dee, Marjorie Manning, John Longden, Arthur Hewlett, Sheila Latimer, Ernest Day, Daphne Heard, Harold Young, Betty Shale, Fulton McKay, John Edmonds, Dennis Carew, Patrick Bullen, Innes Lloyd, Douglas

Wells, Jill Hulbert, Terence Soall, Peter Bartlett, Cyril Harding, Christian Malvery, Alan Woolston, Kenneth Mackintosh, Ruth Lawrence

Other Activities:

- Festival Concerts
- Malvern Festival Club
- Tea Time Talks
- Pageant of British Film – *Boomerang*, *Ladies in Washington*, *Richard Attenborough*, *The Guinea Pig*, *In This Corner*, *Cardboard Cavalier*, *The Fool*, *The Princess*

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