“This Man Is Great” – Glen Byam Shaw Directs Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1951-1959.

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Contents

List of Illustrations

List of Recurring Abbreviations

RSC – Royal Shakespeare Company

SMT – Shakespeare Memorial Theatre

SBT – Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

V&A – Victoria and Albert Museum

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation

LTS – London Theatre Studio

Offi – Officer

Sjt – Serjeant

Brig – Brigade/Brigadier

Btn – Battalion

A Note on Sources and Citations

As a large number of materials referenced in this thesis come from unpublished sources, be those recorded interviews, Shaw's personal notebooks and promptbooks, or personal writings from or on Shaw, the following references will be used throughout:

Mullin – refers to materials taken from Michael Mullin's incomplete biography of Shaw, last edited 1998. Taken from the GL7 materials. Publications by Michael Mullin will be referenced by title.

[Name] Interviewed by Mullin – refers to the tape-recorded interviews carried out by Michael Mullin between 1977 and 1983 and held at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Taken from the GL7 materials.

Notebook – refers to Shaw's director's notebooks for his productions held at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Taken from the GL7 materials.

Dir. Promptbook – refers to Shaw's director's promptbook as prepared before rehearsals began, held at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Taken from the GL7 materials except *Coriolanus* which is held at the V&A.

GL7 – other materials taken from the seven boxes donated by Michael Mullin to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. See Appendix 1 for full contents.

Promptbook – refers to the Stage Manager's promptbook for productions prepared after the rehearsals and used during performance.

SMT Minute Books – refers to the minute books of either the Governors of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre or the Finance Committee of the same, held with those of the RSC at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

Shaw Papers 1 – refers to Shaw's personal writings as copied by his son, George Byam Shaw, and sent to Charles Rogers of the Sassoon Society.

Shaw to Sassoon – Shaw's letters to Siegfried Sassoon, held by Cambridge University Library

Shaw to Baddeley – Shaw's letters to Angela Baddeley, held by the archive of Eton College.

Included as Appendices to this thesis are excerpts from Shaw's notebooks as well as a full inventory of the GL7 research materials donated by Michael Mullin to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. The extracts in Appendices 2 and 3 are selected to support the related

chapters (4 and 7) and constitute a little under half of each notebook. They are reproduced here from my transcripts of the originals, in the hope that in a later project I will be able to make them more widely available, ideally alongside Shaw's promptbooks and other production materials otherwise uncollated.

Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from Shakespeare are taken from The Oxford Shakespeare, edited by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Acknowledgements

The work you're about to read was written over the course of strange and unhelpful times. Many thanks are due, and to too many people to list here in full while also giving the deserved weight of gratitude to my words. Nonetheless, I will do my best.

Eternal thanks to my family, especially my Mother for her understanding, my brother Chris for his stoic camaraderie, my Grandmother for her support, and my Father for starting me down this road. Thank you to Carol Rutter for the supervision, guidance, honesty and occasional ruthlessness in editing; and also for pointing me towards Shaw to begin with. Thank you to Nick Walton for pointing Carol towards Shaw and for his work in bringing a higher profile to the man. Thank you as well to both Sarahs, Walters for keeping me sane and continually convincing me I could actually finish this, and for believing I know what I'm talking about, and Burdett for her support and guidance on the PhD process. Siobhan Brennan and Becca Dunn, thank you for giving me a place to talk about Shakespeare during the lockdown and beyond, and for your apparent enthusiasm whenever I found out something new.

I also need to thank all the archive staff who've helped with the, often esoteric, research I've called on their institutions for help with. Eton College Archive, Cambridge University Library, the theatre collections of the V&A, and of course the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. An extra-special thank you to Madeleine Cox and Philippa Vandome at the S.B.T. for putting up with me asking them to heave GL7 in and out of the stacks for the last five years, as well as for stimulating conversation, listening to me think I'm offering stimulating conversation, and the restrained and sombre working environment on Friday afternoons.

I am immensely grateful to the late George Byam Shaw for agreeing to speak with me about his father, and to his wife Maggie for helping facilitate that. Thank you as well to Charles Rogers and Christine Walsh of the Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship for their interest and for the papers and photographs Charles was able to share with me. I also need to acknowledge the bedrock of work and research done by the late Michael Mullin of the University of Illinois that made this thesis possible. Without him almost none of this would have been possible.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, thank you to the late Glen Byam Shaw. For being worth talking about, whatever he may have believed himself.

Declaration

I declare that the work included in this thesis is original and that I have not used or published it anywhere else. I confirm that this work is my own and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Julian Richards 28/09/22

Abstract

This thesis serves as the first major scholarly analysis of Glen Byam Shaw (1904-1986). Shaw was an actor/director whose work shaped British Theatre and Shakespeare across the last century. Shaw's influence on British theatre is not accurately reflected by the scholarship surrounding him. This thesis looks to fill that gap in the scholarship of post-war Shakespeare studies. In doing so it presents a revisionist history of the Royal Shakespeare Company, locating the origins of many of its principles, practices and approaches in Shaw's work as director of the theatre in the decade before its official foundation.

This thesis looks specifically at the influence of WWII upon Shaw's work as a director of Shakespeare. It examines the history of his wartime service before exploring its effects on his readings of Shakespeare throughout his time at Stratford and his ultimate rejection of the military and their approaches. Shaw's productions of *Coriolanus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Othello* are explored in detail as the most military plays Shaw produced.

Shaw's pre-production notebooks are unique theatrical materials, offering an unparalleled insight into the mind of a director setting out on a production of Shakespeare: his initial reactions to a text at the start of the rehearsal process. Using them, this thesis examines Shaw's understanding of Shakespeare's texts, his interpretations of them, and his directorial instincts and decisions based upon them. From these sources, Shaw is shown as a deeply intuitive and talented reader of Shakespeare with a gift for understanding his characters and translating those understandings onto the stage.

This thesis also explores Shaw's relationship with actors and directors, through interviews conducted with Shaw and his colleagues in the 1970s. From these a clear picture of Shaw is built up as a beloved, respected and highly valued director who showed particular affection for his actors.

Preface

This is a project that is given life in the archive, but it was born long before then. It was born in a theatre more than half a century ago. It died not long after. But now it rises like the revenant dead from the archive and takes the first gasping breaths of its new life there among the stacks and the dust. It's a project of resurrection. But the resurrection of what: a career? A man? A play? We resurrect Shakespeare all the time, but directors die in darkness. They live on only in the remembrance and, if given thought, the resurrection. So this project is a resurrection then, the resurrection of Glen Byam Shaw. But if it's to be a resurrection then what does that mean? It means bringing Shaw back to life out of dusty caskets held in the archive of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, and we will come to those caskets. But Shaw's legacy is everywhere, his influence almost tangible across the history of theatre, and occasionally it throws up tangible artefacts of Shaw's life in unexpected places.

It's 4th October 2019 and I'm sitting in the reading room at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust when another researcher looks conspiratorially over to me and says he's come across a name I'm familiar with. I look around. It's still early after lunch and my usual co-conspirators from the archive team are not yet returned to share in this discovery. I beckon him over to see what in his research has drawn a connection to mine. He's looking at things a decade or so ahead of my era, so I assume it's one of the names that's present both then and when my interest begins. There are a few likely candidates: Fordham Flower, George Hume, possibly Anthony Quayle. None of these is the name he's found. The name isn't even part of his research. But as he's been looking through the minute book for the Governing Board of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, he's found two pieces of torn paper marking places in the book. They seem to be scraps, from a document not considered important enough to preserve. My colleague doesn't recognise what they are, but I do, and soon I have them arranged in the right order.

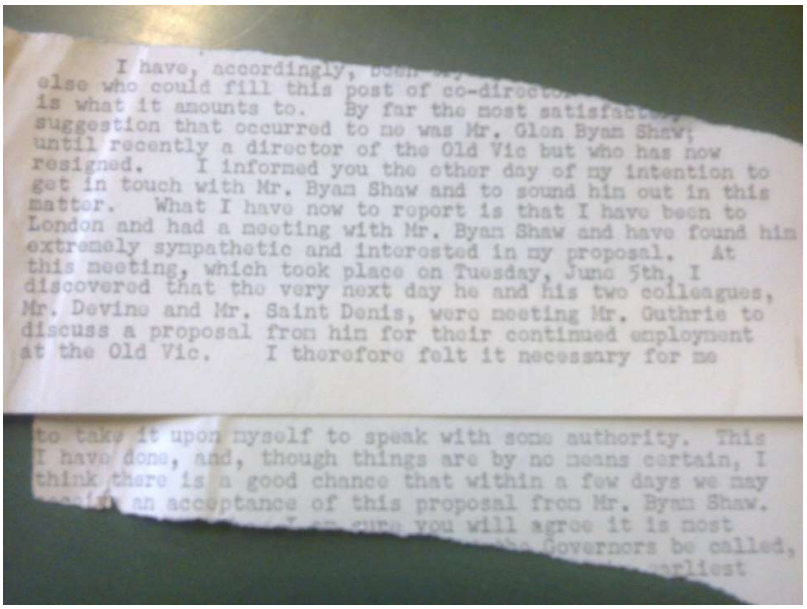

Fig. 1. *Fragment 1*. Torn pages of letter from Anthony Quayle to Governors of the SMT, estimated 1951. Discovered being used to mark pages in the minute books of the Governors meetings.[1]

Sitting here before me is a lost part of Shaw's history. It's just a fragment, barely a finger, but everything else I'm looking to reassemble stems from it. Glen Byam Shaw's journey to Stratford starts here, in these words. The scraps of paper are fragments of the letter sent by Anthony Quayle, the incumbent director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1951, to the governors of the theatre, informing them that he has taken matters into his own hands and a made a concrete offer to Shaw for the position of co-director of the theatre. It is Shaw's name that's been recognised here. I can see this letter fitting into the story of Shaw's arrival at the SMT exactly: the purge of the Old Vic Centre in London pushing Shaw and his colleagues to resign, Quayle's hunt for a co-director he trusted so he could take the Stratford company on tour, the friendship of the two men, the meeting with Tyrone Guthrie about the possibility of Shaw, Devine and St Denis continuing to work at the Old Vic. I know already

[1] The text of this document is as below:
... I have, accordingly, been... else who could fill this post of co-director... is what it amounts to. By far the most satisfactory suggestion that occurred to me was Mr. Glen Byam Shaw; until recently a director of the Old Vic but who has resigned. I informed you the other day of my intention to get in touch with Mr. Byam Shaw and to sound him out in this matter. What I have now to report is that I have been to London and had a meeting with Mr. Byam Shaw and have found him extremely sympathetic and interested in my proposal. At this meeting, which took place on Tuesday, June 5th, I discovered that the very next day he and his two colleagues, Mr. Devine and Mr. Saint Denis, were meeting Mr. Guthrie to discuss a proposal from him for their continued employment at the Old Vic. I therefore felt it necessary for me
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To take it upon myself to speak with some authority. This I have done, and, though things are by no means certain, I think there is a good chance that within a few days we may... an acceptance of this proposal from Mr. Byam Shaw... you will agree it is most... Governors be called...earliest...

that Guthrie tells them in that meeting that the Old Vic Centre will be cut entirely. I know there's no risk of Shaw returning to the Old Vic when Quayle makes this offer without the consent of the Governors. I know that Quayle had to fight most of the Governors to convince them of the need for a co-director at all, threatening to resign if they didn't accept his proposal and sparking a full hour of discussion before they assented to the appointment. I did not know, before these scraps of paper were placed in front of me, that Quayle presented the Governors with Shaw's appointment as close to a fait accompli. As I figure out exactly what it is that my colleague has found I find myself thinking "this man really is everywhere."

It's 16th of October now and the exact opposite thought fills my head. "This man's nowhere," I think as I look desperately through the index to Irving Wardle's *The Theatres of George Devine*. "He isn't here!" I check for him under "Shaw", under "Byam Shaw", under "Glen Byam Shaw." There is no sign of him in the index at all. The fishes of the Nile have done their work.

To be clear, Shaw is in the book. He appears on the first page, in the first paragraph, the first sentence. He appears throughout Wardle's account of Devine's career as a key figure at a number of points in Devine's life. Their co-directorship, alongside Michel St Denis, of the Old Vic Centre from 1945-51 is covered in extensive detail. And Wardle interviewed Shaw; he's quoted extensively throughout the book: recollections of events, comments on Devine's character and professional approaches. Shaw is a key figure in both the execution of the book and the events it covers, but he has not found his way into the index. Whoever has compiled this index has either overlooked Shaw or thought no-one would want to look for him.

I turn to look up Shaw's wife, the actress Angela Baddeley. She does appear in the index. Two page numbers are listed beside her name, both guiding the reader to passing mentions among lists of actors that Wardle knows people may recognise. I look up more of Shaw's contemporaries, friends and colleagues: Michel St Denis, Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Alec Guinness, Michael Redgrave, Peggy Ashcroft. Every name I can think of to check, all make the index, however briefly they appear in the book itself. I stand up, and turn to look back at the university library's shelf of theatre directors' biographies. I begin to pull out every book covering a director whom he worked with: Gielgud, Peter Hall, Tyrone Guthrie, Gielgud again, Peter Hall again, Peter Brook, Peter Brook again, Gielgud. I check

every index and again and again Shaw isn't there. One biography of Gielgud offers a few passing mentions. The rest is silence.[2]

So why does this matter? What difference does it make if Glen Byam Shaw's name is missed from an index or doesn't appear in someone else's biography? What difference did Glen Byam Shaw make to the history of the RSC? As it turns out, quite a lot. In this thesis I am going to show the impact of Glen Byam Shaw and his work on the history of the Stratford Theatre. I will examine his productions and time as director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, with reference to documents and records held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, supported by letters and writing held by the Byam Shaw family, by the Cambridge University Library, and by the archive at Eton College.[3]

I intend to show that Shaw laid the foundations for what Peter Hall rebranded the Royal Shakespeare Company. By drawing on Shaw's notebooks I will show that his depth of thought on character, setting and theme offered to Stratford audiences a dramaturgically rich model of performance the likes of which they had never seen before. The theatre in Stratford was only able to survive, let alone thrive, thanks to Shaw's tireless work, care and affection for his actors and employees, and unflinching dedication to communicating Shakespeare's intent.

Shaw's life and career is far too large a topic for me to come close to covering in its entirety here. Even a focus only on his time at Stratford leaves too much ground to cover. I have had to be ruthless in choosing which productions to talk about here. Shaw's *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, and *Macbeth* I set aside as other scholars have already written and published on them, however briefly. *Romeo and Juliet* I set aside as Shaw directs it twice and comparing the two stagings would take more space than I could afford a single play. His *Julius Caesar* and his *King Lear* both fell in the shadows of the productions that preceded them: *Othello* and *Hamlet* respectively. As a narrative of Shaw's life emerged and my word count exploded I was forced to cut further and full chapters on *Richard III*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Hamlet* were all lost. What remains is an analysis of three of Shaw's most important and most representative productions: *Coriolanus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and

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[2] This largely holds true for biographies of Shaw's contemporaries. However, autobiographies offer continual reference to Shaw. For some examples, see:
Rachel Kempson , *A Family & Its Fortunes*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1986
Peter Hall, *Making an Exhibition of Myself*, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993
Laurence Oliver, *Confessions of an Actor*, George Weidenfeld & Nicholson Ltd, 1982
Anthony Quayle, *A Time to Speak*, Sphere Books, 1992

[3] N.b. Shaw's writing consistently formats contractions with the apostrophe placed earlier than in standard English: do'nt, wo'nt, should'nt etc. I have not corrected this idiosyncrasy when transcribing his writing.

Othello. These plays between them tell the story of Shaw's time in Stratford, and more than that they show his evolving relationship with his own military history and experience. Alongside these chapters, this thesis offers an exploration of Shaw's relationships with his creative peers -- his actors and his fellow directors – as well as a critical overview of his wartime experiences and his time as director of the S.M.T..

Introduction

Glencairn Alexander Byam Shaw CBE (1904-1986) was an actor and director whose work and contributions shaped the nature and course of British theatre and Shakespearean performance across the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st. Shaw was co-director, and later sole director, of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre from 1952 until the end of 1959, and his work on Shakespeare's plays and in particular in Stratford-upon-Avon reshaped the landscape of British theatre both in terms of the nature of interpretation and performance of Shakespeare's work, and more noticeably in regard to the theatrical centres and institutions of the country.

The mythologised history of the Royal Shakespeare Company tells us that before it was founded Shakespeare in Stratford was in a rut. The resurgence of the post-war Memorial Theatre is glossed over to give way to the great myth of recreation. The RSC is painted as a revolutionary force which revitalised Shakespeare both in Stratford and nationally. It staged daring and powerful productions which drew upon a cast of young actors brought to the theatre as a rotating, semi-permanent ensemble. This view of the performance history of Stratford works well in enhancing the prestige of the RSC, and is an accurate reflection of the state of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in the first half of the twentieth century. But it overlooks a vital period of transition: the 1950s. Under Shaw and Anthony Quayle the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre became a centre of theatrical excellence. The productions were staged with a mix of young, new actors and respected veteran performers. Star names were, for the first time in decades, lured to Stratford to bring prestige and crowd appeal to the productions. New directors like the Peters Hall and Brook were identified and invited to direct there. Stratford in 1959 was in many ways a prototypical RSC in all but name; ready for Peter Hall to claim as his own practices the ideas that Shaw had spent the last decade quietly putting in place. The further into my research I got the more I saw developments and principles attributed by the RSC to Hall's innovations actually arising in the decade before his directorship; from Quayle and Shaw and the work they did through the 1950s. Shaw himself, always a withdrawn and private man, did nothing to seek recognition for the work he did in Stratford once he left, and attention was largely unwanted on his part. The academic world granted that desire for anonymity. What scholarship there is on Shaw consists primarily of brief mentions and appearances in works on his contemporaries, and often he appears only as a Shaw shaped hole in their stories. Aside from that there exists only Nick Walton's excellent chapter on him for *Directors' Shakespeare*, Carol Chillington Rutter's coverage of Shaw's

Antony and Cleopatra in her performance history for MUP, and a few scant chapters of an unfinished biography begun by the late Professor Michael Mullin of the University of Illinois after Shaw's death in 1983 and left unfinished after Mullin's death in 2003.

What's remarkable about the lack of scholarship on Shaw is not simply that such a central figure in the history of British Shakespeare performance should be overlooked despite his presence at the heart of the 20th century theatre establishment. Shaw's closest friends and the colleagues with whom he worked most frequently have all been subject to study and celebration; in particular the directors he persuaded to come to Stratford under his artistic directorship: Laurence Olivier, George Devine, Peter Hall and Tony Richardson all first directed at Stratford during Shaw's directorship or co-directorship of the theatre, while John Gielgud's and Peter Brook's continued associations with the theatre were also solidified in Shaw's tenure as director. The most remarkable thing about the lack of scholarship on Shaw, however, is the fact that Shaw's working methods and surviving archive lend themselves so well to academic exploration.

Shaw co-directed *The Merchant of Venice* with John Gielgud in 1938, as well as directing three contemporary plays by himself before the war (*The Island*, *Dear Octopus*, and *Rhondda Roundabout*). But Shaw's method of Shakespeare direction did not properly coalesce until 1943. Serving with the Royal Scots in Burma, Shaw was injured and invalided to a military hospital in India. While he was convalescing, his brother Jim (who was laid up in the next bed) suggested he buy a pair of duodecimo notebooks, a copy of *Antony and Cleopatra*, and set to work directing a theoretical production of the play on paper.[4] Shaw was meticulous: breaking down every scene and cutting as he saw fit, writing comments on his vision for the production in broad terms, laying out individual character notes and observations for every part, and move by move directions of every scene. What Shaw created was a blueprint for the production that could be replicated by any director and company who had access to his materials, if they so chose. As Shaw later recalled:

> That's how it all started. And when I got back I showed them to Alec Guinness... And he showed them to Edith Evans and said "here you are, Glen's done his own production of A&C, why don't you do it?" (Shaw interviewed by Mullin).

[4] Jim suggested *Antony and Cleopatra* specifically, citing Shaw's experience of the war and "the east". For more detail, see Chapter 1.

Shaw's 1946 production deviated from his initial vision of the play, most notably in the decision to move the setting from the Roman Empire to Tudor England (so that, according to designer Margaret "Percy" Harris of Motley[5], the costume designs would better suit Evans as Cleopatra.) But with only two notable changes to the process, Shaw had established the working method for Shakespearean direction that he would practice until his retirement from the theatre. The first of those changes was the inclusion in the initial planning stages of a designer (almost always Percy Harris). The second saw Shaw replace the arduous process of writing out the entire production, scene by scene and move by move, with a marked-up director's promptbook.

Shaw made pre-production notebooks and prompt books for all 19 of his post-war Shakespearean productions (this including the 1946 *Antony and Cleopatra*.) Of these productions, Shaw's pre-production materials survive in some form (either prompt book, notebooks or both) for at least fifteen of them, including all of his productions in Stratford-upon-Avon. The majority of these surviving pre-production materials are held in the archive of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, along with fifteen cassette tapes of recorded interviews with Shaw and his colleagues conducted by Michael Mullin, and copies of correspondence and other production papers pertaining to Shaw's time in Stratford.

Writing the foreword to Michael Mullin's unpublished biography of Shaw in 1998, Percy Harris outlined the final form of the preparatory work which Shaw undertook for his Shakespeare productions:

> Glen did not approach the plays from a scholarly point of view, but as a sensitive and imaginative human being, a man of the theatre, with a real love of the text and a clear understanding of the characters. He would try to read the play as though he had never read or seen it before. Then, as a director, he would attempt to tell the story clearly and straightforwardly, without imposing any theoretical ideas or obscure allusions. With Glen everything came from an intense study of the text. His productions were never gimmicky or over intellectual, but rather performances that ordinary people could understand and enjoy. Scholars in the audience were free to add their own

[5] Harris, and her design studio, Motley, were Shaw's most frequent and closest collaborators, designing almost all of his productions in both Stratford and London.

> complications. It should be remembered that this was in the 1950s, before the fashion developed for a more sophisticated approach (Foreword to Mullin).

In fact, 1951 had seen the foundation of the Shakespeare Institute [University of Birmingham, in Stratford upon Avon;], born with an intent to work alongside the Memorial Theatre and with a deep focus on performance studies. The more "sophisticated", scholarly reading of Shakespeare which Harris refers to was not on the distant horizon of Peter Hall's RSC of the 1960s but right on the doorstep with Shaw. Moreover, while Shaw lacked a grounding in Shakespearean criticism (reading only Granville Barker, AC Bradley and the introduction to whichever edition of the play he worked from, usually the Arden first series[6]), Shaw's approach in focusing only upon the text, and analysing every character and every scene before production began, seems much closer to a scholar's approach than Harris suggests here. Harris goes on to outline the final form of Shaw's preparations:

> During the winter, Glen, his wife Angela Baddeley, and I would go abroad on holiday. The mornings were spent working on the first play he was to direct for the coming season. The decisions we took on the visual aspects of the play depended to a large extent on the actors he had engaged for the leading part.

The leading actors for each season would have been engaged well in advance and consulted on the plays they were to perform as part of the so-called "Star System" at Stratford. This did not always work out, as Harris notes; "Occasionally one of these actors would pull out for an offer of a film" which would lead to changes to Harris's plans "especially where the costumes were concerned" (Foreword to Mullin).

Harris describes Shaw's process as "meticulous," and outlines the work the two of them would do together for each production:

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[6] Shaw, interviewed in 1977, told Michael Mullin he read only Bradley and Barker, remarking: "I also lost my copy of Bradley and then a very famous Shakespeare scholar gave me his copy and I can't remember his name. But anyway, I certainly always referred to Bradley." Shaw remarks later in the same interview: "And, you ask me about reading other people's opinions of play. Well I don't do that very much, but I have a very splendid edition in my bookcase there, it's called the Arden Shakespeare… And the notes are simply superb. And being as ignorant as I am I need that; there are a great many things that I simply don't know. And it's no good again facing the actors and saying you don't know what things mean. The Arden is like having a scholar who isn't lecturing you about things you don't need, you open the book and you can get the scholar's knowledge if you want it." His notebooks on *Hamlet* prove he also read the introduction to the New Temple edition of the play used as the prompt copy.

> After he had studied and criticised my preliminary sketches, we would get down to rough ground plans and models. These were altered and adapted as the work proceeded, gradually refining them after a long process of exploration, and models to start on his blocking. On the ground plan he would work out the actors' movements, using his collection of model soldiers, and choosing the most individual ones as principals. To clarify the three-dimensional image, he worked in the modelbox [sic], using the figures I made for him from pipecleaners [sic]. They had heavy feet made from brass curtain runners and were able to sit, kneel and walk upstairs. The leading characters even had indications of costume. From all this work he made up a promptcopy [sic] that contained the blocking he proposed and the groupings he envisaged (Foreword to Mullin).

Harris is at pains to stress, however, that the director's promptbook "was a starting point, which gave him confidence, so that he would not be caught out without an answer," and that while Shaw "passed his ideas on to the company," it was "never so rigidly as to hamper their imagination or freedom," going on to explain that "at the first rehearsal, he always stressed that his conception and his ideas of each character were meant to provide a basis for the company's work – nothing was irrevocable." This first rehearsal would see a full readthrough of the play, after which the cast were shown the model of the set and the costume designs. Again Harris emphasised Shaw's willingness to listen to the cast's views on the preparatory work:

> At this meeting, they read the play aloud, the model and costume designs were shown. Leading members of the company had usually been consulted already about their costumes, but anyone who disagreed with the image of their character was encouraged to protest. (Foreword to Mullin 1998).

All of which brings us to the question of what this actually means. Why does it matter that Shaw did all of this preparatory work, or that so much of it survives? Why look at Shaw's materials? The answer, both simple and compelling, is because nothing else quite like it exists.

Theatre wasn't an art meant to survive when the curtain fell. Today recordings will survive in the archive of the theatre, on film or on television, but not in Shaw's day. The performance died in the moment of its completion. Scholarship on theatre of that era is, by

necessity, built upon recollection. These recollections may be human: performances seen, actors and directors and production staff interviewed, reviews consulted. Or those recollections may be archival: notes and prompt books and stage manager's reports, designs and photographs and, with later productions, video recordings. Both forms of recollection have their flaws. Human memory is limited and fallible. One cannot rely on a memory of performance or process to paint an accurate picture of that production, especially not of a production staged what is now six decades ago, whether it is recalled by audience, performer, director or anyone else. Reviews written within hours of seeing a production will be biased, lopsided, and focused; such is their nature and their virtue. The archive, meanwhile, lacks life. Theatre is a living art, a moving and breathing art, which cannot properly be represented in the documents of production. A prompt book or a recording can tell us *that* an actor moved but very rarely *how*, and rarer still what the director told them to justify it.

Shaw's archive gives us something close to a combination of these memories; human and archival. Here are documents of human memory created in the moment: a real time record of the director's process and understanding of the production made at the time of the production's conception. Here we have the ideas and principles of production the director tried to communicate to his company from the outset to stand alongside the records of the final result. The director's prompt books show us how Shaw began to direct the production, while the stage manager's prompt books held in the SBT archive as production records allow us to see how much that intention survived through rehearsal and into the opening night. The reviews then allow us to see how these ideas and intentions carried or didn't carry over to an audience.

Among these records are recorded interviews with Shaw and with a significant number of his colleagues and friends: actors Anthony Quayle, Peggy Ashcroft, Desmond Hall, Cyril Luckham, Marius Goring, Trader Faulkner, Richard Pasco, and Lee Montague, designers Percy Harris and Elizabeth Montgomery of Motley, and Dr Levi Fox of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. These interviews were conducted by Michael Mullin between 1973 and 1982 with his focus shifting over that time from his work on Shaw's *Macbeth* to a broader study of Shaw's career. [7]

As I said near the start of this introduction, Shaw is an integral source for Irving Wardle's *The Theatres of George Devine*. His writings include extended passages about

[7] When quoting from these interviews I have transcribed the recordings faithfully and then edited the quotations suitably for readers whilst preserving the speaker's voice as best I can.

Charles Laughton and Vivien Leigh written by request of their biographers. Shaw appears throughout the autobiographies of others only to be ignored by their biographers. The attitude of history to Shaw seems to have been that he was a trusted observer of his contemporaries, a close friend even, but that his own story wasn't worth telling. Shaw seems to have agreed with them. Every account of Shaw from his contemporaries speaks of his modesty, and every account Shaw makes of them speaks to it.

When taking on the position as Quayle's co-director at the Memorial Theatre, Shaw described himself as the "Horatio" to Quayle's "Hamlet", despite Quayle's objections and desire for a more equal partnership, and it is as if Shaw's legacy has been to turn to the world and say "let me speak to th' yet unknowing world/How these things came about. So shall you hear..." (Hamlet, 5.2.333-4). Horatio doesn't tell his own story. But among those who were there, Shaw is seemingly alone in thinking his story not worth telling.

Why Write Biography? A Survey of the Literature[8]

This thesis is a carefully considered assessment of Shaw's work, his life's influence on it, and the importance of its threads in the tapestry of theatre history. It is not a work of biography, but it is a work which uses biography in order to examine Shaw's professional legacy. An understanding of Shaw's life, and particularly of his wartime experiences, is key to understanding the work he produced in Stratford and echoes it continues to have Shakespeare performance. But in order to make use of biography as a tool I have to acknowledge the absence of any biography of Shaw beyond this, and ask why it Shaw's biography should matter at all.

Peggy Ashcroft gets to the heart of the matter most quickly: "I'd like to talk about Glen because I think Glen is not talked about enough," she told Michael Mullin almost as soon as their interview began in 1977, "and he certainly is very reluctant to talk about himself... all who work with him esteem him enormously highly, but he's such a private person and so averse to publicity that he gets overlooked." This overlooking of Shaw would be less egregious if every one of his colleagues and friends weren't so extensively written about and open to study. Ashcroft herself, John Gielgud, Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Michael Redgrave, George Devine, Michel St Denis, Alec Guinness, Peter Hall, Peter Brook, Barry Jackson: all extensively biographed. Those who aren't written about write about themselves: Anthony Quayle and Rachel Kempson's autobiographies stand out among those. But Shaw stands apart and alone in the lack of publication about him.

The obvious rejoinder to Ashcroft's assertion is to ask "Well, how much should we talk about him, then?" Is it not possible that the lack of scholarship on Shaw reflects a lack of reason to write on Shaw? The same question arises when writing any theatrical biography. What does it matter to someone who will never see his *Hamlet* how Michael Redgrave's

[8] Regarding the practice and theory of biography I have looked at Hermione Lee's *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2009), and *Body Parts: Essays on Life Writing* (Pimlico, 2008). J.C. Trewin's *Going to Shakespeare* (George Allen & Unwin, 1978) and John Gielgud's Letters (collected and published Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004) offer a view of the theatre and theatrical community in Shakespeare's day that sit alongside biography. For biography itself I've turned to Rex Vicat Cole's *The Art & Life of Byam Shaw* (Seeley, Service & Co. Ltd., 1932), Jonathan Croall's *John Gielgud Matinee Idol to Movie Star* (Bloomsbury, 2011), Michael Billington's *Peggy Ashcroft* (John Murray, 1988), Gary O'Connor's *The Secret Woman A Life of Peggy Ashcroft* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997), Jean Moorcroft Wilson's *Siegfried Sassoon: The Journey from the Trenches, A Biography 1918-1967* (Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 2003), Alan Strachan's *Secret Dreams: A Biography of Michael Redgrave* (Orion Books, 2005), and Irving Wardle's *The Theatres of George Devine* (Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1978). I have then looked at the autobiographies of Rachel Kempson (*A Family & Its Fortunes*, Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1986), Anthony Quayle (*A Time to Speak*, Sphere Books, 1992), Laurence Olivier (*Confessions of an Actor*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson Ltd, 1982) and Peter Hall (*Making an Exhibition of Myself*, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1993).

sexuality may have informed his understanding of the role, or how Vivien Leigh's readings of Kenneth Tynan's scathing reviews altered her performance of Lady Macbeth?

It matters because performance may be ephemeral but its legacy is not. Theatre builds upon itself, and on performances and productions which came before. It may not matter to understand Redgrave's Hamlet directly but Redgrave's reading of the part has echoes and ripples in performances ever since. Vivien Leigh's Lady Macbeth and the unbalanced reviews she and Laurence Olivier received playing together inform how the next director reads the parts alongside each other, and the next director, and the next. And the decisions Shaw made directing *Antony and Cleopatra*, *As You Like It*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and all the rest carry into the decisions of every director after him who saw them, or heard about them, or read about them or saw a production directed by someone who saw them, or heard about them, or read about them.

But that's not really what this biography is for. If it were, I could simply offer the complete transcripts of the interviews with Shaw and his contemporaries, unedited and unabridged, the reviews of his productions and the productions materials leading into them. In *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, Hermione Lee takes the entire first chapter to defining biography through metaphor, pointing to it both as portrait and as autopsy (1-4), and to outlining ten "rules of biography" which she offers as guidelines rather than any hard and fast laws. Some of these I leave by the wayside: rule 2's assertion that "The story should cover the whole life" (8) gives way to the focus on a single decade of Shaw's life and the work produced within it, alongside those incidents of his life which I feel most inform that work. Others though seem to hint at the question of why biographies should be written: Rule 3, "Nothing should be omitted or concealed" (9); Rule 7, "Biography is a form of history" (13); Rule 8, "Biography is an investigation of Identity" (14); Rule 9, "The story should have some value for the reader" (16). So we build a clearer picture of what biography is: a complete history, investigating identity, that offers some value for the reader. But why does the reader take value from it? What is biography, especially theatrical biography, for?

Alan Strachan makes clear what his biography of Michael Redgrave is for. "To a large extent, this book attempts the reclamation of a great actor," he tells the reader in his introduction (7). Strachan saw Redgrave as equal to those spoken of as the three greatest actors of his generation: Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, and Ralph Richardson, and wanted to see Redgrave recognised among them. Strachan also hints towards another reason for the biography to be written: observing that Redgrave's autobiography, co-written with his son Corin, "was a somewhat incomplete book" (4). Here again comes that idea of completeness:

the idea that somehow a biography need encompass all aspects of the individual it studies without omission or concealment. But concealment is not just the actor's prerogative: it's almost their entire purpose: hiding who they are behind a parade of other people. Gary O'Connor, in his biography of Peggy Ashcroft, *The Secret Woman*, also engages with the idea of incompleteness as his reason for writing, citing Michael Billington's biography of Ashcroft as both the place to go to for a professional assessment and history of her (xiv) and as limited by lacking the personal investigations O'Connor hopes to offer (xiii). In justifying this personal approach, O'Connor also comes tantalisingly close to saying why he's writing: "While I do not wish to make a sermon on the purpose of biography, every writer owes an allegiance to the truth" (xiii). But what is the truth that O'Connor owes allegiance to? Billington's biography of Ashcroft is no less true for affording her a degree of privacy that O'Connor romps over in search of scandal. Nor is O'Connor's writing any less truthful for being salacious where Billington maintains decorum. Billington asserts that we don't need the private details of Ashcroft's personal life to understand her and her work, O'Connor says we can't do without them. So what of Shaw?

What I'm writing here isn't a true biography. I'm analysing Shaw's work with a critical eye, not telling his life's story. But his biography is key to understanding his work. Theatre is a collaborative medium and to examine how Shaw made theatre I have to examine his relationships with the people he made it with. More than that I have to acknowledge the relationships which shaped his understandings: of theatre, of Shakespeare, of the themes and ideas he encounters in his work. Shaw's life is full of moments and people that affect his work: Angela Baddeley, Anthony Quayle, John Gielgud, Siegfried Sassoon, Michael Redgrave, Rachel Kempson, George Devine, Vivien Leigh, and many more.

The further I dug the more I unearthed. Shaw's affair with Rachel Kempson[9] can't help but inform his approach to plays like *Othello* that deal in infidelity, nor can we assess his working relationships with Kempson, with her husband Michael Redgrave, or with Shaw's own wife Angela Baddeley, without taking it into account. Shaw's friendships with Redgrave and John Gielgud, his relationship with Siegfried Sassoon (Moorcroft Wilson 159), all feed into understanding his direction of homosexual tropes and stereotypes in *Troilus and Cressida*. Shaw's letters to Baddeley, which held in the archive of Eton College[10], show his

[9] Kempson confirms an affair with an unnamed man during Shaw's 1953 *Antony and Cleopatra* (Kempson 165-6) and the timeline and details of the relationship she outlines in her autobiography make it clear that it was Shaw, a fact confirmed by his son in conversation with me (George Byam Shaw Interview).
[10] Shaw did not attend Eton College, his letters were acquired by the College by purchase from an unnamed source, presumably Shaw's descendants.

wartime service to be full of thoughts of Shakespeare and make it clear his Shakespeare is full of thoughts of his wartime service. Shaw's private life bleeds into his professional life at every juncture. Shaw didn't direct plays with grand themes in mind or statements to make. His direction came from his own personal connections to the plays as he read them, and to understand how he directed them we must first understand what they said to him. And to do that, we have to understand who he was when he read them.

So what truth do I owe allegiance to here? We come back to Peggy Ashcroft. "I'd like to talk about Glen because I think Glen is not talked about enough." And if addressing the question of incompleteness is purpose enough for biography then Shaw merits that purpose. The history of his life is not just incomplete but absent, but there's more than that. The history of the Royal Shakespeare Company is incomplete without Shaw's story. The history of the Old Vic theatre is incomplete without his story. The history of British Theatre in total, and of the performance of Shakespeare in this country, is incomplete without him. And the history of every one of his colleagues and friends is incomplete without his story. We know this last because they and their biographies tell us so.

Wardle opens *The Theatres of George Devine* by talking about Shaw. The introduction begins:

> When he was running the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in the 1950s, Glen Byam Shaw made a hobby of collecting photographs of his Stratford colleagues. Not autographed star portraits, which would hardly have been of any interest to a man in Shaw's job, but pictures of Britain's leading actors as children. It was a gallery of the great pretenders before they had learned the art of pretence. (xi)

Wardle draws extensively on interviews with Shaw when talking about the years when his and Devine's lives overlapped. Sally Beauman's *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades* also draws on interviews with Shaw about his time, his colleagues and his successor. What of Shaw's own writings survive, with the exception of a single piece talking about his wartime experience, are concerned with telling the stories of his friends and colleagues: Siegfried Sassoon, Charles Laughton, Vivien Leigh. Actors are able to conceal themselves, or parts of themselves, but they can't disappear entirely. Directors are able to hide. Some choose not to: Peter Hall in particular had no interest in hiding himself and was

more than happy to play the face of the Stratford theatre on the political and media stages.[11] But Shaw did hide and so when we find him it's always speaking in praise of others and never of himself: telling biographers how much he thinks of his peers, writing in remembrance of his colleagues and friends, even as torn scraps of paper marking a place in someone else's book.

When I started this research I thought that Shaw's production notebooks were the unlikeliest and most surprising resource I would come across. As it stands, the more I learn about Shaw, the clearer it becomes that they are a distant second. The unlikeliest is found in eight pages provided by Shaw's son George to Charles Rogers of the Siegfried Sassoon Fellowship. The Fellowship asked George to speak some time before my researches began, after which George had gifted Charles Rogers a sheaf of papers: copies and transcripts of Glen Byam Shaw's own writing on himself, and his friends and colleagues. I am indebted to Charles Rogers for passing these documents on to me as they contain a treasure trove of insights into Shaw's life and relationships.[12]

The document which proved most surprising was penned by Shaw in 1959. It is a "Portrait parlé", written at the request of Professor Charles Sisson of the University of Birmingham, then director of the Shakespeare Institute. It consists of two pages of Shaw talking about his childhood, two about his early acting career, two about the war, and two about his post-war career. It's exceptional simply because it is Shaw writing about himself. Most of Shaw's colleagues and contemporaries, his friends, his brother in theatre, his lover, all wrote autobiographies, but the idea of Shaw writing his own life story is inconceivable. Never mind his wartime service and heroism, his close working with Gielgud at a pivotal time in British theatre history, his reshaping of the Old Vic and central role in a scandal which close to destroyed its chance of becoming the National Theatre, his bringing key and shining lights of British theatre to Stratford, his teaching and preparing Peter Hall to succeed him, and all the theatrical achievements and innovations of his direction, Shaw would simply not have believed he was worth writing about.

The second time Shaw appeared in *Hamlet* he played Horatio. When Anthony Quayle asked Shaw to come to Stratford as his co-director, Shaw tried to play Horatio again. More

[11] And in many ways Hall basking in the limelight of history cast a shadow in which Shaw could hide.
[12] These documents consist of letters sent by Shaw to Bridges Adams between 1952 and 1959, Shaw writing a "portrait parlé" of himself apparently for Professor Charles Sisson of the University of Birmingham, Shaw writing on Vivien Leigh for Alan Dent to draw on for his biography of her, Shaw's account of an incident with Charles Laughton during the run up to the 1959 season, and Shaw's letters to Siegfried Sassoon about an incident when driving Sassoon's car in the 1920s.

than any other part, Horatio seems to have stayed with Shaw, and the idea of Shaw as Horatio seems to me a key to understanding his biography. Shaw saw himself as a figure in the background, a constant supporting presence, bringing to his friends the opportunity to be the principal, surviving to tell their stories but never telling his own. So why write his biography? All the reasons of incompleteness hold true. If we are to understand the stories of the RSC, Stratford, British Theatre, and anyone who ever worked with Shaw, we have to hear Shaw's story. But I find myself breaking another of Hermione Lee's rules of biography when I ask why I want to talk about Shaw. Rule 6: "The biographer should be objective." (12)

To be clear, this biography is objective. Lee makes clear immediately after stating this rule that it is a warning against over-investment, not a condemnation of any moral standpoint on or investment in the subject. But later in the same book, Lee makes an observation about the most notable gender disparity in subjects of biography:

> A still lingering difference between biographies of men and of women is revealed by the matter of naming. Lives are no longer being written of 'Miss Austen', 'Mrs Woolf', or 'Mrs Gaskell'. But because biographies of women have for so long been more protective and intimate than those of great men, a biography of a famous English woman novelist might still refer throughout to Jane or Charlotte, while famous male English novelists are not usually called Charles or Anthony.

And I cannot deny that there came a turning point in the writing of this biography when I found it hard to write "Shaw" rather than "Glen". That point came in transcribing his interview with Michael Mullin, listening to Mullin read from the reviews of Shaw's 1953 production of *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> MM: *The Times* says "the production of Mr Glen Byam Shaw is always sympathetic to the players and the play. Its magnificence consists in avoiding magnificence for the sake of allowing the scenes to follow each other in rapid sequence'.
>
> GBS: Now that I like very much, because what he is saying is that I let the author speak, and that's what I say you should do.
>
> MM: That's what you were striving for?

GBS: If the author is worthwhile and if he has the good advantage of genius in the form it seems rather silly if you start mucking about with that. So, let the author speak. I like that. The feeling of what one's job is as a director of Shakespeare and not muck about with it.

MM: *The Birmingham Mail* says that it is "So vivid in stage pictures and so strong in characterisation, out of an amazing and disquieting play, Mr Shaw, with unerring instinct, carved for us an arresting pattern which held us emotionally even when, rarely, it challenged our unqualified acceptance."

GBS: Who wrote that?

MM: *The Birmingham Mail*. It's not signed.

GBS: That's fantastic [chuckles] It says it's a lousy play but I saved it. I've never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. Absolute nonsense.

MM: *The Birmingham Post*: "Shaw has a achieved a fine production, his regulation of a busy traffic between Rome and Egypt swift and orderly, especially when the Captains carouse aboard the galley."

GBS: This isn't me. To say I did it is wrong; it's what Shakespeare does.

MM: Well, I think what ...

GBS: [interrupting] I mean, you can perhaps muck up what he's done, but it's what he does. He switches, and that's the whole technique of how you write the play.

MM: Well I think what they're saying is that they've seen people make a mess of it and this isn't.

GBS: Yes, but it seems to say that it's *I* who have done it. And I did say "thank god I didn't muck it up!"

And that exchange really is at the heart of how Shaw saw himself as a director of Shakespeare. Letting the author speak, trying not to muck up, and objecting to any praise of him over Shakespeare or the actors. It's a moment that encapsulates why Shaw would never write an autobiography, how he avoided study for so long, and exactly why he needs to be biographed.

So why tell Shaw's story? Quite simply because it's needed, for the history of the RSC and British Theatre and Stratford-upon-Avon and everyone working in all of them to be properly understood. But why am *I* writing it? "I'd like to talk about Glen because I think Glen is not talked about enough."

Glen Byam Shaw – Who He Is and How He Came To Be

Glencairn Alexander Byam Shaw was born on 13th December 1904, the fourth of five children of the painter John Liston Byam Shaw (sometimes known professionally as simply "Byam Shaw") and seemingly named after his father's sister (Vicat Cole 178). Byam Shaw senior was also a teacher of art, and an illustrator, whose work notably included illustrations for both of the Chiswick editions of Shakespeare, and for Charles and Mary Lamb's retellings of Shakespeare's stories for children.

Shaw did not remember his childhood fondly when he looked back on it, through no fault of his parents or siblings. In particular Shaw remembered his schooldays as troubling, describing himself as "slow-witted" and saying he "found it difficult to learn to read and write... I had to be given special instruction [at my first school] as I was so far behind the rest of the class I was in." Shaw's view of himself as intellectually inferior to his peers would persist into his approach to directing Shakespeare in later life.

Shaw's first acting experience, and first experience of Shakespeare, came at school, though. Shaw recalled his teacher, "a remarkable little woman called Ada Sears," taking particular care over his scholastic difficulties, and especially focusing upon teaching the arts, and having the class act out some Shakespeare. "[We did] some scenes from *The Merchant of Venice* in which I played Portia, and the next year we [did] a potted version of *Hamlet* in which I played Hamlet. That was a wonderful experience for me because, for the first time in my life, I was conscious that I could do something better than anyone else in the form" (Shaw Papers 1). After spending the ages of 5 to 8 at the Froebel Educational Institute, then his middle school years with Mrs Sears at Lynton House School in Notting Hill Gate, Shaw failed to get into the Navy as a junior cadet and was instead accepted into Westminster School (a feat he attributed to his two elder brothers already being enrolled there). He found no theatre to enjoy or engage with at Westminster, instead filling his spare time with rowing.

Shaw's professional career in theatre began in his last year at school in 1923:

> At the back of my mind I always knew that I wanted to be an actor, and during the last term that I was at Westminster I got an opportunity to be auditioned for a play (*At Mrs Meam's*) that was being sent out on tour by Mr Dennis Eadie (Shaw Papers 1).

The 18 year old Shaw bunked off school to audition and duly appeared in *At Mrs Meam's* at the Pavilion Theatre in Torquay on 1st August 1923. Shaw's next professional performance

wasn't until 1925, but in the intervening year Shaw's life found another defining experience when he met and fell in love with the actress Angela Baddeley. She did not fall in love with him at the time. Angela's marriage to Stephen Thomas continued while Shaw tried to move on. 1924 also saw Shaw first meet the war poet Siegfried Sassoon, as well as the composer Ivor Novello. After Shaw suffered some sort of "emotional bruising" at the hands of Novello (Moorcroft Wilson 160), Shaw and Sassoon entered into a relationship in 1925 that would last for three years and lead to an enduring and lifelong friendship afterwards (Moorcroft Wilson 159, 208-9).

From 1925 Shaw began to pick up acting work. He played Yasha in *The Cherry Orchard* and it was in that production that Shaw first made the most important theatrical connection of his career. The role of Trofimov the student was played by John Gielgud, a man who would become vital to Shaw's professional development, and a close friend to Shaw.[13] Shaw then played a season in rep in 1926 at the Oxford Playhouse under James Bernard Fagan, who once told Shaw he was "the best portrayer of cads" he had ever known. In 1927 Shaw left for America where he returned to *The Cherry Orchard*, this time as Peter Trofimov. While in America, Shaw underwent an operation for reasons unclear today, and while under anaesthetic enjoyed a rather peculiar vision which he outlined at length in a letter to Sassoon..

Shaw's time in America ended rather more abruptly than he had planned when he received news that Stephen Thomas had left Angela. Shaw came home in the last week of May to see her. A meeting with Sassoon the following week led both Shaw and Sassoon to admit that they were now in love with someone else: in Sassoon's case Stephen Tennant, the brother of Angela's sister Hermione's husband (Moorcroft Wilson 208-9). His relationship with Sassoon ended amicably, Shaw proposed to Angela and they married a year later, when both were 24. Shaw happily accepted Angela's daughter Jane, who would go on to work as his assistant in Stratford, and the couple had two more children: George David, named for Shaw's brothers, and Juliet Lavinia.

Shaw continued to find work, carving out a niche for himself in serious drama and classics. In 1928 he played Lord Stratffield in *The Truth Game* at the Globe, and Lyngstrand in *The Lady from the Sea* at the Apollo, following this the next year with appearances in *The Seagull* (as Konstantin Trepliv), and *Three Sisters* (as Baron Tusenbach) as well as a couple of other plays, and Chekhov was secured as Shaw's most familiar playwright. In 1930 Shaw

[13] For more on the friendship between Shaw and Gielgud see Chapters 1 and 5.

played Duval in *The Lady of the Camellias* at the Garrick Theatre opposite Tallulah Bankhead, then an established and much loved figure of the London stage but yet to garner international renown for her film career, as Marguerite. Then, in 1931, Shaw and Baddeley both took part in a tour of South Africa, playing in *Marigold, Autumn Crocus,* and a return for Shaw to *The Truth Game*. In 1932 came what Shaw later considered the height of his success when it came to quality of performance:

> My greatest success as an actor was certainly in Max Reinhardt's production of *The Miracle* in which no-one spoke a word. It was this spoken word which was my chief downfall as an actor, for I had an impediment in my speech, being unable to say or pronounce the letter 'r' correctly, and the quality of my voice was very poor.

Successful though Shaw may have been as both The Cripple and The King's Son in Vollmöller's *Das Mirakle*, he does his voice a grave disservice here. Surviving recordings of him speaking, in 1959 and in 1977, demonstrate that even in later life Shaw's voice was warm, strong, carried well, and held the attention, and that any speech impediment he may have had in his youth was barely noticeable by the end of his time at Stratford.

After 1932 Shaw fell in with a group of actors and theatre makers who would go on to be his lifelong friends and colleagues. His last production of 1932 was *Richard of Bordeaux*, where he filled in for Gielgud in the title role when the latter was unable to perform. 1933 saw the company properly coalesce around Gielgud's productions at the New Theatre. Shaw found himself acting with Gielgud, Gwen Ffrancgon-Davies and Laurence Olivier in *Queen of Scots* in 1934, with the Motley Studio designing costumes and sets. Shaw played Darnley, and his place at the inception of this group kept him close to all those there with him. In 1937 Gielgud was writing of "hav[ing] endless discussions and making vast plans continually" with Shaw and Ffrangcon-Davies (Gielgud to Ashcroft, 13 May, 1937). Shaw and Olivier also became close and lasting friends during *Queen of Scots*, as Olivier remembered:

> Glen Byam Shaw, Campbell Gullan... and myself formed a threesome we called the Bothwellians, after my character. The two rules that our society boasted were strict. [The first was a ceremonialised backstage drinking at the end of each performance, with each actor preparing the next stage of the drinks as his scene finished until all three were gathered to drink them]. There was only one rule besides this ceremony, and that was always to wear our club tie on any day that any of us had a first night.

> Gully died around the beginning of the war, I think. Glen and I steadfastly for the next thirty years or more wore what was left of our ties until they fell apart. Blood red, passionate purple, murky black, whisky yellow and venturesome green – there was something about that tie that made everyone think they ought to know what it was (Olivier 74).

Over the next few years the company grew and Shaw met more of what would be the lifelong core of his social and professional circles. Later in 1934 Shaw played Laertes to Gielgud's Hamlet, and the company swelled to include Anthony Quayle, George Devine and Alec Guinness.

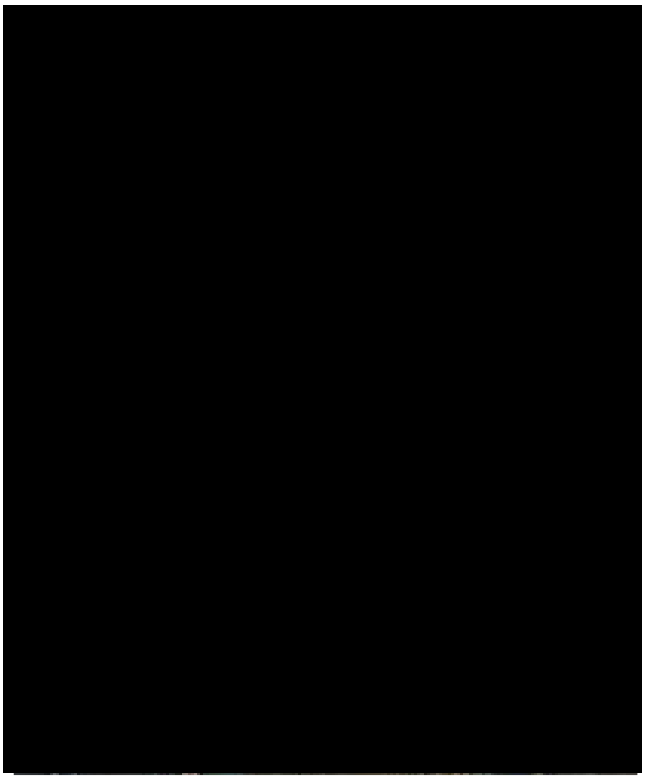

Fig. 2. Portrait of Glen Byam Shaw in full costume and makeup as Laertes, painted by Glyn Warren Philpot, possibly at the request of Siegfried Sassoon. Gifted to Shaw by Philpot's sisters in 1947 (Christies).

Shaw played Norfolk and Scroop in *Richard II* in 1935, and in 1936 he played Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*. The production saw Gielgud and Olivier alternate the roles of Romeo and Mercutio, and brought Edith Evans and Peggy Ashcroft on stage with Shaw for the first time.

The interlapping social circles of the theatre also brought about a friendship between Shaw and Baddeley and Michael Redgrave and Rachel Kempson by 1936, though Redgrave would not act with Gielgud's company until the following year. That year saw Shaw as Norfolk and Scroop in *Richard II* once more, as well as Sir Benjamin Backbite in *A School for Scandal*, and the company grew once again to introduce Redgrave, Harry Andrews and Harcourt Williams into Shaw's professional life. John Gielgud's informal company of actors, from whom Gielgud cast and produced almost all of his productions through the 1930s, included Shaw and Angela, Peggy Ashcroft, George Devine, Laurence Olivier, Leon Quartermaine, Anthony Quayle, Michael Redgrave, Emlyn Williams, and Harcourt Williams. But it was the women of the Motley Design Group who would go on to be Shaw's closest collaborators in the theatre. Motley was founded and run by three designers who'd been discovered together by Gielgud: Elizabeth Montgomery, and Margaret and Sophie Harris. Margaret, "Percy" to her friends, designed almost all of Shaw's productions in Stratford and afterwards a good number of his operas at Sadler's Wells. During the 1930s while working together with Gielgud, Shaw came to appreciate the Motleys' designs and the practicalities of their sets. Shaw also spent some time in the late 1930s teaching acting alongside Alec Guinness for Michel St Denis' London Theatre Studio, laying the groundwork for his later teaching at the Old Vic School alongside St Denis and George Devine.

Then, in 1936, Shaw first came to directing thanks to a quirk of Shakespeare's writing. Shaw was playing Benvolio in Gielgud's production of *Romeo and Juliet* when Gielgud was approached by the Oxford University Drama Society to direct their upcoming production of *Richard II*. As Shaw related the decisions that followed:

> At that time [Gielgud] was doing Romeo... He said "well I can't possibly go down to Oxford in the day and then come back and play Romeo in the evening." So he asked George Devine if he could do it. And George Devine said no because he was working with St Denis at the London Theatre Studio which was a school. So John said "well, what do you think?" George said "Why don't you ask Glen?" So John asked me and I said "Well, I don't think I could," and he said "Well why not? And anyway, I shall come down at the weekends." Because, playing Benvolio I was finished halfway through the play so I could catch a train down to Oxford in the evening to rehearse the next morning (Shaw interviewed by Mullin).

Had Shakespeare written Benvolio into the last two acts of the play, Shaw may never have started directing.

Shaw co-directed *Richard II* with Gielgud, and when Gielgud came to stage *The Merchant of Venice* the following year he asked Shaw to co-direct again. Gielgud himself played Shylock, while Shaw played Gratiano. From there Shaw went on to take jobs as both director and actor and his career seemed to be preparing to follow a twin-track path akin to that of his mentor, John Gielgud. But the world, and war, had other plans for Shaw.

Chapter 1: Life During Wartime – Glen Byam Shaw's War

It is 1938. The threat of war hangs heavy over Europe. On 12th March Germany annexes Austria, the Anschluss largely unopposed by the other European powers. Emboldened by this, Hitler continues his imperial expansion by annexing the Sudetenland, confident that the Allied Powers would not oppose the move. Come September negotiations between England, France and Germany result in the Munich Agreement. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returns to the UK with a piece of paper he says promises "peace for our time". His words ring hollow even then.

As the world prepares for war, so too does the Shaw family. All five Shaw siblings[14] will be drawn into the conflict, just like the rest of the world. The effects it has on Glen will stay with him for the rest of his life, and the seeds of much of his later work will be planted over the next few years. Moments, experiences, people and places will all feed into his understanding of the plays he comes to read a decade later. George Byam Shaw is already serving as a Major with the Royal Scots Regiment. David Byam Shaw is no longer actively serving in the Navy but will soon return to service. Barbara Shaw is married to Commander Antony Follett Pugsley of the Royal Navy, who is Captaining the destroyer HMS *Javelin*. The remaining brothers, James and Glen, have neither of them seen military service but, at James' suggestion, they enrol in the Army Officers' Emergency Reserve. Writing many years after the war, Glen will seem less than enamoured of the organisation he'd signed up for:

> In 1938, on the advice of my eldest brother who was a regular in the Royal Scots, I joined a rather bogus Army organization known as the Officers Emergency Reserve. I say 'bogus' because all you had to do to get into it was to be interviewed by the Colonel of the Regiment, and if he thought you were reasonably all right [sic] you were in, even if you knew absolutely nothing about the Army (Shaw Papers 1).

While the world waits, Glen continues to work. Over the course of 1938 he is constantly in demand. He directs *The Island* at the Comedy Theatre, written by the New Zealand dramatist Merton Hodge and starring Godfrey Tearle (who would go on to play Antony for Glen in 1947). Michel St Denis casts him as Solyony in Chekov's *Three Sisters* alongside his wife Angela Baddeley, John Gielgud, Michael Redgrave, Peggy Ashcroft, George Devine, Alec

[14] For this chapter alone I will refer to the Shaw siblings by first name for clarity.

Guinness and Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies: all members of Gielgud's informal company of actors. St Denis and Devine would go on to found and run the Old Vic Centre with Shaw from 1947 to 1951. Gielgud then asks Glen to assist him in directing his production of *The Merchant of Venice*, as well as playing Gratiano. Glen's direction, as he describes it later, consists mainly of sitting in the front row of the audience as Gielgud asks “Do you think it's good if I'm standing here or do you think it's better if I'm standing over there?", and replying, "Personally I think it would be good if you didn't stand in either of those places and you stood actually right in the middle of the stage" (Shaw interviewed by Mullin). From there Glen goes on to play Alexander Studsinksy in *The White Guard* at the Phoenix Theatre in October. The play seems to have been an adaptation or translation of Mikhail Bulgakov's Russian play *Dni Turbinykh* or *The Days of the Turbins* (itself an adaptation of his novel *The White Guard* which would not have an English language translation until 1971). A partly autobiographical piece, *The Days of the Turbins* was first staged in Russia in 1926, directed by Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre. Controversy had arisen from its treatment of officers of the White Guard (supporters of the ousted Royalist regime) as humanised and even likeable characters, and the performances were eventually cancelled in 1929. A year later Bulgakov wrote to the Soviet government complaining about the treatment of the performances by the Soviet press and in 1932 the Moscow Art Theatre revived the production at the direct instruction of Josef Stalin. It transpired that Stalin had seen the play 15 times during its original three-year run, often going incognito, and had apparently resurrected the play on a whim after having been disappointed by Alexander Alfinogenov's *Fear* at the Moscow Art Theatre and calling for the return of the "good" play (Shaternikova). Who translated the play into English, or adapted it, is unknown.

Glen's professional year ends with him directing *Dear Octopus*, starring among others his wife Angela, and John Gielgud. The play, by playwright, future novelist and former actor Dodie Smith, offers a close comedic study of a family: "that dear octopus from whose tentacles we never quite escape, nor, in our inmost hearts, ever quite wish to" as Gielgud's character toasts it at the end. Smith would later offer a much less comic study of family life and conflict in her first novel, *I Capture the Castle*, in 1948.

It is 1939. In the January the London Theatre Studio project closes its doors for the last time. The brainchild of Michel St Denis, the L.T.S. saw direct input from Glen Byam Shaw, the Motley design team, George Devine, Peggy Ashcroft, Alec Guinness, Michael Redgrave and more. It has run in parallel for many years with John Gielgud's company of actors, many of whom were involved in it including Glen. The end of the L.T.S. project

marks the conclusion of Glen's first foray into the world of actor training; of developing a company professionally. Glen's focus with the L.T.S. had been on acting rather than directing: teaching classes alongside Alec Guinness. John Gielgud's company of actors persists a little longer:

> The company last performed together in *Hamlet* in Denmark. Led by Gielgud, the production had transferred to Denmark for a short run at the historic Krönborg Catle, Elsinore. War was in the air. German gunboats were in the harbour. The actors protested about swastikas on display at their hotel. The swastikas were removed, and the show went on. Despite the ominous atmosphere – or perhaps because of it – the company's mood seems to have been light-hearted, almost manic – with a rush of practical jokes that culminated in a merry excursion late at night across the battlements and dunkings in the sea. It was the last time they would be together before the War (Mullin).

Glen Byam Shaw's first contact with the enemy therefore comes through this production of *Hamlet*. In a move prophetic of, if not responsible for, his later description of himself to Anthony Quayle, Glen plays Horatio. On returning to England Glen finds himself braced and preparing for a war everyone could see on the horizon.

It's 3rd September 1939. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain addresses the nation. He informs them that the British deadline for the German withdrawal of troops from Poland has passed. The British Ambassador's ultimatum to the German government demanding an announced withdrawal has not been met. "I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received and consequently this country is at war with Germany," Chamberlain declares. A little over two weeks later Glen Byam Shaw writes to his close friend and former lover Siegfried Sassoon. In that letter Shaw makes clear both his willingness to fight and his wariness. Sassoon was a veteran of the first world war noted for his courage by his men, and a recipient of the Military Cross. Glen's admiration for Sassoon's courage, his uncertainty of his own, and his determination to do what is right in spite of his own fear and misgivings is clear. Glen also outlines the current state of his family (and his hair) in this letter:

> My brother Jim & I joined a thing called the Army Officer Emergency Reserve last year & my brother George got us affiliated to the Royal Scots which is his regiment. We hoped to be called on general mobilisation but so far nothing has happened.

> I tell Jim that the War Office are afraid to show my white hair to the Germans as they will think the British Army is composed of such very old men!
> George (my brother) is in France we think but have no definite news, & David (my youngest brother) is back in the Navy. Barbara's husband is Captain of a Destroyer but she has no idea where he is.

Before the end of the war George, David and Barbara's husband Antony will have been mourned by the surviving Shaws, though Antony will eventually be found to have survived the tragedy he was thought lost in. This is the first mention of Glen's hair having turned white: photographs of him from just a few years earlier show his hair as still dark (NPG).

> My mother is really quite remarkable. She is quite calm and showed no emotion at all when George & David left but one instinctively knows how much she is going through, I can imagine how wonderful your mother is about it all.
> Well, dearest Sieg, you can imagine how much I long to be doing something myself & I hope with all my heart that it won't be long before they call us.
> The Children (Jane [in her late teens], George [9] and Juliet [5]) are at Badminton, staying with Claude Kirby[15]. Queen Mary is staying about half a mile away from them & the Kent children [presumably the children of George, Duke of Kent] are at Cirencester so that should mean the place is considered safe.
> We have sent the servants away. Angela & I are in this house [presumably 4 Holmbrook as referenced later] alone (19th September 1939).

While they may have been alone in the house, Glen and Angela are far from alone in any real sense. *Dear Octopus* is still touring and the Shaws are still seeing their friends and colleagues.

December arrives. Glen and Jim are yet to be called up, despite their best efforts. "My brother Jim & I continue to try & get into the Army," Glen writes to Sassoon on the 7th, "& it begins to look rather more hopeful, but the general impression is that they wo'nt want us until 'circumstances' have made vacancies in the existing list of Officers!" "Circumstances" would not be forthcoming for another five months.

[15] No other letters or materials reference Claude Kirby or give any indication of who he might be.

It's the 21st May 1940. "Circumstances" conspire to create the vacancies needed for Glen and Jim to be called up in the most tragic way. The catastrophic failure of the Battle of France has left allied forces stranded in hostile territory. The 1st Battalion of the Royal Scots Regiment is among them.

> By the 21st the Battalion was holding a position on the River Escaut just south of Tournai. The Battalion was in continuous action all day, suffering over 150 casualties but not losing an inch of ground. The fighting continued the next day, losing a further 50 casualties, until the Battalion was ordered to resume the withdrawal that night. This continued until 26 May when the 2nd Division was ordered to fight 'to the last round and last man' as part of an outer defensive perimeter, beyond artillery range, to cover the evacuation from Dunkirk. After a desperate defence, together with the 2nd Battalion The Royal Norfolk Regiment, of the Bethune-Merville road in the area of the village of Le Paradis, and after appalling losses and virtually out of ammunition, 1 RS had effectively ceased to exist by 30 May (Website of the Royal Scots Regiment).

Among the casualties suffered on 21st May is Major George Byam Shaw: killed while assisting wounded soldiers. The 1st Battalion's war diaries, kept by Major J. Bruce, record the events of that day in a brief but affecting manner:

> 21st May - R. ESCAUT - A Hellish day! We were mortared and shelled heavily all morning and afternoon and owing to our open right flank Bn [Battalion] HQ had to take up a posn [position] as a support line to D and B Coys [Companies] who were defending this flank. D Coy and Carriers put in several counter attacks to try and re-establish the line. In the afternoon things got rather easier and the Camerons after liaison with us put in a counter attack and re-established the line to some extent. Had over 150 casualties and had great difficulty in evacuating them; these included Major G. BYAM SHAW and 2/Lt R.E. GALLIE killed Lt (A/Capt) W.I.E. THORBURN wounded 2/Lts L.E. LIDDELL, C.E. McDUFF-DUNCAN and KYLE wounded. Padre managed to bury some of our dead that night (1st Battalion Royal Scots 1940, http://www.theroyalscots.co.uk/2nd-world-war-ww2/ Accessed 25th September 2022).

The Shaws have little time to mourn. The Dunkirk evacuation is concluded by the 4th of June and within days Glen and Jim Byam Shaw are called up and given their commissions as

officers in the new 1st Battalion. They're posted to Great Driffield in Yorkshire to begin their training, presumably as newly commissioned officers at the rank of Lieutenant.

Training continues for Glen for some time; interrupted only by brief leave in April 1940 in which time he sees his wife and children. Come August 1940 Glen and Jim are still at Great Driffield. Glen, about to start another week's leave, writes to Sassoon on 13th August in response to a letter offering commiserations on the death of Major George Byam Shaw.

> I was so glad to get your letter. I know you would be thinking of me. I felt terribly sad about my brother & I try not to think about it more than I can help. I was very devoted to him & I shall miss him always. He was killed trying to get some wounded men back to the Airport. So many of the original first Bn [Battalion] were killed that I think in fact I know he would have hated to get home himself.
> I have talked to the Sjt [Serjeant] who was with him when he was killed & he is full of praise for the way he behaved. But it is small comfort to those that loved him. My mother is wonderful about it I believe. I have'nt seen her since it happened.
> Tell Hester [Sassoon's wife] that my thoughts are with her & I know so well how she must feel. We have been working very hard. My brother Jim & I are now both in the 1st Bn which has been reformed. As I say only a few of the original Bn - about 120 & mostly Cooks etc at that - were left, but this new Bn looks like being good. They certainly have something to live up to. In the middle of the battle a message came to the Bn from H.Q. Saying "Well done The Royal Scots."

At the end of the letter Shaw reveals his recent promotion to Sassoon before signing off with a customary farewell between the two men and a misquotation from *Juno and the Paycock*.

Glen's promised leave fails to materialise. It's October now, and Glen has been transferred from combat officer training to staff officer training. This does not please him. Writing to Sassoon on 30th October, Glen expresses his distaste for both the privilege of the Staff Officers and the work he is doing in the position.

> Here I am trying to learn to be a Staff Offi! Laugh that off. Of course the whole thing is a farce, because I could'nt begin to understand the work in fifty years. You know me. Slow but sure - not exactly what is required for this job. Next week I go to

> Division for a month - That will be below the farce Standard - Third rate music hall! Well, well.....
> The Staff to me means your Cousin Philip[16] swishing past you in Flanders in his car & covering you with mud. Well, I know now how much rather I would be in the mud with you than in the car with old Phil:
> I hope that they will have the sense to realise at Drif' that I am an old hack & such am better put with the foot sloggers.
> It seems a hell of a long time since I saw you, Sieg & I have'nt had that leave of mine yet. Over six months now.

Glen also gives Sassoon his opinion of the Brigade leadership in this letter:

> Well I do'nt know Sieg if you ever spent any time at all on the Staff, but really it is hell. The Brigadier [Lieutenant-Colonel Purves] is one of the nicest men I have ever met.
> But even so it is beastly. The telephone rings from morning to night & every time you pick it up someone asks some impossible Question that is quite unreasonably difficult to answer. My head swims.
> The Brig. Major [Brigade Major] is a chap called Stockwell. He says that his father was your C.O. & that he ^(his father) says you are the bravest man he ever met, that he recommended you for a V.C. & that his diary is full of "Enemy repulsed, chiefly due to personal gallantry of Sassoon" etc.
> I liked Stockwell (Nigel) for telling me that but I can't say I like him much as a man. A bit of a twister, I should say. I imagine he is clever in a very light-hearted way, very pushing & difficult.

Glen endures Staff Officer Training for at least 3 more months. 1941 arrives, and with it, Glen's long-delayed leave:

[16] Philip Sassoon: served as Staff Officer and Private Secretary to Field Marshal Haig from 1915 until the end of the first war, MP for Hythe from 1912, and a prominent political and social figure until his death in 1939.

> I had a week's leave in January but as Angela was in York with her play I did'nt go to London but stayed in York. We had a lovely week & the children came up to York as well. I had'nt seen them since April so you can imagine the excitement was great. One morning I took them to "Smiths" to buy them a book each – Jane chose your [Sassoon's] poems - off her own bat - which pleased me (Letter dated Early 1941).

Glen's return from leave soon brings his frustration to a head. In an undated letter to Sassoon from between January and April, Glen outlines the action he's taken:

> I cannot bear Staff work & I asked the Brigadier to let me go to the Bn [Battalion]. He is the most charming man & I think in his heart agrees with me that Staff Capt. [Captain] is a very dreary job. I shall be much happier once I get back & it will be nice to be with my brother Jim again (also a Capt now)
> Incidentally I think Nigel Stockwell the really nastiest man I have ever met in my life. It makes me smile to think that his father was your C.O. He must be a very different man from his son I think. (Or else you can't have liked him much) Is'ant [sic] there one middling honest man left in the world?
> Well I wonder what high jinks old Hitler has up his sleeve for the coming spring. How ridiculous that we all have to be bothering about the wretched fellow instead of enjoying the prospect of Spring followed by Summer (Letter dated Early 1941).

When Glen comes to direct *Othello* in fifteen years' time there will be echoes of his dislike of Nigel Stockwell in his direction of Iago.[17]

Glen returns to the battalion before the summer. Further leave in May gives him time to see his family (apart from Jane who is away studying at Oxford.) Glen also drops in to see John Gielgud, who had apparently been asking to see him the morning Glen happened to visit. While never working as closely as they did before the war, Gielgud and Glen would remain close friends and colleagues for the rest of their lives, with Glen and Angela being among those turned to by Binkie Beaumont for advice after Gielgud's arrest for soliciting in 1953.[18] On his return Glen is asked to arrange a military display for the benefit of the town nearby. Glen does so, to great acclaim, making a particular point to showcase the aspects and

[17] See Chapter 7.
[18] For a full account of these events, see Chapter 5.

professions of army life which do not get much consideration: the cooks, the tailors, the mechanics, the boot-menders, the armourers, the signalmen. This goes down very well with the men, who are glad to be appreciated, as well as with the officers. Glen's directorship of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, which would see him making weekly visits to every workshop and department to check in with them, and coming to be known as "father" or "dad" by a majority of the staff before his departure, will echo this effort to see every person under his command appreciated.

It's the 3rd of July now and Glen is visited by one of his men: Carrigan. Carrigan's wife and daughter were injured in an air raid back in Hull while the regiment were still stationed nearby. Glen met them then while they were recovering, and is clearly still quite affected by this. Carrigan's daughter, two years old, is disfigured for life and her injuries mean she has had to have an eye removed. Glen writes to Angela that evening and asks her to send Carrigan's family a parcel of Juliet's old baby clothes, as well as a toy if she can buy one for the girl.

On the 23rd of July Glen receives a letter from Angela including photographs of their family, and the revelation that they have a dog now: Mousey. Glen is not hugely taken with this addition to their family. That day the H.M.S. Fearless is damaged by Italian aircraft while part of a convoy from Malta. The Fearless is scuttled and the crew evacuated to its sister ship, but news of the sinking comes to the Shaws before confirmation that Barbara's husband, Antony Puggsley, has survived.

Come the 27th of July Glen is away from the battalion. In a letter to Sassoon he describes it as a pleasant change from his usual duties:

> I am on a course at present, but only for a week. I am enjoying it & find it a rest & a relief not having to bother why 3050618 Pte Scott J. is deficient of one pair of Boots Marching, or why 3061815 Pte McIntosh R has returned from leave one hour & 12 minutes late. I'm sure you know it all so well, & that feeling of despair when you think that at last you really have everything sorted out & then the C.Q.M.S. [Company Quarter Master Sergeant] comes in to the office with a sickly smile on his face & says "Excuse me, Sir, but the Sit. Cook reports that four lbs of Margarine have gone amissing [sic] from the Cook-House." Well, as I say, it is nice to be learning about Weapons for a change & getting time in the evenings to write to one's friends...

On 8th October Glen writes to Angela and informs her that the battalion will soon be shipping out to the near east, though he can give her no more details than that. Whether even Glen knows precisely where he is headed is unclear. By December though the battalion has moved only as far as Burford in Oxfordshire. Glen writes to Angela on the 17th of December to tell her that the mess hall is opposite the Lamb Inn.

It isn't long before the war claims the next of the Shaw family. Commander David Byam Shaw is aboard the H.M.S. Stanley when it is attacked on the 17th of December by a combined force of German U-boats and bombers. The attack lasts four days and ultimately the Stanley is sunk by a torpedo strike from one of the U-boats. David Byam Shaw dies on the second day of the attack, along with ten other officers and 125 ratings. The Shaws have Christmas to mourn. Glen will come to write about his response, and his feelings and actions, in a letter to Sassoon in May: "After I saw you on my leave we hung about for a long time, & during that time my brother David was killed. It hit me very hard, Siegfried, & you will understand that I had no energy or wish to see anyone except his wife & children & of course my own family..." (29th May 1942).

Come March 1942 Glen has received a letter from Lt. Colonel Purves who oversaw Glen's Staff Officer training. Glen forwards the letter on to Angela for safe keeping as he wishes to show it to his mother:

> My dear Glen,
> You have been very much in my thoughts ever since I left the battalion. I can never be sufficiently grateful to you for the way in which you supported me & the success you made of the HQ Coy. It may sound rather fulsome praise, but I told several people at one time or another, that I have never met another officer who was able to make a success of that company, + as you know, it was always a shamble [sic] until you took it over.
> I know you disliked your short experience of life on the staff, but if you ever feel like having another try at it, I wish you would let me know, because I could find a good use for you, wherever I may be + I'm sure you are wasted where you are... (28th March 1942).

1st Battalion enjoys one more month in Oxfordshire. Glen's last leave sees him having dinner with Angela, Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh: Leigh sporting sunglasses to cover two black eyes that she and Olivier assure Glen came from her falling over while drunk the night

before. Then comes 15th April and the battalion ships out for India. They arrive in Bombay, as it was called then, on 10th June, before travelling on to Poona. 1st Battalion will spend the next six months in Poona training as they come to terms with the climate and wait out the monsoon season.

Glen and Jim take the time to settle into their new situation. Training keeps them both busy, to the point that when they finally find the time to have dinner together Glen falls asleep during the meal. Late in 1942 the Battalion is transferred from 4 to 6 Brigade to begin preparations for a special operation in support of the Arakan campaign in Burma. In December the Battalion is transferred from Bombay to Calcutta, and then from there by air to Chittagong in what is now Bangladesh (Website of The Royal Scots Regiment). For Christmas 1942 Glen's daughter Juliet sends him a diary for the coming year. In it, Glen writes out the names of every man serving in his company. As the war goes on, he will cross out many of those names as they are lost. By this time, also, he has come to rely on the services of his batman "Graham".

Come the 17th of January, Glen's thoughts during exercises have turned back towards the theatre. As he tells his wife in a letter he started writing to her two days before:

> To-day [sic] as we were marching along a rather dreary & very dusty track, I started to play my favourite game, & that is producing "Hamlet" in my mind. It has the delightful advantage of being "in the imagination", so I never have to make any definite decisions, & can alter my cast, the scenery, & the entire production, several times in the space of one hour. To-day I was trying to tell "Hamlet" how the soliloquys should be done & this is what I said to him,
> "Let them hang in the air like thoughts, & let the mood of the soliloquy be governed by the atmosphere which has been created by the other characters before they leave the stage." The only exception to this that I can remember without having a copy of the play is the "To be or not to be" speech, & that mood is brought on to the stage by Hamlet & has the same effect as a pebble being dropped into a dark silent pool... (15th January 1942).

This line of thinking will stay with Glen right through to his 1958 production of the play. *Hamlet* remains on his mind, and on 27th February Glen writes to Angela from inside a bamboo hut in the jungle to tell her that he wishes he were as brave as he knew her to be. In trying to express his own position, thoughts and feelings he refers to "a superb speech... & if

you want to understand my exact mood as I write to you now, read that speech & Shakespeare will tell you all that is in my mind." The speech in question is Hamlet's final soliloquy from Act 4 Scene 4. When Shaw produces the play in 1958 he leaves the entire speech uncut, and with no better guide to how much of its sentiments speak to him it must be considered in its entirety:

> How all occasions do inform against me,
> And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,
> If his chief good and market of his time
> Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.
> Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and god-like reason
> To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
> Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
> Of thinking too precisely on the event,
> A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
> And ever three parts coward, I do not know
> Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;'
> Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
> To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
> Witness this army of such mass and charge
> Led by a delicate and tender prince,
> Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
> Makes mouths at the invisible event,
> Exposing what is mortal and unsure
> To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
> Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
> Is not to stir without great argument,
> But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
> When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
> That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
> Excitements of my reason and my blood,
> And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see

The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! (30-64).

Shaw roots his understanding of himself in what he feels he should be and how to overcome himself to achieve that. This idea of being what one should be in spite of one's nature or fear will turn Glen against a number of Shakespeare's characters when he comes to direct them, most notably Achilles and Patroclus in *Troilus and Cressida*, and Tyrell in *Richard III*. Beyond this, Glen's understanding of this passage can only be enhanced by the deaths of George and David: both killed by an enemy far away from the one Glen is currently fighting. Glen is away from home, denied any recourse to revenge, and confronted daily by the sight of an army. His thoughts turning to *Hamlet*, and to this speech in particular, are far from surprising.

Glen's hunger for action and his "bloody thoughts" will soon be sated. On 6th March the 1st Battalion of the Royal Scots, is deployed to the Mayu peninsula in Burma alongside the rest of Six Brigade. Their objective is to clear the Japanese positions preventing the advancement of the Arakan campaign. They will not prove successful. Glen would later write "Early in 1943 it became obvious that our expedition against the Japanese was a failure, and we were continually surrounded by the enemy and had to retreat back to India" (Shaw Papers 1). At the same time Jim is attached to the 14th Indian division and leaves the Battalion to perform staff officer duties there for a time. Glen writes to Angela that Jim is "so up-set [to be taken off combat duties] that he went off without saying "Good-bye" to anyone including myself".

The 21st March sees the fighting lead to major shakeups within the command structure of B Company. The war diaries for the day record the events that led to this. B Company sustains heavy casualties under heavy mortar and machine gun fire in the small hours of the morning. With all officers, the Company Serjeant Major, and most of the Non-Commissioned Officers wounded, the company structure was reworked and Major Douglas placed in command of B Company at 0900. By 1630 Major Douglas has also been injured or killed and Glen is given command and a field promotion to Acting Major (1st Battalion Royal Scots

1943-45). Writing to Angela on the 21st Glen is upbeat about these events. "I expect you have realised that we are doing a bit of the "real stuff" now," he writes of the recent fighting. "Hugo has been wounded & I have taken over from him. He is not badly hit & will you please assure Ruth from me that he is absolutely O.K. & won't even be disabled in any way. We have had pretty good luck so far & expect it will continue so. Everyone is in very good heart." It is unclear whether Hugo is Major Douglas who took over command of B company at 0900 or his predecessor who was injured during the attack at 0200.

April brings with it the withdrawal from Burma as it becomes clear that the planned offensive cannot succeed. The early days see a number of conflicts between the Royal Scots and Japanese forces. On the 5th April B Company rejoins the main body of the battalion. In the small hours of the next morning the Japanese attack from all sides. Platoons from B company, alongside Battalion H.Q. personnel, defend the north and east, through the morning until the battalion successfully withdraws to the beach. At 1530 the fighting has ended and the battalion have counted their casualties:

> Casualties suffered by the bn during the fighting 5/6 Apr was:-
>
> | | Killed | Wounded | Missing |
> |---|---|---|---|
> | Officers | - | 1 | 1 |
> | O.Rs | 9 | 31 | 13 |
> | Total | 9 | 32 | 14 |
>
> (1st Battalion Royal Scots 1943-45).

The wounded officer is Jim Byam Shaw. As recorded elsewhere here, Glen will go on to write about the night many years later:

> The night when my brother was wounded was a very unpleasant one, as the Japanese infiltrated into our camp during the night, and there was a complete mix up with nobody knowing what was going to happen next. It was certainly very alarming with terrible noises of dying men all round one, and, of course, fire arms, rockets and hand grenades going off throughout the whole night. Early on in the proceedings I heard my brother call out to me from the darkness, and I went to see what had happened to him. He was lying on his back and smothered in blood. He asked me if his arm was off, and I told him it was not. I did my best to bandage up his wounds but it was very difficult in the darkness to see exactly what one should do, and I only had a field

> dressing with me. I then had to leave him to try and get control of my company and defend our Battalion H.Q. which was in danger of being over-run.
> The fascinating thing to me, looking back on all this, is that I seemed to be in a state of great elation and supreme confidence. I wasn't nervous or frightened for a moment, not even when a man who was standing absolutely next to me was shot dead. As the dawn began and one was able to see the shambles all round us, it was pretty nasty, with the dead and dying lying about in all directions, but I felt, I am almost ashamed to say, wonderfully happy that I had not been afraid, and the greatest compliment that I have ever been paid in my life was when I walked past some of our Jocks (Scottish troops) who were in a slit trench and I heard one of them say "Look at that bugger, he's enjoying it" (Shaw Papers 1).

Jim receives two injuries of note: one to his right side and one to his left elbow. Of the two the elbow wound will prove the more debilitating, damaging the joint as it has.

The battalion establishes a defensive position the next day. On the 8th April orders for the next assault are received. The battalion is divided into three forces: 2 striking forces designated X and Y, and a reinforcement force, Z. Glen is put in command of X force (consisting of B and D companies). By 1825 that day X force have held their position and completed their objective, but Glen has been wounded (1st Battalion Royal Scots 1943-45). Writing to Sassoon a month later, Glen reveals that he was shot in the left thigh, the bullet passing through his scrotum and right thigh before exiting: damaging the sciatic nerve in his right leg and causing him to lose a testicle.

In his account of the fighting, Glen writes:

> ...when I was wounded it took seven days before I arrived at the Base Hospital at Dacca in Calcutta. In the course of that time I had two operations in Field Hospitals and we travelled by stretcher, motor ambulance, a barge down the river, another motor ambulance and finally a hospital train. The further one got from the battlefield, the more casual became the attitude of the people who looked after one until one got to the hospital, and then the nurses were like angels... (Shaw Papers 1).

Glen, now out of danger, writes to Angela and refrains from telling her how serious his injuries and condition had been. The battalion continues to withdraw, returning to Bombay on 24th May, where Glen will be waiting in the main hospital and continuing to recover. Before,

on Easter Sunday (25th April) Glen is informed that Jim will be transferring to the same hospital, and will ultimately end up in the bed next to him for the majority of their shared convalescence.

Months pass and Glen grows bored. By the 8th of August he has written to Angela to say that he's starting to get his "out of work feeling". Seven years hence, when Shaw provisionally agrees to become Anthony Quayle's co-director in 1951 it's with a speed that suggests he knows how quickly this "out of work feeling" can set in for him. On 11th August Glen and Jim attempt an unsuccessful breakout. They are foiled by the doctors and forced to resign themselves to continued convalescence for another few weeks at least. Glen is now walking with the assistance of a stick. At some point during this period Angela appears in a BBC radio broadcast and Glen hears her voice for the first time in 2 years. The experience is quite affecting for him (Shaw/Baddeley letter 8th December 1944).

Also during this period Jim grows tired of Glen's "out of work" feeling and demands that his brother do something to distract himself. Years later, Glen will recall:

> ...I had had my leg badly wounded so I was sort of hobbling about on crutches and I got very grumpy and fed up; nothing to do in this place. And my brother got sick of it and he said "well why don't you do something instead of just sitting there and moaning and grumbling." So I said "What the hell am I to do?" And he said "Well I can tell you exactly what to do. You're always complaining that all of your things have been stolen" (my watch and my fountain pen and my photographs and my thing of my wife Angela, you know, everything had gone.) And he said "Stop moaning about it. Your bloody possessions are gone so don't go on about it any more! Get going to the bazaar, buy yourself a new fountain pen and some notebooks and buy yourself a copy of a complete works of Shakespeare, because you can get them in the bazaar, I've seen them there" So I said "Alright" and this I did and I said "Well now what do I do?" He said, "I'll tell you again what to do, you do a production as though you were really going to do it, of Antony & Cleopatra , we're in the army, been in the army for several years now so you know something about that, and we're in the east so you know something about that because we've been in this bloody country for three odd years, so do A&C and do it on paper as though you were going to do it, and you can choose who you like to play the parts, you can write down "Gielgud" or whoever, use whoever you like." So this I did (Shaw interviewed by Mullin).

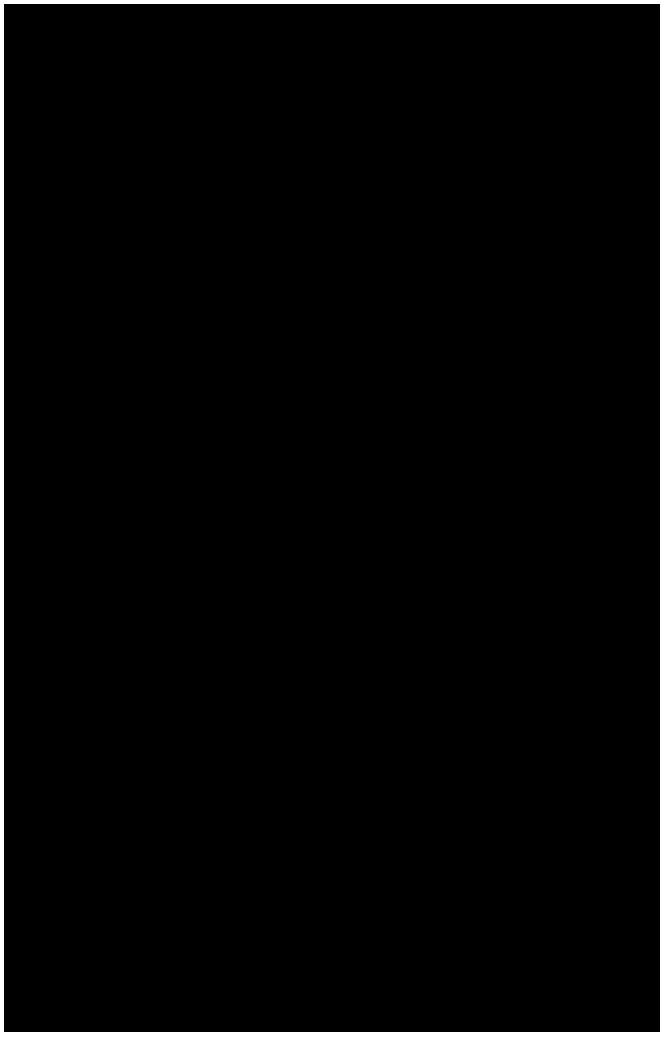

Fig. 3. Photograph of James Byam Shaw (left) and Glen Byam Shaw (right) in uniform, presumably taken in India during their recovery period after their injuries. Reproduced by permission of the Provost and Fellows of Eton College.

It's 4pm on 17th September 1943. Glen and Jim are put up in front of a board of senior doctors to assess their fitness for duty. They are both discharged from the hospital, but with no clearance to return to any military duties until they have been reassessed. The two brothers take leave in Bombay and generally enjoy themselves until 23rd October when they return to the battalion. Once back on duty, Glen writes to Angela to inform her:

> ...We are going to start going to the hospital daily to be put through a rehabilitation course, which consists, as far as I can make out, of having one's limbs pulled about by young Amazons!
> Anyhow it ought to be great fun! (23rd October).

On 29th of October Glen clarifies to Angela that, having now experienced it: "it isn't the sort of massage I like or am used to." The day also brings the theatre briefly back into Glen's life when Jim's nurse recognises his surname and asks if he's related to Glen. Jim gleefully points out that his brother is lying in the next bed. "I believe she had seen me in "Richard of Bordeaux" so I can imagine the poor girl's surprise when she saw a middle-aged & slightly emaciated white-haired soldier instead of the golden headed hero of romance that she had in her mind's eye!" Glen tells Angela in his letter.

It's 4th November, and Glen writes to Angela with news of his medical situation:

> My beloved
> We had the Medical Board yesterday, & have both been graded "C" for three months, which means that one can only have a job at the Base during that time. Also we have to do a Rehabilitation Course for at least three months, which means massage & exercise; & I am only allowed to do a "Sedentary" job during that time, which, according to my dictionary, means "accustomed to sit much"!
> So there it is.
> I do'nt yet know where I shall get "accustomed to sit much", but quite obviously it will not be with the Battalion. I am still hoping that Ting [Jim] & I will get a job together, but even that seems doubtful, under the circumstances. Of course we knew that it was bound to be something like that, but I ca'nt say I feel exactly cheerful just at present.
> Also we keep on losing "Rank", & are now, as regards pay and reality, "Lieutenants", though our C.O. has, very nicely, said we may still call ourselves "Captains". As I wrote & told my son, at this rate I shall return home as Private Popeye!

By the 16th of November Glen has started to work again, assisting Colonel Williams in making a training film and apparently taking up directing once more:

> It's a funny sort of work; helping to make a training film! I find it rather interesting, & enjoy trying to make the soldiers "act natural". The Colonel in charge is extremely nice & most considerate, & insisting on having an enormous arm-chair carried round for my exclusive use! Well, it is something to do, & I hope a permanent job will turn up for Ting & Me shortly... (Shaw to Baddeley, 16th November 1943).

The permanent job that Glen is hoping for does not materialise shortly as he'd hoped. What does come is word that Angela is considering coming out to India to help entertain the troops. Glen strongly advises her against it:

> You say, shall you try to come here with Cochran! My sweet-heart nothing would upset me more than if you did.
> The thought of the children being without you during War time would spoil all the happiness of having you with me.
> I should be terribly worried about you on the journey & in all probability I should'nt be able to meet you at all anymore than I have been able to meet George Devine though we have done everything possible to see each other.
> No, my darling. We must go on doing our jobs as best we can right up to the end of this terrible time, then I am sure God will give us peace & happiness together for the rest of our lives.

In the same letter, Glen tells Angela about an American airman whom he met while in the hospital whose death has clearly affected him.

> I also wrote to Tallulah - which will amuse you I know - but actually it is a very sad story.
> There was a charming American air pilot in hospital with Ting & I, very young & very American, in fact we all called him "America". We used to tease him a lot & say that the Air Force had a cushy time compared to the Infantry.
> One day he said something about wishing he knew a "Star". Ting, of course, piped up & said I was the most famous actor in England etc, etc!
> Sherry (that was his name) asked me if I'd ever acted with any American Stars, so with much pride I nonchalantly mentioned that I had once appeared with "Tallulah".
> Then he asked me if I had ever been to America & when I said "Yes", there was a long pause & suddenly he said "Say, I guess my Grandmother would have heard of you"!
> You can imagine how Ting & all the other chaps laughed, & poor Sherry kept trying to explain that his Grandmother was a great theatre-goer & that was what he meant.

> But it is my favourite story against myself & one I hope to tell many times if I get home in time for it still to be slightly funny!
> Next morning he came into our Ward & said "Say, what about you writing to Miss Bankhead & asking her to send me a photograph". I refused; but said that I would dictate a letter to her from me if he would write it. So that made that morning go by pleasantly & quickly; and off the letter went to "Actor's Equity" as I did'nt know her address.
> He showed us all a little book of photographs that he had of his wife (married less than a year) his Mom, Pop, little brother, & old Granny, affectionately known as "Rippy".
> He promised to come & see us after he left the hospital, but did'nt turn up for a couple of weeks.
> One of the other Americans happened to call in & I said to him "You tell young Sherry that if he does'nt come & visit me soon, I'll write & tell "Rippy" about him"
> Next day he appeared, rather self-conscious, with a huge quantity of "Lucky Strikes".
> When Ting & I were on leave one of the Sisters wrote & told me he had been killed. I wrote off to his Squadron Commander to find out if it was true & got a letter back just a few days ago saying he had been killed on Active Service on 25 Sep.
> It up-set me more than I should have expected. I think it was the little book of photographs. I wrote to "Mom". And the answer from "Tallulah" has'nt come yet!
> (17th December 1943)

When he comes to direct *Troilus and Cressida*, Shaw will specifically compare the bravery and circumstance of the Trojan warriors leaving the city for battle to that of fighter pilots (*Troilus and Cressida* Notebook). While never explicitly mentioned or written about, the death of "America" cannot be far from his mind.

In January 1944 the 1st Battalion redeploys to Belgaum to begin jungle training for the next offensive. Glen does not accompany them, remaining instead in Bombay (his postal address now "care of Lloyd's Bank"). On 17th January Glen receives a reminder of his earliest loss to the war when the regimental quartermaster contacts him:

> ... I got an airgraph from Major Harris yesterday who is in charge at the Royal Scots Depot. He wants to know what to do with my father's picture "Sun, Silk & Sinew" that belonged to George & which he lent to the C.O. at the Depot when he was there. I

> have discussed with Ting & we both think it would be best to have the picture sent to 4 Holmbrook…
> Of course we can't just take it for ours forever but I really don't think Ting or Barb will want it, & I don't think it will be much good giving it back to the Regiment as they are always moving about (Shaw to Baddeley, 18th January).

The 4th of February brings happiness with it as Glen finally manages to arrange to meet and spend time with George Devine for the first time since they were both posted in India. Glen also makes it very clear that he has no interest in taking a job with the Entertainments National Service Association, no matter how many times such a job is offered to him. A year later, when refusing their latest offer, he will explain in a letter to Angela that he feels enough guilt being invalided off the front lines and doesn't want to give up what aspects of "real" soldiery he can still hold on to (4th March 1945).

It's now 17th February and Glen has malaria. A sketch of tiny devils drilling corkscrews into his head shows how he feels in his letter to Angela, but he believes he should be out of hospital in about ten days. Sure enough on the 28th February Glen is discharged to settle into a daily routine which he considers to be less than ideal, and which he outlines to his wife in his letter of 10th March:

> I get up in the morning, wash, shave & dress, walk two hundred yards to the Mess. Have breakfast. Walk back to my room. Read for quarter of an hour. Go out & get into a truck. Am driven to the hospital (approximately four miles). My leg & foot are massaged for about three quarters of an hour, by a large lady called Miss Mozley-Stark. I do exercises; under the supervision of afore-said large lady. I read or write for one hour. I walk to the Mess & have my luncheon. I listen to the news on the wireless & return to my room, & again read or write. (Generally sleep!)
> My servant arrives & asks me if I am ready for a bath. I say I am. (No, I have'nt forgotten about tea. I do'nt bother with it) The bath is a tin tub about the seize [sic] of the one in our scullery, used for washing up. I return to my room & change my clothes. "I mess about" (quotation from Diary of famous young scholar) I walk two hundred yards to the Mess (can you stand anymore?) Order a drink - lemonade - & have dinner. Listen to the news on the wireless. Order a drink – orangeade [sic] - walk back two hundred yards to my room. Take off my clothes, go to bed, & read. Turn out the light & go to sleep, EXHERSTED! [sic]

The servant mentioned is an "Indian bearer" as Glen refers to him in later letters; Graham the batman having departed with the battalion for Belgaum. The "famous young scholar" seems to have been Glen's son George in a previous letter.

What letters Glen writes between April and September of 1944 do not survive in the Eton College archives. Come October Glen is once more holding the rank of Major, and is on his way to a convalescent hospital. On 16th of October Glen has his first ever view of snow-capped mountains. He also has plenty of concern about Angela's recent attack of bronchitis. After a few weeks Glen returns to the Tactical Training Centre in Dehradun and assumes duties which will see him moving between the TTC and Bombay city for the coming months. By 7th December Glen has also begun work on another training film:

> We are making a little training film here, & I find it a hard day's work hacking round with the cameramen from 0830 to 1700; but it's quite fun. By the time I have arranged the troops, locations, transport, ammunition, etc, etc for the next day's work, I seem to have very little time to write letters, even to you my sweet-heart (Shaw to Baddeley, 7th December 1944).

On 8th December the BBC broadcasts the first part of its radio adaptation of *Bleak House*. Angela Baddeley is in the cast and Glen listens, hearing her voice again for the first time since he was in hospital. Despite his best efforts to avoid treating Christmas day as anything special while he's away from all of his family (Jim included), Glen is unable to refuse an invitation to join the Brigadier and his wife for dinner on Christmas Day.

It's 5th January 1945 and Glen has received £2 in postal orders from a friend:

> A great treat. I thought "I shall do just what I like with this money because it was a present...", so to-day [sic] I gave half of it to the Clerk in our office who has six children & once told me they sometimes do'nt get enough to eat because his pay is so small. A sad character. Very weak & meek & I sometimes get very cross with him for he is awfully stupid at times, but we understand each other. It gave me more pleasure than I can say to give him the money (so little really) I just waited till [sic] everyone was out of the Office & then tucked it into his coat pocket & said "Buy some gloves for those children!" I only tell you this story to let you know that your Boonie can still

> enjoy himself in a quiet way, but it is not to be repeated as you well know! (Shaw to Baddeley, 5th January 1945).

Glen spends the early months of 1945 continuing to travel between Dehradun and Bombay. He spends the night of 20th February considering a production of *Othello* he will never stage:

> I thought last night how wonderful it would be to do "Othello" with John as Othello, Larry as Iago, Vivien as Desdemona, & you as Emelia. The balance would be absolutely perfect I think. Emilia must be played as a young woman & with tremendous character, I have only seen Mary Grey, & Sybil Thorndike. Both quite wrong. And I think George Devine would be lovely as Roderigo. Playing it as nouveau rich [sic]! (Shaw to Baddeley, 20th February).

When Glen finally does stage *Othello* in 1956 he will do so without any of this cast, though all four of them were in Stratford that season. Emilia is indeed played as a young woman, but her "tremendous character" is less clear cut.

In March Glen refuses another job offer from the ENSA and laments "I shall probably have to spend the rest of my life producing Amateur Theatricals to make a living!" (Shaw to Baddeley, 4th March 1945). Later that month Glen is offered a role in the Old Vic Theatre hierarchy by newly appointed co-director John Burrell, to be taken up whenever he returns from service. Knowing that George Devine will be there as well, Glen accepts what will eventually evolve into his role as head of the Old Vic Theatre School.

It's 9th April and the anniversary of Glen's injury. He writes a letter to Angela admitting, for the first time, the severity of the injury and how close he came to death. That Glen was willing to tell Sassoon so soon after the injury but waited this long before revealing it to his wife speaks more to Glen’s entrenchment in the military fraternity and mindset than it does his relationship with Sassoon specifically, but it is still notable that Glen told Sassoon of an injury to his genitals long before telling his wife.

12th April arrives and brings with it Edith Evans, who is out producing a play. She and Glen have dinner together and she reassures him that she thinks he made the correct decision accepting John Burrell's offer. The theatrical world continues to re-establish contact with Glen: he receives a letter from Binkie Beaumont on the 30th.

> He tells me about his plans & says he wants me to be with him & may he apply for my release.
> I have told him about John Burrell's cable & my acceptance; also that I have discussed the future, very vaguely with you by letters, but that I am far to [sic] much out of things to make up my mind about anything definitely (Shaw to Baddeley, 1st May 1945).

Glen asks Beaumont to speak to Angela about his plans for Glen's future, trusting her "to make the right decision for [Glen]." He does offer Angela his own thoughts on his future, to inform her discussions:

> My own feeling is that I should like to be in the Old Vic organisation & Edith seemed to think that was the right thing for me too.
> Also I am naturally influenced by the fact that George Devine is going there.
> But I suppose it does'nt necessarily mean that I could'nt work for Binkie at times, even if he is not in on that scheme (Shaw to Baddeley, 1st May 1945).

On Glen's return, Beaumont will offer him the opportunity to stage any play he chooses, and from this offer Glen will produce the *Antony and Cleopatra* that grows out of his hospital notebooks in 1946. Glen's preference for an organisation around him, and for working with a close friend prefigures his decision to go to Stratford once again: George Devine here at the Old Vic giving way to Anthony Quayle at the Memorial Theatre.

May brings the end of the war in Europe on the 8th. At some point in May, Glen's Brigadier asks him whether he would consider staying in the army after the end of his service. Glen explains to the Brigadier his reasons for wanting to return to civilian life and his career. He fails to mention not having seen his wife and children for nearly 3 years. When Angela complains of this in her next letter Glen tells her that he couldn't tell the Brigadier that, as in the army one doesn't display emotion of any kind (Shaw to Baddeley, undated, circa May 1945).

Having thought he would have to serve a full 3 years abroad before returning home to take up his role at the Old Vic, Glen hears on the 17th June 1945 that he will be returning home and should be back in England before the end of August. Nothing goes wrong, nothing delays him, and soon Glen is reunited with his wife and children. The next morning Glen is telephoned by Laurence Olivier asking if he and Angela would join Olivier and Vivien Leigh

for lunch at the Garrick. Glen's return to England is marked the same way as his departure for India. Writing about the event in 1968, Glen observed "All was just the same except that I noticed that the cuffs of Larry's shirt sleeves were very frayed!" (Shaw Papers 1). In truth, the fraying of Olivier's shirt sleeves is the least of the changes Glen will see in his theatrical life after the war.

Shaw's wartime service did not decide his relationship with the theatre. That relationship long predated the war, and his shift away from acting and towards directing had already begun. But the echoes of Shaw's war are clear and continuous in his work in the theatre after it. Beyond simply being affected by the war, Shaw took and applied the lessons, attitudes and understandings of his wartime service to his work after it, both before and at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.

The logistical connection to his actual theatre directing is intrinsically tied to his pre-production process: the carefully planned notebooks and blocking, the detailed assessment of the forces at his disposal, the contingency for any eventuality that may arise alongside a willingness to adapt to the ideas of actors and necessities of the theatre. But beyond that, Shaw's war offers clear lines of understanding for his approach to his role as director of the theatre and his interactions with his staff and casts.

This is a man who rejects the "Staff Officer" model of leadership as nothing more than entitled cousins in swanky cars splashing mud onto their men. A man who'd "much rather be in the mud" with the front-line soldiers than above them and away from the action. But this is also a man who is an officer: a front-line officer, but an officer nonetheless. A man who believes in a chain of command to be followed; in having orders obeyed when he gives them. When he comes to the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Shaw's model of leadership conforms to this approach. His blocking of his productions is to be tried through once before any changes can be suggested by the actors, and his word is final on casting and plays, however famous or important the actor who objects. Just as he tried to showcase every profession and aspect of the soldiers under his command when organising the regimental display in 1941, so too does he take time to visit all the theatre workshops every week and check in with the staff there. Every actor, however small the part, has some character notes for his productions to guide and direct them. Shaw cares for the men (and women) under his command but doesn't ever lose sight of that idea of command.

Shaw's experience of soldiery and his growing understanding of it through the war also shines clearly through his reading and understanding of Shakespeare. His hatred of Staff

Officers will surface again a decade later in *Troilus and Cressida* when examining Ulysses. So too can we see his officer's instincts and understandings on the importance of discipline and warding against "Alarm and Despondency".

Active service also gives Shaw a keen understanding of just how important it is for soldiers to rely on one another. Whether it's the urgent violence and necessity of actual combat, as he experienced in Burma, or the simple dependability of an officer's adjutant like his on Graham the "batman", Shaw lives and later directs the need for soldiers to be utterly dependable and relied upon to fulfil their role. It is this that [as we will see in later chapters] allows him to understand the importance of the active military context to Iago's machinations in *Othello*, that turns him against Achilles and Patroclus quite so vehemently in *Troilus and Cressida*, that helps him transform his inspiration from Hamlet's soliloquy in Act 4 into Michael Redgrave's performance, and that makes him insist that he and Anthony Quayle be "closer than brothers" when co-directing the theatre in Stratford. It comes with an understanding that "one doesn't display emotion of any kind" in the army, and continued distaste for any soldiers in Shakespeare who let their emotions overpower them, like Achilles, like Iago. It also feeds his own urgent need for activity while he is injured, and his refusal to join the ENSA when asked, as he desperately strives to do his bit and to make a genuine contribution to the war.

Shaw's need to contribute and for his contribution to matter can also be traced back to his very first sentiments on the subject of war: "Of course I shall go into the Army as soon as possible - You know that. Though what sort of soldier I shall make is another question. I wish I had your courage," he wrote to Sassoon in September 1939. Shaw's insecurity in his military masculinity is clear from the sentiment even without it being written to Siegfried Sassoon, a man Shaw respects and loves, who has seen Shaw at his most physically and emotionally intimate, and who was himself a decorated war hero who had been awarded the Military Cross. Shaw's turn to Hamlet's speech in Act 4 Scene 4 is as much to persuade himself of how he should be feeling as it is to explain those feelings to his wife. Here is a man who needs to prove himself, who does not think he is by nature or inclination what he is required to be but who strives to achieve it anyway. It's no wonder Shaw tried to convince Quayle to make him his deputy, rather than his equal, when he came to the Memorial Theatre, who described himself consistently as the Horatio to his co-director's Hamlet, who ascribed all his successes to his actors and his playwright while taking responsibility for all his failures himself. But Shaw is also a man who, when tested, is capable of a supreme confidence and cockiness. This is just as true whether it's the quiet certainty that he has read

As You Like It and its transition from winter into spring correctly[19] when no-one else before him seems to have:

> The day that we started rehearsal there was thick snow on the ground in Stratford and exactly a month later, on the day that we had the first performance, it was the most beautiful spring day I've ever known in my life. And I said "I was right, Will, wasn't I? You did mean that, didn't you?" (Shaw interviewed by Mullin).

or his tangible enjoyment of a night attack on his regiment in Burma, the legacy of Shaw's war is present in everything he does after. More than anyone else working in the theatre at the time, Shaw brought his experiences of the war into his work. In both what appeared on stage and what happened off it, Shaw's military understandings, approaches and attitudes are clear. While Shaw never sought to be radical, the uniqueness of his military approach coupled with his allegiance to the text over any scholarship or performance history would make his productions consistently intelligent, considered, and carefully crafted pieces of theatre. Nothing Shaw directed could be accused of being rushed, ill-conceived or careless. Shaw's productions were all graced by a thoughtfulness, attention and care, the development of which can be directly situated in his time at war.

[19] Shaw's production establishes this tradition of beginning the play in winter and having it transition into spring as the play progresses. Shaw's influence can be seen in productions of the play by Terry Hands (1980), Stephen Pimlott (1996), Greg Doran (2000), Dominic Cooke (2005), Polly Findlay (2015), and more.

Chapter 2: The Tragedy of *Coriolanus*

Shaw's first production in Stratford was *Coriolanus*. Shaw staged it in the spring of 1952, while still deciding whether to take up the position of co-director of the theatre. Anthony Quayle had wanted to play the title role for some time, and asked Shaw to direct him (Shaw, Leaving Speech). But while not Shaw's choice, *Coriolanus* is a play that would have spoken to Shaw as soon as he began to read it; one that deals with the conflict of a soldier trying to adjust to a life away from war. It's a conflict almost every man in Britain was contending with at the time, but the continued influence of Shaw's war on his work after it brings that conflict into relief. Shaw and Caius Martius sit parallel to each other as soldiers, heroes in battle and without fear in the face of the enemy to the point where they could be seen to be enjoying themselves (Shaw Papers 1), returning to civilian life and attempting to adjust to meet its challenges. It's a transition that Shaw made far more successfully than Martius did, but one he would undoubtedly have empathised with. *Coriolanus* shows a man familiar with military command trying to come to terms with civil and civilian interactions, a war hero in the time after war, a great man thrust into unfamiliar circumstances. The parallels between Shaw and Caius Martius are stark. The contrasts are even starker.

When reading Shaw's other productions at Stratford I am supported by his notebooks and able to access his direct personal thoughts on every character, every theme, and every idea he engages with. Given the passage of time it is remarkable that so many of Shaw's notebooks and director's promptbooks are accessible. The original notebooks for *Antony and Cleopatra*, written in a military hospital in India during wartime over seventy years ago, are astonishing in their survival and condition. Notebooks and/or director's promptbooks exist for almost all of Shaw's productions in Stratford. *Coriolanus* is poorly represented among them. The director's notebooks for *Coriolanus* disappeared before 1976[20] and so Shaw's immediate impressions of the play, his thoughts going into the production and the depth of development he put into it are closed to us. Perhaps more than would have been the case with almost any other production, the loss of this perspective Shaw's notebooks could have offered on the play is a tragedy.

[20] Shaw also believed his director's prompt book for the production to be lost in 1976. It was later discovered in his flat along with prompt books for his production of *Henry V* at the Old Vic and for an unstaged production of *Much Ado About Nothing*. In 1982 Shaw's son in law, George Hart, negotiated the sale of the prompt books to Stone Trough Books (with his Father in Law's consent). The books were later purchased by the V&A where they now currently reside.

Which leaves the question of how to examine this production. It can't be ignored. It's in the first weeks of rehearsals for this production that a one-year trial period becomes a commitment that will last the decade and sets Shaw on the path that leads to every production after it. And it's a play, and for that matter a production, that so firmly hinges on the central performance that knowing what Shaw thought of Caius Martius feels like a necessity rather than mere curiosity. So how can that be uncovered?

Clues may be found in Shaw's other notebooks. By looking at what Shaw thought of Shakespeare's other soldiers, Antony and Achilles, Ulysses and Othello and Cassio, we can start to piece together what Shaw thought of Caius Martius. And when we look to his notebooks we find those soldiers and Shaw's views of them are all rooted in his own life and soldiery. From his simple initial assertion of Antony that "This man is great," to his decrying Achilles as a "despicable & perverted thug" and locating Ulysses' hatred for the men under his command in his rank as a Staff Officer[21], to his assertion that "Cassio has shared dangers with [Othello] & we may be quite sure that Othello would never appoint an Officer as his Lieutenant who had no experience of War,"[22] we can see that Shaw plants his understanding of soldiers, of all his characters, in his own life. And he can't help developing affinities and distaste for them. His disgust with Achilles is palpable, his disdain for Ulysses undeniable. He finds no time or love for Iago, since "there is no love, beauty, friendship, loyalty or truth for him, everything is lust, ugliness, deceit, cruelty & jealousy," and yet Richard III is "both terrifying & yet strangely beautiful," and "is a magnificent soldier of action & courage." Shaw's personal affinity with a character is vital to his understanding of them, and so to his depiction of them. And if we want to understand his *Coriolanus*, we have to understand his Coriolanus. We need to understand where Shaw could see himself in him, where he would've seen differences, how the man would have spoken to him. We also need to know who played him.

Shaw staged two productions in 1952. The second, *As You Like It*, went up in the April and was revived for an Australian tour the following year. Anthony Quayle accompanied the 1953 touring production, and it was with the knowledge that he would be doing so that Quayle approached Shaw with an offer of co-directorship: trusting Shaw to run the main house in Stratford when Quayle was abroad and touring, as well as to share the

[21] For more see Chapter 5.
[22] For more see Chapter 7.

responsibilities while Quayle was around. *Coriolanus* was the first play Shaw staged in Stratford in 1952, and Quayle played the title role.

Quayle and Shaw first crossed paths in 1934 and in *Hamlet*. Quayle was playing Guildenstern while Shaw was Laertes, a role Quayle would go on to play in 1938 at the Old Vic while Shaw played Horatio in John Gielgud's production at Elsinore Castle in Denmark. *Hamlet* was the only play they would appear in together throughout their careers, but the two saw plenty of each other through the Motley design studio. Motley were the go-to designers for John Gielgud's unofficial company of actors, working closely with Shaw and his colleagues, and their workshop on St Martin's Lane became a meeting place for the entire London theatre profession, including Quayle. As Quayle described it years later:

> The 'Motleys' became an unofficial and unique club—a sort of eighteenth-century 'Coffee House.' It was the most haphazard coffee house in London; the people who dropped in from time to time—Peggy Ashcroft, Edith Evans, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Jack Hawkins and Jessica Tandy, Robert Donat, the Redgraves, the Byam Shaws, Michel Saint-Denis; younger actors like Alec and Merula Guinness, Steven Haggard—were all friends who enjoyed each other's company, shared each other's aims, and were to a greater or lesser extent under John Gielgud's patronage. At its centre was John himself, lord of the London stage—but never lording over it, always generous to young actors, and always blithely tactless (*A Time to Speak*, 257).

Of the two men, it was Shaw who knew the Motley women best. Motley designed three of the four productions Shaw directed before the war, and of the fourteen productions Shaw directed at Stratford, Motley designed twelve of them.[23] Percy Harris of Motley was Shaw's closest collaborator in Stratford except, perhaps, for Quayle himself, and became an integral part of Shaw's pre-production work.

Quayle's attitude to the outbreak of war mirrored Shaw's in many ways. He signed up as soon as possible, hoping for a posting with the field artillery, and after finding himself instead serving on the coastal defences quickly sought transfer in order to better contribute and feel like he was contributing. He was transferred first to Gibraltar, before ultimately joining the Special Operations Executive and seeing himself parachuted behind enemy lines

[23] The exceptions were *Troilus and Cressida* in 1954, designed by Malcolm Pride, and *Macbeth* in 1955, designed by Roger Furse at the request of Laurence Olivier.

in Albania to run intelligence gathering missions, liaise with the local resistance groups, and prepare the ground for the allied invasion.[24]

The next time Quayle, Shaw and the Motleys all crossed paths in a professional setting came in 1946. Returned from war with a limp and a set of notebooks detailing a full production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shaw soon found that production drawn into life. "When I got back I showed [the notebooks] to Alec Guinness," Shaw recalled later. "And he showed them to Edith Evans and said 'here you are, Glen's done his own production of *Antony and Cleopatra*, why don't you do it?'" The production was not staged as Shaw initially devised it, in part due to the casting of Evans as Cleopatra. Shaw and Motley decided Evans would not suit the imperial Roman Shaw had originally intended and so instead set the production in Elizabethan dress.

> That same year [1946], in the West End, [Shaw] had his first shot at *Antony and Cleopatra* – and ignored almost everything he'd put down in his little blue notebooks three years earlier. Tony Quayle as Enobarus (after Albania) was certainly equal to Shaw's conception of 'a soldier through & through'. But for the rest, there was nothing of the voluptuous, indolent, jabbering East in Shaw's 1946 production. Instead ... Shaw in 1946 directed *Antony and Cleopatra* as an Elizabethan play (Rutter 70).

Closer to Shaw's vision, and with far more effect on his subsequent career, was his casting of Quayle as Enobarbus. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Quayle was able to experience Shaw's directing for the first time, and clearly liked and admired the process enough to want to work with him again years later.

After *Antony and Cleopatra* Shaw and Quayle parted professional company again for a time. Quayle was asked to Stratford, first as a guest director and then to take over from Barry Jackson as the director of the Memorial Theatre. Shaw, meanwhile, had been approached by John Burrell in 1945 to join the Old Vic, alongside George Devine and Michel St Denis, and establish the Old Vic Centre which would include both a Young Vic Company for touring children's theatre and an Old Vic School for training actors. This work began formally in 1947, with Shaw largely assuming responsibility for the Old Vic school, while also directing productions for the Young Vic Company. This appointment wasn't to last, though. The Old Vic directors who had brought in "the three boys" (as Byam Shaw, St Denis

[24] Quayle used his experiences for the basis of his first novel, *Eight Hours From England*, published in 1945.

and Devine came to be known) were forced out by the governors in 1949, and through 1950 it became clear the Old Vic School was on the outs as well. When the governors revealed they intended to close the school and get rid of St Denis, all three of the "boys" offered their resignations in protest. At which point Quayle returned to Shaw's professional life.

In Stratford, Quayle had come to realise that no production at the Memorial Theatre could turn a profit without playing to 90% capacity every night of its run. The cost of improved production quality, of keeping the workshops running, of bringing in actors from London (even at lower rates of pay than the most renowned of them were used to) meant that the theatre relied on its, admittedly ample, cash reserves for any production playing to much less than a full house every night. Resolutely opposed to government subsidy, Quayle believed that financial security lay in touring. Existing productions, Quayle reasoned, could be taken on tour internationally with no additional cost for sets or costumes, while host theatres took on the administrative costs of stage and venue. This would extend the life of productions already directed, designed and proven successful, raise the theatre's reputation across the world, and allow for Stratford to mount twice as many productions in a year to bring in further revenue, one company staying in Stratford to stage new productions while a touring company travelled with productions from the previous season. To realise this plan, though, the theatre needed two directors, one to “play” at home and one away, as it were. An initial offer to Tyrone Guthrie fell through due to Guthrie's insistence on demolishing the Memorial Theatre and building a new one to his design (Quayle 458-9). Quayle saw the upheaval at the Old Vic as an opportunity:

> There were two things I thought we should try to do. The first alternative was to try to link Stratford with the Old Vic, jointly financing the school. I put this plan to Fordie [Fordham Flower, Chair of the Memorial Theatre Governors] who seemed very pleased with the idea, and eventually it went up to the Governors of both theatres. It was turned down flatly by each in turn. Neither Stratford nor the Old Vic wanted anything to do with each other... (Quayle 462).

Quayle had envisaged a joint programme with the Old Vic, with productions exchanged between the two theatres and huge financial savings as a result, but it was not to be. His second idea was both simpler and successful:

> The other alternative was to let things rip, let the Old Vic school close, and then hope to fish out of the smoking ruins one of my two great friends, either Glen Byam Shaw or George Devine. This is exactly what happened. The Old Vic school closed and out staggered the two men. The most immediately and obviously suitable for the job was Glen. I asked him to come and join me as co-director (Quayle 463-4).

Fragments of a letter to the governors of the Memorial Theatre from Quayle suggest he is slightly fudging the timeline here. The Three Boys tendered their resignations to the Old Vic on the 7th May. There followed a month of unexpected national outcry, a month that also saw the majority of freelance staff abandoning the Old Vic. Eventually Tyrone Guthrie was asked to come on board as General Manager to salvage the situation and set the Old Vic back on track. Guthrie's appointment was announced on 3rd June, and on the 5th Quayle met with Shaw to discuss his offer of the co-directorship. There, Quayle learned that Guthrie had arranged a meeting with the Three Boys to discuss the future of the Old Vic Centre. Fearing that Shaw would soon be re-hired, or tempted by a bad offer with the unspoken threat of unemployment as the alternative, Quayle made Shaw a firm offer of the co-directorship without consulting the Governors of the Memorial Theatre and before the Old Vic Centre had closed. As it fell out, Guthrie's meeting with the Three Boys was simply to inform them that he was closing the Old Vic Centre in its entirety (Wardle 136-138). And so Shaw was brought to Stratford.

Shaw had visited Stratford before as an audience member. A letter to his wife dated 21st July 1949 reveals he and his children came to Quayle's first season as official director of the theatre and saw at least Quayle's *Macbeth*, John Gielgud's *Much Ado About Nothing* (in which Quayle played Benedick), and Tyrone Guthrie's *Henry VIII* with Quayle in the title role. (The letter makes no mention of the two productions in which Quayle was not involved.)

Coriolanus wasn't Shaw's choice of play. In 1952 Quayle wanted to play Coriolanus and wanted Shaw to direct him (Shaw Leaving Speech). After *Coriolanus* Shaw would only direct one other play in Stratford that he didn't choose himself (that being *King Lear*). But even though Shaw didn't choose the play, its relevance and connection to him are marked.

Coriolanus at its core deals with the conflict faced by a soldier in peacetime. It is a conflict Shaw would have been familiar with in 1952, his own service having ended less than a decade before. It is possible to read a number of parallels between Shaw and Caius Martius,

but the distinct differences between the two men are manifestly clear and rooted in a single, simple idea: Shaw was able to adapt to peacetime, while Martius is not.

Throughout the play Caius Martius is a man far more at home on the battlefield than in the city. The play opens with Martius taking the same approach to a civil problem as he would to a military one and expecting the same results. He is shown as a man ill at ease with both the people of the city he has fought to defend and the way of life they embrace. In fact, he makes it clear that he is fighting for an ideal of that city, not the people who actually make it up. Martius is not an easy man to like, for either his fellow characters or the audience, but he is a man of integrity, shaped by his circumstances and understanding war like no other. *Coriolanus* shows his rise and fall in its entirety: his triumph at Corioli, his initial lauded return, his failure to accept and accede to the social norms of peacetime civilisation, as seen in his contempt for the citizens most notably across Act 3, his exile and ultimately his acceptance and forgiveness of the society that spurned him at the cost of his own life.

It is not a conventionally popular play, with Peter Holland describing it as "Intransigent, intractable, often difficult to love, sometimes difficult to like" and saying it "can feel as contemptuous of its audiences as Caius Martius does of the city of Rome" (Introduction to *Coriolanus* 1). If that contempt is reminiscent of Martius' then it may stem from the same source: the condescension of the military towards the civilian. An understanding of war often seems a prerequisite to an understanding of the play. Just as the play "worries about the place for the soldier in the state no longer at war" (Holland 2) so too does its performance history seem to worry about the place of the play in a nation prone to peace (at least domestically). In Stratford's history it had been staged fewer than ten times before Shaw, more than many of the "problem" plays but still far fewer than the theatre favourites. The feeling from that performance history is of a play that directors, actors and audiences know to be great but cannot love, or make beloved, as they feel it should. Two of those productions came in 1915 and 1919, during or hot on the heels of the first world war. The last was in 1939, on the eve of the war but not during it, and all the rest were peacetime productions. So too were the productions that came after Shaw, of which Stratford has seen only eight. The audience in 1926 may have felt closest to that in 1952 in their proximity to the war, but even then the all-pervasive nature of the second world war was far more affecting to many than the home front of the first. As time passed and audiences came to see the play directed by Peter Hall in 1959, or John Barton in 1967, or Terry Hands in 1977, all the way through to Greg Doran in 2007 or Angus Jackson in 2017, the understanding of war and its effect on those who wage it would have grown less and less. War never goes away,

and wars were waged at the time of every one of those productions, but the percentage of the population involved in them was a fraction of that involved in the world war of Shaw's service. These wars weren't domestic in the way that the war is brought to the doorstep of Rome in *Coriolanus* or to the edge of Britain in Shaw's war. They didn't engulf the entire civilisation in the same way that everyone involved, combatant or civilian, was a part of the war with nowhere to escape. Most audiences wouldn't have had the sympathy for Caius Martius, or for the citizens of Rome, that the play looks for.

The audience in 1952 would not have been like most audiences. This would have been an audience still fresh from the harsh realities of the second world war. Every one of them over the age of 7 would have lived through the war, most of the men would have been soldiers in at least one of the world wars, and no-one would have escaped the immediate legacy of the conflicts. The theatre would have been filled with men who had themselves been the soldier returning after years of war to a peacetime nation they'd fought to defend but hadn't seen for years, and women and children whose loved ones had done the same. Women who'd served abroad would also have understood the mindset of Martius while men in protected jobs at home or conscientious objectors would have had greater understanding of the Roman people: Menenius, the tribunes, the citizens, and all the other characters in the play faced with soldiers returning and trying to re-integrate. For one of the few times in its history, more so than even in 1915 or 1919, the play would have had an audience and cast who understood life during wartime.

The connections that Shaw makes with his characters in his notebooks are consistent in many respects. Shaw is a former soldier, now directing in peacetime, and the characters with whom he has the greatest connection and understanding are also soldiers. He understands the morality of soldiery, how it differs from the morality of the non-military mind and how the two moralities interact. And as we recall, Shaw's approach to directing was formed in a military hospital at the height of the second world war. In many ways *Coriolanus* was Shaw's play. Everything would suggest that Shaw would come to this play with an understanding brought by his wartime experiences and with a cast that would also share that literacy of war and what it means to be a soldier in peacetime. Shaw's notebooks for his other productions portray him as a man taking an ordered and military approach to his civilian life where he can; as a man who does not fully understand the common man of peacetime in the same easy way he does the common soldier.

Quayle's own military service and understandings were brought to bear on the part as well. Quayle's role as director of the theatre had been secured in part by Fordham Flower,

himself a Colonel during the war, being impressed by Quayle's military attitude and record. And it was Coriolanus's military, rather than noble, background which Quayle and Shaw focused on. Instead of an arrogant aristocrat convinced he was superior to the plebeians by birth, Quayle's Coriolanus knew himself to be better because of his war record. Quayle was praised for his conveyance of "combat-worthiness and political crudity," and for making Coriolanus "a lout with a lion's heart. He went into action with the maximum of fury as he blundered in the Forum with the minimum of tact" (Brown 1951-53, 7). And certainly the reviews saw the martial element of Quayle's Coriolanus come to the fore over his aristocratic aspects. Ruth Ellis in the *Stratford Herald* honed in on the soldiery of the production and performance, saying Quayle "needs no battles to emphasise his soldiership" and that his anger was "a hot-headed soldier's impatience rather than the cold contempt of the patrician" (21 March 1952).

Shaw's production seems to have set aside the potential broad scope of the play and its political dimension to focus in instead on the character of Martius himself. "P.P.R." in the *Nottingham Guardian Journal* observed:

> Although Glen Byam Shaw, the producer, handles robustly the many crowd scenes and the fight is skilfully arranged by Charles Alexis, yet the dramatic impact remains a psychological one, centred upon the conflict for power as between dictatorship and democracy (15th March 1952).

Though the *Evening Standard*'s Harold Conway was less than convinced by the crowd scenes (14th March 1952), lack of realism didn't bother W.H. Bush in the *Birmingham Sunday Mercury*. Instead, Bush believed Shaw had "overcome this difficulty [the handling of the mob] in masterly fashion." He saw Shaw's mob as "a credible entity" and that "the result [was] that the crowd scenes, usually the play's weakness, become its strength" (16th March 1952).

But while the reviews may have differed in their opinions of the mob, the crowd scenes appear to have been secondary to both the production and Shaw in the face of the figure of Caius Martius himself and his soldiery. With the focus on Martius as a soldier, hot-headed and impatient, it seems entirely believable that Shaw saw Coriolanus in many ways as what he himself could have been, had he not managed to adapt to peacetime. Coriolanus is Shaw untempered by the patience, understanding and kindness so many of his peers and colleagues saw in him. Anthony Quayle, interviewed by Michael Mullin in 1977, offered a

description of Shaw which perfectly encapsulated the balance Shaw struck, and incidentally highlights the difference between him and Martius:

> Glen as you know is a very remarkable man indeed. He is a man of the most extraordinary principles. Also modesty, but also with a streak of absolute steel, or maybe it's granite as he's Scots, going through him, I don't know which it is but he's all those. And the outward extreme gentleness is not a disguise, it's true, but it conceals a character of such strength and probity as I've seldom if ever come across.

"A character of such strength and probity" could just as easily be a description of Caius Martius, with his refusal to compromise himself for the sake of politics even when it brings about his downfall and exile (Act 3 Scene 3), but where Shaw's streak of steel or granite lay beneath his genuine gentleness, Martius wears his granite on the top, encasing and blocking him from any sympathy to the commons (Act 1 Scene 1) or to his former kinsmen when he returns to lay siege to Rome (Act 5 Scene 2) until it's finally uncovered by his mother, wife and son (Act 5 Scene 2 Lines 183-194).

Peggy Ashcroft thought of Shaw as “such a private person and so averse to publicity…” (Ashcroft interviewed by Mullin). Here another line of comparison arises between Shaw and Martius, a natural disinclination from the public eye. A large part of Shaw's relative obscurity has arisen from his active efforts to eschew attention. According to his son George, “he tended to keep his light under a biggish bushel" (George Byam Shaw interview). Without Shaw's notebooks it's impossible to say how much Shaw sympathised with Martius and specifically his reticence and reluctance to display himself as he expresses in Act 2 Scene 2 ("It is a part/That I shall blush in acting, and might well/Be taken from the people" 2:2:145-7) but it is almost unquestionable that Shaw would have felt some kinship.

Comparing Shaw to Coriolanus is an idea built upon shared experience far more than it is shared character. Coriolanus and Shaw react to those experiences, however similar, in fundamentally contradictory ways. Perhaps the most powerful manifestation of these distinctions comes in their opinions of their own wartime heroism. Martius’ heroism is unquestionable and unique as he sees it. His soldiers fail to follow him into Corioli, he takes the city alone (1.4). Why should Martius doubt his own heroism in the face of this cowardice? He treats his Roman subordinates with the same disdain he feels for the citizens of Rome whenever he interacts with them. At no point does Martius doubt his superiority over those around him, and the play gives him no reason to in war. Shaw was far less assured

of his own “heroism”. His letter to Sassoon in September 1939 establishes that from the outset of the conflict, and writing long after the war, Shaw still treated his courage with disbelief and self-effacement. I have discussed Shaw’s wartime recollections in detail in Chapter 1, but they remain relevant here as we consider the contrast between Shaw’s belief that he “lack[ed] physical courage” and his description of the attack on his encampment in April 1944.

But perhaps more important in drawing distinctions between the two men, and in seeing where Shaw would undoubtedly have found Martius' flaws, lies in their treatment of others. Martius' superiority and cold disdain for those he sees as beneath him turns them against him and leaves him alone, exiled and leads ultimately to his death. Shaw's attitude as a director could not have been more different. Actor after actor who worked with Shaw praised him for his care and affection for his casts, from the smallest roles to the largest. All accounts of Shaw's direction say that his careful pre-planning of moves and characterisation was never prescriptive and always worked in concert with the actors themselves.[25] Shaw's attention to detail was developed more for himself than for the actors. Peggy Ashcroft made clear that what his pre-production work gave him was a confidence in himself and in the production that freed him to embrace his position of authority, and with it enough confidence to let his decisions be challenged or even changed (Ashcroft interviewed by Mullin). Meanwhile, Marius Goring spoke effusively about Shaw's continued support of actors and direction through the run of a production "which would really make an actor love a director… Glen's really great quality is that from the word "Go" when the cast is assembled everybody in that cast knows that they have got a real friend who is just watching their interests from beginning to end" (Goring interviewed by Mullin).

But it was Anthony Quayle who gave the highest praise of Shaw's relation with his actors, speaking at great length on the way Shaw reconciled his pre-planning of a production with the freedoms of performance. The picture he paints is of a man who is modest, supremely competent but lacking in innate confidence, kind and respectful to all his subordinates, seeking to glorify those around him over himself at every turn, and willing to compromise:

> If you were to say to Glen "But what an enormous amount of work to do before" he says "Well, dear old boy, it's the only way I can do it, because my brain doesn't work

[25] For more on Shaw’s working relationship with his actors, see Chapter 4.

> very quickly. And I cannot, like some bright people, rely on the inspiration of the moment. I get flustered. I have to *know*. It's laborious beyond words but I have to know everything about that play before I start: exactly where actors stand, what they do. Then I have to get that over to them, so that the entity which is in my mind is on the stage. Let's get right through the play as I ask you to, then if you're not happy we'll move it around. If I'm to direct this play I must see my idea carried out, then we can go back and I'm perfectly content to alter it if you're not happy.

This is a far cry from Caius Martius' refusal to show his wounds to the Roman citizens (Act 2 Scene 3) or his complete loss of composure when trying to make peace with the tribunes and people (Act 3 Scene 3).

Shaw did not think highly of his *Coriolanus* in retrospect. When writing a list of his productions with an A-C grading system assessing their quality, he ranked *Coriolanus* as a "B". Shaw only spoke briefly about the production in his interviews, saying: "The *Coriolanus*, as far as I'm concerned, was not very successful... I had a very good Coriolanus and that was Quayle, but I think the production was dull." Shaw clearly took responsibility for the production's shortcomings, stating "it was my fault... [that] the rest of the cast wasn't very interesting." When asked to clarify if there was any specific reason why the production had not been a success in his eyes, Shaw replied: "Yes; Me. I don't know; I just didn't get it off the ground. My fault." Before that Shaw also said that the one thing which came to mind when he thought of the production was "khaki." The choice of a specifically military non-descript colour, rather than beige or grey for instance, would seem to tie both the production and Shaw's artistic mindset back to the war, and seems to suggest Shaw's military experience may have literally coloured the production.

"Khaki" was far from Motley's minds when they designed the costumes. The costume design sketches suggest that in fact a particularly patriotic palette of red, white and blue was Motley's intention, with hints of black and gold to round things out. The production was set and staged in the period, and the Roman citizens were clad in robes and tunics in dull shades highlighted by white or black. The Volsces wore dark colours, but each of their costumes appear in the sketches with at least a flash of bright sky blue: a sash, a belt, a full pair of trousers in one case. The Roman rulers meanwhile wore red, mostly dulled and almost terracotta, with white or black stolas over them. The women of Rome were exceptions, Volumnia dressed all in black with a small tiara causing her to cut an imposing matriarchal figure, while Virgilia was alone in wearing a dress of full purple which was then replaced by

a purple cloak over a black robe when she came to entreat with Coriolanus. Volumnia's designs also seem to show a purple robe for the visit of the women to the Volsces camp, and the colour coding seems deliberately to mix the Roman Red and the Volsce Blue as the only way to get through to Coriolanus.

Figs 4-8. Costume designs for Caius Martius through Shaw's production of Coriolanus. They depict him in his opening scenes (4), during the battle of Coriolis (5-6), when thinking he is to be appointed as Consul (7) and in exile in Antium when he has shed his red cloak.

As for Coriolanus, here Motley allowed the red to be bright. Final designs show Coriolanus in dull golden armour but almost always overlaid with a bright, bloody red: a stola, a cloak, a plume to his helmet. Production photographs show Quayle without any of these red accessories in Act 3 Scene 2 when already rejected by the Roman people. His allies may still have hope for a reconciliation with the citizenry but Coriolanus's wardrobe knows he's done with Rome. The sketches show one other scene before that moment with Coriolanus at Corioli, shirtless and drenched in blood the exact same colour as the red of his cloaks. After leaving Rome, Coriolanus wears a dull white robe and cloak as he attempts to pass as a commoner when approaching the Volsces, though even then the sketch for the costume is highlighted with a pale blue tinge.

Critical response at the time was favourable, if muted, with a number of the actors that Shaw himself thought under-served by the production singled out in reviews. The praise for the supporting cast was best summed up by the *Birmingham Post*'s T.C.K:

> As Menenius, Michael Hordern is all quiet wisdom and dry humour, and here a distinguished stand is made for sanity. The fine voice and confident presence of Laurence Harvey makes Aufidius a worthy protagonist to Coriolanus. Mary Ellis

> established Volumnia's dominion over Coriolanus by the sincerity of her approach rather than by direct attack and Siobhan McKenna makes an eloquent appeal as that "most gracious silence" Virgilia. (14 March 1952)

Hordern's Menenius came in for particular praise too from Norman Holbrook (who rated him the best performance of the night in the *Birmingham Evening Dispatch*) (14th March). It seems clear that while the quality of the production was made or broken by Quayle's Coriolanus itself, the quality of the rest of the cast did not go unnoticed.

Margaret Harris of Motley, however, shared some of Shaw's retrospective misgivings about the production, calling her set design "clumsy and heavy." Ruth Ellis of the *Stratford Herald* disagreed, saying "Motley's décor is dignified and soberly beautiful" and certainly no review found fault with Motley's work. The stage was dominated in the exterior scenes by archways, set upstage and diagonal on each side of the stage. Both were angular, square-topped free-standing structures; a shallow one stage left set at the top of a ramp, about seven feet tall, while a much deeper, almost tunnel-like arch stage right sat slightly higher atop a flight of steps and rose to a towering 12 or 13 feet. These archways were unadorned when representing Rome, with high-topped round tents downstage of them to represent the camp of the Volsce army, and shield walls and high iron spiked fences brought on for Corioli (with a portcullis dropped from the deeper archway.) Interior scenes saw these arches masked by scenery run in from the wings: heavy, star-patterned curtains for Aufidius's house, and large panels bearing painted roman frescos of lions devouring deer for Volumnia's. Given the apparent scale of these panels, Harris's lament of the set as "clumsy and heavy" may have been a pragmatic description of the changes and materials rather than an assessment of its aesthetics.

Fig. 9. Set design for *Coriolanus*, described by Percy Harris as “clumsy and heavy.”

Shaw's production of *Coriolanus* may not have been great. Shaw certainly didn't think it was. But what cannot be disputed is that Shaw's *Coriolanus* spoke to a cast, audience and director who shared its protagonist’s challenge of turning from war to peace, as well as showing that while Shaw may have gone through many of the same experiences as Coriolanus, the two men responded to those experiences in entirely different ways. Where Martius showed contempt, Shaw showed love. Where Martius showed self-esteem, Shaw showed self-effacement. Where Martius showed hubris, Shaw showed humility. *Coriolanus* shows a man returning from war and turns it into a tragedy of a man who can never leave that war. Shaw returned from his war, never forgetting it or the lessons he learned from it, but his life after the war could only be said to be a labour of love. It’s perhaps because of this that Shaw sees Martius’ flaws as ones inherent in the man himself. There is no sense from Shaw’s production that there is any critique of the war itself, only of how Martius responds to it and to peacetime. Shaw’s war was inevitable after all, just as it was righteous and necessary. In 1952 the glorious ideal of war was still indestructible. This would change for Shaw in time.

It is perhaps fitting to end this chapter on Shaw's other great, lost production; one which he never got to stage. Writing to Siegfried Sassoon in 1967, the same year the first

RSC production of *Coriolanus* opened, Shaw told his friend: "On Monday I plunge into rehearsals for 'The Merchant of Venice' with Ralph Richardson at the Haymarket Theatre. I can't say it's my favourite play. I wish we were doing 'Love's Labour's Lost' which I have never produced and which I love" (22nd July 1967). *Love's Labour's Lost* was in fact staged only once during Shaw's time at Stratford, and it was directed by the man whom Shaw was preparing to be his successor: Peter Hall. In Shaw's final season, when Hall was waiting in the wings to replace him, the production that Hall would direct would also be strangely appropriate. It would be *Coriolanus*.

Chapter 3: A Year In The Life – Shaw's Seasons at Stratford

In late 1951, when Shaw arrived at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, the nature and routine of the theatre's seasons had been laid in place by Antony Quayle and would last for the duration of both of their tenures. The seasons had been steadily growing since the Stratford Shakespeare Festival had first been founded in 1879. As Ivor Brown put it in his introduction to the theatre's photographic record for 1948-51: "First it was a week, then three weeks round the Birthday, then Easter with a few summer weeks added for the August holiday visitors, and finally the grand seven months stretch of continuous performance which Stratford now provides and the world expects" (2-3). The seventh of those months of performance was added by Quayle himself to extend the season.

The seasons in Stratford began in March, running through the summer until the end of September. This extended run was facilitated in large part by the staggered opening of productions pioneered by Barry Jackson in 1946 which Quayle had expanded upon. There would be five productions to a season for all of Shaw's time in Stratford, Shaw directing one or two himself each season. For the period of their co-directorship, Quayle would direct a single production a year (excepting 1955) and act in one or two, often appearing under his own direction.

The rehearsal period for each production had also been lengthened by Barry Jackson in 1946 and now stood at four weeks. This would remain true at least until 1958, when Shaw's notebooks on *Hamlet* would confess "It is a tremendous play to rehearse & produce in four weeks & I shall have to work in the evenings to some extent at least." Often these rehearsals would occur while the season's other productions were already up, and since every actor was involved in at least two productions in a season (with the notable exceptions of Paul Robeson and Sam Wanamaker in 1959[26]) this made the rehearsal process even tighter and more fraught. The comparative brevity of the rehearsal process goes some way to explaining the necessity of Shaw's pre-production work, even if the sheer extent and detail of it is unique to his style of working.

But Shaw's work began far earlier than the first week of rehearsals in the February of each year. Even in his first year directing at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, while feeling

[26] Robeson was invited over from the United States of America, initially to play Gower in *Pericles* in 1958, and when that fell through due to issues with Robeson's visa to play the title role in *Othello* in 1959. In both cases this was a special request made by the director, Tony Richardson, and Robeson was only asked to play the single role each season. Sam Wanamaker was brought in as Iago in 1959 due to his friendship with Robeson to support him in the production.

out the working environment and conditions to see if he wanted to take on the co-director's role, Shaw was in Stratford five months before the rehearsals for the season began. In August of 1951 he stayed with Quayle as the latter began preparations for the 1952 season. Shaw spent his time in and around the theatre. Writing to his wife on the 8th of August, a section of the letter separately dated "Tuesday" (presumably the 7th) reads:

> It is rather a strange situation because nobody really knows who or what I am & all the theatre & restaurant attendants seemed puzzled by the white-haired man who walks quietly about the place.

Before long all of the people of the theatre would know the white-haired man very well indeed. Shaw remembered the time he spent in Quayle's house that year, preparing for the season that would follow and the years after, with fondness when he came to make his leaving speech in 1959.

Shaw agreed to the co-director's role long before *Coriolanus* went up to open the 1952 season, and his full-time position was confirmed at the governor's meeting in June of that year (RSC Minute Books). To get a picture of Shaw's work as co-director of the theatre, and how his time was spent, we begin in the summer. With the season in full swing, and the final productions going up, Shaw and Quayle's attentions would turn towards the next season, starting with the casting.

Quayle had begun the casting policy that became the bedrock of the 1950s in Stratford; that of bringing in "star" actors to create a box office draw for the theatre and building a season and company around them, but it was during their joint tenure that this policy really flourished and bore fruit. Desmond Hall, long-serving production manager at Stratford, also remembered Shaw's casting process in a later interview:

> He had of course, in his time as director, the whole of the casting to do. He was entirely responsible for casting the whole season, and any other directors coming in would have to take what was there. I mean that in the nicest possible way, but a season would be cast around probably two or three leading actors who he would choose first, find out if they were available and what they would like to play (Hall interviewed by Mullin).

While Hall is doubtless correct that the parts which those actors Shaw approached wished to play would have informed the choice of plays for the season (as it most certainly did in 1959 with the offer of the title role in *King Lear* to Charles Laughton having been discussed six years previously), he went into discussions with leading actors with a clear idea of at least one part he wanted them to play, usually in his own productions for the season. Peggy Ashcroft, a friend of Shaw's since his acting days, remembered his offer to her in 1953 taking her by surprise:

> Glen said to me "Peg, Tony's going to off to Australia and I've got to run a season on my own. Will you come and be in that season?" So I said "Yes, of course I will!" [laughs] And then he took my breath away by saying "I want you to play Cleopatra." Well this was, of course, an enormously important moment for me. It hadn't occurred to me really that I would be asked to play Cleopatra. It was a great jump because my early career had been terribly limited, as it used to be in those days: if you were an ingénue you stayed an ingénue until god knows when (Ashcroft interviewed by Mullin).

Ashcroft wasn't wrong; her casting as Cleopatra was seen as a bold choice by the theatrical world. As Rutter puts it in her chapter in *Great Shakespeareans*: "One way of reading Ashcroft's stage life with Shakespeare is as a history of miscasting… the *Daily Mail* wondered 'how Peggy Ashcroft ever came to be chosen for Cleopatra', a 'part she was ... obviously not born to play' (29 April)" (113-4). Ashcroft had already begun to break out of the mould of the ingénue slightly:

> It was very difficult to break out of it. I did break out of it, in a play with Robert Morley [*Edward, My Son*, in 1948 in New York] and then again *The Deep Blue Sea* was a development from that. But Cleopatra... (Ashcroft interviewed by Mullin).

Cleopatra was different. Unlike the other Shakespearean roles Ashcroft had assayed, "Portia, Viola, Rosalind, etc etc etc" as she handwaves them in the interview, Cleopatra granted Ashcroft an opportunity to show off "the quality of her acting, the way it continually surprised, even shocked, audiences, not least, in this most English of actors (who so far had built a career playing 'the gentle lady cooed at over the matinee tea-tray', as John Barber put it

in the *Daily Express*, 29 April 1953), with its *sexiness*" (Rutter 111) Given the opportunity though, Ashcroft relished it:

> It was a tremendous event, and I think I really could say it was one of the happiest experiences I've ever had. I mean obviously it was an enormous, challenging, demanding thing to do, but when things are that demanding somehow you go at them bull-headed.

The challenge Cleopatra posed to Ashcroft was made far easier for her by her working relationship with Shaw.

> Of course Glen and I were very *lié* and we worked well together. And we understood each other. I was able to say to Glen, the only way I felt able to do it and Glen was able to say "But..." You see, then I saw Glen in action with a whole production and the impressive thing, to me, and to all the company, about Glen's work was his intense concentration and preparation. It was very remarkable and very rare (Ashcroft interviewed by Mullin).

The degree of preparation Shaw did was both well known to his actors and made to appear effortless in his actual direction. Actors wound up giving performances perfectly matching his conception of the part without ever feeling pushed towards it, and equally Shaw was willing to give ground to an actor's reading of the part whenever a better performance would result from it.[27]

From the position of having cast the leads for the season, Shaw and Quayle would go on to confirm the productions, cast the smaller roles, and invite directors to take on the productions they had chosen, or to help choose plays they wished to produce. Sometimes the leading actors would have some influence over the casting of a production, and over the other creatives who would work on it. It was at Olivier's urging that Shaw brought Roger Furse in to design his 1955 *Macbeth* rather than working with Motley as he usually did, and it was Charles Laughton who recommended a young Albert Finney to Shaw in 1959 for the role of Edgar. But while actors and designers could be drawn to Shaw's attention by his stars, he would not countenance any attempt by them to reverse or contradict his decisions on matters

[27] For more on the relationship between Shaw and his actors, see Chapter 4.

of casting and administration. After Laughton's death, Shaw wrote some reminiscences of his time working with him on *King Lear* including a confrontation over the casting of an unspecified actor in an unspecified part:

> At the end of the 1958 season I went with the Stratford Company to Russia and when I got back Angela and I went on holiday to Cornwall then returned to Stratford to make the final preparations for the 1959 season. I was in my office one morning when a call came through from Charles [Laughton].
> "I hear you have cast '---' for the part of '---'"
> "Yes" "Well I won't accept it"
> "Why not?" "Because he is not good enough"
> "Have you ever seen him act?" "No"
> "Well I have many times and I think he will play the part extremely well"
> "I am not prepared to accept your judgement" said Charles and I could hear from the tone of his voice that he was getting nasty

In spite of this "nastiness" from Laughton, Shaw dug his heels in.

> "Well he is going to play the part and that's that"
> "In that case I shall not play Lear"
> "But you have signed a contract to do so"
> "I don't care a damn about that. I refuse to come to Stratford unless you agree to change that actor"
> I hesitated for a moment then I said
> "I won't do that but I accept your resignation" and I rang off

Shaw wasn't alone in realising the ramifications of his actions:

> The General Manager, Patrick Donnell, was in the office at the time –
> "We're in a mess, Paddy"
> "Yes, but you were quite right" he said

Donnell's support would've been the best reassurance for Shaw. In 1959 Donnell was his longest standing and most trusted lieutenant in the theatre. Shaw taking the sole directorship had been contingent on, among other things, Donnell being kept on with him.[28]

> An hour went by then the telephone operator told me that Mr Charles Laughton was on the line.
> "Is that you, Glen?" "Yes"
> "I have been lying here in bed with the tears running down my face. I feel in despair. I thought you would telephone" "Why would I?"
> "We have always been so friendly"
> "I agree but I can't have you interfering with the Company or my casting of the plays"
> "I realise that" he said
> "So you agree that '---' shall play the part I have cast for him in Lear?"
> "Yes"
> And that was the end of that (Shaw Papers 1).

Sometimes too directors would have an input. Tony Richardson asked Shaw to invite Paul Robeson to play Gower in his production of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* in 1958, a momentous casting decision as Robeson would be the first black actor to play a part in Stratford since Ira Aldridge, and the first ever at the Memorial Theatre. As things fell out, Robeson's passport had been confiscated by the US government and was not returned until June of 1958, that return partly as a result of protracted lobbying and support by Richardson and Shaw. Gower was played in 1958 by Edric Connor, still making history as the first black actor to perform at the Memorial Theatre, and Robeson was cast in the title role of *Othello*, also directed by Richardson, the following year.

And so the casting was usually fixed and agreed long before the season began. That is not to say that issues did not arise around the casting later in the season; far from it. Actors, by necessity, were cast in wide-ranging collections of parts that taxed their abilities in every direction, sometimes untenably. Surviving correspondence between Shaw and the actor Alan Webb casts light on one such instance in 1955. Webb wrote to Shaw asking to be released from playing Justice Shallow in Shaw's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* on 1st June 1955. *The*

[28] Donnell's promotion to General Manager in 1958 and the reason why he was the last of Shaw's trusted lieutenants is discussed more in Chapter 8.

Merry Wives of Windsor opened 12th July 1955. Shaw wrote back deeply apologetic and saying he needed to ask Quayle before releasing Webb from his contract. In the end Justice Shallow was played by Edward Atienza, who also played Feste in John Gielgud's *Twelfth Night*, Lavache in Noel Willman's *All's Well That Ends Well*, and Clown in Peter Brook's *Titus Andronicus*. Why Webb was so opposed to playing the part of Shallow is unclear, though with *Merry Wives* opening as the last production of the season it may have been an issue of timing rather than an aversion to the part. Webb also appeared in *Twelfth Night* and *All's Well* as Sir Toby Belch and The King of France respectively.

Issues of casting would also arise around illness and injury. Understudies would be appointed in the cast for the principal characters, but sometimes events would conspire against the theatre and emergency measures were necessary, as Cyril Luckham recalled happening in 1958:

> It's an absolute wicked charm [Glen has.] Because he gets one to do things, I can tell you. In my first or second season I was in all the plays except one. When you were out of a play you had a week's holiday when it came on, and you had a wonderful week out. I'd been home about a day when the phone went. "Cyril, my dear boy. We're in a fix. Ron Haddrick has fallen ill, and we open with *Pericles* [directed by Tony Richardson] in three days time or something. Can you save our…" And so of course one said yes, and I packed up, gave up my hol, had a dreadful time trying to learn it and played it for about a week, I think. I can't even remember the name of the part now.[29]

Paul Robeson's casting in *Othello* also continued to cause problems for the Memorial Theatre in 1959 even after his passport was restored. Early in the year Robeson was taken ill in Russia with a suspected heart condition. At his wife's urging he cancelled a planned tour of India and, at the end of January, withdrew from the Stratford season (Robeson Junior 292). In February of 1959 Shaw, apparently at Tony Richardson's begging, wrote to Michael Redgrave asking him to take on the part. Redgrave refused, and Shaw's letter back to him after makes it clear Shaw knew he would do so (GL7). As things fell out, Robeson was

[29] The part in question was Helicanus. The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Collections Catalogue lists Ron Haddrick in the parts of both Helicanus and Leonine, as well as Luckham as Helicanus and Peter Palmer as Leonine. The Photographic Record of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre for 1957-59 lists only Luckham and Palmer in the cast.

persuaded by a telegram from Shaw in which “implored Paul to help me or [the] Stratford Season will be ruined", and it was agreed that Robeson would miss the first two weeks of rehearsals in order to recuperate in a Russian sanatorium, before joining the company and playing the part (with Julian Glover as his understudy filling in for him in rehearsals for those first two weeks).

While casting could and did create problems throughout the entire course of the season, the bulk of the work was still finished and laid to rest before the end of the summer. Shaw's attention then turned to his own productions. His preparatory work required focus, and so: "during the winter, Glen, his wife Angela Baddeley, and [Percy Harris] would go abroad on holiday. The mornings were spent working on the first play he was to direct for the coming season" (Harris, foreword to Mullin). This work began by reading the play repeatedly, to the point where actors and directors would never recall Shaw needing to consult the text during rehearsals. From there Shaw began his preparation by composing his notebooks.

For each production he had usually a pair if not three notebooks of A6 size which he filled with his thoughts on the play. He divided them into sections, usually progressing from thoughts on the play, its tone and the points the audience needed to understand, to the ideas of design of set and costume as discussed with Harris (or whomever the designer may be on the rare occasions he and Harris did not collaborate). From there Shaw progressed to any additional production concerns such as music, dance or fight choreography, before the bulk was given over to part-by-part assessments of the characters of the play. He wrote in pencil, editing as he went with both erasure and crossings out. He favoured writing only on the verso pages at least initially, but often returned to a note on characters and wrote enough additions to carry onto the recto overleaf.

The character notes in particular could be minutely detailed, though there is a pattern of increasing brevity across the decade, particularly in the smaller parts. This becomes clear when comparing Shaw's notes on the 4th Forest Lord in his two productions of *As You Like It* in Stratford. First, in 1952, Shaw fills a full page of the notebook:

4th ^Forest Lord aged 24. John Turner[30]

A tough young fellow. Very much alive & on the spot. A first class hunter. It is important to remember that although all these Lords live in the forest & look rather like brigands they are aristocrats & very well bred men [sic]. In other words they should all look distinguished in their own ways & wear they [sic] strange assortment of clothes with an air & sense of style.

On his return to the play in 1957, which Shaw stressed was not a restaging of his previous productions but rather an attempt to come at the play fresh, Shaw's view of the character is somewhat briefer:

4th Lord 23 Derek Mayhew

Young & gay & full of life. He is a charming chap & always ready to help in any way he can,

After the notebooks were prepared, Shaw turned to the question of blocking. This was where the presence of his designer became key, with Harris's set design playing host to Shaw's childhood toy soldiers to mark the initial blocking, then clarifying this in the model box of the set with Harris's pipe-cleaner figures. Despite the depth of this preparation, Harris was at pains to point out that what Shaw developed at this stage was a guide and not a fixed blueprint:

During rehearsal, he passed his ideas on to the company, but never so rigidly as to hamper their imagination or freedom. The promptcopy [sic] was a starting point, which gave him confidence, so that he would not be caught out without an answer. At the first rehearsal, he always stressed that his conception and his ideas of each character were meant to provide a basis for the company's work – nothing was irrevocable. At this meeting, they read the play aloud, the model and costume designs were shown. Leading members of the company had usually been consulted already

[30] Shaw's character notes always listed the actor's name alongside the character's, though it's hard to tell if these were added later or if casting was completed before Shaw began his notes.

> about their costumes, but anyone who disagreed with the image of their character was encouraged to protest. (Harris, foreword to Mullin)[31]

Shaw's preparatory work was far more for himself than for his actors. Armed and with an understanding of the characters and play that allowed him to guarantee *something* was put on stage and ensured he had an answer for any question put to him, Shaw used this preparation as a framework on which the production could be laid, or rebuilt should the actors find another approach or interpretation that still gelled with the full production.

Promptbooks and notebooks prepared, Shaw returned to Stratford for the end of the year, bringing the company with him as they began to arrive for the next year's season. Levi Fox, the director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust during Shaw's tenure, spoke to Michael Mullin in 1977 about the feeling in the town as the new year and season drew close:

> We were fortunate in Stratford in the fifties that we did have a succession of top actors and actresses who came to us under what has sometimes been referred to, in not terribly grateful terms, as the "star system". I think it had a lot to be said for it if I may say so, and I remember with what keen anticipation we used to await the announcement of the names in the late autumn at the turn of the year. And then how, when the company first started to arrive in December, as it did several weeks in advance of the beginning of the season, what keen anticipation there was. There was a much greater feeling of excitement and involvement in those days than there is now [1977]. The fact is, I suppose, we have the company with us all the year round and it isn't quite the same, but in those days these great celebrities used to come along and they were very much welcomed and looked forward to and they did seem to fit into the state of affairs set up very well (Fox interviewed by Mullin).

The company continued to arrive in Stratford until the season was ready to commence. Before rehearsals began it had become customary under Anthony Quayle for the director of the theatre to address the company as a whole, actors and directors alike, by way of welcome. It was a duty which Quayle handled with his usual charisma and confidence. Shaw was far less happy about being the centre of attention, as indeed he was about being the ultimate authority, and public speaking in his own person was a particular challenge:

[31] For more details on Shaw's preparatory work and how actors took to it, see Chapter 4.

> My most dreaded day at Stratford was the opening of the season. When Anthony Quayle was there it was not so bad, for he spoke and I said nothing. But in 1955 Tony was in America and when the day for the opening of the season arrived I was on my own.
>
> In the Conference Hall at the Theatre there were Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier, Angela Baddeley, Joyce Redman, Alan Webb, Michael Dennison, Maxine Audley, Keith Michele [sic], Rosalind Atkinson, Ralph Michael, William Devlin, Edward Atienza, Geoffrey Bayldon, Ian Holm, Patrick Wymark and a Company of forty other actors and actresses.
>
> There was also Sir John who was going to produce "Twelfth Night" the first play of the season.
>
> It was the custom that the Director should make a speech of welcome and intention. I looked at Angela. She gave me her secret smile of love and encouragement. I started off. I certainly can't remember a word I said. I know that I felt ill with nervous strain. Suddenly Vivien got up and put her arms round me. "It's alright" she said "We are your friends" (Shaw Papers 1).

The feeling among most of Shaw's actors was certainly that he was their friend, and working to their benefit whenever he directed them. Shaw also had to make this address alone in 1953, when Quayle was leading the other half of the company's tour of Australia and New Zealand. After that, rehearsals began. Shaw's productions opened the season in 1952, 1957 and 1958 but in the other years of his tenure he did not begin rehearsals until at least month into the season. He filled his time, though, and cultivated a reputation of care for all of the theatre's staff, in every department. As Desmond Hall recalled it:

> He was also enormously thoughtful for his staff: he never failed to go round all the workshops on opening night and shake everybody by the hand which was a side most people here remember him for.

Hall remembered Shaw’s thoughtfulness extending far beyond the opening nights:

> As director of the theatre he was always available; spent 14 or 15 hours a day in the theatre, always. Would never dream of going home until his performance went on in

> the theatre. It was his theatre, everybody in it were his friends, colleagues, employees, and he thought it was his duty very much, well, it wasn't a duty, it was natural to him, to be always with them when they were working, particularly in front of the public.

The picture that Hall paints of Shaw is very much one of paternalistic care and loyalty rather than one of micromanagement:

> When Glen was director here, everything that went on the place that he was director of was his business, and he wanted to make sure that everybody was happy as far as they could be, and to thank them for what they did, or otherwise if they didn't come up to expectations (Hall interviewed by Mullin).

Hearing Hall say this calls to mind a letter Shaw wrote to his wife back in June of 1941. Then he had proudly told her that having been tasked with organising a military display during his training, he had made a point of showcasing all the non-traditional trades in the battalion - cooks, tailors, mechanics, boot-menders, armourers, signalmen etc., to the great happiness of both the men and the officers. His understandings of the importance of morale, comradeship, and the simple decency of appreciating the work of those under his direction, carried over from war to peace and the army to the theatre. As Percy Harris put it, Shaw's

> interest and influence on the theatre was not confined to the company. It included the stage staff and everyone who made up the workshops and wardrobe, not forgetting the dressers and the front-of-house staff. Everyone felt they were essential to the success of the production, and that he knew and cared for them all. This approach of course made him much loved and admired. He knew that everyone was important to the work and they knew that their contribution was noticed and appreciated (Harris, foreword to Mullin).

Levi Fox also remembered Shaw's warmness and kindness, and noted that Shaw's love for Stratford was also at the heart of his character as director of the theatre, at least as Fox saw it:

> He loved the free and natural beauty of [Stratford]. There were trees and gardens around, fields behind the house, birds and wildlife and so on, and somehow this struck a note of harmony with his spirit I think. And this sensitive, likeable character showed

> itself in many ways. He was awfully nice with children, for example; always found time to talk to them. And this characteristic sensitivity reflected itself very much down at the Memorial Theatre itself. There are not many occasions when one went to the theatre in those days that one didn't encounter Glen Byam Shaw in the foyer or around the theatre.

Shaw's approach and care suggested echoes of one of his predecessors to Fox as well:

> He made the whole business of theatre-going a very personal experience. And in this respect he was very much like Sir Barry Jackson. Sir Barry did this a great deal, and he did a great deal of eavesdropping. He would go and sit in the stalls, behind a group of ordinary playgoers or intermingle with a school group and he would just listen. And weeks and months afterwards he would recall and tell you about something that he'd overheard and this obviously helped him in gauging audience reaction. And Glen tended to do the same sort of thing (Fox interviewed by Mullin).

By the time Shaw left the theatre he had come a long way from being the "white-haired man who walk[ed] quietly about the place", puzzling the staff and the general public, but he kept that role on and it bore professional fruit for him. Gauging the public reaction to every aspect of the season, from its announcement to the final show, gave Shaw a working understanding of his theatre in the community and in the world that allowed him to shape his productions and seasons accordingly. He makes this practice explicit in opening thoughts on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in his notebook for the 1955 production:

> A couple of Sundays ago I was letting myself into the theatre by the front door & there were two old girls looking at one of the boards with the list of plays for the Season on it.
> As I passed, one of them said to the other "Well, out of that lot the one I should like to see is "The Merry Wives of Windsor".
> I'm sure she sensed in the title a jolly good evening of fun.

And from that idea Shaw built the principles and core ideas he wanted his production to convey in order to pitch them to his actors.

Rehearsals for the first shows of the season began in February. In both '52 and '57 Shaw began with productions of *As You Like It*, and the timing of the rehearsals played into his hands for proving a point about the staging of the play:

> I'd had this idea, because of the songs, that it should start in the winter. Because you don't sing "blow now thou winter wind" in the middle of summer, and you don't sing "in the spring time, the merry merry ring time," in the winter. So I planned the whole production on that idea, because it's not a terrible thing to be banished into the forest on a lovely spring day, but it is when there's snow on the ground and it's turning cold and bears are about and you can't find anything to eat or start a fire and so on (Shaw interviewed by Mullin).

Shaw's production saw a heavy coating of snow on the first day of rehearsal and glorious sunshine and warmth on opening night. The other years of his tenure saw other directors' productions open the season and Shaw's own rehearsals start later. As director of the theatre, Shaw had very little to do with the rehearsals for other productions for the most part. Anthony Quayle made it clear later that he and Shaw had very rarely visited each other's rehearsals or looked in on the other directors, not even watching the dress rehearsal (Quayle interviewed by Mullin). However, occasions did arise when Shaw was called on to help with issues arising with other productions. Sometimes this would be an issue of casting or production, such as with Paul Robeson in 1958 and '59. At other times the issues were more urgent, as Laurence Olivier recalled about John Gielgud's production of *Twelfth Night* in 1955:

> All started merry as a marriage-bell. It was lovely to be with Glennie again and with Johnnie Gielgud as our director; though, as twenty years before in *Romeo*, he did not always agree with what I was trying to do, we had enough mutual fondness, and respect to recognize that perfect agreement in matters of characterization would never be ours, not in this world; and so peaceful co-operation was possible. He still had the disconcerting habit of changing moves at every single rehearsal; of course a director has the right to change his mind, but after almost four weeks and with the opening night looming closer, I began to be nervous that the occasion would be a shambles, with an utterly confused company knowing neither the timing nor the placing of the moves. Noël Coward once said that the only real use of a director was to stop the

> actors from bumping into each other; at the rate our *Twelfth Night* was going our first performance would have been more like a game of Blind Man's Buff than anything else (Olivier 163-4).

Coward's comment that Olivier references here bears some resemblance to his advice to actors ("Learn your lines and don't bump into me") and may have been offered to Olivier at any point after their first collaboration, when Coward directed Olivier in *Private Lives* in 1930.

> Sensing disaster, I had to talk to Glen and explain that none of us had yet been allowed to do the same thing two days running. He asked John Gielgud to join us, and at the risk of hurting his feelings I asked him to leave the company at the point we had got to and let us go over and over it for a couple of days until we knew the moves well enough to do a run-through without a stop; then at least he himself would be able to see his own mistakes if there were any, and if he needed to make more changes he could make as many as he chose, since we would at least know what we were changing *from*. I'm afraid he was a bit hurt by the suggestion that he should quit his own rehearsals, but for the sake of avoiding a disaster I had to be firm and insist. At the end of the two days we were able to offer him a clean run-through. As I suspected, he did not find that he had to alter that much, and he recognized that I had respected his production and, as I had promised, made not a single change to it (Olivier 163-4).

In a letter to Stark Young on 3rd April that year, Gielgud commented that Olivier

> has little respect for the critical sensitivity of others; on the other hand he is quite brilliant in his criticism of my directing methods and impatient with my hesitance and (I believe) necessary flexibility. He wants everything cut and dried at once, so he may perfect [his performance] with utter certainty of endless rehearsal and repetition – but he is good for me all the same (Gielgud 180).

The conflict of styles between the two men makes it hard to know how much of Olivier's account is accurate. Nonetheless Shaw managed to mediate, and the production opened on 12th April to wide acclaim.

Rehearsals and the steady opening of productions filled the remainder of Shaw's year. Each new play provided key markers for the progression of the season, with the first night of each production acting as a press night as well. With no previews, no reviews appeared until the production had opened, meaning its success hinged largely on the reputation of the play, the theatre, the director and the leading actors. The "star system" policy was vital to the theatre's continued success and Shaw's palpable love for actors, connections and charm were key to that policy.

Shaw's role as director of the theatre also meant April brought with it an extra duty: an annual refusal to speak at the Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations. Shaw's fear of public speaking in his own person, so terrifying him in the address to the theatre company alone, meant he would never agree to Levi Fox's request that he deliver a speech at the event:

> I think he always felt that he needed to have enough time to do the job properly otherwise it worried him. In this connection he was never at all keen to be invited to make speeches without adequate time for preparation. He could make a lovely speech, absolutely apt and well thought out and well delivered but he was never keen to do this. I can tell you that in connection with the Shakespeare Birthday Celebrations for example, when on the occasion of the annual birthday luncheon distinguished speakers are invited to make after luncheon speeches by way of proposing toasts, one to the immortal memory and one to the theatre, on a number of occasions the planning committee, of which I presided, had in mind to invite Glen Byam Shaw to be the principal speaker. And when I sounded him out and informed him Glen absolutely implored me not to get him, or not to allow him to be invited, and yet we knew he would have made the speech of the day. He was a very modest man (Fox interviewed by Mullin).

Public speaking was unavoidable, however. As the director of the theatre, Shaw's responsibilities required him to represent it to the wider world. Receptions needed to be attended, dignitaries needed to be greeted, and according to Desmond Hall, on the occasion of the royal visit to the theatre in 1957 the Queen had to be kept from falling into a pond[32] (Hall interviewed by Mullin). His feelings on these duties were perhaps put to the test most

[32] No further details about the incident are offered.

acutely during the company's tour of Russia in 1958, the only one of the tours which Shaw himself accompanied (as the others were led by Quayle). As Rachel Kempson recalled:

> Night after night the Russians gave parties and receptions for the Company. At every one of these Glen Byam Shaw had to make a speech, which terrified him. We could see the backs of his trouser legs were quivering as he talked. One of the rather grand Lady Commissars fell madly in love with him and insisted on sitting next to him at every reception. This was extremely useful to everybody. It allowed us many perks: free seats for the ballet and cars whenever we wanted them. I don't think the arrangement suited Glen as well as it did us. In fact he became ill and had to go home! (Kempson 186).

The 1958 tour of Russia was the one major break from Shaw's normal annual duties during his tenure. For four weeks across December and January of 1958-59 a trio of productions from the 1958 home season (Shaw's *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* along with Peter Hall's *Twelfth Night*) were taken first to Leningrad and then to Moscow at the invitation of the Russians and with the backing of the British Council. Shaw held off on accepting the offer until after the productions in question had all opened in Stratford, to be sure the audiences agreed with the company that they were of suitable quality for the tour. The company had toured in previous years, and it was to facilitate touring that Quayle had first sought a co-director for the theatre. But in previous years it had always been Quayle who had accompanied the touring company, while Shaw had remained in Stratford.

Shaw went to Russia in December of 1958 having tendered his resignation and knowing the next year's season in Stratford would be his last. Peter Hall had already agreed to succeed him, on Shaw’s recommendation, and it was while both men were in Moscow that Hall put his vision of the RSC to Fordham Flower, the chair of the theatre's governing body. That year would see no preparations for casting the following season, no productions to prepare, no work to be done once the final production opened. Shaw's last duty at the theatre would in many ways have been the most taxing for him: his leaving speech. It presented a dual challenge; not only public speaking but the unavoidable fact of his being the centre of attention.

Shaw's leaving speech is full of humility. He talked about the dread he felt the first time he was left in charge of the theatre without Quayle. He praised the actors of the last

season and of seasons past. And he ended by taking the time to go around every department, as he did after each production, to thank them.

> Before I finish, I should like to say something about this theatre in general. There is no question at all that it owes an enormous amount to the leading players who make very considerable sacrifices in order to come here, and by doing so make it possible for this theatre to exist in the way that it does.

The "sacrifices" Shaw speaks of here were largely financial: while Stratford was not short of cash in any real sense there was still a significant difference between what an actor was paid there and the money they could get in London. This was compounded with the additional costs of travel from London, and with the time commitment of a full season.

> But naturally, if sacrifices are made, something must be given in return. In other words, if this theatre was badly run, I feel quite sure that the great artists of the theatre: actors, producers, designers and musicians, would not come here and therefore I contend that the people who are the very core of this theatre's strength and success are the permanent members of the staff, whether they work in the scenic department, the property department, the wardrobe, the scene painting department, the front of house staff and cleaners, the box office, the restaurant, the press department, the management, stage management, stage staff, orchestra, the postal department, the secretaries, the accounts department, the library and picture gallery, and last, but of course definitely first in reality, the governing body. I have not mentioned anybody by name because if I mentioned one I should want to mention all, and it isn't the individual that is the most important. It is the entire team. To have worked with this team for 8 years has been my great privilege and happiness (Shaw, leaving speech).

Most of Shaw's years ended as they began: looking to the casting of the next season, sounding out friends and colleagues as to their availability, considering what plays would suit the actors he knew he had. 1959 was different, though. Shaw's year ended with all the concerns of the next season passed to Peter Hall. Instead, Shaw was preparing to move back to London, for the first time in nearly a decade, and see how long he lasted before his "out of work feeling" set him in search of a new production.

Chapter 4: Shaw, Acting and Actors

Shaw's approach to direction was one which today sits very awkwardly with current conventions and understandings of acting and direction. As I have already covered, Shaw would go into the rehearsal process having already blocked the full production and made detailed examinations of the characters. A large portion of what we now understand to be the work of rehearsal would be done before any of the actors had arrived in Stratford. A part of this can be put down to necessity: the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre's seasonal schedule allowed only four weeks of rehearsals for productions, many of them being rehearsed while the cast were playing in the season's other plays. But the main motivation behind Shaw taking this approach was a combined question of habit and confidence on his own part.

The reasons for Shaw adopting the practice of pre-production blocking and notebook making are rooted in the circumstance of his wartime convalescence, but his decision to keep making them for all his future Shakespeare productions seems to have been rooted in his own tendency towards self-effacement and lack of confidence in himself. Peggy Ashcroft touched upon it in 1977:

> [Shaw] certainly is very reluctant to talk about himself. To say he's underestimated is not quite fair because all who work with him, obviously, esteem him enormously highly. But he's such a private person and so averse to publicity that I think he gets too overlooked shall we say (Ashcroft interviewed by Mullin).

Shaw would have grounded his aversion to publicity in far more pragmatic terms. As discussed before, Shaw saw Shakespeare as the architect of any success he came by, with his own role being to allow Shakespeare to speak. As Anthony Quayle put it, Shaw thought his job was "to be absolutely faithful to his author and not to use that author as a vaulting horse for his own ambitions. [Shaw] is the servant of his author, this is how he sees himself" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin). This faithfulness to his author and lack of ambition is endemic throughout Shaw's work, from his rejection of the credit for "fixing" plays like *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Troilus and Cressida*, to his quiet pride in seeing proof out of his office window that he had staged *As You Like It* across the correct timeframe with winter turning to Spring. Shaw's faithfulness here is not a question of "original practices" or any effort to recreate the Elizabethan stage. Rather it is a desire to be true to the text; to stage the

plays so that they appear as they were written. “I was right, Will, wasn’t I? You did mean that, didn’t you?” may as well be Shaw’s mantra.

In that same conversation with Mullin, Shaw offered his motivations for the degree of preparatory work, or "homework" as he called it, when discussing Peter Brook's 1970 production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (a production for which Brook had eight weeks of rehearsals, allowing time and space for his actors to experiment and for the production to evolve in a way Shaw’s productions did not have the rehearsal hours for):

> Alas, I never saw Brook's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. I wish I had; I'm sure that I would have loved it. And what he has done has had a tremendous effect on the theatre. From what I've heard his attitude towards the actors and approach to the play with him is obviously so helpful and right. I would guess he does the exact opposite of what I did. I would think he works on the spot. I can't do that because I have a very slow working brain, if it works at all, and so I have to prepare. I couldn't face a company of actors, however undistinguished they were, without having done my homework and knowing how I want the play to finally come out, how I think that each character should be acted, and the link between them. But I think that Brook develops as he goes along, and you've got to have a marvellously quick and fertile brain and imagination in order to work like that. Otherwise it soon gets out of hand (Shaw interviewed by Mullin).

Hints of the full extent of this homework and of Shaw's need to be prepared to face his actors appear in his notebooks for *Richard III*, with his in-depth knowledge of the historical biographies of many of the characters sitting in contrast to his assertion that he had "not read a great deal about the actual events or about the actual characters that appear in the play." Shaw's notes refer to the actual historical fates of various characters, political interactions of the era, his own possible descent from the Mayor of London (requiring him also to have investigated who exactly was Mayor of London at the time) and assorted other details that belie his claims of ignorance.

Shaw's approach to direction then, with a production fully blocked and character exploration completed and presented to the actors from the outset, feels today to be restrictive and limiting in the extreme. And yet almost universally the actors who worked with him were unceasing in their praise for him as a director. At least a part of this is a generational divide, the current actor-led methodology of production not having emerged and evolved in the

1950s. The other part seems to be a result, in near equal parts, of Shaw being kinder to his actors than most directors and of him being right most of the time. Marius Goring saw Shaw's supportiveness to the actors as the key to his directorial success, and thought that it arose from Shaw's own experience of being an actor:

> From the very beginning you felt you had somebody who's really interested in what you're trying to do because you've already discussed it with him, you come to agree with him. He would follow through to the first night and then he'd always be back every fortnight or so saying "that's got better, on the other hand that's not as good, you've lost something there, let's try and get that back." It would really make an actor love a director. And I think it was mainly because he did so much acting himself. Because I've worked with a number of directors who're quite brilliant in their way but in a sense you feel that they don't really quite know what it is all about because they haven't acted (Goring interviewed by Mullin).

Goring clearly believed that Shaw's acting experience gave him both a sympathy for the difficulties and challenges of the profession, and an understanding of the technical abilities and limitations of acting. Shaw had spent a good decade as an actor before even considering directing, and had continued to act alongside his directing work until 1940. Goring saw this acting experience put to manifest work in his directing, for the benefit of all concerned:

> the director hasn't got to be a *good* actor, but the point is that he should have been one, just in order to know what the limitations are: what you can do and what you can't do. So often one would have directors… [who've] got an idea but haven't got the actual technical understanding of what a human being can actually do. They hope for some wonder and of course it doesn't come… But Glen had tried to be an actor, and so he would see other people trying to be actors, and just thought he was able to help… [he] was marvelous in teaching actors what to do, although he himself would probably not be able to do it for the full performance (Goring interviewed by Mullin).

Goring saw Shaw's ability to bring attention to the smallest moments of performance, and his attention to detail across the whole production, as reminiscent of "probably the greatest director England's ever had; Granville Barker." He was also clear on what he thought Shaw's greatest asset as a director was:

> But this is all just to try and explain what was, what is, Glen's really great quality, and that is that from the word "Go" when the cast is assembled everybody in that cast knows that they have got a real friend who is just watching their interests from beginning to end (Goring interviewed by Mullin).

This is not to say that Shaw was always happy with his company, or always managed to be the ally they needed in every rehearsal. Shaw himself recalled an incident in his leaving speech in 1959:

> I like rehearsals to be very concentrated, and I can't bear it if people sit around in corners when I'm trying to work. Suddenly, at one of the rehearsals, Margaret Leighton [playing Rosalind in *As You Like It*] stopped and said "This really is impossible." I, having been conscious that there was a certain amount of whispering going on all round this hall where we were rehearsing, flew into a rage and said that I quite agreed with her and that it was absolutely disgraceful. Whereupon Miss Siobhan McKenna, who was playing Celia, burst into tears. And a second later Miss Leighton burst into tears.

Shaw was entirely lost, unable to tell what on earth was happening. He pressed on as best he could:

> I tried to calm them down and explained to Miss McKenna that my fury was not directed at her but at the members of the company who were sitting all round and distracting my concentration. "Alright, let's forget it and start the scene again" I said. They started, but after a few lines had been spoken, Siobhan burst into tears again and then Margaret Leighton burst into tears again. And they flung their arms round each other and the tears were literally falling down onto the floor. And I thought I was going mad because I didn't know what it was all about. I do remember saying "Well this is going to be a jolly comedy."

In the end one of the stage managers had to explain to Shaw what had occurred:

> When the two leading ladies were mopping themselves up, it was explained to me that whenever the chap who was playing Oliver came to the line "he threw his eye aside", Miss McKenna couldn't help giggling, and Miss Leighton had got a bit bored with that, and that was how it had all started. Anyhow the production turned out to be gay and successful in spite of all the tears (Shaw leaving speech).

Nor is it true to say that every actor was enamoured of Shaw in every production and accepted his ideas and preparatory thoughts. Trader Faulkner disagreed with Shaw over his interpretation of Malcolm in Shaw's 1955 *Macbeth*, seeing the character as far stronger than Shaw did, based on Faulkner's own historical reading around King Malcolm Canmore. Faulkner, with some gentle guidance from Laurence Olivier (who it is evident from Mullin's interview with Faulkner was clearly Faulkner's idol) ended up offering a performance closer to Shaw's conception than his own, and was clear that he respected Shaw's ability and understanding of Shakespeare even with the specific disagreement they had faced:

> Shaw was a wonderful director because he was very quiet and I think he let what was there grow: like a gardener he would prune here and clip there so that all the buds were cut back to their right length and then the bush just sprouted when the fusion happened between the artists and the audience; because on the first night it was electric... And I felt very much, in playing that part, that I was in the hands of a very clever man, Byam Shaw, who was paying much more attention to the overall effect of his production than any specific detail to Malcolm (Faulkner interviewed by Mullin).

Other actors saw Shaw as far less fixed in his ideas about his productions when rehearsals began. Marius Goring clarified for Mullin that: "You mustn't necessarily accept that Glen actually directed the play like [his notebooks]… And working with Glen, I never had the feeling that he was imposing it" (Goring interviewed by Mullin). Peggy Ashcroft also clarified that Shaw's "homework" was more for Shaw to have a guideline to work from than a fixed and unchangeable blueprint for production:

> He had every move worked out. Now that didn't mean that he wasn't absolutely ready to adjust moves when it got on the floor; just that he could address a company. He could give every actor a delineation of what their character was, in detail, whether they were small characters or main... I think he probably had the notebooks there, but

> he talked to us. He is such a modest and retiring man, but that dropped away and he just said what was in his mind. And then one got to work, and the fact that he knew what he wanted was a tremendous asset to a company and it didn't preclude the fact that you could say what you felt (Ashcroft interviewed by Mullin).

And Shaw's "homework" was seen as a great help by some actors. Cyril Luckham in particular spoke very fondly of Shaw and the work he brought into the rehearsal room on day one:

> [Shaw had these] meticulous moves all worked out beforehand: the groupings, the movements, all of that. But all occasionally altered if necessary. He always did a tremendous amount of homework. Not like, quite a few modern directors who seem to arrive having done none at all: it's all sort of bunged in…
> Well if you've got weeks and weeks and weeks I suppose you can try that. This was carefully thought out from all his experience and knowledge and discussions with people, so that you felt so safe. That was one of the great things, I said it before: you felt so safe with him. You would never be asked to do something which was terribly difficult for an actor to do. It would be made as easy as possible and always would look nice from the front, and be true to the old bard… And he was immensely encouraging and oh it was thrilling! (Luckham interviewed by Mullin).

And Peggy Ashcroft also felt that the actors appreciated the work Shaw did before rehearsals began, as well as appreciating the personal approach Shaw brought to direction.[33] The sense that Shaw was easy to work with pervades almost every surviving memory of the man. Anthony Quayle also talked to Michael Mullin about Shaw's direction in comparison to that of Peter Brook, but where Shaw was entirely praising of Brook and dismissive of his own approach, Quayle took a rather different position:

> There's a certain style of director who likes to challenge the actor, to never let him be comfortable, to provoke him, to be abrasive. That wouldn't be Glennie. Glennie believes you get there with kindness, very firm but with great sympathy. If you hadn't got there he'd say "no, it's not there quite," but it was always encouraging. He'd say

[33] As covered in Chapter 3.

> "come here, let's see, now we've got to get a certain something else into this scene, it's not there quite. But it'll come, it's coming, yes yes, a bit more, yes." He doesn't throw you right back and say "Well you'd better go and think" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

Quayle saw Shaw as far more supportive of the actor where Brook assumed a more challenging approach:

> Peter Brook would say "Why did you do that? Why do you think the man thinks that? Why do you think he does this? Why that? Why the other?" "I dunno" "Well you'd better think about it. I'm not going to tell you because if I tell you it won't be yours." Glennie doesn't hesitate to say what he thinks the man or the woman is thinking or feeling at that moment. He feels it so strongly that he can't help but tell you. If you're playing Rosalind he'll say "Well, she comes, now, in this scene she's feeling this, feeling that, feeling the other," and he paints you a picture of it (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

This, Quayle was sure, was the kind of thing Brook would never have said. Quayle understood Brook to cut his actors loose, instructing them that:

> “It's up to you to find your way: all alone, find it.” And if the actor doesn't find it then Peter Brook's attitude is that it's not his. He's taking something second hand from a director, he's not minting it himself. Brook's a kind of challenger, "Come on! Find it! Think it! Find it in yourself!" Glennie would say "now look, old darling, we have to get this and then it has to go *rrrrr*" and will keep giving you glimpses and visions until you go "Oh, yes, I see which way I've got to go!" They're completely different methods. And they both have got their value (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

Marius Goring also saw Shaw's supportive directing style as key to his success and the love that his actors had for him. Goring also felt that Shaw was very skilled at persuading actors to do what he had planned before the rehearsals began without them ever realising it had been his intention from the beginning; helping an actor to reach the same conclusions about character, staging and the play without ever directly telling them what to think. It was a skill he felt Shaw had learned from the Russian director Komisarjevsky:

> [Komisarjevsky] believed firmly that if you once tell an actor what to do you're killing the most important thing that he's going to need at the end of development which is the feeling that he's part of the plot. Even if he isn't, it doesn't matter. He must have the feeling. This is something that has come instinctively to him as a performer. And I would say that was carried on completely by Glen in his every production. I've never been in any production of Glen's that I can ever remember Glen *telling* me to do anything. By the end it probably may have been *(chuckles)* exactly what he wanted when we got to it. That's the magic. What makes him so lovely to work with (Goring interviewed by Mullin).

Quayle also saw Shaw's persuasiveness and the role it played, though for him it was more overt and clear, though no less effective:

> I think in other hands it can be an extremely dangerous way of directing indeed. Glen really is what you'd call a blocker. With some directors this can send you mad; to say "Now you're here, come in here and say 'come on Michael, we must go' and then you should touch him there." You'd say "I don't know whether I want to touch him. I don't know if the character should." And they say "Just touch him." You say, "I'll see you in hell before I touch him." But with Glennie he had such good reason, and it was so well thought out, and so sensitively thought out. He would always say "now please, dear old fellow, do please accept what I say and you'll find it. We'll get the play going so much quicker if you do and if there's something which later you find it's not right... I have thought about it and you in this part so deeply, I really have." And you'd find he had. Even to the smallest details he would have thought about it. And he'd thought about it with such sensitivity that you couldn't but accept them. But at times when you couldn't, usually he would say "Alright, darling, let's find out what's better for you then," after you'd been rehearsing 10 days (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

But any such adjustment to Shaw's envisioned production only came after at least one attempt at Shaw's own version:

> The first week he'd say: "I beg you all, please accept my vision of this play. Because if you don't I don't know where I am and you won't know where you are. Don't let's

> get into a no man's land of all sitting down to think, because I have thought about this for months." And so he would bring it about, but with such great personal charm and such sensitivity that you couldn't be annoyed. Sometimes you'd disagree and then sometimes he would give way and sometimes he would stand firm. It's just a whole different ballgame [to directors who try to impose their will] (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

And Shaw was capable of accepting great changes to his conception of the play. Rutter examines one of the largest changes from notebook to stage in his 1953 *Antony and Cleopatra*:

> the equally enigmatic Seleucus scene (5.2.135–174) is disclosed by pencilled notes in the promptbook that show Ashcroft playing a different Cleopatra to the one Shaw imagined in 1944. Originally, he'd intended a straightforward betrayal of a momentarily wrong-footed queen.
> His notes are worth quoting in full to observe how meticulously the director was thinking through each scene by playing it out on a mental stage: (Rutter 88)

Rutter does indeed go on to reproduce the extract from the notebooks in full:

> On line 'Here my good Lord,' she turns swiftly to the table L, opens the casket & takes out a scroll. Caesar says 'you shall advise me in all for Cleopatra' as she is doing this. She turns back again & presents Caesar with the scroll, which he looks at casually. The only treasure that Caesar is really interested in, at present, is Cleopatra herself; the rest will follow in due course.
> 'Where's Seleucus?'
> 'Here madam'
> There is a slight pause. Cleopatra had not noticed him before & did not expect to find him among Caesar's followers.
> But she recovers herself in a moment.
> When Seleucus – who is obviously telling the truth – publicly exposes Cleopatra as he does, she becomes speakless [sic] with rage. She immediately realises the trap that has been set for her. Caesar, of course, is not in the least surprised by Seleucus's statement, for the Treasurer has already deserted to Caesar, & the Emperor is in possession of all the facts

> [As they exit] Cleopatra turns her back on them as they go & stands absolutely still, tearing the scroll, slowly to pieces, & letting them flutter to the ground, speaking her next two lines as she does so (NB44). (Taken from Rutter 88-90)

These entries from Shaw's 1944 notebooks were applied, to an extent, in his 1946 production with Edith Evans as Cleopatra. Rutter goes on to look at how Ashcroft's performance differed from them in 1953:

> In Ashcroft's performance, however, while it looked like her treasurer was betraying her to Caesar and making her a laughingstock ('Caesar smiles'), it was she who was the joker (and the whole fandango with her treasurer was a set-up to sting Octavius). Dismissing Seleucus before Caesar's face with 'go hence, / Or I shall show the cinders of my spirits / Through th'ashes of my chance', Ashcroft half-turned to her girls: 'Cleo gives women a crafty side-long glance' (Promptbook) (Rutter 88-90).

It should be noted that this "crafty side-long glance" does not appear in his director's promptbook for 1953 (his equivalent then of the fully written notations Rutter quotes from 1944), only the stage manager's. It's unclear how much Shaw's conception of this moment may have changed between 1944 and 1953 but Ashcroft's influence is clear in the introduction of this moment, and with it the entire conception of the scene.

However overtly or subtly Shaw's direction manifested and was challenged, what cannot be disputed is that it inspired loyalty from his casts. Nowhere does this seem clearer than in Cyril Luckham's reminiscence on a particularly traumatic performance of *Julius Caesar*:

> [When] I was slain I fell down on that forestage, with a spread scarlet robe and everything, lying there with my head back and then a 2 ft drop…
> Well when I was killed I used to fall back and lie there and eventually down came the curtain and the next time I came on I was in the coffin with my scarlet robe right over me. Well, only once, when I fell I slightly misjudged the distance and I fell and my head came over the edge of the rostrum, so it came right down. And I passed out…
> I was picked up and they had a hell of a job carrying me off because I didn't help them. And they had to shove me straight in the coffin and bring me back. And I just came to, feeling pretty awful, in the wings, and there was this great scarlet thing

shoved over me and back I had to go, I thought “God, I shall faint again and it's awful”, I couldn't wait. And then they told Glen about this and he got the company together and said something like "This is a very gallant gentleman" and I thought it was all worth it, it's been worth it! (Luckham interviewed by Mullin).

Chapter 5: "The Destruction of the Glorified Ideal of War" – *Troilus and Cressida*, 1954

"No one decides to go on with a War after seven years, for fun," Shaw declares in the first of his director's notebooks for his production of *Troilus and Cressida*. It was not an ill-informed statement. To Shaw it would have been a simple fact of life, as it would have been for his actors and audience. "We have lived through a war that lasted for approximately five years," he writes, "so we should have some idea of how these people feel after seven years of War; & we should be able, even after a lapse of nearly nine years, to remember the state of fear, boredom, sorrow & beastliness in which we were, as these people are, immersed." Shaw's intent with the production was clear from his reading of the text which showed, he wrote, "the destruction of the glorified ideal of War."

For the first time since he started working in Stratford two years prior, Shaw did not have Percy Harris of Motley designing his production. Instead, Shaw was working with Malcolm Pride. Motley worked on other productions that season, and there is no apparent explanation for why they did not work with Shaw on *Troilus and Cressida* but Shaw was clearly impressed with Pride's work. Years later he recalled:

> It was very exciting in design. We had these huge brick walls of Troy; they slid open and Malcolm Pride had designed it so it seemed you were looking across a mile and a half or so, and you saw these tiny tents in the distance, about 1300 of them; the whole of the army camped there (Shaw interviewed by Mullin)

Shaw's notebooks offer a more detailed, practical understanding of the set designs.[34]

> When we go from the Troyans[35] to the Greeks the Walls of Troy slide away leaving us on the Phrygian plane [sic] with the Greek Camp in the distance. Apart from the 'Helen' Scene & the scenes in Pandorus's [sic] orchard there are no other changes of scenery.

[34] When preparing his notebooks on this production, Shaw at one point stopped and began again, redrafting his initial thoughts and reaction. This second draft is incomplete, rewriting only the first 20 pages of the first notebook. This provides us the opportunity to compare the two drafts of these early thoughts and see how Shaw changed, reframed and reassessed his ideas, and where relevant in this chapter I will be making comparisons as regards those 20 pages. All of Shaw's commentary on characters and staging comes from the completed first draft.

[35] Shaw refers to the Trojans as "Troyans" throughout.

> Agamemnon's tent, Achilles [sic] tent, & Calchas [sic] tent appear on the Phrygian Plane [sic] when they are required… the essential thing to convey to the audience [is] that the Troyans are in a besieged city & that the Greeks are encamped outside it.

The tents in question were a single side of material hanging on rails to be run on and off from the wings. The Greek Camp was a painted backdrop while the walls of Troy were solid, truck-borne constructions. Pride's costumes were "based on clothes of the period" which broadly meant stolas and togas and indeterminately Greco-Roman armour.

Troilus and Cressida is an infamously difficult play to categorise. As K. Deighton's introduction to the Arden second edition of the play notes, the question of categorisation goes back to the folio printing in 1623. Deighton quotes G. Wilson Knight's postulation that "*Troilus and Cressida* was neither unknown nor forgotten by the editors of the first folio. It is more probable that they were only doubtful how to classify it" (ix). Shaw's introduction addresses this question of classification head on:

> There is great difference of opinion amongst the Scholars as to whether this play should be considered as a History or a Tragedy or a Satirical Comedy or what. If the Scholars can't make up their minds about it then I, certainly, can't. But as we are going to present the play on the stage we must know what we are aiming at. It seems to me that the question of 'label', comedy, tragedy et cetera is not very important. What is important is that the play should have a clear & definite impact on the audience.
> To me the most essential thing to remember is that this play is about WAR & people in war time (Troilus and Cressida Notebook).

Shaw's declaration is clear. This is a play about war, and to Shaw and the rest of the British people in 1954 there was only one war which it could be about.[36] But Shaw approaches it differently here. Before he's used that war as a basic model of good and evil, comparing Richard of Gloucester or Octavius Caesar to Adolf Hitler. But here Shaw's morality of war is as grey as the play's. His notes talk of the immediacy of conflict, of living through the war as much as fighting it, and when he talks of the sense he wants the audience to take from the battles it is with a very clear parallel in mind:

[36] While the Korean War had ended only a year earlier, the UK's involvement had been much less than in the Second World War. Far fewer troops were deployed, conscription was never introduced (though national service continued), and the war stayed distant without tangible effect on the UK's civilian population.

> We must act the circumstances of this play as though they were happening at this moment to us & not think of them as some rather romantic and vague happenings that never, actually, took place at all

Shaw goes on to tie the circumstances of the play to a specific moment and feeling in the memory of his cast:

> When these young men go out, each day, to fight they should have exactly the same feelings of excitement, strain & fear of death that the Battle of Britain pilots had when they climbed into their Spit-fires [sic] & Hurricanes.

The parallel ties Shaw's sympathies directly to the Trojans, and seems to make sense. The costuming and setting wouldn't suggest it, with Pride's dulled breastplates and plumed helmets a far cry from the crisp uniforms and flying jackets of the RAF. But the idea of fighting men still living with their loved ones, defending their home from invasion, ready to be called up at any moment to fight and possibly die, bidding farewell to their families again and again in fear that each time might be the last, is one which Shaw's audience would be more than familiar with.

Shaw's desire to show the realities and realism of war is clearest in the second notebook. His exploration of the play's generic classification leads into a discussion of its realism and the plays which he sees it most resembling: Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, and the works of Chekov. "They are like a slice of real life," Shaw writes, "with comic & tragic circumstances all mixed up together, & they are about real down-to-earth people, not about great heroes & heroines."

Shaw discovered Chekov and O'Casey alongside Siegfried Sassoon during the early days of their relationship. Shaw tying those plays to *Troilus and Cressida* and "the destruction of the glorified idea of war" therefore brings Sassoon's work into play. Sassoon's poem *On Passing the New Menin Gate* would seem most significant. Sassoon wrote the poem after visiting Ypres with Shaw on 25th July 1927, and later described this poem as his "final word" on the First World War (Moorcroft Wilson 186).[37] The visit stayed in Shaw's mind as

[37] Who will remember, passing through this Gate,
The unheroic dead who fed the guns?
Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate,

well, his first letter to Sassoon after the outbreak of war saying “I keep thinking of the day when we went through the Menin Gate together & I was sure you must be thinking of that day too...” And so it would have been with Sassoon in his mind that Shaw came to write his notes on the purpose of *Troilus and Cressida*:

> Naturally when one first reads it one is put off the scent [of Chekov and O’Casey] because the war is the famous war between the Trojans & the Greeks & most of the people are famous legendary characters.
> …
> Why did Shakespeare choose to write about these particular characters, in these circumstances?
> It seems to me that he wanted to show the futility & worthlessness of War. Why did he choose this War?
> I think because it is, usually, thought of in a romantic way, as a War fought by great Kings, Princes, & Warriors for the most beautiful woman in the world.
> …
> Shakespeare has said to himself: "That is rubbish. War is loathsome in any case but in this case it must have been at its worst."

This depiction of *Troilus and Cressida* as a slice of life drama more akin to Chekov or O'Casey than to the rest of Shakespeare's work is a ground breaking assertion to be making in 1954. It's not surprising that Shaw shied away from this assertion at first. Even then, though, his focus was on "people in War time" and it was on people that Shaw focused.

Shaw acknowledges that the characters of *Troilus and Cressida* are far from "real" in an audience's eyes. "I think that one of the dangers of the play," he writes, "is that it is written

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Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones?

Crudely renewed, the Salient holds its own.
Paid are its dim defenders by this pomp;
Paid, with a pile of peace-complacent stone,
The armies who endured that sullen swamp.

Here was the world's worst wound. And here with pride
'Their name liveth for ever', the Gateway claims.
Was ever an immolation so belied
As these intolerably nameless names?
Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime
Rise and deride this sepulchre of crime (Sassoon 188).

about the Greek & Troyan War & that many, if not most of the characters in it are famous in the kind of way that Gods & Goddesses are famous…an obscure, remote, but slightly awe inspiring way." This acknowledgement of the unreality of these characters in the audience's perception done, Shaw treats the characters as entirely real. He sets out a list of four things the production aims to show. The second draft of this list repeats itself, with the first two entries reading: "The reality of War, & a War that has been going on for seven years," and "The debasing & destructive affect [sic] that War has on human beings of all kinds." In the first draft the second entry is instead: "The reality of the characters that we see; & goodness knows they are full of character. In some cases they are so strongly drawn in that they are almost caricatures." Shaw's redraft seems to be an attempt to get away from this idea of caricature. He tries to guard against caricature in principle: "As I have, already, said Shakespeare has, almost, caricatured some of these people, and we must be careful in the playing not to make them comic strips instead of real human beings." The degree to which the production succeeded at this is questionable. The one character specifically warned against caricaturing is Ajax. "He must take himself desperately seriously; it is this very fact that makes him so comical."

There are characters, though, whom Shaw's production does lean towards caricaturing, often in a derogatory way. Shaw does it on a broad scale to every character in the play when describing the way he sees the national characteristics of the Greeks and the Trojans. He outlines his reasons for doing so:

> I think of the Greeks as Prussians & the Troyans as Frenchmen & I think if we are really going to try & make these characters live on the stage – as we must – & stress the difference between them then I think it may help.
> I can imagine myself saying to one of you "You are not being quite Troyan enough" & getting a rather blank look in reply.

Shaw is constantly thinking about the play in terms of performance and rehearsal; it is not enough for him to know what he means by "Greek" or "Troyan" (or indeed "Trojan"); he must find a way to make it clear to his cast. He goes on to talk about the national characteristics he sees mirrored in the play and in Western European temperaments, in terms less than flattering to the Germans. His Greco-Germans "worship force & might", they "lack humour or wit." He parallels the Greek veneration for Nestor ("something of an old club bore") to "the respect the Germans had for Hindenburg when he was practically senile." He

then points to specific Greeks to reinforce his ideas: their attitude to women is really awful because “the way Diomedes talks about Helen is revoltingly insensitive & crude & he treats Cressida like a tart.” Ulysses shows them to have militarism without heroism, as he is “the equivalent of the chief of the Imperial General Staff. A back-room boy.” Thersites is simply “a diseased and cowardly creature.”

Shaw is a little kinder, if not wholly complimentary, in his assessment of the Franco-Trojans: “Cultured; over-cultured - sophisticated & going towards decadence, but still with an inherent sense of chivalry, courtesy, refinement, & coinage. [sic]” Where the exemplars of the Greeks are widespread and disparaging, Shaw sees the Trojans as embodied by Hector: “not a man of great will-power but he is great of heart. A gentleman born & bred. A true aristocrat.” He says this description applies to all Priam’s sons, “even to the soft & decadent Paris,” before dropping one last Franco-Trojan comparison that we’ll come back to: “And there is something French, too, about Pandorus [sic] & his little piece…”

It's an effective shorthand but undeniably caricature. No allowance is made for the fact that every Greek in the play *is* a soldier, having travelled far from home to prosecute this war. Shaw's revised notebook is far kinder to the Trojan/French characters in its equivalent passage, focusing on Hector and Troilus. But the revised notebook also has his assertion that “[as] the author's intention was… to show us the worst aspect of War, he has, of course, tended to show us the worse side of these people's natures rather than the better; but they are none the less true for that.” The worst side of the Trojans then is this “over-cultured” “decadence”, while for the Greeks it is their humourless brutality. It’s no wonder that Shaw sides with the Trojans then: a play so opposed to war can only support those who are bad at war over those who live for nothing else. But Shaw sees fault in characters on both sides, and while he may talk about the war bringing the worst of people out, he still sees it as the fault of the characters themselves. And his disdain is most clear for Achilles.

Achilles and Patroclus are perhaps the most caricatured of Shaw’s characters here. He addresses Achilles first, densely packing four pages of notes with detail, grotesquery and homophobia. Achilles is “extraordinary” and “monstrous”, and

> It would be fatal to get him mixed up in one's mind with the Achilles of the legends…In fact he seems to be rather like the very worst type of Star actor who has had a row with the management & refuses to appear on the stage, but sits in his dressing-room with his boy friend, drinking champagne & making fun of everyone. (I'm glad to say I have never met such an actor!)

Whether Shaw's bracketed aside here is the truth is hard to say, but it is notable that he chooses to make this comparison in the year of the "no stars" experiment at Stratford[38]. Whatever his own experience, he clearly felt his cast would understand the kind of actor he was talking about here. Shaw's Achilles is "conceited", self-centred, interested only in himself and Patroclus ("& that is a nasty business"). Shaw rails against Achilles' failure to aid the war effort "except the manoeuvre of the murder of Hector in the most cold-blooded & cowardly way." His assessment is blunt. "I really ca'nt see one good trait in his character," he writes, before pointedly calling him a "perverted thug." Achilles earns no approval for his military prowess: he may look like "a moody tiger" and give the sense he could fight "with the fierceness and magnificence of a tiger." But "there is absolutely nothing heroic about this man except in his own estimation of himself." Shaw calls him a Hydrogen bomb that refuses to explode. And if a Hydrogen bomb won't explode then all you're left with is something ugly, radioactive, and poisoning everyone around it.

Shaw paints a picture of a depraved, cruel and selfish man. Then he explicitly ties those negative traits to what he sees as Achilles' openly homosexual relationship with Patroclus. There is no nuance to this reading of Achilles except for a dichotomy of masculinity in the conflict between his reputation and the sense of his physical prowess, and his actions and conduct on the stage itself. Scholarship on Achilles at the time was mostly content to say in passing that he was less than his Homeric counterpart. George Bernard Shaw, in his 1884 lecture on the play, saw Achilles as "clever, elegant, sensual, entirely unscrupulous, intolerant of contradiction, and able, through his renowned strength and skill in combat, and his power as a chief, to indulge his selfishness without restraint" (Bernard Shaw 50), and Byam Shaw seems to have thought along similar lines. The exception is in the assessment of his intelligence: Bernard Shaw coming back to the idea of him as clever, crafty (58) and even "as selfish, witty and wicked as a French Marquis in the 18th century" (Bernard Shaw 61). Byam Shaw bluntly says "his intelligence is hardly better than Ajax".

[38] In a departure from their usual policy of seeking "star" actors to provide a box office draw, Shaw and Quayle decided and publicly announced that the 1954 season would instead focus on training and offering opportunities to younger and lesser-known actors. This approach, taken alongside the multi-year contracts offered to supporting actors in Stratford, is a clear prototype of what Peter Hall would name the Royal Shakespeare Company.

Fig. 10. Keith Michell as Achilles with his Myrmidons (Donald Pickering, George Hart, Ian Bannern, Edward Atienza, David King, James Villiers) conspiring the death of Hector (Act 5 Scene 7). Shaw's notebooks describe the Myrmidons as "fierce & brutal fighters from Northern Greece" and compares them to "Nazi Storm Troopers," noting that "They are very brave but utterly ruthless in battle."

Where Bernard Shaw saw Patroclus as "a parasite of Achilles" (51), Byam Shaw saw him as a direct and malign influence upon him beyond simply living off him. Byam Shaw's description of Patroclus, half the length of that of Achilles', cements the open homosexuality of his reading and his clear disapproval of that relationship. Patroclus is "one of those effeminate young men who use their physical attractions to get themselves attached to a great personality. He amuses & entertains Achilles but has a very bad affect [sic] on him." Patroclus has "no responsibility for anything", "no respect" except for Achilles, and "I don't think he really cares much for him." Where Achilles' appearance is defined by his martial prowess, Patroclus can only look "attractive in a debauched way." Byam Shaw sees him "sitting about and sniggering… mak[ing] fun of religion, marriage, discipline & anything else that is serious & profound."

Once again there is no subtlety to the description and Shaw presents Patroclus only as a caricature of a homosexual stereotype. His advice to Achilles in Act 3 Scene 3 sees

Patroclus kneeling in front of Achilles, a few steps down from him (though off to the side), moving only after he's said he has "little stomach to the war" (222), as if to solidify the connection between his performative homosexuality and his pacifism, or "cowardice" as Shaw would doubtless categorise it. Shaw's characterisation of these two men, whom Shakespeare by no means depicts as perfect, is something which the context of Shaw's production both helps to explain and further confuses.

Shaw's production went up in July 1954. Homosexuality was not decriminalised in the United Kingdom until 1967. The impetus for that decriminalisation, the Wolfenden Report, was published in 1957 having been commissioned in September 1954, two months after the production opened. But the attitudes of the 1950s to homosexuality were far more rooted in the past than the future:

> In the nineteen fifties, the police took on this responsibility [policing homosexuality] with new enthusiasm… the defection of Burgess and Maclean[39] had given a political urgency to this search... In October 1953 it was reported that a plan to 'smash homosexuality' in London was being prepared by Tory Home Secretary David Maxwell-Fyfe... The new Police Commissioner, John Nott-Bower, went about his task with alacrity... The forties had seen a fourfold increase in arrests for homosexual offences, and in the following five years this rose by half as much again, from 4,416 in 1950 to 6,644 in 1955, amounting to a nearly 600 per cent growth between 1940 and 1955 (Rebellato 157-8).

Fines, jail sentences and chemical castration were all handed down as sentences for homosexual offences through the 1950s, and Shaw's homosexual and bisexual friends and colleagues would have been all too aware of the risks inherent in the theatre taking an openly pro-homosexual stance.

The depiction of a homosexual relationship on stage at all could have been taken as a bridge too far. Claude L. Westell made his opposition to it clear in the *Birmingham Mail*:

[39] Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean were members of the so called Cambridge Spy Ring, who defected to Russia in 1951 when they risked exposure as Soviet Agents. Both men were homosexual and it was believed that homosexuality left men open to blackmail by the Russian government and so they were considered security risks. Burgess had been at Cambridge University in 1931, before his recruitment by the Soviets, where he designed the sets for a student production of *Captain Brassbound's Conversion* which starred a young Michael Redgrave.

> while we are considering the character of Achilles it is legitimate to question whether his unhealthy relationship with the effeminate Patroclus need have been quite so flagrantly and emphatically stressed by the producer (14th July 1954).

Peter Rodford in the *Western Daily Press* also took issue, saying that "Keith Michell distorts Achilles to the point of repugnance" (15th July 1954). Other reviewers saw the homoerotic and homophobic tones of Achilles and Patroclus; Milton Shuman called Achilles "a swaggering pervert" in the *Evening Standard* (14th July 1954) while the *Coventry Evening Telegraph*'s reviewer marked Patroclus down as "an effeminate fool" (14th July 1954). But where Westell and Rodford objected to the relationship being depicted at all, the other reviewers seemed content that the negative portrayal of the two was enough to offset its presence.

Further complicating matters is Shaw's more personal context. He was in many respects the protégé of John Gielgud, and a member of Gielgud's informal company throughout the 1930s. In 1934, when Gielgud stepped aside from playing Hamlet mid-way through the run it was Shaw who replaced him before the production toured to Elsinore. In 1936 Shaw and Gielgud were appearing in *Romeo and Juliet* (Shaw as Benvolio, Gielgud alternating Romeo and Mercutio with Laurence Olivier), when Gielgud was asked by Oxford University Drama Society to direct *Richard II* for them. Gielgud, needing someone to deputise for him, asked first George Devine and then Shaw.

And while Shaw may not have been Gielgud's first choice of co-director for *Richard II* he was clearly impressed enough to ask Shaw to co-direct *The Merchant of Venice* with him the following year. Peggy Ashcroft specifically spoke of Shaw's assistance to Gielgud on that production: "One also realised, in that season, how much Gielgud valued Glen." Shaw's career in direction rose out of Gielgud's approach to him, and Shaw remained a loyal friend and follower of his. Marius Goring, talking about the changes in verse speaking in the theatre explicitly tied Shaw's direction to Gielgud's, saying: "It was Glen, I think, picking up a sense of verse that Gielgud had instinctively, and just making sure that people used their ears and made sure people remembered that they were speaking verse, not speaking prose" (Mullin 1977).

Fig. 11. L-R foreground Glen Byam Shaw, Laurence Olivier, and John Gielgud, on stage in Gielgud's 1935 production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Gielgud and Olivier alternated Mercutio and Romeo; here it appears Gielgud is Romeo and Olivier is Mercutio, being embraced by Shaw's Benvolio, presumably in Act 1 Scene 4. The blocking presumably remained the same across both versions of the casting and so would have seen Shaw embracing Gielgud as closely as he does Olivier here.

All this makes the explicit homophobia of Shaw's notes, alongside the implicit homophobia of his production, sit oddly with the fact that Gielgud's arrest for "importuning for immoral purposes", and the surrounding media furore, occurred in October of 1953: only six months before Shaw's *Troilus and Cressida* opened. Earlier in 1953 Gielgud had been caught soliciting in Hampstead. The police sergeant who had found him, recognising him and sympathetic, let him go on the excuse that he was rehearsing for a new play. Gielgud was undeterred by this brush with disaster and public exposure. If anything he may have grown bolder as a result: his fame had seemingly saved him from any consequences and he was given a knighthood in the coronation honours list in June 1953. And then Gielgud went to a public bathroom known as a cottaging hotspot on 21st of October 1953. There he was arrested on a charge of "importuning for immoral purposes" and ordered to appear before a magistrate the next day. Panicked, Gielgud gave his name as Arthur Gielgud, claiming to be a clerk. By most accounts, including Gielgud's own, he then went home and did nothing more until the morning. The magistrate, failing to recognise Gielgud, fined him £10 and ordered

him to see his doctor, presumably to have his homosexuality “treated”, immediately after leaving court. But while the magistrate may have failed to recognise the actor, a reporter from the *Evening Standard* present at the court did not fail to. The story was in the papers before the end of the day and Gielgud's reputation teetered on the brink of collapse.

Gielgud's great regret about his actions the night of his arrest was that he did not call his friend and colleague "Binkie" Beaumont for help. Beaumont was the co-founder and manager of HM Tennant, and probably the most influential theatre producer and manager of his day. He was also a "known" homosexual, this being common knowledge in theatrical circles and beyond. Beaumont produced the majority of Gielgud's West End plays, as well as Shaw's own production of *Antony and Cleopatra* back in 1946 (having offered Shaw the chance to do whatever he wanted after the war ended). Beaumont's influence extended beyond the theatre, and he could believably have had the police dismiss or ignore the charges against Gielgud. As it was, he did not discover what had happened until the papers made it public and as the producer of Gielgud's current production of *A Day By The Sea*, he had to decide whether to allow Gielgud to appear on stage so soon after the incident and risk a homophobic backlash from the audience. To this end he gathered Gielgud's closest and most trusted friends, and counted among them Shaw and his wife, Angela Baddeley. The meeting's decision that Gielgud must perform [agreed after Vivien Leigh called Laurence Olivier a “cunt” for suggesting he take over the role from Gielgud (Croall 392)] proved correct when Sybil Thorndyke insisted Gielgud enter alongside her for his curtain call, to rapturous applause. Shaw's inclusion in the "crisis meeting" places him at the heart of the discussions happening in the theatre about the perception of homosexuality in the profession. It also indicates that he held a position of great trust from both Beaumont and Gielgud, arguably the two most influential and prominent homosexual figures in the theatre at the time.

Shaw's continued desire to work with Gielgud and have him perform in Stratford, hardly speaks to the strength of disgust Shaw shows to Achilles and Patroclus if his issue is with their homosexuality. Nor does Shaw’s continued work and friendship with other queer actors: Emlyn Williams, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Charles Laughton, Tallulah Bankhead, Michael Redgrave, and *Troilus and Cressida*’s own Geoffrey Bayldon and Laurence Harvey.

Gielgud's arrest brought all the homophobia of the British establishment and society to bear against the theatre:

> The character actor Edward Chapman organised a petition calling for Gielgud's resignation from Equity. The British Embassy in Washington advised Gielgud not to

> apply for a visa "in case of embarrassment" ahead of a proposed appearance in *The Tempest* in New York. In his diaries Noel Coward described Gielgud as "stupid and selfish". Columnist John Gordon, writing in the *Sunday Express*, said the actor's actions were a "West End plague", adding: "The rot has flourished behind the protective veil until it is now a widespread disease." The columnist also called for Gielgud to be stripped of his knighthood (Sharp).

As the world around him began to stage what appeared to be a concerted campaign of homophobia against the theatre, and with his mentor's illustrious career almost destroyed by his homosexuality, Shaw's explicit queering and homophobia when it comes to Achilles and Patroclus seems almost defensive. *Troilus and Cressida* would have been chosen as Shaw's play for the season long before Gielgud's arrest. But it would also have been with the aftermath of it fresh in his mind that he drew up the notebooks and staged the production itself. The homophobia of the production could well have been a reflexive response against the "protective veil" accusation levelled against the theatre establishment as a hotbed of homosexuality. Certainly Shaw had other friends and colleagues working against the image of theatre as a homosexual sphere, either to defend the institution or through genuine homophobia. In 1954, the director George Devine was informally aiding Shaw and Anthony Quayle in the hunt for a London Theatre for the SMT. Devine abandoned this project in favour of his work at The Royal Court, and his intentions for that theatre's work and the English Stage Company were firmly anti-gay. Dan Rebellato's *1956 And All That* details Devine's intentions:

> This impatience at transvestite playmaking [which Devine expressed to the playwright John Osborne in their first meeting] was part of a general policy at the Court. Devine felt that 'the blight of buggery which then dominated the theatre in all its frivolity, could be kept down decently by a direct appeal to *seriousness and good intentions* from his own crack corps of heterosexual writers, directors and actors' (Rebellato's emphasis). As Osborne succinctly sums up: 'the implication was unmistakeable. In the newly-formed, middle-class-liberal English Stage Company, principles would be applied [...] No fancy salaries and the nod that queer folk were not to be considered, certainly not as officer material' (Rebellato 215).

Devine was in Stratford in 1954, directing *A Midsummer Night's* Dream. With an atmosphere of homophobia this pervasive and this threatening to the theatre, Shaw's defensiveness seems justified. That Shaw would make the decision to guard against the accusations against the theatre is only made more likely by his own sexuality.

Before his marriage, Shaw had a relationship with the poet Siegfried Sassoon. Jean Moorcroft Wilson, Sassoon's biographer, described Shaw as "in many ways the wisest and most grounded of all Sassoon's lovers" and goes on to claim that "their two years together were... among the happiest, calmest and most productive of all Sassoon's life" (159). Shaw remained close friends with Sassoon throughout his life, with correspondence between the two of them continuing until Sassoon's death in 1967, and Sassoon regularly visiting Stratford to see Shaw's productions. There is no evidence of Shaw having any further relations with men after his marriage, but his bisexuality is evident.

Shaw's queering of Achilles and Patroclus, and the disgust displayed in that queering, is therefore a complex thing to unpack. If, as the evidence of his life suggests, Shaw did not despise Achilles and Patroclus purely because they were queer then he must have had some other reason for doing so. That must have been enough to also taint their sexuality, in Shaw's mind, somehow actively tying it to their faults. The answer may lie in his notes on the only character in the play for whom Shaw appears to have more contempt: Thersites.

The notes on Thersites are blunt, incisive and mired in the context of Shaw's war. He places his age at thirty five ("old enough to be as vile as he is & young enough to be as vigorous as he is") which would put him at twenty eight when the war began. He described Thersites as "palluted" [sic] but without specifying whether this pollution happened in the last seven years, or if Thersites was always "A diseased, embittered, cowardly failure," with "a sharp and calculating tongue." Certainly by the time of the play Shaw sees him as "like one of those horrible buzzing blue-bottles that breed out of rotting flesh." But he also sees a direct figure from his own military service in Thersites: "He is the sort of man – not so uncommon – in the Army – who tells filthy stories that make other men laugh at the time, though afterwards they feel disgusted & depressed."

Fig. 12. “[Thersites] is a clown of War. A diseased, embittered, cowardly failure, but with a sharp & calculating tongue” (Troilus and Cressida Notebook) - Achilles (Keith Michell) and Patroclus (Jerome Willis) listen as Thersites (Tony Britton) insults them (Act 2 Scene 3).

Shaw’s contempt for Thersites is easy to understand with this comparison. Shaw had served as a field officer, responsible for maintaining morale. Throughout the notebooks for *Troilus and Cressida*, he draws on the concepts of "Alarm" and "Despondency" as the two most dangerous threats to military morale. "Spreading alarm and despondency" was criminalised for all British Citizens, military and civilian, during wartime (Hansard June 20 1940). It remains an offence under military law to this day, and was codified as such by the Army Act of 1955, drafted the year after Shaw's production opened. There it is proscribed in Section 27 of Chapter 18, between "Cowardly Behaviour" (i.e. desertion), and "Becoming prisoner of war through disobedience or wilful neglect; and failure to rejoin forces":

> 27. Any person subject to military law who-
>
> (a) spreads (whether orally, in writing, by signal, or otherwise) reports relating to operations of Her Majesty's forces, of any forces co-operating therewith, or of any part of any of those forces, being reports calculated to create despondency or unnecessary alarm, or

(b) when before the enemy uses words calculated to create despondency or unnecessary alarm,

shall, on conviction by court-martial, be liable to imprisonment or any less punishment provided by this Act (18-19).

While "alarm" and "despondency" themselves are not defined here, and the specifics of those definitions were of enough concern in 1940 for at least one question to be asked in the House of Commons seeking clarification (Hansard 20th June 1940), it can hardly be argued that despondency has not set into the Greek forces, nor that Thersites' words and conduct will not worsen that despondency.

And “Alarm and Despondency” finally offer an answer to the anger at Achilles. Shaw mentions alarm and despondency five times across the notebooks. Thersites' mutterings can hardly be responsible for generating a "general feeling", especially given Shaw's admission that Thersites “has the capacity to say things which are true & wickedly amusing.” Shaw doesn't need to state the source of the despondency in the Greek forces because in Act 1 Scene 3 Shakespeare has Ulysses do it for him:

The great Achilles, whom opinion crowns
The sinew and the forehand of our host,
Having his ear full of his airy fame,
Grows dainty of his worth, and in his tent
Lies mocking our designs: with him Patroclus
Upon a lazy bed the livelong day
Breaks scurril jests;
And with ridiculous and awkward action,
Which, slanderer, he imitation calls,
He pageants us (142-151).

And here emerges the most likely reason for Shaw's attitude towards Achilles. Achilles and Patroclus are clearly identified by the text as the source of the despondency setting into the Greek forces. To a former front-line officer this makes them both criminals and a direct threat to the war effort. The despondency is being generated by their actions: refusal to fight, lounging in their tents, mocking the other commanders, and in Shaw's reading engaging in sexual acts. Achilles is “perverted” not because his lover is male but because his lover is

distracting him. Seven years into the war is neither the time nor the place for Achilles to be cavorting with Patroclus or anyone else. To drive this point home, Shaw cuts all of Act 5 Scene 1 except for Thersites' final speech. Gone is the letter from Hecuba, gone is Achilles' oath not to fight. Now the only thing keeping him from battle is Patroclus. His promise to Hector to meet him on the field, sealed with a handshake no less (4:5:270), is ignored only through Achilles' indolence, and Patroclus' death spurs Achilles to battle as much because Patroclus is no longer there to hold him back as because it has enraged him.

The issue with this generous reading of Shaw's anger at Achilles is that it fails to account for the charged homophobic language of his notebooks. If a case can be made for opposition to Achilles' and Patroclus' relationship being based on its detrimental effect on the war rather than its homosexual nature then it can only be made by examining his attitude towards the other relationships in the play.

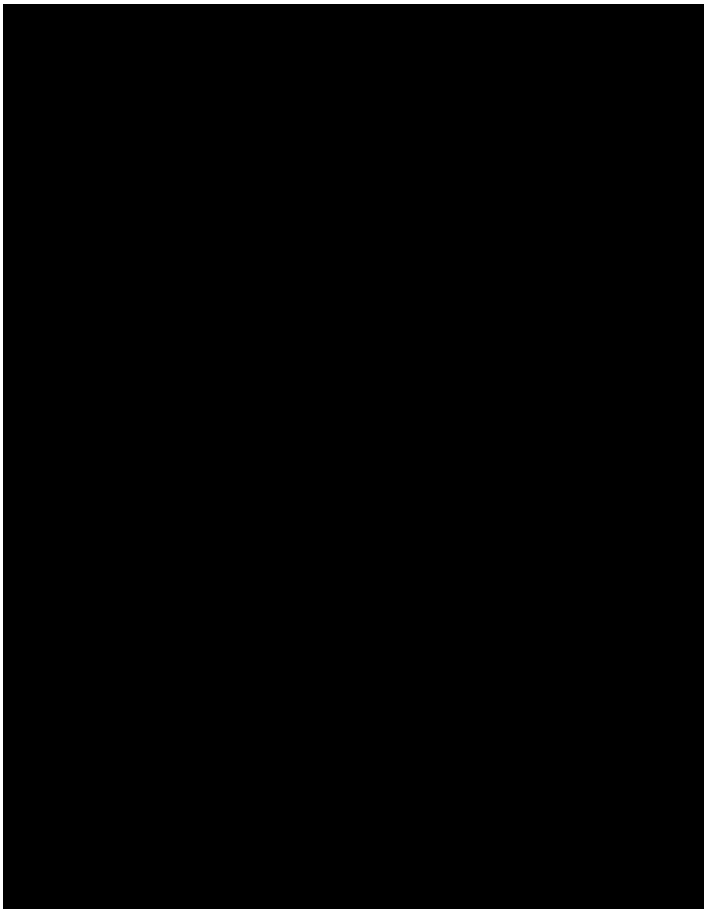

Fig. 13. Helen (Barbara Jefford) lounges in the lap of Paris (Basil Hoskins) (Act 3 Scene 1). Shaw writes that "The characterisation of Helen is almost as extraordinary & startling as that of Achilles. It is as though Shakespeare says "This war is being waged for the sake of one woman's honour & when you see her you will realise that there is nothing honourable about her."

Shaw's view of Paris and Helen is also far from complimentary. About Paris, he says, "We should feel a certain decadence." Paris receives by far the unkindest notes of any Trojan: while Shaw may paint a disapproving picture of some of Paris' kinsmen (Deiphobus, Alexander, Calchas & Pandarus all coming out of Shaw's notebooks somewhat scathed) it is Paris on whom he lavishes the most disparagement: “a rather silly young man” with “not a great deal in his head”, called “sweet… because he ca’nt think very highly about love or anything else.” Most interesting to us is Shaw’s declaration that:

> Helen obviously has a bad affect [sic] on him & he is quite willing to skip a day's fighting if his 'Nell' wants him to stay with her.

Shaw's description of Paris is far from kind, but does acknowledge more positive traits than his descriptions of Achilles and Patroclus. A part of that, though, would seem to be tied up in Shaw's consistent opposition to the idea of royals being subject to common flaws: his main praise being that “He is a Prince by birth & his manners are perfect.” Paris could easily be read as having much about him that is "vulgar or common" if a director so chose. Instead Shaw couches all of Paris' faults in the temptation presented to him by Helen. He ends his notes on Paris by saying that in him "we should see a young man who indulges in the lusts of the flesh to excess." While his description of Paris lacks the strength of the homophobic rhetoric he puts into Achilles' and Patroclus' relationship there does seem to be a shared sense that it is the relationship with which Shaw finds fault. Here though that issue is as much its effect on Paris as it is on the war itself. Equally, one can find parallels between Shaw's acknowledgement of Paris' good looks and charm and his grudging acceptance of Achilles’ handsomeness and combat prowess.

To Helen, Shaw is far less kind. His description of her is from the same model as that of Achilles; a refutation of any of the mythic reputation of the figure followed by an effective and impassioned character assassination. Shaw’s four pages of notes are best summed up in a single sentence:

> It is as though Shakespeare says "This war is being waged for the sake of one woman's honour & when you see her you will realise that there is nothing honourable about her".

Shaw explicitly positions Helen in the same role as Patroclus: keeping her lover from the front lines. Patroclus carries the added burden in Shaw's eyes of being expected to fight. When discussing the gentlemen serving Paris and Helen he exclaims that "somehow they have avoided military service!" Patroclus, an actual soldier for the Greeks, is even more conspicuous in his lack of service. Shaw himself was prepared to be called up as soon as war was declared in 1939, and after he was invalided did everything he could to try and return to active service including an attempted hospital breakout.[40] He saw it as his duty to fight, however frightened he was and however beastly he felt war was, and to see the men in this play abstain or refuse would do little to endear them to him. Helen meanwhile carries the added burden of being responsible for the war in the first place; especially with Shaw's assertion that "the dust, sweat, & blood of battle are enjoyable to her so long as her beautiful lover is not in danger of mutilation or disfiguration," taken alongside Shaw's own experience of the horrors of war.

Shaw's dislike for Helen and Paris's relationship is not as extreme as the homophobic sentiments expressed towards Achilles and Patroclus's but does support the idea that his anger is at the effect their relationship has on the war. The play's other heterosexual relationships seem to be at a remove from this idea. The notes make no real mention of the relationship between Priam and Hecuba in their comments on each of them. While ebulliently praising of Hector, he makes no mention of his relationship with Andromache save to mention that she is his wife. When talking about Andromache herself Shaw is brief and offers no real judgement on her unsuccessful efforts to dissuade Hector from taking to the battlefield:

> She adores her husband & knows him very well.
> When he is in a certain mood she knows how dangerous it can be. She feels certain that he is going to his death & does her best to stop him, but when he gives her a direct order to go back into the Palace she does so without another word.

This leaves only Troilus and Cressida themselves, and Shaw's view of their relationship runs parallel to his view of Helen and Paris's.

Shaw's view of Troilus is a conventional one for his era: that of a noble young man led astray and ruined by temptation and love of a woman not deserving of him. "He is not an accomplished lover" Shaw writes, "but a young man who falls in love with an enchantingly

[40] See *Chapter 1* for more details on Shaw's military service.

pretty little creature who is not, in any way, worthy of him." With Paris, Shaw flirted with the idea that he was a good man brought low by his affections, but with Troilus he is fully committed to this idea. "It is in the character of Troilus, & what that character represents, that the tragedy of the play lies," he writes of Troilus, and earlier, in his introduction, he says:

> ... Troilus is young & full of courage, determination & simple nobility of spirit.
> Perhaps the most tragic thing in War is the disillusionment of youth.
> At the beginning of the play Troilus believes in honour, chivalry & love. By the end of the play he has seen his love behave like a whore & has seen his brother's body dragged, ignominiously across the battle Field tied to the tail of Achilles horse

Shaw's staging stood by his idea that Troilus and his disillusionment are at the centre of the play and its message. When it came to the final scene, Shaw re-ordered the last speeches of Troilus and Pandarus so that rather than ending with Pandarus bequeathing his diseases to the audience, arguably a firmer condemnation of the "glorified idea of war", Shaw instead gives Troilus in his dejection the final image, leaving him, as Westell wrote in the *Birmingham Mail*, “disillusioned...standing sword in hand looking to the sky and stars” (14 July 1954). Ironically, this moment of Troilus's silence was perhaps the actor's best effect in performance, for as a speaker, Laurence Harvey had developed “a most distressing habit of hissing every time he draws a breath” (*Birmingham Gazette*, 14 July 1954), of “deliver[ing his lines] in monotone bursts like a drunken gunner who enjoys the noise but has no particular aim” (*Evening Standard*, 14 July 1963). Shaw had retained Harvey for the 1954 season before Quayle returned from the company's 1953 tour of Australia, clearly keen to use him in his planned productions for that year, especially given the season's declared intent to nurture young talent. But despite Shaw’s early enthusiasm, Harvey’s Troilus was the least praised of the principals in reviews and most often singled out for criticism: particularly of his verse speaking. Shaw’s interpretation was never questioned, but Harvey’s execution was apparently not up to the task.

With Troilus's virtue and nobility so central to his understanding of the play, it is little wonder that Shaw would read and depict Cressida, and Troilus' relationship with her, unfavourably. His analysis of her character is full of a misogyny that carried over into production. Shaw cites Ulysses' description of Cressida in Act 4 Scene 5 as fact, and Richard David noted that Muriel Pavlow "modelled her first appearance on Ulysses' description and made little attempt to go beyond this brief" (David 390). Shaw saw her as the cause of

Troilus' downfall, as wanton and shallow, as not worthy of the pure and noble innocent he thought Troilus to be. But he did not see her as malicious.

Shaw's tendency to trust the word of certain characters in the play as gospel despite alternative readings had previously surfaced in his production of *Richard III*, where he trusts Richard's spoken assessments of Clarence, Lord Rivers and others as fact rather than interrogating Richard's viewpoint. His reading of Ulysses' description of Cressida (4.6.55-64) as accurate is unsurprising, and in keeping with conventional readings of the play which would largely hold until Joseph Papp's 1965 New York production[41]. Shaw's notes echoed Ulysses:

> she is intensely provocative & one really ca'nt look at her, for a second, without thinking of sex, due to the fact that she hardly ever thinks of anything else herself. But she is, certainly, not a whore. She makes love for pleasure not for money or gain. It is something that she simply ca'nt help. By instinct she knows exactly how to be attractive to men & her nature is such that she ca'nt resist using her ability to fascinate them.

Shaw goes on to point to Cressida's family as reason to dislike her, and seemingly cites hereditary factors over upbringing as its cause, with "the taint of disloyalty in her blood." The undeniably charged misogyny of asserting that "one really ca'nt [sic] look at her, for a second, without thinking of sex, due to the fact that she hardly ever thinks of anything else herself" and of referring to her "silly little nature" reaffirms that the Cressida that Shaw reads is the one Ulysses describes rather than rooted in her own words or actions. While Ulysses is perhaps a more reliable source than Richard of Gloucester, he can hardly be said to be an objective observer given his immediately preceding humiliation at Cressida's hands, or indeed to be speaking under any compulsion to be truthful. Audiences would have to wait more than a decade and cross the Atlantic to see a production that positioned Cressida as anything other than Shaw's "provocative little piece". Papp's 1965 production was more anti-Troilus ("Try as I might I couldn't bring myself to feel any sympathy for Troilus's caterwauling" [Papp 23-24]) than pro-Cressida in many respects, but he did begin the process

[41] Papp broke with traditional orthodoxy on the play, as outlined in his essay "Directing Troilus and Cressida", with his reading of Troilus as "a cad, with Cressida as his victim" (Papp 24).

of re-evaluating Cressida in light of the text and a kinder understanding of the strains she is under, in a way which Shaw did not.

And yet, when it comes to understanding the war, Shaw did show more sympathy to Cressida than Papp, and his notes demonstrate some understanding of the coming readings of Cressida. Papp asserts that "To Cressida, the war is remote (I. ii.). It has little meaning for her except that men are involved in the fighting" (25) and dismisses it as a factor in her decision making, while Shaw is clear in his notes that "She was only thirteen when the war started & there is no doubt that it has had a considerable affect [sic] on her nature." This acknowledgement of the effect of growing up during wartime, of the effects of going through all of her teenage years in a city-kingdom under siege, once again seems to show Shaw bringing the memories and experiences of the Second World War, both his own and those of his cast, audience and country, to bear on the production. Shaw himself was 10 years old when the first world war began, and his children grew up during the second, and so the experience of growing up during wartime was one with which he was intimately familiar.

But Shaw falls short of Papp's assertion that "Troilus was a cad and Cressida his victim" (24). For all that Shaw can see that the war has shaped Cressida he can't see that her actions in the Greek camp are born of wartime necessity and survival. The "considerable affect on her nature" is caused by "the war" but Shaw doesn't point to the men who make war, from Troilus to Ulysses across both sides, as playing any part in Cressida's formation. In two years Shaw will start engaging with these ideas head on, but for now he still engages with the war as a monolithic and inevitable entity. Despite his efforts to demythologise the characters, Shaw still mythologises the conflict itself and his Cressida suffers for it.

Casting Muriel Pavlow in the part, Shaw was looking to defy some expectations. Pavlow's acting career had begun as a child and in 1954 she was still typecast as the innocent young girl. Shaw's Cressida, an "intensely provocative" "kitten" with a "silly little nature" was a direct contrast to Pavlow's usual casting. 1954 was Muriel Pavlow's only season at Stratford, though not her first time working with Shaw,[42] and the rest of the season saw her playing Titania in George Devine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and both of Shakespeare's Biancas, in Anthony Quayle's *Othello* and Devine's *The Taming of the Shrew*; parts that seem

[42] In 1939 when she was 17 she had played in Shaw's production of *Dear Octopus*, alongside Angela Baddeley and John Gielgud. *Troilus and Cressida* was the only other time Shaw and Pavlow would work together, but George Byam Shaw remembered Pavlow remaining a friend of his parents after *Dear Octopus*. This was in part due to Pavlow's work on the board of Denville Hall, Shaw's retirement home in later life.

calculated to challenge Pavlow's casting history. Given the season's intention to nurture and develop young talent, expanding Pavlow's range was likely an explicit part of Shaw's plan.

Pavlow's Cressida met a mixed reception among reviewers, with a good number of them simply refusing to accept her in the part as Shaw, and convention, read it. An anonymous reviewer in the *Birmingham Post* declared an attack on her casting across the entire season, saying:

> she speaks her lines beautifully, moves well and looks bewitchingly lovely; but it is difficult to believe that one so clearly the soul of youth and innocence can follow a course so perfidious. To cast Miss Pavlow as Cressida is as unkind as to ask her to play Bianca in Othello. (14th July 1954)

While the *Evening Standard*'s Milton Shulman thought:

> Miss Muriel Pavlow, having decided that Cressida was a part tailored for the talents of someone like Rita Hayworth, is just not the type to throw the essential physical attributes into her role. When she forgets her hips and concentrates on being gently appealing she is much more acceptable (14th July 1954).

And the *Western Daily Press*, *Birmingham Gazette*, and *Solihull and Warwick Country News* also saw Pavlow as miscast, with Janet Latimer in the last of those saying Pavlow was "frankly much too sweet a girl for this part... Cressida should be more of a siren; Miss Pavlow does not fully attain that type"(17th July 1954). But reviewers looking beyond Pavlow's typecasting and history welcomed her performance eagerly. Alan Dent called her casting "a flash of inspiration" in his review in the *News Chronicle* (14th July 1954). The *Morning Advertiser*'s Geoffrey Taran praised her "unsuspected histrionic versatility" (19th July 1954) in the role. An almost drooling review from Louis Schaeffer in the *Brooklyn Eagle* praised her as one of the best performances of the night, calling her:

> a fresh faced, pint-sized beauty, cast against type, who turns out to be an excellent Cressida. Her dainty whole-some look adds an exclamation mark of corruption to her sexy little tease, whose waiting sexuality has been unlocked by her affair with Troilus (15th July 1954).

Cecil Wilson in the *Daily Mail* acknowledged her as "the surprise of the evening," saying "Minxes have never been this actress's speciality, but here the nice, saintly, prim little girl next door finds a new sensuous spark in the cheap sweetness of the wanton who shattered Troilus's illusion" (14th July 1954). And Ruth Ellis writing for the *Stratford Herald* saw Pavlow's perceived innocence as an asset in the part (16th July 1954). The reviewers all take for granted that the production's reading is correct, that Cressida is a wanton and unfaithful woman, but even among the many positive reviews of Pavlow's performance only a handful come away sympathetic to her in the way Shaw's notes are.[43]

While Shaw was disapproving of Cressida, his readings of the Greeks are far less approving than of any of the Trojans: Agamemnon ("He is a figure head, but is over self-important & lacking in intelligence & subtlety"), Menelaus ("He is the typical cuckold. The sort of man who is extremely irksome to women... I think, probably, bites his finger-nails"), Diomedes ("I think he despises women utterly... A good fighting soldier but with no imagination and not much intelligence"), and Ajax. Ulysses "Like most Staff Officers … really despises the fighting soldiers and they despise him." As a field officer, Shaw would have had direct dealings with staff officers and experienced all aspects of the war they avoided, but his enmity for them predates his active service. Writing to Siegfried Sassoon at the start of his officer training, he expressed relief at having successfully transferred out of staff officer training into field officer training.[44] Completing Shaw's Germanic demonisation of the Greek forces is his assertion that "One could compare [Achilles' Myrmidons] with the Nazi Storm Troopers." It's no wonder Shaw is more accepting of the faults in his Trojans.

And this is made clear in his introduction when talking about Cressida and Pandarus:

> And there is something French, too, about Pandorus [sic] & his little piece. Are they horrid people? I don't think so, though, of course, they are hopelessly shallow & weak. But at least they are both kind & pleasant & I must confess that I infinitely prefer them to thugs like Achilles & Diomedes or pompous dolts like Ajax & Menelaus.
>
> They have wit & liveliness & are like an old Doctored pussy cat & a kitten.

[43] See Appendix 2, p. 232-4
[44] See Chapter 1.

And this assertion offers us perhaps our best source of evidence regarding the conundrum of Shaw's homophobic attacks on Achilles and Patroclus: Pandarus.

"However hard I try I ca'nt make myself really dislike this old gent" he writes of Pandarus, "& I believe that the author had a sneaking regard for him too." As with Cressida, Shaw attributes no malice to Pandarus. Unlike with Cressida, Shaw reads and directs Pandarus as queer. As Joanne Brown observed:

> This Pandarus left a large impression on the audiences, with Quayle 'mincing, lisping, and gloating over the passions of his "Twoilus and Cwessida"' (Daily Mail, 1954). Production photographs (Brown, 1956a) show a white-haired Pandarus with an elaborate, long, hooped earring and a draped, silk scarf. This depiction seems to share features with, what Nicholas de Jongh calls, 'the 1950s socio-medical version of the "ageing homosexual"', a stereotype described by the psychotherapist D. J. West (and quoted by de Jongh) as 'on the shelf, lonely, without home or family [...] trying to bribe himself into the company of young men' (de Jongh, 1992, p.130). Cressida, according to this interpretation, was to be that bribe (Brown 192).

Joanne Brown's retroactive assessment of Quayle's Pandarus is not inaccurate, but perhaps fails to account for the sympathy the performance elicited. In *Shakespeare Quarterly* at the time, Richard David stopped short of saying that Pandarus was depicted as de Jongh's "socio-medical version of the "ageing homosexual"", but acknowledged both the queering of the part and the likability of Quayle in it:

> Anthony Quayle's playing of the part was tingling with life, and full of surprises that convinced the very instant they lighted. This was no plain bawd, but a benevolent old woman of an uncle, something of a dandy, too, in his swathings of shawl upon silk shawl and every kind of scarf, broidery, and fichu. The meagre white hair floated in a fluffy bob around a face par-boiled with fat living; and the high, fluting voice, destitute of Rs beyond a slight guttural roll, coaxed and flattered and entertained unceasingly. The scene in Helen's boudoir, with a tickling love-song, was an excellently light-fingered exhibition of degeneracy… And yet there was nothing obscene in the spectacle, for Quayle managed to suggest that Pandarus' passion derived not from any anxiety to gratify a taste of his own but from a desperate

> solicitude that others (especially the young) gratify theirs, in the only terms that he knew (391-2).

Not every critic agreed with David of course. Many critics did see obscenity in Quayle's Pandarus, with Louis Schaeffer calling him the performance of the night, but describing Pandarus as "drooling, snuffling, an eager and obscene old biddy. It isn't a pretty piece of work but it certainly is alive and vivid" (*Brooklyn Eagle* 14th July 1954). In many ways this was the main thread tying the reviews together: an affection and appreciation for Quayle while simultaneously offering the socially required disgust for his depiction of Pandarus. The *Daily Mail*'s Cecil Wilson was grateful for Quayle as:

> The one gust of comedy in the welter of blood and hatred... mincing, lisping and gloating over the passions of his "Twoilus and Cwesida" transforms one of our most virile actors into a highly fancified compound of Dame Edith Evans, Daniel Quilp and a Douglas Byng act[45] (14th July 1954).

The *Liverpool Daily Post* saw more to like in Pandarus, but liked him because Quayle "never reduce[d] Pandarus quite to the level of the bawd but retain[ed] throughout some element, no matter how senile, of the patrician" (S.J., 15th July 1954). On the other hand, the *Birmingham Mail*'s Claude Westell read a downright sinister quality into the queerness (14th July 1954).

Shaw's notes on Pandarus make it clear that what kindness and empathy Pandarus could elicit from the audience was intentional.[46] While he makes no bones of Pandarus' flaws, he also makes it clear that his fondness for the character outweighs his disapproval for his actions and attitudes. Pandarus is "a sort of great big, soft, sly, pussy cat that loves eating, drinking, gossip & intrigue… He is, of course, depraved but he has some wit & kindness & is very tender-hearted." Shaw also notes that Pandarus is "a terrible shot", presumably with a bow rather than a gun, and the short-hand for homosexuality seems clear.

[45] Daniel Quilp is the villain of Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*, an evil and lecherous dwarf, while Douglas Byng was a renowned pantomime dame and female impersonator of the day.

[46] Shaw's notes on the character, taken with Quayle's costume, wig and reports of his performance, seem to prefigure Oliver Ford Davies's performance of the role in Greg Doran's 2018 production in many ways. Both productions portrayed Pandarus as fussy and camp, with a white wig and flowing gold and white robes unlike any other characters on stage, as much interested in Troilus and the other young men as in Cressida.

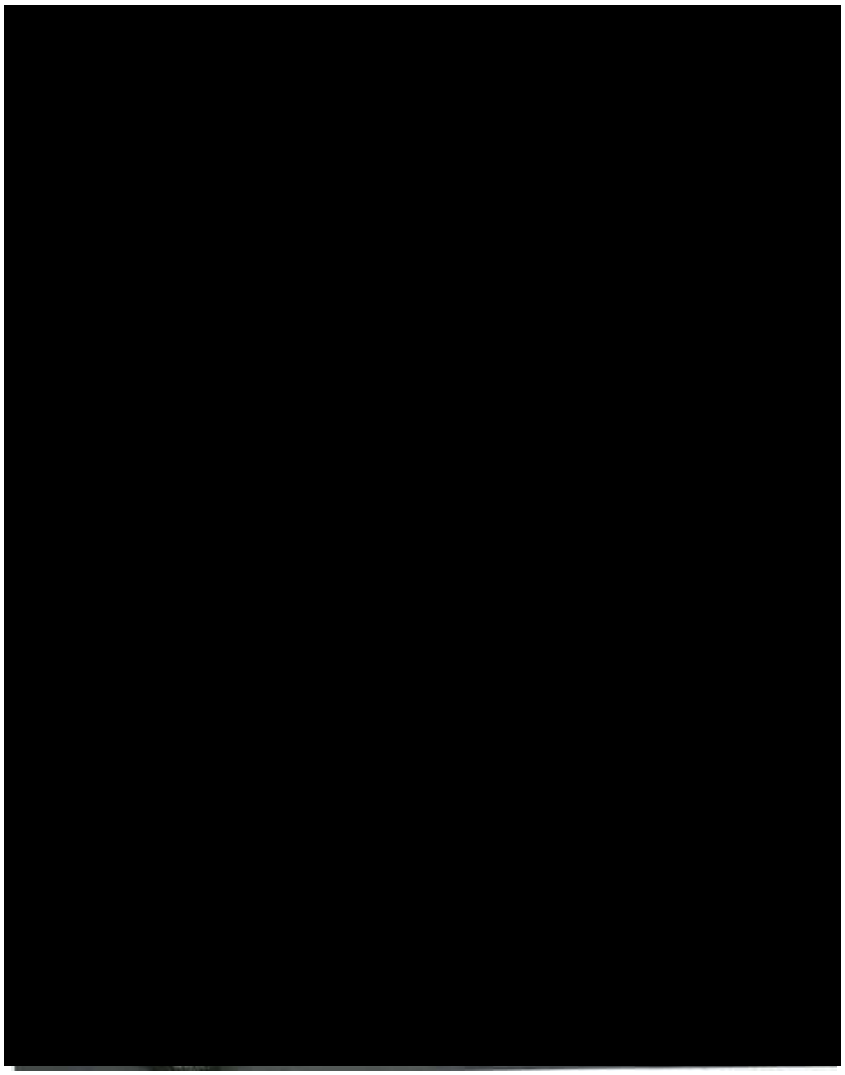

Fig. 14. Pandarus (Anthony Quayle), who Shaw sees as “Incapable of making love himself probably, but getting infinite pleasure in making the necessary arrangements for virile young people to do so” (Troilus and Cressida Notebook), introduces Cressida (Muriel Pavlow) to Troilus (Laurence Harvey) (Act 3 Scene 2).

It's notable that, unlike Thersites for the Greeks, Shaw sees Pandarus as the outcome of Troy's "rot", not its instigator, asking: “If Queen Helen can live in sin with one of Priam's sons why not his niece with another?” Pandarus is also one of the few characters whom Shaw sees as already understanding the core, anti-war message of the play:

> The War for him is Hell. All those beautiful young men being killed! He shuts his eyes to the horrors & tries to give them a good time when they are, so to speak, 'on leave'.

Further reinforcing Shaw's affection for Pandarus is his casting of Anthony Quayle. As well as a favourite of audiences and critics alike, Quayle was Shaw's closest friend, "closer than brothers" as Quayle described their working relationship years later. In 1952 Shaw had directed Quayle in the title role of *Coriolanus* and as Jaques in *As You Like It*. In 1955 Shaw would direct him as Falstaff (a role in which Quayle had directed himself across the history plays) in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. This latter collection of parts -- Jaques, Pandarus and Falstaff -- has a certain avuncular unity to it; a shared subversion of the elder statesman or paternalistic figure. There is a shared vivacity and joiè de vivre to Pandarus and Falstaff too, and with Shaw and Quayle's collaboration on the one seemingly a prelude to their collaboration on the other there is room to view the three roles as occupying the same space in Shaw's understanding of Shakespeare. When Shaw writes "He is sensual & enjoys looking on at the various amorous intrigues that take place in the forest now that he has reached a certain age" of Jaques or "There is something which is very loveable about the old boy in spite of all his faults. He, certainly, has wit & charm even if he is a scoundrel" of Falstaff it could easily fit into his analysis of Pandarus.

It should be noted that for all that Shaw queers him, Pandarus is not engaged in a homosexual relationship. It is a distinction that matters in two possible ways. It may be that Achilles and Patroclus draw Shaw's ire because they appear to indulge their proclivities, but this hardly seems likely given the weight of evidence against it in Shaw's personal life. More likely is that it confirms that his objection to Achilles and Pandarus lies in their relationship itself rather than in their orientations. While the strength of the homophobia in the pre-production writing is undeniable it appears that may have acted as a shorthand for Shaw's more situation-specific distaste for the relationship between two should-be-combatants who choose to indulge their appetites rather than fight.

Overall critical reception of the production could be said to fall broadly into two camps. The first hailed the production as a triumph, praising the direction, staging and acting alike. The second, majority, camp was less impressed, but almost uniformly found no fault in Shaw. They criticised the actors, and even Shakespeare himself, but consistently praised Shaw's direction and Malcolm Pride's designs. The *Warwickshire Advertiser*'s “J.A.P.” perhaps best summed up the critical consensus:

> Even the skill of so good a producer as Glen Byam Shaw, excellent scenery, and some good acting cannot relieve the tedium in moments of "Troilus and Cressida"... Mr

> Byam Shaw has done the most that any producer could do with this indifferent material.

What Shaw may have made of this view is likely the same he made of similar sentiments expressed in a review of his production of *Antony and Cleopatra* the previous year: "[the review] says it's a lousy play but I saved it. I've never heard anything so ridiculous in my life. Absolute nonsense. This isn't me; it's what Shakespeare does" (Shaw interview 1977).

Shaw's *Troilus and Cressida* is an anomaly. His only collaboration with Malcolm Pride, one of his only productions without Motley, a production from a season without stars of a play without genre. It's a production illuminated by his wartime experience -- and mystified by his bisexuality. But Shaw states his understanding of the play clearly:

> It is true I think that War brings out the best in people but it is equally true that it brings out the worst.
> As the author's intention was, I think, to show us the worst aspect of War, he has, of course, tended to show us the worse side of these people's natures rather than the better; but they are none the less true for that.

And it's hard to argue that Shaw's production didn't stay true to that. There's a progression here from his *Coriolanus*, a move from the focus on men affected by war to how the war affects men. Shaw absolutely sees "the worse side of these people's natures" and to him that worse side is indolence, stupidity, betrayal, inaction and a focus on personal desire and gratification. It's a view of war that still holds to the national mythology, that if everyone pulled together and did their bit then it would all be over by Christmas, or at the very least all turn out right. If Shaw's intent is "the destruction of the glorified idea of war" then he succeeds. But that is exactly as far as he goes in this production. Two years later, in his production of *Othello*, Shaw would set his sights on a much more radical target.

Chapter 6: Director of the Theatre – Shaw and Quayle [1952-1956], Shaw [1957-1959] and Hall [1960-1968]

The history of the RSC has been built upon the idea that it rose entirely from the work and vision of Peter Hall when he became director of the Stratford Theatre in 1960.[47] It's a story that served the RSC well: a story of one man's revolutionary triumph turning a failing regional theatre into the beating heart of the Shakespearean World. It's a story that paints the transformation from Shakespeare Memorial Theatre to Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the foundation of the Royal Shakespeare Company as vital to the revitalisation of Shakespeare performance in Britain. It's also not true. 1960 may mark the dawn of Hall's era, and 1961 the founding of the RSC, but its foundations of both were laid across two previous decades, with Hall's three immediate predecessors (Barry Jackson, Anthony Quayle and Glen Byam Shaw) doing the work of saving Stratford from lacklustre productions and poor reputation. Many of Hall's reforms were radical, but just as many found their roots in policies or principles which Quayle and Shaw had pursued. Rather than coming in and turning Stratford on its head, Hall was Shaw's chosen successor, trained for the role by Shaw over the preceding four years, and creating an organisation that was recognisably born from the one Shaw had led and directed throughout the previous decade. As a result of the mythologised history of the RSC, Shaw's contribution to it (as well as that of Quayle and to an extent Jackson) has not only been neglected but actively diminished, and his influence and achievements overlooked.

The official "History" page of the RSC website is sparse when examining events prior to the RSC's official foundation in 1961. What little information it does have includes either a complete misunderstanding or an egregious misrepresentation. The timeline, working back from the present day, shows the following events:

> **1961** Chartered name of the corporation and the Stratford theatre become the Royal Shakespeare Theatre
>
> **1958** Peter Hall becomes Artistic Director. Aldwych Theatre leased in London and Stratford/London operations begin
>
> **1948** Anthony Quayle becomes Artistic Director
>
> (RSC History).

[47] See the RSC website, Sally Beauman's *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades*, any of Peter Hall's obituaries, and others.

Quite aside from the timeline ignoring the appointments of every Director of the Theatre prior to Peter Hall except for Anthony Quayle (ignoring Shaw, Jackson, Iden Payne, and Bridges Adams), the assertion that Peter Hall became Artistic Director in 1958, and that the Aldwych was leased the same year, is patently incorrect. Hall's becoming director of the theatre was agreed upon in 1958, but would not take place until 1960, and it was only in 1960 after Hall had spent two years laying the groundwork for his directorship that the Aldwych was leased. This error is typical of the RSC's created history in that it positions Peter Hall as the dawn of all things good. And in order to achieve this, those who came before him have been ignored or their achievements shrunk. Such is the case with Glen Byam Shaw.

When looking at the minimising of Shaw's influence and achievements at Stratford there is one particularly pervasive myth which concerns his friend and colleague George Devine. The myth says that when Anthony Quayle brought Shaw to Stratford to join him as co-director in 1952 he also recruited George Devine as an informal third director of the theatre. Sally Beauman's chapter on Quayle and Shaw's time at the SMT is titled "The Triumvirate" and refers to the three directors collectively as such throughout. Beauman outlines the arrangement as follows:

> Byam Shaw duly became joint director, and it was announced that he would direct the next Stratford season while Quayle took the second company on tour to Australia. Devine, more loosely connected with the new triumvirate, would continue to direct guest productions. But Quayle wanted the triumvirate to develop into something more formal; he saw in it a way of making a London operation a practical possibility. The idea was to find a London theatre of which Devine would be the director; Byam Shaw would be responsible in the main for Stratford, and Quayle himself would be free to move between the two organizations, sometimes directing or acting at one or the other, sometimes taking a company on tour. The plan would free Quayle from some of his administrative responsibilities... Quayle's move was an astute one: even if the triumvirate had, for the meantime, to remain an informal one until money had been raised and a London theatre found, he had managed to bring together three of the most talented of British directors, whose very different characters and abilities created a promising balance (Beauman 213-214).

In many ways it is an enticing idea. There's something poetically Shakespearean about the idea of a Triumvirate forming to lead the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, with the least involved Triumvir eventually giving way to the future Emperor. Beauman goes on to outline how Devine's attempts to secure a London theatre for the SMT failed, how Peter Hall emerged as his obvious successor in the informal triumvirate, Quayle's realisation that Hall would need to take on his troubleshooting role while Quayle took responsibility for the London Theatre, and Quayle's decision to retire rather than take on that role: leaving Shaw as director in name and Hall as the heir apparent. The truth, however, appears to have been somewhat different.

In his autobiography *A Time To Speak*, (published in 1990, eight years after Beauman's *The Royal Shakespeare Company: A History of Ten Decades*) Quayle does talk of bringing Devine into the informal leadership of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in order to help with the search for a London theatre. However, Quayle places that arrangement between the 1953-4 touring season and the 1955 season. He also states that this arrangement lasted a little longer than a month at most, with Devine setting his heart upon the Royal Court Theatre for his own personal ambitions rather than for its fitting the requirements of the Stratford company (468). That said, Beauman cites a 1979 interview with Quayle wherein he says negotiations with the Royal Court were held on Stratford's behalf, ultimately falling through. Whichever of Quayle's recollections is correct as regards the matter of the Royal Court, George Devine's involvement in the search for a London Theatre still appears to have been limited to 1954/5. Rather than Devine being an informal co-director and "triple pillar of the world," Irving Wardle says in *The Theatres of George Devine* that Devine "did not attend planning meetings and was in no position to influence the theatre's policy except through unofficial suggestions. He simply accepted the plays as they came up without any long-term end in view" (148). Devine had no more influence or authority than any other guest director, save his personal friendship with both Shaw and Quayle. Wardle draws on a number of sources including interviews with both Shaw and Quayle.

A Time To Speak also sees Quayle reveal that he had intentions to step down as early as 1953, with the intention that the 1954 season be his last, and that he stayed on for 1955 in order to try and negotiate the London theatre arrangement as a response to guard against the seemingly imminent opening of the National Theatre, possibly in association with or in the place of the Old Vic (469). Even assuming Devine had been successful in his negotiations with the Royal Court it seems unlikely that Quayle would have stayed on for long after a London base had been established. When Peter Hall was approached to direct at Stratford,

Shaw and Quayle were both aware they were preparing him for the directorship of the theatre (Quayle 467, Beauman 229, Shaw interviewed by Mullin), though Hall himself recalled initial discussions as barely mentioning the idea (Beauman 229-30). Quayle's decision to resign solidified after that meeting rather than emerging then for the first time, and Quayle's association with Stratford in 1955-6 was under the proviso that he was already intending to leave, whenever his resignation may have been announced. Quayle writes of the reactions of both Shaw and Fordham Flower to his intentions to resign:

> Fordie, too, was loath to accept what I told him. But in the end he came to understand what I was trying to say. Between him and Glen, they came to me with a proposal that I should begin to taper off at least my close work with Stratford. 'Take some time off,' they said. 'Work at something else. Go to America and act there. Make some films. Anything you like. Only don't sever your connection with this place.'
> I could not refuse, and in fact it is exactly what I did (471).

If there was ever anything resembling a Triumvirate in Stratford in the 1950s then, it appears one can only refer to the brief period in 1954-5 surrounding the negotiations with the Royal Court. Quayle and Shaw acted as co-directors from 1952-56, with Quayle already planning to leave from 1954. Shaw then acted as sole director from 1957-59 with his own plans to leave throughout that time. The idea of the triumvirate actually materialising during that time, with either George Devine or Peter Hall as the third triumvir, does a disservice to all four men involved. The idea requires us to accept that Quayle was a visionary failure, Shaw merely a caretaker, Devine an unambitious flake, and Hall a man dependent on circumstance over hard work.

While it is clear that Devine played a key part in Shaw's directorial development before his time in Stratford (as indeed did John Gielgud and Michel St Denis), it is just as clear that Shaw's working relationship with other directors in Stratford features only two key figures: Anthony Quayle and Peter Hall.

Anthony Quayle, Director of the Theatre 1948-1951, Co-director 1952-1956

Quayle had acted with Shaw in Gielgud's company on occasion before the war, and appeared as Enobarbus in Shaw's 1946 *Antony and Cleopatra*. Nine years Shaw's junior, Quayle was 35 when Fordham Flower asked him to replace Barry Jackson as director of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1948, Quayle having already effectively shadow-directed the previous season alongside Michael Benthall. Quayle set to work turning Stratford into the pre-eminent theatre in the country, quickly realising that the best way to achieve this and to capitalise on Barry Jackson's reforms was to bring the biggest possible names into the casts in order to draw in the audiences from London, where said names were known. Quayle also saw that the size of the Stratford auditorium left only a few options for a theatre looking to turn a profit:

> Each season the main battle at Stratford was of course the artistic one. What happened on stage was paramount: the quality of the performance, the direction and the décor. The quality was dependent on the financial foundation, and the financial foundation of the Memorial Theatre was extremely thin. We had to play to over 90% capacity for the entire season to break even. And since I had lengthened the season by four weeks [from six months to seven], this took some doing. There seemed to be little chance of making a tiny profit to put by for further developments... The only way that I could see that we could ever make money was to hire another director, as I had suggested to the Governors. We would have two companies, and while one stayed in Stratford, I would take the other off on a tour of Australia and New Zealand. I was endlessly on the lookout for this co-director but it took several years for the right circumstances and the right man to appear (457-8).

Quayle initially approached Tyrone Guthrie about the co-director role, having to refuse when Guthrie imposed a condition of his coming to Stratford being that the Memorial Theatre be torn down and replaced with a theatre of Guthrie's own design. Then, towards the end of 1951, Quayle asked Shaw to join him as co-director.

To understand Shaw's response and the eventual working relationship which emerged between him and Quayle, we must first consider Shaw's time at the Old Vic Centre which immediately preceded it. Shaw had been asked by John Burrell to join the Old Vic Centre at the end of the war and, together with Michel St Denis and George Devine, had been running

it since. The Three Boys, as they were referred to by friends and colleagues at the time, had survived the 1949 purge that saw Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson removed from the directorship of the Old Vic itself, but by 1951 the Old Vic centre was clearly marked for closure and the Three Boys offered their resignations. There was something close to a national outcry at the Governors of the Old Vic accepting their resignations and the impending closure of both the Young Vic Company and the Old Vic School. Interviewed in 1979, Quayle recalled:

> they had this big financial trouble at the Old Vic School, which I then tried very hard to save by getting Stratford to take it on and keep the work of these three men going. But I couldn't raise enough money. And so it collapsed, and out of the debris I rushed in, grabbed hold of Glen and said "I beg you: come and help me at Stratford" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

In *A Time to Speak*, Quayle expands that he had a choice between "saving" Shaw or Devine, and that Shaw was "the most immediately and obviously suitable for the job" (464). It seems safe to say that Shaw was a more junior partner among the Three Boys. St Denis was unquestionably the leading force; the most experienced, the mentor to both of the younger directors, and the theoretician whose vision the Centre was designed to enact. It was his theories of actor training which the Old Vic School, though headed by Shaw, sought to execute. Devine was a more experienced director than Shaw; it had been Devine that Gielgud first approached to co-direct *Richard II* for OUDS with him back in 1936, and Devine who had recommended Shaw for the job despite Shaw's lack of directing experience. But Quayle had never been directed by Devine, friends and colleagues though they were, while he had played Enobarbus in Shaw's 1946 production of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Quayle knew, and knew he could trust, Shaw's directing.

Quayle's recollections of Shaw's response in both *A Time To Speak* and his interview with Michael Mullin show that Shaw was somewhat reticent to accept the position of co-director. In the interview, Quayle recalls:

> When I first asked Glen to come to Stratford (more than asked him; I begged him) he said "Well, first let me come down and see what's going on there." So he came and stayed with us for a week. And he obviously liked it and enjoyed the atmosphere very much. And then he said "This is such passionate kind of work that I couldn't do it

> unless I felt that you and I could work together closer than brothers. If there was any element in which I couldn't agree or had to swallow what I thought it would be absolute torture. I couldn't do it. I just couldn't do it. So I think the only honest thing to do is to come for a trial period." It was very unusual; you don't find many people of his stature or his status talking like that. "I will come for a trial period; I'll do a production and I'll be your help and I'll try and understand the way all the different sides of the theatre work. You don't have to pay me a salary or anything. And at the end of the season if I don't like it I want to be free to leave, but if I do then I'll stay" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

While the timeframe differs between Quayle's accounts (whether it's three months or less than two weeks), he is clear that Shaw took far less than a year to decide he wanted to stay. Both Quayle and Shaw would go on to describe their time together in Stratford as the happiest professional years of their lives, the working relationship Shaw outlined as being "closer than brothers" readily and seemingly easily achieved. Quayle was effervescent in his recollections of Shaw in 1977:

> [It] started a working partnership which was really the most marvellous I've ever known. I've never worked in such harmony with a man. Absolutely wonderful, I can't believe it. It was indeed a brotherly relationship, but it was more than that too. And Glen was always very loyal; I was always trying to push him into a kind of co-equal position. And he always resisted it in every way: "No, you made this, you did it, it is yours. I am the Horatio to your Hamlet. I cannot suddenly say 'Here I Am!' No! It has to be a continuance of your policy. I'm not that modest that I don't think I've got a lot to contribute, I have, but I want to be, as it were, always behind you. If you want to go off to Australia, I'll stay here and hold the fort. But you must understand I'm always your number two" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

What emerged, then, was a working relationship that Quayle characterised as “a kind of underground tussle”: “me always trying to push him further, he always trying to pull back.” In the end, Quayle “did go away for a over a year”; taking one company on tour of Australia while Shaw “held the fort” in Stratford. Even on the other side of the world, though, Quayle knew he could count on Shaw’s “absolute loyalty”, that back in Stratford Shaw was “Always thinking of ‘what old Tony would wish or not wish’.” Indeed, Quayle remembers that before

he left, Shaw “honestly said ‘Oh Christ, don't leave me!’” But he also “knew perfectly well that left on his own” Shaw would “be off and like a swan. He'd take off and be flying, and he was.” Such recollections of loyalty, then, for Quayle, epitomised the man: Shaw “was always like that, an absolutely wonderful fellow, just wonderful. I have no words to say what I think about Glen” (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

Quayle's faith in Shaw in 1951 may not have been as grounded in experience as it would prove to be decades later but it was strong enough for Quayle to take a remarkable stand when fighting for Shaw's appointment. Having already offered the co-director role to Tyrone Guthrie some years before, Quayle appears to have been determined not to lose Shaw. Quayle informed someone of his intention to approach Shaw about the idea of the co-directorship (possibly Fordham Flower) before meeting with Shaw himself on the 5th June 1951. Quayle found Shaw "incredibly sympathetic and interested in [the] proposal" (Fragment 1). Quayle also found Shaw was meeting the next day with Tyrone Guthrie, the new head of the Old Vic, alongside Michel St Denis and George Devine. The Three Boys had already resigned from the theatre before Guthrie's appointment, and the meeting was to see if any rapprochement could be reached to bring them back into the fold. As it would fall out, Guthrie had arranged the meeting to explain that he was going to axe the entire Old Vic Centre and everything the Three Boys had been working on since the end of the war. But Quayle, seeing only a chance that Shaw would be snatched back into the bosom of the Old Vic, chose to make Shaw a firm offer of the co-director role. His thinking, we may assume, was that if Shaw went into the meeting with Guthrie knowing he had a secure role at another theatre, one at which he would be afforded freedom of creative control and had been assured a working relationship "closer than brothers" in the same vein as that he'd had with Devine and St Denis (in fact the relationship between Shaw and Quayle would end up much closer than that Shaw had with his previous co-directors), then he might more readily refuse whatever compromise offer Guthrie was able to make. It was having already made this offer to Shaw that Quayle requested a meeting of the governors and put the appointment to them.[48]

Quayle's relationship with the governors was often adversarial, aside from his friendship and alliance with Fordham Flower. Flower was the chairman of the governors and the man who had asked Quayle to take on the directorship back in 1948. "There was hardly a season and hardly a board meeting where Fordie and I were not protecting each other from

[48] For details of Quayle’s letter to the Governors, see Introduction.

criticism," Quayle wrote in *A Time to Speak*, "and even after a very good financial season, [the governors] would shrink back in horror at what was being put forward as the next season's offering" (451). The meeting following Quayle's conversation with Shaw would prove to be particularly combative:

> There was one meeting where I put before them the proposal that we invite Glen Byam Shaw to join me as co-director and they would have none of it. How could the Stratford Theatre afford another director? With two directors, I argued, we could form two companies. I would take one of them away for a year and try and earn some much needed money. In the end, I had to threaten to resign and walk out of the meeting. I meant it too. They debated amongst themselves for another hour, and finally agreed to my plan (451).

While Quayle was doubtless taking a stand on the principle of hiring a second director for the theatre at all, it was a battle he could have chosen to fight across multiple meetings and with less extreme measures than threatening his resignation (an act which mirrored the principled stand taken by Shaw and his colleagues at the Old Vic) had he not been so loyal to, and eager to recruit, Shaw.

As it fell out, the governors, almost certainly due to Fordham Flowers' influence, agreed to Quayle's plan and Shaw was brought on board as co-director of the theatre beginning with the 1952 season. As Shaw recalled in his leaving speech in 1959:

> I arrived in Stratford on the 6th of August 1951. Anthony Quayle and his wife Dot had asked me to stay with them at Avoncliffe, and this I did with great pleasure for several months.

That Shaw's invitation to co-direct the theatre began with an invitation to an extended stay in Quayle's own home shows that the strength of the relationship they would forge during their collaboration was built on already strong foundations of friendship.

> Tony was a marvellous man to work with, full of vitality and enthusiasm. We immediately plunged into plans for the 1952 Shakespeare season, plans for a tour to Australia, plans for a visit to America, in fact so many plans that after a couple of weeks my head was reeling. Tony has an extraordinary capacity for inspiring other

> people with his own enthusiasm. But occasionally he had an off-day. And then a sort of cloud descended on the whole organisation. It was quite impossible not to be influenced by his mood. But the depression never lasted long.

That the director's mood and attitude could affect the entire organisation, both for inspiration and depression, seems key to understanding how Shaw became so well loved by the end of his tenure. As for Quayle's "off-days", Shaw continued in his speech to recall how he lifted Quayle out of one particular funk:

> I remember at the end of one rather trying day that we had had together, he suddenly said "ooo, I'm sick of this, let's get out of here. Let's go and have dinner at Broadway[49] and take Dot and old whats'er name with us."
> I said "If you are referring to my wife her name's Angela" And there we both burst out laughing and the depression was lifted (Shaw leaving speech).

And once again the easy, friendly relationship between the two men is key to Shaw's professional recollections of their time together.

Shaw and Quayle shared the leadership role at the theatre until the end of the 1956 season, a time that Shaw later described as the happiest years of his life (Shaw interviewed by Mullin). Shaw's arrival did more than relieve some of Quayle's workload: it allowed for a major development in the running of the company: the touring company.

The importance of the touring company as a development for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre should not be underestimated. When Quayle talked about a touring company "earn[ing] some much needed money" he was not exaggerating. Barry Jackson's tenure as director of the theatre from 1946-48 had seen the theatre run up a significant deficit as Jackson worked to salvage the theatre's artistic reputation with little concern for its finances. As Sally Beauman records:

> [at the end of his first season] Barry Jackson announced a deficit of £13,385 [roughly £555,000 in September 2022], the largest loss a season at the Memorial had ever sustained. When revenue from other sources was balanced against this, the deficit

[49] A village in the Cotswolds, roughly thirty minutes drive from Stratford.

> shrank to £5,993 [£249,000], - still more than the theatre had ever lost in a year before.

Beauman writes that the Governors' "nerve was being tested", but also acknowledges that the test was "not yet too severe..." given the extent of the money the SMT could draw upon:

> the theatre had liquid assets in the form of investments that, in 1946, totalled over £190,000 [about £7.9m]. A surplus of £23,000 [£955,000] had been made in the previous year alone, and it had been foreseen that costs would go up. But far from cushioning the blow, the scale of the reversal from 1945 to 1946 was such that trouble was brewing after only a year of the new reforms (177).

Jackson had come to a theatre that was sitting on huge financial reserves but suffering from serious neglect, both artistically and practically. The theatre was in need of repairs and renovation (Beauman 201), the workshops were neglected, the staffing was inadequate, and the quality of the productions had stagnated to a point of repetitive mediocrity that satisfied only the loyal, local audience. Jackson had immediately embarked upon a campaign of spending to address all of these issues, the one-off costs of renovation and repair sitting alongside massively increased production budgets to bring in cast members and directors from beyond the usual Stratford stable, improve the quality of the sets and costumes, and otherwise make the theatre worth going to. While successful, and vital in setting Stratford on track to become a centre of British theatre, Jackson did all this with no concern at all for balance in the finances, relying entirely on the substantial reserves of the theatre to support it. Quayle had been brought in partly to redress this financial balance. What costs were incurred by touring would be massively offset by the increase in revenue, especially when both costs and revenue were shared with the host theatres. During their time Quayle and Shaw were able to turn the Memorial Theatre's financial fortunes around, and Shaw's departure saw the theatre comfortably in the black.

Being able to take the shows on tour also gave a significant boost to the Memorial Theatre's national and international reputation. Before the Second World War, Stratford had been something of a provincial oddity of a theatre: turning out unimaginative and predictable

productions of predictable plays.[50] Jackson had begun the work of revitalising Stratford's output but it was Quayle and Shaw who turned it into a consistent production house for the majority of the Shakespearean canon (staging 31 of the plays over both their tenures and missing only the three parts of *Henry VI*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *Timon of Athens*) with a reputation across the world for high quality productions performed by strong casts led by famous names: Paul Scofield, Peggy Ashcroft, John Gielgud, Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Michael Redgrave, Richard Burton, Ralph Richardson, Margaret Leighton, Marius Goring, Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, Emlyn Williams, Edric Connor, Paul Robeson, Charles Laughton. The prestige and reputation of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre arguably peaked after Quayle's departure with the 1958 tour of Russia: "the first made by any English company since the Revolution" (Beauman 234).

Shaw and Quayle's collaboration came primarily in their administrative interactions. As directors of the theatre, the two men trusted each other's directing abilities, and those of the guest directors they brought in each season, enough not to interfere. As Quayle explained it:

> All the directors were really very good directors and I always left them completely alone. I would never go to rehearsal even, and I'd never say a damn thing, unless there was trouble and one had got to go in and help out, which was very very rare indeed. In fact I can hardly remember it. I wouldn't even see a dress rehearsal... And certainly with Glen, unless he asked me, I just kept the hell out of it. So that the man is unprohibited and doesn't feel there's a backseat driver. Sometimes if I was acting in a play as well as directing it I would want his opinion and ask him to come in and have a look, to see if he had any notes or anything. But having settled a bit the broad outline, we kept workwise a bit rather out of each other's way. We'd meet all the time to say "how's it going?" But we didn't go into each other's workshop (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

While Quayle and Shaw may not have entered each other's workshops in directorial capacities, Quayle featured in Shaw's on a semi-regular basis as a cast member. Following on

[50] The first 50 years of the 20th Century had seen Stratford put on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in 30 of those years, *As You Like It* in 28 of them, *Much Ado About Nothing* in 24 of them, and *Hamlet* in 31 of them. By contrast, *Coriolanus* had appeared in eight of those years, *Antony and Cleopatra* in seven, *Measure for Measure* in six, and *Troilus and Cressida* in three of them.

from their collaboration in 1946, Quayle appeared in four of Shaw's productions. He played the title role in *Coriolanus* in 1952, Jacques in *As You Like It* in the same year, Pandarus in *Troilus and Cressida* in 1954, and Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in 1955. Among the records of this last production are a page of notes seemingly taken by Quayle from Shaw in rehearsal which appear to depict the relationship between director and actor as one purely on those lines with no attempts at backseat driving from Quayle:

Shallow Scene

1. Council - COUNSEL
2. hold up before Evans says 'Pausa verba'
3. 'It is no matter' interpolations ragged
4. Nym – 'marry trap' speech. Unintelligible
5. Anne's entrance, & Merry Wives entrances still untidy

1st Brooke [sic] Scene. A. Hold up during Pistol. Nym re lines bottom of 16.

1. Please keep an eye out for Ros & I playing out at audience like two music hall comedians
2. Could Ros actually push me on 'Come a little nearer this ways' At moment on stairs still
3. Clean up my x of Ros, "Surely I think you have charms"
4. Cut in Ros' speech page 39_&40
5. Cut in Distri's exit line P40. Feeling held up.
6. (Cut in Fox speech. 42)
7. Talk to Glen about starting at bottom of hill with "Have you received no promise of satisfaction"?
8. Keith, don't run on after 'known' _page 44.
9. Glove big?

2nd Brook.

~~10~~.1. Ros. P77. 'take on with her men'.
2. Ford P78. 'And speed you sir'.
3. " P80. Come in quick after long speech.
4. " groan on adieu

The notes here are technical rather than interpretive, all ways to improve the performance Quayle is already giving rather than to change it to something different. Shaw and Quayle would have discussed the interpretation of the part before rehearsals began, but even so these notes feel like they come from fairly late in the rehearsal process.

Shaw and Quayle's co-directorship did, of course, require collaboration between the two men behind the scenes, and Quayle very briefly outlined the nature of their initial work on a season:

> We'd decide on a programme of plays, and on the casting each year, always working about a year ahead. So while you're doing, say, 1977, we're now in the summer of 77 so we'd have got the last production on and we ought to be well into casting next year already. And then we'd be deciding who was to direct which or what and who's to play it and so on, and who'd design it. And once that was fixed we'd usually direct one production a year each, Glen since he wasn't acting would sometimes do two (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

The casting policy of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre had first been changed by Barry Jackson. The 1946 season was "a complete break with the past. [Jackson] brought in a completely new company consisting mainly of young actors, and resolutely refused to employ anyone who had ever appeared at Stratford in the old days – a decision that caused lasting bitterness to actors like Baliol Holloway" (Beauman 173-4). When Quayle took over the directorship of the theatre from Jackson in 1948 he made a decision which would affect and dictate the casting policy of the theatre from then until Peter Hall's founding of the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1960 (with the notable exception of the 1954 season). He asked John Gielgud to come to Stratford. Sally Beauman explains:

> For over twenty years, of course, Gielgud had been held up by critics as the kind of actor the Memorial should be employing, and for over twenty years everyone connected with the Memorial had been saying that such exalted ideas were either impossible or undesirable. According to Gielgud no one had, however, actually asked him to go there; he was somewhat piqued at this, and when Quayle asked him to work for the company he agreed at once, without hesitation. His Stratford appearances marked his first Shakespeare performances for six years and his participation first as a

> director, and in Quayle's second season as an actor, virtually assured Quayle's new policy of success. Where Gielgud led, others would follow (Beauman 198).

"Quayle's new policy" was one of drawing "Star" actors to Stratford alongside the younger casts modelled on Barry Jackson's era. It was a policy which, with the exception of 1954, was maintained through every year of Quayle and Shaw's tenures as directors of the theatre. Shaw's close friendship with the former members of John Gielgud's informal acting company of the 1930s would prove invaluable in luring these stars to Stratford. After Quayle's departure Stratford saw returns from Peggy Ashcroft, John Gielgud and Michael Redgrave as actors. Gielgud and Tyrone Guthrie came back as directors. And Stratford saw debuts from Charles Laughton, Paul Robeson and Sam Wanamaker on stage, and Tony Richardson directing. But perhaps the clearest sign of how integral Shaw became to this casting policy came in 1955, when Quayle was performing in America and had told Shaw of his intention to resign as soon as circumstance allowed (having initially planned to have done so in 1954 but staying on in hopes of realising the London theatre plan that ultimately fell through). In *A Time To Speak*, Quayle writes:

> The 1955 season at Stratford was remarkable for the presence of Larry [Olivier] and Vivien [Leigh, his wife]. I had been pursuing them for years but they had always eluded me. It was Glen who had finally got them to agree to come and do a season; Glen who had called himself a Horatio! (469).

The irony is clear in Quayle's voice as he writes. Here is a man claiming to be Quayle's lesser achieving what Quayle had himself been trying for years. Shaw's successful approach to Olivier and Leigh was, to Quayle at least, a final clear proof that Shaw was a "Hamlet" in his own right.

With Quayle in Australia the casting for the 1955 season would have predominantly fallen on Shaw's shoulders. Doubtless he would have consulted with Quayle by letter, as he did when casting the 1954 season while Quayle was on tour in 1953[51], but Shaw's own recollections in 1968 (written for Alan Dent as he prepared his book *Vivien Leigh: a Bouquet*) make it clear that he courted Olivier and Leigh on his own initiative:

[51] The minutes of the theatre's Executive Council record Shaw saying he was waiting for Quayle to return from Australia before casting the season in full, but that he had already cast Barbara Jefford, Harry Andrews, Laurence Harvey, Keith Michell, Tony Britton and Leo McKern.

> Anthony Quayle (the Senior Director) had told me that he wanted to do a play in America. [Tamburlaine the Great]. I shall ask Larry and Vivien to come here I thought. I telephoned Vivien and asked if Angela and I might go to "Notley" for the week-end.
>
> Angela [Baddeley] reminds me that the first time we went there, when they had just moved in, there was hardly any furniture and no pictures, but Vivien had tied big bows of ribbon, round the - naked - electric light bulbs to help!
>
> At dinner on Saturday evening I sat next to Vivien. "Vivien. Will you and Larry come to Stratford next season?" "I will, but Larry won't" she said. "Why won't he" I asked. "Because he wants to do something on his own" (Shaw Papers 1).

At the time, during the summer of 1954, Olivier was preparing to start filming his *Richard III*, a project which undoubtedly counted as "something on his own" both for his control of it and for the absence of Leigh from the production (Olivier 162). Shaw persisted though, and managed to persuade Olivier to come to Stratford:

> On Sunday morning Larry and I went for a walk across the fields. I asked him to come to Stratford and play Malvolio, Macbeth and Titus. He stopped as we were going through a gate leading from one field to the next and put his finger on top of the gate. "I am sick of balancing on the tight rope of success" he said "Yes, I will come." And we started to talk about "Macbeth"; he having accepted that I should produce the play (Shaw Papers 1).

Olivier had played Macbeth before, back in 1937/8 at the Old Vic with Michel St Denis directing him. Less than happy with his performance and reception then (Olivier 81), he "was both pleased and challenged by the chance to have another bash at this monster" (Olivier 162). The "tight rope of success" he talked to Shaw about could have been about Macbeth himself as a part, or it could have been a broader observation on Olivier's career and failure to quite reach the critical heights of his great friends and rivals, John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson. In any case, the critical and audience responses to Shaw's *Macbeth* assured Olivier fell finally into success.

While Shaw and Quayle were co-directors throughout their time together, in practice Shaw was frequently to be found acting as director of the theatre whilst Quayle was abroad: be that on tour with the company or, in early 1956, performing overseas in his own person. Quayle returned from playing Tamburlaine for Tyrone Guthrie in New York that year in time to direct his own production of *Measure for Measure* at the Memorial Theatre but his intention to resign had already been confirmed with both Shaw and Flower at this point. In fact, according to *A Time To Speak*, it was a resignation that had been a long time coming.

When Quayle had first been offered the directorship of the theatre back in 1948 he had sought advice from Tyrone Guthrie as to whether he should accept the position. Guthrie advised Quayle to accept it, but with a warning:

> He reflected a moment and added, 'But whatever you do, don't do it for more than five years. If you have given everything you can to that theatre, you'll be a burnt-out cinder at the end of five years. You won't have an original thought left in you. Nor should you have. You should be spent. That's the time when you want to move aside, and let in a fresh man with a fresh slant on things. Do not go on after five years' (Quayle 448-9).

Even judging by his earliest intentions Quayle overshot this. Quayle's original intention was to step down as director after the 1954 season: the end of his sixth official year in the role. Quayle writes that after the 1953 season:

> I had a very clear idea in my head of what the 1954 season at Stratford was going to be and how it could be the end of my term in office. As Tony Guthrie had told me, at the end of five years I ought to be exhausted – a cinder – and I was. I hardly had an original idea left in my head.
> ...
> The thought that the 1954 season would be my last at Stratford sustained me. I wanted to leave having fulfilled all the tasks I had set myself: to have raised the theatre into one that was internationally known and internationally recognized; to have found a co-director of the place and, finally, to have achieved a swan song by taking the company on a successful tour of the USA (Quayle 466-7).

The American tour Quayle hoped to end upon was to be an elusive dream. Quayle and his wife flew on ahead of the company [and their children] to New York, only to find that some insuperable difficulties had arisen which to my dismay meant that the entire American tour had to be cancelled.' Quayle took the cancellation hard:

> Such setbacks are not unusual in the theatre, but they are always desperately disappointing, and this one was almost heartbreaking. I had hoped to be able to bow out after a successful American season, but now Glen and I had to rethink our plans for the future.
> It was becoming more and more clear that the Old Vic was destined to become the National Theatre. Nothing was concluded, but the events were moving that way. If that were to become a reality, then Stratford would be fighting for a place in the sun. The Old Vic/National Theatre would be on the inside track (Quayle 467).

And so it was that Quayle and Shaw turned to George Devine to help them find a London theatre. As has already been discussed, this plan fell through and Devine left the project quickly, but the conceived triumvirate would still be necessary to pre-empt the rise of the National Theatre. With Devine lost to the Royal Court they needed to find a third man if the SMT was to manage two theatres. "The most obvious choice," writes Quayle "was Peter Hall" (Quayle 468). In interviews with both Sally Beauman and Michael Mullin, Shaw recalls that after their first meeting with Hall, Quayle turned to him and said "that's the next director of the Stratford theatre" (Beauman 229). "I think we both felt, I know I did, that Peter Hall was *the* person, which he proved to be," Shaw told Mullin. "He's a genius" (Shaw interviewed by Mullin). He had also never professionally directed Shakespeare. Beauman records that:

> The recollections of Hall and Quayle differ as to what happened [after that first meeting between the three men in 1955]. Hall was invited to direct at Stratford, but remembered only vague and inconclusive discussions about a London theatre and his joining the triumvirate. Quayle recalled much more precise discussions: according to him it became clear that if Hall was to join the triumvirate its roles would need to be reassigned, with Byam Shaw remaining responsible for Stratford, but Quayle taking on London, and Hall Quayle's original role of cross-pollinator. This suggested reassigning of roles was, according to Quayle, the factor that finally convinced him

> that he must leave the Memorial. He believed Stratford must have a London base, but the last thing he wanted to do was administer it himself. The prospect filled him with horror; he envisaged at least five more years of committees, finance battles, and a desk-job. Believing that involvement in administration blunted the edge of any creative talent, he saw himself abandoning for good all his ambitions as an actor (229-30).

Quayle himself wrote:

> I felt I had no more energy to give to the administrative side. My spirit rebelled at the thought of organization; more hours of sitting behind a desk with a row of telephones in front of me. I was tired of lording it over other actors, to quite an extent determining their lives. I had much to do to determine my own destiny. Except for my own precious family, I was very much a loner and I had come to the end of what I could do at Stratford (468-469).

And so Quayle's departure was assured. The London theatre base for the Stratford company would ultimately be achieved by Hall during his tenure as director rather than under Quayle and Shaw. Looking back on the years of co-directorship, Shaw was unequivocal in his fondness of those memories: "It was splendid for me to have Tony around, he's always been a great friend of mine, we became tremendously close, in fact that to me was the happiest time of my adult life" (Shaw interviewed by Mullin). Quayle's response on being told this by Michael Mullin was just as simple: "Well, as far as work is concerned, they certainly were with me. Absolutely. You can't believe that people could get on that well, but we did" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

Beauman, writing the RSC's official history with the organisation's blessing, is not kind to Shaw's years directing alone. She talks about "The increasing lifelessness of the Stratford work, the predictability of design, the marked lack of company playing," which she says was "most often noticeable in Byam Shaw's own productions" (231). Shaw's time alone was, according to Beauman, "a caretaker regime" that existed purely for the benefit of Peter Hall (233). It's an idea which fits beautifully with the carefully crafted history of the RSC's creation and, as with the idea of the Triumvirate, it is completely wrong. The details of

Shaw's resignation, the timing of that resignation, and the reasons for it will be covered later[52] but the attack on the era as a caretaker regime, lifeless and predictable, does a disservice to all involved, including Peter Hall. Michael Billington addressed Beauman's claims in his biography of Peggy Ashcroft:

> To those who suggest that Glen Byam Shaw from 1957 to 1959 was just carrying out a holding operation and that productions were marked by increasing lifelessness, predictability of design and lack of company playing, I can only report that that is not how it seemed at the time. Those were the seasons of Peter Hall's productions of *Cymbeline* and *Twelfth Night*, of Tony Richardson's *Pericles*, of Tyrone Guthrie's *All's Well that Ends Well*, of Peter Brook's *Tempest* and of great performances such as Peggy's Imogen, Gielgud's Prospero, Redgrave's Hamlet and Benedick, Olivier's Coriolanus...when one looks back at the programmes for the 1957 season what is impressive is the all-round strength: Richard Johnson, Alec Clunes, Robert Harris, Clive Revill, Patrick Wymark and Mark Dignam were amongst the lead players while names like Julian Glover, Eileen Atkins and Toby Robertson crop up amongst the Lords and Ladies (169).

Billington goes on to praise Shaw's virtues as a director: "clarity, lucidity and narrative drive" (169). Beauman's focus on the opinion of the "new generation" of critics of Shaw's own productions ignores those who did not follow the view of Kenneth Tynan (whose review of *Hamlet*, which Beauman quotes from, cannot be said to be without personal bias) and also entirely fails to account for the extent to which Shaw's work showed through the work around him, including that of Peter Hall.

[52] See Chapter 8.

Fig. 15.Glen Byam Shaw (R) with Anthony Quayle (L) in Quayle's office, circa 1952, forging a working partnership that Shaw would describe as "closer than brothers" (Shaw interview) and Quayle as "the most marvellous [working partnership]. I've never known anything like it in my life. I've never worked in such harmony with a man, anywhere. Absolutely wonderful. I can't believe it" (Quayle interview).

Peter Hall: Director of the Theatre 1960, Artistic Director of the RSC 1961-68

Peter Hall's first year directing in Stratford was 1956, at a time when both Quayle and Shaw were in office as co-directors of the theatre. Quayle, however, was in America, performing in *Tamburlaine the Great* for the start of the year when Hall would have been preparing for his production, and Quayle had by this time not only an intention to depart but a firm timeline for it, having agreed in the previous August to review his position on his return from America. In the end Quayle would officially tender his resignation just two weeks after Hall's debut production opened. But this meant that in effect, for Hall's first work at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Shaw was the sole director of the theatre.

Hall's debut production was *Love's Labour's Lost*. It was the only one of Shakespeare's plays that Hall had ever directed before, during his final year at Cambridge (Hall 98). Many years later, while directing *The Merchant of Venice* in 1967, Shaw would write to Siegfried Sassoon and say: "I wish we were doing 'Love's Labour's Lost' which I have never produced and which I love" (22nd July 1967). There's a symbolic appropriateness to Hall beginning his time in Stratford with Shaw giving him a play Shaw himself had a desire to direct. It would be Hall who would finally achieve Quayle's vision of a London theatre which Quayle and Shaw had been working towards for years, and Shaw was comprehensive in his acknowledgement of Hall in that regard: "Something that's entirely due to him was that the Aldwych Theatre, the London Theatre, was taken. We, the company, coming to London, Peter Hall did that" (Shaw interviewed by Mullin). Though the Aldwych was acquired for the company at the end of 1960, a good year after Shaw's own departure, that he still thought of himself as a member of the Stratford company when talking to Michael Mullin in 1977 shows a lot of the loyalty Shaw had for the theatre. It would also be Hall who would end up taking credit for Stratford's place as a powerhouse of English and International theatre; the radical reforms he introduced in 1960 to form the Royal Shakespeare Company taking precedence over Jackson, Quayle and Shaw's more gradual, evolutionary programme of reformation while Shaw, as his son George put it, "tended to keep his light under a biggish bushel" (George Byam Shaw Interview).

It wasn't only *Love's Labour's Lost* that Shaw gave to Hall. There can be little doubt that between 1956 and 1959 Shaw acted as a mentor to Hall, training Hall to take his place, as he and Quayle had been sure Hall one day should. Beauman tells us:

> In those five years Hall amassed a great deal of experience, far wider in its range than that of the other young directors who also began making their names during the same period, such as Tony Richardson, William Gaskill, and Peter Wood (his successor at the Arts). But he had no experience of administering a theatre of the size and complexity of the Memorial, and his professional experience of directing Shakespeare was limited to the five productions he directed at Stratford between 1955 and 1959. To some who knew him, like John Barton (who met him at Cambridge, and who shared a flat in London with him for some years in the Fifties and later became his closest colleague at the RSC), he seemed nervous and diffident about directing Shakespeare, less sure of his ground than when working on modern plays (237-8).

This lack of confidence in Shakespeare led Hall to adopt a position Beauman describes as "very much Byam Shaw's protégé," with "his productions during this period reflect[ing] that." This manifested as a run of productions "deeply influenced by their era," the majority of which were " characterized by elaboration and beauty of setting;" with designers including James Bailey and Lila de Nobili "who were best known for their work on ballet and opera." Looking to Hall's future to read his early Stratford work, Beauman observes: "Of the spare, Brechtian style of Shakespearean production that Hall was later to evolve with John Bury, and which became so recognizably Stratford's style in the 1960s, there was then no trace" (237-8). It's notable that Beauman points to Hall's style as a collaboration with John Bury rather than talking about it as Hall's own. Hall's Stratfordian career was built on his collaborations and influences: John Bury, John Barton, Lila de Nobili, all of them influenced Hall's work and his developed style of Shakespeare came from them, coupled with Hall's reading of Jan Kott. Even Hall's structural plans for the company came from his seeing the same model in Russia. Hall's position as Shaw's protégé, as Beauman characterises it, seems then not to be the early developmental stages of a director who will grow beyond his mentor but the codifying evidence of Hall's style: to follow the example and inclinations of the more experienced Shakespearean professionals around him and model his practice to match them. The only thing that changed was the power dynamic, with Hall as artistic director looking to his lieutenants in Bury, Barton and de Nobili, rather than to his commanding officer in Shaw.

Certainly Hall's early productions were praised for their visual beauty as Shaw's were, and the aesthetics brought to his *Love's Labour's Lost* in 1956, his *Twelfth Night* in 1958, and his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1959 all bore a degree of influence from Shaw and Motley (the former production was James Bailey's design, the latter two by Lila de Nobili).

But it was not simply a design aesthetic which Hall learned from Shaw in those years, and it is surely no coincidence that after Shaw's departure Hall almost immediately turned to John Barton to join and support him in Stratford.

John Barton's legacy at Stratford is indisputable in both its lasting effects and its nature. As incumbent artistic director Greg Doran wrote after Barton's death in April 2018: "perhaps John's greatest influence on the company, and hence to the profession, was his passion for the verse, and his ability to uncover the clues that Shakespeare wrote into the text to enable actors to deliver it with freshness and vivid clarity" (Doran). Barton's approach to, and understanding of, Shakespeare's verse was a key factor in making the RSC into what it became. Accepting that Hall was "nervous and diffident" about directing Shakespeare at first, as Barton recalled to Beauman in 1979, then his decision to turn to Barton for help would seem to make sense on these grounds, but more so when we consider Shaw's approach to verse. Shaw did not by any means explore the depth of scholarship and decoding that Barton offered to his actors. In part this would have been because many would not have needed or accepted it: where Barton and Hall were working with young companies of fresh and relatively inexperienced actors, Shaw was primarily working with much more experienced actors, many of them students of Shakespeare that Shaw would have considered scholastically superior to himself. Anthony Quayle was asked directly by Michael Mullin if Shaw would do anything with his companies to address the speaking of verse and Quayle was quite clear both that Shaw didn't and why:

> No, not particularly, but then I think that this is something which, for better or worse, is very much, again, in the air in the English theatre. You don't very often get a company of actors together to do a Shakespeare play who haven't some experience of it. Even the youngest of them have been in other productions where they've understood it or they've listened when some great actors have been acting and it goes into the brain. So they begin to try and handle this difficult thing between the reality of the character and the style of the language (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

Quayle goes on to compare the idea of teaching an actor to speak verse to "teach[ing] a violinist how to bow," saying "That's his job, he should know that." Quayle's view was that "actors solve [the question of verse speaking] far more from example than they do from any director giving them [guidance]." Quayle pointed to John Gielgud as someone "very fastidious and fussy" about verse speaking, but clearly saw Shaw as occupying another camp

entirely: "with Glennie, it's much more to the character and the rest of it follows" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

But what's of note here is that Shaw's formative Shakespeare acting was with Gielgud, and Gielgud chose and trusted Shaw to co-direct with him (in the case of *Richard II* effectively directing in Gielgud's name). So while Shaw's direction may have focused on the character work as Quayle suggests, that character work all arose from the text. And Gielgud's influence on Shaw's Shakespearean understanding meant that rather than a scholar's approach to Shakespearean verse like Barton's, he developed an actor's understanding of it. Many of the actors who worked under Shaw went on to praise his understanding of the actor's position in a production and the insight and understanding that being an actor had given him. Marius Goring (who played the title role in *Richard III* and Octavius in *Antony and Cleopatra* for Shaw in 1953) spoke about Shaw's approach to verse, making clear both Shaw's understanding of it and that what Shaw heard and did with it was not simply a continuation of the hidebound traditions of English theatre:

> And when it comes to the sheer speaking of verse they've done very interesting things. Barton, who knows a great deal about it, has gone very much into the speaking of verse at Stratford. But Glen's got far more idea of how to speak Shakespearean verse than they have. And Glen's not bringing any scholastic knowledge at all; he's just bringing his ear. It's not because they don't care; on the contrary they take their verse speaking desperately seriously in Stratford. They have classes on it that go on and on and on and on. But it seems to me that the more they study the less like verse it ends up being. It becomes over-studied and hasn't got a natural flow... While Glen got [that natural flow] absolutely perfectly. Just as Gielgud had... (Goring interviewed by Mullin).

Goring saw the standard of verse-speaking in Shaw's time as higher than any before or after, and believed Shaw achieved this "Without anybody sort of bothering much about it or making a song and dance about it." Goring attributes this quality straightforwardly as coming "simply because it was done by ear." As he put it:

> Glen knew how it should sound, and many of the actors he got did too. [Michael] Redgrave was first rate, so was Peggy [Ashcroft]. And they just relied on ear. It was a big achievement you see, because it wasn't just doing what had been done before; it's

> not a false tradition. There is a tradition of speaking verse in England which is dreadful, has become utterly stone dead, as all traditions do, you know... so it wasn't a question of Glen in any way continuing that sort of thing. It was Glen, picking up what Gielgud had instinctively and just making sure that people used their ears, and making sure people remembered that they were speaking verse, not speaking prose (Goring interviewed by Mullin).

Doubtless Shaw would also have given Hall support, guidance and advice in regard to his future administration of the theatre, but it was not the theatre's administration and organisation which Hall sought support with after Shaw's resignation. In fact Hall close to immediately introduced radical and far reaching changes to the theatre's organisation, structure and running. But when it came to the actual staging of Shakespeare, Shaw's natural grasp of the language and meaning coupled with Hall's lack of experience with the writer seem likely to have come together as the main crux of their working relationship. It would have been only natural, once Shaw left the theatre in Hall's hands, for Hall to turn to Barton to shore up what he would have believed to be his own potential weak point now he was deprived of Shaw's guiding hand and safety net.

Perhaps the best place to leave this chapter is with his fellow directors' own words on the subject of Shaw. First, Peter Hall:

> I never found out whose idea it was that I should take over at Stratford, whether it was Glen Byam Shaw's – which I suspect – or Fordham Flower's.

Hall's suspicions were correct, as Shaw and Quayle had agreed on training Hall to replace them some years before. Hall continues, praising Shaw's character and craftsmanship:

> I was devoted to Glen. He was cultivated and elegant, like a gentlemanly schoolmaster, yet possessing a sudden and surprising ability to descend to earth and call a spade a spade, usually in robust and scatological terms. He was a director who was often under-praised, for he was a great craftsman. He almost always worked with Margaret Harris – called Percy – of the legendary team of designers, the Motleys, who started out in the Thirties.

Hall laments the "predictability" of Motley's work in the fifties, after their ground-breaking work of twenty years before, but admits: "Even so, Glen and Percy staged vigorous, honest and lucid Shakespeare that allowed great acting to flare into genius, as in the superb Redgrave/Ashcroft *Antony and Cleopatra*." Hall also praised Shaw's abilities and tact as director of the theatre, not only of plays:

> Glen was foxy. Everyone who runs a theatre has to keep their own counsel, and sometimes this is seen as duplicity. Perhaps it comes with the territory. You can't tell everybody everything all the time, particularly when you're dealing with the insecurities and vanities of talent. You try to avoid lying, but you sometimes have to withhold the truth, or some of it. Glen was a master of theatre diplomacy. He loved actors – his wife was the marvellous Angela Baddeley – and understood very well that because they did a difficult job they needed to be selfish to protect themselves. This explained, he said, why they could sometimes behave like terrible children, likely to break up the nursery (Hall 149).

This, then, was Hall's Shaw. A master of theatrical diplomacy, an underpraised craftsman who could allow great acting to flare into genius, a lover of actors. That last feels like the description Shaw himself would have been happiest with. Shaw's love of actors seems to have lain at the heart of his directing, and with it, and from it, comes an understanding of characters and of people. When asked by Michael Mullin what defined Shaw as a director, Anthony Quayle's response was clear:

> With Glen I would always think of wonderful insight into the workings of heart and mind and character... He's such a feeling man himself and is a man with such an experience of all kinds of life, partly through actually living it and partly through imagination, that his productions convey all those marvellous portrayal of characters. It's his revelation of characters that is the thing that defines Glen.

And Quayle, when finally drawn into a discussion of Shaw's directing style, returned once again to his love of actors:

> His qualities really, I think, spring from his character. They are integrity, they are a lack of flamboyance, and an admirable desire, to be absolutely faithful to his author

> and not to use that author as a vaulting horse for his own ambitions. He is the servant of his author; this is how he sees himself. He is also a man of extreme sensitivity. He works on the text of a play for months ahead so that he knows it and he's got a picture of it in his mind's eye so clear that he knows the texts by heart beforehand. You very seldom see him look at a text; he knows it. Not because he's sat and learnt it, but just from going over and over and over that play and playing with his toy soldiers and funny dolls that he uses in production after production. He goes through it and being an actor he almost acts the parts out using his dolls for himself. So he knows exactly where everyone is, exactly how such and such a scene will be played.

Quayle draws comparisons between Shaw and another great director, though one famously far less kind to his actors: Alfred Hitchcock. The meticulous nature of their work and preparation seemed to Quayle to run along very similar lines:

> Hitchcock showed me once the whole layout and schedule he'd prepared of a film he was going to do. It was an enormous great chart which would have spread right across a double bed. And there, scene by scene, move by move, frame by frame, was exactly how that film was going to be done. He said "There's the film. Anybody could do it now. There it is. There is the entire film laid out for you." Each department, what they were concerned with, everything was there. He'd thought and imagined everything. Glen does the same.

But where Hitchcock's degree of micromanagement came from a position of complete confidence and need for control, Shaw's came from a need for security and as an aid to his confidence as much as anything else. His notebooks on *Richard III* include him declaring he has done no historical reading and doesn't think the real history of the characters of the play should have any bearing on the performance of them, before going on demonstrate deeply detailed historical knowledge of the figures that can only have come from research he had done just in case he was asked about the history he purported to know nothing about.

Shaw's working methods could have proved restrictive for his actors, if it weren't for one simple trait. Shaw loved actors. As Quayle explained it:

> And this could be desperately cramping for an actor, this could put him in a straight-jacket were it not for this tremendous sensitivity of Glen's and a kind of love that he

> has for actors. There are some directors who don't love actors. They have to use them, they respect them to an extent and they admire them to an extent, but really actors are just a damn nuisance to them. Glen doesn't feel that at all: he adores actors, he loves them, and he would pour his blood out to help them achieve a great performance. So you always feel loved with Glen, you never feel in the slightest put down. He's always the most loving and giving of directors. And he's always giving encouragement but he's not false; he's never giving false praise. You feel tremendous, like he's a huge great raft, or a dolphin if you will, as if you were struggling in the sea and up comes this dolphin to keep lifting you up, lifting you up, lifting you up! He's tremendously supportive to his actors, absolutely tremendous, I've never met that from any other director (Quayle interviewed by Mullin).

Shaw was never going to be a great revolutionary. But it's hard to think of anyone better suited to have prepared the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre for Peter Hall, or indeed to have prepared Peter Hall for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre.

Chapter 7: Alarm and Despondency – *Othello* (1956)

Shaw's *Othello* is a play rooted in the military as an institution. His reading was straightforward: this was a play about soldiers. He and Percy Harris may have decided to stage the play in 16th century costumes but the soldiery Shaw was drawing on and pointing to was undeniably that of the 20th century. Shaw's military service is a constant point of reference in his direction of *Othello*, and his thoughts on the play can be traced directly back to it. His first recorded thoughts on *Othello* are dated 21st February 1945, in a letter from India to his wife Angela. All his thoughts are on an ideal cast, none of whom he would use in 1956, but it's enough to show that the play is on his mind. February 1945 saw Shaw travelling regularly between Dehradun and Bombay, overseeing the making of training films and other administrative duties. It's little wonder his situation made him think of *Othello*, especially with his planned production of *Antony and Cleopatra* laid out in his hospital bed the year before.

Fig. 16. John Gielgud, Vivien Leigh, Laurence Olivier, Angela Baddeley and Glen Byam Shaw gather for the 1955 season at Stratford. Reproduced by permission of the Provost and Fellows of Eton College.

A decade later all of Shaw's ideal cast would be working Stratford's 1955 season.[53] And yet it wasn't until a year later that he directed *Othello*, with none of his ideal cast from a decade before in the company. In part this was a practical decision: 1954 had seen a production of *Othello* by Anthony Quayle. But Shaw still chose to stage his production in 1956, the shortest gap between re-stagings of a play during his time at Stratford.[54] Something clearly made him wish to revisit the play, and in 1956 the most obvious thing to be on Shaw's mind is unquestionably relevant: Anthony Quayle was leaving the SMT at the end of the season.

Shaw and Quayle had discussed the question of succession and it had been agreed by the two men that the young, upcoming Peter Hall was the only choice to replace Shaw when he too left. 1956 saw him invited to Stratford to direct for the first time. Hall's production of *Love's Labour's Lost* was his first professional Shakespearean production, and Sally Beauman suggests that Shaw acted as a direct mentor to him through the four years leading to the succession in 1960: "At Stratford, Hall was very much Byam Shaw's protégé", "and his productions during this period [1955-59] reflected that" (Beauman 238). Earlier Beauman asserts:

> While Quayle was away in America (in 1956), the friendship between Byam Shaw and Peter Hall strengthened, and the older man's admiration for the younger director intensified. He considered Hall 'a genius of the theatre'… Hall would be, and should be, the future director of the Memorial. In the meantime he did everything in his power to help Hall with *Love's Labour's Lost*, his first major Shakespearean production (230).

And so with the burden of command, and the hunt for a successor, on his mind, Shaw directed *Othello.*

Othello has much in common with plays Shaw had already directed. The military mindset of the title character leading him to be lost in a domestic sphere outside wartime carries echoes of *Coriolanus*, while the scheming manipulator making the audience complicit

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[53] Baddeley appeared as Mistress Page in Shaw's own production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and as Maria in *Twelfth Night* which was directed by Gielgud. Gielgud also directed and starred in *Much Ado About Nothing* as Benedick, while Olivier and Leigh played Malvolio and Viola in *Twelfth Night*, the Macbeths in Shaw's *Macbeth* and Titus Andronicus and Lavinia in Peter Brook's *Titus Andronicus*. George Devine's production of *King Lear* for the SMT toured "The Continent, London and the Provinces" with Devine himself playing Gloucester and Gielgud in the title role.

[54] Equaled only by the gap between Michael Langham's *Hamlet* in 1956 and Shaw's own in 1958.

in his machinations follows on from *Richard III*. But there are key points of difference between the characters in question which Shaw hits upon in very different ways and which ripple throughout his production of *Othello*.

No actor in 1956 old enough to play *Othello* would have avoided life during wartime. Most, if not quite all, would have seen active service either during the war or after it, national service in the UK not beginning to end until 1957. But Harry Andrews, the actor Shaw cast as Othello, was an actor with a particular military manner. His obituary in the *New York Times* would note that he "was particularly known for his portrayals of tough military officers in films like 'The Hill' and ''The Battle of Britain'" (Yarrow). Andrews played fourteen military roles on screen between 1952 and 1962 alone. Casting Andrews feels like Shaw's decisive move to solidify Othello's military background in the minds of his audience. P.W.W. in the *Bristol Evening Post* found Andrews' Othello to be "a soldier clothed in love with authority his outer garment" (30th May 1956), while the *Birmingham Evening Dispatch*'s Norman Holbrook spoke of him as a "stalwart, commanding actor" (30th May 1956). And Shaw's notes on both the production and the character of Othello bring this military reading of Othello directly in line with the rest of the play. [55]

Shaw's preproduction notebooks cut straight to the heart of the matter:

> I think it is tremendously important to remember that the main characters are all soldiers or women who are married to, or living with, soldiers.
> (I include Roderigo in this category because I think he becomes a solider in order to follow Desdemona to Cyprus.)
> And they are not only in the army, they are on active service, during the main part of the play.

From here, Shaw discusses "the production", specifically its atmosphere and effect:

> There should be an atmosphere of tention [sic] & state of emergency (as in War) from the moment Cassio brings the news to Othello that he is wanted at the Senate.

[55] Shaw wrote three notebooks for the production: an early notebook on the characters dated "23 Feb 56" and two later notebooks dealing with the production as a whole and offering a refined version of the character notes from the earlier notebook, dated "20 Apr 56" and "21 Apr 56" respectively. Unless otherwise specified any quotations from Shaw's character notes will come from the notebook dated 21st April.

> The domestic tragedy which is the core of the play happens, very largely, because of the unusual circumstances in which the characters are placed.
> Othello doesn't go to Cyprus for his honeymoon he goes there to defend the island from a Turkish invasion & his wife has to get the Duke's permission to go with him.
> Emilia is appointed by Othello to attend on his wife. She is not Desdemona's lady's maid or life long friend.

Shaw's focus on the military context of the play goes beyond setting the scene. He roots major character decisions in it and justifies them by it:

> Roderigo goes to Cyprus to be near Desdemona but has to disguise himself as a soldier to do so. The reason why Othello cashiers his Lieutenant on the spot is, chiefly, because the island is in a state of unrest due to the invasion scare & because Cassio has attacked & wounded the Cypriot Commander, which might easily cause a mutiny. It is the exceptional circumstances that make it possible for Iago to carry out his schemes.

Shaw is as clear on these "exceptional circumstances", and also clear that the audience needs to be just as aware of them:

> If Othello, Desdemona & Cassio were together in Venice with no responsibilities Iago would have no chance of succeeding.
> If this is not made clear to the audience then I feel that Othello is in danger of appearing to be a fool & that, of course, would ruin the story & the tragedy.
>
> So let us bear that in mind so strongly that the audience is continually aware of the background against which the action takes place.

These four pages helpfully cover not only Shaw's belief that the military aspects of the play are key to staging it, but also presents his evidence for it and how it affects the action of the narrative, as well as important character insights, most notably the lack of prior relationship between Desdemona and Emilia.

Shaw's experience of the military is inextricably tied to his experience of "the east". Ever since Shaw's brother Jim's claim that "we're in the east so you know something about

that because we've been in this bloody country for three odd years" when advising Shaw to direct a theoretical *Antony and Cleopatra* from his sickbed, Shaw's conception of "the east" has apparently been a homogenous mass with a reigning monoculture (or lack of culture) holding sway over the entirety of Africa and Asia, where experience of India and Burma qualifies him to understand Egypt. Shaw's service after his injury saw him acting as an administrator while constantly wanting to return to the front lines and active combat. It also saw him regularly interacting with Indian civilians. Shaw brings this experience to bear on his depiction of Cyprus and its population, to Shaw just as "eastern" as India was, with a mixture of expected stereotype and military focused nuance.

Shaw writes that it is "important to realise that most of the play takes place abroad, in the East, & Percy Harris has helped to make this clear both in the sets & costumes; but it must also, be acted." We can see what Harris contributed to this sense of "eastern-ness" from the production photographs and costume designs. The Cypriots had their skin darkened, the men near universally wearing dark, pointed beards. Montano and his officers wore white turbans and dark uniforms in a style emulating both the 16th century Venetian tunics and the dress and uniforms of the Turks of that time. The Cypriot army was presented as a hybrid, the uniformity of its colonial masters mixed with the cultural "otherness" of the island. The image of "western" military uniforms paired with turbans and adapted for the heat recalls similar images of the Indian army of 1945.

The Cypriot citizens showed a far less unified front,with the men, especially the musicians, going bare-chested under loose jackets and waistcoats or crop tops while the women wore dark dresses over white blouses that showed more skin than Emilia and Desdemona ever did. The Cypriot costume designs used dark blues and golds in contrast to the Venetian doublets and gowns in an array of reds, oranges and browns, though unsurprisingly, perhaps, white recurred across both sides of the national divide. It was a distinction that Shaw wanted to make sure was kept clear in the audience's mind at all times with colour, cleavage and bared shoulders acting as shorthand for national origin.

Shaw also deliberately played up a difference in temperament between the two nations. For Shaw in the notebooks, the Cypriots are "tough" and "excitable", Othello's authority alone preventing streets brawls. "They are very important if we are to get the right atmosphere of un-rest on the island caused by the invasion scare." Shaw's notes on the Cypriots are at odds with their obvious wartime parallel. Shaw interacted regularly with Indian civilians during his time stationed in India and his letters offer some insights into his view of them. Shaw's well-meaning camaraderie with and kindness to his office clerk and

frustration with his bearer's failure to understand him at times (which he attributes to stupidity) alongside his assertion in one letter to Angela that "nothing in this country [is nice] except the weather & quite a lot of the lower class Indians!" (13 Mar 1945) paint a very different picture to that of the Cypriots in his notebooks. Shaw's Cypriot civilians (seven men and six women) are a stereotype: the hot-headed, hot-blooded Mediterranean men spoiling for a fight. But Shaw gives the Cypriot military, and they are very clearly the Cypriot military here and not the Venetian Army in Cyprus, a much more interesting depth.

Shaw describes both Montano's officers (all three of them) and the Venetian army as "good soldiers." Further to this he adds of the Cypriot soldiers that they are "extremely gutty young men" and that "Their first loyalty is, of course, to their own Commander, though they recognise Othello as the Commander-in-chief & Governor of the island." This loyalty to Montano is of particular note given that Shaw doesn't see Montano as another lieutenant to Othello like Cassio. Rather Montano is positioned much closer to Othello himself in rank:

> Montano is, obviously, a soldier of considerable importance & reputation. He is in command of the island until Othello arrives.
> Othello treats him as an equal & it is very important that the audience realise what his position is so that it can be understood why Othello is almost compelled to cashier Cassio after he has wounded Montano in their fight together, & why it is difficult for Othello to re-instate Cassio when Desdemona asks him to do so. The brawl is exactly the sort of incident that can create bad feeling between two regiments, particularly if the troopers belong to different nations.

This seniority for Montano affects a fundamental core of the play. It makes the brawl and Cassio's attack on Montano, as Shaw notes, a much more difficult crime to forgive. It gives the Cypriot forces an autonomy and independence from the Venetian military structure which keeps them from becoming inferior or subservient to their Venetian counterparts. Remembering and focusing on Montano's position as commander of the island before Othello's arrival, coupled with his Officers' loyalty to him over Othello, helps to explain the tension on the island beyond the threat of Turkish invasion. And it raises questions about Cassio, an officer junior to Montano, being named as Governor on Othello's recall. As far as Othello knows, Cassio has begun a needless brawl with Montano's men and seriously wounded Montano himself. His appointment will turn Cyprus into more of a powder-keg of national tension. Rather than simply a moment of Othello's personal jealousy affecting his

judgement the scene also becomes an example of an out of touch, distant imperial power making a poorly-informed decision to promote a white officer over a non-white one that could further incite racial tensions in an already dangerous situation. Shaw's attention to military detail gives the play a tension and edge that raises the stakes of the situation immensely. The threat of war, or uprising, is never allowed to leave the audience's mind. Shaw knew what it was like to be in the army. His production needed the audience to know too.

Shaw talks repeatedly about "the gulf of understanding" between Othello and Desdemona in his character notes but a single line he writes in the February notebook about Othello seems to cut to the heart of the matter directly. "He ca'nt [sic] understand that his wife could lie to him & yet not be dishonest." And while Shaw omits this idea from the final notebook it seems to sit at the heart of his understanding of the play and of the production. Shaw's Othello is rooted in the idea of him as a fundamentally military man on active service in a strange land. It's an idea that's been explored in more depth since, most notably Nicholas Hytner's 2013 production for the National Theatre. That production's military adviser, Major-General Jonathan Shaw (no relation), wrote specifically on the idea of betrayal in a military context:

> [Othello]'s duping does make sense once it is understood that his moral code is derived entirely from his military upbringing within a culture that is based on trust, the basis of all soldiering. Othello and Iago have clearly been in many fights together, life-and-death situations in which each has probably entrusted his life to the other and at some time saved the other's life. Othello has every reason to trust Iago implicitly. Betrayal is the most heinous of military sins, so it is the last to be suspected (J. Shaw 2013).

And what Byam Shaw seems to have seen is the fundamental balance to that. If a soldier lies to their commander then they are dishonest; moreover they're unquestionably concealing something which can only be a more serious offence than the lie itself. Why else would they lie? So if Desdemona is lying to Othello then what else can he think of her? Shaw sees Othello as a commander of men, an officer trying to manage rowdy and restless soldiers promised action but instead finding themselves garrisoned in a strange land far from home. The only way Othello can respond to deceit is as a soldier because the only way he can

respond to *anything*, especially while on active service, is as a soldier. The fault lies not in Othello's stars but in his soldiery.

And just as Othello can only trust or distrust Desdemona entirely, Shaw sees the same as true of Iago. Othello trusts Iago entirely because he has to rely on him, as a soldier and a brother in arms, and if he can't trust him entirely then he can't trust him at all. Shaw's reading of the events of the play is clear: they could not have happened except under the exact circumstances that fall out by coincidence. As Shaw reads him, Iago is far from a master manipulator; he is simply lucky. Shaw also calls into question the effectiveness of Iago's façade of honesty. Shaw's reading of Iago, "cunning but (with) no real wit", is as rooted in the military as his Othello:

> He is a hundred per cent [sic] a soldier. One feels that he has been in the Army ever since he was a boy.
> He seems to me to be in rank the equivalent of a present day Regimental Sergeant Major. He is as tough as nails & coarse in his speech and manner. He resents courtesies & refinement & hides his real feelings behind a façade of hearty good nature & honest-to-God out-spokenness.

The play's other soldier since boyhood is, of course, Othello himself. The military bonds of brotherhood and trust between Othello and Iago are thus established as the reason for Othello's trust in him.

And Shaw's production needed to establish some reason for this trust because Shaw did not see it coming from Iago seeming trustworthy. Iago was played by the Welsh actor and playwright Emlyn Williams. It was Williams' only season at Stratford, and unlike Muriel Pavlow two years previously, there was no effort to offer Williams a range of parts. Williams was in Stratford to play the villain, adding Shylock and *Measure for Measure*'s Angelo to his Iago. Williams was never intended to sell a believably trustworthy exterior. As Shaw saw it in the February notebook:

> [Iago] thinks he has the ability to change his personality to suit his company & the occasion, but at times he can have a rather embarrassing affect [sic] on people. He lacks sensitivity & can make other people feel ill at ease when he is trying to show how nice, on conscientious or loyal he is.

> As there is no sincerity behind what he says or does on such occasions he tends to overdo it, & people who are with him feel slightly uncomfortable & try to cover it up by saying what a splendidly honest & good-hearted chap he is.

That said, by the April notebook, and so presumably the thoughts Shaw shared with Emlyn Williams and the rest of the company, Shaw chooses to open by describing "What Iago appears to be on the surface," and takes pains to make it clear that the majority of the characters cannot suspect what Iago's true nature is, even if his overdone honesty makes them feel uncomfortable still.

> What is vital to the story is that only two people in the play have the slightest idea of this real nature until after Desdemona is dead, & they are both too simple minded to fully understand that he is as terrible as he actually is. Furthermore they are both fascinated & frightened by him.
> I mean Roderigo and Emilia.

Fig. 17. “That doesn’t sound like a timid, shy little girl to me! No; I think everything points to the fact that [Desdemona] is a young woman of outstanding determination & spirit” (Othello Notebook). Emilia (Diana Churchill), Desdemona (Margaret Johnston), and Iago (Emlyn Williams) on the Cyprus docks (Act 2 Scene 1).

With Shaw and Williams attempting to depict these duelling conceptions of Iago simultaneously -- having him be both convincing to the intelligent characters and transparent to the simple minded Roderigo; uncomfortably overdoing his honesty but also without arousing suggestions of villainy -- it is perhaps little wonder that some critics were "less than just to the merits of [Williams'] performance" (Brown, 1954-56, 16). Williams would have been a far cry from the "exceptional powers of will and intellect" that A.C. Bradley saw in Iago (5, 233) or even the "opportunist who cleverly grasps occasion" of John W. Draper. A faction of reviewers saw the part as Shaw and Williams intended, and hated it, with the anonymous critic of the *Liverpool Daily Post* calling out for “the appearance of honesty as the character demands” and decrying Williams’ “little insignificant man born nasty and continuing so” (30th May 1956). Other reviewers praised Williams' performance, but thought the intelligent and restrained readings of both Othello and Desdemona left Iago as something of an empty figure. While these reviewers may not have been happy with Shaw’s reading of Iago, it is clearly that version of the part that made it onto the stage.

It feels almost counter-intuitive of Shaw to combine his urgent need to keep Othello from appearing a fool with this questioning of Iago's intellect, but it also reinforces Shaw's sense of *Othello* as a tragedy: that is to say that its fallout and consequences are unavoidable. Shaw grounds the tragedy in circumstance, and specifically in military circumstance and structure. Iago is the equivalent of an RSM[56] in Shaw's eyes, entirely to be trusted by Othello because his role dictates that he must be. Cyprus is a military base in the immediate aftermath of war with more on the horizon; it's still on high alert. Cyprus is also far outside the comfort zones of almost every character in the play. Othello has never lived with his wife before, Desdemona and Emilia have never followed their husbands to war before, Desdemona is new to marriage and Emilia is new to waiting on Desdemona. Roderigo has never been in a military situation before (though Shaw and Motley have him disguise himself as a soldier to follow Desdemona), and none of them nor Cassio or Iago has been on the island of Cyprus before.

Shaw reads Iago entirely as a man reacting to circumstance rather than creating any opportunities of his own. In Act 3 Scene 1 when Desdemona asks Othello to forgive "Michael Cassio, who came a wooing with you" Iago "step[s] forward register "Cassio" L ft down to 3rd step" (Stage Manager's prompt book), a reaction which Shaw apparently means to show Iago learning for the first time that Cassio came wooing with Othello. Shaw’s Iago

[56] Regimental Sergeant Major.

doesn’t know things in advance to plan for them; he learns them and then immediately acts upon them. Shaw sees no depth to Iago’s planning. Nor does he see any depth to his motives.[57]

In 1977 Shaw would say that he believes that "there is a motivation, a feeling that you're being warned, being instructed" in each of Shakespeare's plays, and that at the core of *Othello* is a warning against jealousy arising not just from the title character but present in all of them. Shaw's February notes go into extensive detail on the nature of Iago's jealousy:

> I suppose all forms of jealousy are degrading & that of all human emotions it is the worst.
> It does, as Iago says, "like a poisonous mineral gnaw one's inwards."
> …
> Iago knows all about jealousy, he has even reached the point where he takes a ghastly pleasure in being tortured by it.

Shaw firmly locates Iago's motivations as imagined slights, all born from his jealousy without foundation.

> He invents things to be jealous about such as his wife's infidelity with Othello and Cassio.
> He wants to believe the worst so that his "inwards" can continually "burn like the mines of sulphur."
> He is jealous about everything. Sex, rank, breeding, beauty, courage, intelligence, everything; & the only trait that everyone says he possesses to the full, i.e. honesty, he despices [sic] to the bottom of his heart; but he uses it as a disguise behind which he can inflict on others the same agonies he inflicts on himself.
> In fact the agonies he inflicts on Othello are far worse because Othello is a simple true nature & he is driven to a state of mind verging on madness & gets no satisfaction at all out of the ghastly feelings of jealousy which take possession of him;

[57] Shaw's earlier notes offer a far greater insight into his understanding of Iago than the later notebook does. The six pages Shaw dedicates to exploring Iago's jealousy in February have been condensed to three lines by April but here we can see Shaw feeling out the shape of his Iago, working to build him into a character of enough depth and realism that Shaw himself can believe in him. Shaw's recently departed co-director Tony Quayle was clear that "It's his revelation of characters that is the thing that defines Glen", and in many ways Iago is the character most resistant to Shaw's approach.

Shaw pointed to direct parallels in violent intention between Iago and Othello, with Iago's far more scattershot in approach:

> Othello wants, physically, to tear Desdemona to pieces or cut her into messes; Iago wants, mentally, to do that not only to Othello but to everyone & in the course of the play he manages to torture Desdemona, Emilia, Roderigo, Cassio & even to some extent Brabantio & Bianca, as well as Othello. And yet we [?] can't help being fascinated by this monstrous man.

Shaw does afford Iago a degree of dedication to his actions, if not a degree of control:

> He has such enormous energy & vitality & is completely unsparing of himself in his determination to do as much harm as he possibly can.
> He is perfectly prepared to go without sleep, or anything else provided he can be engaged in making trouble.

Shaw is also quite willing to offer some psychoanalysis of Iago and to cut through all his voiced motives to the heart of the matter:

> I think his terrible jealousy comes from an inferiority complex.
> In his heart of hearts he thinks that everyone is better off than he is. Roderigo is rich. Cassio is handsome & successful. Desdemona is virtuous, Brabantio is a Senator, Bianca is attractive & is Cassio's mistress not his, & Othello is, in spite of being middle-aged & black, deeply loved by Desdemona & is also a noble character. There is nothing about Emilia that he can, genuinely, find to be jealous about so he imajines [sic] to himself that she is unfaithful to him & enjoys torturing himself with the thought of that more than anything else.

Shaw even goes so far as to say that Iago's resentment at Cassio's promotion is an imagined slight, or at least an imagined cause for his jealousy:

> He thinks that he has a grudge against Othello & Cassio because of the Lieutenancy, but when Othello makes him his Lieutenant he is no more satisfied than he was

before, & he would have been no more satisfied to begin with even if Othello had made him is Lieutenant then.

As Emilia says when Desdemona protests that she has never given Othello any cause to be jealous.

"But jealous souls will not be answer'd so;
They are not ever jealous for the cause
But jealous for they are jealous."

This Iago seems to crystalise in a moment of performance toward the end of Act 3 Scene 3. Othello has just dropped to his knees and sworn vengeance against Cassio and Desdemona for their seeming betrayal of him. Iago's line "Do not rise yet" is followed in the Arden edition of the play that Shaw is using with an interpolated stage direction: "*He kneels*".[58] It's a moment which unites the two men in their murderous endeavor: realigning the military hierarchy to place Iago at Othello's side as he's wanted to be since the very first scene. But this isn't enough. Shaw's Iago "is no more satisfied than he was before, & he would have been no more satisfied to begin with even if Othello had made him his Lieutenant then." Iago's jealousy is too far gone for him to be content to kneel beside his commander. Emlyn Williams' Iago supports his order to Othello "Do not rise yet" by physically preventing his commander from doing so. And then, in a moment carried over from Shaw's first director's prompt book to performance, Iago doesn't kneel.

Iago speaking standing over Othello is a theatrical moment that does an awful lot of work. It proves the lieutenancy isn't enough for Iago. It shows how far gone Othello is in his rage and jealousy that the career soldier doesn't resist this perverse reversal of the military hierarchy. It gives the audience a clear visual representation of the difference in sincerity and power of the two men in that moment: Othello's oaths bound in kneeling solemnity whilst Iago's are thrown out from standing whilst he keeps Othello on his knees. In Shaw's director's prompt book Othello raises his hand when he swears, Iago taking it when he starts to speak. In the stage manager's prompt book the moment when Iago takes Othello's hand is not specified but he is holding it by the time Othello rises. In a play so infused with Christian imagery it is impossible to read the stage picture as anything other than a mock blessing with Iago in the role of priest. And by giving Iago power in this moment, it makes perfectly clear how little power Iago has had before now. "It is the exceptional circumstances that make it

[58] "He kneels" or "Iago kneels" is found at least in Oxford, Arden, New Temple editions of the play.

possible for Iago to carry out his schemes", and until this moment Iago has been entirely dependent on those circumstances.

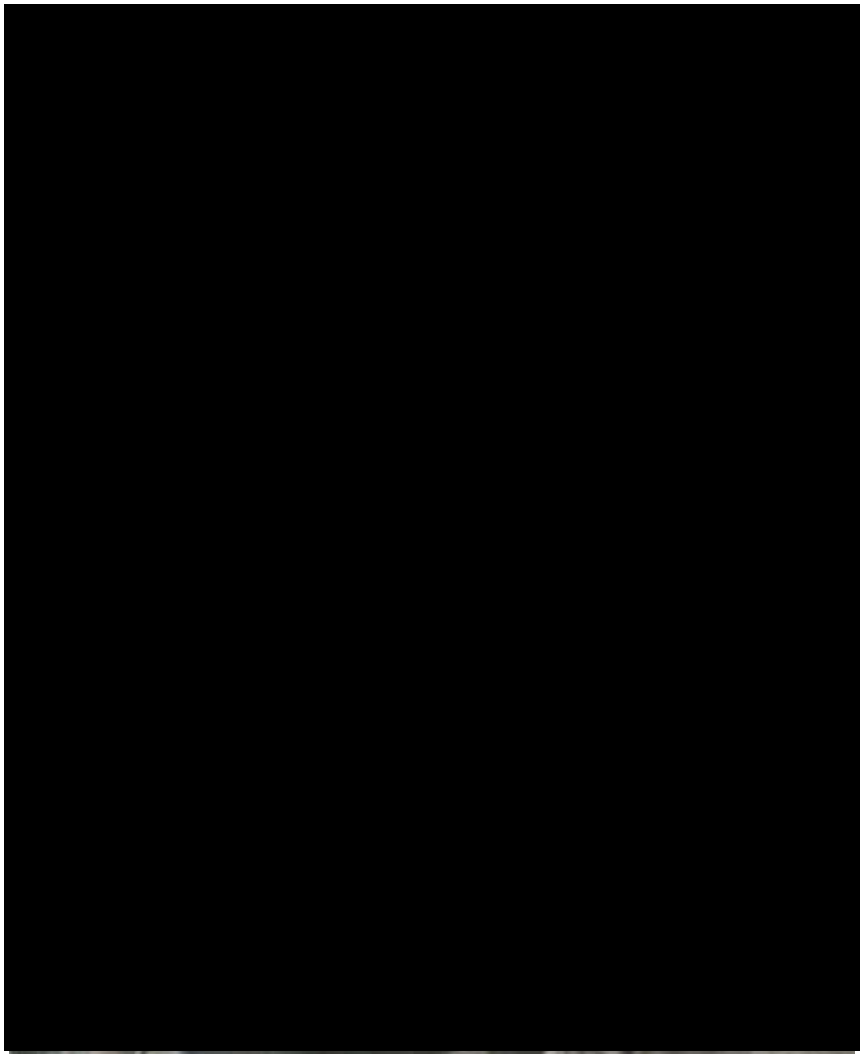

Fig. 18. Iago (Emlyn Williams) doesn't kneel when swearing his oath with Othello (Harry Andrews) in Act 3 Scene 3. "The subtle evilness of his real nature is infinite & beyond description" (Othello Notebook).

Which is not to say that Shaw sees Othello as without fault. Shaw doesn't argue that these circumstances would've made any man murder his wife. Instead Shaw points to the existing fault lines in Othello's and Desdemona's relationship as crucial to its collapse. "They love each other passionately & profoundly but they do'nt understand each other at all ultimately," he writes in his notes on Othello. In his notes on Desdemona, Shaw expands on the source of this lack of understanding: "The differences of race, nationality, age & experience set an invisible gulf between them that gets wider & wider once their confidence

in each other is shaken." The separations of "nationality" from "race" and "experience" from "age" are important distinctions; especially in the context of 1956.

Race and nationality would have been inextricably linked in the British national consciousness in 1956. As Mark Abrams would note in his introduction to the PEP report *Racial Discrimination in Britain* in 1968:

> As recently as 1950 there were in the whole of Britain probably no more than 100,000 coloured people, i.e. people with non-white skins and their origins in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Apart from a handful of students and professional people, most lived in the dockland areas of London, Liverpool, Cardiff and the ports of the north-east coast... In the three years 1955-7 the net intake of Commonwealth citizens from the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean reached 132,000 and the coloured population in Britain had doubled" (9).

For the British public, race and nationality would have been almost indistinguishable. As far as Shaw's audience were concerned going into the production, immigrants were "coloured" and "coloured people" were immigrants. That Shaw separated race from nationality in his conception of the part, while still othering Othello in both senses, was a conscious choice on his part and not a reflection of his era.

But Shaw and Andrews went further than this separation. Reviews of the production shared a common view of Andrews' Othello: that he wasn't black enough. This wasn't a question of him playing the part white or being made up light-skinned: Andrews was caked in black makeup, and both his makeup and his performance invoked caricatured racist features and physical characteristics. As C.L.W. described him in the *Birmingham Mail*, Andrews "bore a negroid look with his crisp, close-clustered hair, clean shaven jowl, high cheek bones, thick lips and rolling eyes" (30th May 1956), all features in line with the racist expectations of 1956. The objection of the reviewers was not to Andrews' makeup. Rather it was that Andrews and Shaw denied them the performative "blackness" that they wanted to see. There was an appetite among the reviewers for an angrier, more violent, "savage" Othello that they felt was inherent in his race. C.L.W. continues: "Yet here was the essential nobility which establishes him so firmly in the regard of all but his enemy," and clearly placed the nobility in opposition to Othello's blackness. After saying that Andrews gives "a performance which shows such nobleness, such force and such sweetness of nature," the *Yorkshire Post*'s Desmond Pratt clarifies that "Mr Andrews plays the Moor as a light-coloured native" (30th

May 1956). There is no way Andrews's make-up could be construed as "light-coloured." Pratt's following criticisms of Andrews' failure to capture Othello's anger make clear that "light-coloured" is code to say that Andrews isn't "black" enough in his anger and violence.

"Light-skinned" may also have been referencing Andrew's costume. With the military more firmly in Shaw's mind than race, Andrew's Othello was dressed in 17th century Venetian garb rather than the "Moorish robes" of previous Othellos. Rosemary Anne Sisson particularly objected to this change:

> It is, I suppose, a weakness to wish to see Othello wearing his familiar Moorish robes. Dressing him like a Venetian soldier does, indeed, bring his story more nearly home to us and shows us that it is a tragedy of a man who chances to be a Moor, rather than of a famous Moor who is jealous and noble. But yet I wonder if that slight removal of reality given to him by robes and scimitar is not necessary to us, whether… his familiar greatness is not part of the magic (1st June 1956).

This costuming complaint drives home the unity of race and nationality in the British consciousness. If Othello isn't dressed as a Moor then how can he be Black? Sisson here neatly encapsulates most of the reviewer complaints against Andrews. If Othello was a man to her then he couldn't be a Moor. His robes were "removed", not replaced, and he was simply "dress[ed] like a Venetian soldier" but never to actually be considered one.

The difficulty in seeing Othello as a Venetian soldier is easy to understand. The colour bar on British servicemen had been temporarily suspended for the second world war before being lifted in 1947 (Hansard 4th June 1947), though segregation within the armed forces continued. A limit on the number of black personnel who could be recruited remained in place until 1968 (Hansard 11th December 1968) as did a bar on non-white officers holding commissioned ranks. The British armed forces were white; the officer classes even more so. As a General, Othello's rank is higher than that of any non-white British serviceman to this day (Rayment). Shaw could only focus on Othello's military background and bearing by de-emphasising the performative blackness of the character. Abandoning the robes that Sisson was so fond of was more than an aesthetic choice. Rather it was a thematic necessity.

Fig. 19. Othello (Harry Andrews) about to strike Desdemona (Margaret Johnston) with the letter recalling him to Venice while Lodovico (Andrew Fauldes) and Iago (Emlyn Williams) look on (Act 4 Scene 1). Shaw notes that Desdemona "weeps when Othello hits her in the face not because of the physical pain but because her pride in him & her pride in herself is terribly wounded" (Othello Notebook).

It is notable that there is very little actual mention of Othello's race in Shaw's character notes on Othello himself. The specification of race as one of the differences with Desdemona that create a gulf between them comes from Shaw's notes on Desdemona, not on Othello, but that aside, there are also surprisingly few mentions of Othello's race in Shaw's notes on the other characters. Iago's motivations for hating Othello are discussed in Shaw's notes on both characters. Earlier, in his notes on Iago, Shaw opines that: "To think of his wife in bed with Othello or Cassio is a ghastly & disgusting pleasure to him; & having, imagined it, it is even more pleasurable to plan how he will be revenged." Iago ties sex and race together from the beginning of the play -- "An old black ram is tupping your white ewe" (1:1:88-89) -- but here Shaw pulls them apart again. Iago's "ghastly pleasure" is the same whether it's Othello or Cassio he imagines with his wife. Shaw sees jealousy at the centre of the play, and as far as Iago's concerned Othello's race is a weapon he can use against him but not a motive for the attack.

The rest of Iago's notes discuss the self-hatred Shaw sees in him, and no mention is made of Othello's race. Discussing the same matter in his notes on Othello himself, Shaw writes:

> Iago hates Othello more than anyone else because he ca'nt help respecting him, both as a man & as a soldier.
> Othello is like a great oak tree & it is the supreme triumph for Iago to gnaw through the roots & see the tree crash to the ground.

And so Shaw situates Iago's hatred of Othello in professional jealousy. Once again it is the military context that Shaw sees as key to understanding the play. That military context carries its own racial connotations with it. Othello's rank is leagues above any held by a non-white serviceman in 1956 and racial resentment would be unavoidable. But Shaw's Othello rises above even that: it's not his rank that Iago resents but his soldiery, and that because Iago can't help respecting him.

Shaw addresses the seemingly contradictory nature of Othello's rank and race as well. This note was clearly added after Shaw had completed his notes on Othello and moved on to the next character (Cassio) before going back to append it with an asterisk and addendum on the facing page. "We know that the Venetians always had foreigners to Command their armies," Shaw writes, "but for them to appoint a Moor as Commander in Chief shows what a tremendous reputation Othello has as a soldier." Here Shaw ties nationality and race back together: Othello is not just a foreigner but a Moor as well, but Shaw uses both to emphasise Othello's exceptionalism as a soldier. Rather than counting against him, Othello's race is held up as proof of his brilliance.

None of this is to say that Shaw was working to dispel the stereotypes of blackness that the reviewers were looking for. But as with everything else in the play, Shaw saw them as subordinate to the military context placed on top of them. Without mentioning either race or the army explicitly, Shaw laid that out in his notes on Othello:

> It seems to me that the most essential qualities for us to recognise in Othello are natural authority & inherent power of personality. A self imposed restraint & control covering a nature which is fundamentally primitive & tremendously passionate.

The word “primitive” appears nowhere else in the April notebooks. The stereotypes of race are still there, but beneath this "self imposed restraint and control" which implicitly comes from a lifetime of service in the Venetian (White) military. The February notebooks take the idea further:

> We can, for once, believe Iago when he says that for Othello to be angry is very extraordinary – though even there he purposely lays it on very thick - & it is, I think, extremely important that we realise – for instance when he cashiers Cassio – how controlled he is. When Iago gets through the chink in his armour & Othello begins to lose control we should see his primitive instincts gradually taking possession of him till he is transformed into an unreasoning savage.

Here the ties to the military are clearer. Othello is “controlled” in his professional capacity with the strictures of the army to rely on. But the “chink in his armour” is his personal life, and specifically his sex life. Othello’s “primitive instincts” that make him an “unreasoning savage” are let loose both by his removal from the military sphere and by locating him in a sexual one. Shaw has seen Iago’s efforts to tie race and sex together when baiting Brabantio, and while he rejects them as motive for Iago, he unifies them in the stereotypes of Othello bubbling beneath the soldierly surface.

Shaw’s view on Othello’s sex life shifted between February and April though. On April 21st Shaw writes of Othello:

> I imajine [sic] that Othello has had very little experience of women. Physical love is a sacred thing to him & I think that it is important that the audience should realise that although the love that exists between Othello & Desdemona is based on the admiration for each other it is of a wonderfully physical kind.

Here there is a definite sympathy for Othello's lack of experience with women. The idea of physical love being "a sacred thing to him" idealises and accepts Othello's naivety, and the suggestion that Othello and Desdemona's romance is built on physical attraction is depicted as "wonderful" while also implying all the problems that can arise from a relationship built on physicality rather than mutual interest and understanding. In the equivalent passage from the earlier notebook, Shaw is far less kind.

> I imajine [sic] that Othello knows very little about women & that he has used his energies, mostly, in the tented field & not in the bed-room. Physical love is dangerous to him. The animal side of his nature is released and I think that is essential for us to understand that the love that exists between Othello & Desdemona is, very much, based on a physical attraction of a compelling kind.

Even without the stereotyping implicit in talking about "the animal side of [Othello']s nature" this version of Shaw's thoughts is decidedly derogatory. Here physical love is "dangerous" rather than "sacred", and physical attraction is "compelling" rather than "wonderful." Shaw strikes a very different tone here to the one he would adopt in the April.

This shift is also present in his notes on Brabantio. In the later notebook Shaw writes with a sort of detached sympathy for the man that discusses his reaction to the elopement as understandable, focused on the elopement aspect of the relationship, and drawing short of condoning Brabantio's belief that "Othello must have used some drug or oriental magic to inveigle [Desdemona] into marrying him." In the notes he wrote in the February, Shaw's position is different:

> It is, of course, the most appalling shock to him to discover that his only child has married a Negro.
> [Personally I don't blame him. Furthermore they have eloped together.]
>
> ...
>
> [I don't think there are many fathers who have white daughters who would not object to them marrying coloured gentlemen – no matter how successful & noble they were – even now, & we must realise that for such a thing to happen to a Senator's daughter in Venice in the sixteenth century would be almost unbelievable.]

By contrast the production Shaw ultimately sets out appears to be tolerant almost to the point of 21st century progressivism in its treatment of Othello as a black man. [59] Shaw

[59] We cannot know for sure why Shaw changed his tone so dramatically in the two months after initial thoughts. When writing in February 1956 Shaw already knew his cast, so it is unlikely that any change was for their benefit. More possible is the idea that Shaw changed and refined his ideas after rereading the play itself. It is in the April 20th notebook that Shaw first says that Othello cannot be seen to be a fool because that "would ruin the story & the tragedy." The only problem with this narrative is that it implies a lack of preparation on Shaw's

acknowledges that his blackness matters to Brabantio, to some of the Venetians, to the world around him, but also asserts that it does not matter to him or to his wife or to his ultimate fate. Shaw's notes could, for the most part, as easily be about a character who is white. And for Shaw's understanding of the play to hold in 1956 this is almost a necessity. Shaw's military conception of *Othello* only works if Othello can fit into a military context. And that military context, in 1956, is an overwhelmingly white one.

Where his notes on Othello evolve, Shaw's notes on Desdemona are consistent across the two notebooks. Most striking is a simple assertion Shaw makes which attributes a strength and agency to Desdemona that he sees continuing through the play. "We may be quite sure that it was Desdemona who insisted on the elopement," Shaw tells us. And this makes perfect sense for all three of the characters involved. For Othello the honorable soldier so focused on ideals of honesty and loyalty to be the one to suggest the elopement would feel out of character, and Iago's manipulations and Brabantio's declaration that "She has deceived her father and will thee" (1.3.240) become that much more believably affecting for Othello if Desdemona had been the one to propose it. But Shaw does not hold this against Desdemona, and while he does express understanding of Brabantio's reaction to the elopement, he does not condemn any of the involved parties. Far from it, in fact: he praises Desdemona's "outstanding determination & spirit."

This is a Desdemona, like Shaw's Othello, who is not responsible for the tragedy of the play but whose character in its context cannot help but cause it. Shaw sees the core of Desdemona's character as a confidence, misplaced and abused, in herself, her relationship and her husband.

> She never, for an instant – even during the most terrible scenes they have together – regrets having married him & she defends him & is loyal to him till the last moment of her life.
> Her confidence in herself & in Othello is complete.

part. As detailed throughout this thesis, Shaw's preparatory work was meticulous and included continuous rereading of the play long before he began making notebooks for it. More likely is that an outside influence made him see the play in a new light. Between drawing up his initial notebooks and the latter ones Shaw would have had detailed discussions with Percy Harris, and talked at least briefly with the composer Antony Hopkins, the choreographer Pauline Grant, and the fight arranger Bernard Hepton. It is not impossible that Shaw's shift arose from discussions with them or other individuals close to Shaw or the production: Harry Andrews, Emlyn Williams or Margaret Johnston as the productions leads; Shaw's wife Angela Baddeley; Shaw's lover Rachel Kempson; Shaw's co-director Anthony Quayle.

> To see that confidence being gradually destroyed & this woman of beauty & refinement reduced to uncontrollable [sic] tears is agonising, for she has wonderful courage & she does'nt cry easily.

Ultimately Shaw relocates the tragedy of the play in that gulf of understanding between Desdemona and Othello: "race, nationality, age and experience" driving them apart as Iago "does everything he can to broaden the gap, till finally there is no confidence left between them & they are like strangers to each other."

The notes Shaw writes for Desdemona, uniquely among the characters in the play, remain almost entirely unedited between the two versions of the notebook.[60] Shaw's interpretation of Desdemona is fully formed in his mind when he begins his preparatory work for the production and that image does not change. Some roots of it can be found in Granville Barker (the only criticism Shaw admitted to having read for his work beyond the Arden editions of the plays he worked from). Desdemona "is no helpless maiden enticed away whether by foul means or fair" (Barker *Othello* 166) to Granville Barker, but possessed of a "determined mind", "ardour and resolve" (167). But where Granville Barker sees "Desdemona's part in the play [as] a passive one" as "the single fateful step she takes has already been taken at the start" (165), Shaw sees her as continuously walking the path that leads to her death: her choices to accompany Othello to Cyprus, to plead for Cassio in spite of circumstance and her husband's reception, to conceal the loss of the handkerchief in the hope of recovering it, are as important as her marriage.

Shaw's interpretation of Desdemona seemed to win out in production as well, with Margaret Johnston realising the part as unquestionably independent, determined and spirited. "Desdemona, as a rule," wrote Ivor Brown in his introduction to the SMT's photographic record for 1954-56, "gets a polite, perfunctory last line in the notices. Margaret Johnston made so striking a figure of a doomed wife that there could be no such dismissal in her case. Desdemona became to us, as indeed she always should be, a woman of character who knows her own mind in matrimony, defies the colour-bar with courage, and cannot be wholly dominated when her doom is upon her" (16-17). Margaret Johnston's performance of this view of Desdemona won her a lot of critical support. In a performance that was "hauntingly and brilliantly, dead on target", Johnston's Desdemona was no "impetuous

[60] The only difference is a simple change of wording in the last sentence: what in February read "she should have the affect [sic] of sunshine" becomes "she should have the affect [sic] *on other people* of sunshine" (emphasis mine).

bobby-soxer" idolising a soldier but "a woman with a mature love for her husband" (*Birmingham Evening Dispatch, Oxford Mail* both 30 May 1956). The "stunned pause" that followed "her blow in face from Othello" and prompted "uncontrollable sobbing" was, wrote JKSB in the *Manchester Guardian,* "agonising" (31 May 1956). But just as some reviews longed for a "previous" Othello to the one Shaw was directing, so they wanted a "former" Desdemona, a Desdemona of "young simplicity" (Sisson, *Stratford Herald*, 1st June 1956). Again Shaw, the alleged traditionalist, offered an interpretation too radical for the theatrical orthodoxy to embrace. Shaw's production may have seemed traditional on the surface, with the 16th century costume designs and setting (though even then Othello's lack of robes belies this idea) but his reading of character and fidelity to his text brought out radical reinterpretations of the play.

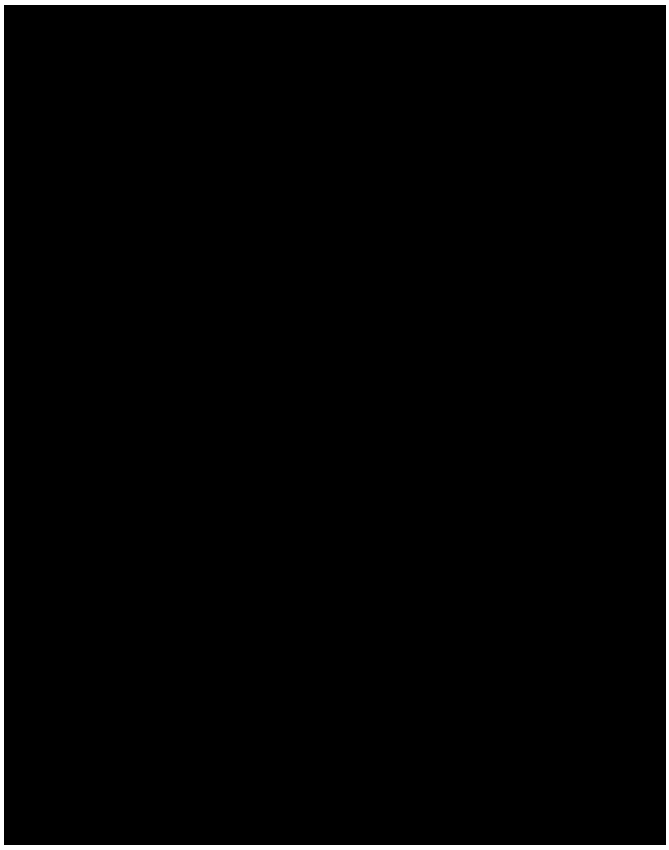

Fig. 20. "During the action of the play Emilia becomes deeply attached to Desdemona, but up to the moment when she realises that Iago is an inhuman beast she remains, first & foremost, loyal to him" (Othello Notebook). Emilia (Diana Churchill) helps undress Desdemona (Margaret Johnston) (Act 4 Scene 3).

Shaw's strength of interpretation has always been in his character work. And with Iago discarded as jealous and unsubtle, it is Emilia who seems to be the character that Shaw finds the hardest to grasp. He vacillates between seeing her as blinded by her love for Iago or simply lacking the intelligence to realise what he's doing until it's too late. Perhaps the best clue to Shaw's attempts to understand Emilia come when he writes: "She has a strongly passionate nature. We know that by the way she behaves in the last scene when we see the true Emilia for the first time." It appears that Iago is an open and uninteresting book to Shaw while Emilia remains closed off for most of the play. Shaw writes four pages on Emilia, a large part of them concerned with Iago's jealousy again and the unfoundedness of it, but he also takes time to say the most important thing about Emilia is that she doesn't know Desdemona before the play begins. "During the action of the play Emilia becomes deeply attached to Desdemona," he writes, "but up to the moment when she realises that Iago is an inhuman beast she remains, first & foremost, loyal to him." In the February notebook Shaw takes this idea further, putting Emilia's loyalty to Iago beyond the legal bonds of marriage:

> She is certainly very much under his influences & is obviously physically attracted to him.
> I imajine [sic] he is extremely cruel to her which frightens her but does'nt lessen her love for him.

Shaw's mention of Iago's potential abusiveness towards Emilia takes a slightly circular journey to the stage. It is present in the February notebook, but is then lost from the April notebook and the director's prompt book. But the stage manager's prompt book contains an additional moment that suggests it was an idea which re-emerged in rehearsals with Emlyn Williams and Diana Churchill. On page 83 of the prompt book, as Emilia hands Iago the handkerchief in Act 3 Scene 3, the Director's prompt book reads "Kisses E" after Iago's line "I have use for it" before Iago "moves to US on stage corner of table & sits on it". Emilia then exits. The stage manager's prompt book keeps this kiss but then continues "Iago slap Em push her from him & breaks US table. Em follows him but he sends her away."

Like Iago's lack of kneeling later in the same scene, this direction brings a physical force to Iago's manipulations not seen explicitly in the text itself. The effects it has on Emilia and on Iago seem equally important to the audience. For Emilia it suggests a pattern of abuse from Iago intermingled with affection, showing domestic abuse of a kind which could quite easily explain her unwillingness to betray Iago and break her silence until Othello has passed

the point of no return. For Iago it shows another failing of his ability to manipulate and control subtly, instead making him reliant on moments of brute force like this slap and his keeping Othello on his knees and, ultimately, the failed attempt on Cassio's life and the killing of Roderigo.

In many ways it is the moments of physical violence that typify Shaw's understanding of the play. Iago controlling and managing the action but far more of a blunt instrument than he'd like himself to be. Emilia physically knocked aside so he can focus on the handkerchief. Othello forced to his knees as Iago swears oaths around him. The “very easy business” of Roderigo and Cassio helpless in the dark as Iago stabs at them both with very different results, neither ultimately to Iago's good. Othello's epileptic fit in Act 4 Scene 1 sees Iago kick Othello in the head in the Director's prompt book, while in the Stage Manager's prompt book he straddles Othello, lifts up his head and then drops it back to hit the floor. When Othello strikes Desdemona later in that scene he does so with the letter granting his authority to Cassio. And when Othello kills Desdemona in Act 5 Scene 2 she "beats his chest" and fights to live. With the ideas of the play so encapsulated in these moments of physical violence, it seems apt to return to the very first observation Shaw makes about the play in his notes:

> I think it is tremendously important to remember that the main characters are all soldiers or women who are married to, or living with, soldiers.

And ultimately that is where Shaw’s production leads us. *Othello* is a play about soldiers, and one highly critical of them. Shaw uses it to show us how military life affects military men and those around them. Shaw writes repeatedly that it is circumstance that brings about tragedy in *Othello* and that circumstance is, to him, entirely military. The attack he sees in the play is less fervent and obvious than *Troilus and Cressida*’s deglorification of war itself, but Shaw’s *Othello* is still an attack.

Shaw’s notes, Harris’s designs, Andrews’s performance all make it clear that it’s not Othello’s blackness that drives him to tragedy. And when Shaw has stripped that out of the play, what’s left is his soldiery. Shaw’s Iago has also “been in the Army since he was a boy”. The production is a constant string of violent acts and outbursts committed by soldiers kept from war. Shaw’s production tells us the main characters are all soldiers, that this violence keeps happening because they are soldiers, that absolute trust and mistrust are unavoidable because they are soldiers, that tragedy is inevitable because they are soldiers. The problem,

it's telling us, is soldiers. The army may not create the faults Shaw sees in his main characters, but it exacerbates them, it makes violence their only response, and it has done since their childhood.

Almost exactly a year after Shaw's rehearsals for *Othello* began, the government announced the beginning of the end of National Service in the UK. Shaw's *Othello* feels like an avatar for the national mood turning against it. Without the pressing need of War, Shaw tells us, all you'll do by feeding more boys into the armed forces is create more Othellos, more Iagos, more "soldiers or women who are married to, or living with, soldiers." A decade after Shaw left the army, he staged an *Othello* that saw the army as a far greater menace than any Iago could ever be without it.

Chapter 8: "Be thou my Charon" – Shaw and the Boatman

It's 1958 and the end is nigh. This is the year that Shaw decides to leave Stratford. By 1960 he'll be gone and leave behind a legacy of success and security for Peter Hall to polish and call the RSC. 1958 is the year everything changes, so much so that the RSC website's official history claims: "Peter Hall becomes Artistic Director. Aldwych Theatre leased in London and Stratford/London operations begin" (RSC History). None of this is true. The timeline the RSC offers erases Shaw entirely, skipping from Quayle's appointment to Hall's as if nothing happened in the intervening decade, and getting the dates wrong too. It's 1958 and Shaw is about to be erased from history.

Shaw's resignation, his ending, his erasure, are not an artistic choice. There's no failure to Shaw's approach, no sudden need to move on. He was ready to retire soon, undoubtedly, and Hall was being prepared to replace him. But there is no indication that 1959 is to be his final year until the moment he gives the governors his resignation. Instead there's an event, a moment in time, where everything changes. A boatman come to carry Shaw out of his life at Stratford and into the after-life. Shaw leaves when he sees the last of the military virtues he believed in — loyalty, duty, respect — broken by a man he trusted implicitly. Two years after staging *Othello*, Shaw gets to live it. The monster in the river is the boatman's betrayal. And the boatman's name is George Hume.

George Hume became general manager of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1948, the year Anthony Quayle first took up the directorship. As general manager, Hume was responsible for the majority of administrative duties within the organisation and all matters pertaining to the building and the non-theatrical aspects of the Memorial Theatre. He was answerable to the director of the theatre, as Quayle had made certain of the director's supremacy when he first accepted the position: "I made only a few stipulations: 1) I was to be in control of the entire theatre, everything from the restaurants to the workshops. Naturally I would deputize, but all must be answerable to me. I wanted no business manager intervening and frustrating my artistic aims..." (Quayle 449). But Hume was integral to the running of the theatre: handling day to day matters of business, finance and administration beyond the productions. And his value and friendship to Shaw was made clear in 1956 when Quayle resigned. Shaw was asked to stay on as sole director, something which he was not keen to do alone, and agreed only on the condition that Hume and Paddy Donnell, the stage manager, were both kept on as well.

It's 1958 and George Hume leaves his role as General Manager of the Theatre at some point between 24th of April and 3rd of May 1958. Back in January, Hume had expressed to the theatre's finance sub-committee an interest in one of the many properties in Stratford owned by the theatre, specifically the Boat Wharf. Hume was apparently investing in a boating company of his own. When the finance sub-committee met again in March, Hume confirmed to them that the Boat Wharf lease was a protected tenancy (meaning the rent could not be raised during the course of the tenancy, only on the renegotiation of the lease at the end of the contract). The finance committee chair agreed to discuss a suitable rent for the Wharf with Hume, ready for when the current contract ended. Hume is present at the meeting of the theatre's Executive Council on 24th April alongside Shaw. This is the last recorded piece of theatre management Hume is involved with.

The finance committee next meet on 4th of June. The meeting is dominated by the repercussions of Hume's departure. His nomination to be director of the Arden Hotel (which was owned by the theatre and leased out to the proprietors on condition that the board director be chosen by the theatre trustees) is withdrawn. An unauthorised gift he had made to Stanbridge School of Nineteen pounds and Nineteen shillings for prizes is approved. Then comes the matter of the Boat Wharf:

> Boat Wharf: The Secretary produced a letter dated 30th May 1958, which he had received from Mr Fletcher of Messrs. Charles Russell & Co. In it Mr. Fletcher advised that the old tenant was entitled to assign to a new tenant the benefit of his tenancy, in the absence of proof by the Theatre [that] it was a term of the tenancy that there was no power to assign (SMT Minute Books).

Fletcher's advice, as their lawyer, is that the Theatre has no power to prevent the current tenant from transferring his tenancy to someone new and end their own tenancy early as a result. In effect, the new tenant had cut the theatre out of the deal and any chance of asking for a competitive rent for the lucrative summer boating season. That new tenant is Malthouse Boats Ltd, and it is co-owned by George Hume.

> Therefore, the new tenant, Malthouse Boats Ltd., of which company Mr Hume is a Shareholder and Director, is installed as a yearly tenant and is entitled to stay on unless the property is required by the Theatre for its own use. The only alternatives open to the Theatre were to serve six months' notice after 29th September next to

> expire on 29th September 1959, and put in a Manager to run the business, or to obtain a market rent from the new tenant. If the first alternative were followed, Mr. Fletcher advised that some small compensation for loss of goodwill, up to twice the rateable value, would be payable and that the Theatre should consider the advisability of itself carrying on such a business. It was decided to adopt the second alternative and the Secretary was asked to take the advice of Mr. Bewlay as to a proper rent. It was further decided that there should be a written Tenancy Agreement with Malthouse Boats Ltd., under which there would be no power to assign the tenancy (SMT Minute Books).

It appears, then, that Hume was neither satisfied with waiting until September nor with the rent suggested by the Finance Sub-Committee. Instead he had taken advantage of the protected nature of the tenancy, and of the tenant's right to assign a new tenancy, and had taken over the lease, at the current rate, for his company at some point prior to the 3rd of May. The date is confirmed by the next matter in the finance sub-committee minutes for the 4th of July:

> Entertaining Expenditure: Mr Donnell reported the receipt of an account from the Swan's Nest Hotel for the entertaining of a party of journalists there on 3rd May by Mr. Hume. As this had taken place after Mr. Hume had resigned as General Manager, Mr. Donnell asked whether the account, amounting to £9.10.0 should be paid from Theatre funds. Authority for payment was given (SMT Minute Books).

The details of Hume's actual departure are unclear, except that at some point after 24th April but prior to 3rd of May he leaves the Memorial Theatre. It is impossible for me to say, without access to the closed minute books of the SMT held in the RSC archives, whether he was fired or resigned, and whether, if he resigned, he did so before or after his deal with the previous tenant of the boat wharf had come to light. What we can say is that at the next meeting of the Executive Council of the theatre, Shaw appointed Paddy Donnell as his assistant to take over Hume's roles in the theatre, confirmed there would be no replacement in the role of General Manager, and presented his own letter of resignation to the Council to take effect at the end of the 1959 season (SMT Minute Books). He had already discussed and agreed the matter with Fordham Flower, and had offered Peter Hall the position of director.

Hall had accepted. Just as Shaw's hiring had been presented to the Governors as a *fait accompli*, so too was his resignation.

Shaw's resignation had been in the offing since Quayle left, but it was Hume's betrayal that solidified his decision and dictated the timing of it. Whatever the actual legal or contractual circumstances may have been, Shaw, the man who valued loyalty over almost all else, felt Hume's actions as a personal betrayal at a time when he most needed support in the theatre. Certainly Shaw's son George saw it as having a very strong influence on his father's decision to leave Stratford, though the exact details of it were not known to him:

> There was a monstrous bust up when he discovered that the general manager had been in some way disloyal to Stratford. George Hume was the general manager, the man who had his name over the door, and was considered to be very good. He lived next door to my parents; my father liked him and his wife Laura was a great friend of my mother's.
>
> The things my father said he admired most in people were loyalty, discipline, and love. These were important to him. George Hume was the worst of the worst because he not only pinched the cash, or whatever it was he did (I still don't know although there's a secret file in the Birthplace Trust; I don't suppose they'll let you look at it, they certainly wouldn't let me)... Anyway they were allies: the Humes, my father and mother, until the Hume thing burst and that made him very very unhappy, very very angry, and he stayed in a sort of rage for quite a long time. My poor mama and my half-sister Jane [working at the time as Shaw's assistant] had a hell of a time looking after him (George Byam Shaw interview).

The archival records I have been able to access, perhaps unsurprisingly, make no mention of Shaw's emotional response to the situation. But the idea that he was sent into a rage by it, and that this rage lasted for some time, puts another colour on Shaw's own resignation. It is possible to read the timing of Shaw's resignation as defeat, as a tired and saddened acceptance that the theatre he thought he knew no longer existed as it did in his mind. Quayle had gone, Hume had now proved disloyal, and the only allies Shaw had left who'd been with him since 1951 were his wife, Fordham Flower as chair of the governors, and Shaw's secretary Katy Flannagan (who had previously been Quayle's secretary and went on to be Peter Hall's). But George Byam Shaw's recollections of his father's mood paint a rather different picture. This was a Shaw enraged, furious at Hume's betrayal of the theatre and of

Shaw himself. This was a Shaw who had agreed to stay on alone after Quayle left only if Hume stayed too, and this was the thanks Hume gave him. How long "quite a long time" (as George Shaw put it) may have been is unclear. Hume was gone by 3rd of May, and Shaw's resignation had been agreed with both Flower and Hall by 9th of July, so it seems unquestionable that it was a decision made while still in that rage: passionate and impulsive in a way Shaw rarely was, and without the considered restraint that usually characterised him. Certainly it seems to have been a decision made because Shaw needed to leave rather than because he knew Hall was ready to replace him.

Maybe Shaw would still have left at the end of the 1959 season if he hadn't felt Hume had betrayed him. Or maybe he would have stayed on a little longer. Maybe Hall would have been appointed later. Maybe when Hall went with the Memorial Theatre tour to Russia he'd have been thinking only of his current productions, not trying to formulate a future for the theatre. Maybe Hall wouldn't have spoken to the director of the Gorky theatre about the model of ensemble contract they used and let those ideas inform his own (Hall 154). He'd not have met with Fordham Flower in a Moscow Hotel room and spent the night persuading him of the ideas of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Or maybe Hall would have become Shaw's co-director, serving a couple of years as Shaw had with Quayle in order to support the two companies model Quayle had envisioned for the London base of the theatre back in 1954. We can't know just what effect George Hume's boating ambitions had on British theatre in the second half of the 20th century, but they do appear to have changed it forever. Another year of Shaw's directorship could have seen Peter Hall drawing on entirely different influences for his initial foundation of the RSC, a house style developing much closer to Shaw's own approaches, the continuation of the "star" policy in some form, and who knows what else.

But all these possibilities are lost. They boarded the boat with Shaw when Hume sold him down the river. Shaw walks straight from Hume's betrayal into rehearsals for a grandiose and philosophical *Hamlet* staged as a direct attack on the Coleridge/Olivier orthodoxy of the play that is then savaged by Kenneth Tynan and Olivier's other devotees. This ideologically motivated attack on Shaw's work then becomes the basis for the RSC's official history of his era. Sally Beauman positions Tynan's bile-filled review as fact (231). The RSC erases Shaw from their timelines.

It's 1962 now. The Stratford theatre, now officially the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, seeks the first government subsidy in its history. Shaw has been working steadily, directing two productions each in 1960 and 1961. Now an offer comes that he hasn't been expecting. Shaw is asked to become director of productions at Sadler's Wells, effectively becoming the

leading dramatic figure in British Opera. Shaw has never directed an opera in his life. By the end of his career he's directed fourteen, as many as his productions in Stratford. Shaw stays in the role, even as Sadler's Wells evolves into the English National Opera, until 1973. His tenure, his career, ends with a barnstorming definitive production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. Shaw may have started in the east, but beyond my scope and beyond my reach it is a Teutonic mythology that takes him.

Shaw's production notebooks began with *Antony and Cleopatra*, and my exposure to them did too. In his very first notebook, written back in his hospital bed in 1944, Shaw wrote out the acts and scenes of the play in a detail he'd never replicate later. He wrote about the production, in the general and the specific. And then he turned to the characters, and the first line of analysis Shaw wrote about any of Shakespeare's characters set the model for his incisive, insightful and archetypal reading of all his future productions. After the name "Antony", a simple, four word sentence:

This man is <u>great</u>.

Shaw's contributions to the history of the Stratford Theatre may have been overlooked but his influence is everywhere. A quick glance over every production of *As You Like It* staged in Stratford since colour photography was in use shows them using Shaw's winter into spring colour palette if not his actual timeframe. Shaw's "star policy" has combined with the RSC's standing company to form the new RSC casting status quo. Shaw's choice of successor led to the founding of the company and much of that work was only made possible by the groundwork Shaw had laid in keeping Stratford solvent and free from public subsidy, as well as raising its reputation. Barry Jackson and Anthony Quayle may have done admirable, even astounding work in raising Stratford's profile from the home of the dull and predictable to being a place where good Shakespeare can be seen without fail, but Shaw's time and work is what tipped that balance from good to great and made Stratford the centre of Shakespearean excellence in the English theatrical world. Shaw's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and later his *Macbeth* (both staged in seasons when Quayle took a backseat due to international commitments) set a theatrical benchmark for those plays and for the staging of Shakespeare that remains to this day. Shaw's output was incredible: between the ages of 48 and 57 he staged fourteen of his own productions at Stratford, oversaw dozens more, cast the full season each year, trained a successor, undertook all the other duties and responsibilities of the

director of the theatre in Stratford, and took the time to visit and become loved by every workshop and department in his organisation.

The productions that I point to here as Shaw's most influential and successful are not those I have written about.[61] Instead what I offer is a snapshot, less than a quarter of his output, but the ones that tell his story best. Because the story that Shaw's *Coriolanus*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *Othello* tell together are the story of a man who has learned through terror and blood and duty and sacrifice that war is hell.

Shaw served his country in a war too terrible to avoid. When he came back, he set to work proving why war is so terrible it must be avoided. *Coriolanus* let him show what the war did to men who came back from it. *Troilus and Cressida* showed what it did to people living through it. In *Othello* he found a way to show what it did to people preparing for it. Anthony Quayle showed him brotherhood could be forged without it, while George Hume showed that the kind of trust it engendered didn't work outside it. This is a man who loved Siegfried Sassoon, in every sense, and whose career proves he saw the same horrors in war that Sassoon did. But this is also a man forged and shaped by that war in a way more tangible than most.

It's hard to overstate the importance of the second world war to Shaw's work. In a purely pragmatic sense it has direct, tangible in the most literal sense of the world, connections to every play he directed after. I've held them in my hand as I've written this. Shaw's notebooks, his entire working method, the extent of his preparation and his confidence to direct alone and on the scale that he did, all stem from his time in a hospital bed in Burma with a wound in his leg and a brother fed up of his moaning. It's a production style born of frustration, of a regimented military order he later turns against, of an urgent and pressing need to be active, and of time alone to think. For a man who continually described himself unacademic, as having "a slow working brain" as he said in 1977 (Shaw interviewed by Mullin), it is a phenomenally cerebral and academic approach. Shaw thinks, and proves he thinks, about the plays he is directing, with a depth and dedication that belie his self-effacing claims to slow-wittedness. And his thinking is all coloured by his war.

Shaw went to war an actor and came back a director. There's no other way of putting it; the transition may have begun before the war began, but in 1939 Shaw would have said he

[61] For more on Shaw's *Macbeth*, read Michael Mullin's *Macbeth Onstage*: a reproduction of Shaw's prompt and notebooks with commentary from Mullin and extracts from his interviews with cast and production team. Shaw's 1953 *Antony and Cleopatra* is covered in detail by Carol Chillington Rutter in her book on the play's production history for Manchester University Press. *As You Like It* is explored by Nick Walton in his chapter on Shaw for *The Routledge Companion to Director's Shakespeare*.

was an actor as much as a director had he been asked, and in 1946 there is no question of what he is. His work after 1946 is bursting with his wartime experiences; from his brother's simple claim that "we're in the east, so you know something about that, and we're in the army, so you know something about that" (Shaw interviewed by Mullin) leading to his *Antony and Cleopatra*s and to his *Othello*, to his sympathetic understanding of the military mind in peacetime in *Coriolanus*, his dark reflections on the endlessness of a multi-year conflict in *Troilus and Cressida*, his instinctive assertions that the military and overseas circumstances of *Othello* are key to Iago's success. And Shaw's war is bursting with Shakespeare. At every turn he's thinking about directing *Hamlet*, or how Hamlet's speeches best represent his mood, casting an *Othello* in his head, and ultimately lying in a hospital bed while putting an entire production of *Antony and Cleopatra* together with nothing but a pencil, two notebooks and a copy of the play.

In his autobiography, Antony Quayle writes about Shaw coming home from the war: "I always thought of Glen, with his courtesies and his bowties, as one of the most tranquil and passive men I have ever met, and it was grotesque to think of him engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with some Japanese and having a bayonet pushed through his thigh" (438). This really is the fundamental idea in understanding Shaw. The military dichotomy is far from his only apparent internal contradiction (the homophobia of his *Troilus and Cressida* against his own bisexuality is his most prominent professional one, while his simultaneous love for Angela Baddeley and Rachel Kempson is his most personal) but it sits at the heart of his work post-war. When Quayle described Shaw as possessing an "outward extreme gentleness" that is entirely genuine but when he says it "conceal[ed] a character of such strength and probity as I've seldom if ever come across" (Quayle interviewed by Mullin), he was not exaggerating. Shaw is a man who writes before the war of his concerns about "what sort of soldier [he] shall make" and then proves to be a brave and heroic one. He is a man who withstands a night attack on his encampment not only without nerves or fear, but with one of his men declaiming "Look at that bugger, he's enjoying it", and yet whose trousers are visibly shaking as he trembles with fear when faced with public speaking.

Shaw's greatest ability as a director wasn't his rhythm and pacing, deserving though he was of the "particular praise" he received for it in Stratford and after (Shaw interviewed by Mullin). Nor was it his eye for composition and ability to compose a stage picture, as he demonstrated time and again. It wasn't even the dedication and work he put into preparing his productions. Rather, Shaw's greatest strength was his ability to inhabit two worlds and retain his understanding of one after he had left it for the other: actor and director, soldier and

civilian. The defining moments of Shaw's war show him as an officer desperate to be stood with the rank and file: his showcasing of the talents of every aspect of army life, his request to be transferred away from staff officer training, his attempts to escape from hospital before his recovery was completed, his refusal to accept a role with the ENSA. The defining memories of his colleagues of him as a director are of his love for and understanding of actors; the sense that as a director he wanted them to succeed and was working only to raise them up and support them to greatness. What Shaw himself couldn't see was how this made him great himself.

If Shaw's career, in theatre and in the army, is to be categorised as anything then it should be as a Field Officer. Shaw's preproduction materials are a guide to his productions but more than that they stand as a physical testament to the support he wanted to give to his actors. Shaw led from the front, engaging with the text first and gathering all the reconnaissance he could before letting his actors tangle with it. After the war he stayed out of the limelight, in every sense, but his work gave many young actors a start and many older ones a magnum opus.

Except that Shaw rejects the role. The roots of it are there at the start of his service as he desperately tries to get out of Staff Officer training, and they rise again when he tries just as desperately to get out of his hospital bed. But by the time Shaw's staging *Othello* again, he sees what he couldn't quite grasp even in *Troilus and Cressida*. The problem isn't the staff officers, it's the whole hierarchy. The military is made of unexploded hydrogen bombs like Achilles: ugly, dangerous, poisonous and radioactive, fit only for cold-blooded and cowardly manoeuvres. This isn't distinct from the staff officer's disdain for the men whose slaughter and dehumanisation they oversee. It's all the same thing. The military is unmasked as the parade of screaming Daleks that they are.

So if he's not a Field Officer, then what is Shaw? There's a word for men who fight on the front line, shoulder to shoulder with those they're leading, who can even be accused of enjoying themselves in the fray. And that word is "Warrior". Shaw is the director as "warrior", focused and aggressively loyal to the text, dedicated to supporting those alongside him, fierce (if calm) in defence of his positions, unyielding in the face of adversity and opposition. Shaw went to war hoping he would prove to be brave. And at the end of his career Wotan, warrior king of the gods, sent his Valkyries to carry Shaw to the heroes' hall. The last piece of Shaw isn't lost in the river or trapped in the Duat. It's in Valhalla, where the warriors go when their work is done.

I started by looking to the words of Peggy Ashcroft. "I'd like to talk about Glen because I think Glen is not talked about enough." But having talked about him, his work, his working manner, and his legacy, I think Ashcroft overcomplicates things. The reason to talk about Shaw is simple, straightforward, and summed up in Shaw's own words:

This man is <u>great</u>.

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Appendix 1

Contents of GL-7 research materials held by the archive of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Contents are sorted by box.

Box 1

Tape Recorded Interviews:

- Lee Montague: 4/7/73
- Richard Pasco: 6/7/73
- Trader Faulkner: 20/7/73
- Glen Byam Shaw (4 tapes): 30/5/77, 30-31/5/77, 31/5/77, 3/6/77
- Peggy Ashcroft: 3/6/77
- Marius Goring: 10/6/77
- Cyril Luckham: 12/6/77
- Margaret "Percy" Harris (2 tapes): 14/6/77
- Levi Fox/Desmond Hall: 27/6/77
- Anthony Quayle: 31/7/77
- Motley (Margaret Harris & Elizabeth Montgomery): 28/8/82

Box 2

- Correspondence between Michael Mullin and Glen Byam Shaw
- Correspondence between Michael Mullin and Levi Fox
- Correspondence between Michael Mullin and Anthony Quayle
- Correspondence between Michael Mullin and Peggy Ashcroft
- Correspondence between Michael Mullin and Percy Harris
- Additional correspondence between Michael Mullin and Peter Streuli, JM Dent and Sons, Edward King, Joy Endler, Thomas Holte, , Susan Chaffin, Susan Zyngier, John Dawson, Diane Cocker, University of Illinois, and Ann Brooke Barnett
- Photographs: Motley Design Conference, 1989
- Annotated introduction to unpublished *As You Like It* promptbook with notes on Costumes and measurements
- Second copy of the above with handwritten note apologizing for its incompleteness
- Third copy of the above
- Transcribed notes on character from *As You Like It* notebooks

- Reviews of *As You Like It*
- Handwritten summaries of the above
- Notes on pre-performance newspaper coverage of *As You Like It*
- Notes on newspaper coverage of the end of the run of *As You Like It*
- Photocopied extracts from promptbooks for *As You Like It*
- Letter from Sylvia Rouse to Dr Hobgood and cast and crew of *Hamlet*
- Newspaper clippings concerning Glen Byam Shaw's appointment as co-director
- Photos of *As You Like It* from performance and rehearsal
- Notes on pictures for publication regarding costs, rights, etc.
- Transcript and photocopies of *As You Like It* notebooks
- Set sketches for *As You Like It*
- Notes on 1951 funding of the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre and market mood
- Costume notes and designs for *As You Like It*
- Inventory of Research Materials by Play
- Comparisons of the balcony scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* (x2)
- Transcriptions of interviews with Glen Byam Shaw (see Box 1) (x2)
- Transcription of interview with Motley Design Studio (see Box 1)
- Transcription of interviews with Percy Harris (see Box 1)
- Transcription of interview with Levi Fox (see Box 1)
- Transcription of interview with Peggy Ashcroft (see Box 1)
- Transcription of interview with Marius Goring (see Box 1)
- Transcription of interview with Cyril Luckham (see Box 1)
- Transcription of interview with Anthony Quayle (see Box 1)
- Transcription of interview with Desmond Hall (see Box 1)
- Obituary of Glen Byam Shaw
- Early drafts of transcriptions of interviews with Glen Byam Shaw (see Box 1)
- Note of unidentified quotation
- Manuscript submission guide for University of Missouri
- List of promptbooks provided to Michael Mullin by Glen Byam Shaw
- Reader's report on *Macbeth Onstage*
- Frank Granville Barker writing on Glen Byam Shaw in *Music and Musicians* Sept '73)
- Programme for London transfer of *Antony and Cleopatra* (1954)
- Shakespeare Memorial Theatre programme 1957
- Programmes for *As You Like It* (1952) (1961)

- *As You Like It* set photos and production stills
- "Stratford in 1954": Richard David writing in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, SQ5 (1954)
- *Troilus and Cressida* production stills (1968)
- *Scenery by Motley* by Charles Thomson Earey, dated May 11th 1982
- *Antony and Cleopatra* in Contemporary Review: New perspectives on performance, by Josh Shanes and Michael Mullin
- *Antony and Cleopatra* in Contemporary Review: New interpretations in literature, by Josh Shanes and Michael Mullin
- *Antony and Cleopatra on stage*: MLA Variorum Edition of Shakespeare
- Harvard Theatre collection photographs (*Antony and Cleopatra*), with attached note
- *Antony and Cleopatra* production stills

Box 3

- Correspondence between Glen Byam Shaw and Dick Daniel
- Roy Walker notes on *Julius Caesar* for Glen Byam Shaw
- *Julius Caesar* cue sheet with scene timings
- *Julius Caesar* dress parade call
- *Julius Caesar* press photo call
- *Julius Caesar* understudy list and cast list
- *Julius Caesar* cast availabilities and commitments
- *Julius Caesar* music cues
- *Julius Caesar* character bios including ages
- *Julius Caesar* notes on who's onstage in scene 2 (the Games Scene)
- 1957 contract commitments
- *Julius Caesar* scene and character notes
- *Julius Caesar* set sketches
- *King John* dress parade call
- *Romeo and Juliet* promptbook
- *Romeo and Juliet* set change list
- *King Lear* promptbook
- *The Merry Wives of Windsor* promptbook

Box 4

- Director's Notebooks: *King Lear, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Julius Caesar, As You Like It (1948/52), As You Like It (1952), As You Like It (1957), Romeo and Juliet (1954), Romeo and Juliet (1958)* (1 volume each)
- Director's Notebook: *Richard III* (2 volumes)
- Director's Notebooks: *Othello*, *Troilus and Cressida* (3 volumes each)
- Michael Mullin writing on Antony and Cleopatra, 1953 Stratford-upon-Avon
- Draft chapters of unpublished biography of Glen Byam Shaw by Michael Mullin, including foreword by Percy Harris
- List of transcribed interviews
- Postcard from Robert Hardy
- Addresses and Contacts for interview requests
- Postcard from Percy Harris
- Postcard from unknown sender
- Returned letters to Michael Redgrave and Albert Finney
- Letter from Harry Andrews to Michael Mullin
- Letter to Roy Dotrice from Michael Mullin
- Letter to Michael Mullin from Fannie Walters
- Transcription and summary of Glen Byam Shaw interviews 30th and 31st May (see Box 1)
- Newspaper bio of Glen Byam Shaw, source unknown
- Reviews of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and notes thereon
- Inventory notes on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* promptbook
- *The Merry Wives of Windsor* scene breakdown
- *The Merry Wives of Windsor* production stills
- *Macbeth* promptbook (unbound)
- *As You Like It* 1952 promptbook
- *Richard III* promptbook

Box 5

- Xeroxed production stills – *Antony and Cleopatra*
- Transcriptions of *Antony and Cleopatra* notebooks (1944/6)
- Partial transcription of *Antony and Cleopatra* notebooks (1953)
- *Antony and Cleopatra* Research Notebook (Michael Mullin) including

    - Scene by Scene examination
    - Record of cuts
    - Glossary
    - Additional queries directed to Michael Mullin
    - Comparison between ’53 and ’44/6 notebooks
    - Bank of Illinois Calendar Card
    - Notes on differences between notebooks and promptbook
    - Summer Hours Timesheet
- *Antony and Cleopatra* 1953 promptbook (in 3 parts)

Box 6

- *The Merry Wives of Windsor* production stills
- *The Merry Wives of Windsor* production materials: scene timings, stage map, cues for rehearsal call, understudy working division, technical cue sheet, lighting map (x2), scene list with timings and character calls, dress parade call, rehearsal schedule (and amendment), understudy cast list, main cast list, press photo call, music cues (including handwritten copy), props list by scene, costume plot (including handwritten copy)
- Shakespeare Memorial Theatre rehearsal schedule: June-July 1955
- *The Merry Wives of Windsor* character notes
- Letters between Glen Byam Shaw and Alan Webb re: Justice Shallow
- Director’s rehearsal notes for *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: “Shallow Scene”, “1st Brook Scene”, “2nd Brook Scene”
- List of characters for *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, marked with ticks and question marks
- Records of productions of *Antony and Cleopatra* from 1874 to 1953
- Notes on 1936 New Theatre production of *Antony and Cleopatra* by Komisarjevsky
- Records of productions of *Antony and Cleopatra* from 1954-1967
- Notes on 1972/3 RSC production of *Antony and Cleopatra* by Trevor Nunn
- Reviews of 1972/3 RSC production of *Antony and Cleopatra* by Trevor Nunn
- Notes on adaptations of *Antony and Cleopatra*
- Notes on First Performance of *Antony and Cleopatra*
- Records of productions of *Antony and Cleopatra* from 1759 to 1867
- Records of productions of *Antony and Cleopatra* from 1873-1877
- Notes on productions of *Antony and Cleopatra* between 1889 and 1935
- Records of the 1865 production of *Antony and Cleopatra*

- *Antony and Cleopatra* Notebooks
    - 2x Blue Notebooks dated 1944
    - 1x Brown Notebook dated April 28th 1944
    - 1x Black Notebook dated July 27th 1944 (contains pages taken from second brown notebook and repurposed for *Hamlet*)
    - 2x Red Notebooks dated 1953
- *Hamlet* notebook, 1958 (repurposed from *Antony and Cleopatra* notebook)
- *Antony and Cleopatra* promptbook (1946)
- *Hamlet* promptbook
- Notes on *Hamlet* promptbook
- Newspaper cuttings relating to *Hamlet* 1958

Box 7

- *Macbeth* photographs intended for inclusion in *Macbeth Onstage*
- *As You Like It* promptbook (1957)
- *Julius Caesar* promptbook
- *Othello* promptbook

Appendix 2 – Selected extracts from *Troilus and Cressida* notebooks, discussing Characters, Setting and "The Play"

Glen Byam Shaw

SMT 30 May 54.

(facing page)

Troilus & Cressida

The Play

There is great difference of opinion amongst the Scholars as to whether this play should be considered as a History or a Tragedy or a Satirical comedy or what. If the Scholars ca'nt make up their minds about it then I, certainly, ca'nt. But as we are going to present the play on the stage we must know what we are aiming at. It seems to me that

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the question of 'label', comedy, tragedy et cetera is not very important. What is important is that the play should have a clear & definite impact on the audience.
To me the most essential thing to remember is that this play is about WAR. & people in war time.
I think that one of the dangers of the play is that it is written about the Greek & Troyan War & that many, if not most of the characters in it are famous in

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the kind of way that Gods & Godesses [sic] are famous, that is in an obscure, remote, but slightly awe inspiring way.
That is not surprising considering some of these mortals, who appear in the play, were supposed to have either a god or goddess for their father or mother.
But, Shakespeare, has written about People. Real, down to earth human beings. There is not one grain of anything super-natural in the play.

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It is as though he has set out to pull these mythical heroes off their pedestals & force them to live again in the most trying circumstances, I,e. WAR. And we all know that people reveal their true natures more strongly in times of danger & adversity rather than at any other time. This is not a heroic war fought for King & country, or for justice or salvation from tyranny. Everyone, including Troilus, knows that Helen is not worth the death of one

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soldier, let alone thousands. Everyone is utterly sick of the War, and that is not surprising. It has been going on for seven years.
If we think what five years of War seemed like to us we should be able to understand the state of mind that these people are in.
I remember the War years seemed an eternity of fear, depression & sorrow, & I find it impossible to believe that it is almost nine years, now, since it finished. Those nine

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years have gone in a flash but the War years seemed unending in their boredom & beastliness.
First & foremost, then, I say we must act the circumstances of this play as though they were happening at this moment to us & not think of them as some rather romantic and vague happenings that never, actually, took place at all, or if they did, so long ago that they have the unreality of a dream.
When these young men go out, each day, to

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fight they should have exactly the same feelings of excitement, strain & fear of death that the Battle of Britain pilots had when &they climbed into their Spit-fires & Hurricanes. When the Greek Generals discuss the lack of spirit in the Army it makes one think of two things that

one heard about so often in the War & which are the destruction of any troops if they are allowed to get a hold on the men "Alarm & despondency".
At the very end of the play Aeneas says to

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Troilus "My Lord, you do discomfort all the host." And it means just that. There were many times in our War when one felt one's heart sink & alarm & despondency trying to take possession of one. The fall of Paris, the surrender of the French nation, the sinking of H.M.S. Hood, the great advance of the Germany army towards Cains, et cetera.
Then there is the offer of peace at the expense of honour. Priam would accept it. Hector's

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reason & Helenus's fear would make them agree, but Troilus is young & full of courage, determination & simple nobility of spirit. Perhaps the most tragic thing in War is the disillusionment [sic] of youth.
At the beginning of the play Troilus believes in honour, chivalry & love. By the end of the play he has seen his love behave like a whore & has seen his brother's body dragged, ignominously [sic] across the battle Field tied to the tail of Achilles horse,

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Achilles! who has proved himself to be a sexually perverted ego-maniac & a dastardly brute as well.
Throughout the play this glorious hero of the Greeks does'nt do or say one decent thing. His selfishness, arrogance, & conceit is simply insufferable. To me he is utterly contemptible. But, naturally, he has his own point of view & would justify all that he says & does, or rather does not do for he does'nt even kill Hector though

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he has the effrontery to tell his own Myrmidons to say that he has.

We should bear in mind that for seven years the Greeks have been fighting & living in their tents on the Phrygian plane [sic]. No wives or relationships with them though from what Thersites says we can be pretty sure that there are opportunities for them to indulge themselves & become riddled with disease.

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You know that I said that I think Shakespeare had a genius for putting his plays in the right locations & making his characters of the right nationality to fit with the atmosphere of each play that he wrote.
In this case he seems to have set out to show how terrible, futile, & destructive War is, & what better way could he have chosen than by showing us a true & realistic sample of the Troyan War instead of the

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glorified one that we vaguely have in our minds. Unfortunately for me I am not a Scholar & although I have read some of Homer (in English of course!) & Rec Warren's book about the Greeks & Troyans, I have still found it difficult to make the people of these two Nations exist in a 'matter of fact' way for myself.
I have, therefore, let me confess, begun to think of them as belonging to two nations that I know a little more about.

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I think of the Greeks as Prussians & the Troyans as Frenchmen & I think if we are really going to try & make these characters live on the stage – as we must - & stress the difference between them then I think it may help.
I can imajine myself saying to one of you "You are not being quite Troyan enough" & getting a rather blank look in reply.
To me there is quite a lot about the Greeks in the play that fits with the

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Germans.
They worship force & might, & they are lacking in humour or wit. They are soldiers first & foremost. Fighters. Their veneration for Nestor, who is something of an old club bore, is much the same as the respect the Germans had for Hindenburgh when he was practically senile
Their attitude to women is really awful. The way Diomedes talks about Helen is revoltingly insensitive & crude & he treats Cressida like

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a tart.
(I am not saying that Helen & Cressida are wonderful women, they certainly are not, but Diomedes is not better than they are)

Thersites has a way of telling the truth about people & things but in the foulest way.
Everything is debased by him & he himself is a cowardly & diseased creature.
Ulysses is the equivalent of the chief of the Imperial General Staff. A back-room boy.

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In fact they are, to my mind very much like the Germans or rather the Prussians.
And equally I think one can with some truth compare the Troyans with the French.
Cultured; over-cultured,- sophisticated & going towards decadence, but still with an inherent sense of chivalry, courtesy, refinement, & coinage [sic].
Hector knows in his heart when the play starts that he & Troy are doomed, but the

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gallantry & idealism of his youngest brother quickly wooes [sic] him away from what his reason tells him.
He is not a man of great will-power but he is great of heart. A gentleman born & bred. A true aristocrat. That applies to all the sons of Priam, even to the soft & decadent Paris.
And there is something French, too, about Pandorus & his little piece. Are they horrid people? I don't think

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so, though, of course, they are hopelessly shallow & weak. But at least they are both kind & pleasant & I must confess that I infinitely prefer them to thugs like Achilles & Diomedes or pompous dolts like Ajax & Menelaus.
They have wit & liveliness, like an old Doctored pussy cat & a kitten.

So that is what I am going to try & aim at.
1) The reality of War, & a war that has

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been going on for seven years.

2) The reality of the characters that we see; & goodness knows they are full of character. In some cases they are so strongly drawn in that they are almost caricatures

3) The difference in Nationality & basic qualities between the Troyans & the Greeks bearing in mind that the Troyans may be compared to the French

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& the Greeks to the Prussians.

4) The tragic disalussionment [sic] of youth, in the person of Troilus, in circumstances of War.

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Paris 27 Basil Hoskins

The second son of Priam
By far the most handsome of the brothers. In face the most wonderful looking young man.
As a fighter not so good. We should feel a certain decadence about him. Helen obviously has a bad affect [sic] him & he is quite willing to skip a day's fighting if his 'Nell' wants him to stay with her.
I get the impression that he is a rather silly young man with

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not a great deal in his head, & when he says to Helen "Sweet, above thought I love thee" it's not such a compliment as it sounds, because he ca'nt think very highly about love or anything else.
He does think a lot about himself, & his appearance should take one's breath away.
He is a little over-dressed, in a slightly flamboyant way, but there is nothing vulgar or common about him. He is a Prince by birth

//

& his manners are perfect. All women find him attractive him. I think that there has been some sort of trivial love-affair between him & his "disposer" Cressida. There is, certainly, an under-current of meaning when Helen & Pandarus talk together about Cressida. In Paris we should see a young man who indulges in the lusts of the flesh to excess.

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…

Troilus 22 Laurence Harvey

At the start of the play he is in love & that colours all that he says & does.

* During the play we should see him becoming agonised, depressed, tortured, embittered, & finally heart-broken & determined to get himself killed.
It is in the character of Troilus, & what that character represents, that the tragedy of the play lies.
He is absolutely sincere when he says :-

*One moment he says one thing & then a day later will say the exact opposite. In the Opening Scene, for instance, he says that Helen is not worth fighting for, but the next day he is the person who persuades Hector to go on with the War on her account. This seems to me absolutely true to the emotional state that he is in.

//

"I am as true as truth's simplicity,
And simpler than the infancy of truth"

& again when Cressida & he have to part he says:-

"Fear not my truth; the moral of my wit
Is "plain and true"; there's all the reach of it."

He says he ca'nt sing or dance or make polite conversation or play "at subtle games".

In other words he is not an accomplished lover but

//

a young man who falls in ~~madly~~ love with an enchantingly pretty little creature who is not, in any way, worthy of him. Like his eldest brother, whom he adores, he has nobility, courage & a great sense of honour. We should feel that although he is so desperately attracted to Cressid he is, in his heart, a little ashamed of his over-powering desire for her. Notice that there is never any question of Marriage. It is an affair with a girl who is not of Royal

//

blood & who is the daughter of a traitor.
He is, as he tells Pandarus, careful not to let his father or Hector find out about it & when he is going to sleep the night with her Pandarus has to go & request his brother Paris,-who is, of course, sympathetic to such behaviour,- to make up some excuse if Priam should ask for Troilus at supper.
One can imajine how painful such deceptions are to this simple & honourable young man,

//

but it, probably, adds an intoxicating excitement to the love affair.

He is shy & easily embarrassed, but when he speaks the words ~~should~~ power out of him in an excess of pent up emotional feeling. He is not very intelligent but full of sincere & sensitive feeling. He is completely unsophisticated. He wears his clothes

//

with ease & dignity.
He is a magnificent & dashing fighter.
He is Priam's youngest (legitimate) son.

//

…

Pandarus 50 Anthony Quayle

However hard I try I ca'nt make myself really dislike this old gent, & I believe that the author had a sneaking regard for him too. A sort of great big, soft, sly, pussy cat that loves eating, drinking, gossip & intrigue. Incapable of making love himself probably, but getting infinite pleasure in making the necessary arrangements for virile young people to do so.
When he say "Well, Troilus, well, I would

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my heart were in her body!" he is certainly speaking the truth!
He is, of course, depraved but he has some wit & kindness & is very tender-hearted
He adores all nice looking young men; & quite likes young girls, too, when they are pretty & silly.
He loves clothes, & dresses himself up in the most fantastic style.
He, probably, makes-up & uses scent, & is a terrible shot.
"Royalty" is his idea of heaven, especially when the Royal persons behave

//

rather badly, like Helen & Paris.
The fact that Troilus is one of Priam's sons makes him wildly excited at the idea of him going to bed with his niece. Naturally he would'nt be so plebeian as to mention marriage. That would be quite out of the question, & rather dull in any case.

If Queen Helen can live in sin with one of Priam's son why not his niece with another? The rot has set in at Troy & Pandarus is the

//

outcome of it.
He is amusing & accomplished. Sings & plays entertainingly, though his voice is not as good as it was. The sort of person who does their best to turn the whole of life into a frivolous party.
The War for him is Hell. All those beautiful young men being killed! He shuts his eyes to the horrors & tries to give them a good time when they are, so to speak, 'on leave'.

//

…

There is something of the Kitten about her.
She is very pretty & soft & warm.
She is very attractive physically in an easy & obvious way. As Ulysses says "there's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip,
Nay her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body".

In other words she is intensely provocative & one really

//

ca'nt look at her, for a second, without thinking of sex, due to the fact that she hardly ever thinks of anything else herself.
But she is, certainly, not a whore. She makes love for pleasure not for money or gain. It is something that she simply ca'nt help. By instinct she knows exactly how to be attractive to men & her nature is such that she ca'nt resist using her ability to fascinate them.
We must not forget that there is the taint

//

of disloyalty in her blood. Calchas is a traitor, & her Uncle is not the man to set her a good example. She is not wicked she is weak.
She is shallow but not squalid.
She means what she says when she says it, but there is no depth of feeling to keep her faithful or chaste. She is exactly the kind of girl who makes a man surpremely happy for one night & miserable for a long time afterwards.
She likes change & excitement. One can't blame her. That

//

is her silly little nature. Unfortunately she can do terrible damage to a noble, sensitive & deep nature like Troilus's. I am sure that she really loves Troilus. That is the heart-breaking

thing about it; & she really hates Diomedes but finds him physically attractive & has no power of resistance.

She should look like an exquisite little flower. She was only thirteen when the war started & there is no doubt that it has

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had a considerable affect [sic] on her nature.

Troilus & Cressida

Characters (continued)

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Nestor 70 Mervyn Blake.

He is very old, but still thinks of himself as a soldier though he ca'nt fight anymore.
A typical old Die-hard. His stories about the campaigns that he has fought are endless.
The imitation, described by Ulysses, that Patroclus does of him is obviously malicious & exaggerated but there is, of course, a basis of truth in it. He, certainly, 'hems' & 'strokes his beard' continually
He, probably, also does

//

a certain amount of clearing of his throat when he talks & undoubtly showers of spit fly out of his mouth.
I sat next to a most distinguished & charming old gentleman the other day at lunch & I was literally covered with spit & small bits of half eaten food by the end of the meal. Nestor is like that.

He has been very wise & intelligent, but I'm afraid we have to confess that by now he is a

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bit of a bore.
Of course the difficulty for the actor is to be a bore without boring the audience.
Actually we should be delighted by the old bird & find him touching & lovable if rather silly.

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…

Ulysses 47 Leo McKern

He is the brains of the Greek Army. Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Not a fighter. He is the only person in the play who reads a book!
Like most Staff Officers he really despises the fighting soldiers and they despise him.
His plot to get Achilles to fight again does'nt work. In fact the only effect it has is to make Ajax as bad as Achilles. He is a great talker & has an ability to convince

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However he is a brilliant speaker & to hear him at it should be fascinating.
His voice is strong & vital & he has the capacity to use it very effectively.
He is, certainly, never dull or insipid.
He has an interesting appearance but there is something a bit crafty, cunning & sinister in his expression.

…

//

Thersites 35 Tony Britton

It is difficult to decide how old this man is, but I put him at thirty-five because I think that makes him old enough to be as vile as he is & young enough to be as vigorous as he is.
He is a clown of War. A diseased, embittered, cowardly failure, but with a sharp & calculating tongue. To me he is like me of those horrible buzzing blue-bottles that breed out of rotting flesh.

//

He is palluted [sic] himself & tries to pollute everyone with whom he comes in contact.

Not a single thing that he says is kind, pleasant, or helpful.
He is the worst sort of debased soldier. Grumbling, de-bunking, dirty, diseased & frightened for his own skin.

However he has the capacity to say things which are true & wickedly amusing.

He is the sort of man – not so uncommon – in the Army – who tells

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filthy stories that make other men laugh at the time, though afterwards they feel disgusted & depressed.
He should look horrible. Dirty & deformed;
a sort of human monkey. If Troilus is the representation of what is noble in a human being then Thersites is the epitome of what is base.

//

Ajax 28 James Grout

He has the arrogance, stupidity, conceit & childishness of a champion boxer.
He is a great ox of a man with the brains of a peacock.
He is really ridiculous, even when dressed in full armour, but he can certainly fight, in the way that an elephant can fight, in spite of looking absurd.
The part must not be caricatured. He must

//

take himself desperately seriously; it is this very fact that makes him so comical.
There is not, really, much to say about him because there is so little in him.
Thersites puts it rightly, though crudely, when he says that Ajax "has not so much wit as will stop the eye of Helen's needle, for whom he comes to fight"

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Achilles 30 Keith Michell

He is an extraordinary & monstrous character as represented in this play it would be fatal to get him mixed up in one's mind with the Achilles of ~~mythical~~ the legends.
In this play there is nothing God-like about him. In fact he seems to be rather like the very worst type of Star actor who has had a row with the management & refuses to appear on the stage, but sits in his

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dressing-room with his boy friend, drinking champagne & making fun of everyone.
(I'm glad to say I have never met such an actor!) His conceit is abominable. He never says anything that is'nt concerning himself. He has no interest in anyone else, except Patroclus, & that is a nasty business. He does nothing during the entire play that is of assistance to the War effort except the manoeuvre of the murder of Hector in the most

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cold-blooded & cowardly way.
I really ca'nt see one good trait in his character, & I feel that Shakespeare has, purposely, taken the greatest of all the legendary heroes & turned him into a despicable & perverted thug.
In appearance he should look extraordinary.
Handsome, massive, arrogant & terribly cruel. A moody tiger. His intelligence is hardly better than Ajax's, but there must be a

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compelling power about his personality, otherwise it will be impossible to understand what all the fuss is about. He is the Hydrogen Bomb of the Greek army but he refuses to explode. There is absolutely nothing heroic about this man except in his own estimation of himself. We must feel, of course, that if he fought it would be with the fierceness & magnificence of a tiger.

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Patroclus 24 Jerome Willis

One of those effeminate young men who use their physical attractions to get themselves attached to a great personality. He amuses & entertains Achilles but has a very bad affect on him. Patroclus has no responsibility for anything, ~~himself~~ & no respect for anyone except his friend Achilles, & I don't think he really cares much for him.
The way he calls Achilles "Sweet" is

//

really awful.
He should look attractive in a debauched way. Very conscious of his appearance. Weak, impertinent & spiteful. I think he is continually sitting about & sniggering. The sort of young man who makes fun of religion, marriage, discipline & anything else that is serious & profound.

//

Helen 25 Barbara Jefford

The War is on account of her & yet we only see her – veiled – for a moment on her way to the Eastern Tower with Queen Hecuba & then for one short scene in the Palace.
But what an amazing scene that is.
The characterisation of Helen is almost as extraordinary & startling as that of Achilles. It is as though Shakespeare says "This war is being waged for the sake of

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one woman's honour & when you see her you will realise that there is nothing honourable about her".
I think that she is slightly drunk in the Palace scene. Nobody could be quite so inane unless they were.
She spends, almost, the entire scene bantering with old Pandarus.

She implores him to sing her a song, knowing, very well, he kind of songs he is likely to know.
We learn that it is

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she who keeps Paris from the battle front, & finally one feels she is going to get some sort of new sensation by using her exquisite fingers to undo Hector's armour & take it off. Apparently the dust, sweat, & blood of battle are enjoyable to her so long as her beautiful lover is not in danger of mutilation or disfiguration. She is ravishing to look at. Like alabaster. And dressed superbly, but extremely simply, in white & gold. Her hair is pure gold in colour.

//

How fantastic & tragic that all these men suffer the hardships & dangers of War for this useless, stupid adulteress.
She, obviously, only thinks of one thing, ever. She calls it love but it is nothing more than lust.

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…

Appendix 3 – Selected extracts from *Othello* notebooks, discussing Characters, Setting and "The Play"

G. Byam Shaw.
SMT

20 Apr 56

//

Othello The Play

I don't want to waste a lot of time talking about this play, because we shall need every minute we can get for rehearsals. The number of hours we have for rehearsing is considerably less than you had for 'Hamlet' or 'The Merchant' because you could rehearse at night. But I think it is important right from the start for you to know roughly what I have in mind about the characters & what I am aiming at in the production.

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I think it is tremendously important to remember that the main characters are all soldiers or women who are married to, or living with, soldiers.
I include Roderigo in this category because I think he becomes a solider in order to follow Desdemona to Cyprus.
And they are not only in the army, they are on active service, during the main part of the play. There should be an atmosphere of tention [sic] & state of emergency (as in War) from the moment

//

Cassio brings the news to Othello that he is wanted at the Senate.
The domestic tragedy which is the core of the play happens, very largely, because of the unusual circumstances in which the characters are placed.

Othello doesn't go to Cyprus for his honeymoon he goes there to defend the island from a Turkish invasion & his wife has to get the Duke's permission to go with him.
Emilia is appointed by Othello to attend on his wife. She is not

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Desdemona's lady's maid or life long friend.
Roderigo goes to Cyprus to be near Desdemona but has to disguise himself as a soldier to do so. The reason why Othello cashiers his Lieutenant on the spot is, chiefly, because the island is in a state of unrest due to the invasion scare & because Cassio has attacked & wounded the Cypriot Commander, which might easily cause a mutiny. It is the exceptional circumstances that make it possible for Iago to carry out

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his schemes.
If Othello, Desdemona & Cassio were together in Venice with no responsibilities Iago would have no chance of succeeding.
If this is not made clear to the audience then I feel that Othello is in danger of appearing to be a fool & that, of course, would ruin the story & the tragedy.

So let us bear that in mind so strongly that the audience is continually aware of the background against which the action takes place.

//

It is, also, I think important to realise that most of the play takes place abroad, in the East, & Percy Harris has helped to make this clear both in the sets & costumes; but it must also, be acted.

Most of the play consists of scenes between only a few characters, very often only two, but I think it is valuable in two Scenes to have a large number of people on the stage.
They are the Senate Scene & the Cyprus Scene.
In the Cyprus Scene the

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Cypriots appear three times. First on Othello[‘s] entrance then when they are summoned by the Herald & finally when the fight starts between Cassio & Montano. I want to get the feeling that the Cypriots are extremely tough & highly excitable people, & that it is only the authority & personality of Othello that stops a very dangerous situation from getting completely out of hand.

In the Cyprus scene I want to get the impression of a mass of people not of a number of individuals. That is why I am using

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everyone I can.

And of course to achieve the effect of a crowd of people everyone must Act to the full.

No one could read this play carefully & not realise that Shakespeare has done some strange things with regard to the time in which the action is meant to take place.
I wo’nt go into it now because the instances of discrepancies in time are too obvious & too numerous for anyone to miss, but I do beg

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of you all not to worry about it or to attempt to find some solution of a realistic kind, because I am quite sure there is’nt one, & you will only waste time in trying to solve a problem that is no problem to an audience if the play is properly acted. All that can be said, I think, is that when Shakespeare wants the action to go quickly he uses one Time & when he wants to stretch out the action he uses another.

//

This is the most domestic of all Shakespeare’s tragedies.

We must find the right balance between domestic drama & great tragedy. The absolute truth of relationship between the various characters & the necessary size of interpretation.
This play can't be played like Ibsen or like Grand Opera.

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The rhythm of the play must be generally fast & urgent so that we can get full affect [sic] out of the changes of pace & pauses. If the general direction of the play is allowed to meander then we shall lose our grip on the audience.

It is absolutely essential that Part I should be kept moving along at a brisk pace.

The elopement, followed by the invasion scene, followed by the departure for Cyprus, followed by the arrival at Cyprus, the drinking scene,

//

& the brawl which leads to the cashiering of Cassio.

We are then set for Iago to start on his destruction of Othello's love for Desdemona which is the heart of the play.

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<u>Sets & Costumes</u> Designer Margaret Harris

As you can see from the model we play the play in a semi-permanent set.

The permanent part of the set is in front of the house tabs & should look like part of the theatre & not like scenery. The balconies in the assemblies, with stair-cases leading down

from them are, of course, valuable in the action but also help to concentrate the main action downstage centre.

//

In parts 1&2 both lifts are down & in the Cyprus scene & the whole of Part II entrances & exits are made up & down steps at the back.

This is done to give the feeling that the Castle is built on a cliff overlooking the harbour. It also has the advantage of further confining the stage space & pushing the action of the play downstage.
We don't want an enormous stage space for any scene in the play.

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The costumes are based on Italian costumes around 1570 which was the approximate date of the attempted invasion of Cyprus by the Turks.

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…

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Fights arranged by Bernard Hepton

The fight between Cassio & Montano & the brawl that starts because of it are very important & will need a lot of work.

The only other sword fight is when Cassio kills Roderigo [sic] & that is a very easy business.

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…

Glen Byam Shaw

SMT

21 Apr 56.

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Othello

Characters

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Roderigo 24 John Ganley

We must believe in Roderigo as a human being. We must be able to recognise in him the sort of weak decadent character who would be so madly attracted to Desdemona physically & so over-sexed & mentally under-developed that he could be taken in by Iago & used by him in the most blatant way to achieve his own ends. Roderigo takes himself desperately seriously & thinks he is an attractive fellow.
His relationship to Iago is

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that of a rabbit to a snake. There is no doubt that Iago has an almost mesmeric affect on him & any effort that Roderigo makes to break away is always overcome by Iago. He is very impressionable & moody. He can be utterly depressed or highly excited & can, under the influence of Iago, change from one to the other in a very short space of time. He lacks mental stability & balance.
When we see him first in Venice he is richly dressed & trying to look romantically attractive. Then Iago persuades him to sell his estate, become

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a soldier & follow Desdemona to Cyprus.

The poor fool becomes a sort of batman to Iago & is consequently even more in his power. As a soldier he does'nt cut a very imposing figure but he continues to try & make the best of his appearance even with a beard & in uniform.

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Iago 28 Emlyn Williams

What Iago appears to be on the surface is a tough, blunt, straight-forward soldier. A man who has been in the Army since he was a boy, & someone who has enormous physical energy & self confidence.
An honest-to-God disciplinarian respected by the troops & trusted by his superior Officers. Attractive in a coarse gutty way, with a good heartedness that makes him want to help anyone in trouble.
That is the man who is known to everyone as

//

"the honest Iago".
Hidden behind the 'honest' exterior is a nature that is tortured by every form of jealousy. Iago has reached the stage when he wants to torture himself. It is like some terrible, fascinating & agonising drug.
To think of his wife in bed with Othello or Cassio is a ghastly & disgusting pleasure to him; & having imagined it it is even more pleasurable to plan how he will be revenged. He has a grudge against the whole world. He hates everyone & everything.

//

There is no love, beauty, friendship, loyalty or truth for him, everything is lust, ugliness, deceit, cruelty & jealousy. The subtle evilness of his real nature is infinite & beyond description. What is vital to the story is that only two people in the play have the slightest idea of this real nature until after Desdemona is dead, & they are both too simple minded to fully understand that he is as terrible as he actually is. Furthermore they are both fascinated & frightened by him.

I mean Roderigo & Emilia.

//

If Iago appears to be a brute or a villain to anyone else in the play* then the whole story becomes nonsense. Shakespeare has given Iago full opportunities to show his real nature to the audience, but it must be completely hidden from the other characters with the partial exception of the two that I have mentioned.

*before Desdemona is dead

//

Brabantio 65 Anthony Nicholls

He is an important & greatly respected member of the Senate. There is nothing senile, stupid or doddering about him. It is, of course, the most appalling shock to him to discover that his only child has secretly married the Moor. We know at the end of the play that his grief over the marriage has killed him, & his anger & resentment against Othello, who has been his friend, must be very real. He is certainly not an irate & blustering old bore but a great Nobleman who loves his daughter

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devotedly, even if he doesn't understand her.
To him it is inconceivable that Desdemona could take in love with a bleak man & he truly believes that Othello must have used some drug or oriental magic to inveigle her into marrying him.
When it is proved that this is not the case it, literally, breaks his heart.

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…

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Othello 42 Harry Andrews

As he himself says he has been a fighting soldier ever since he was a boy. We should recognise in him a man who has lived almost entirely out of doors.
He is not a politician or a diplomat, he is a soldier.
He has lived in continual dangers & has the strength & nobility of nature of a man who has been constantly in the presence of death.
There is no craft or cunning in him.
The thing that fascinates

//

Desdemona is his detachment, mystery, strength of personality & pride in his profession. She is happy to be the wife of a great Warrior. They love each other passionately & profoundly but they do'nt understand each other at all ultimately. Iago hates Othello more than anyone else because he ca'nt help respecting him, both as a man & as a soldier.
Othello is like a great oak tree & it is the supreme triumph for Iago to gnaw through the roots & see the tree crash to the ground. It seems to me that the most essential qualities

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for us to recognise in Othello are natural authority & inherent power of personality. A self imposed restraint & control covering a nature which is fundamentally primitive & tremendously passionate. I imajine [sic?] that Othello has had very little experience of women.
Physical love is a sacred thing to him & I think that it is important that the audience should realise that although the love that exists between Othello & Desdemona is based on the admiration for each other it is of a wonderfully physical kind.*

*We know that the Venetians always had foreigners to Command their armies but for them to appoint a Moor as Commander in Chief shows what a tremendous reputation Othello has as a soldier.

//

Cassio 26 Basil Hoskins

Handsome, attractive, well-bred & also very much a soldier. In spite of what Iago says he is, obviously, not just a Staff Officer, for Desdemona reminds Othello that Cassio has shared dangers with him & we may be quite sure that Othello would never appoint an Officer as his Lieutenant who had no experience of War.
Othello is very attached to Cassio. Note how he calls him by his first name. There is a sympathy & trust between them of a very real kind.
This, of course, is hateful

//

to Iago.
Desdemona is also very fond of Cassio & enjoys being with him.
He knows how to behave with women of all kinds. He has tact, sensitivity good manners & easy charm. He can't help pulling Iago's leg at times which is a very dangerous thing to do, though he doesn't realise it. He is not a very strong character.
As soon as he arrives in Cyprus he picks up an attractive little tart for his mistakes.
Although he knows that he has a very weak head he is persuaded by Iago to

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drink in spite of the fact that Othello has told him to keep a careful watch on the Guard.
He is the sort of man who finds it very difficult to say "No".
I think that he is, perhaps, a little in love with Desdemona, but she is in no way physically attracted to him, though she is very fond of him, & in any case Cassio would never dream of making love to Othello's wife.

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Duke of Venice 55 Mark Dignam

He is treated as a Royal person.
Through him we should recognise the importance & magnificence of the Venetian State.
The atmosphere in the Council Chamber is, of course, very tense. The Senators have been summoned in the middle of the night to attend a special Council meeting.
Messengers are continually arriving with news of the Turkish fleet. But the Duke & Senators must behave like men of great dignity & importance

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& not like silly old parrots

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…

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Gratiano 50 Toby Robertson

He is Brabantio's younger brother. He is also a Senator. I think it is good to try to establish the relationship between him & Brabantio before he appears at Cyprus towards the end of the play.
He must have some strength as a character otherwise it could appear to be rather absurd when he is told by Montano to guard the door against Othello in the last scene.
I think of him as a quiet dignified man of late middle-age.

//

Lodovico 30 Andrew Fauldes

He is Desdemona's cousin & is the Duke's A.D.C.
We know from what Desdemona & Emilia say that he is good-looking, attractive & that "he speaks well".
I have put him into the Senate scene in attendance on the Duke so that when he arrives at Cyprus we have already seen him & associate him with the Duke.
He looks very fine.
Beautifully dressed & very aristocratic. He must also have considerable authority as the representative of the Duke. This is very important for the end of the play.

//

Desdemona 22 Margaret Johnston

Desdemona is not a shy simple girl.
Her father may think she is but nothing that she either says or does shows it. We may be quite sure that it was Desdemona who insisted on the elopement, knowing that her father would never consent to her marrying Othello & it is Desdemona who asks the Duke & Senators to allow her to go to the War with her husband. Othello says to Iago :-
"tis not to make me jealous
To say my wife is fair,
feeds well, loves company
Is free of speech, sings, plays &

//

dances well".
That doesn't sound like a timid, shy little girl to me! No; I think everything points to the fact that she is a young woman of outstanding determination & spirit. She is deeply & passionately in love & nothing, not even her affection for her father, is going to stand in the way of her marrying Othello; & having married him she is determined to live with him as his wife. We know that she has already turned down some eligible young Venetians but she has done so, not as her father thinks out of shyness or modesty, but

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out of boredom.
For a demure & pretty little thing to be treated as Othello treats Desdemona, once his jealousy has been aroused would be sad & pitiable, but for a young woman of beauty, breeding & passionate spirit to be treated like that is appalling; & that is what it should be.
There is not one grain of self-pity in her.
She never, for an instant – even during the most terrible scenes they have together – regrets having married him & she defends him & is loyal to him till the last moment of her life.

//

Her confidence in herself & in Othello is complete.
To see that confidence being gradually destroyed & this woman of beauty & refinement reduced to uncontrollable tears is agonising, for she has wonderful courage & she does'nt cry easily.
She weeps when Othello hits her in the face not because of the physical pain but because her pride in him & her pride in herself is terribly wounded.
By nature she is gay & energetic, as Othello says. She has an easy, natural way of showing affection

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when she feels it.
This, of course, can be misunderstood once Othello doubts her faithfulness. It would be utterly impossible for her to be disloyal to Othello in any way, & although she lies to him about the handkerchief I think she does so because he is, obviously, very up-set, & because she is determined that she will find it again; so the lie is really only playing for time.
If only she & Othello knew & understood each other as well as they love each other all would be well, but that is far from being the case.

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The differences of race, nationality, age & experience set an invisible gulf between them that gets wider & wider once their confidence in each other is shaken.
Iago does everything he can to broaden the gap, till finally there is no confidence left between them & they are like strangers to each other. Desdemona is beautiful in the way she looks, moves & speaks.
She should have the affect [sic] on other people of sunshine.

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Montano 36 Ron Haddrick

Montano & all his Officers & troops are Cypriots & look quite different to the Venetians. Montano is, obviously, a soldier of considerable importance & reputation. He is in command of the island until Othello arrives.
Othello treats him as an equal & it is very important that the audience realise what his position is so that it can be understood why Othello is almost compelled to cashier Cassio after he has wounded Montano in

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their fight together, & why it is difficult for Othello to re-instate Cassio when Desdemona asks him to do so. The brawl is exactly the sort of incident that can create bad feeling between two regiments, particularly if the troopers belong to different nations.

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1st Montano Officer Peter Cellier
2nd Montano Officer Rex Robinson
3rd Montano Officer Robert Arnold

Three Officers of Montano's regiment. They are extremely gutty young men, & good soldiers. Their first loyalty is, of course, to their own Commander, though they recognise Othello as the Commander-in-chief & Governor of the island.

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Emilia 30 Diana Churchill

I imajine [sic] that she is slightly older than her husband. It seems to me that the most important thing to remember about her is that she is Iago's wife, & that she is not Desdemona's friend nor even her servant when the play starts.
Iago is told by Othello to let his wife attend on Desdemona & look after her during the voyage to Cyprus.
During the action of the play Emilia becomes deeply attached to Desdemona, but up to

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the moment when she realises that Iago is an inhuman beast she remains, first & foremost, loyal to him.
I think she is desperately in love with him.
"I nothing, but to please his fantasy"
(i.e. his 'love thoughts'.)

She has a strongly passionate nature. We know that by the way she behaves in the last scene when we see the true Emilia for the first time.
I think of her as a peasant woman. Handsome, strong & rather slow witted. She seldom speaks but

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when she does she says some very true things in a rather coarse way. There is nothing vulgar about her, but she is used to being with soldiers & words like 'belch', 'whore' or 'strumpet' come naturally to her.

What she lacks in intelligence, refinement & sensitivity she makes up for in good-heartedness & courage.
She has, obviously, been through hell with Iago & his jealousies.
She has only to look at another man to be told in the crudest terms, by Iago, that she has been

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to bed with him.
But, as I have said, Iago loves to torture himself with such imaginings & pretend to Emilia that he really believes them, whereas he really knows that the only person she wants to sleep with is him & he is physically bored with her & always after new 'sport'.

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<u>Cypriots</u>

Men

1st	Cypriot	Toby Robertson
2nd	"	John MacGregor
3rd	"	David William
4th	"	Ronald Wallace
5th	"	Gordon Gardner
6th	"	John Scott
7th	"	John Hayward

Women

1st	Cypriot	June Brown
2nd	"	Prunella Scales
3rd	"	Dilys Hamlett
4th	"	Virginia Maskell
5th	"	Greta Watson
6th	"	Stephanie Bidmead

They are the inhabitants of the island &should look fierce & tough

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People who can get excited very easily & who could be extremely dangerous if they got out of hand. They are very important if we are to get the right atmosphere of un-rest on the island caused by the invasion scare.

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Othello's soldiers

Herald	Peter Palmer
Trumpeter	Stanley Wheeler
1st Soldier	Barry Warren
2nd "	Derek Mayhew
3rd "	Thane Bettany

They are Venetians & look completely different to Montano's troops. They are very good soldiers.

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Bianca 19 Jennette Sterke

She is a very silly but very attractive little tart.
She has fallen in love with Cassio & is rather an embarrassment to him in consequence, because she follows him about & makes scenes unless he goes to visit her continually. She is like a little cat, one moment soft & purring the next spitting & showing its claws.
She has only one idea in her head & that is sex. Anything else bores her to tears. She is terribly jealous of Cassio, particularly as she knows all about men

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& infidelity.

Her appearance is unmistakeable. Physically attractive in a professional way; & the way she walks & moves her body is charming but not at all lady-like.

There is something amusing about her. It is impossible not to laugh when she gets angry.

Appendix 4 – List of productions directed by Glen Byam Shaw in Stratford-upon-Avon

1952

Coriolanus, opened 13th March

As You Like It, opened 29th April

1953

Richard III, opened 24th March

Antony and Cleopatra, opened 28th April (transferred to London 10th January 1954, followed by European Tour)

1954

Romeo and Juliet, opened 27th April

Troilus and Cressida, opened 13th July

1955

Macbeth, opened 7th April

The Merry Wives of Windsor, opened 12th July

1956

Othello, opened 29th May

1957

As You Like It, opened 2nd April

Julius Caesar, opened 28th May

1958

Romeo and Juliet, opened 8th April

Hamlet, opened 3rd June

(Both productions subsequently toured to Leningrad and Moscow later that year)

1959

King Lear, opened 18th August