1992:
SHAW AND
THE LAST
HUNDRED
YEARS

Edited by
Bernard F. Dukore

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Note to contributors and subscribers. *SHAW*’s perspective is Bernard Shaw and his milieu—its personalities, works, relevance to his age and ours. As “his life, work, and friends”—the subtitle to a biography of G.B.S.—indicates, it is impossible to study the life, thought, and work of a major literary figure in a vacuum. Issues and men, economics, politics, religion, theater and literature and journalism—the entirety of the two half-centuries the life of G.B.S. spanned was his assumed province. *SHAW*, published annually, welcomes articles that either explicitly or implicitly add to or alter our understanding of Shaw and his milieu. Address all communications concerning manuscript contributions (in 3 copies) to Fred D. Crawford, General Editor, *SHAW*, 1034 Hickory Street, Lansing, MI 48912-1711. Subscription correspondence should be addressed to *SHAW*, Penn State Press, Suite C, Barbara Building, 820 North University Drive, University Park, PA 16802. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed but will be returned only if return postage is provided. In matters of style *SHAW* recommends the *MLA Style Sheet*. 
SHAW

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THE THEATRICAL POLITICS OF ELIZABETH ROBINS AND BERNARD SHAW

The relationship between Bernard Shaw's theatrical career and that of the lesser-known Elizabeth Robins tells us a great deal about Shaw's commitments to the social plays of Henrik Ibsen, to the priorities of his own career, and to feminist issues. The reputation of the American-born actress, most widely known for her Ibsen heroines in the 1890s and her suffrage politics in the early twentieth century, remains largely marginalized.¹ In some cases, Robins has been misrepresented by the biographers of the men she influenced: William Archer, Oscar Wilde, Henry James, and Bernard Shaw. Shavian biographers and scholars, contentious as they may be, can agree upon one assumption: that Elizabeth Robins was not one of Shaw's sexual conquests. Neither Shaw nor Robins ever hints at the possibility; indeed, Shaw's February 1893 letter to her, dramatizing her "rejection" of his offer to interview her to publicize her production of The Master Builder, along with his several references to her as "St. Elizabeth," have led to caricatures such as Michael Holroyd's description of Robins in the first volume of his Shaw biography, in which he portrays her as uncaring about her husband George Parks, spiteful of and disgusted by men.²

In a brief sentence, Holroyd grossly distorts Robins's marriage to fellow actor Parks. It was not, in fact, a marriage of "several months," but of two and a half years, 1885–87; and Robins was not taking "care to see little of him," but was kept from her husband by their Boston Museum Theatre manager, who first placed them in separate touring companies and then, when he found out about the marriage, refused to renew Robins's contract. Finally, George Parks himself kept from Robins the news that she might have had an opportunity to appear with him in a
different touring company. Parks knew he was financially strapped, but he expected her to give up her career. Her professional goal and long-time ambition was a life dedicated to the theater. The most serious dispute they may have had (and evidence is slight) is that Robins may have aborted their child. When Parks first insisted he could not live without her, Elizabeth's grandmother reminded her that for her to marry would risk perpetuating the family's mental illness. Elizabeth's aunts and uncles on both sides of the family were weak of constitution. Her mother and father were first cousins, and her teen years were haunted by the decline in her mother's condition.

Parks's suicide was hardly a "convenience" for Robins, as Holroyd and others tend to portray it. In the months before his suicide, his voice failed him; he downed doses of probably addictive medicine; and Robins was called to her family in a remote settlement in southern Florida, where her younger sister had died of malaria. Elizabeth contracted malaria, too. But as she was recuperating, she persevered in gaining interviews with both Edwin Booth and Lawrence Barrett, who hired her for their touring company in the fall. Robins's diary entries show that she was devastated by Parks's death and that she was soothed by dreams of their intimacy.

Holroyd editorializes that Robins "felt convinced that all men were potential rapists." He offsets this with "Shaw was determined that woman was the huntress and man her prey." He continues, "Each was a poor specimen of the other's beliefs." Perhaps Shaw would have liked every woman he flirted with to pursue him, but Holroyd distorts each writer's stereotype of the opposite sex. By contrast, Margot Peters qualifies Shaw's womanizing during the 1890s in her essay "As Lonely as God." She suggests that Shaw's "puritanism caused many women pain and himself, after the brief rapture, only disillusion," that he "longed for a sexless state," and that he "sought and attracted women, yet evaded them." In fact, Shaw's and Robins's attitudes about sex grew to be strikingly similar. The less anxiety they had about sexual attractions, the more committed and successful they became in their theatrical endeavors.

Robins's manner quite likely projected the appearance of imperiousness, self-protection, and perhaps frigidity. She had been propositioned during a trip through Central America and fictionalized an account of this almost-seduction in one of her novels. To characterize her as a shrill man-hater, however, is to distort the personality she felt tragically trapped by. In her analysis of her behavior written in the latter part of 1892, she admitted that her "resistance" was unnatural: "Why do I resist so desperately?" She answers her own question a page later: "It is not I that do it. It is some dead ancestress looking tradition laden thro' my eyes—some old ascetic—some Puritan or maybe my own Grandmother who reared me
and whose spirit walks again in me. . . .” Rather than pride herself on the fact that “No woman ever had greater power of control with such capacity for Passion as I,” Robins deplored her resistance: “I grow sad-eyed and sick. . . . There are times when every fibre of my body cries out for a satisfying of the hunger and thirst that are born of long abstaining. I lie o’ nights in a furnace here in my bed & I curse my narrow pride and shallow doubts & say ‘to-morrow I will yield—to-morrow—to-morrow.’”

Robins regretted most of all that those who followed the call of the flesh seemed to be men and women whose intellectual and artistic potentials were strengthened, while the “asylums [were] filled with the wrecks of [those] who have won this sorry battle of resistance & lost themselves.” The hopeful actress may have suppressed—but could not have escaped—the facts of her mother’s institutionalization after too many pregnancies, too much chloroform in childbirth, the deaths of a daughter and a son in their infancies, and years of growing estrangement from Elizabeth’s father. Thus Robins feared she would grow old, resisting. She had recommitted herself to abstinence by the time she was most pestered by Shaw.

Shaw would, before the end of the decade, devote himself to a celibate marriage and his literary talents. After his marriage to Charlotte Payne-Townshend in 1898, his dramatic art matured—in sharp contrast to the ways that Shaw’s behavior with women had affected his upstart dramatic career of the 1890s. This dichotomy cannot be more pointedly illustrated than by examining how Shaw changed in his dealings with Robins. His 1890s confrontations with Robins over Ibsen productions turned to enthusiastic support for one of the most explicitly feminist plays to be produced in England, Robins’s Votes for Women, performed in 1907 at the Court Theatre under the direction of Shaw’s good friend, Harley Granville Barker.

Both Robins’s play and Shaw’s development from dramatic critic to playwright are indebted to the impact Ibsen’s dramaturgy had upon them. Their relationships to the various campaigns to stage Ibsen during the 1890s are documented more from Shaw’s viewpoint than from Robins’s. The long evolution of Robins’s feminism is best displayed in the fiction she wrote about the London theater of the 1890s, most of which remains unpublished. Her careful record-keeping and her long correspondence with the musician and writer Florence Bell reveal just how multifaceted was her life during the 1890s. If we fail to understand that many of her most ambitious acting projects were unproduced, that she secretly wrote plays and fiction, that actor-managers courted her talents, or that she was as much the inspiration for a national theater as Shaw’s Dark Lady of the Sonnets, then we miss the importance of the formative events in her life to her later popularity as a suffrage spokeswoman.

Although in print she merely acknowledged that the impact of Hedda
Gabler on her career was artistic rather than political, the role was a defining moment in her feminism and the production a landmark in the evolution of modern drama. Her performance as Hedda in April 1891 influenced Shaw tremendously. He complimented her at the time, saying that he had “never had a more tremendous sensation in a theatre than that which began when everybody saw that the pistol shot was coming in the end.” Robins was irritated when Shaw took it upon himself to advise her that the play made no sense when she omitted the lines referring to Hedda’s pregnancy. Perhaps Shaw’s surprised discovery of how touchy she could be over something so intimate marked his first misreading of her. By June, he had turned his short and modest paper for the Fabian Society into the lengthy Quintessence of Ibsenism. The book was compelled, he explained in the Preface, because “the sensation created by the experiment of Elizabeth Robins and Marion Lea with Hedda Gabler [had] started a frantic newspaper controversy.” Gradually, his wit as a theatrical critic led to his new agenda: turning his social views into dramatized entertainment of the sort that he felt Ibsen had only half achieved. Much of Shaw’s immense value as a dramatist is that he gave his characters such extreme positions, which scandalized theatregoers and shocked the censors. Even though his new women and daring social positions tested the waters of change, many of his characters’ outrageous agendas are diffused by a cleverly romantic denouement. By the time he exerted his control over the newly re-formed Independent Theatre in 1895–96, Robins knew that his theatrical politics consisted largely of his own self-interests; to be precise, he tried to manipulate the management of the Independent Theatre so that they would be compelled to produce his own play, Candida. This self-serving air clashed severely with Robins’s idea of a theater. In her as yet unpublished first novella, The Coming Woman, Robins in 1892 had stressed the ideal of collaborative dedication to a more artistic theater: one with fewer commercial priorities, and in which the management was neither mercenary, nor centered on the talents of the leading actor, nor exploitative of women.

Shaw may have had “designs” upon the Independent Theatre, but that was half the conflict when it came to the dispute over its production of Ibsen’s Little Eyolf. On 1 January 1895, Elizabeth Robins wrote to her friend Florence Bell, “Janet Achurch’s letter of this a.m. decides things; she gives up a princely salary in Australia & all kinds of luxuries and glories for my bare statement that if I produce Little Eyolf she shall do Rita!” Rita, the voluptuous wife of Alfred Allmers, undergoes several transformations as she deals with her husband’s new asceticism, the death by drowning of their child, and the counteraccusations they hurl at each other in their grief. On top of this, Allmers learns from his supposed half-sister Asta that their bond is not biological; this permits each
to think of the closeness they shared in childhood as unfulfilled passion. As Allmers reaches for what could have been, now that he is sure his love for his wife is dead, Asta reinforces the decorum of their relationship by going off with a man whose love she can trust, leaving Rita and Alfre to grope for some sort of reconciliation. As sure as Robins was that Achurch, London’s first Nora Helmer, should play Rita, others knew that Robins would be perfectly cast as Asta. Twenty-one months after Achurch’s pledge to perform with Robins, this significant Ibsen play was still unproduced. Although there are a number of reasons for this, one of the largest complications was Shaw himself.

In mid-December 1895, Dorothy Leighton brought to Robins an Independent Theatre circular which, Robins reported to Bell, “she won’t let me see but from which she reads me elegant extracts.” Leighton and Achurch’s husband, the actor Charles Charrington, were now coproducers. The announcement that the Independent Theatre was being reorganized as a stock company and was planning to produce *Little Eyolf* as its first venture was put in language Robins found excessive. The circular assumed, moreover, that Robins would participate in the “grand joining of forces” to stage Ibsen. Robins guessed why Leighton would not show her the circular: “I saw Bernard Shaw’s handwriting on the margin.” In fact, Shaw had drafted the circular for the reorganization of the Independent Theatre. Robins went on to confirm her hunch that Leighton was sent by Shaw to convince her to play Asta and that if she did not agree, the Independent could not call their effort a “grand consolidation.”

At the same time, however, Shaw had ulterior motives for wanting to see *Little Eyolf* staged. Shaw had written *Candida* specifically for Janet Achurch, for whom his infatuation is well documented, and he wanted her to perform the title role. He knew that other Independent Theatre enthusiasts would look on such a production as self-serving if he used Achurch before she performed the role that much of the London theater world was waiting for her to play. On 18 February 1896, Shaw insisted to publisher William Heinemann, who controlled the stage rights of *Little Eyolf*, that the £400 that the Independent held must either be spent on *Little Eyolf* or “on me—ME—moi qui vous écrit.” Heinemann saw this as Shaw’s attempt to get *Little Eyolf* out of the way so that his own play could be produced. This caused Heinemann to withdraw the play. On 26 February 1896, the day after Heinemann sent his refusal to Shaw, Robins reported to Bell, “I think there’s no doubt J. A. [Janet Achurch] and the Independent Theatre have lost *Little Eyolf* after all. If so they’ve Shaw to thank.” Soon Shaw was spreading the rumor that Robins planned to produce the play herself in the fall.

When fall came and Shaw met her in the street, he claimed Robins was
"sitting on the copyright of Little Eyolf," as she described the exchange to Florence Bell (1 September 1896). Robins also reported that he said to her, "every human soul he knew took that view of my attitude: that I didn't care about doing it myself and wouldn't let anyone else do it." Perhaps Robins's response was just what Shaw wanted; she resolved to "show the few who cared that the case was otherwise." As she continued in her letter to Bell, she formulated plans to raise a subscription fund for independent productions of both Little Eyolf and Mariana. If this effort succeeded, she declared, "We have only to go on steadily and doggedly from this beginning to a kind of little theatre for the Minority. ..." In a sense, Robins herself effected the "consolidation of forces" to promote Ibsen, whereas Shaw, working through the attempts of Leighton and Charrington to revitalize the Independent Theatre, had not succeeded.

In his published reviews of Little Eyolf, Shaw is critical of the replacement of Janet Achurch by Mrs. Patrick Campbell when a commercial offer by a theatrical syndicate extended the production beyond the special matinees Robins had produced. Documents in the Robins Collection dispute Michael Holroyd's statement that Robins was at fault for the cast change, that she "quickly passed on the facts and figures [of the Syndicate's offers] to Mrs. Pat, enabling her to underbid Janet for the lead."16 Holroyd failed to apply the warning of Margot Peters: "The trouble with Bernard Shaw is that we always believe what he says."17 Shaw was involved in creating the character of others as much as that of himself.

Robins had written to Florence Bell that Shaw was a "blunderer of the first order" for commenting in his review of Magda in 1895 that Robins could do better with the part than Mrs. Patrick Campbell had done (6 June 1896). He little realized, she explained, that this made any professional relationship with Campbell close to impossible. In 1897, another of Shaw's reviews mocked the modesty of the noncommercial guidelines of Robins's New Century Theatre production of John Gabriel Borkman: "For my part, I beg the New Century Theatre, when the next Ibsen play is ready for mounting, to apply to me for assistance. If I have a ten-pound note, they shall have it; if not, I can at least lend them a couple of chairs."18 Shaw's insistence on commercial standards no doubt had its place, but the remark brands Robins as unresponsive to the needs of Ibsen's texts. In fact, she deserves credit for inspiring the noncommercial focus of the New Century and for making it important to the movement for a national theater. We have been hoodwinked by a brilliantly dramatic Shaw who used his own theatrical extravagance to characterize Robins as so offended by his flattery that she threatened to shoot him. Closer to the truth is that each was so successful at the counterinsult that neither could acknowledge the true stature of the other's genius.

More than thirty years later, in separate lectures delivered in March
1928 to commemorate the centennial of Ibsen’s birth, Robins and Shaw continued to document their contributions to the Ibsen campaign. Her essay *Ibsen and the Actress* was enthusiastically printed by Leonard Woolf as a Hogarth Press pamphlet and has since been republished. She attended Shaw’s lecture one week after delivering her own. She had a tight and complicated schedule because she had a later appointment at the B.B.C. to broadcast a different Ibsen memoir at 9:15 p.m. She had spent the week writing, cutting, and rehearsing this second essay. She wrote in her diary her response to “the final Ibsen lecture. 5:30 […] Shaw this time; his address is a thing of shreds and patches. Where is Ibsen in all this? I kept saying” (Diary, 19 March 1928). In fact, her own part in the lecture series was the result of Shaw’s plea that she participate.¹⁹ She became inspired by the public’s reaction to *Ibsen and the Actress* and spent years working on longer volumes of her autobiography of her Ibsen years.

Ibsen was not the only subject which Robins and Shaw continued to discuss. He sent her an important acknowledgment of her writing talent when her authorship of the novel *The Open Question* was disclosed in 1899. She had published fiction under the pseudonym C. E. Raimond for a number of years, and he had rightly suspected that she had something to do with the 1893 dramatization of *Alan’s Wife*. This latest work, however, was monumental enough for him to praise her by comparing her directly with George Eliot.²⁰ In his letter, he scolded her for her long pretense as an actress that was “nothing apparently but a very occasional display of a visibly dwindling fancy for the stage.” He warned her that George Eliot had wasted her best talents, and he attacked Robins’s grandly written novel endorsing suicide. “Beware of sensationalism,” he stressed, underscoring his repeated “Beware, beware,” almost as if he could project that he himself would never use his plays to agitate sensationally for any highly charged political issue.

Robins took her author’s career entirely seriously. She wrote the play *Benvenuto Cellini* as if she had never been introduced to Ibsen and were instead pleasing the first actor-manager who hired her, the American James O’Neill, in whose famous melodrama *The Count of Monte Cristo* she performed. She gave the option on *Benvenuto* to Herbert Beerbohm Tree. During the year she waited for him to produce it—he never did—she traveled to Alaska, where she experienced the Nome Gold Rush of 1900 and was reunited with her brothers. From these travels, she wrote two novels important for their contrast between male-centered and female-centered quest narratives. The lingering effects of the typhoid fever she contracted in Alaska made her accept what she had experienced earlier, that she did not have the physical stamina to sustain herself for long-running performances.
Robins did not forgo Shaw’s warning against sensationalism until the confrontational tactics of women agitating for suffrage in Britain led her to challenge the theatrical establishment with a dramatic tract more politically radical than anything Ibsen or Shaw had produced. In the late fall of 1906, she described her work to the leader of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, Millicent Fawcett, as “the first thing I shall have written under the pressure of a strong moral conviction.” Still hopeful that her agreement would lead to actress Gertrude Kingston’s production of the play, Robins sent a draft to Shaw, and she met him on New Year’s Day, 1907. From among Robins’s many consultants—Henry James and J. M. Barrie among them—it was Shaw’s advice that she treasured and put to use. Sandwiched between the first and third acts of her play is a rousing recreation of a Trafalgar Square meeting to promote suffrage. This scene of fiery rhetoric, interspersed with intense heckling—somewhat in the style of the town meeting in Ibsen’s *Enemy of the People*—escalates the intensity of the main characters’ conflicts. The politician Geoffrey Stoner is forced to confront his former lover, Vida Levering, when he agrees to bring his young fiancée, Jean, to the open-air rally. At the moment he discovers that Vida is speaking from the platform, young Jean catches the reaction on his face and knows it is he who earlier abandoned Vida and forced her to abort their child. Jean forces Stoner to make amends for his past betrayal of Vida, who knows she can bargain for his pledge to support suffrage. Instead, she leads him to a true conversion, bringing him to understand the suffering she has endured.

Robins respected Shaw for recognizing the tragic dimension and political impact of her play. From Robins’s letters to Bell and to Kingston, it is clear that Shaw’s approval pleased her greatly. She reported to Bell that Shaw “is very encouraging & will be a great help for I think he’ll come to some of the rehearsals & help with the stage-man[agement] of the act of the meeting—which he declares to be original & amusing. The ‘theme’ he says is very good &—oh 20 things beside that lifted my heart up & sent me spinning” (4 January 1907). Later, she added, “I am now embarked on some heightening of the last act in acc[ordance] with Shaw’s immense opinion of the ‘Stoner drama’ which he declares to be something quite new” (11 January). In a subsequent letter, she underscored the impact of Shaw’s advice by reciting his evaluation: “‘What you have there,’ quoth he, ‘is Greek tragedy not fashionable comedy’” (17 January 1907).

Negotiations between playwright Robins and actress-manager Kingston broke down when Kingston could not promise a prompt production. Shaw probably had a good deal to do with recommending the play to the Court Theatre’s director, Harley Granville Barker, who suggested a new title, altering Robins’s *The Friend of Woman* to *Votes for Women*. Compared
with Shaw's later dramatic uses of the suffrage issue, *Press Cuttings* and *Fanny's First Play*, Robins's *Votes for Women* is a remarkably committed feminist play.

At the height of the stage success of *Votes for Women*, the only play produced of the six she wrote, she proudly acknowledged its triumph by contrasting its "sold out" status to that of the less successful earlier productions of Shaw's plays. She confided to Bell the report of another woman, who had told her that

she was a supporter of Vedrenne-Barker "a regular attendant," always had the same stalls &c & never in her life had seen under that management the "house full" boards out before. I think Shaw *must* have had them, indeed I'm practically sure of it but others say no. *Anyhow, we need 'em!!* (13 April 1907)

Robins's successfully political play committed her wholeheartedly to the suffrage cause and other women's political issues, yet she hardly abandoned her sense of the writer's task as primarily artistic. She refashioned the characters and plot line of *Votes for Women* into a novel that contained reasoned examination of the polarity of men's and women's spheres. The novel's title, *The Convert*, is equally applicable to Vida Levering and Stoner. As in the play, Vida convinces Stoner of the viability of a pro-suffrage position; but the novel is structured to show the months of Vida's own awakening from a skeptical outsider to an impassioned lobbyist for the rights of women. For its details of the early phases of the W.S.P.U.'s impact, before its split with the Labour party, *The Convert* is an important historical novel. It is little wonder that Robins saw Shaw's dramatic evenings as no more than witty entertainment. Her only diary comment on *Misalliance*, for instance—that the play was "a vile affair but full of (Evil) wit"—was recorded when, serving as courier for Emmeline Pankhurst, she attended opening night to solicit agreements from a potential suffrage supporter (Diary, 23 February 1910).

Unlike *Press Cuttings* and *Fanny's First Play*, which at best offer support of the cause through their amusing parody of the militants' tactics, two plays by Shaw tower over his others in the way they address women-centered social issues: *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Major Barbara*. Robins did not record any reaction in her diary to *Major Barbara*; she was away from London when the play was first produced. But her feminist play *My Little Sister*, which would have been staged by the Women's Theatre of Manchester in 1914 had the outbreak of World War I not canceled the production, demonstrates the vast difference between Shaw's convenient "use" of women's issues in these plays and Robins's more directly political vision of a feminist theater. Where Shaw gave Mrs. Warren a chance to
justify her temptation to prostitution as the result of an economically hostile world, Robins exposed and indicted the practice of white slavery. In her play (and in the novella that Robins had, this time, written first), two sisters on their first visit to London find themselves tricked into a brothel. A man condescendingly sympathetic to the sisters' naïveté helps the older one escape. She begs the authorities to find her younger sister and break up the ring of abductors, only to learn that the authorities are complacently tolerating the prostitution houses. While revising the novella version of My Little Sister,23 Robins accompanied Salvation Army officers as they tried to assist young women walking the streets. When she dressed one night as a Salvation Army volunteer, it was hardly the idealistic and romantic Major Barbara who was her model. Robins discovered that the street women either ignored or resented the charity of the Salvationists. Desperately, she disclosed to one young woman that her uniform was only a hoax, that she was genuine in her wish to assist her, and urged the girl to visit her at her flat.

The diary entries that describe Robins's inability to save this woman are poignant in their earnestness. The episode is only one small incident in a life dedicated to improving the conditions of women. Robins, who had experienced the double standard and been frequently ostracized for her fierce independence, could not help feeling that Shaw's portraits of feminist women seemed so self-serving, so full of playful positioning and semantic brilliance, that their ideals and their principles became conflated with Shaw's own comic diffusions and with his dramatic agenda, which was as complex as politics and sex.

Notes

1. Feminist criticism, including that by Elaine Showalter, Dale Spender, Jane Marcus, and Sheila Stowell, as well as dissertations by Mary T. Heath and Gay Cima, has explored various aspects of Elizabeth Robins's achievements. My biography of Elizabeth Robins, Elizabeth Robins, 1862–1952: Actress, Novelist, Feminist, forthcoming from the University of Alabama Press, will be the first full-length critical study of her life and work.

2. Michael Holroyd, Bernard Shaw, Volume 1, 1856–1898: The Search for Love (New York: Random House, 1988), p. 311: "For several months, though she took care to see little of him, she had been married to an American actor, George Parks, who (wearing a suit of stage armor) had stepped into the Charles River in Boston, and drowned. It showed how dangerous men were. Dressed in beautiful black weeds, Elizabeth had sailed to England. But even here, she discovered, there were men. How did she know that they were not following her? There seemed no place, not even St. Paul's Cathedral, they did not penetrate, staring, standing, breathing... It was disgusting!... She felt safer in the world of Ibsen.” I must also disagree with Holroyd that Shaw intended Mrs Warren's Profession for
Robins. Holroyd sees Shaw as desirous of scandalizing her when, in fact, Shaw wanted to convince her to play the comic Gloria in You Never Can Tell.

3. Not in his suit of armor, as most accounts misreport it, but with a box containing his heavy chain mail belted to him.


6. Under the Southern Cross (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1907). Robins began the novel in 1890 and completed it in 1899. Stokes apparently considered it a long story and held off publication until Robins supplied material to complete a collection.

7. Elizabeth Robins, “Study for a Woman of 30 Who Is Loved and Who Resists, and What She Thinks of Herself.” Subsequent quotations are from this document, originally catalogued with the Elizabeth Robins to Florence Bell Correspondence (1892), Fales Library, New York University. This private meditation was probably initiated when she felt drawn to William Archer’s intimacies. I thank Frank Walker, director of the Fales Library, retired, and Mabel Smith, Literary Executor of the Robins Estate, for permission to quote from the correspondence, unpublished diaries, and personal documents in the Elizabeth Robins Collection.


10. The delay in production was not because Elizabeth Robins retired to bear William Archer’s child, as Thomas Postlewait speculates in Prophet of the New Drama: William Archer and the Ibsen Campaign (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1986), pp. 118–19. Robins had earlier released Achurch from her promise on Archer’s advice that it would interfere with her performance in America in Arms and the Man. Two leading actor-managers, Charles Wyndham and George Alexander, had been offered the play but found no opportunity in their schedules to stage it.

11. Robins to Bell, 12 December 1895, Fales Library, New York University. Subsequent correspondence from Robins to Bell is identified parenthetically by date.


17. Peters, “As Lonely as God,” p. 185.


19. Shaw’s lecture, to my knowledge, has never been published. However, there is “a conflation of reports” of the lecture as “Ibsen—and After” in Shaw and Ibsen: Bernard Shaw’s The Quintessence of Ibsenism and Related Writings, ed. J. L. Wisenthal (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 253–56.


22. Sidney P. Albert has informed me that he is aware of an undated postcard to Robins from Shaw, who wrote, “As of now, I agree with you about Act III of Major Barbara.”

23. My Little Sister (American title of Where Are You Going To? serialized in McClure’s, then published by Dodd, Mead, 1913) was later dramatized but never staged.
feminist studies which either misuse material or use only fragments of it, rather than have a solid historical, biographical background. I'd like to see more responsible work done on Shaw and woman. The other thing I'd like to see, in light of some of our new openness and new understanding of sexual identity, is an examination of some of the characters who may or may not have sexual identity confusion. For example, is Vivie Warren a lesbian? What about Praed, Henry Higgins, Colonel Pickering? I'm not questioning Shaw's sexual identity; I'm talking about that of his characters.

[Members of the audience then entered the discussion.]

JOANNE GATES: We should consider the opportunities that the world of computers provides for Shaw studies. An electronic discussion group of Shaw scholars, a computerized data base for bibliography or for cross-referencing archival material, or the texts of Shaw's plays on disk are among what should be thought about for the next century. George Landow's book *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* tells how Brown University uses a linked data base surrounding a primary text for classroom instruction. His example, enhanced ways to study Tennyson's *In Memoriam* through a hypertext project (with cross links in the electronic text to a wide variety of secondary sources), may be a useful model. A similar project, with the text of, for instance, *Mrs Warren's Profession* or *Pygmalion*, keying the source document to articles on critical, performance, and historical issues and to references in Shaw's correspondence and diaries, would be an invaluable teaching tool. Other interactive projects are also under way. At Stanford, for instance, Larry Friedman has used computers and multimedia to connect a filmed version of *Macbeth* to computer search and annotation. Certainly the commercial availability of important Shaw productions on video and laser disks would enhance the field of Shaw studies.

JOHN BERTOLINI: I hate to interfere with the euphoria of these proceedings, but something needs to be said. We are deluding ourselves if we think that the rest of the world thinks of Shaw the way we do. Beginning with *The Making of Modern Drama*, Richard Gilman made it permissible to omit Shaw from the history of modern drama. I think it's been downhill since then. We have to combat that. We have all had the experience of living in English departments, being the unique Shawians, with the feeling that our colleagues are generally sniggering at us behind our backs. We have to face this. More and more anthologies of modern drama think it's perfectly fine to leave Shaw out. In many ways, Beckett has come to take the place Shaw used to occupy in anthologies of modern