Bernard Shaw's Heartbreak House: The War in 'Neverland'

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Abstract
One of the achievements of recent Shaw studies has been to present Heartbreak House as a play of apocalyptic and eschatalogical vision in which the first world war is seen as a crisis in European civilization. This essay is concerned with the meaning of 'heartbreak' in relation to Shaw’s vision of the war in Heartbreak House, and, in particular, with connections between Heartbreak House and the fashionable 'heartbreak' of Barrie’s Peter Pan and Shaw’s correspondence with Mrs Patrick Campbell. It seems to me that this approach might be useful in order to oppose a drift in recent criticism towards depoliticization of Heartbreak House and a view that in this play Shaw’s usual concern with socialist reformism and revolution is replaced by despair and questions about whether it is possible for mankind and civilization to survive the war.