

The impact of psychology in G. B. Shaw's play: *Candida*

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at reading Bernard Shaw as a psychologist, attempting to extricate the legal and rational relation from the romantic, illegal, and irrational, though the latter is the flowing as all that happens in the world. Nevertheless, all the activities that spring from our Life Force, i.e., our instincts and impulses are infected with pain and frustration and discomfort, but we are not cut off from final and complete redemption. Shaw in his plays awakens mankind to realize our salvation lies in sanity, the sooner we become rational the better it is.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of psychology in literary interpretation has long been recognized. Plato and Aristotle, for example, attributed strong psychological influence to literature. Plato saw this influence as essentially baneful: literature aroused people's emotions, especially those that ought to be stringently controlled. Conversely, Aristotle argued that literature exerted a good psychological influence, in particular, tragedy did, by affecting in audiences a catharsis or cleansing or purging of emotions. Spectators were thus claimed and satisfied, not excited or frenzied, after their emotional encounter.

The title refers to the honesty and compares it to that of non-Shavian morality, especially which of romantic drama, requires in cases of morality infidelity. In this case, the infidelity is the result not of a casual affair but of a love neither partner had ever found in their respective marriages.

Shaw's letter of 11 March 1911 to Gilbert Murray, in which he specifically encourages Murray to write a Freudian version of *Oedipus Rex* (supplying him with a hilarious scenario by way of inducement), shows that by that time he knew about Freud's Oedipus complex through Ernest Jones's 1910 essay "The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery": "I am not very appreciative

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of the psychiatrists; but there may be something in their theory that repressed instincts, though subconscious, play a considerable part in our lives, and that the first child's jealousy of the second, and even of its father, is the jealousy of Othello in a primitive stage of passion, before the specialization of a part of it takes place for reproductive purposes. The completeness with which that specialization is suppressed does not eradicate the passion" (G.B. Shaw, *Collected Letters*, III, pp. 13-19).

Shaw knew Jones, Freud's leading English disciple and future biographer, who could have kept him up to date in matters Freudian, and he may easily have come across Freud's name earlier than this in Harelock Ellis's work (Albert's "Reflection on Shaw and Psychoanalysis", p. 172, Albert suggests that Shaw could have read about Freud as early as 1904 in volume 1 of Ellis's studies in the psychology of sex).

Shaw wanted the reconstruction of marriage after realistically seeing its liabilities and deficiencies. Shaw was basically a Eugenist and a socialist, and realism serves him as a device to expose the hidden flaws of our respectable social structure. Instead of painting things naturally he went deep to find out the facts affecting society. After considering his views on love and marriage, being associated with respectability and sentimentality, is based on the fundamental misunderstanding of the purpose of sex-instinct, thus obscuring the creative purpose of the life force, Shaw spared no pains to reveal the new nature of sex and to free society from its slavery of sex.

Marriage depends, as a permanent relationship, on the basis of sentimentality, not on sex which is the creative instinct. Thus, the real and creative purpose of sex-instinct remains obscured by romance. Shaw claimed that "he alone of modern English play-writers has written genuine sex dramas" (G.B. Shaw, *The Complete Prefaces*, pp. 500-501).

He was interested in sex, in its intellectual and cosmic aspects approaching sensuality though he was mistakenly criticized for treating sensuality in his works. Not dealing with romantic nonsense and "erotic ecstasy" Shaw took the genuine "natural attraction of the sexes for one another" as an appropriate theme.

DISCUSSION

Candida is Shaw's unique comedy with a triangle of love; love and sex from satisfaction point of view. Shaw considered it as a real creative purpose. In the play *Candida*, Eugene Marchbanks, a young poet, falls in love with Morell's wife, *Candida*. The device of this love triangle, however, is used by Shaw to expose the reality under the idealistic mask on marriage and family. In the play, tearing aside the mask of illusionary happiness of married couples, Shaw has ruthlessly exposed the loss of freedom and the tyranny to which married women are subjected. Eugene, the young lover, declares that *Candida* wants "reality, truth and freedom" the truth being the truth about her marriage and the freedom from the bound that ties her to her moralizing husband. By this impression of *Candida*'s domestic life on Eugene, Shaw wants to show that her dutiful, respectable and noble-minded husband is really above and a tyrant, even though he considers her as his "treasure". Eugene tells *Candida* that she must have no more to do with scrubbing brushes or ill-smelling lamps, and offers her instead "... a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun; where the lamps are stars..." (G.B. Shaw, *Plays Pleasant*, p. 129).

Interestingly, Freud had originally used the theatrical of "Catharsis", derived from Aristotle, to describe the treatment of hysterics: The Cathartic Cure. And psychoanalysis, which involves playing roles, storytelling, dialogue, performance, and catharsis, can itself be viewed as a form of theater. This climate scene in *Candida* translates Freud's "talking cure", as psychoanalysis is often called, into a typically Shavian discourse or laughing cure. If I make you laugh at yourself, Shaw declared:

Remember that my business as a classical writer of Comedies is to chasten Morals with ridicule and if I sometimes make you feel like a fool, remember that I have by the same action cured your folly, just as the dentist cures your Toothache by pulling out your tooth And I

never do it without giving you a plenty of laughing gas. (G.B. Shaw, *The Complete Plays*, London: 1950, p. vi)

In 1902, Shaw had written to Trebitsch that “laughter is my sword and shield and spear” (Weiss 27). And Bertolini has very interestingly read some of Shaw’s shorter plays as deliberate meditations on how laughter works as part of his dramatic technique (Bertolini, *The Playwrighting self of Bernard Shaw*, p. 85, *On the Doctor’s Dilemma*).

Thus the drama of *Candida* leads toward this cathartic scene of laughter and discussion between Morell, Eugene, and Candida in act III. Shaw tries to rationalize love as far as possible. Candida’s love is motherly. She develops a warm corner for Eugene Marchbanks in her heart, not a grand romantic Passion. She is perfectly cool and unsentimental. When the moment comes for her to make a choice between her solid husband and her fragile poet lover, she shows herself thoroughly unromantic and practical. She is a rational thinker in the matter of love and she says:

Candida: “I give myself to the weaker of the two”.

Morell: “I accept your sentence, Candida”.

Marchbanks: “Oh, I feel I am lost”.

Romance is an artificial construction and it obscures the real creative purpose of sex instinct. Shaw views sex apart from romance, which is unreal. For him, sex is a fundamental instinct which ought to be satisfied not for pleasurable romance but because it is real, evolutionary, violent and the most imperative instinct. This is a most necessary, sporadic and impersonal instinct and the sacred Life Force express itself through it. For Shaw the aim of Life Force is neither pleasure for its own sake nor puritanical repression for the attainment of heavenly bliss. Shaw considers sexual experience as a necessary part of human growth and for him the substitution of sensuous ecstasy for intellectual activity is the very devil. In a letter to Frank Harris, Shaw said:

I liked sexual intercourse because of its amazing power of Producing celestial flood of emotion and exaltation which, However momentary, gave me a sample of the ecstasy that May one day be the normal condition of conscious intellectual Activity (G.B Shaw, *Sixteen Self Sketches*, p. 115).

Though Shaw rescues sexual attraction from its slavery to romance, his over-enthusiasm to view sex as an instrument of creative evolution, sometimes, makes his treatment of sex unnatural and attractive. However, it is wrong to say that Shavian plays lack sexual emotions. Shaw has declared the purpose of theatre:

The theatre is continually occupied with sex appeal. It has To deal in sex appeal exactly as a costermonger has to deal, In turnips, and a costermongers opinion on turnips is worth having (Chapplerow Allan, *Shaw – The Chucker Out*, London: 1969, p. 97).

Shaw left the serious business of sex to woman and motherhood has been made the sole purpose of woman’s life by Shaw. No doubt the desire to be a mother is instinctively universal. Let us mention again that Shaw’s characters are mere Instruments of sex instinct and whenever he gives love scenes; sex is the dominant motive behind love. No doubt, Shaw did not isolate love from sexual impulse. So, we may say that Shaw rescued love from romance and glamour, the institution of marriage from nobility and false respectability, sex from sensuality and unreal pleasure ,and presented there three- love, marriage and sex- in their true and real selves, naked to the world. However, these three are devoted by Shaw to the service of the Life Force in bringing about the race of superman. Shaw put love, marriage and sex on a new pedestal of reality, which was hidden by the artificial masks of romance, respectability and sensuality and very clearly discussed them as the themes of his comedies.

CONCLUSION

In the present age, when every part of the world is threatened with Destruction, Shaw's ideas find relevance in the quest for peace and harmony among the different nations. If Shaw has lost some of his appeal today, the fault is not in his approach to the theater, but to the fact that the iconoclasm of one generation is not the same as the next. As Shaw himself told Stephen Winsten, "The world will never be the same again, because I have educated Four generations to see things as they are, not what they imagine them to be or want them to be" (Winsten's, *Days With Bernard Shaw*, London: n.d, p. 88).

Shaw's views on theater have influenced modern dramatist and brought about changes in methods of dramatic presentation. He wrote in 1926 that his newer plays needed the "sort of theater" whom would combine the optics and acoustics of a first-rate lecture theater with a first-rate circus. What he thought the playhouse should look like is still largely an ideal, though these have been experiments with theater-in-the-round. Much of Shaw's modernism consists in his adapting to the stage available to him and bringing back to life theatrical conventions that had been discarded when naturalism and realism took hold in the theater. Thus he made use of the pre-naturalistic stage convention that Characters may have written into their roles an artificial amount of self-consciousness. This device not only permitted the use of the ironic with that Shaw loved but made possible clarity of expression in dialogue unavailable to a doctrinaire realist.

Great dramatic art, Shaw had, "is a revelation of ourselves to our own consciousness" (G.B. Shaw, *Our Theaters in the Nineties*, p. 145). In order to make ideas behave dramatically, he wanted his characters to be able to step out of their roles now and then to become bigger than life: "unless an actress can be at least ten times as interesting as a real lady why should she leave the drawings room and go on the stage?" (Ibid, p. 194).

The reader of today should find much interest and relevance in the study of *Candida* as aspect of feminine psyche even if the reader is uninterested in Shaw's political passions or evolutionary zeal.

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