Chapter—V

Application of Psychoanalysis to Candida

*Candida* is a play of very complex nature though apparently it seems to be presented with neatly sorted plot and characters. Its complexity lies in two things: firstly it incorporates a conflict that has nuances of modern urbanity whereby the lady, her husband and her lover are mature enough to accept their psychological weakness and thus sit down to have a table talk on the issues of love and marriage; secondly the play presents forth a very interesting situation that can be sufficiently explicated for the analysis of Freud's concept of Oedipus complex. In both these aspects of the play an insight based on the psychological conflicts and complexities brings out much enriched discussion.

Conflict and a seemingly un-Shavian charge of emotion strike us immediately as we enter the play. The atmosphere is thick with disputes and accusations, thrust and counterthrust. The characters fight each other and often themselves. Listen at the outset to the bickering between the pert secretary Proserpine Garnett and the young curate Lexy Mill:

Proserpine [impatiently, pulling the letter she has been working at of the typewriter and folding it]: Oh, a man ought to be able to be fond of his wife without making a fool of himself about her.

Lexy [shocked]: Oh, Miss Prossy!

Proserpine [snatching at the stationery case for an envelope, in which she encloses the letter as she speaks]: Candida here, and Candida there and Candida everywhere! [She licks the envelope]. It's enough to drive anyone out of their senses [thumping the envelope to make it stick] to hear a woman raved about in that absurd manner merely because she's got good hair and a tolerable figure.
Lexy [with reproachful gravity]: I think her extremely beautiful, Miss Garnett [He takes the photograph up; looks at it; and adds, with ever greater impressiveness] extremely beautiful. How fine her eyes are!

Proserpine: Her eyes are not a bit better than mine: now! [He puts down the photograph and stares austerely at her]. And you know very well you think me dowdy and second rate enough.

Lexy [rising majestically]: Heaven forbid that I should think of any of God's creatures in such a way! [He moves stiffly away from her across the room to the neighborhood of the bookcase].

Proserpine [sarcastically]: Thank you. That's very nice and comforting. (125-126)

A moment later Morell quarrels with his father-in-law Burgess.

Burgess: ... James: three years ago, you done me a hil turn. You done me hout of a contrac; and when I gev you arsh words in my natural disappointment, you turned my daughrter again me. Well, Ive come to hact the part of a Kerischin. [Offering his hand] I forgive you, James.

Morell [starting up]: Confound your impudence!

Burgess [retreating, with almost lachrymose deprecation of this treatment]: Is that becomin language for a clergyman, James? And you so particular, too!

Morell [hotly]: No, sir: it is not becoming language for a clergyman. I used the wrong word. I should have said damn your impudence: that what St. Paul or any honest priest would have said to you. Do you think I have forgotten that tender of yours for the contract to supply
clothing to workhouse?

**Burgess** [in a paroxysm of public spirit]: I hacted in the hinterest of the ratepayers, James. It was the lowest tender: you caan't deny that.

**Morell**: Yes, the lowest, because you paid worse wages than any other employer - starvation wages-aye, worse than starvation wages - to the women who made the clothing. Your wages would have driven them to the streets to keep body and soul together. [Getting angrier and angrier] Those women were my parishioners. I shamed the Guardians out of accepting your tender: I shamed the ratepayers out of letting them do it: I shamed everybody but you. [Boiling over] How dare you, sir, come here and offer to forgive me, and talk about your daughter. (127)

A while afterward Marchbanks tells Morell he loves Candida and then counters the older man's patronizing tone:

**Marchbanks**: ... You are very calm and sensible and moderate with me because you can see that I am a fool about your wife; just as no doubt that old man who was here just now is very wise over your Socialism, because he sees that you are a fool about it. [Morell's perplexity deepens markedly. Eugene follows up his advantage, plying him fiercely with questions]. Does that prove you wrong? Does your complacent superiority to me prove that I am wrong?

**Morell**. Marchbanks: some devil is putting these words into your mouth. It is easy-terribly easy-to shake a man's faith in himself. To take advantage of that to break a man's spirit is devil's work. Take care of what you are doing. Take care.

**Marchbanks** [ruthlessly]: I know. I'm doing it on purpose. I told you I
should stagger you.

They confront one another threateningly for a moment. Then Morell recovers his dignity. (133)

And after Morell speechifies at him, the poet replies:

**Marchbanks** [looking round wildly]: Is it like this for her here always? A woman, with a great soul, craving for reality, truth, freedom; and being fed on metaphors, sermons, stale perorations, mere rhetoric. Do you think a woman's soul can live on your talent for preaching?

**Morell** [stung]: Marchbanks: you make it hard for me to control myself. My talent is like yours insofar as it has any real worth at all. It is the gift of finding words for divine truth.

**Marchbanks** [impetuously]: It's the gift of the gab, nothing more and nothing less. What has your knack of fine talking to do with the truth, any more than playing the organ has? I've never been in your church; but I've been to your political meetings; and I've seen you do what's called rousing the meeting to enthusiasm: that is, you excited them until they behaved exactly as if they were drunk. And their wives looked on and saw what fools they were. Oh, it's an old story: you'll find it in the Bible. I imagine King David, in his fits of enthusiasm, was very like you. [Stabbing him with the words] "But his wife despised him in her heart."

**Morell** [wrathfully]: Leave my house. Do you hear? [He advances on him threateningly].

**Marchbanks** [shrinking back, against the couch]: Let me alone. Don't
touch me. [Morell grasps him powerfully by the lappell of his coat: he
cowers down on the sofa and screams passionately] Stop, Morell: if
you strike me, I'll kill myself: I won't bear it. [Almost in hysteric] Let
me go. Take your hand away.

Morell [with slow emphatic scorn]: You little snivelling cowardly
whelp. [He releases him]. Go, before you frighten yourself into a fit.

[133-134]

And we are not yet out of Act I! The very directions for the way characters are to say
their lines read like a Wagnerian opera's expression marks: Burgess replies "trembling
with rage"; Proserpine "highly incensed; Marchbanks "passionately", "desperately",
"piteously"; Morell "in a suffocated voice", "almost fiercely", "grimly"; and Candida
herself ranges from "gaily" to "remorsefully". Critics who say that Shaw's theater is
too intellectual have surely not read this play.

The play involves a number of minor climaxes that intensify the psychological
complexity of the play. There are multiple revelations involved in the play. The play
is built on the uncovering of secrets; the conflicts most often spring from one
individual defending a secret that another individual is determined to expose. We
have already seen Proserpine being provoked by Lexy into exposing her jealousy of
Candida, and a moment later he is forced to acknowledge his slavish adulation of
Morell. Old Burgess is compelled to agree that he is a scoundrel under Morell's
demand that truth be faced, and then Morell himself begins to show self-doubt under
Marchbanks's withering directness. And the revelations continue until the play's end
when, with marvelous counter pointing. Shaw makes the poet, who had been eager to
reveal his secret love for Candida, acquire a special secret of his own as he flies out
into the night.
Another device is the unusual degree of physical contacting. In none of Shaw's other plays is there so much actual touching. For instance, when Candida returns home she is kissed by her husband and by her father, and at the end of the play the husband and wife again embrace. In the erotically laden scene by the fireplace, Marchbanks rests his head and then his arms in Candida's lap. Morell at one point puts his arm affectionately on the poet's shoulder, and the poet himself, at the very moment when the men are about to ask Candida to choose between them, places his hand on Morell's forearm as if to draw courage from him. Marchbanks twice suffers rough handling from an enraged Morell, and his knee is tapped and then gripped by Burgess when he confides in him. Candida above all displays a very active pair of comforting hands, whether she is caressing her husband, or sitting at his feet and embracing his knees, or arranging the poet's hair and adjusting his collar. It is as if the playwright, responding to some obscure personal impulse but directing it with consummate control, has allowed the human body itself to become the chief theatrical prop. Such an impulse is rooted in the desire to celebrate one's identity. The suppressed libido, according to the Economic Topography of Freud, gets transformed in culturally and socially acceptable constructs of the institutions. In the scene here the accepted notions seem to be closer to the show of confidence and openness. Such confidence and openness provide a pleasure of intriguing nature that borders on the gratification of the suppressed libido. One finds various examples of such an exhibition of pleasure. In the case of Candida it is her wit that fetches her, this pleasure. Being a Shavian New Woman she is visibly pleased at various junctures when she outperforms others specially the three men Morell, Marchbanks and her father through her intelligent use of language: pregnant with disarming wit and satire. Following extracts sufficiently portray the same:
**Candida:** Of Course she is. [She takes up her hand-bag]. And now I MUST LEAVE YOU TO James for the present. I suppose you are too much of a poet to know the state finds her house in she's been away for three weeks. Give me my rug. [Eugene takes the strapped rug from the couch, and gives it to her. She takes it in her left hand, having the bag in her right]. Now hang my cloak across my arm. [He obeys]. Now my hat. [He puts it in the hand which has the bag]. Now open the door for me. [He hurries before her and opens the door]. Thanks. [She goes out; and Marchbanks shuts the door]. (131)

In another speech one can sense the same feelings on the part of Candida:

**Candida** [jarred] Oh, James! how could you spoil it all?

**Marchbanks** [firing up] Yes, to be idle, selfish, and useless: that is, to be beautiful and free and happy: hasnt every man desired that with all his soul for the woman he loves? Thats my ideal: whats yours, and that of all the dreadful people who live in these hideous rows of houses? Sermons and scrubbing brushes! With you to preach the sermon and your wife to scrub.

**Candida** [quickly]: He cleans the boots, Eugene. You will have to clean them tomorrow for saying that about him.

**Marchbanks:** Oh, dont talk about boots! Your feet should be beautiful on the mountains.

**Candida:** My feet would not be beautiful on the Hackeney Road without boots. (139)

Similar display of intriguing pleasure is witnessed in the repartee between Marchbanks and Morell also where the surprising confidence of Marchbanks shakes
the apparent strength of Morell's polished and rich mannerisms. The interesting insight that one enjoys here is that according to the normal yardsticks of materialistic society Morell, the one who should be more relaxed and secure of his potentials seems to be unnerved easily whereas, Marchbanks, the one who is deprived of all the emblems of a secure life and presently depends on Morell for his means, is full a beaming life-force. The pleasure that Marchbanks derived in his confession of love for Morell's wife in front of Morell makes him a perfect symbol of a great power of the deviant impulse that the individual acquires while in the search for identity (Holland sec. 58).

Marchbanks [twisting himself round on him] Oh, I am not forgetting myself: I am only [covering his face desperately with his hands] full of horror. [Then, dropping his hands, and thrusting his face forward fiercely at Morrell, he goes on threateningly] You shall see whether this is a time for patience and kindness. [Morell firm as a rock, looks indulgently at him]. Dont look at me in that self-complacent way. You think yourself stronger than I am; but I shall stagger you if you have a heart in your breast.

Morell [powerfully confident] Stagger me, my boy. Out with it.

Marchbanks: First—

Morell: First?

Marchbanks: I love your wife.

Morell recoils and, after staring at him for a moment in utter amazement, bursts into uncontrollable laughter. Eugene is taken a back, but not disconcerted; and he soon becomes indignant and contemptuous. (132)
The negative or ridiculed side of Marchbanks produces a current of sympathy for his antagonist Morell, which is strengthened when Eugene and Candida verbally assault him. He also wins our respect by his kindliness to his secretary and his curate, by his firmness with Burgess, his forbearance toward his exasperating young rival, and his courage in leaving that rival alone in the house with Candida. In other words Shaw here again, as with Marchbanks, strikes the difficult balance between creating a purely satiric character and an admirable one, and he makes the clergyman a worthy opponent for the more inherently romantic figure of the poet. Some of Morell's traits, particularly those relating to his personal appearance, were drawn from contemporary Christian Socialist ministers; Shaw said he had Stopford Brooke chiefly in mind, but other names have been put forth also. No doubt the portrait is a composite one, as it was with Marchbanks also. Yet just as with Marchbanks, Shaw may have found the creative process facilitated by being able to identify with Morell. The Reverend is a forty-year-old Christian Socialist who lives by words and is highly dependent on the maternal care of his wife. Shaw is a thirty-eight-year-old Fabian Socialist who lives by words, resides at his mother's house in London, and is still to a large extent financially and emotionally dependent on her. Both men preach their varieties of socialism to entranced audiences and are attractive to women. As Shaw in one of his letters noted Morell's "readiness to boss people spiritually," his "certainty that his own ideas, being the right ideas, must be good for them," so too did various people note these qualities in Shaw himself; and the description of Morell in his public role as "facile, cheery, spontaneous, fluent, emphatic, unhesitating and bumptious" could on the whole be applied as well to the public Shaw. If in Marchbanks Shaw partly mocks aspects of his past self, in Morell he partly mocks aspects of his present self.

Seen in this light, some of the play's criticism of Morell can be viewed as
Shaw's self-criticism. At a later time, when famous and rich, Shaw would quip that he did not throw himself into the struggle for existence, he threw his mother into it; but his guilt over this still continuing dependency can perhaps be seen behind Marchbanks's thrust at Morell: "It horrifies me when I think of the doses of [cant] she has had to endure in all the weary years during which you have selfishly and blindly sacrificed her to minister to your self-sufficiency" (140). In fact so intent is Shaw in his self-criticism that at times it results in small inconsistencies as when Marchbanks implies that the women at the meetings remain unaffected by Morell's eloquence whereas Candida had said that the women in particular were affected by it. Perhaps Shaw ignores this shift because in both instances he has fulfilled his intention of ridiculing Morell's vanity as a speechmaker and of indirectly ridiculing himself as well. Such self-criticism may also be at the root of another small inconsistency, this time of characterization. Very early in the play, long before events have shaken Morell's confidence in himself and his complacency as husband and provider, he abruptly wilts under Marchbanks's confession of love for Candida and half pleads for the younger man to help him: "There are so many things to make us doubt if once we let our understanding be troubled. Even at home, we sit as if in camp, encompassed by a hostile army of doubts. Will you play the traitor and let them in on me?!! Nothing up to that point had at all prepared us for this outburst, and even allowing for the oratorical heightening to which the Reverend is addicted, it does seem out of character for him to intimate such susceptibility to self-doubt. He sounds suddenly like the diffident Eugene, and this momentary lapse in characterization suggests that the dividing line was not as firm as Shaw would have liked between that past self represented by Marchbanks and the present self represented by Morell.

Candida Morell, the third member of the triangle, is obviously the most
complex figure in the play and the one toward whom our feelings are apt to be the most complex, as were Shaw's as well. A beautiful woman, radiating maternal warmth and physical desirability, a woman whose poise and competence are softened but not weakened by her ready tenderness, Candida evokes in audiences feelings reaching back to childhood and forward to the latest ideals of feminine excellence. Because these ideals have changed in the decades since Shaw wrote, and the primacy of marriage and motherhood and the home has lost much of its traditional sanction, our attitude toward Candida will differ somewhat from that of late-Victorians whose very security in patriarchal patterns made it possible for them to relish Shaw's exposure of the strong man's dependence on the woman he thought he was protecting. That the play is less frequently performed today than in the earlier decades of the century, and that actresses now find more satisfaction in roles as career women than as heroines of the hearth, suggest that judgments of Candida are peculiarly implicated in the changing outlook on women's position in society. The "liberated" women may no longer find Candida a model and the insecure men no longer admire her domestic supremacy. Hence it might be well to emphasize for a moment how emancipated a woman she actually is and how firmly she recognizes her own worth. Her mettle is best seen in her response to Morell's demand that she choose between him and Marchbanks:

**Candida:** Oh! I am to choose, am I to suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other.

**Morell** [firmly]: Quite. You must choose definitely.

**Marchbanks** [anxiously]: Morell: you dont understand. She means that she belongs to herself.

**Candida** [turning on him]: I mean that, and a good deal more, Master
Eugene, as you will both find out presently. And pray, my lords and masters, what have you to offer for my choice? (150)

And though she chooses the weaker of the two men, her husband, she has played his foolish game in a way that exposes and punishes his folly. Then, driving the lesson home, she explains to Marchbanks that her husband has always unwittingly relied on the support of women:

Ask James's mother and his three sisters what it cost to save James the trouble of doing anything but be strong and clever and happy. Ask me what it costs to be James's mother and three sisters and wife and mother to his children all in one. Ask Prossy and Maria how troublesome the house is even when we have no visitors to help us to slice the onions. Ask the tradesmen who want to worry James and spoil his beautiful sermons who it is that puts them off. When there is money to give, he gives it: when there is money to refuse, I refuse it. I build a castle of comfort and indulgence and love for him, and stand sentinel always to keep little vulgar cares out. I make him master here, though he does not know it, and could not tell you a moment ago how it came to be so. [With sweet irony] And when he thought I might go away with you, his only anxiety was-what should become of me! (147-48)

And then she finishes off the lesson by deftly complimenting the loser on his superior strength and reminding him that he has been spared an alliance with a woman too old for him. Throughout, her mastery of the situation has been unmistakable.

But she has been guided, we must remember, by good sense and love rather than by any obligation to fulfill marital duties or social expectations. Indeed the
degree of her freedom from conventions is daringly indicated in an earlier conversation with Morell on whether Marchbanks will someday forgive her for not teaching him about love:

Morell:... I don't know what you mean.

Candida [explaining]: If he learns it from a good woman, then it will be all right: he will forgive me.

Morell: Forgive?...

Candida [realizing how stupid he is, and a little disappointed, though quite tenderly so]: Don't you understand? [He shakes his head. She turns to him again, so as to explain with the fondest intimacy]. I mean, will he forgive me for not teaching him myself? For abandoning him to the bad women for the sake of my goodness, of my purity as you call it? Ah, James, how little you understand me, to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there were nothing else to restrain me. Put your trust in my love for you, James; for if that went, I should care very little for your sermons: mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day. (149)

This woman clearly follows her own moral code rather than law or custom. She obeys not the dictates of an externally imposed ideal of duty but the promptings of her heart, which impose their own restraints. She exemplifies the recommendation Shaw had given a few years earlier that women should "repudiate duty altogether" in order to gain their freedom. Or, as he summed it up a decade later, "[Candida] is straight for natural reasons, not for conventional ethical ones." Conventionally she might be considered "a very immoral female," but in truth her "brains and strength of mind" are her
salvation. Motherly wife as she undoubtedly is, Candida is shown to be an independent-minded woman as well.

A "pure" mother in any event is what Candida represents to both Marchbanks and Shaw himself. She is made to regard the rival males as mere boys and to comfort and pet them as if they were her children.

Thus it was the wife as mother, whether mothering a Morell or a Marchbanks, that the playwright had at the forefront of his mind when creating Candida, and he ignores the sexual and procreative aspects of marriage almost entirely. The only time his control wavers in the play is when that sexual aspect must be dealt with, when the inherent contradiction of a pure virgin mother could not be avoided. This is not to say that he completely shies away from sexuality since in an attenuated way it does pervade the play, whether in all the talk of Prossy's infatuation with Morell, or in all the kissing and touching mentioned earlier. Yet Shaw, like Eugene, seems to grow uneasy when Candida's physical appeal becomes too prominent and the male animal gives signs of becoming aroused.

The source of this uneasiness lies within the core of the play, for fundamentally the work is not the traditional romantic triangle as such generations of critics have assumed it to be but rather the familial triangle of a son, a mother, and a father. Incredibly condensing into a single day an archetypal pattern of human development that normally takes years, Shaw has Eugene enter the play as all but a child and leave it as a man, just turned eighteen, and seemingly freed of his involvement with a parental couple. More specifically, the play recapitulates under slight disguise the classical Oedipal situation of a boy vying with a man old enough to be his father for the possession of a motherly woman. Physically cringing before the older male, whose recurrent impulse is to throttle him for his impudence, the boy continually
wounds his rival with sharp-edged words and reduces him at the end to a sobbing wreck seated in a child's chair. Eugene triumphs over the bigger and stronger Morell, emasculates him, and has the joy of hearing Candida confirm that her husband is "the weaker of the two." Yet in his encounters with Candida, Eugene is passive and feeble, embarrassed to reveal his love for her and remorseful for having humiliated her husband:

Candida [to Eugene]: What have you been saying?

March banks [appalled]: Nothing. I -

Candida: Eugene! Nothing?

Marchbanks [piteously]: I mean-I'm very sorry, again: indeed I wont. I'll let him alone. (130)

Shaw's creative fantasizing, at its profoundest levels stirred by his own incestuous urges, moves the play through all the stages of a typical Oedipal pattern.

The standard Oedipal fantasy may be said to have three stages at its outset: the boy tries to stop the father from possessing the mother, tries to slay him, and then tries to replace him. Since the slaying looks back to past resentments and forward to future rewards, it has the double purpose of hurting the father and of removing him from the scene so that the son can possess the mother exclusively. In the private fantasy satisfactions of writing Candida, Shaw has no difficulty with the earlier phases but encounters problems as he drives toward the goal of possessing the mother. He has Marchbanks at the beginning of the play prevent any lovemaking between Morell and Candida though the husband had emphatically wanted to be alone with his wife after their three weeks of separation. Morell urges the young man to "take a turn in the park and write poetry" for an hour and then return to lunch, but Marchbanks manages to avoid going away and immediately starts to ridicule and hurt the older man, accusing
him of being afraid to let him see Candida again and of wanting to get rid of him
"because you daren't let her choose between your ideas and mine." Then when Morell
finally takes up the poet's challenge and leaves Candida alone with the young man,
the naked moment of incest has arrived and must at once be clothed. The poet
nervously delays the announcement of his love by reading poetry aloud for two hours;
and Candida, seated at the fireside with gathering boredom, drifts off into "a waking
dream" while "looking intently at the point" of a poker held "upright in her hand."
The poker, Marchbanks tells her, makes him horribly uneasy. He says it signifies for
him a sword to ward him off. (What it signifies for her we are not told though
doubtless Shaw wanted it to serve as a phallic reminder of her absent husband). Once
the intimidating poker is put down, Marchbanks can declare his feelings to Candida as
he lies with his arms in her lap:

**Candida:** Now say whatever you want to.

**Marchbanks** [the eager expression vanishing utterly from his lips and
nostrils as his eyes light up with pathetic spirituality]: Oh, now I cant
say anything: all the words I know belong to some attitude or other—all
except one.

**Candida:** What one is that?

**Marchbanks** [softly, losing himself in the music of the name]: Can­
dida, Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida, Candida. I must say that now,
because you have put me on my honor and truth; and I never think or
feel Mrs Morell: it is always Candida.

**Candida:** Of course. And what have you to say to Candida?

**Marchbanks:** Nothing but to repeat your name a thousand times.

Dont you feel that every time is a prayer to you?
Candida: Doesn't it make you happy to be able to pray?

Marchbanks: Yes, very happy.

Candida: Well, that happiness is the answer to your prayer. Do you want anything more?

Marchbanks: No: I have come into heaven, where want is unknown.

(143)

But we notice that he has not even begun to express any desire for her physically or, more consequentially, to hint in any way that he wants her to live with him. The dramatist could easily have delayed Morell's return for at least another line to allow Marchbanks to broach these matters, but perhaps Shaw did not do so because the safe part of his own fantasizing was now fulfilled and its dangerous part had to be handled obliquely. According to Arnold Silver:

The danger did not lie chiefly in the oncoming confrontation with the husband, since Marchbanks handles this with ease, but rather in the possibility that Marchbanks may actually win in the competition for Candida's love; and for certain psychic reasons Shaw had to ensure that the poet rejected Candida before she rejected him. Thus after Morell's return and for the first time in the play, the poet is given remarks which indicate a surprising reduction in his desire for the woman. (106)

He suddenly exclaims to the distressed husband, when Candida is out of the room, that his own love is now entirely selfless and his yearnings are completely fulfilled:

I am the happiest of men. I desire nothing now but her happiness. [In a passion of sentiment] Oh, Morell, let us both give her up. Why should she have to choose between a wretched little nervous disease like me,
and a pig-headed parson like you? Let us go on a pilgrimage, you to
the east and I to the west, in search of a worthy lover for her: some
beautiful archangel with purple wings. (147)

This moment of renunciation, in which Marchbanks upholds his desexualized image
of Candida by wishing her beyond the reach of earthly male lovers, has been preceded
by another of the poet's claims that all he really wants is the pleasure of loving
Candida platonically. When Morell anxiously asks if she repulsed his advances,
Eugene replies that "she offered me all I chose to ask for: her shawl, her wings, the
wreath of stars on her head, the lilies in her hand, the crescent moon beneath her feet."
All he chose to ask for, in other words, was that she perpetuates for him Titian's Vir­
gin Mother, and he could not allow himself to think of her as a fleshly human woman.
"I loved her so exquisitely," he tells Morell, "that I wanted nothing more than the
happiness of being in such love. And before I had time to come down from the
highest summits, you came in." To descend from the summits, apparently, would be
to descend to the body and its demands, and to the desires and responsibilities of
mundane existence. As Morell tells the boy:

**Morell:** Man can climb to the highest summits; but he cannot dwell
there long.

**Marchbanks** [springing up]: It's false: there can he dwell forever, and
there only. It's in the other moments that he can find no rest, no sense
of the silent glory of life. Where would you have me spend my
moments, if not on the summits?

**Morell:** In the scullery; slicing onions and filling lamps. (149)

Marchbanks's ethereal sentiments run counter to his supposed desire to marry
Candida and live an earthbound life with her, "to give her children to protect, to help
and to work for," as he subsequently asserts. He soon shows a desperate eagerness to leave the house even though up to that point he had insisted on staying. He also tries to avoid having Candida make a decision even though earlier he had wanted her to do so. It is only after she bars him from leaving, and only after Morell insists that she makes a choice, that Marchbanks puts in his bid for her. By his statements and his actions in Act III, he belies his occasional claims that he still wants Candida for himself. And these inconsistencies of his, the most striking, of which we have yet to notice, are of a kind that no competent dramatist, building toward the suspense of Candida's decision, would have allowed. If it is Candida's play, she needs to have both men maintain the pitch of their desire for her until she makes her choice; if it is Marchbanks's play then he needs to have his hesitancies and retreats explored. But the play cannot successfully move in opposite directions in its last act. Perhaps the fairy demon in Marchbanks, so deft in tripping up Morell, had put a hidden wire across Shaw's path too and caused him to stumble badly. Or less figuratively put, the tension between the demands of the plot and the Oedipal pattern of Marchbanks's love probably lay in Shaw himself, in a conflict between the playwright and the man: the playwright struggling to meet the dramatic imperatives of his material, and the man struggling to vent a buried incestuous fantasy and to complete its painful final stages.

For of course the penalty for incestuous behavior would be castration, and the fear of this is what renders Marchbanks unable to declare a physical passion for the motherly woman. Candida's "purity" had to be maintained in his imagination; to attempt to violate it would bring down on him a terrible vengeance. Indeed, he refers metaphorically to the threat of castration as soon as Morell returns home:

Morell: Have you anything to tell me?

Marchbanks: Only that I have been making a fool of myself here in
private whilst you have been making a fool of yourself in public.

**Morell:** Hardly in the same way; I think.

**Marchbanks** [eagerly, scrambling up]: The very, very very same way.

I have been playing the Good Man. Just like you. When you began your heroics about leaving me here with Candida -

**Morell** [involuntarily]: Candida!

**Marchbanks:** Oh yes: I've got that far. But don't be afraid. Heroics are infectious: I caught the disease from you. I swore not to say a word in your absence that I would not have said a month ago in your presence.

**Morell:** Did you keep your oath?

**Marchbanks** [suddenly perching himself on the back of the easy chair]: It kept itself somehow until about ten minutes ago. Up to that moment I went on desperately reading to her-reading my own poems anybody's poems - to start off a conversation. I was standing outside the gate of Heaven, and refusing to go in. Oh, you can't think how heroic it was, and how uncomfortable! Then-

**Morell** [steadily controlling his suspense]: Then?

**Marchbanks** [prosaically slipping down into a quite ordinary attitude on the seat of the chair]: Then she couldn't bear being read to any longer.

**Morell:** And you approached the gate of Heaven at last?

**Marchbanks:** Yes.

**Morell:** Well? [Fiercely] Speak, man: have you no feeling for me?

**Marchbanks** [softly and musically]: Then she became an angel; and there was a flaming sword that turned every way; so that I could not go
in; for I saw that that gate was really the gate of Hell. (134)

The castrating instrument, the castration threat which disables him from going in and the infernal torment awaiting him if the incest craving is maintained - these could hardly be more economically expressed. And insofar as the poet indicates that he has now recoiled from the possibility of a physical relationship with Candida, he renders her choice superfluous, though her overwrought husband does not realize this.

But Marchbanks knows that he has already transgressed, partly in deed by having injured the fatherly Morell and partly in imagination by having wanted the motherly Candida for himself. For these transgressions he must atone through self-imposed punishment, as severe as his own serious nature and the serious nature of his sins demand, yet bleakly glorious in its very severity. He announces his punishment the moment after Candida chooses Morell and says she has served her husband as mother, sister, and wife all in one:

Morell [quite overcome, kneeling beside her chair and embracing her with boyish ingenuousness]: It's all true, every word. What I am you have made me with the labor of your hands and the love of your heart. You are my wife, my mother, my sisters: you are the sum of all loving care to me.

Candida [in his arms, smiling, to Eugene]: Am I your mother and sisters to you, Eugene?

Marchbanks [rising with a fierce gesture of disgust]: Ah, never. Out, then, into the night with me!

Morell [rising quickly]: You are not going like that, Eugene?

Marchbanks [with the ring of a man's voice - no longer a boy's - in the words]: I know the hour when it strikes. I am impatient to do what
must be done.

**Morell** [who has also risen]: Candida: dont let him do anything rash.

**Candida** [confident, smiling at Eugene]: Oh, there is no fear. He has learnt to live without happiness.

**Marchbanks:** I no longer desire happiness: life is nobler than that.

**Parson James:** I give you my happiness with both hands: I love you because you have filled the heart of the woman I loved. Goodbye.

(151-52)

The strangeness of Marchbanks's farewell has generally been overlooked. He might have been expected to say something else, to say in effect that he is not renouncing future happiness that if Candida prefers her snug home there will nevertheless be other women willing to share with him the joys of the mountains and the night. Obviously Candida herself intends something along these lines when she compliments Eugene for having learned to live without happiness, meaning to live if necessary without women, in devotion to his high calling but still available for happiness should he fall in love with a woman nearer his own age. But Marchbanks is saying something more: he is renouncing sexuality itself.

Shaw himself is not quite ready yet to sacrifice women and happiness, but he is in a sense testing it out through Marchbanks, who atones for wanting to possess the motherly Candida and to destroy the fatherly Morell by pledging chastity, voluntarily emasculating himself in order to ward off the primitive fear of an imposed punishment by castration. He offers this sacrifice of his own sexuality, his own happiness, to the father, and then finally offers him his love even as he withdraws it from Candida, the woman he *loved*. His only consolations are that now, through renunciation; he may lead a nobler life and fulfill his destiny as a poet. In this reference
Arnold Silver in this reference opines that:

It was artful of Shaw not to dwell on the self-sacrificial masochistic ending but rather to bring the incest fantasy to completion implicitly, and even to allow Eugene the small triumph of having a secret to take with him. But the secret of the play's power to move us lies finally in its disguised presentation of that most universal of love triangles, the one involving a father and a mother and a child. And this familial pattern explains, too, the widely varied estimates of the play's central figures, who pluck at buried memories of our own experiences as children and as adults. (110)

These probably were the more important fantasy satisfactions Shaw could derive from *Candida*, and they indicate some of the ways in which his parents' association with Lee created for him a complicated variant on the standard Oedipal situation. Yet whether or not we allow Shaw these special satisfactions, it is difficult to deny him the pains of his Oedipus complex. The sexual desires provoked by the motherly figure of Candida, even the dangerous little fantasy of having Candida think of instructing the young man in making love, prompted Shaw to exact from Marchbanks the penalty of renouncing women altogether, and later exact from himself precisely the same penalty.

None of this accounts in biographical terms, however, for Marchbanks's pacifying of Morell at the end of the play and his near declaration of love to him. It may be, of course, that Shaw is simply having Marchbanks make amends for all the earlier cruelties to Morell. Yet this atoning impulse may also have been reinforced for Shaw by three curious facts. He was, to begin with, writing the play at the age of thirty-eight, and his father at exactly the same age was partaking of the first year of
his marriage to Lucinda. In a psychological sense, Shaw through Marchbanks was pitting himself against the husband for the possession of the mother, and not just as he may have done as a child in fantasy but now as a fully grown fantasizing man, exactly equal to his father in years; this adult recapitulation of the Oedipal conflict would encompass guilt and the need to make amends.

Yet beyond this, the guilt feelings toward the father, and more especially the masochistic renunciation of women, cast their shadows on the sunny philosophy that Shaw held at the time he wrote *Candida*. He held that man's natural appetites were worthy of cultivation rather than repression; he demanded "respect, interest, affection for human nature as it is," a cherishing of the real as over against the ideal; he favored the freer expression of human impulses. He denounced restraints imposed in the name of traditional morality and duty and self-sacrificing nobility. Yet from the evidence of *Candida*, this was what Shaw wanted to believe rather than what he wholly felt. The Reverend Morell may be the weaker of the two men in the play, and yet Morell's traditional morality is made to triumph over Marchbanks's ideals of free expression, as the poet acts the role of the good man when alone with Candida and then finally rejects even human happiness in favor of self-denying nobility. Marchbanks is as it were a shy Eros figure converted by the Superego personified in the aptly named Morell. And that conversion foreshadows Shaw's own in a few more years from a relatively hedonistic to an ascetic outlook. The play thus tells us more about the conflicts within Shaw than does his avowed philosophy, and considered in conjunction with the other plays of this period it clearly exhibits his mixed feelings toward love. Shaw at the end is more on Eugene's side than on Morell's, this may be taken to signify the growth of a latent tendency in Shaw toward renunciation of the body, with all of the grim pleasures of such a renunciation, including a temporarily
lightened anxiety over his attachment to his mother. Marchbanks thought he was rejecting the motherly wife when he proudly strode out into the night, and perhaps he was, yet Shaw would find that he himself could not so easily turn away from the mother.

The self-identification with Marchbanks is apparent, and however the poet may have fared, his creator two years after completing the play did meet the enterprising woman who became a new mother to him in a sexless marriage lasting forty-five years, a marriage in which Shaw had to accept the small beer of domestic comfort and was not even to have "mere happiness" instead of exaltation. Thus *Candida* not only provides the interesting insights within the Freudian perspectives of the Identity and Self-Identification but also draws an interesting analogy with Shaw's life thereby creating new dimensions to the conflict and interaction of the play.
Works Cited

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