CHAPTER - I

SHAW AS A DRAMATIST

Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. His father’s family had been small landowners in Ireland since the late seventeenth century and they had intermarried with the Irish. But previously they had lived in Hampshire, and they claimed an ancient Scottish origin. His father, after employment at the law courts, became in middle life, a grain merchant. His mother was the daughter of an Irish country gentleman. She was twenty years younger than her husband and she lived largely for her art, that of an opera singer. Shaw’s education was ordinary enough, but as a boy he loved to frequent the Irish National Gallery to study the pictures there and by the time he was fifteen he had a sound knowledge of some of the great composers too. To great writers such as Goethe and Moliere he introduced himself by following up the sources of the operas. He was, indeed, left to a great extent to find his own way, and he spoke of his early years as, “rich only in dreams”. Religiously the family background was Protestant, but Shaw rejected the Christian faith.

At fifteen, his mother having gone to London with her two daughters, who were both older than their only brother, Shaw was left with his father and he worked as a clerk in a Dublin estate agent’s office, where his efficiency soon got him promotion from rent collecting to the position of a cashier. Four years of this employment was enough for him. Determined to be a writer, he resigned from this post and in 1876 he joined his mother in London. He tried journalism, but in ten years, up to the age of twenty-nine, it is said that he earned only $6 by that means. His inner confidence, however, sustained him through those hard years till his writing began to bring him in a small income. Between 1879 and 1882 he wrote four novels. The first, *Immaturity*, dealt with the problem of marriage. It remained unpublished until his collected works appeared. The second, *The Irrational Knot*, written in 1880, first appeared serially in 1885-87; it was published as a book in 1905. The third,
Love Among the Artisans, was also serialised in 1887-88. It was the fourth novel in the order of their writing, Cashel Byron's Profession, was his first published book, for it appeared soon after its serialization in 1885-86, and it is decidedly the best of his novels. None suggests that Shaw would have won the success as a novelist that he achieved as a dramatist, but these novels anticipate many of the themes and ideas he was to express later in his plays. They contain, too, touches of disguised autobiography.

The important events for Shaw in these years of struggle were his meetings with people and his discovery of ideas. In 1882, he went to a meeting addressed by Henry George, of whose speech he later declared that it, "changed the whole current of my life". He then began to study Socialism and Economics, and he read Marx’s Das Capital in the British Museum. He became acquainted with leading Socialists. Henry Salt, an apostle of Shelley's ideas, and Edward Carpenter, another progressive idealist, were among them. It was the newly founded Socialist journal Today which accepted Cashel Byron’s Profession, and it was through that acceptance that Shaw met William Morris. He already knew Sidney Webb, to whose very clearly conceived socialist and economic ideas he owed much, and of whom he has said; "Sidney Webb was of more use to me than any other man I have ever met.” His membership of the Fabian Society, to whose Executive he was elected in 1885, further extended his contacts and activities. He read papers to the Fabian Society, his outstanding aptitude for debate showed itself, and be became a public speaker on platforms and at street corners, where his tall figure, red beard, clear and self-assured mind and abounding detailed knowledge, mastered his audiences.

By 1890, his knowledge of contemporary economic matters was considerable, and it was controlled by a comprehensive philosophic outlook. Like his friends he envisaged a better world to be brought into being by the co-operative efforts of realistic thinkers activated by a selfless love of
humanity. This lofty moral idealism had, at first, no religious basis, but it was not long before he found a belief which lent sit a strong support. In the writings of Samuel Butler he saw an escape from the Darwinian theory of evolution which made chance, not purpose, the determining factor, and when, in 1891, he came to know the thought of Nietzsche, he realized that he had already been thinking in terms of a purposive Life Force behind the working of the universe. This Life Force he moreover, perceived, explained the place of women in the world, for it accounted for woman’s ruthless pursuit of man. Men like himself must, therefore, by intelligent co-operation with the Life Force, use all their endeavours to hasten the evolution of mankind to higher moral, intellectual, economic and social standards. To this stage in his thinking he had practically come, when he turned to the dramas as his medium of expression.

That Shaw chose the drama as the means whereby to criticise and educate society was due to a most happy combination of experience, coincidence and chance. His own a experience had taught him that he had no promising future in the novel. It may well seem now a destined coincidence that, just when Shaw was approaching the time when he must find a channel for his enormous vitality, the plays of Ibsen became known to him. It was more or less a result of chance that, when he had finished his Quintessence of Ibsenism (1891), he had ready with him the first draft of a play, which had been laid aside since 1885. William Archer, the dramatic critic, had then asked him to write the dialogue for an adaptation of a French play, but had rejected Shaw’s unfinished attempt. Perhaps the predominating influence in determining him to turn to the drama was the example of Ibsen; perhaps his love of debating, influenced him towards choosing the kind of play in which the characters undertake this dual task of proposer and opposer. At any rate, taking up this early effort in 1892, he made it into Widower’s Houses, and thereafter, for nearly sixty years, with unflagging energy, he made the drama peculiarly his own province.
In 1898, Shaw published the first collection of plays, entitled *Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant*, in two volumes. Each of these plays proved a veritable bombshell in the literary world. They showed that a new and powerful genius had appeared on the dramatic horizon whose main purpose was to shake people out of their social complacencies and beliefs. The new dramatist was exploiting with unusual effect the medium of drama for shattering a number of social, economic and political doctrines. The playwright was a combination of the artist and the preacher. Three plays later, in 1901, followed another volume entitled, *Three Plays for Puritans*, which confirmed the impression produced by the earlier volumes.

With the publication of *Man and Superman* in 1903, Shaw attained his full stature as a dramatist. It showed that he had found his feet in the world of drama. The play proved a tremendous success especially in New York, and later in England. This was the first full dress exposition of his philosophy of life. In 1904 came another of his well-known plays, *John Bull's Other Island*, which shows how an Irishman looks at England.

From now onwards Shaw came to be recognised as a veteran dramatist of the highest caliber, a great force in the literature of the day. Plays flowed from his pen in an unending stream and he became almost a literary institution. Fanny's First Play came out in 1911, and skipping over other less significant productions, we may mention the famous *Back to Methuselah*, 1921, which also created a stir in the world of letters. Two years later, came *Saint Joan*, which, in many respects, is rightly regarded as Shaw's masterpiece. Another epoch-making play was *The Apple Cart*, in 1930. A number of other productions followed like *Millionaire* (1936), *Geneva* (1938), and *In Good King Charles's Golden Days* (1939), to mention only a few. Shaw's literary faculties seemed to be inexhaustible and he continued to write till the very last. At his death, he left an unfinished play, which according to his will, is not to be published. It has been given to the British Museum to be kept as a relic.
Bernard Shaw is not a simple personality as critics often take him to be. Critics who emphasize any particular aspect of Shaw can quote evidence from Shaw himself to prove their theses while one can successfully quote Shaw’s own statements to prove the opposite. This does not mean that he is a bundle of contradictions, but is an instance showing his versatility. Who the real Bernard Shaw is, still remains as unsolved puzzle.

As Robert F. Whitman rightly elucidates: “Depending on which critic you read, Shaw was either an artist of the first rank who regrettably dabbled his fingers in philosophic waters that were over his head, or a major social philosopher who in later life took up playwriting; he was either an intensely religious man – Christian in the truest sense – whose only claim to modernity lay in shocking the completely conventional, or an Existentialist who used orthodox terminology to disarm opposition; he has a nationalist whose pose of mysticism was at best superficial and at worst hypocritical, or a mystic whose faith in rationalize was destroyed early; he was an out-of-date vitalist, or the forerunner of feminism and the New Left; he was a moralist, or an immoralist; he was a supreme realist, or an emotionally crippled idealist who never grew up to face reality; he was an elitist and a capitalist, or a good communist fallen among the Fabians. And one could … flow on at length”.

Shaw himself has contributed substantially to the confusion by creating a number of “Public Shaws” and then insisting on the distinction between the masks and the real man behind them. Shaw’s literary career has been a long one and his concept of art has been undergoing continual changes that most of his opinions appear to be contradictory. It is Eric Bentley who explained Shaw’s complexity, pointing out the plurality in Shaw as: “not Either/Or but Both/And.”

Balanced criticism must find ways to deal with Shaw’s ideas without losing sight of the fact that Shaw was essentially a man of the theatre. The thesis is mainly concerned with Shaw as a playwright, an artist, meticulous in
creating characters on the stage. Criticism so far has been, in general, concentrating more on Shaw ideas – social, economic, political or philosophical. Even criticism on Shaw as an artist has been emphatic on structure and various other themes, paying little attention to the various modes of characterization employed by Shaw in his plays.

Early critics have summarily rejected the possibility of characterization in the plays of Bernard Shaw. According to Max Beerbohm, “Mr. Shaw is always trying to prove this or that thesis, and the result is that his characters (so soon as he differentiates them, ever so little, from himself) are the merest diagrams.” For James Huneker, Shaw is “a better bishop than a playwright.”

According to Wagenknecht, Shaw has created one great character – G.B.S. – and in play after play he performs infinite variations upon it.” Arland Ussher’s view is that Shaw’s characters lack conflict: “When all has been said of their gusto, their entrancing vitality, it remains true that there is something lacking in them, as there was in their creator; and what they lack is the sense of an inner tension, without which even comedy is mere slapstick – even if it is intellectual alapastick.” Archibald Henderson, Shaw’s biographer, comments that Shaw’s characters lack passion: “Shaw has almost succeeded in eliminating the Red Corpuscle from Art. His characters seem to be devoid of animal passions: their pallid ratiocinations can more aptly be described as vegetable passions.”

For such a hostile attitude towards Shavian art and characterization, there are various other reasons in addition to the complexity of Shaw. The taste is an aspect to be borne in mind. The well-made plays were in vogue. Being a sensible thinker and an iconoclast, Shaw did not favour the conventional well-made plays, which had only stereotyped characters and incidents and no chance for imagination. With the advent of Henrik Ibsen, whom Shaw welcomed and popularized in England with his The Quintessence of Ibsenism, a new kind of play often called ‘plays of ideas,
emerged. The ‘objective and anti-idealistic’ plays were Ibsen’s main contribution towards the growth of the “problem plays” in England.

Another characteristic change in the contemporary drama was that the stage manager, director/producer, came to hold a more dominating position than star-actors like Sir Henry Irving. The dramatist commanded respect and actors were chosen so as to suit the specific roles in the plays. Till then even productions of Shakespeare plays were at the mercy of star-actors. As Shaw, the drama-critic, rightly comments:

“They go only to see Sir Henry Irving of Miss Ellen Terry. When he sprains his knee and Miss Terry flies south leaving only Shakespeare [sic] and then Lyceum company – that company; - in possession, the theatre becomes a desert: Shakespeare will not pay for gas enough to see him by. Back comes Miss Terry; up goes Shakespeare, Wills, Sardou, anybody; the public rallies; and by the time the sprain is cured, all will be well.”

The stage was redeemed from such an atmosphere by the realistic plays of T.W. Robertson. The romantic tradition in playwriting and acting was dispensed with in preference to a realistic approach. Society, a play by Robertson, produced by Marie Wilson and Squire Bancraft at the Prince of Wales Theatre in 1865, symbolized all these welcome changes. The Bancrafts built a new stage for their plays. With Robertson, the power came to pass from the actor to the author.

The new theatre has a proscenium arch with its clever scenic and lighting effects. Styan explains the characteristics of the modern theatre: “Since playwritings must write according to the physical limitations of an existing theatre, few today presuppose any direct contact with the spectator. A theatre of scenic illusion instead encourages a naturalistic treatment of subjects. The characteristic play of modern times, therefore, is that of the ‘box’ setting: the drawing-room, the kitchen, the garden or the yard. Dialogue approximates in varying degrees to a normal idiom of speech, and the
behaviour of a character is accordingly detailed like a person’s in real life… The actor’s speech, gesture, movement and grouping depend more and more on his feelings for his part, and less and less on his feelings for the spectator”.

Shaw, both as a critic and a dramatist, is convinced that the actor’s job is to execute the author’s conception of a particular character. In a letter to Henry Arthur Jones, he explains the actor’s role in a play: “Take the ordinary actor at a rehearsal. How often does he divine without a hint from you which way your lines are to be spoken in scenes which are neither conventional nor otherwise obvious? How many actors playing Shakespeare can catch intentions in the speeches which are plain enough to you? I scrupulously avoid any direction that could not be conveyed by the action of make-up of the actor, as otherwise the play would no longer be a play”.

Shaw’s plays are essentially intellectual plays. He claims that the plays have a specific purpose or exposing social evils: “My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. In particular, I regard much current morality as to economic and sexual relations as disastrously wrong, and I regard certain doctrines of the Christian religion as understood in England today with abhorrence. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters”.

Shaw talks much about the propagandistic nature of his plays. His plays do not follow the pattern of well made plays to which the audience is accustomed. His plays do not have emotional and romantic scenes. Hence, perhaps, Shaw’s plays were condemned as no plays at all; his characters were dismissed as mere mouthpieces of Shaw. The domination of the stage by the star-actors like Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry and Bradley an attitude towards character criticism must have been the other possible reasons for Shaw being dismissed as a mere propagandist with no characterization to his credit.
It is Eric Bentley who redeemed Shaw from such a hostile treatment. He explains how a play is a harmonious unit of various aspects where characters form only a part. Bentley has also pointed out how Shaw has suffered, for being a different type of writer: "Characters in a well-made play are "conventional" — that is, they behave, not according to laws of psychology, but according to the expectations of an audience in a theatre. A type of drama in which the plot is given a free hand cannot afford any less passive or more obtrusive personae. Conversely, if a playwright abandons the plot-determined play, he will have to be more inventive as to character. To assume the initiative, his characters will have to be capable of it. So Shaw's first contribution to the drama was" more active characters. They were more active, first of all, in the most obvious fashion: they were violent. More important, they made decisions which affected the course of events, and they made them on the basis of their own nature, not of the spectator's. And so these characters were surprising. For a number of years they were too surprising to be acceptable. Like all surprising art, Shaw's dramaturgy was damned as non-art. The critics' formula was not a play.  

The idea that Shaw is essentially an artist has been expressed by a few early critics as well. Edmund Wilson is emphatic of the artistic qualities in Shaw: "Bernard Shaw has been underrated as a artist. Whether people admire or dislike him, whether they find his plays didactically boring or morally stimulating, they fail to take account of the fact that it is the enchantment of a highly accomplished art which has brought them to and kept them in the playhouse".

Defending Shaw against the charge that his plays lack action, R.F.Rattray suggests that in his plays, "action is largely spiritual action: people are affected and altered by it: they change in the action of the play".

Shaw is a versatile, complex and a controversial artist. Criticism on his work is abundant. It is difficult to comment on a hundred years of criticism.
Criticism relevant to the theme of characterization alone is taken for discussion.


*The Wit and Satire of Bernard Shaw* (1967) is a diligent study on Shaw's language and the effective use he makes of it in his plays especially the irony, satire and humor. *Bernard Shaw: A Reassessment* (1969), by Colin Wilson, hails Shaw as a man of ideas emphasizing that Shaw's thinking was not only far in advance of his own days, but is ahead of even the contemporary situation in some aspects. Bernard F. Dukore's *Bernard Shaw, Director* (1971) illustrates how Shaw is essentially an artist, who pays minute attention to every element of the play, though he uses it as a vehicle for his ideas.

Louis Crompton's *Shaw the Dramatist* (1971) studies the intellectual background of some of Shaw's plays. The contribution of this book to the study of characterization lies in its demonstration of the closeness of Shaw's characters to their real-life prototypes. Leon Hugo, in his Bernard Shaw: *Playwright and Preacher* (1971), attempts to correlate Shavian doctrine with Shavian drama. Margery M. Morgan, in *The Shavian Playground* (1972), shows little interest in Shaw's ideas and sees them only as counters manipulated in the plays by conscious or unconscious elements in Shaw's personality. Bernard F. Dukore's main interest is rather in strategies of
organization than in characterization in particulars. Maurice Velency's *The Cart and the Trumpet* (1973) tries to find a special meaning in Shaw's assertion that all his characters are Shaws.

Charles Berst's *Bernard Shaw and the Art of Drama* (1973) draws attention to the artistic and aesthetic dimensions of the plays. Berst, however, is keenly aware of the role of philosophy as an essential element of Shavian dramaturgy. Berst is of the view that Shaw approached life as an art, to be explored on as many planes and from as many view-points as possible. Though the present researcher is in agreement with this concept of Shavian drama, which emphasizes the complexity and plurality in Shaw, J.E. Wisenthal's *The Marriage of Contraries* Bernard Shaw's Middle Plays 1974) identifies and describes several comparable instances of Shaw's habit of seeing the world in terms of contraries. Alfred Turco, Jr., in *Shaw's Moral Vision: The Self and Salvation* (1976) is concerned with tracing the evolution of Shaw's spiritual biography as it reveals itself in his plays.

No full length study, however, has been so far made on Shavian modes of characterization correlating Shavian philosophy and his dramatic art. While Eric Bentley’s criticism has explained the futility of analyzing Shavian characters in terms of dimensions, flat and round, the concept of character criticism itself has undergone welcome changes. Styan rightly emphasizes: “A rule for one type of play may not apply to another. The real test is whether a character can do what the play requires of it.”

In 1932, M.C. Bradbrook published Elizabethan Stage Conditions in which, after reviewing the dramatic criticism of Shakespeare in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, she showed how the attitude to characters had been established by Coleridge and Hazlitt and reduced to absurdity by A.C. Bradley, whose character studies were, she suggested, little more than ‘thinly disguised gossip about the private lives of the dramatic personae’. This method of attack was continued in L.C. Knight’s famous essay ‘How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?’ Yet the study of character, either in the text or on the stage, seems central and inescapable.

Thomas F. Van Laan explains the exact role of the characters in a play: “What is normally called a character is ... two separate things. He is, on the one hand, a series of impressions woven into the composite pattern formed by the entire play. This series of impressions clusters around a single label ... and acquires substance from the personality of the actor, whose continued identification with the label focuses and sustains the implications of the related impressions. On the other hand, the character is a perception that takes shape in the consciousness of the spectators and consists of the realizations and attitudes that the received impressions awaken. As they watch the actor performing his part, the perception and the visible figure coalesce.”

Hence, it can be seen that though character-study cannot be dispensed with, characters in a play must be studied only in terms of the particular play by the particular author and only in relation to its themes and ideas.
promulgated in the play. So, one needs to know what kind of play Shaw wrote to understand what kind of characters he created. Shaw’s drama is intellectual drama where character-interaction and conflict of ideas synchronize.

The basic controversy whether Shaw is an artist or just a propagandist is not ill-founded. Though Shavian philosophy of the Life Force can be found consistently implicit in Shaw’s major plays, Shaw is not consistent in this attitude towards the purpose of art. Shaw’s period of authorship is also too long to expect Shaw to be consistent. Arthur Nethercot analyses the various changes of trend in Shaw’s attitude towards art and philosophy:

Strange as it may seem Shaw started out, as he admits in his Sixteen Self Sketches, as an art-for-art’s-sake man. But when he found he was getting nowhere under the domination of this creed, he became an artist-with-a-purpose, maintaining that “great art is never produced for its own sake”. In 1899, after finishing Captain Brassbound’s Conversion, he had written to Ellen Terry about his intention to abandon practical plays and turn to “Shaw-philosophy.” And by 1903, in the dedication to Man and Superman, he had found his new title. By this time, he said, “the artist-philosophers are the only sort of artists I take quite seriously.” For many years he regularly referred to himself as one of these artist-philosophers.

Although Shaw continued to list himself among the artist-philosophers, he found new changes to ring on the classification as time went on. In the preface to Back to Methuselah, which he wrote in 1921, he calls himself an ‘artist-prophet.” And, as Nethercot adds: “… by his postscript to the same work in 1944 he had added a new element or emphasis: he was now also a “born artist-biologist struggling to take biology a step forward on its way to positive science from its present metaphysical stage.” And so he remained in his Self Sketches: the artist-philosopher-prophet-biologist a true protean, dumbfounding man.”
Nethercot has analysed the various changes of attitude in Shaw towards the purpose of his art and he has clearly brought out the fact that throughout his career, Shaw is primarily an artist. Shaw himself makes this aspect clear. Conceding that anybody could have done the propaganda, Shaw told Mrs. Pearson: “No one could have written my plays. I had to write them: they were a part of me.”

The artist in Shaw can be clearly seen in his letters. Hardly anything else reveals inner workings of Shaw’s personality better than these intimate exchanges with actors, actresses and people of the theatre. When he writes to actors and actresses, he does not talk about his philosophy, or about his socio-political and economic ideas. He talks to them about the plays only in terms of characters as individuals, not in terms of abstract concepts. In a letter to Louis Calvert, Shaw described Undershaft neither as a Life Force figure nor as a personification of wealth: “Broadbent and Keegan rolled into one, with Mephistopheles through in … Undershaft is diabolically subtle, gentle, self-possessed, powerful, stupendous, as well as amusing and interesting. There are the makings of ten Hamlets and six Othellos in his mere leavings.” One should not ignore the pluralistic qualities in Shaw. The use of phrases like “diabolically subtle” is highly suggestive of the Shavian ideas. But, all the same, it is the artist who predominates and the characters are individualistic to the extent the play needs them to be.

Eric Bentley’s classification of Shaw’s plays based on chronology helps to analyse the plays of Shaw from a technical point of view: “Indeed his plays are so various, and there are about thirty important ones, that classification is extremely difficult even on chronological lines. Yet, though Shaw’s dramatic career is not so clearly periodized as, say, Ibsen’s, certain groupings do suggest themselves. A major break occurred with the First World War. The plays prior to that compose a single group which in turn may be cut in half at about the turn of the century. Dividing the post-war period also in half, we have two main periods, with two subdivisions:
I. i. 1892-1899 Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, and Three Plays for Puritans.

ii. 1901-1912 From Man and Superman to Pygmalion.

II. i. 1913-1924 From Heartbreak House to Saint Joan.

ii. 1929-1939 From The Apole Cart to In Good King Charles's Golden Days". 22

Explaining his classification, Bentley points out that the plays of the nineties are chiefly simple inversions of current theatrical patterns, while from Superman, Shaw makes his own patterns. They are mainly discussion plays, dialectical plays and fantasies. Heartbreak makes a departure in technique and mood, characters becoming abstract.

While Bentley's classification is based on chronology, Ward's classification is based on themes and both the classifications help in understanding Shavian plays better. Ward explains that plays based on his philosophy are the major works of Shaw: "Shaw's belief in the Life Force and in Creative Evolution stands as the main trunk of his work, formed by Man and Superman and Back to Methuselah. His other plays are the branches of the tree. In these he discussed problems of marriage (The Philanderer; Candida; Getting Married; Misalliance), of family life (You Never Can tell; Fanny's First Play), of sexual prostitution and its economic roots (Mrs. Warren's Profession), of politics and statecraft (John Bull's Other Island; Heartbreak House; The Apple Cart; Too True to be Good; On the Rocks), of religion (Androcles and the Lion; Saint Joan)". 23

Though Ward is of the view that Shaw's belief in the Life Force and in Creative Evolution is formed in Superman the researcher feels that a deep analysis of the plays reveals the fact that though Shaw gives expression to his concept of the Life Force only in 1903, one can trace the Shavian concept of
man-woman relationship with particular bearing on the Shavian Life Force theory even from his first play, Widowers. While critics emphasize the plurality in Shaw, one can say that the real idea behind the various ideas voiced forth in the plays is the Shavian concept of man-woman relationship, the other socio-political and economic ideas being secondary.

A note on the Shavian concept of the Life Force will not be out of place here. Carl Henry Mills explains the concept crisply: "For Shaw, man is the instrument created by life for the advancement of life's instinctive purposes. Man's very reason for being, then, will be found in the fulfillment of life's intentions regarding him, not in the vain pursuit of his own purposes. ... Shaw's theory of creative evolution represents femininity as being more primitive and fundamental than masculinity and calls civilization an attempt on man's part to make himself something more than the mere instrument of woman's purpose. Since woman has more direct inheritance from the life force, she usually succeeds in turning man back to his specific biological function of reproduction and nourishment. Man may have his dreams and his ideals, but woman will very often divert him from them. The exception in Shaw's theory to this usually male behaviour is the philosophic man of genius, who holds within himself a special potential of life, and is expressly created for the purpose of carrying life to a higher level by giving mankind a new insight into truth, a new conception of political association and moral obligation, a new vision of beauty, or a new refinement of personal relationships."²⁴

Considering the Shavian philosophical concept of man-woman relationship as the ultimate base for Shavian plays, the plays can be classified into three groups. Plays written before Man and Superman can be termed as early plays. Among these plays, Major Barbara, and Caesar and Cleopatra are chosen for analysis. The plays written during and after the war are termed as later plays, among which Heartbreak House, Saint Joan and Apple Cart
are chosen for discussion. As Shaw himself puts it, "every drama must present a conflict. The end may be reconciliation or destruction: or, as in live itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensabale: no conflict, no drama."²⁵

Christopher Caudwell is quite hostile towards Shaw: "Believing in the solitary primacy of thought, all his plays are devoid of humanity, because they represent human beings as walking intellects."²⁶ But Caudwell's view cannot be correct because mere thought alone cannot exist as drama. Shaw's characters are not frozen characters as Caudwell suggests, because a character cannot propose ideas without life. Though they may not have the Shakespearean complexity, they have lives of their own. Even a minor character like Alfred Doolittle can be complex. Though his becoming rich can be sociologically interpreted. His problem in the given situation is human. The dilemma Doolittle experiences, before accepting the money, is quite human:

"That's the tragedy of it ... It's easy to say chuck it; but I haven't the nerve. Which of us has? We're all intimidated ... that's what we are. What is there for me if I chuck it but the workhouse in my old age? I have to dye my hair already to keep my job as a dustman. If I was one of the deserving poor, and had put by a bit, I could chuck it."

When the bullying Lady Britomart loses her grip over the children, after the arrival of Andrew Undershaft in the family scene, there is a change of tone and mood in her. Her self-pity is poignant: "A woman has to bring up her children; and that means to restrain them, to deny them things they want, to set them tasks, to punish them when they do wrong, to do all the unpleasant things. And then the father, who has nothing to do but pet them and spoil them, comes in when all her work is done and steals their affection from her.
REFERENCES


