

CHAPTER - V

Artist or Thinker

When the earliest plays of Bernard Shaw began to see the light of day, the theatre-manager, the actors and actresses, and the audience were at a loss. The critics, burdened with the knowledge of the "well-made play", did not know what to say. But they did say that Shaw was not an artist, that his play were "not plays". The theatre managers did not like these plays, drunk completely as they were with the cheap entertainment pieces. The actors and actresses as well as the critics thought, while granting that Shaw was a thinker, that these plays lacked good "acting" parts. The audience was completely at a loss and laughed incessantly not knowing what to do ; they regarded the playwright as a jester who would sacrifice all for the sake of good joke - a few of our contemporaries still hold such a view. The views that Shaw's plays have no good "acting" parts and that they are "not plays" are tantamount to condemning him as "not an artist". The fact is, he was always, and often is, looked upon as a thinker, a philosopher and a prophet. It is also often observed - and this observation is quite correct - that as a thinker Shaw cannot be regarded as belonging to the first rank because most of his ideas are only second-hand, Marx, Neitzsche, and William Butler informing them. But these critics also did not regard Shaw primarily as an artist. Shaw actually was a victim of what he said about Shakespeare- lack

of philosophic competence. It is certainly true that his ideas are not original ; he himself made no claim to the name of a creative or original thinker who derives new cosmic theories ; he denied that such an original "monster" had ever existed. He was definitely influenced by the ideas of Nietzsche and Butler and Lamarck and borrowed from them not illiberally, but borrowing was not his sole business ; he contributed to and enriched the borrowed ideas. All the piercing ideas of his own time and of the past have been studied by him, but he co-ordinated these ideas with the vast mass of advance thought. It is natural, therefore, that many critics look upon him as a thinker in the first place.²

Without entering into a lengthy discussion I maintain that all great art has two-fold activities - it gives us pictures, and, at the same time, a lesson. It not only gives us a picture but finds a meaning in it and tries to evaluate it. It is because of this that Hamlet is decidedly a greater work of art, despite Elliot's scathing remarks,³ than even a masterpiece like King Lear with all its beauty and power because in Hamlet we find a problem, which defies precise

1. Shaw in the Postscript, dated 1931 to Our Theatre in the Nineties, writes, "Until than Shakespeare had been conventionally ranked as a giant among psychologists and philosophers. Ibsen dwarfed him so absurdly in those aspects that it became impossible for the moment to regard him seriously as an intellectual force". Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw. Paul Hamlyn. 1965. P 779.

2. Both Archer and Walkley, Shaw's friends, also held this view.

3. Hamlet and his Problems in Sacred Wood - J.S. Eliot.

explanation, discussed. All real and great art has some philosophical and moral import. Philosophy is a commentary on life, and in art we find events which, inspite of magnification or minification, are very much like what happens in real life. The artist may not always be, of course, conscious of the deeper signification of the "commentary on life" present in his work. Later generations may well discover newer significance of a work of art. Hence the greatness of Hamlet and even of "To be or not to be".

Shaw held that discussion was the real test of a playwright. If he meant by this that it is discussion only which puts the seal of art on a play or a novel, then he was entirely in the wrong. Again, a piece of art does not become inartistic if discussion is relevently and interestingly present there. In the plays of Shaw, as in other plays of ideas, we find that art has become highly intellectualised; drama has become a medium of intellectual discussion and the characters have become self-conscious. It may so happen, as it often happened in the case of Shaw, that the characters express the ideas of their creator. It is difficult to get an impersonal artist of the type of Shakespeare regularly. The protagonists of a number of plays of Rabindranath Tagore - Govindamanikya in Bisarjan, Malini in Malini and the

1. In The Quintessence of Ibsenism Shaw writes "... and now serious playwright recognizes in the discussion not only the main test of his highest powers, but also the real centre of his play's interest". Constable & Co. 1913. P 188.

poet in Rather Rashi express Tagore's own views; but these plays are, nevertheless, acknowledged as works of art. In all great works of art and particularly in a modern work of art which is intellectual before anything else, discussion becomes inevitable - if it cares to interpret life. In Shakespeare, say in Hamlet, there is a lot of intellectual discussion, but far from making the play inartistic, it adds to its greatness as a work of art. The important thing is that discussion must become an integral part of the whole design and an adequate medium to express the character and also life. Discussion is the instrument in the hands of the playwright, particularly of the playwright of the drama of ideas, to present before us the ideas and to enable us to look at them from different angles. The use of discussion may become inevitable to bring out the significance of life and to expound and explain an idea or ideas. All the dramatic works of Shaw are commentaries on life, and hence discussion, far from branding them as inartistic, shows that these are art-pieces. Discussion may be regarded as a part and parcel of the art of Bernard Shaw. The modern play is essentially a problem play. The playwright has to admit that there is not just one correct point of view. There are several points of views and the characters are "all right from their several points of view"¹. Each character is to be allowed to put forward his point of view; discussion,

1. Preface to Man and Superman. The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw. Paul Hamlyn Ltd. 1965. P 160.

naturally, becomes inevitable. About the several points of view held by several characters and the dramatist's relation with them Shaw writes : "... and their points of view are for the dramatic moment, mine also. This may puzzle the people who believe that there is such a thing as an absolutely right point of view. ... However that may be, it is certainly true that nobody who ¹agrees with them can possibly be a dramatist"

It is rather ironical that Shaw as a critic has made it impossible, or at least difficult, for those who accept his criticism to own that Shaw as a dramatic artist has any right to be really famous. Bernard Shaw as a critic repeatedly fell into the grave error of separating the stuff he was criticising into matter and manner as if they were watertight compartments. Thus when he confronted the Elizabethan dramatists he maintained that they had nothing to say and that they were only tolerable because they had an incomparably wonderful way of saying things. Comparing Shakespeare with Ibsen he would point out that if one paraphrased Ibsen's Peer Gynt it would still remain good intellectual stuff, whereas if one paraphrased Shakespeare's "Life's is but a walking Shadow", it would become mere commonplace. Hence Shaw arrived at the conclusion that Ibsen was the greater and more penetrating dramatist than Shakespeare. But this type of criticism is not only false in

1. Preface to Man and Superman. That Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw. Paul Hamlyn Ltd. 1965. P 160.

fact, but also non-sensical in theory. It is absurd to paraphrase Shakespeare because he is of genius all compact; and as it is true of Ibsen so it is of Shakespeare that, so far as he is an artist, it is absurd to separate what he says from his manner of saying it. Shaw's own reputation as a dramatist would suffer very much if such a distinction between matter and manner is made in his case, for the reason that Shaw's matter is in no sense original. A paraphrase of Shaw is as absurd as a paraphrase of Shakespeare; this would relegate him to a very ordinary position as a dramatic artist. If Shaw is an artist, it is precisely in the sense that Shakespeare is an artist; and so any distinction between the theme and the style in a Shaw-play would only lead us to wrong conclusions. The first critics of Shaw who thought that he was a philosopher and not an artist actually committed this mistake. The fact is, the "ideas" of Bernard Shaw are no more than commonplaces, but his way of presenting these ideas makes him a master-artist the like of whom England has not seen very often.

Shaw has won the attention of the present generation as an artist, and quite rightly too. Shaw's comments about himself in which he claimed the honour of being a thinker and a philosopher are not very safe guides. This, however, in no way suggests that he is not a thinker at all. But he is much more an artist than a thinker. His ideas - his philosophy, one may say - are not original; but his manner of presentation of these ideas thrills us with a conviction that nothing quite like it has ever come within our experience. In

a separate chapter I have dealt with Shaw's dramatic technique which shows what a great dramatic artist he is. I may, however, add one or two things more in support of my contention. The great role of Shaw in the theatre has been to exploit the full possibilities of a style of English comedy which had first been given its characteristic form during the seventies of the nineteenth century by W.S. Gilbert. The Comedy of Manners of the Restoration Period, which had reached its culmination in Congreve, had been the product of an aristocratic society which depended for its ironic effects on the contrast between the artificial social conventions and natural animal instincts; between fine manners and fine intelligence on the one hand, and the crudest carnal appetites on the other. The comedy of the nineteenth century - setting aside those of Oscar Wilde - depended on the contrast between the respectable conventions of a pious middle-class society and the mean, practical realities behind them; between the pretensions of high moral principles and the cold complacency which underlay such pretensions. As with the dramatists of the Restoration Period it was always the pursuit of pleasure that emerged from behind the formalities, so in the comedies of Gilbert, which preceded his Savoy operas and of which the most famous and successful was Engaged (1877), it is always the greed for money that emerges from behind the screen of noble words and discreet behaviour. The characters of Gilbert's comedies who talk the language of the Victorian fiction, are never for a moment

betrayed by emotion into allowing themselves to be diverted from the first chance; and the young men are perfectly ready, not from appetite but from sheer indifference, to make equally passionate professions to any number of young ladies at the same time. It is not far from the Symperson family and Cheviot Hill of Engaged to Shaw's The Philanderer and Widowers' Houses.

But neither Gilbert nor Dickens nor Samuel Butler - these two other great satirists of the money-minded English, to whom also Shaw was indebted - could teach Shaw how to analyse society in terms of economic motivation or to understand and criticise the capitalist system. This he learned to do from Karl Marx, whose work during his English residence - the period in which Das Kapital was written - was itself, of course, a product of an ironical protest against the nineteenth century English civilization. Shaw's study of Economics had served him, as he himself said, for his plays as the study of Anatomy had served Michaelangelo for his sculptures. Shaw thus brought something new into English imaginative literature. And with economic insight and training he joined literary qualities of a kind that had never yet appeared in combination with them - qualities that, in fact, had been absent from English literature since the century before.

In the field of literature the Irish of Bernard Shaw's period enjoyed certain special advantages over the English,

1. As in George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century - Archibald Henderson. Appleton - Century-Crofts Inc. 1956. P 731

due to the fact that, since Irish society was still mainly in the pre-industrial stage, they were closer to the eighteenth-century standardss. The Irish have preserved for English literature classical qualities of hardness and elegance. Shaw has had, as Edmend Wilson points out, the further advantage¹ of musical education.

Bernard Shaw, on the other hand, is a writer of the same kind as Plato.² There are not many such writers in literature; and often they puzzle the critics. Shaw, like Plato, repudiates as a dangerous form of drunkenness the indulgence in literature for its own sake; but, again like Plato, he then proceeds, not simply to expound a useful morality, but himself to indulge in an art in which moralities are used as the motifs. It is partly on this account certainly that Bernard Shaw has been underrated as an artist. Whether people admire or dislike him, whether they find his plays didactically boring or morally stimulating, they, more often than not, fail to take account of the fact that it is the enchantment of a highly accomplished art that brings them to and keeps them in the playhouses. So far from being relentlessly didactic, Shaw's mind has reflected in all its complexity the intellectual life of his time; and his great achievement is that he has reflected it with remarkable fidelity. He has not imposed a cogent system; but he has

1. Bernard Shaw at Eighty - Edmund Wilson (in George Bernard Shaw : a critical survey. Ed. L. Kronenberger. The World Publishing Company. 1953. P 140).

2. Shaw - C.E.M. Joad. Victor Gollanez Ltd. London. 1949. P 149.

worked out a vivid picture of life. It is, to be sure, not a passive picture; it is a picture in which action plays a prominent part.

Shaw's diatribes against Shakespeare made him infamous. It must be borne in mind, however, that Shaw had a good ear for Shakespeare's word-music. He is primarily not a poet, but coupled with his advantage of receiving a musical education, he had the advantage of - and this is even more important - having a musical ear. He wrote : "Do not suppose for a moment that I learnt my art from English men of letters. True, they showed me how to handle English words; but if I had known no more than that, my works would never have crossed the Channel. My masters were the masters of universal language; they were, to go from summit to summit, Bach, Handel, Haydon, Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner" . When Stella Campbell² said that Shaw had a "thrush in his throat", she meant that Shaw, like Shakespeare, was, above all, musical. We can see in the dramatic works of Shaw a logic, a grace, and a formal precision. Of the influence of Mozart on Shaw there can hardly be two opinions. When his indebtedness to Congreve and Sheridan was hinted at, Shaw replied : "They had no part whatever in forming my habits. On the other hand, the fact that I was brought up on Italian and German opera must have

1. As in Bernard Shaw at Eighty - Edmund Wilson (In George Bernard Shaw : A Critical Survey - Ed. L. Kronenberger. The World Publishing Company. 1953. P 140).

2. George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century. Vol II. Archibald Henderson. Appleton-Century Crofts Inc. 1956. P 734.

influenced me a good deal; there is much more of Il Trovatore and Don Giovanni in my style than of The Mourning Bride or The School for Scandal¹". Shaw has time and again dwelt on this aspect of his art: he told Archibald Henderson, "Arms and the Man is a light opera in comedy form"²; again in his essay "The Drama of Ideas" published in The New Statesman and Nation, he wrote "The truth was that I was going back atavistically to Aristotle . . . to the word music of Shakespeare, to the form of my idol Mozart . . ."³.

We may take the example of The Apple Cart to bring the point home. The artistic and musical quality of this play has not been properly appreciated possibly because here Shaw worked with economic and political material; possibly because it was thought that Shaw had given up his socialist faith and turned a Monarchist. And yet, when carefully examined, the art of the playwright comes out quite clearly. The first act of The Apple Cart is an exercise in the scoring for small orchestra at which Shaw is particularly skilful. After the overture before the curtain of the conversation between the two secretaries, in which the music of King Magnus is foreshadowed, the urbane and intelligent king and the "bull-roarer Boanerges" play a duet against each other. Then the king plays a single instrument against all the nine of the Cabinet. From this the themes emerge : the King's disinterestedness and the Labour Government's sordid self-

-
1. "Mr. Shaw on Mr. Shaw". The New York Times, June 12, 1927. (As in Archibald Henderson's Vol II Page 734).
 2. As in G.B.S : Man of the Century Vol.I P 134
 3. Ibid Vol II P 735.

interest. The development is very lively; the music is tossed from one instrument to the other. Finally the King's theme gets a full and splendend statement in the long speech in which he declares his principles : "I stand for the great abstractions : for conscience and virtue : for the eternal against the expedient; for the evolutionary appetite against the gluttony" etc. etc. The deep, ringing voice of the King lifts the movements to a poignant and fitting climax; and then a dramatic reversal carries the climax further and rounds off and balances the harmony. Candida, Androcles and the Lion, and Saint Joan may also be analyzed in this way. The Epilogue of Saint Joan, far from being inartistic, is a symphonic treatment of Joan's history, which is without a par. Music is here in the masterly blending between what Professor S.C. Sengupta calls "the comedy of impersonal evolution and the tragedy of personal death".

To say that Bernard Shaw is not an artist is to ignorantly discredit his technique and substance. The technical complaint is easily disposed of; I have already discussed it in the chapter on Shaw's technique and treatment of theme. Leaving aside the technique of construction of his plays, which is classical, there is such a thing as Shavian prose. The Shavian sentence, by obliterating all connectives, becomes a short of lash made up of fused ideas, written for ear and mind - "music of ideas" it may be called - and barbed

1. The Art of Bernard Shaw. S.C.Sengupta. A. Mukherjee & Co. 1965. P 102.

to suit the occasion. Such an achievement is quite enough to stamp a man as an artist, whether he uses it for drafting a resolution or writing a letter to his friend or composing dialogue for a play. If Shaw can claim immortality, it will not be by virtue of his so called original, novel or startling ideas, but by virtue of his artistic presentation of them.

Of the music in the plays of Shaw, Edmund Wilson observes, "This music is a music of ideas - or rather, perhaps, it is a music of moralities"². People may find his plays didactically boring or morally wicked; but it is the enchantment of an accomplished art which makes them revisit a Shaw-play. It is an art that has the power to preserve such a piece as Getting Married, which, so far as the theme is concerned, may be regarded as "dated", and which consists only discussion; but this play remains brilliant and fresh because of its symphonic development and the music of ideas. It is the music of ideas which makes the fantastical Too True to be Good a great work of art.

The critics who regarded Shaw as a philosopher in the first place rather than an artist did it, obviously, for the reason that they had no ear for music; also for the reason that they looked upon him as a promulgator of certain ideas.

1. Dixon Scott has very admirably dwelt on this aspect of Shaw's art in "The Innocence of Bernard Shaw", George Bernard Shaw : a Critical Survey - Ed. Louis Kronenberger. The World Publishing Co. 1953. P 72-104.

2. Bernard Shaw at Eighty - Edmund Wilson (Ibid. P 141).

A third reason may be added; they knew little of Bulter and Lamarck. The consequence of the third reason was that when Shaw took up the Life Force, they thought that it was an original idea. These critics failed to listen to the music of ideas in Shavian plays; their incurable deafness prevented them from entering into the secrets of the art of Shaw. I would maintain that Shaw is not a competent philosopher. Though it is not my declared intention to put the Shavian philosophy to cross-examination, I may point out some of its obvious defects that will bring out his philosophic incompetence. Among its defects, both as a philosophy and a cosmic dream, one may enumerate these - the unconvincing attempt to solve the problem of evil by depriving the Deity of omnipotence, the failure to ascribe convincing reasons for faith in the perfectibility of man and belief in the spiritual progress of mankind, the low place accorded to woman, and the scientific etherealization of mankind by redemption from the burden of flesh. To this list a few more defects could be added. But this list is enough to prove that Shaw was not a philosopher worthy of serious consideration.

To come back to Shaw's art, the artist Shaw is present not only in his classical dramatic technique, in his constructive skill, and in the music of ideas; he is present particularly in his art of characterisation. The idea that in drawing the characters Shaw is "playing ¹ ventriloquist" is ridiculous and misleading because the

1. George Bernard Shaw : Man of the Century. Vol II. Archibald Henderson. Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc. 1956. P 601.

characters of Shaw are wholly themselves. His sort of play would be impossible unless he endowed his characters with powers of self-consciousness and self-expression. The exceptional variety and vividness of his characters reminds one of Shakespeare's artistic genius. Shaw's characters speak for themselves; they are the living people in their hidden selves. Each character belongs to the play in which he or she appears. As it is ridiculous to suppose Othello in Hamlet or Hamlet in Othello, so it is ridiculous to have Broadbent in the place of, say, Undershaft or Tarleton. Broadbent, Undershaft and Tarleton are, it may be noted, like characters; so are Marchbanks, Cusins and Dubedat. But none of them could be mistaken for the other; they have their own peculiar existence in the dramas. A character like Jack Tanner in Man and Superman may be regarded as animated thought, but he is made a human being as when he is made awkward at the declaration of Juliet that the child she bears is conceived not outside the wedlock or when he discovers that he, and not Octavius, is dwindled to be the husband of Ann. The impression that Tanner is just animated thought gets another jolt when, just before the curtain finally falls, he is made a laughing stock as a mere talker. Shaw's minor characters are also individuals and not just men in a mob. In Major Barbara there are a number of characters who belong to the lowest class - Bill Walker, Peter Shirley and the rest; but each of them is his own self and one cannot help noticing that each has dramatic existence. Thus in Shaw's plays not

only the protagonists, but also the minor characters are distinctly drawn and differentiated from each other.

Shaw discovered that Shakespeare, who borrowed his plots from different sources, made from them plays peopled with characters which are masterly creations in human portraiture. As a dramatist, Shaw created "living pictures" in human form which have characters of their own. Shaw significantly says, concerning Shakespeare and himself, "We have no souls. We understand all the souls and all the faiths and can dramatize them because they are to us wholly objective : we hold none of them"¹. It may be noted that the number of the secondary characters in the plays of Shaw exceeds those in the plays of Shakespeare. The women characters in his plays are also highly individualized; no amount of absurdity could put Ann in the place of Joan. Candida and Cleopatra, Eliza, Raina and Lady Undershaft - all appear before us as highly individualized characters. The male and the female characters, at least the major characters, in Shaw's plays demand first class actors and actresses on the stage for their reconstruction and interpretation. To say that Shaw has not created actable characters is to betray ignorance. These characters are lively and are immensely actable because they speak from the sub-conscious level of the mind. A speech delivered from the conscious level of the mind is somewhat untrue in as much as the real character, his intents and private thoughts, remains

1. Bernard Shaw - Frank Harris. 1931. P 228.
(Shaw's letter to Harris. London. June 10, 1930).

concealed behind the speeches, but when a man speaks from the sub-conscious level, he reveals himself more truthfully and more poetically. The poetical outbursts of Father Keegan and Joan, of Caesar, Marchbanks and Lilith may be cited as examples. Moreover, the "double-density dialogue"¹, of which Ibsen was the master, found not a bad practitioner in Shaw, who employs this device to bring out the inner thoughts and even the inner conflict of the speaker. In other words, the essential nature of the speaker as well as the nature of the conflict that rages within him or her comes out through this device.

Eminent writers including C.E.M. Joad and G.K. Chesterton have examined and re-examined Shaw's philosophy of "Life Force" and have ably pointed out its weaknesses as a "philosophy" or a body of systematic thought. These, coupled with the fact that his ideas are mostly borrowed casts not a favourable light on the philosophic competence of Shaw. I would like to point out one more thing : in his later dramas Shaw seems to be a puzzled man - a man who fails to keep faith in anything and to advance any system, philosophical or political, worth the name. Sometimes I have a lurking doubt whether Shaw had any philosophy at all. Creative Evolution and Life Force certainly attracted him, but he reacted to it not as a philosopher, but rather as an artist. He really exploited the great dramatic possibility of the theory

1. The phrase has been used and explained by Michael Meyer in "Ibsen". Penguin 1974.

of Creative Evolution and wrote "plays of ideas" with them. The long speeches in Man and Superman are not prompted by a faith on the part of the playwright in Creative Evolution as a satisfactory body of thoughts; they are prompted by his inspiration as a poet. The outburst of Joan and the last dithyramb of Lilith are also the outcome of poetic inspiration. Nothing else can explain the beauty of these speeches in which Shaw reached highest realm of poetry. Shaw may be regarded, as the Germans regard him, primarily as a poet, who used prose as the medium of expression.

Shaw is a great stylist whose prose ranks next in style to that of Jonathan Swift; it is limpid, passionate and tireless, never falling much below its standard of perfection. Shaw himself has told us, Archibald Henderson reports, that his style - Shaw, of course, makes a statement of general application for the nature of all styles that really are styles -- is an instrument of assertion. "A true, original style", Shaw wrote, "is never achieved for its own sake Effectiveness of assertion is the Alpha and Omega of style. He who has nothing to assert has no style and can have none; he who has something to assert will go as far in power of style as its momentousness and his conviction will carry him. Disprove his assertion after it is made, yet its style remains".

-
1. G.B.S. : Man of the Century - Archibald Henderson. Vol II. Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc. 1956. P 734.
 2. Preface to Man and Superman : The Complete Prefaces of Bernard Shaw. Paul Hamlyn, 1965. P 165

This description applies admirably to the writings of Bernard Shaw himself who is a master of effective assertion; and the style remains even after one disproves Shaw's assertions. The reader catches the writer's enormous self-confidence, as he finds himself assisted along dry paths of assertion and argument by the administration of carefully calculated doses of amusement and shock. The Shavian theme may sometimes seem dull and dated, but the medium is invariably a polished work of art. The Shavian style has affinities with that of Dickens at his best, exhibiting the same rapid variation of purpose and device, from colloquialism to a high abstraction which by some miracle makes itself concrete as it goes. Shaw balances his periods in a unique way, picks up the inevitable word and places it in the most effective place in a sentence that rolls on as one idea rapidly follows the other. I would, by way of citing examples, take up only two instances from two of his plays. It would be seen that there is a smoothness in the sentences -- smoothness that springs from the careful placing of the words and balancing of the periods. The first example occurs in Saint Joan. The following comes from the mouth of Joan in the Trial Scene.

"I could do without my warhorses; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and the soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs

crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind".

This is home-spun language coming from the deepest recess of the heart of one who is an innocent rustic; it is not the language manufactured in the study of an Oxford scholar. With the most common words - but not the vulgar - used by the rustics Shaw has created music. He has reached real poetic height vindicating his claim that he is an inspired artist. For comparison the following coming from the mouth of Cauchon may be cited :

"The mighty structure of Catholic Christendom will never be shaken by naked madmen or by the sins of Moab and Ammon. But it may be betrayed from within, and brought to barbarous ruin and desolation, by this arch-heresy which the English Commander calls Protestantism".

Here is classical precision; how the entire edifice of the Catholic Church is endangered by the works and actions of Joan is brought out through the most neat and precise terms. The words issue from the intellect of Cauchon; but eloquence is pronounced in the studied manner of the use of words. If Joan's speech reveals a surcharged child of nature uninitiated to the history of subtle philosophical thoughts who has nevertheless, instinctively learnt the essence of mysticism, Cauchon's speech reveals a cool and calculated man who understands where the real danger lies.

The vigour, the force that we find in Shaw's prose style may to some extent be accounted for by the fact that he generally strikes at the pillars of society; his satire is directed at such able opponents as the medical science, conventional theism and the system of free enterprise. There is something of the authoritarian in his intellectual make up; the attitude of the authoritarian comes out often through the language he uses - vigorous and unambiguous, sometimes satiric and ironic, always emphatic. The result of his authoritarian attitude and his striking the able opponent may be seen in the following that comes from the mouth of Don Juan in Man and Superman : "Here you call your appearance beauty, your emotions love, your sentiments heroism, your aspirations virtue, just as you did on earth; but here there are no hard facts to contradict you, no ironic contrast of your needs with your pretensions, no human comedy, nothing but a perpetual romance, a universal melodrama"¹. Don Juan's invective catalogues the hypocrisies of the Devil's subjects and ends with those who are "liars every one of them, to the very backbone of their souls". No prose style can be more pointed and forceful than this.

The poet in Shaw comes out in the mystic utterance of Mrs. George in Getting Married and in the last speech of Lilith in Back To Methuselah. Once again we get a glimpse of the poet in Shaw in the speech of Father Keegan in John

1. Man and Superman (Don Joan in Hell) - Shaw

Bull's Other Island : "In my dreams, heaven is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people : three in one and one in three It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped : three in one and one in three". This is the language of a mystic, of an inspired soul that has mystical experience; and such experiences can scarcely be communicated through very intelligible language as C.E.M. Joad seems to demand.¹

We have so often been told that the Shavian Comedy lacks form and is unlikelike. If we start by asking what the "form" of the comedy is, tradition will not give any single answer. Shaw himself did not use any unvarying "form". It is a fact too clear to be missed that he teased his critics by calling his plays "Discussions", "Conversation pieces" and the like, but when the acid test of production on the stage came, the plays did always well.

We may take up Candida to see how Shaw gives his play a form. To say that Candida Shows how its author could have written "real plays" had he wanted to, is nothing but an irritating commonplace. "Candida appeals to the anti-Shavian not because its form is more playlike, but because its subject is more like that of other plays : the woman choosing between two men". For a Kindred reason Saint Joan earned²

1. Shaw - C.E.M. Joad. Victor Gollancz Ltd. London. 1949. P 49-50.

2. Bernard Shaw in Twilight - Jacques Barzun (In George Bernard Shaw. A Critical Survey. Ed. L. Kronenberger. The World Publishing Company. 1953. P 166.

general approval, not by virtue of superior form, but because of general familiarity with the story. When it is said that Candida is more like other plays, it is meant that Candida is more like other contemporary plays. If the range of comparison is extended to take in Aristophanes and Moliere, we find that Shaw is often closer to his great forerunners than even to his imitators like Harry Johnstone, Gwladys Evan Morris and even Granville-Barker of the early career. To come back to Candida, if we change the Shavian vocabulary and attitude the play will become a purely conventional comedy. It has been noted that Candida is a "well-made play"; so is "Arms and the Man". In the First Act of Candida there is a situation which gets complicated in the Second; the resolution comes in a conventional manner with the wife accepting the husband. But the reason she advances for accepting the husband is rather novel - he is weaker than Candida's young lover who does not require her help. The Auction Scene in the play is also conventional; the only difference is, here a woman is to judge the fates of the two bidders.

One of the principal features of the comedy of Aristophanes is the "parabasis" an address to the audience conveying the author's sentiments upon the theme. Shaw should be praised rather than abused for reviving this device in the long didactic speech. The Frenchman's tirade in Fanny's First Play, the monologue in Too True to be Good, the opening speech of Ra in Caesar and Cleopatra are quite classical. I

is also to be noted that in ancient comedy and in the comedies of Moliere to a marked extent, the abstract form is never allowed to choke off a good opportunity for laughter, for horseplay, music and dancing. There are indeed limits to the advisable distension of any framework, but each has to be judged on its own merit. In plays like Getting Married, Misalliance, and Heartbreak House which seem formless, the virtuosity with which Shaw digresses while maintaining the classic unities¹ deserves due recognition.

The next question - and a very important one - to be tackled is whether Shaw, as a dramatic artist, is objective; whether he displays human feelings in their fullness and variety. The debate is whether Shaw creates characters --real and lifelike. The notion that Shaw is "playing ventriloquist" has been already discussed and found not tenable. We may add that a character in a play stands or falls on whether he fits in the purpose and environment provided by his creator and not on any particular substance or mode of presentation. We would see that neither Dickens nor Walter Scott depicted any "real" character, if the latter view was accepted as the standard of judgement. We cannot be sure whether "real life" furnishes Rabelaisian or Shavian or Swiftian characters. The point which is often maintained but is forgotten at the first

1. Bernard Shaw in Twilight - Jacques Barzun (In G.B. Shaw : A Critical Survey, Ed. L. Kronenberger. The World Publishing Company, 1953). Barzun writes that Shaw's virtuosity "should have earned him medals from all academics in the universe instead of the ignorant scorn of play going critics of the school of Mr. Curdle", P 167.

opportunity is that literature is larger than life. A character in a fiction is real in so far as he fits in, as already noted, the purpose and environment created in the fiction. Life in literature is so hard a thing to live that to live the life of Don Quixote or Tertuffe or Mr. Pickwick is impossible; it would be only a mad idea. But these characters are nonetheless "real"; they are real because they fit in the atmosphere created for them - atmosphere into which they are put. A Shavian character is real precisely in that sense. Shaw is a master, not only of writing brilliant dialogue, but of creating situations -- human situations -- and in this sphere he has hardly any peer save Shakespeare and Moliere and Dickens. The characters of a Shaw-play live under that situation or atmosphere, and they would be unreal in a different situation. This means that as a dramatist Shaw followed Shakespeare in attempting to create "living pictures" in human forms which have characters of their own quite independent of their creator's. Shaw's comment on this aspect of his art is significant: "We (meaning Shakespeare and himself) have no souls. We understand all the souls and all the faiths and can dramatize them because they are to us wholly objective"¹. Again he writes, "I am of the true Shakespearean type: I understand everything and everyone, and am nobody and nothing"².

1. Bernard Shaw - Frank Harris. Victor Gallanez Ltd. London. 1931. P 228. XIII.

2. Ibid. (G.B. Shaw to Frank Harris. London. June 20, 1930). P 228.

One important and interesting aspect of the art of Bernard Shaw has not as yet received deserving attention from the scholars. Shaw was immensely interested in visual arts, and exploited his familiarity with English as well as continental art in his plays. The so-called prophet and propagandist Shaw is completely non-existent here; he appears before us as an artist who himself is deeply in love with art. It may be legitimately surmised that Shaw as an artist was influenced not only by Mozart and Wagner, but also by Titian, Rambrandt, and a much less known painter, Frederick Bernard. Dick Dudgeon's mounting the scaffold in The Devil's Disciple is possibly suggested by Frederick Bernard's popular painting "Sidney Carton : A Tale of Two Cities". Candida is "the Virgin Mother and nobody else"². Titian's "Assumption of the Virgin" which decorates the wall of the house of Morell, Candida's husband, has more than a mechanical purpose. Candida is a Shavian mystery play about Madonna and Child with the heroine of the title as the Holy Mother. From Candida to Buoyant Billions it is a long road; to both the plays and to many another that went between, Shaw's love for visual art added a unique dimension which would remain absent if Shaw were a mere propagandist rather than an artist. Those who claim that Shaw's book on Ibsen The Quintessence of Ibsenism is more a quintessence of Shavianism commit the

1. Exploiting Art : The Pictures in Bernard Shaw's plays - Stanley Weintraub. Modern Drama Vol XIII. Sept. 1975. No. 3.

2. Shaw to Ellen Terry, 6th April, 1896. Collected Letters I.

mistake of looking at Shaw primarily as an ethical teacher, a moral reformer. The Quintessence of Ibsenism is neither a quintessence of Ibsenism nor of Shavianism. The real Bernard Shaw is much more than a thinker; he is a considerable artist who has ideas, but whose ideas are often borrowed, uncertain and confused. All great art is interpretation and evaluation of life and, simultaneously, greater than life. Shaw is an artist precisely in this sense.