The Evolution of George Bernard Shaw's Female Characters

Holly Glosser

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THE EVOLUTION OF GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S
FEMALE CHARACTERS
(TITLE)

BY
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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS PLAN B PAPER BE ACCEPTED AS
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE CHARACTERS</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAINA</td>
<td>5-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUDITH</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CANDIDA</td>
<td>12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANN</td>
<td>15-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BARBARA</td>
<td>19-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOAN</td>
<td>23-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
George Bernard Shaw was probably the most cussed and discussed writer of his time. He was an outspoken person and the staunch positions that he took in his plays were not always popular. Shaw's characters have ranged from degenerates to fine gentlemen, but the most interesting and controversial of the characters are the females.

In this paper I would like to discuss six of these female characters in relationship to one another. These six characters seem to show a definite evolution of the stature of woman through the eyes of Mr. Shaw.

The first aspect to be discussed is Shaw's female characters in general. The next aspect to be discussed is the evolution of six of Shaw's female characters -- Raina, Judith, Candida, Ann Whitefield, Major Barbara, and Saint Joan as they appear in George Bernard Shaw's plays.
FEMALE CHARACTERS

The criticism of Shaw's women characters varies as greatly as the criticism of Shaw himself. This criticism ranges from denunciation to commendation.

"Mr. Huneker has ventured to assert that Shaw is 'practically the first literary man who has achieved the feat of making his heroines genuinely disagreeable persons.'"¹

Archibald Henderson takes a more moderate stand on the disagreeability of Mr. Shaw's female characters. He feels that Shaw makes his male and female characters equally disagreeable.

From the beginning of his literary career, Shaw has been imbued with the conviction that, to use his own words, 'women are human beings just like men only worse brought up, and consequently worse behaved.' In Shaw's plays it is a toss-up between the men and women as to which is worse behaved. The women in Shaw's plays seem always deliberately to challenge the conventional ideal of the womanly woman. ²

Shaw criticism is both adverse and favorable. On the other end of the criticism scale we have Shaw's women characters praised by Patrick Braybrooke.

²Ibid., p.367.
I cannot see in any way that Shaw can be criticised adversely regarding his women characters. Shaw has drawn a rational woman, he has made her independent, he shows how she is shocked at the crudities of the world, for example Miss Warren, yet he indicated how she can crown kings and lead armies as in the example of Joan of Arc. 3

These women seem to some disagreeable and to others agreeable. Each critic can prove his stand concerning these females. Whether they are agreeable or disagreeable they still have charm and the ability to elicit comment. The controversial quality of these females makes them worthy of comment.

Shaw has basically four types of women as they advance in stature -- the Womanly Woman, the Life-force Woman, the Emancipated Woman, and the New Woman.

The womanly woman subjugates herself to home, husband, and children. She is modest and idealistic. She believes firmly that woman's place is in the home. She is the ideal Victorian woman. "Ibsen launched a frontal attack on the Womanly Woman in a Doll's House, Shaw cleverly satirized her romantic illusions in his portraits of Judith, the minister's wife in The Devil's Disciple and Raina in Arms and the Man."4


The Victorian society believed that the family was woman's sphere and man was woman's master. This society believed also "that no really womanly woman ever forms an attachment, or even knows what it means, until she is requested to do so by a man."\(^5\)

The womanly woman with romantic ideals is exemplified also by Candida. The life-force woman is seen briefly in Candida but comes to life full blown in Ann Whitefield in Man and Superman. The life-force woman is set upon this earth to perpetuate the master race. She is the proproment of life in the battle of the sexes. The emancipated woman is the woman who is rebelling against society, who is asserting her freedom. The New Woman is Shaw's ultimate. She represents the Emancipated Woman carried one step farther. She represents both freedom and responsibility. Examples of the New Woman are Major Barbara and Saint Joan. This is the outline of the evolution of Shaw's female characters -- from Raina to Saint Joan.

RAINA

The first of the Womanly Women appeared in *Arms and the Man* in 1894. Raina and her fiancé Sergius were the embodiments of the romantic idealism. They played at life as if it were the operas they saw in Bucharest. They wear romantic spectacles to look at life. Raina exhibits this romantic idealism in the first scene of the play by hiding the Swiss mercenary, Bluntschli, in her bedchamber. The idealistic romanticism is exemplified in every phase of Raina's life, but the most outstanding bit of play acting occurs in her relationship with Sergius. This love scene from Act I of the play is an example of the sentimental nonsense that relegates Raina and Sergius to the realm of romantic idealism.

Sergius: Am I forgiven!

Raina: My Hero! My King!

Sergius: My Queen!

Raina: How I have envied you, Sergius. You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself worthy of any woman in the world; whilst I have had to sit home inactive--dreaming--useless--doing nothing that could give me the right to call myself worthy of any man.

Sergius: Dearest, all my deeds have been yours. You inspired me. I have gone through the war like a knight in a tournament with his lady looking on at him.
Raina: And you have never been absent from my thoughts for a moment. (very solemnly.) Sergius: I think we two have found the higher love. When I think of you, I feel that I could never do a base deed or think an ignoble thought.6

Raina's whole outlook on life is as if seen through a pair of opera glasses. Raina lives in a world of dreams and poses. She pretends that the world is glorious for those who can see it and act out its glories. In Act I she revels in the thought that Sergius is just as romantic and wonderful as she thought he was.

Raina: (Laughing and sitting down again). Yes, I was only a prosaic little coward. Oh, to think that it was all true—that Sergius is just as splendid and noble as he looks—that the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance! What happiness! What unspeakable fulfillment! Ah!!7

These romantic ideals are never allowed to stand unaltered in a play by George Bernard Shaw. "The play is like all of Shaw's plays, the dialogue of conversion. By the end of it the young lady has lost all of her military illusions and admires this mercenary soldier

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7Ibid., p.118.
not because he faces guns, but because he faced facts.\(^8\)

The conversion comes in the unmasking of Raina by Bluntschli. Raina has fooled everyone around her with her lies and pretenses, but Bluntschli bluntly accuses her of it bringing about the conversion sought by Shaw.

This conversion of Raina occurs in Act III of the play. Bluntschli takes her seriously when all about her have allowed her to lie and pretend without really realizing what she is doing. Bluntschli takes her for what she is not for what she pretends to be.

Raina: (staring haughtily at him). Do you know, sir, that you are insulting me?

Bluntschli: I can't help it. When you get into that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but find it impossible to believe a single word you say.

Raina: (coming a little towards him, as if she could not believe her senses). Do you mean what you said just now?

Bluntschli: I do.

Raina: Ill Ill!! (She points to herself incredulously, meaning, 'I, Raina Petkoff, tell lies?') He meets her gaze unflinchingly. She suddenly sits down beside him, and adds with a complete change of manner from the heroic to the familiar). How did you find me out.?\(^9\)

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\(^8\)G.K. Chesterton, George Bernard Shaw, (London: John Love the Badleyhed, ltd, 1925), p.121.

\(^9\)Shaw, Plays By George Bernard Shaw, p.157.
This is the instance of Raina's so called transformation but at the end of the play we find only a slight change in Raina Petkoff. When Bluntschli is establishing himself as a worthy suiter for the hand of a Petkoff, Raina pretends to sulk.

Raina: (pretending to sulk). The lady says he can keep his table cloths and his omnibuses. I am not here to be sold to the highest bidder.

Bluntschli: I won't take that answer. I appealed to you as a fugitive, a beggar, and a starving man. You accepted me. You gave me your hand to kiss; your bed to sleep in; and your roof to shelter me --

Raina: (interrupting) I did not give them to the Emperor of Switzerland!

Bluntschli: That's just what I say. (He catches her hand quickly and looks her straight in the face as he adds). Now tell us who you did give them to.

Raina: (succumbing with a shy smile). To my chocolate cream soldier!

Bluntschli: (With a boyish laugh of delight). That'll do. Thank you...

With this answer from Raina we see Bluntschli become the mercenary again, but by Bluntschli's own admission we have two romantics left to face the world. One is just a little more practical than the other. Raina will probably never change. She has just found another here to worship -- a chocolate cream soldier.

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10Ibid., p.175.
JUDITH

Judith in the Devil's Disciple is just a step higher than Raina on the ladder to the ultimate woman. Judith is also admired and petted into a high opinion of herself, but she displays a certain sincerity that Raina does not show. Shaw's initial description of Judith Anderson shows the petted, admired trait in her character which will prevail throughout the entire play.

Judith is more than twenty years younger than her husband, though she will never be as young as her husband in vitality. She is pretty and proper and ladylike, and has been admired and petted into an opinion of herself sufficiently favorable to give her a selfassurance which serves her instead of strength. She has pretty taste in dress, and in her face the pretty lines of sentimental character formed by dreams.

Judith's petted and admired sense of superiority shows through in this speech to Richard Dudgeon in Act II.

Judith: My husband has been very good to you. He has forgiven you for insulting him, and is trying to save you. Can you not forgive him, for being so much better than you? How dare you belittle him by putting yourself in his place.

Judith is a sentimental, spoiled, romantic whose world is shattered when her husband seems to become a coward. She cannot seem to choose between love for the


12 Ibid., p. 41.
sinful Dick Dudgeon and duty to her husband. But when her husband comes back in the nick of time to save Dick, her love flows back to her husband. She makes Dick promise never to tell.

Judith's ambivalent feelings toward Dick Dudgeon change three times in the three acts that the play contains. In the first act she tells Essie that Dick Dudgeon is a bad man -- not even to be thought about.

Essie: ...Father used to talk about Dick Dudgeon, but I never saw him.

Judith: (ostentatiously shocked). Dick Dudgeon, Essie do you wish to be a really respectable and grateful girl, and make a place for yourself here by good steady conduct?

Essie: (very half-heartedly). Yes.

Judith: When you must never mention the name of Richard Dudgeon -- never think about him.

But he is a smuggler; and he lived with gypsies; and he has no love for his mother and family; and he wrestles and plays games on Sunday instead of going to church...13

After Dick has gone to prison in place of the minister and the minister has run off instead of saving Dick, Judith's attitude reverses -- from hatred to love.

13Ibid., p.17.
At the jail Judith tries to get Richard to say he made the sacrifice for her and to tell him that she is now in love with him.

Judith: Yes, I. Am I not to care at all?

Richard: (gaily and bluntly) Not a scrap. Oh, you expressed your feelings towards me very frankly yesterday. What happened may have softened you for the moment; but believe me, Mrs. Anderson, you don't like a bone in my body or a hair on my head. I shall be as good riddance at 12 today as I should have been at 12 yesterday.

Judith: (her voice trembling) What can I do to show you that you are mistaken.

Richard: Don't trouble. I'll give you credit for liking me a little better than you did. All I say is that my death will not break your heart.

Judith: (almost in a whisper) How do you know?\textsuperscript{14}

During the trial Judith's love for Dick continues, but when her husband shows up in the nick of time to save Dick, her love flows back to her husband. Judith will probably return to her pretty, admired little ways with her stalwart hero husband to protect her.

The chief difference in Judith and Raina is the sincerity of Judith. She is more sincere in her actions because she truly believes that this is what is to be done. She like Raina, realizes only momentarily the realities of life, but neither comes to a permanent realization that will change her basic character structure. Judith and Raina begin and end as idealistic romanticists.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 56.
CANDIDA

Candida is probably the ultimate of the Womanly Woman type. She is the motherly, domestic type woman. She is fully aware of what goes on in her household and she takes care of every situation as it arises. She treats all of the members of the household as if they were her children. The mother in Candida shows in this conversation between Candida and Marchbanks in Act I.

Candida: (touched) Do you know, you are a very nice boy, Eugene, with all your queerness. If you had laughed at my father I shouldn't have minded; but I like you ever so much better for being nice to him.

Marchbanks: Ought I to have laughed? I noticed that he said something funny; but I am so ill at ease with strangers; and I never see the joke! I'm very sorry.

Candida: (bustling him good naturedly) Oh, come! You great baby, you! You are worse than usual this morning...¹⁵

Candida is always taking care of someone in the household. Like all mother-women she has the abominable habit of always straightening up. In this scene from

¹⁵Shaw, Plays by George Bernard Shaw, p.192.
Act I Candida continues to treat Marchbanks as a child.

Candida: Are you going, Eugene? (looking more observantly at him). Well dear me, just look at you, going out into the street in that state! You are a poet, certainly. Look at him, James! (she takes him by the coat, and brings him forward to show him to Morell). Look at his collar! look at his tie! look at his hair! One would think somebody had been throttling you. (the two men guard themselves against betraying their consciousness). Here! Stand still (She buttons his collar; ties his neckerchief in a bow; and arranges his hair). There! Now you look so nice that you'd better stay for lunch after all, though I told you you mustn't. It will be ready in half an hour. (She puts a final touch on the bow. He kisses her hand). Don't be silly.16

Straightening people up as if they were children is common to the mother in Candida. Candida advances higher up the ladder of perfection than Raina and Judith because she is forced to see what is real and to choose between two kinds of reality. She realizes she must choose the man who needs her most in order to fulfill her desires as a wife and mother. In this respect Candida is probably the forerunner of the life-force woman which culminates in Ann Whitefield. She illustrates this trait

16 Ibid., p. 199.
in one of her final speeches. She says,

I give myself to the weaker of the two.

...Now I want you to look at this other boy here--my boy--spoiled from his cradle... 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. And when he thought I might go away with you, his only anxiety was what should become of me. 17

"Candida (Mrs. Morell) is a womanly woman of abundant common sense, fully aware of her husband's weaknesses and loving him for him-self and not for his sermons." 18

Candida realizes what it takes to fulfill her place in this world as wife and mother. Candida realizes her place in her home but she does not grasp the reality that Marchbanks knows. She cannot see "the secret in the poet's heart".

17 Shaw, Plays by George Bernard Shaw, p.233.
18 Wagenknecht, op.cit., p.97.
Ann Whitefield is Shaw's Life-force woman. "This woman is sexually dynamic and pursues the man with all the energy and cunning with which the life force has endowed her. The object of her pursuit, of course, is not personal romance; she is only the instrument of the universal force that seeks to perpetuate its greatest experiment: mankind."19

Ann's pursuit of man in order to perpetuate the experiment is the story of the play. Her pursuit is open and bold. She realizes what is necessary to her fulfillment and proceeds to pursue that fulfillment.

"Shaw has most certainly not exaggerated in regard to Ann Whitefield, he has stated a bold position, a position that is a perfect dualism. On the one hand, Ann is still the woman, on the other side she is the determined huntress, and once let woman engage on big game hunting and the bachelor may as well give in at once."20

19Ibid., p.20.
20Braybrooke, op.cit., p.155.
Ann is definitely Shaw's Life-force woman. She is the type of woman that Shaw feels can perpetuate the Superman. She is shrewd and coniving and she has been set upon earth to trap a suitable mate. She uses all of her feminine wiles to set and spring the trap. One of the biggest traps is woman's seeming dependence on man. Tanner explains this trait in Ann in one of his early speeches to Ann concerning her childhood.

Even then you had acquired by instinct that damnable woman's trick of heaping obligations on a man, of placing yourself so entirely and helplessly at his mercy that at last he dare not take a step without running to you for leave. I know a poor wretch whose one desire in life is to run away from his wife. She prevents him by threatening to throw herself in front of the engine of the train he leaves her in. That is what all woman do.21

Ann is a woman of strength and she faces reality. She is the proponent of Shaw's life-force. As the Life-force woman certain basics are essential. This woman must be adequately endowed to trap the mate suitable to the purpose of the life-force. Ann's description leads us to believe she has been adequately endowed by the life-force to perpetuate the master race as Shaw saw it.

21Shaw, Plays by George Bernard Shaw, p. 292.
Ann is a well formed creature, as far as that goes; and she is perfectly ladylike, graceful, and comely, with ensnaring eyes and hair. Besides, instead of making herself an eyesore, like her mother, she has devised a mourning costume of black and violet silk which does honor to her late father and reveals the family tradition of brave unconventionality.22

Ann seems to be perfectly armed for her task as proponent of the life force. Added to this armor Ann possesses vitality that few people enjoy. In Ann vitality rises to the point of genius. Ann is one of the few vital geniuses in the world.

Ann seems to be armed adequately to charm the later generations. Thomas Boyd was throughly enchanted with Ann Whitefield and he gives this description of his first encounter with Miss Ann Whitefield.

And then Ann! I met her at seventeen, and if I didn't compose verses about her it was because I could never find two words that properly rhymed. The way she led the baffled Tanner by the ear; the way she knew and got what she wanted. And as she now comes to mind she was one English girl who didn't have big feet, who had a well shaped, treacherously dimure head, a flat, straight back--well, the kind of girl who is competent to play any amount of havoc on the dumb sex.23

22Ibid., p.273-274.

And wreak havoc Ann does. She pursues her quarry until she has ensnared him. By the end of the play John Tanner is subdued by the life-force in the form of Ann Whitefield. Ann Whitefield is a realist who get what she wants, but she is not quite the ultimate in woman. She is the strongest character Shaw draws with the exception of Major Barbara and Saint Jean, but she is not free. She is controlled by the life-force.

Shaw gives this explanation of Ann and her origin.

"'As I sat watching Everyman at the Charterhouse,' says Shaw, 'I said to myself, "Why not Everywoman?" Ann was the result; everywoman is not Ann; but Ann is Everywoman.'"24

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24Henderson, op.cit., p.367.
MAJOR BARBARA

Major Barbara comes closer to perfection than any of Shaw's previous characters. Major Barbara, the heroine of the play Major Barbara, "is evidence of a new approach, in his earlier period Shaw had surprised his audience with two kinds of women: capable, unromantic women like Candida, and acquisitive, passionate women like Mrs. Warren... Shaw's newer New Women are often simply abundant, independent daughters of the life-force."25

These daughters of the life-force are what has been termed as Shaw's New Woman. Shaw draws a distinction between the Emancipated Woman of that era and his New Woman. This New Woman is a step higher on the ladder of life than the Emancipated Woman.

The Emancipated Woman represents the ideal woman of the feminist movement but the New Woman represents the ideal towards which the Emancipated Woman herself must strive. The Shavian Emancipated Woman is concerned mainly with winning her freedom. The Shavian New Woman is free to begin with and does not need to struggle for personal goals; she uses her freedom as a means to the good society. The new Woman then, represents both freedom and responsibility, and may be interpreted as Shaw's idea of the complete human being.26

26 Wagenknecht, op.cit., p.20.
The New Woman is free and does not hesitate to use that freedom. She says what she believes and acts upon what she says. The independence of the New Woman is exemplified in one of Barbara's speeches to Undershaft in Act I of the play.

Undershaft: Indeed? Are there any good men?

Barbara: No. Not one. There are neither good men nor scoundrels: There are just children of one father; and the sooner they stop calling one another names the better. You needn't talk to me: I know them. I've had scores of them through my hands: scoundrels, criminals, infidels, philanthropists, missionaries, county councillors, all sorts. They're all just the same sort of sinner; and there's the same salvation ready for all of them. 27

Independence and responsibility mixed with the charm of a woman combine to help make up the character of Barbara, but more important Barbara does not lose her femininity while asserting her individuality.

Barbara has depth, breadth, and height; she thinks strongly, feels sensitively, and hitched her wagon to a star. But she has a fourth dimension too, --charm. Her femininity is not lost in strength, practicality, or professional moral purpose. She is real, yet an ideal, ... Barbara is a very solid

and fine achievement in dramatic realization.\textsuperscript{28}

Barbara comes very close to the ultimate woman. She is able to a certain extent to submerge herself to her ideals. We find evidence of this selflessness in the second act, when she submerges herself to her religious ideals. Barbara's calmness of spirit, devotion to her work, and her patience bring her close to being the ultimate woman. This calmness of nature and patience are shown especially in Act II of the play at the West Ham Salvation Army Shelter. She takes all crises with a calmness that most people do not possess. Her encounter with Bill Walker in one example of this patience and calmness of spirit.

Barbara: Well, you see, there's no use putting your name down unless I can do something for you, is there? What's your trade?

Bill: (Still smarting) That's none concern o' yours.

Barbara: Just so. (Very business like) I'll put you down as (writing) the man who-struck-poor Jenny Hill-in the mouth.

Bill: (Rising threateningly) See eah. Awve ed enaff o this.

Barbara: (quite sunny and fearless) What did you come to us for? \textsuperscript{29}


\textsuperscript{29}Shaw, Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, p.252.
Barbara's calm nature is evident in this short scene with Bill Walker and it continues throughout the rest of the play. She exemplifies the New Woman working toward the good society. She believes that God is the road to this good society. She switches her goals from helping the down trodden to the more challenging goal of converting the complacent class. Barbara falls just short of being the ultimate woman. She can submerge herself somewhat for her principles, but her conversion by Undershaft in the end of the play makes her fall short of Joan who is acclaimed a Saint.
SAINT JOAN

Joan seemed to be the culmination of Shaw's efforts to find the perfect -- the ultimate woman.

When Mrs. Shaw suggested Joan as a subject to her husband, and when he read the records of Joan's trial as made available by Jules Quicherat, Shaw must have realized that here was an opportunity to study and recreate a person who united in herself so much that he had divided between his practical and his idealistic characters. It almost seems that if Joan had never existed Shaw would have had to invent her. 30

Whether Shaw invented Joan or she was supplied to him by history, she seems to be a synthesis of all of Shaw's previous work. She combines the best of all of Shaw's female characters.

Joan contains not a physical beauty but a spiritual beauty. She exudes confidence and poise along with good common sense. This description of her given at her first appearance in the play shows courage in her physical make-up. "Joan appears in the turret doorway. She is an able-bodied country girl of 17 or 18, respectably dressed in red, with an uncommon face: eyes very wide apart and bulging as they often do in very imaginative people, a long well-shaped nose with wide nostrils, a short upper

30Bentley, op.cit., p.168.

-23-
lip resolute but full-lipped mouth, and handsome fighting chin...her voice is normally a hearty coaxing voice, very confident, very appealing, very hard to resist."

"Joan was an essentially modern woman. She apparently had no dislike of masculine dress and was not ashamed that the world should know, not by faith, but by experience that she possessed a pair of legs." Joan seems to have been the pioneer of rational dress for woman.

Joan was also one of the first apostles of nationalism. She was "the first French practitioner of Napoleonic realism in warfare as distinguished from the sporting ransom gambling chivalry of her time." The ideal of French Nationalism and a practical approach to war appears in Joan's speech to Dunois in Scene V of the play. This scene takes place immediately following the coronation of the Dauphin.

Ahh! If, if, if, if! If ifs and ans were pots and pans there'd be no need of tinkers.
(rising impetuously) I tell you Bastard, your art of war is no use, because your knights are no good for real fighting. War is only a game to them, like tennis and all their other games; they make rules as to what is fair and what is not fair, and heap

31 Shaw, Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, p.63.
32 Braybrook, op.cit., p.139.
33 Shaw, Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, p.3.
armor on themselves and on the poor horses to keep out the arrows; and when they fall they can't get up, and have to wait for their squires to come and lift them to arrange about ransom with the man that has poked them off their horse. Can you see that all the like of that is gone by and done with?.. And if it was, do you think men that are fighting for France and for God will stop to bargain about ransoms as half your knights live by doing? No: they will fight to win; and they will give up their lives out of their own hand into the hand of God when they go into battle as I do.34

Realism was Joan's forte in war, but "the Shavian Saint Joan is a human person, but she has a larger share of the supernaturalism than many of us seem to possess."35

There was something special about Joan from the beginning. No one could tell exactly what it was but no one argued that it was there. Poulengy tells Robert de Baudricourt about Joan.

Poulengy: (Slowly) There is something about her. They are pretty foulmouthed and foulminded down there in the guardroom, some of them. But there hasn't been a word that has anything to do with her being a woman. They have stopped swearing before her. There is something. Something. It may be worth trying.36

Joan also exuded a confidence that only comes with knowing that you are right and that God is on your side.

34Ibid., p.120.
35Braybrooke, op.cit., p.145.
36Shaw, Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, p.66.
Joan's first encounter with Robert de Baudricourt in Scene I of the play is evidence of this confidence.

Joan: (bobbing a curtsey) Good morning, captain squire. Captain: you are to give me a horse and armor and some soldiers, and send me to the Dauphin. Those are your orders from my Lord.

Robert: (outraged) Orders from your lord! And who the devil may your lord be? Go back to him, and tell him that I am neither duke nor peer to his orders: I am squire of Baudricourt; and I take no orders except from the king.

Joan: (reassuringly) Yes, squire: that is all right. My Lord is the King of Heaven.

Robert: Why, the girl's mad. (to the steward) Why didn't you tell me so, you blockhead?

Steward: Sir: do not anger her: give her what she wants.

Joan: (impatient, but friendly) They all say I am mad until I talk to them, squire. But you see that it is the will of God that you are to do what He has put into my mind.

Robert: It is the will of God that I shall send you back to your father with orders to put you under lock and key and thrash the madness out of you. What do you say to that?

Joan: You think you will, squire; but you will find it all coming quite different. You said you would not see me; but here I am.37

Joan's confidence in herself and in God persuaded Baudricourt to give her the armor and a horse and send to the Dauphin. Joan was again granted her wishes and

37Ibid., p.63.
she began to defeat the English. Joan achieved instant worldly success because she believed in another world. Her faith in God and her voices made her seem invincible.

Because Joan was a pioneer—dress, nationalism, and practical warfare—and she had confidence of her convictions she appealed greatly to George Bernard Shaw. "She appealed to Shaw, not as a national heroine, still less as a military leader, but as one of those pure spirits who strive to bring justice and mercy on the earth without much regard for the conventional standards of their own times." 38

Joan was unconventional and yet realistic. Joan joins such level headed male characters as Dudgeon, Caesar, Tanner, and Undershaft in facing reality. They were "all characters with a head, with their eye on the point piercing illusions and grasping reality." 39

Saint Joan is the perfect ego-less woman. She gives of herself and expects nothing in return. She gives love not only to individuals but to an entire nation. She is possessed of God as he comes to her in the form of her voices. She lives only to do the will of God, to save France, and to live in God's world. Shaw shows the stature of Joan and her love for God and his works


39 Kronenberger, op.cit., p.150.
in her beautiful speech during her trial as a witch and a heretic. Joan makes this speech after she has torn up the confession that would have saved her life.

Joan: You promised me my life; but you lied. You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear: I can live on bread, when have I asked for more? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean. Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction. But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers; to chain my feet so that I can never again ride with the soldiers nor climb the hills; to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and to keep me from everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate Him: all this is worse that the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times. I could do without my warhorse; 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. But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and mine is of God.40

This speech shows a love of God and the wonders that he has made that few people possess. This is the aspect that makes Joan the outstanding woman -- the

40 Shaw, Bernard Shaw's Saint Joan, p.150.
egoless woman. She has the supreme selflessness. She cares not for herself but for her God, her people and her country--France.

Joan never questions the wisdom of God. Joan's only question comes in the epilogue of the play. "The final speech of the play is a plea to make the world ready to accept the saints of God.

"Joan: O, God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?"

Joan combines reality, confidence, leadership, unconventionality, and love to become the ultimate of the female characters of George Bernard Shaw -- a Saint.

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Ibid., p.122.
SUMMARY

Shaw shows all facets of the character of women in these six women -- from the romantic idealist to the ultimate selfless woman.

Raina looks at the world through rose colored glasses. She lies and poses to everyone around her. Judith is a little more genuine but she has admired petted little ways which make her an idealistic romantic. Candida is the womanly woman as wife and mother -- not only mother to her children but to all around her. She is the forerunner of the life-force woman which is culminated in Ann Whitefield. Ann becomes the proponent in the struggle between the life force and man. As such she faces reality more than the previous characters. She knows what she must do and does it. Major Barbara is the New Woman free to live life as she sees it. She combines independence and responsibility. Joan is the ultimate woman. She is rated along side of many of Shaw's outstanding male characters. She combines freedom, responsibility, and faith in order to become the egoless woman. Joan is ultimately proclaimed a saint because she puts all above herself.

This is the road to perfection for the female as Shaw sees it. The ultimate is perfect selflessness -- the Saint.
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