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*CANDIDA*: SHAW'S PRESENTATION OF  
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC "OTHER"

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at the

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This thesis has been approved for the  
Department of ENGLISH  
and the College of Graduate Studies by

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Dedicated with great appreciation to my parents, Jim and Alice Rademaker

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**CANDIDA: SHAW'S PRESENTATION OF  
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**ABSTRACT**

In 1876, George Bernard Shaw arrived in London, in many ways just another of the Irish immigrants who were coming to England in the wake of famine. Shaw had not in mind just making a living; he wanted to be the literary giant he would indeed become. Of Anglo-Irish descent at a time when little distinction was made between the Anglo and Celtic Irish, Shaw felt it necessary to distinguish himself from the latter sort of immigrants, whose Roman Catholicism was a cause for alarm in a Britain that had been Protestant for three centuries. Shaw would do so with his pen, writing texts of a mostly subtle anti-Roman Catholic nature. Inspired in part by the intolerance of his ascendant Protestant family, Shaw would continue writing such texts for the length of his career, long after he may have needed to prove himself as something other than "Other" – those whom the literary critic Edward Said says a dominant group identifies as being different in powers political, cultural, racial, and moral. To create a perceived sameness with English Protestants, Shaw chose, in his play *Candida*, to cast the title character as a representation of the Virgin Mary, and highlight the difference between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism through the ways in which she interacts with other characters, and the ways in which they see her.

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## PREFACE

In researching and writing about a subject as complex as religion in Great Britain and Ireland, one will encounter a host of terms that may have certain meanings in fact, and other meanings in popular usage. In this paper, Christians in Great Britain and Ireland who are not Roman Catholics (that is, under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff) will be referred to as Protestants. The term is technically incorrect when applied to members of the Churches of England and the now disestablished Church of Ireland (also known as Anglicans), as they have claimed to maintain an apostolic succession of bishops started in ancient times with the first Pope, St. Peter, and they do not adhere to the episcopal and doctrinal reforms established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Martin Luther and John Calvin (Herring 6-7; Nockles 154). While Anglicans may refer to their churches as “catholic” or “Anglo-Catholic,” their association in the popular mindset with Lutherans, Presbyterians and members of other Protestant denominations is great (Nockles 154). Because the association is so strong (the British monarch, for example, as supreme governor of the Church of England, swears to uphold the “Protestant Reformed Religion”), and because Anglicans joined with technical Protestants in the near-hysterical, anti-Roman Catholic prejudice that was a hallmark of British Victorian and Edwardian culture, all such groups together are the Protestants of this paper (“The Coronation Oath”). Should a reference to the Churches of England and Ireland require a specificity that goes beyond the

general Protestant group consisting of Anglicans and Nonconformists, the reference will be made simply as “Anglican.” Similarly, as the terms “catholic” or even “Catholic” are often used by Anglicans to describe themselves, all references to the generally popular notion of the Catholic, that is the follower of the Pope, will be made as “Roman Catholic.”

Additionally, when referring to the practices and teachings of Roman Catholicism, this paper will distinguish between those dating from apostolic times until 1965, and those dating from 1966 until the present time. The former period will be referred to as the “Preconciliar Era” of Roman Catholicism, denoting its time and place before the major reforms to the Roman Catholic Church in the years following the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The time after the Second Vatican Council will be referred to as the “Postconciliar Era.” It is necessary to make the distinction primarily because of the postconciliar teachings regarding both ecumenism and the role of the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholic Church. Regarding ecumenism, or the approach to dealing with other religions or branches of Christianity, the Second Vatican Council declared that the Roman Catholic Church would abandon its four-centuries old practice of viewing itself as a closed religion and open up to cooperation and dialogue with other Christian communions and even non-Christian faiths, looking for unity rather than division (The Second Vatican Council, *Unitatis Redintegratio; Nostra Aetate*). Also, Vatican II’s declaration that the Roman Catholic Church sees the

Virgin as a “mediatrix” between her son Jesus and the faithful was, in effect, a demotion for Mary. Prior to the council, strict Roman Catholic tradition dating from ancient times, bolstered by the formal teaching of Pope Leo XIII in the late nineteenth century, held up the Virgin Mary as a conduit of grace – that is, the channel-like dispenser of gifts from God the Father to the human race (“*Adiutricem*,” Spretnak 70). Vatican II, however, requested that the honor afforded the Virgin and teaching about her be primarily limited to the mention of her few direct appearances in the New Testament (The Second Vatican Council, “*Lumen Gentium*”). The result: a somewhat drastically modified Roman Catholic teaching with much less focus on the Virgin Mary as mystical and glorious channel of grace and Queen of Heaven and Earth, and a much more “rationalizing” focus on her as simply Mary, Nazarene housewife, or, as Charlene Spretnak would refer to her, “a nice woman in the Bible” (70; 2). The postconciliar approach to the Virgin Mary was similarly applied to the other saints, who, having been for centuries regarded as intercessors for the faithful, were now mostly to be honored for living holy lives (Sullivan 80). The changes fostered by the Second Vatican Council are important to many points that are made in this paper, as George Bernard Shaw’s writing about Roman Catholicism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reflected beliefs, teachings and practices that are markedly different from those of the Roman Catholicism of the Postconciliar Era.

## CHAPTER I

### GROWING UP “SHAW” IN ROMAN CATHOLIC DUBLIN AND ANTI-ROMAN CATHOLICISM IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

In 1964, the literary biographer B.C. Rosset wrote a quarter-life story of George Bernard Shaw that sought to uncover aspects of the Anglo-Irish playwright's Victorian youth and adolescence, a time he felt had been largely unexplored by other Shaw biographers. This account of Shaw's early life, titled *Shaw of Dublin: The Formative Years*, spent a great deal of time examining the effects upon Shaw of growing up and coming of age in a city that, while mostly Roman Catholic in general population, was nevertheless dominated by a minority Protestant ascendancy that was either of, or connected to, British colonialism.

The biography argues that Shaw, as a young child, was greatly influenced by the values of this ascendancy via the person of his father, George Carr Shaw, impoverished gentility and second cousin to the baronet Robert Shaw of fashionable Bushy Park, Dublin (Rosset 10). Although Shaw's father had not a title nor the holdings that went with one, he, as Rosset contends, never missed a chance to join in the chorus of Shaws, both genteel and impoverished, who came

together to instruct their young on the evils of retail trade and Roman Catholicism, and the sure guarantee of a one-way ticket to hell that the latter would bestow upon its adherents (98-101). Rosset contends that the child George Bernard Shaw, always impressionable, swallowed these teachings whole – even to the point of following with ferocity the extended Shaw family rule of not allowing oneself to establish relationships with shopkeepers or Roman Catholics (98-101). According to Rosset, this was a stricture the young GBS would devoutly follow until the approach of adolescence, when his mother, amateur operatic singer Lucinda Shaw, would turn the world of the family upside down by her singing of the Mass as a member of *missa cantata* choirs in various Roman Catholic churches (111). Under the direction of Roman Catholic music coach George Vandeleur Lee, with whom she was rumored to have had a lengthy affair, Lucinda’s singing of Mozart-composed liturgies resulted in what the ascendant Shaws considered a “Papist Invasion” of their family and caused what Rosset describes as the ascendants’ “excommunication” of their impoverished relatives (111). Rosset notes that in writing about his life (and even in editing what others were writing about his life), George Bernard Shaw glossed over this ugly and hurtful period of his family’s history, and his “attempts to suppress or evade the circumstances (were) due to his desire to conceal the Catholicity of Lee,” while at the same time forming “part of Shaw’s total strategy” (113-4). In other words, it is Rosset’s contention that Shaw would not have turned out to be Shaw without this

unfortunate set of circumstances involving Roman Catholicism within his immediate and extended families in Dublin.

It is interesting to note that a parallel between these circumstances and the series of events that were taking place, across the Irish Sea in England starting in the two decades prior, would so closely parallel the ascendant Shaws' notion of a "Papist Invasion" of their family. In the 1840s and 1850s, England, like the Shaws of Bushy Park in the 1860s, would start to experience a situation of discomfort regarding the unwanted approach of Roman Catholicism in a series of events that English Protestants would come to term the "Papal Aggression" (Wallis 54). Starting with 1829's Catholic Emancipation Act (which made most discrimination against Roman Catholics illegal) and continuing with the influx of Irish Roman Catholic immigrants following the potato famines of the 1840s, Protestant England found itself home to more Roman Catholics than many thought bearable (Wallis 217-8). Suddenly, or perhaps seemingly suddenly, the Saidian "Other" – those exotic outsiders who, in matters of power political, cultural, and moral, the dominant group sees as different regarding what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do – was visibly in the midst of a people who thought they had, for the most part, eradicated such strange and superstitious idolaters centuries prior (Said 12, 48). To make matters worse, the head of this undesirable lot, the Italian pontiff Pope Pius IX, had dared to stick his nose into British affairs by announcing his reestablishment of Roman Catholic

dioceses in England, Wales, and Scotland -- dioceses that had been defunct since the time of the Reformation (Wallis 55-6).

Such boldness on the part of the Other, this Papal Aggression, was not taken lightly. In the spirit of fanning the flames of the semi-panic among the public, literature of an anti-Roman Catholic bent was shipped in from North America, and began to sell well in England (Schultz vii). These texts usually centered on tales of “convent captivity,” such as Maria Monk’s infamous *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, in which an unsuspecting Protestant girl is lured into Roman Catholic religious life and forced to endure murder, rape, debauchery, and infanticide as a matter of course. Thus, anti-Roman Catholic literature took on a life of its own, creating and enforcing myths and stereotypes that to various degrees survived well into and throughout the twentieth century (Paz 38; Schultz vii; Monk 194, 53, 181, 195).

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This paper will show that George Bernard Shaw, in a writing career that lasted nearly 75 years, could not – once he had left Ireland and began to work in London – rid himself of the anti-Roman Catholic sentiments instilled by his family in Dublin. It was a situation that would end up suiting him well, as the England he made his home was, as has been detailed, in the midst of an anti-Roman Catholic fever of great strength.

The nominally Anglican Shaw, who was admittedly not a practicing Christian of any sorts, preferred instead of established religion the one he himself made up, based on the principals of Creative Evolution he saw espoused by Nietzsche, with support selectively taken from the various views of John Bunyan, Voltaire, Shelley, Dickens, Ibsen, the writers of the Gospels, and Henri Bergson (Smith 35). Central to this belief was the concept of the “Life Force,” a driving spirit that Shaw believed made itself present in attuned human beings (usually women), and inspired them to create progressively higher forms of life via the choice of mating partners supplied by the intuition of the Life Force itself. It was a concept Shaw was far from fully working out when he arrived in London in 1876, at the time calling himself an atheist – and any germinations of it he kept to himself during that time (“The New Theology,” 10-1). Although Warren Sylvester Smith sees traits of the Life Force mentality first at work in *Candida* in 1895, some 19 years after Shaw’s arrival in London, the concept was not made the overt subject of one of Shaw’s plays until *Man and Superman* in 1903 (22). The traces of the Life Force that Smith recognizes in *Candida*, filtered as they are via connection to the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant dogma of the Holy Ghost, will be discussed later in this paper.

In the anti-Roman Catholic London of 1876 it seemed important for Shaw to “fit in,” especially as he was in many ways just another immigrant from Ireland. Shaw’s Anglo-Irish descent was not enough to guarantee acceptance, for



as shall be shown, the concept of the Anglo-Irish as a people separate from the Celtic/Gaelic Irish was not yet fully formed in the minds of the English, who tended to see all Irish as simply “Irish,” and therefore Other. (Lyons 212). Thus, to have a successful career as a writer – something Shaw fully intended from the start – he would have to show that he was indeed an entity separate from the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Celtic Irish. One of the best ways to do so would be to write in a manner that could show that his sympathies were not with Rome but with London.

Although in remembering the lengthy battle for Irish Home Rule that had taken place early in the twentieth century, Shaw would in 1936 write of the power Maria Monk seemed to wield over British Protestants who opposed such an arrangement, he had been largely unwilling to mimic her overtly offensive jabs at Roman Catholicism (“Preface: Twenty-four Years Later” 65). His plays and novellas that can be considered anti-Roman Catholic span most of the length of his career, and they are largely subtle in their attacks. This paper will specifically focus on *Candida* (1895), a play that can be seen as subtly anti-Roman Catholic from more than one angle. It will explore how Shaw made use of both Roman Catholic devotion to the Virgin Mary and the Victorian Protestants’ own concept of the wife and mother as the “angel in the house” to create Other of the Roman Catholic. It will also show how the anti-Roman Catholic presence in *Candida* had already been addressed by Shaw, and would continue to be addressed, in the plays

*Passion Play* (1878), *Major Barbara* (1906), *Saint Joan* (1924) and *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1934), as well as the novella *The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God*.

**CHAPTER II**  
**SHAW: ANGLO-IRISH IDENTITY AND**  
**A CAREER'S WORTH OF ANTI-ROMAN CATHOLIC TEXTS**

Before an earnest examination of anti-Roman Catholicism in *Candida* can begin, it is imperative to establish the reasons that led to Shaw's determination to present the Roman Catholic as Other, and then to examine the bases of the most prominent anti-Roman Catholic texts in his canon. Although of Anglo-Irish stock and baptized in the Church of Ireland, it is evident that Shaw so lacked confidence in his pedigree that he would seek to ingratiate himself among the English as something other than Other. Perhaps one reason for this is because in 1876, when Shaw arrived in London, the concept of being Anglo-Irish was not yet fully developed or particularly recognized by either the Irish or the English (Lyons 212). Bolton asserts that the term "Anglo-Irish," although certainly seen from time to time in writing from the late eighteenth century and throughout the first half of the nineteenth, did not really come into the popular parlance or consciousness until the 1890s, when the start of the Gaelic Cultural Revival in Ireland made it necessary to distinguish between the Irish who were of

Celtic/Gaelic origin, and the Irish who, like Shaw, were descended from the succession of English colonizers in Ireland since the seventeenth century (240).

In fact, Lyons calls it “nearly incomprehensible” that any Irishman of English stock would think of himself as anything other than just plain “Irish.” prior to the latter years of the nineteenth century (212-3). An illustration of the point can be found in the following excerpt from *The Irish Statesman*, written by Anglo-Irish political journalist H.A. Law at the late date of August 17, 1929:

... whom do we mean by the Anglo-Irish? Note that the name was not chosen by those of whom I speak. *They* have been content, and commonly proud, to call themselves simply “Irish.” But that word has of late been so much used as a synonym for “Gaelic” that, for the sake of clearness and convenience, some distinction had to be made in speaking of one particular body of Irish citizens ... Endless exceptions must be made; but for our present purpose it may be assumed that the typical Anglo-Irishman is Protestant in faith, has some connection to the landowning class as it existed from the end of the seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, and cherishes family traditions to the Crown of these islands (qtd. in Lyons 213).

Both Lyons and Hall offer clear evidence that, throughout much of the nineteenth century, there was, for all practical purposes only one Irish people – be they

Anglo and Protestant or Celtic and Roman Catholic. Despite the fracturing of identity that would eventually make itself manifest in Ireland, it seems all Irishmen thought of themselves as simply “Irish” during that time.

Thus, the Irish, unhyphenated self-identity is what George Bernard Shaw arrived with when he came to London in 1876; it is certainly a perception that would be echoed again and again in his post-success writing and speeches, when, in the rare cases in which he would refer to his personal ethnicity, he would describe himself simply as “Irish” or “an Irishman” (“Preface for Politicians” 9; “What Irish Protestants Think” 50; “Modern Religion II” 63). As in Ireland, not much had been made of the concept of the Anglo-Irish in England during that same time, although what little discourse there had been on the subject appears to be less than flattering. While, in 1860, the popular English Anglican novelist Charles Kingsley would write that the Celtic Irish were “human chimpanzees” that were: “...happier, better, more comfortably-fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were,” the assessment that the English politician and writer Daniel Owen-Madden would make of the Anglo-Irish in the 1840s was only slightly more kind (Kingsley 125; Lengel 30-1; qtd. in Lengel 129). He felt that while the Anglo-Irish indeed possessed certain characteristics distinct from and more favorable than those of the Celtic Irish, they were also, in terms of their relationship to the British, certainly Other:

But the Protestants of Ireland also differ essentially from their English brethren in Britain. They form a new kind of Irish people. They are rich in Saxon self-reliance, and they are also endowed with Celtic sensibility and ardor...their blood is nearly as hot as that of the Catholics. The Anglo-Irish have imbibed far more of the national character of Ireland, than they have imparted of their hereditary English qualities. For matters purely intellectual they are as Celtic as if they had not a drop of British blood. Exclusive institutions have alone preserved them from being completely merged in the national character of Ireland (qtd. in Lengel 30-1).

While it is clear that Owen-Madden was educated to the point of being able to recognize an inherent difference between the Celtic and Anglo-Irish, his insistence that the latter had, apparently at their own choosing, given themselves over to the fate of being assimilated into an inferior culture casts them in just as much light as Other as the “chimpanzee,” or Celtic Irish of whom Kingsley would write. Thus, perceptions of the Irish – Celtic or Anglo – among those of the middle Victorian, English Protestant world Shaw would enter could hardly have been very favorable. They would help affirm a condition the scholars of the Anglo-Irish poet William Butler Yeats would refer to as the “Anglo-Irish solitude,” or the feeling, often seen as being expressed in Yeats’s verse, that the Anglo-Irish were seen as Other in both Ireland and England, due to being out of

place in both countries. This, as the theory went, resulted in personalities that were often indifferent but also prone to success in personal achievement (Moynahan 142).

There is no doubt that Shaw wanted to be highly successful in his writing career when he arrived in London. As his biographer Michael Holroyd details, Shaw saw his move to London as not only a chance to bid farewell to the provincialism of the Dublin he very openly hated, but also as a defining moment in which he would “advance on London, as the centre of literature, art and music, and crown himself ‘king’ there. He had decided to become a ‘professional man of genius’” (59). To become a “king,” in London, Shaw would have to prove that while he may have been “an Irishman,” he was most definitely not “Other.” One way, and perhaps the most effective way, would be to attack one of the most well-known characteristics of the Celtic/Gaelic Irish – their Roman Catholicism.

Although, as previously noted, the majority of Shaw’s anti-Roman Catholic plays were mostly subtle in their attacks, the very first of the lot was ironically more in keeping with the shocking nature of Maria Monk. But 1878’s unfinished *Passion Play* (also known as *Household of Joseph*), an attempt to dramatize the final three years of Christ’s life, speaks volumes about the anti-Roman Catholic feelings that were instilled in the young GBS at Bushy Park, and the same of his desire to fit in as a member of the “We” group soon after his arrival in London. Because Shaw rarely discussed or wrote about the only

posthumously published *Passion Play*, it is difficult to know exactly why he quit writing the text, which stops quite abruptly in the middle of its second act. What is known is that in later years Shaw, speaking to his friend Karl Pearson, admitted that he wrote the play in blank verse in an attempt to imitate Shakespeare, but as he was poor and unconnected in London, did not think he possessed the wherewithal to get it published (Holroyd 71-2). Years later, in his only written statements about *Passion Play*, made in his autobiography *Sixteen Self Sketches*, Shaw called it “profane” and admitted he attempted to represent the Virgin Mary as “a termagant” (83). Seemingly in support of these views, scrawled upon part of the original text of the play housed in the Shaw files within the British Museum, are in the playwright’s own handwriting the words: ““vile stuff”” (Holroyd 72-3).

Finally published as *Passion Play: A Dramatic Fragment* in 1971, some 21 years after Shaw’s death, the play is a direct and devastating attack upon the persons of Jesus, his mother, Mary, and her husband, St. Joseph (the patron saint of the Roman Catholic Church). This swipe against the “earthly trinity” that preconciliar Roman Catholics held especially dear as the Holy Family can be seen, as Lindblad has argued, as Shaw drawing upon of his own family’s negative experience with the Roman Catholic Other – in the person of George Vandeleur Lee (125). In *Passion Play*, a fast-talking Judas lures Jesus to Jerusalem, much as Vandeleur Lee would indirectly lure the young GBS to London after moving there



with the would-be playwright's mother (Holroyd 50-1). The villain to George Carr Shaw's family, just as Judas would be toward the Holy Family in *Passion Play*, is the Roman Catholic music coach and, as such, Shaw's first play suggests that Roman Catholics, in addition to being Other, are also villains.

While *Passion Play* can indeed be seen as offensive to Christians of all denominations, it is, again, particularly horrifying to the Roman Catholic with its insistence that St. Joseph (also the patron saint of laborers) cheated his customers by running a shoddy carpenter's workshop. Also offensive is its insistence that Mary, who, as a matter of Roman Catholic dogma (an article of faith necessary to accept in order to obtain salvation) is believed to have remained a virgin *in perpetua*, not only had relations with more than one man but also gave birth to other children (Shaw, *Passion Play* 1.1.150-155, 1.1.54). At the same time, this Queen of Heaven, this preconciliar conduit of grace, is portrayed as a most ungraceful woman, as she verbally and physically abuses her children, then fakes her death in order to gain attention from them (Shaw, *Passion Play* 1.1.112, 1.1.241). Additionally, the divine figure of Jesus is referred to as a "bastard;" he is lazy and dreamily poetic, a forerunner of the Eugene Marchbanks character in *Candida*, who will be discussed later in this paper as a representation of Christ in that play (Shaw, *Passion Play* 1.1.45, 1.1.119-43).

Whereas *Passion Play* mocked the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and St. Joseph, 1906's *Major Barbara* chose as its target one of the more popular saints

of the Preconciliar Era in a reference to the Roman Catholic communion of saints and the difference it exhibits in regard to Protestant theology and worship. *Major Barbara* is Shaw's retelling of the story of St. Barbara, a maiden of ancient Rome, who was put to death by her pagan father not only for adhering to Christianity, but for daring to evangelize his servants ("Barbara" 86; "Saint Barbara"). She was made the patroness of arms dealers and artillerymen because of the fate of her father, who was blown to pieces in a flash of lightning as divine retribution against her execution ("Barbara" 86; "Saint Barbara"). In *Major Barbara*, the title character Barbara Undershaft is an anti-St. Barbara, an officer of the Salvation Army who shows the extreme weakness of her own Christian faith after her father, a wealthy, irreligious arms dealer, creates disillusionment in her by arranging for the bailing out of her financially-strapped shelter with what she implicitly refers to as his blood money (Shaw, *Major Barbara* 391). Barbara is only mollified when, toward the play's end, her father lures her into a job at the arms factory, under the false pretense that she is going there to evangelize his workers. Although Barbara's fiancée is complicit in the cruel scheme, she herself never catches on, and the play ends with its title character looking like a fool, awaiting the chance to let God "...be in my debt, not I in his," as she plans the conversion of the armament workers (Shaw, *Major Barbara* 444).

Although Barbara Undershaft is, as an officer of the Salvation Army, most definitely a Protestant, the clear and obvious ties Shaw makes to the story of St.

Barbara are awash in irony that reinforces a sense of the Roman Catholic Other. Well-known to preconciliar Roman Catholics as one of the “Fourteen Holy Helpers” (a group of saints whose intercessory powers against illness and sudden death were considered to be extremely powerful), St. Barbara is intentionally and poorly represented in *Barbara Undershaft*, whose own blindness makes her unable to see the truth of what is happening to her, and makes her unable to help herself, much less anyone else (“Barbara” 86). In *Major Barbara*, Shaw’s anti-Roman Catholic sentiment comes across in a way that is more esoteric, more intellectually-inclined than the shocking attacks against the perpetual virginity of Mary, the lack of professional ethics displayed by St. Joseph, and the divine origin of Jesus that are mocked in *Passion Play*. *Barbara Undershaft*, like St. Barbara, is a victim of her father’s cruelty, and although she does not die, her reason for being does. In the process, she comes across as shortsighted and stupid. As the play is allegorical to the story of St. Barbara, the martyr’s fate at the hands of her father, is, by association, also presented as shortsighted and stupid.

Anti-Roman Catholicism, of a particular variety that would especially offend a member of the preconciliar Church, is also seen in Shaw’s Nobel-prize winning *Saint Joan* (1923), a psychosocial portrait of the 15<sup>th</sup> century teenager Joan of Arc, who led France’s armies in turning the tide of the Hundred Years War before her execution for heresy, which was followed by a posthumous rehabilitation. In the play’s lengthy preface Shaw plainly and happily muses upon

the definition of the word “catholic,” and its meaning of “universal,” which he implies should rightly indicate the start of an age of benevolent ecumenism that the Roman Catholic Church was still far from sanctioning (299).

Shaw congratulates the Vatican by declaring that Joan being made a saint “...was a magnificently *Catholic* (my italics) gesture as the canonization of a Protestant saint by the Church of Rome” (“Preface to *St. Joan*” 299). The “Protestant” characterization may seem fair and accurate in terms of semantics, given as Shaw was speaking of the pre-Reformation Era Joan’s propensity to “protest” against being instructed by the Church hierarchy and its reluctance to allow her to follow a “private judgment” of conscience in regard to the military mission she claimed had been dictated to her by the elocutions of three saints: Michael, Margaret, and Catherine of Alexandria (Barstow 27). Private judgment, and the rational following of the conscience that flows from it, is, after all, one of the cornerstones of the Protestantism of Luther and Calvin (Ankerberg and Weldon 128-9). But to the preconciliar Roman Catholic, the entertainment of any notion that a saint of the Church could actually be a “Protestant” would be tantamount to committing blasphemy. This very serious circumstance is plainly addressed by *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, which refers to Protestantism as a “pestilence” promoted by reformers who are “practiced in all the arts of Satan” (Burns 158-61; Carlin 185-91; *Catechism of the Council of Trent* 14-5). As

for levying such a charge of heresy against someone who has been made a saint,

Trent declares:

Still more enormous is the guilt of those who, with pure and impious lips, dare to curse or blaspheme the holy name of God, that name which is to be blessed and praised above measure by all his creatures, or even the names of the Saints who reign with him in glory. Shuddering, as it were, at its very mention, the Sacred Scriptures sometimes express the crime of which they are guilty, by the word benediction (262).

What Shaw feels is Joan's defiant Protestantism, especially as he links it to what he calls her groundbreaking refusal "to accept the specific woman's lot," would also cast the playwright in a light of ignorance among preconciliar Roman Catholics, seeing as he appears not to realize the impact of the influential but controversial, and highly argumentative female Church Doctor, St. Catherine of Siena, a Dominican tertiary who lived in Italy during the century before Joan of Arc, and who caused great scandal by her unwillingness "to accept the specific woman's lot" and keep her mouth shut (Shaw, "Preface to *St. Joan*" 265; Hilbert 25). Not unlike Joan and her military activities, Catherine did just as she pleased whenever she pleased, whether it be controversially preaching in public, audaciously lecturing the pope straight to his face, or, in what could be considered a true one-upmanship of Joan and her voices from saints, claiming she was

inspired to do all these things by the voice of God himself (and then, quite outlandishly, telling him just what she thought when she didn't agree with his plans for her) (Hilkert 25). All of this, combined with a general feeling that she was behaving in a manner both unbecoming to and unnatural for her gender, caused Catherine to be accused of hypocrisy and presumption, and brought before the major superiors of the Dominican order in Florence in 1377, where a highly secretive trial-like proceeding was conducted before judges ("Catherine of Siena, St." 259). Although there is no public record of the proceeding, it is known that Catherine, unlike Joan in her trial for heresy, was acquitted ("Catherine of Siena, St." 259). Catherine's process of canonization, also unlike that of Joan, was relatively quick. She was declared a saint by Pope Pius II in 1461, 81 years after her death ("Catherine of Siena, St." 260).

Shaw, a voracious reader of all texts religious, would seem to have made a mistake when he ignored the contributions of Catherine of Siena and wrote *Saint Joan* and its preface as celebrations of the title character as the first outspoken and determined woman to have great influence in the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout the years, critics both secular and non-secular have examined the similarities between Catherine of Siena and Joan of Arc, and it is the former who is universally regarded as more influential, the true and traditional harbinger of increased voice and participation by women in Roman Catholicism. An example of such can be seen in the writing of Simone de Beauvoir, who, in *The Second*

*Sex*, points out the two saints' shared penchant for outspokenness and their unusually forceful personalities (622). She acknowledges Joan's success, allowing that: "Joan of Arc's adventure had in it something of the miraculous..." but at the same time she insists that: "... it was only a brief escapade" (Beauvoir 104). De Beauvoir gives more credit to Catherine of Siena, calling her contribution to the cause of women in the Church "significant," and acknowledging her diverse roles as counselor, benefactress, itinerant preacher, Church diplomat, and papal advisor as the credentials for her being seen as possessing the more important role (104). Likewise, while Pope John Paul II mentions Joan of Arc's sharing "in the Church's mission" in his apostolic letter, "*Mulieris Dignitatem* (On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year)," he singles out Catherine as a woman who rose above "serious social discrimination" to make "...a significant impact on the life of the Church as well as of society." Thus, while it probably did not hurt Catherine's cause that she was never found guilty of the wrongdoing of which she was accused, the swiftness of her canonization compared to Joan's 489-year rehabilitation process (posthumous retrial, acquittal, beatification, canonization in 1920) gave the former quite a head start when it came to being regarded as the female saint who would not only open doors for women in the Church but would also not be afraid to speak her mind and conscience to members of the male

hierarchy (Barstow xxii-iii).

It can be argued, though, that Shaw knew exactly what he was doing in his seemingly misguided elevation of Joan of Arc's position over the contributions of Catherine of Siena, and that he used it to create Other of the Roman Catholic. For while preconiliar Roman Catholics educated in a basic knowledge of the hierarchy of saints would likely view his ignoring of Catherine in Joan's favor as a simple display of ignorance from a nominally Protestant writer, Shaw highlighted, in recounting and commenting upon Joan's conviction and rehabilitation, a melodramatic episode of Roman Catholic Church history that calls attention to the very concept of sainthood and the process of canonization (in Joan's case worthy, some might say, of being called a fiasco) as something only the Other would do, a messy and self-contradictory process that would certainly not be found in Anglican or Nonconformist churches.

In the later years of Shaw's career, his anti-Roman Catholicism would raise the ire of one of Britain's most important Roman Catholic female figures, Dame Laurentia McLachlan, the abbess of Stanbrook Abbey in Malvern, England. The Benedictine nun, who was considered Britain's foremost authority on Gregorian chant, and Shaw, who had written about classical music for London newspapers during his first years in England, had carried on a strange but affectionate correspondence which featured letters exchanged on a regular basis from the early 1930s until the time of Shaw's death (Corrigan 146-7). It was a



friendship not entirely rooted in music, but one that had started, in part, when Dame Laurentia expressed amazement to Shaw over his controversial declaration of Joan of Arc as a Protestant through a mutual friend, the British Museum curator Sydney Cockerell (Corrigan 87). Although her friendship with Shaw could not make her accept his view of Joan as a “Protestant,” Dame Laurentia did not hold it against him, eventually attributing Shaw’s viewpoint to creative license (qtd. in Corrigan 88). What did anger the abbess was to come nearly a decade after *St. Joan*, when, in 1932, Shaw published the *buldingsroman* novella *The Adventures of the Black Girl in her Search for God*. Its iconoclastic stance against the Roman Catholic Church – told through the misadventures of a native African girl (who has just learned of “God” from missionaries, and seeks to literally find him for herself) -- so riled Dame Laurentia that she severed their mutually-cherished relationship, refusing to speak to or correspond with Shaw for nearly a year and a half (Corrigan 133).

Although *The Adventures of the Black Girl* can be seen as generally offensive to all branches of Christianity, Dame Laurentia took great exception to two parts which were clearly aimed at Roman Catholicism: one in which the black girl encounters the first pope, St. Peter, and the other in which Christ, in conversation with Mohammed, is depicted as a male model whose misfortune in life has forced him to earn easy money by posing for an artisan who creates the

quintessentially Roman Catholic *objet d'art*, the crucifix (Corrigan 125). In the part of the text concerning St. Peter, Shaw suggests that the Roman Catholic Church is nothing but a joke, a paper tiger run by an ineffective, effeminate hierarchy and clergy. This is seen when the black girl comes across the saint, who is described as “an ancient fisherman,” struggling to carry a gigantic paper cathedral upon his back (Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl* 37). Her offer to help is rebuffed when St. Peter assures her of his strength, as he is “the rock on which this Church is built” (Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl* 37). After the black girl corrects St. Peter, suggesting that his less than healthy appearance would indicate that he is far from what he says, he begins to dance and prances past her, “making all the bells in the cathedral tinkle merrily” (Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl* 37). As the saint makes his effete exit, clergy representing various Protestant sects surround the black girl, yelling “Do not believe the fisherman!” (Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl* 38). In addition to being linked toward a certain deviance, in this instance Roman Catholicism, as Manista has suggested, is presented as a religious system that is flatly unworthy of the trust of anyone who, like the black girl, has the ability to discover “absurdity and arbitrariness masked as truth” (119).

The black girl’s later encounter with the artisan, Jesus, and Mohammed is used by Shaw to further his commentary upon the longstanding anti-Roman Catholic perception of the Church as an institution needlessly and overzealously

obsessed with art and ornamentation, and, through this fault, its demonstration of itself as an institution that routinely and hypocritically violates the first commandment, which states:

“I am the Lord, your God. You shall not make to yourselves any idol or graven thing: neither shall you erect pillars, nor set up a remarkable stone in your land, to adore it. For I am the Lord your God” (*The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Ed.*, Lev. 26.1).

Ignoring, or perhaps ignorant of longstanding Roman Catholic teaching, codified by the Council of Trent, that the “idol” or “graven image” of this commandment concerns only representations of pagan gods or objects of nature that pagans worship as gods, Shaw has Christ buckle under to the more literal interpretation of the passage, as supplied by the disapproving Mohammed (*Catechism of the Council of Trent* 241-5; Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl* 50-1). Shaw also uses the representation of violence that is depicted by the *corpus* upon the crucifix as a commentary on the longstanding English Protestant objection that preconciliar Roman Catholicism, with its heavy focus on teaching and meditating upon the events of Christ’s passion and death, was a faith filled with adherents who, “influenced by the errors and ignorance of self-torturing monks,” are obsessed with the lurid and macabre, and as such are Other (Gill 175). “People

idolize me as the Dying Malefactor because they are interested in nothing but the police news,” Jesus says to Mohammed, to which the latter responds, “I should not like people to treat me like that” (Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl* 51). Mohammed’s censure of Jesus goes on, with the former accusing the latter of nothing short of heresy, further rebuking Christ for taking part in the making and veneration of images (Shaw, *The Adventures of the Black Girl* 51-3).

Although Dame Laurentia was eventually able to forgive Shaw and resume their correspondence, the anti-Roman Catholic contents of *The Black Girl* remained so deeply offensive to her that she could barely bring herself to speak of them, as they filled her with what a Stanbrook historian describes as “grief and indignation” (Corrigan 125). *The Black Girl*, however, would not be the end of the abbess’s complaints to Shaw regarding anti-Roman Catholicism in his writing. In January 1935, a bit more than three months after the end of their *Black Girl* feud, Dame Laurentia would again censure Shaw, this time as to his writing on the figure he had already addressed in *Candida*: the Virgin Mary.

Shaw seemingly drew upon the profound attacks based on the widely held Protestant misconception, partially fueled by the writings of the Victorian Scottish Free Church minister Alexander Hislop, that concerned Roman Catholics not only “worshipping” the Virgin Mary, but holding her up as a goddess in the tradition of the Greek Demeter, the Latin Minerva, and the Egyptian Isis, in his follow-up to *The Black Girl*, a play titled *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (19-55). The

text features a segment in which a “lady tourist” (presumably an English Anglican) who is visiting a remote island is told by the local priestess that the images of a quadratic godhead – consisting of “the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Immaculate Mother” must become the focus of her worship (Shaw, *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* 554). The lady tourist responds to the priestess by protesting that she is not a Roman Catholic, and leaving in a huff (Shaw, *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* 554). Perhaps worn out by *The Black Girl* feud, Dame Laurentia made only a single protest against Shaw’s expression of what, to most preconiliar Roman Catholics indeed would be a blasphemous view. It was nevertheless stinging, though, as it called upon him to do nothing less than alter the unpublished text by the omission of the reference to the Virgin Mary: ““You know as well as I do that we do not worship her as God,”” the abbess wrote, implicitly referring to the Roman Catholic practice of *hyperdulia*, which allows only great honor, above that which can be bestowed upon all other saints (*dulia*), to be given to the Virgin through prayer that can also include requests for intercession (*Dulia*). In keeping with the spirit of *hyperdulia*, Dame Laurentia also implored Shaw – whose anti-Roman Catholic writing she thought potentially harmful to strong minds, never mind weaker ones -- to develop a prayerful relationship with the Virgin, and ask her for help so that he could quit his devotion to ““such mischievous things”” (qtd. in Corrigan 136). Shaw’s reply was a treatise on the teachings of Hislop, and his insistence that he had already

established a relationship with the Virgin Mary via his travels to the sites of the temples of the ancient goddesses (Hislop 19-55; qtd. in Corrigan 138).

Additionally, Shaw even went so far as to accuse the abbess of being anti-Roman Catholic herself, owing in part to the Scots-Protestant derivation of her surname:

“McLachlan? That suggests a clan of Covenanters to whom the worship of the B.V.M. (Blessed Virgin Mary) is a damnable idolatry to be wiped out with claymore and faggot. Has Laurentia got that in her blood? If not, why in the name of all the saints does she fly out at me when I devoutly insist that the Godhead must contain the Mother as well as the Father?” (qtd. in Corrigan 138).

Dame Laurentia chose not to respond in kind to Shaw’s swipe, and, as Corrigan writes, “Their second duel left not the slightest trace of resentment on either side” (140). But while the cloistered abbess did battle with the worldly playwright over the anti-Roman Catholicism evident in *The Black Girl* and *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, she was rather a latecomer to the Shaw canon, and seemed to have been only familiar with *Saint Joan*, which had first made her aware of Shaw, and the texts that followed (Corrigan 86). As Shaw’s literary career had started nearly five decades before *Saint Joan*, she was most probably blissfully ignorant of the Saint Barbara rewrite that was *Major Barbara*, and any hints the playwright might have dropped about the existence of *Passion Play*. Had she known of the latter, one wonders if she could ever have established and kept contact with GBS.

**CHAPTER III**  
**CANDIDA: MARY IMMACULATE IN**  
**THE QUADRATIC GODHEAD**

*Candida* can certainly be interpreted as the manifestation of Shaw's insistence on placing the Virgin within the Godhead – be it based on his own interest in goddess worship, or more to the point of presenting Other, what he and the Victorian English Protestants thought they saw Roman Catholics doing. Whichever the case, it can be argued that the play's four principal characters – the grumpy, mean-spirited East End sweatshop owner Mr. Burgess, the romantic itinerant poet Eugene Marchbanks, Burgess's son-in-law, the idealistic Anglican pastor James Mavor Morell, and Morell's "perfect" wife Candida very much coincide with the persons of the Father, Son, Spirit and "Immaculate Mother." The presentation of this system of the quadratic Godhead as being that which belongs to the Other is outlined in *Candida* as the title character's actions leave no doubt that it is the Immaculate Mother who has the upper hand among the four – an assertion which illustrates what Shaw presents as the Other's belief that the

Virgin eclipses her son as prime mediator with the Father, and perhaps rules over the Father, as well.

Carol Marie Englehardt, by calling attention to Roman Catholic Marian titles that suggest Mary's role as first mediator and much more, argues that with such things present in their belief system, Victorian English Protestants could hardly be blamed for thinking of Roman Catholics as Others: "This woman, whom Roman Catholics addressed as the 'Queen of Heaven,' the 'Queen of Mercy,' the 'Most Powerful Mediatrix,' and the 'Dispensatrix of Divine Grace,' appeared to usurp her son," she writes ("Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary" 44). The contention is one that has far greater significance than the strangeness that could be associated with a simple title by which a Roman Catholic might address the Virgin Mary in prayer. For as Englehardt also points out, the prominence of the Virgin Mary in the Roman Catholicism of the Victorian Era expanded the sense of Otherness applied to Roman Catholics in many social matters ("Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary" 46). These are reflected in the various writings of Kingsley, who frequently asserted that membership in the Roman Catholic Church, with its Marian doctrines and dogmas, offered its religionists little more than a corrupting effeminacy, with an appeal only to women and unmanly men (Englehardt "Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary" 46). Of particular fear to Kingsley was the effect the Virgin Mary, whom he viewed as an "aggressive interloper," appeared to be having on



members of his own church (Englehardt “Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary” 44; qtd. in “Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary” 44). Kingsley was appalled by High Church Anglicans who, fueled by the pre-Reformation leanings of the Oxford Movement, sought to increase Marian devotion in the Church of England. As Englehardt suggests, Kingsley’s popular 1851 novel *Yeast: A Problem*, goes to great lengths to warn fellow Anglicans against adopting such practices of the Other, as they were unbecoming to the sense of British masculinity that viewed men as hyper-virile masters of self-sufficiency (“Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary” 46). When for example, a character in *Yeast* bypasses the Oxford Movement and goes straight to Roman Catholicism, admitting that the Virgin Mary “satisfies his desire for a mother who will guide and protect him,” Kingsley presents the conversion as a regression to infancy that should, for all its outrageousness, be condemned on patriotic grounds alone (Englehardt “Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary” 46).

Shaw would apply the Roman Catholic concept of the Virgin Mary as the guiding mother in his characterization of Candida Morell and her relationship to the other members of the quadratic Godhead in *Candida*. But, despite the relative softness of the character’s exterior, Candida is not exactly the benevolent mother who is always kind, understanding and ever-loving. Rather, the character presents a threat to the male-cherishing, English Protestant system championed by Kingsley, as part of an illustration of the feared “matriarchy” that Lagretta Tallent

Lenker argues was regularly used as bait for fear not only by Shaw, but other Victorian writers that included Oscar Wilde, Harley Granville Barker, and Somerset Maugham (37).

In this sense, matriarchy would be established through the person of Candida in the form of a character type Shaw would revive from *Passion Play*, and one that he would use again and again in later plays, that of the “nightmare mother” who takes and exerts power through an aggressive bossiness that borders upon cruelty as she seeks to manage her family (Lenker 41). But while the latter day nightmare mothers (Lady Britomart in *Major Barbara*, Mrs. Higgins in *Pygmalion*) are mostly supporting characters whose bellicose ways can be viewed as comic, Candida, as the Virgin Mother, is the nightmare mother writ nearly as large as *Passion Play*'s Mary, dominating all other characters, be they representative of Father, Son, or Holy Ghost (Lenker 41). This, of course, would be the point, as the Anglican parsonage of St. Dominic supposedly presided over by the parson Morell emerges as an allegory for the Roman Catholic Church – a religion in which a woman is not only unquestionably in charge, but is unquestionably paid heed to by the three other persons of the quadratic Godhead.

Despite his unorthodox view of a quadratic Godhead containing the Virgin Mary, Shaw did make use of sound Roman Catholic theology in the Marian representation of the Candida character by virtue of her correspondence to those figures that the three principal male characters in the play represent. Drawing

upon preconiliar dogmatic and doctrinal teachings (which remain in the Postconiliar Era), Shaw correctly casts Candida/Mary as daughter to Burgess's God the Father, mother to Marchbanks's God the Son, and spouse to Morell's God the Holy Ghost (Liguori 111). That Shaw intended the Candida character to be representative of the Virgin Mary is quite obvious. In addition to his admission of the representation in a letter to the actress Ellen Terry, there is a series of codes within the play that make the connection apparent (621-4). To begin with, Candida's name is derived from the Latin word "candidus," meaning "dazzlingly white" – as in the Virgin Mary's Roman Catholic pronounced sin-free, immaculate soul ("Candidus;" Pius IX, "*Ineffabilis Deus*") Additionally, there is, in the stage directions, a call for the prominent display of the Titian painting, *The Assumption of the Virgin*, that is to be hung above the mantle in Candida's home (Shaw, *Candida* 200). Drawing upon traditional Roman Catholic teaching based on apocrypha that states that Mary, as a child, was a virgin of the Temple in Jerusalem, responsible for various housekeeping and ceremonial tasks not unlike those of the ancient Greek Vestal Virgins, Shaw has Marchbanks express horror that Candida fills and trims the lamps and scrubs the floors (*The Protoevangelium of James 7*; Shaw, *Candida* 235-6). Shaw also uses the traditional Roman Catholic imagery of the Virgin, taken from the book of the Apocalypse, of a woman crowned with stars and standing atop the moon when Marchbanks speaks of Candida having "the wreath of stars on her head" and "the crescent moon

beneath her feet” (12: 1; Shaw, *Candida* 255). Additionally, at one point in the play a dread-filled Morell (who fears Marchbanks and Candida have engaged in sex after he has forced them to spend time along together) asks Marchbanks if he was able to “approach the Gate of Heaven.” (Shaw, *Candida* 253). The reference, “Gate of Heaven” is taken directly from the Roman Catholic prayer titled “Litany of the Blessed Virgin,” which invokes Mary under a series of metaphoric titles (“Singular Vessel of Devotion,” “Tower of Ivory,” “House of Gold”) that suggest mystical entrance into and/or enclosure within a holy space, and highlight the Virgin’s body as a place of confinement whose very existence makes it worthy of honor (51-2).

But why would Morell, Candida’s husband, seek to enclose Marchbanks, Candida’s youthful, overly-emotional admirer (in reality, someone who sees Candida as a mother figure) with her or within her, as he purposely does when he reluctantly leaves the parsonage for an evening’s speaking engagement? Additionally, why would Shaw choose to make use of the pseudo-sexual titles of “The Litany of the Blessed Virgin” to draw attention to the relationship of a figurative parent and child? While secondary to casting Candida within the overriding concept of an Immaculate Mother who must preside over every aspect of a matriarchal religion, the answer can be ascertained when examining Shaw’s representation of Morell as God the Holy Ghost and Marchbanks as God the Son. For as God the Son, Shaw presents Marchbanks as a young man with what Lenker

has identified as a naïve, pre-Oedipal complex who would be dominated by the “nightmare mother” to the point of not even being aware of any paternal competition for her love, or any challenge to his subconscious sexual desire for her (44). This, of course, would enforce the Victorian English Protestant belief that it is the Virgin Mary who dominates her son in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church. Thus, when Morell insists that the naïve son spend time enclosed with the dominating mother, the sole object of his raw affections, he is a Holy Ghost-like guiding force who enhances the chances that the figure of the Son will help create the matriarchal religion or society Shaw seeks to represent as Other. Morell so much as tells Marchbanks this when he says:

“You will be one of the makers of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth; and -- who knows? – you may be a master builder where I am only a humble journeyman. For don’t think, my boy, that I cannot see in you, young as you are, promise of higher powers than I can ever pretend to. I know well that it is in the poet that the holy spirit of man – the god within him – is most godlike” (Shaw, *Candida* 222).

Interestingly, the dialogue, while fully in line with the preconciliar and postconciliar Roman Catholic teaching that *the* Holy Ghost is the part of the Trinity that lives within the believer, is also in line with Shaw’s personal concept of a “Holy Ghost” that is synonymous with the Life Force (*Catechism of the*

*Council of Trent* 66; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 683; Shaw, “The Revolutionist’s Handbook” 693). A feature of the Life Force, as previously noted, is that it always possessed strong, attuned women – such as Candida, or Shaw’s concept of the Virgin Mary – to seek out weaker men to dominate and with whom to breed, thereby resulting in a better production of both men and women in the next generation (Smith 27). Therefore, as the representation of the Holy Ghost, or the Life Force, it is Morell’s duty “build up the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth” through the creation of a society that cannot help being matriarchal at its root and therefore somewhat paradoxical considering Shaw’s arguably feminist personal views and his presentation of the maternally-centered Roman Catholic as “Other” to fearful Victorian and Edwardian English Protestants.

Although he is the part of the quadratic Godhead that is least vocal in *Candida*, the character of Mr. Burgess, who is Candida’s father and is representative of God the Father, is nevertheless of the utmost importance in representing the matriarchal society that Shaw sees as the Roman Catholic Church. For although Roman Catholics both preconciliar and postconciliar have been taught to view the three persons of the Trinity on an entirely equal footing, the popular perception, of course, is that God the Father sits at the head of the triune throne (*Catechism of the Council of Trent* 67; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 180). While Candida dominates, bullies and plays with the minds of Morell and Marchbanks as she hints at extramarital affections for the latter, there

is no question that Burgess – the old sweatshop owner who nicely corresponds to Shaw’s idea of God the Father as a cross between “the elderly gentleman with the beard” and, in reference to a sacrifice Noah makes after the flood, the angry “anti-vegetarian deity who, after trying to exterminate the human race by drowning it, was coaxed out of finishing the job by the gorgeous smell of roast meat” -- is subservient to his daughter, and that there is no enhancing what appears to be only a dutiful respect she applies to him (“The Religion of the British Empire” 6; qtd. in Corrigan 129).

In short, the importance of the Burgess character as God the Father lies in the fact that Candida wastes little time on or with this man, who can be seen as voicing his dissatisfaction with her attitude when he expresses his antipathy toward *The Virgin of the Assumption* and its prominent placement. He even attempts to dismiss her by insisting that Morell, ever working to build up his Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, hung it above the fireplace only to show off his growing prestige in the Anglican Church (Shaw, *Candida* 214-5). It is an assertion that, taken on face value, makes little sense – seeing that Morell, who is described in the text as a practitioner of Christian Socialism – was not a High Churchman who would be swayed by any lingering call from adherents of the Oxford Movement for increased Marian devotion in the Church of England. However, reading the incident in a manner of subtext, one can see that, as such, Burgess demonstrates a lack of knowledge that Shaw would use to enhance the

characterization of God the Father as someone who could be easily usurped by a matriarchal figure such as the Virgin Mary.

The assertion, then, is made: as Other, Roman Catholics follow a faith that is certainly not Protestant – in that Roman Catholicism is a matriarchal religion effectively headed by the Queen of something that is pretty close to an absolute monarchy. Given implications both theological and sociopolitical (Queen Victoria, a limited constitutional monarch, was merely the titular governor of the Church of England and therefore not such a threat) the Roman Catholic, as a result of this allegorical view of *Candida*, can only be perceived as Other (Englehardt, “Victorian Masculinity and the Virgin Mary” 53).



**CHAPTER IV**  
**THE ATTACK OF “THE OTHER:”**  
**ROMAN CATHOLIC RE-EMERGENCE IN**  
**VICTORIAN PROTESTANT BRITAIN**

In addition to the allegorical interpretation of *Candida* as a play that reflects Otherness due to its promotion of a matriarchal church, there is a second way in which it can be seen as a text which makes Other of the Roman Catholic. The second interpretation involves a warning of sorts of what happens when the Irish Roman Catholic Other steps beyond the role of just *being* in the presence of the British Protestant We group, and demonstrates great audacity by actually entering their homes and seeking to transform via the manipulation of that which is held sacred by the dominant group. In this interpretation of *Candida* the object that the Other seeks to manipulate is that of the great Victorian symbol of proper Protestant wifehood and motherhood, the title character of Coventry Patmore's 1854 popular and saccharine poem, "The Angel in the House," as she is represented by the character of Candida. The poem, which has been viewed as creating the angel character as a substitute for the comforts of Marian devotion

absent in the Church of England, views the Victorian housewife as a subservient but sacred object, on loan from God to aid in the everlasting benefit of the upright husband and father:

Because, though free of the outer court

I am, this Temple keeps its shrine

Sacred to Heaven; because, in short,

She's not and never can be mine. (Wolffe, 309; II.XII.1 29-32).

Considering the prominence of such sentiment among the Victorians, *Candida*, interpreted as a play that makes manifest a threat against something so British and Protestant, is a commentary on difference, intrusion, and fear that, as Englehardt has argued of the concepts of the “Angel” (representative of Protestantism) and the “Virgin” (representative of Roman Catholicism) pits the docility of one, who is subject, against the other, who uses independent power to rule her Church (“The Paradigmatic Angel in the House: The Virgin Mary and Victorian Anglicans” 167-8). This second interpretation of *Candida* gives the Victorian English Protestants what they doubtless would have wanted in a comic, happy ending that is achieved by the ultimate victory of the We group and the defeat of the impertinent Other, making all well that ends well. Before examining this interpretation in detail, though, it is necessary – as the play concerns, for the most part, average Londoners living in a working-class neighborhood – to look at how

events of the time concerning the Roman Catholic Church and its reemergence in England were felt by the late Victorian English Protestants.

Rampant prejudice toward Roman Catholics among English Protestants in the Victorian Era is well-documented. Perhaps the most written about of specific prejudices is one that this section of the paper will refer to as the fear of “confessional sex” (Wallis viii). As addressed in the 1990s by Paz, John Wolffe, Susan Bernstein and a range of other social historians and literary critics, this phenomenon was the fear among Victorian English Protestant men that their wives, mothers, sisters or daughters, those Angels in their houses, could be lured into Roman Catholic conversions, then raped or seduced by a priest after they stepped into his confessional (Paz 12; Wolffe 124-5; Bernstein 47). The lurid idea had a slight basis in fact, connected as it was to an 1850 news story from Sheffield about a priest who had sex with his female servant, made her pregnant, then was ordered to pay child support (Paz 12). The problem, though, was that most everyone who claimed to be outraged by the widely-reported story failed to get its details straight (Paz 12). As the story was circulated among English Protestants, the woman had been raped by the priest inside his confessional (Paz 12). The relations between the two, in fact, had been consensual. The only thing the confessional had to do with the story was that the woman, who felt guilty after the act was over, stepped inside it and confessed the sin of fornication to her priest-lover, who gave her the Church’s absolution (Paz 12).

In addition to causing fear and anxiety, the frequently repeated, incorrect version of the story began to bolster the idea of the Roman Catholic priest as a threat to the authority of English manhood (Bernstein 47). The fear was that the priest-confessor, even if he failed to rape or seduce converted Englishwomen inside the confessional, would nevertheless succeed in getting them to discuss their sex lives, or lack thereof (Bernstein 47). This, as viewed by Victorian English Protestants, would undercut the authority of husbands or fathers, the only men they viewed as having the right to discuss such delicate matters with wives or daughters (Bernstein 42). In a widely-distributed, anti-Roman Catholic tract of the middle nineteenth century, W. J. Brockman went so far as to warn Protestant Englishwomen to be wary of being duped by priests into converting to Roman Catholicism because: “I know of not another reptile in all animal nature so filthy, so much to be shunned and loathed, and *dreaded by females*, both married and single, as a Roman Catholic priest or bishop who practices the degrading and demoralizing office of auricular confession” (qtd. in Bernstein 42). That this tract, and other anti-Roman Catholic propaganda of the time, is so concerned with conversion says something relevant about the Victorian English Protestant fear of the Roman Catholic Other’s rebellious emergence from its place.

Additionally, as argued by McLeod, the entire time from the Catholic Emancipation of 1829 up until the 1890s saw the Vatican make proclamations,

issue doctrine, and promulgate dogma that were considered anathema to the religious beliefs of most English Protestants, be they Anglicans or Nonconformists (43). Perhaps the most offensive of these was of a purely spiritual nature, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, promulgated in 1854. This declaration made it an infallible teaching of the Church that the Virgin Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin that is, in all mainstream Christian belief, imparted on every human soul in the first instant of life (McLeod 43; Pius IX “*Ineffabilis Deus*”). Also among the outpourings from the Vatican was one that was widely seen as an affront to Great Britain, the 1864 papal encyclical “*Lamentabili Sane*,” also known as “The Syllabus of Errors.” This document declared it an act of heresy for any Roman Catholic to believe that another faith or Protestant denomination (for example, the Churches of England and Ireland) could rightly act as a religion of state (McLeod 43; Pius IX, “*Lamentabili Sane*”). Also infuriating was the First Vatican Council’s Doctrine of Papal Infallibility (1870), a proclamation that stated all popes, by special, God-given graces, are naturally errorless in judging matters of faith (McLeod 43).

While these controversial teachings continued to bolster prejudice against Roman Catholics into the latter part of the Victorian Era and into the Edwardian, a more specific threat to what many Protestants in Britain saw as the country’s growing sense of social progressivism was seen in the form of Pope Leo XIII’s issuance of the encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (“On Capital and Labor”) in 1891. In

this edict (which condemned moves toward various forms of state socialism by European governments), the continuance of a Papal Aggression against Britain was strongly felt (McLeod 43; Cort 284-5). The encyclical angered all socialist factions in Britain, including members of the relatively mild Anglican and Nonconformist Christian Socialist movement (Morell, in *Candida*, belonged to this branch), who believed it was the duty of Christians to do whatever necessary to better the lives of laborers, including tailoring the focus of their churches to revolve around social justice concerns, and offering support for moves such as strikes (Shaw, *Candida* 7;Phillips 1-2, 206, 245). It also offended the more radical socialists such as the Fabians (a group that counted among its members George Bernard Shaw), who favored abolition of private property, the dismantling of the system of hereditary peerage, and the nationalization of various industries, most prominently health care (Cole “Fabianism”). With *Rerum Novarum*’s strong insistence that all Christians should seek to work out their personal salvation before worrying about social justice, and not engage in strikes because of the idleness which would likely result, Christian Socialists felt that Leo XIII was trying to dictate to those outside his spiritual jurisdiction, and was quite audacious in so doing (Cort 284-5). Likewise, *Rerum Novarum*’s harsh stance toward socialists who sought to abolish private property and enterprise, a concept that Leo XIII implied was tantamount to favoring the abolition of a God-given free

will, was seen by the more radical British socialists as being aimed squarely at them and the progress they felt was being made toward the creation of a new Britain that would at last have parity among its social classes (Cort 284-5).

As previously mentioned, much of the fear based on the papal intentions started in 1850 when Pope Pius IX announced his decision to re-establish the Roman Catholic dioceses that had been taken over by the Church of England centuries before, complete with the original names that had been kept by the Anglicans (Paz 9). The Pope's action led to a storm of stories and editorials in London's leading newspaper, *The Times*, which amounted to "a series of attacks against the new hierarchy" (Paz 9). Although *The Times* and many of its readers expressed outrage over the Pope's audacity in establishing "new" dioceses that would be exact jurisdictional replications of those of the state-run Church of England, they were particularly offended by the re-establishment of a Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster, as it, being named for the area that contains the seat of Parliament, would supposedly represent and "encourage 'the wanton interference of a band of foreign priests' in domestic affairs" (Paz 9; *The Times* qtd. in Paz 9).

*The Times*, betraying its fear that the Pope was using the diocese re-establishments as the first shot in a religious war, called the action illegal and made a commitment to fight the Vatican over the matter (*The Times* qtd. in Paz 9). The newspaper further editorialized that although a few English "weak

minds” had converted to Roman Catholicism in preceding years, “the Pope was mistaken in believing that England would ever return to ‘Romish bondage’” (*The Times* qtd. in Paz 9). Other London papers, along with English provincial newspapers and anti-Catholic magazines and journals, began pouring fuel on the fire with sensationalized accounts of the Papal Aggression, especially after the former Oxford don and celebrated Roman Catholic convert, Cardinal John Henry Newman, suggested that the Pope’s recreation of the office of Roman Catholic Bishop of Birmingham was among the first steps in an action that would prove God to be: ““leading England back to the true church, which possessed both divine prerogatives and ... high destiny”” (Paz 9; qtd. in Paz 9). Shortly after Newman made his remarks, the newly recreated Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, Nicholas Wiseman, sent the newspapers and magazines into another whirlwind with the suggestion, made in his first pastoral letter, that the initial shot in a War of Papal Aggression had hit its target with the rightful and long overdue diocese re-establishments: ““The great work, then, is complete...”” he wrote. ““Catholic England has been restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament”” (qtd. in Paz 9).

Press accounts that detailed further signs of the Papal Aggression would inspire trepidation among English Protestants throughout the latter half of the 1800s. The single situation, however, that probably proved to be the most



inflammatory involved the fear that was inspired by news in 1858 of the incredibly odd custody fight between the Roman Catholic Church and a Jewish family in the Papal States. The case involved parents petitioning the Vatican in the hope of regaining custody of their son from the Church, which had interred him in a convent after one of the family's Roman Catholic servants baptized him as he slept (Paz 15). The news, Paz asserts, inspired near panic among the many English families who kept Irish Roman Catholic servants, and led to the widespread notion that Irish immigrants could be joining the Pope in his acts of aggression (Paz 15). The fear and furor the thought conjured was so immense that debates over how Great Britain could interfere in the Papal States case began to rage among the public and in Parliament (Paz 15). It led to the circulation of petitions that sought to have Parliament discourage the Roman Catholic presence in England by sending the Pope subtle signs that Great Britain would not be intimidated by any form of aggression to come from the Vatican (Paz 15). Among these petitions were those that called for Parliament to end the token, goodwill financial contributions it made to the Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth in Ireland, and to begin inspecting convents for signs that they were Maria Monk-like "dens of iniquity" (Paz 14-5). Parliamentary debate on the latter petitions became extremely ugly, with the MP Henry Drummond suggesting, on the floor of the House of Commons, that convents were nothing more than fronts for places where the Roman Catholic Church punished its female members and sold their

sexual favors, “either prisons or brothels” (Paz 17; qtd. in Paz 17).

Somewhat calmer, although still strong reaction to another widely reported news event had fanned the flames of anti-Roman Catholic prejudice in the early 1850s. Although the legal case it pertained to involved only one aristocratic family and a London convent, it inspired much anger and anxiety in the average Protestant man and woman on the street and throughout the country (Paz 13). The case, involving the postulant Augusta Talbot and her family inheritance, convinced many Victorian English Protestants that the Roman Catholic Church was a hypocritically greedy, money-obsessed institution (Paz 13). Talbot, who was the niece and ward of the Roman Catholic peer Lord Shrewsbury, entered a convent in 1851 after refusing to marry a man that her late mother’s husband had chosen for her. After her enclosure, Talbot’s stepfather went to court to have the convent return to him the young woman’s sizable inheritance, which she had given to her religious order as a dowry (Paz 13). The stepfather lost his case, but gained sympathy from people across England, inspiring newspaper and magazine editorials about greedy priests, the supposed hypocrisy of the vows of poverty that are attached to Roman Catholic religious life, and the concept of nunneries representing, as the Victorian religious historian Walter Walsh wrote in 1899, “a grand scheme for relieving English ladies of their money” (Paz 13; qtd. in Paz 13). A widely reprinted editorial cartoon that first appeared in the radical

political magazine *Punch* commented upon the Talbot case by depicting sinister-looking priests luring virginal-appearing girls into convents (much as they supposedly tried to lure them into their confessionals) (Paz 13).

Added to the deeply felt controversies described in the paragraphs above was the anxiety among many English Protestants produced by the fact that Roman Catholicism was growing in England during the middle and late Victorian Era, especially in working class sections of London and the provincial industrial cities of Liverpool and Manchester (McLeod 38-9). While only an estimated one percent of England's population was Roman Catholic prior to the 1829 Emancipation, the statistic quadrupled over the next two decades (McLeod 38). The 1851 religious census of England revealed four percent of the population to be Roman Catholic, with the concentration running as high as a somewhat astonishing 36 percent in the working class London neighborhoods of The Strand and Southwark (McLeod 38). Considering numbers on a *per capita* basis, the situation was even more advanced outside London. In the same census, the number of Roman Catholics figured to be living in Liverpool was a relatively high 38 percent, while in Manchester, the mark was at 27 percent (McLeod 38).

While McLeod asserts that tension no doubt came from the fact that some English Protestants of the time – particularly bohemian artists (like the Other, Marchbanks, in the second anti-Roman Catholic interpretation of *Candida*) and writers who wished to be provocative – were converting to Roman Catholicism,

the grand majority of England's new papists, especially as seen in Liverpool and Manchester, were its thousands of Irish immigrants who came into the country starting in the 1830s (38; Shaw, *Candida* 215-6). The effects of this largely potato-famine induced immigration are not to be underestimated in the continuing reinforcement of prejudice toward Roman Catholicism, and the idea that the colonial subject, the Other, was not only here at home, but also bent on asserting itself, perhaps even taking over. In another light, however, the social theorist Frank H. Wallis argues that the average Victorian English Protestant who harbored prejudice toward Roman Catholicism was really acting, no matter what other contributing factors may have been present, out of a deeply-instilled sense of superiority over the Irish, which was a reflection of the upper hand that centuries of English/British colonial rule of Ireland had given him (228). In terms that are congruent to Said's theory of the creation of Other, Wallis attributes anti-Roman Catholicism among English Protestants in the Victorian Era as expressions of Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrism "which propounded the belief that Celts were racially inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race," beliefs that are echoed in Kingsley's references to the Irish "chimpanzees" of Celtic/Gaelic origin (228; Letter to Frances Eliza Kingsley 125). The Anglo-Saxons (or those who thought of themselves as Anglo-Saxons) were convinced that they had "inherited a genius for...reason, restraint, love of freedom, respect for law and distrust of

enthusiasm” which the Celtic Irish had not (Wallis 228). Wallis also argues that Anglo-Saxon ethnocentrists, or English Protestants of the Victorian Era, viewed their Celtic colonial subjects in or from Ireland as “emotionally unstable, childish, ignorant, lazy, violent, primitive, dictatorial, dirty, vengeful and superstitious” (238). Wallis’s and Kingsley’s assertions are clearly reflective of the English Protestant creation of the Irish Roman Catholic Other, a construction which, by association, can be applied to all Roman Catholics, and one that shows up, along with the great fear of the power of the priest and the confessional over women and children, as the basis of the second anti-Roman Catholic interpretation of *Candida*.

**CHAPTER V**  
***CANDIDA*: “THE ANGEL,” “THE VIRGIN,”**  
**AND “THE OTHER” AMONG “US”**

In this second interpretation of *Candida* as an anti-Roman Catholic text, it is imperative to realize that the title character, as “the Angel in the House,” is not the major character in the play. The focus, rather, is on Morell and a plot that can be seen as centering on his experience of what, in twenty-first century terms, might be called an identity crisis after Marchbanks, representative of the Other, the Roman Catholic who adores Candida as his Virgin Mary, attaches himself to the parsonage. This interpretation relies more heavily on the course of the play’s action, beginning with the physical placement of the principal characters at the start of the play, and then throughout it.

Marchbanks, a homeless poet descended from aristocracy who has been taken in by Morell and is inordinately fond of Candida, is not in the parsonage through the first half of Act I, having accompanied Candida and her children on a seaside holiday. The strong, handsome and oratorically-gifted Morell, who finds himself in constant demand as a speaker for meetings of various political

groups, remains in London to fulfill his many engagements, obviously not at all aware that the rather offbeat young poet has designs on his wife. When Candida returns unexpectedly to retrieve warmer clothing for her son, she has Marchbanks in tow. Soon after their arrival, the young bohemian informs Morell, in terms both matter of fact and glibly taunting, that he is in love with Candida, and that he must agree to let her choose between them. Morell experiences great fear as he ponders the possibility that Candida is not as impressed with his fiery sermons on Christian Socialism as she has claimed to be, and wishes to leave him for the more dreamy and esoteric Marchbanks. After Morell tests Candida's fidelity by requiring her to spend several hours alone with Marchbanks, he indeed demands that she choose between them. Candida slyly leads on both men, but she picks Morell, calling him her "master" (Shaw, *Candida* 262, 265-6). Heartbroken and dejected, Marchbanks kneels down before Candida (interestingly, as a Roman Catholic might before a statue of the Virgin Mary), and she kisses his forehead. As he rises, turns, and leaves the parsonage, Candida and Morell embrace (Shaw, *Candida* 199-268).

Although the representations are subtle, one does not have to look too hard to find parallels between the plot and characters in *Candida* and the type of anti-Roman Catholic prejudice that flourished in England during the Victorian and Edwardian Eras. The situation that Morell is in at the start of the play is a representation of what Tracy C. Davis calls English "middle class, Christian,

socialist monogamous...procreatively successful family life,” free from any type of outside interference (220). Marchbanks, of course, is Other to Morell: celibate, childless, homeless, romantic, petulant, penniless and shabby, much more akin to the renowned Roman Catholic mendicant saint, Francis of Assisi, than the ideal young man of Victorian Protestant England (Butler 17-26). In his shabbiness – highlighted by the fact that he wears the same shirt and lawn tennis sweater every day, and that it appears “in these garments he has apparently lain in the heather and waded through the waters,” he also bears a striking resemblance to the “uncleanly” Italian priests Shaw describes in his essay, “On Going to Church,” those who absolutely ruined his enjoyment of art by daring to say Masses while Shaw, on holiday, toured their cathedrals (*Candida* 215-6; 22).

The crux of Morell’s problem, of course, is that he has been unaware, and has allowed Candida to enclose herself with the Other, Marchbanks, in a holiday cottage that was a virtual confessional, affording her the opportunity to choose something Other than him and his very English, male-centered, Victorian Protestant way of life. Morell’s late-realized fears are symbolic of those fears of Victorian English Protestant men who, in the wake of Roman Catholic Emancipation, the Oxford Movement, and Newman’s conversion, had agonized over the possibilities of their wives being talked into converting to Roman Catholicism by, say, the neighborhood’s new Roman Catholic priest, and



then having to experience the various sexual horrors they knew were sure to follow, thanks to Maria Monk, her *Awful Disclosures of the Hotel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal*, and the other popular, anti-Roman Catholic literature of the day, especially as found in magazines such as *Punch* (which the Protestant Alliance alarmingly suggested could be put out of business in an England in which Roman Catholics seemed to be gaining more presence and voice) (Wolffe 131).

Of additional importance regarding the upset of the St. Dominic's parsonage is the dialogue that centers on the absence of the Morell children and their enclosure in a place of seclusion with Candida and Marchbanks (Shaw, *Candida* 204). For if the Victorian English Protestant husband was concerned about his wife falling prey to "priestcraft," the Victorian English Protestant father was perhaps even more concerned about the effect that the changes in English society introduced by Roman Catholic Emancipation and increased Irish immigration could likely have on his progeny. As Bernstein notes:

Not only does the peculiar seclusion of the confessional pose a danger to the 'sexual purity' of English wives and daughters, but also renders the father confessor, as spiritual advisor to these women, a counterforce to the power of the husbands and fathers in the home, and, by extension to the rule of the British nation

(47).

In addition to the perceived scandal of the confessional, anti-Roman Catholic gossip of the day could not ignore thoughts of the Irish Roman Catholic servants tiptoeing about at night, Holy Water from their emancipated chapels in hand. With this in mind, it is crucial to note that it was with the Other Marchbanks that the Morell children left London, and from their enclosure they had not returned (Shaw, *Candida* 214). It is a situation that is parallel to the Vatican removing the baptized Jewish child from his home, Augusta Talbot enclosing herself and her money in a monastery, and the fears of what might ultimately happen to all English Protestant children if the Holy Water from the Irish servants was somehow found to make them wards of the Vatican.

In the second anti-Roman Catholic interpretation of *Candida*, Morell certainly views his perfect, Victorian English Protestant wife as the title archetype from “The Angel in the House,” a view, as has been shown, not at all uncommon among husbands of his time, place and station – and, as Wolffe has argued, one that was an unconscious substitute for the comforts of Marian devotion that were absent in Protestant homes (309). Marian devotion, however, is not lacking in the Other, Roman Catholic-like Marchbanks, however, as he constantly links *Candida* to the Virgin, first by presenting her with the Titian painting, then by delivering the speech in which he speaks of the aforementioned woman of the Apocalypse,

crowned with stars and standing atop the moon (Shaw, *Candida* 255).

The fact that Marchbanks tells lies in an effort to make Morell grief-stricken over Candida's supposed extramarital desire reinforces the notion of extreme corruption among the Roman Catholic priesthood in its supposed advances toward women inside the confessionals, or in their attempts to lure them and their money, as in the case of Augusta Talbot, into the prison-like convents depicted by Maria Monk (Bernstein 57-8; Paz 13). Much of the bulk of *Candida*, in fact, is a sparring contest between the English, Protestant Morell and the Other, "Catholic" Marchbanks -- a sort of personal Armageddon with each man's vision of "the woman," either the perfect "Angel in the House" Candida, or the immaculately conceived "Virgin Mary" Candida, as its prize. Such is evident in the subtext of the following exchange:

MARCHBANKS. I love your wife.

MORELL. Why, my dear child, of course you do.

Everybody loves her: they can't help it. I like it. But I say, Eugene, You're under twenty: she's over thirty. Doesn't it look rather too like a case of calf love?

MARCHBANKS. You dare say that of her! You think that way of the love she inspires! It is an insult to her! ...

MORELL. She seems to bear it pretty well. Eugene, my boy: you are making a fool of yourself: a very great fool of

yourself...(Shaw, *Candida* 220-1).

This is a telling exchange, and one that defines how each man objectifies Candida in line with his own personal values and beliefs. In the exchange, Marchbanks, in stating his love, surpasses *hyperdulia* and crosses into a display of adoration toward his Virgin. Morell, at first not sensing the depth of the Other's feelings, is initially very happy that Marchbanks admires his wife. She is, after all, in the parson's eyes, the perfect example of English Protestant womanhood, and, as such, is to be well regarded. But the later suggestion of "calf-love," or "puppy love," the sort of immature idolatry a child often shows for another person, is insulting to the Other. Marchbanks lashes out at Morell, angry that the latter can recognize an idolater when he sees one, angry that he sees a man whom, while free to have a great amount of respect for a married woman, is one who should not be feeling or expressing love for her. And what is the parson's response to the poet's outrage? It is the same one that many Protestants who do not understand the intricacies of the Roman Catholic attachment to the Virgin Mary might make: "You are making a fool of yourself: A very great fool of yourself" (McLeod 84-5; Shaw, *Candida* 221).

The exchange that follows this incident can be read as a virtual, face-to-face combat between the ideologies of the Victorian English Protestant and the Roman Catholic Other, with attention paid to the threat the latter makes toward

English manhood. Playing upon Anglican and Nonconformist fears fueled by the Brockman tract and its equation of the priest to a reptile (the body of which the devil had invaded to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden), Shaw has the Protestant representation, Morell, speak of a diabolical influence in the doctrine espoused by the Roman Catholic representation, Marchbanks (*The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Ed.*, Gen. 3.1-6). The Roman Catholic then bluntly supplies credence to the fear that the Papal Aggression is more than a mere product of the Protestant imagination, and perhaps something from the depths of Hell itself:

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

MARCHBANKS [ruthlessly]. I know. I’m doing it on purpose. I told you I should stagger you (Shaw, *Candida* 222).

It is at this point that Morell, dejected by Marchbanks’s insolence and cruelty, begins to doubt both his ability to perform his role as a husband, and his wife’s professed positive feelings for his work as a clergyman. It is also when he begins to wonder what might have gone on inside the holiday “confessional” in which Candida and Marchbanks were enclosed. The “devil” of

Roman Catholicism has clearly threatened not only Morell's wife, but his home, family, work, and sense of masculinity.

Morell becomes more and more dejected throughout the play, convinced he must be losing his wife to the proselytizing of the Other. In the final act, when he purposely but reluctantly leaves Candida alone with Marchbanks, figuratively enclosed once again in a room that represents the confessional, he hopes she will emerge with the courage to tell him of what he thinks will be her "conversion" (Shaw, *Candida* 249-51). What Shaw makes take place between Candida and Marchbanks, though, is not the priest's seduction of English womanhood, but the spiritual son's idolatrous adoration of the Virgin:

MARCHBANKS. Oh, now I can't say anything: all the words I know belong to some attitude or other – all except one.

CANDIDA. What one is that?

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

CANDIDA. Of course. And what have you to say to

Candida?

MARCHBANKS. Nothing but to repeat your name a thousand times. Don't you feel that every time is a prayer to you?

CANDIDA. Doesn't it make you happy to be able to pray?

MARCHBANKS. Yes, very happy...I have come into Heaven, where want is unknown (*Candida* 251).

It is significant that Marchbanks's attentions to Candida in this scene are again representative of adoration, and not *hyperdulia*. This is because of how Shaw structures Marchbanks's "prayer." With his rapturous repetition of, "Candida," Marchbanks is lost in prayer, but not prayer that venerates or seeks intercessory help. Instead of asking the Virgin to pray *for* him, to take his requests to God, or simply honoring her (as the Roman Catholic Church allows), he is worshiping her. This, of course, was and is not allowed, in both preconciliar and postconciliar Roman Catholicism (*Catechism of the Council of Trent* 40; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 253). Thus, Shaw constructs a situation in which the Roman Catholic Other is truly guilty of at least some of what English Protestants attest. Because the scene is interrupted by Morell's reappearance, it sets up the final battle of this Armageddon, and the ultimate victory for the English Protestant way of life.

Upon his return, Morell simply cannot handle what he has overheard of

the above exchange. His dejection has gotten the best of him, and he demands to know the truth from Candida. His charge to her is prefaced by a speech in which the metaphoric language once again insists that Marchbanks, the Roman Catholic, the priest, the Other, is something diabolical. “That foolish boy can speak with the inspiration of a child and the cunning of a serpent,” Morell tells Candida, echoing the Victorian English Protestant tract-writer Brockman’s reference to priests as “reptiles” to be “dreaded,” “shunned” and “loathed,” as much as the serpent of the Garden of Eden (Shaw, *Candida* 264; Brockman qtd. in Bernstein 42; *The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Ed.*, Gen. 3: 1-6). Morell continues: “He has claimed that you belong to him and not to me; and rightly or wrongly, I have come to fear that may be true” (Shaw, *Candida* 264). He then orders Candida to choose between himself and Marchbanks (Shaw, *Candida* 264). Here, Morell presents himself as a personification of all that is right with Protestant England as he makes his bid: “I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer a woman” (Shaw, *Candida* 265). As the claim of the Other, Marchbanks’s bid offers the opposite of what Morell says he can provide:

CANDIDA. And you, Eugene? What do you offer?

MARCHBANKS. My weakness. My desolation. My



heart's need.

CANDIDA. [impressed] That's a good bid, Eugene. Now I know how to make my choice (Shaw, *Candida* 265).

When Candida chooses Morell, it is the ultimate victory for Victorian English Protestants, the We or "Us" group, English manhood, John Bull, progressivism, the Church of England, the English family, Queen and country, the Angel in the House, the *status quo*. It is a loss for the Roman Catholic Other, and it indicates that all aspects of this Other – be they the immigrant Irish servants with their Holy Water, the nuns that got to keep Augusta Talbot's inheritance, the sex-obsessed priests, the aggressive Pope, Cardinal Newman and the other misguided English converts, and those whom the We group thinks of as idolaters, *will* be kept in their places. But Candida's choice, made after she tells Marchbanks his bid was good, also projects upon Morell the Said assertion that the dominating force is not always strong, but rather only as strong as the image, or text, of itself it creates in relation to the Other (94). When Candida says: "I give myself to the weaker of the two," she implies that Morell, for all his good looks, physical strength and grand words, is actually the force that has less experience in the world (Shaw, *Candida* 266-7). As Marchbanks has told her, he is "as old as the world" (Shaw, *Candida* 267). She has not only realized the truth of it, but has decided that Marchbanks, as always, will persist. To this reaffirmed Angel in the House, Morell, the representative of the English Church, the English nation, and

English manhood, is only a youngster when compared to the ability to survive that Marchbanks, representative of the ancient Roman Catholic Church, has demonstrated. It also comments upon another highly controversial Roman Catholic interpretation of scripture that provides the Church's teaching of papal supremacy. In both the preconciliar and postconciliar Roman Catholic magisterium, the passage, from the Gospel of St. Matthew, affirms St. Peter and his successors to the office of Bishop of Rome (that is, the papal office) as the heads of the only true Christian Church founded by Jesus Christ, the second person of the triune Godhead (*The Catechism of the Council of Trent* 78; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 233). The scriptural text that provides the basis, in which Christ states, "And I say to thee: That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," gives Candida the out she needs to turn away from Marchbanks and recommit herself to Morell (*The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Ed.*, Matt: 16:18). To Candida, who has decided to remain the perfect Victorian English Protestant wife, Marchbanks's own assertion of being as "old as the world" is a testament to the perpetual durability he sees as his divine gift. He will not need this particular Angel in the House, this Candida, inside his confessional. She knows that he can and will close the door without her inside, and she knows that he can and will endure.

In this second interpretation of *Candida* as an anti-Roman Catholic text,

George Bernard Shaw echoes some of the prejudices of his time in references that, although veiled, are strong and stinging in what they say about the Other and those who create it. While *Candida* indeed reaffirms the *status quo* with Morell's victory, the parson's good finish would seem to reflect the wishes of the Victorian English Protestant as the nightmare has a happy ending, courtesy of George Bernard Shaw, one of Us. It is a play in which the temptation of confessional sex is overcome by an Angel in the House who chooses to remain true to the We and Us groups' ways of life. When all is said and done, Shaw, with *Candida*, can be seen as affirming Great Britain's status as a social, cultural, imperial superpower, and reinforcing his own status within that superpower. He is also suggesting to his English audiences that if any force could be stronger than "the gates of hell" and prevail against St. Peter's Church, it might just be John Bull. Shaw was happy to do this, as strength and success in his career of writing English words for English readers and theater-goers is what he hoped would make him less than Other; it's also what he hoped would make him "king."

The first interpretation, of course, plays upon the sense of Otherness felt by Victorian English Protestants toward Roman Catholics in relation to the Virgin Mary's seemingly all-encompassing presence in the preconciliar Church, even to the point that she is on at least equal footing, and perhaps even above the triune Godhead. When combined with the fears caused by anti-Roman Catholicism in Victorian and Edwardian England, it is little wonder that this sense of Otherness

was felt, and even acted upon in the forms of gossip, the spreading of misinformation, *Punch* editorials and cartoons, and the like.

Given Shaw's powers of observation alone, it would be positively anti-Shavian to think of him not wanting to comment upon a fervor that, as Saddlemyer has described of Shaw's fascination with the Salvation Army and its public drumbeating, so put itself on display ("War, Commerce, and Family Values"). Given that, it is also apparent that Shaw's choice to present the Roman Catholic as Other in *Candida* is far more than a desire to point out to his fellow Protestants (and Shaw was, at least, nominally a Protestant) that Roman Catholics are different because they "worship" God the Immaculate Mother perhaps more than they worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Roman Catholics are different, Roman Catholics are Other, says Shaw, because Shaw, the Irishman, was himself Other – and he needed to show the Victorian English Protestants that, while he may never have agreed with their idea of what "the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth" should be, when they read his plays or saw them performed, he would have liked for them to think that that perhaps he did. That he could do so in such thorough manner offers proof positive that the lessons and strictures of childhood are often difficult to erase.

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