

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Money, Marriage and Morality in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

by

Sujan Ghimire

Roll No.: 270

Symbol No.: 282135

TU Regd. No.: 6-2-49-256-2008

Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

2017

**Central Department of English**  
**Tribhuvan University**

**Letter of Recommendation**

This is to certify that Sujan Ghimire has completed his thesis entitled “Money, Marriage and Morality” under my guidance. I recommend this thesis to be submitted to the Research Committee for viva voce.

.....  
Keshab Sigdel  
Supervisor  
Central Department of English  
Tribhuvan University

**Tribhuvan University**  
**Faculty of Humanities and Social Science**

**Approval Sheet**

The thesis entitled “Money, Marriage and Morality in G.B. Shaw’s *Pygmalion*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Sujan Ghimire has been taken willingly as the partially fulfillment of the requirement undersigned the members of the research committee.

Members of Research Committee,

Internal Examiner

External Examiner

Head of the Central Department of

English

Date:

### **Acknowledgements**

I am glad to take this opportunity to thank Keshab Sigdel, Lecturer at the Central Department of English, T.U., for his supervision of this research work. His wide-ranging knowledge and study have led to many improvements in the substance and helped me to give the final shape to this thesis.

I would like to extend my profound gratitude to Prof. Dr. Ammar Raj Joshi, Head of the Department of English. I am especially grateful to Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa for granting me an opportunity to carry out this research work and his invaluable suggestions.

I would like to thank my friends and those who supported and encouraged me directly or indirectly in this course. I am heavily indebted to my parents, brothers, and my friends who constantly supported and provided encouragement to carry out this research work. Finally, I am thankful to Arjun Kumar Shrestha for teaching help in bringing this research work into this present form.

Date:

Sujan Ghimire

## Money, Marriage and Morality in Shaw's *Pygmalion*

*The Thesis research entitled "Money, Marriage and Morality in George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion" focuses on the role of matter for the cultural construction of 19th century England utilizing the theoretical concept of cultural construction conceptualized by Raymond Williams. Pygmalion illustrates the difference and tension between the upper and lower class in the Victorian period. A basic belief of the period was that a person is born into a class and that no one can move from one class to another. Shaw, on the contrary, believes that personality, culture, and class are not defined by birth. Instead, such categories are constructed based on power, position, and money. Even morality and marriage are determined by material interest. The study argues that, the barriers between classes are not natural and can be reconfigured.*

The present thesis analyses George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* (1913) in the light of the theories of cultural materialism. George Bernard Shaw is an English dramatist. His works problematizes social problems. Shaw raises the social conditions, heredity and environment which have inescapable force in shaping human character. Early twentieth century England was a time where the bourgeoisie held all of the power and proletariats were under the shadow of bourgeoisie. *Pygmalion* deals about a story of a young girl Eliza and a Professor called Higgins. Higgins tries to transform Eliza into a woman as poised and well-spoken as a duchess. The play considers some of the illusions of the class distinctions. Eliza, talking to Colonel Pickering about how she want to become a lady like duchess and how Mr. Higgins refused to help her because she belongs to the lower-classed section of society. Later she finally convinces Mr. Higgins to help her. In *Pygmalion*, we observe a society divided, separated by language, education, and wealth. Shaw shows that such gaps are not natural and can be bridged. Eliza

progressessomewhat throughout the play and she continues to remain within the walls of the middle class status.

*Pygmalion* reflects the reality of the contemporary society of England. Throughout the play, men and women are continuously recognized for who they are through different factors such as how they are dressed, their manners, how they speak, morality or their money. It is however noticeable that a combination of all factors is rarely to be found. The idea of ranking individuals based upon their wealth and behaviors has endured through all cultures, countries, and times. Shaw's *Pygmalion* addresses an individual's capability to advance through society, an idea as old as social distinction. Shaw does so through the social parable of a young English flower girl Eliza, who after receiving linguistic training assumes the role of a duchess. She receives instruction, as a bet, by a self-absorbed language professor named Higgins. However, Eliza does not take her social ascension alone, as she is joined by her drunken father Dolittle. The manner in which they rise from poverty demonstrates their equality as humans.

*Pygmalion* centers on a woman who cannot speak to save her life. She is the model of the characters who is not perceived by the society positively despite the success. In the name of economic and social status she is always perceived as docile and submissive. In the story where two rich and powerful men are language specialists. This story shows that there is a social hierarchy in London at the time. And people have the ambition to make the social position in the society and are able to succeed in doing so. What are the aspects of the money, marriage and morality of the society found in the text? How does Shaw excel in the representation of the modernist culture? How money plays an important role to construct the class, culture and morality? Is class permanent or can be reconfigured? And which aspects of the society are represented in the text? These are some of the issues this research aims to answer.

The play *pygmalion* is the mirror of the society of the 1920s London. Each and everything is decided in terms of money. The text shows how people get into marriages to secure the life in the future and people are being immoral and corrupted in the society. Shaw portrays the contemporary society from the traditional social structure; society analyses everything from the viewpoint of social and economic status so that he excels in the representation of the modernist culture. The play presents how society forms its ideology.

Shaw's *Pygmalion* deals with the theme of education and its influence on the agents' social and individual relationships. In the preface to *Pygmalion*, Shaw points out that the reason for writing this play is that the "English neither speak their language properly, nor teach their children to speak properly. They need a phonetician to reform their way of speaking and spelling" (2) . In *Pygmalion*'s class-conscious society, major characters are almost discriminated according to their social class and level of education: on the lower side stands the uneducated-ragged flower girl defined in terms of the lower-class standards and on the upper side, the professor of phonetics representing the power and ideology of the upper-class. Hence, in the play, the social agent's self and his/her individual and social relations are constructed mainly by the discourses of class and education.

George Bernard Shaw's reputable pessimism clearly comes through the stories that deal with pessimistic events and emotions and his characters are victims of ironic necessity (faced with madness or other tragic events). For the purpose of this project, pessimism is defined as including attributes of hopelessness, helplessness, general negativity, and situations where the literary characters "glass is half empty" outlook (Cappo 67). The question ensues as to why Shaw chooses to depict such gloomy stories. Does Shaw aim to use dark stories to entertain his audience, or is there a deep, philosophical message to the readers behind his storylines? Is there a

social justice agenda Shaw is trying to push? Perhaps Shaw's pessimism is related to the realism present in late 19<sup>th</sup> century literature, which favored science and rationality and viewed the Church as an obstruction to human progress. Shaw could have simply been a proponent of social problem, a literary movement seeking to depict believable everyday reality. Regardless, a thorough understanding of Shaw's life, work, influences, and writing style is important to understand why he chooses to write pessimist stories and how his brand of pessimism depicts social awareness and inspires social change.

Literary realism is written from an objective perspective that simply and clearly represents the subject matter of the story, even at the expense of a well-made plot with social criticism. Nineteenth-century realist writers addressed social, economic, and political concerns through their depictions of various aspects of life during that time, and they strove to accurately represent contemporary culture and people from every echelon of society. Realism had a documentary quality in that these authors accurately reported the details of a specific historical era. In their portrayals of love, marriage, and family, realists explored social and psychological factors contributing to conflicts in nineteenth-century domestic life. In fact, many are noted for their attention to the complexities of human psychology and the numerous factors contributing to individual motivation. Several realist authors have been praised for their ability to capture regional dialects as well as differences in the speech patterns of people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Realist writers also addressed themes of religion, philosophy, and morality in their works.

However, Shaw's ability to write about many kinds of people and conditions is often attributed to his sensitive personality. For example, he explores the connection of madness with his audience, and fundamentally asks, "Who is mad and who is sane?" Shaw personally struggles



with madness, but finds a way to relate with his audience through the relatable madness of his characters. Wallace explains, “Shaw was able to conceive of that little bit of madness in us all because he was a little more than “normally” mad, and his characters have that human degree of madness which gives them reality and causes us to identify with them” (103). In this way, Shaw combines his abilities of understanding people with his own autobiographical moments to create authentic yet relevant stories. In his narratives, he relates he dictates critiques through his characters, “there is a notable tendency to make the narrator and one or two personages the transparent mouth-pieces of certain clear-cut opinions on women's rights, sexuality, patriotism, and conjugal morality” (Wallace 294).

Another key element of research to understand Shaw is in the field of history, culture, and economy. *Pygmalion* highlights specific socioeconomic practices present in early industrial England. He specifically highlights the class differences between the bourgeoisie, the working-class, and the peasants. With the different factions of the government in constant tensions, it was difficult to create and fund social policy. Furthermore, with the Catholic Church being involved in social programs, there was always a question about who should carry on such programs, the church, or the state. Different critics have examined how the play excels in the depiction of the contemporary society and its discursive practices. Lee Yan has discussed this play from the perspective of power balance. He further asserts:

Higgins evidently establishes himself as a domineering male character and the power relation between Eliza and Higgins is not balanced. There are imbalance power relations between groups of people or between institutions/state, there will be a production of knowledge. As the play proceeds, the interdependent relation

between education discourse and other discourses like class and marriage is revealed. (68)

It is shown that acculturation and language retraining give Eliza a better chance for marriage. Higgins says “By George, Eliza, the streets will be strewn with the bodies of men shooting themselves for your sake before I’ve done with you” (Shaw 6). He also predicts that Eliza could marry an officer or the son of a marquis, a significant advance on the social ladder for her. Higher education secures a better financial condition, and provides better chances for marriage. Higgins predicts a plenteous life of luxury, chocolates, taxis, gold, and diamonds for Eliza. Elsie Adams analyzes this play from the feminist perspective. According to her there are several sorts of female stereotypes in Shaw’s works. She further asserts:

The play, presents us with various combinations of the traditional figure of temptress, goddess, or mother (usually with a capital M); and, even when he creates a woman who has broken out of a traditional "female" role, he tends to draw on another literary type - the “emancipated" woman... career girl. (17-22)

In fact, Shaw was quite a feminist and actually favoured the idea of the emancipated woman that will be made clear through the further analysis of *Pygmalion*. Feminist issue in the play provides extra light to the issues of the females.

Apart from the feminist criticism, some of other critics viewed it as a comedy that presents the criticism of life. Desmond MacCarthy calls the play *Pygmalion* a “misnomer” as he does not see the appropriateness of the title. In his article, “Pygmalion and Shaw” he says “the play has a story of an artist who turns a flower girl into a work of art and by his self-central refrains from the love affair”(51).

Finally, MacCarthy's point is that Higgins has not the least care of what all the training has cost Eliza or how hard she has tried to learn; it means that sculptor knows nothing about how much suffering the statue has to undergo.

Although Shaw desires to stray from realism, it bleeds through his writings largely due to the influence of contemporary socio historical contexts of England. Although all these critics have raised different issues in the writing of Shaw, the issue social criticism is totally absent in their reviews and consistent commentaries. The present research adopts the theoretical concept of class as construction to explore pros and cons of drama *Pygmalion* by Shaw. Present researcher argues that class, gender and culture are not natural. They are created by human and they can be destroyed on the basis of time and context.

Raymond Williams, a Welsh academic, developed the theoretical paradigm and research methodology the class construct in the society. Embracing the political nature of Marx's theory and his critical focus on power and the class structure, Williams's class construction took aim at how culture and cultural products relate to a class-based system of domination and oppression. Williams further argues:

Straight incorporation is most directly attempted against the visibly alternative and oppositional class elements: trade unions, working-class political parties, working-class life styles... The process of emergence, in such conditions, is then a constantly repeated, an always renewable move beyond a phase of practical incorporation: usually made much more difficult by the fact that much looks like recognition, acknowledgement, and thus a form of acceptance. (124)

The working-class's perpetual struggle to destroy capitalism comes to a halt with the belief that the current system is good enough, insofar as it has been able to take into account the needs of the emergent working-class. The feeling that the current system, which was being challenged

George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* is the story of Henry Higgins, a master phonetician, and his mischievous plot to pass a common flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, off as a duchess at the Embassy Ball. In order to achieve his goal, Higgins must teach Eliza how to speak properly and how to act in upper-class society. The play looks at "middle class morality" and upper-class superficiality, and reflects the social ills of nineteenth century England, and attests that all people are worthy of respect and dignity (Shaw 37). Henry Higgins, professor of phonetics, who, comes upon a homely flower-girl selling flowers in the streets, makes a wager with Colonel Pickering that in three months he can so transform her as to pass her off for a lady. To Higgins, this is but a task that he accomplishes, a wager that he wins; but in Eliza Doolittle, the flower girl, a new personality has been created. With the manners and speech of a lady, she cannot fall back into her old life, and with those ways has come an asserting will, which selects Henry Higgins, her "creator," as her mate (56). To Higgins' dismay, he finds that his "laboratory case" has surged into all his life, with emotional entanglements he had not anticipated.

Throughout most of civilization, people have been divided into social classes. In a lot of different especially capitalist cultures there is an upper class rich, powerful and in control. Then there was a middle class, less comfortably off than the upper class, and certainly less powerful, but respected nonetheless. At the bottom there is the lower working class making up the majority of people, rarely having the necessities of life and never considered by other classes no matter how long or hard they work. Within the framework of contemporary cultural studies, the research

critically examines Shaw's *Pygmalion* in order to express how the modernist ethos of money, marriage and morality are represented in the play.

*Pygmalion* portrays the transformation of a cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, into a professional woman through the handiwork of her “sculptor” Professor Henry Higgins. Discovered by Higgins and Colonel Pickering at Covent Garden, Eliza is caught off guard selling flowers to Pickering. Meanwhile, Higgins notes every disfigured word uttered from Eliza's mouth. Soon, Eliza appears on Higgins' doorstep to ask for his phonetician skills in order to become a flower-shop girl. Throughout the play, Ms. Doolittle persists to achieve her goal of literary mastery, yet the real test is of her ability to attain *savoir faire*. Bernard Shaw utilizes Eliza's cockney speech as derogatory towards British society, though this same criticism is cast upon the upper class, whose sole judgment relies on speech. Higgins and Pickering's treatment of Eliza throughout her growth differentiated from each other due to their varying echelons of society. Eliza Doolittle rises to a higher ranking not only due to expertise of Higgins and Pickering, but also through her own development as a woman. Her ascent to the middle class differs from her father's, Alfred Doolittle, resulting in different perspectives of the bourgeoisie. Though Shaw obviously states the theme of this play in the Preface to be confined to phonetics, the true concern of *Pygmalion* centers on the class system and the resulting changes of a capitalist society.

For Raymond Williams, “society, economy, and culture are three concepts whose meaning has changed recently, each change in one affecting the meaning of the other two as well” (87). In short, each concept has conformed to a bourgeois model: society, for instance, previously referred to active fellowship or company but in a bourgeois context refers to “civil society,” or commercial society (56). The meaning of economy has changed from management of household

and community to the system of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of modern capitalism. “Culture has also taken its particular place within the bourgeois model”: previously referring to the process growth and tending of crops, animals, and eventually human faculties, it responded to changes in the other two concepts to become equated with the concept of civilization in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (56). The concept of culture is for Williams emblematic of the condition of literary theory. It is a concept with a long development through complicated and even contradictory uses, and is undergoing a crisis in its stability and univocity as a concept:

When the most basic concepts – the concepts, as it is said, from what we begin – are suddenly seen to be not concepts but problems, not analytic problems either but historical movements that are still unresolved, there is no sense in listening to their sonorous summons or their resounding clashes. We have only, if we can, to recover the substance from which their forms are cast. (11)

Civilization itself underwent a crisis at this time, severing its links with the concept of “civil society” which had an exclusively commercial and economic meaning and instead “expressed two senses which were historically linked: an achieved state, which could be contrasted with ‘barbarism’, but now also an achieved state of development, which implied historical process and progress” ( Williams 45).

Bernard Shaw, a self-proclaimed socialist, signifies that it is speech alone that makes the difference between a flower girl and a duchess, therefore endowing “this action line with a fine satiric thrust at the basic artificiality of social ranking” (Cappo 57). He preferred social poise and considerateness to mere crudity, harboring even some “limited admiration for the dignified code of manners of the Victorian period” though he found some of its artificialities cramping (Cappo 143). Shaw also uses Higgins' character to evoke his own personal thoughts within the play,

making other satiric comments on the place of speech in British society and on "the deplorable lack of suitable training in the phonetics of the English language" (57). In the Preface, Shaw enthusiastically applauds the new scientific approach to language by phoneticians, "if only because it raised pronunciation above the intense self-consciousness and class snobbery which had always bedeviled the subject in England" (Cappo 142).

Colonel Pickering and Professor Higgins portray the white-collar class through their treatment of Eliza. Pickering is "antithetical to Higgins in all but his interest in linguistics" (Nethercot 216). Shown as gentle and courteous, he is immediately touched by "Liza's vulgarity and innocence" by offering to pay for her lessons himself (216). Even Eliza appreciates Pickering, accrediting his treatment as a catalyst. "Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street," claims Eliza, "That was the beginning of self-respect for me" (Shaw 79). Contrasting from Pickering, Higgins claims he has "created this thing out of squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden" in reference to Eliza (78).

These two characters do have similarities, though. Bernard F. Dukore alludes to the point that "a member of a particular social class is revealed not only by his speech and behavior, he is revealed also by the way in which he is treated" (288). Pickering distinctly treats a lowly flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, the in the same fashion as he would treat a lady. He, in fact, eliminates the class distinction through "treatment that does not take such distinctions into account" (288). Higgins treats Eliza just as rudely and inconsiderately as he treats every other character in the play, including his mother and Mrs. Pearce. MacCarthy furthermore agrees with Dukore: "The self-absorption of Higgins's makes his behaviour as inconsiderate as lack of education makes Eliza's, but at least he treats everyone alike. He may be rude, but his rudeness is not discriminating" (112). Another parallel between Pickering and Higgins is their failure to

recognize that Eliza's undertaking to improve herself was not to merely rise in the world, "but [is] first of all the result of a doglike devotion to two masters who have taken trouble over her" (Crompton 147).

Williams opposes his understanding of language to a vestige of linguistic idealism, structuralism. Structuralism is a key starting point for Williams because a variant of Marxism has attempted to synthesize itself with French structuralism, and he wishes to differentiate himself from this particular strain of Marxism. Williams' criticism of structuralism is, in brief, that it gives temporal priority to a system of values (in the Saussurian sense) over empirical "utterances," which are considered derivative from the structure of a language which is seen as given. For Williams, this relationship between structure and utterance embodies a political relationship between observer and observed, "where the 'language-habits' studied, over a range of speech of conquered and dominated peoples to the 'dialects' of outlying or socially inferior groups, theoretically matched against the observer's 'standard', were regarded as at most 'behavior', rather than independent, creative, self-directing life" (27). By privileging structure over utterance structuralism participates in an imperialist project, taking over from 19<sup>th</sup> Century linguistics the objectification of languages, particularly "foreign" languages or "provincial" dialects. Treating language as a stable object that is constitutive of individual thinking and communication denies individual agency and creativity. For Williams, any understanding of language as constitutive of humanness must take into account its indissolubility from acts of self-creation and expression.

Eliza metamorphoses not only into a "duchess" as Higgins promises or a shop girl, she rather wants to become a self-reliant professional woman. She originates as the "incarnate insult to the English language," according to Higgins, yet her personal evolution of character is



dramatically shown by Shaw as a theme of favoritism (11). As Eliza begins as Higgins' pupil, he teaches Eliza all that he knows about phonetics and speech, yet it was up to her to find her own strength. Soon the true romance of the novel is revealed: The growth itself and the improbable transformation of Eliza was actually the intended happy ending. Shaw calls the play a romance “because it is the story of a poor girl who meets a gentleman at a church door and is transformed by him, like Cinderella, into a beautiful lady” (qtd. in Dukore 63). In fact, Eliza grows to realize that she does not need Higgins. “She learns that she is a human being with all the potential that implies,” says one critic of Eliza (Carr 66).

Her original state of being as a prude who is happy in an asexual relationship with Higgins changes as she enters into a normal, sexual relationship with Freddy Eynsford Hill, where she is able to dominate. As the professor teaches Eliza phonetics, the poor flower girl becomes “a doll in Henry Higgins' doll house” (Dukore 60). Soon, though, Higgins becomes his doll's doll in this metaphor, for Eliza's departure disrupts the comfortable lifestyle she has maintained for him. When Higgins states, “No use slaving for me and then saying you want to be cared for: who cares for a slave?” Eliza becomes aware of the slave mentality of the female sex (85). She learns that demanding someone to care for her because she cares for him is merely a commercial exchange. Higgins' servant, who is his master, plays the ultimate trump card of the servant against the master. She departs Higgins' teachings, though, have actually hindered Eliza's transition from one class to another by removing her from her original social class and forcing her “not one but several rungs up the class ladder” (Dukore 288).

Williams argues that language as practical consciousness is involved in all aspects of human activity in history, from production of biological life. Social aspect of language is the most important and also the most difficult to grasp. William notes :

Insight into the inherent sociality of language, relegating language and human consciousness to the superstructure, treating language as something that groups share as their consciousness, thus creating a “bourgeois,” a “folk” and a “proletarian” consciousness, tacitly reintroducing the objectification of language in the form of a supposedly unitary group consciousness, and eventually, by Stalin’s decree, the “national character. (34)

The production of language needs expanded form, and the production of social relationships and the reproduction of the species, such that all human activity is inherently socialactivity. The result is that there is no such thing as “pure consciousness,” or isolated theoretical consciousness, but consciousness that always and only exists in terms of the material elements of language (“agitated layers of air, sounds”) and that is engaged in practicaland socialactivity. The Higgins' ill-mannered remarks do not stop Eliza from liberating herself from his oppressive words, for she resolves to become a phonetics teacher, much to Higgins' dismay. When Higgins' questions the credibility of such an occupation for Eliza, she responds, “What a fool I was not to think of it before! You can't take away the knowledge you gave me. You said I had a finer ear than you. And I can be civil and kind to people, which is more than you can” ( 88). He even ignores the question of how she is to earn her living afterwards.

Eliza: you're an idiot. I waste the treasures of my Miltonic mind by spreading them before you. Once for all, understand that I go my way and do my work without caring two pence what happens to either of us. I am not intimidated, like your father and stepmother. So you can come back or go to the devil: which you please. (85)

Ms. Doolittle masters even more than the pronunciation of the educated classes, but also a new dignity and even calculation in her emotional outburst. Obviously, her old commonness has abandoned her at the very moment that the experiment has ended and she must find her way independently in life. Regardless, Eliza's development is limited, for she never proceeds past the stage of judging the world in correlation to herself. She remains a “typical petite bourgeois, who, as Higgins puts it, sees life and personal relations in commercial terms” (Crompton 147). Eliza's unique ascent, though, to the middle class is juxtaposed to the established bourgeois family, the Eynsford Hills.

Williams argues that relationship between base and superstructure is vague. More importantly, base and superstructure are taken as objective categories that exist in some sort of a hierarchical relationship of importance favoring the base. As Williams and Marx both tried to demonstrate, institutions, forms of consciousness, and institutional and political and cultural practices are inseparable from economic relations and practices, such that the two cannot be treated as separate entities. Williams concludes that the neither the base nor the superstructure can be considered as separate objects:

It is one of the central propositions of Marx's sense of history, for example, that in actual development there are deep contradictions in the relationships of production and in the consequent social relationships. There is therefore the continual possibility of the dynamic variation of these forces. The ‘variations’ of the superstructure might be deduced from this fact alone, were it not that the objective implications of the base reduce all such variations to secondary consequences.(77)

Material production is for Marx only a subset of all productive forces, but it has been taken as representative of all productive forces in a society, such that production has been equated only with economic activity, in turn identified with the base that determines the superstructure (not in the sense of providing limits and pressures but in the reductive sense of reflection) thus giving rise to economism. Marx himself gives emphasis to material production because he is studying production under the system of capitalism, which sharply divides between material production and society, culture, and aesthetics, all of which could be considered types of production

Shaw compares the middle class and lower class mannerisms using Clara Eynsford Hills and Eliza Doolittle's interaction throughout the play. Shaw's view of the middle class begins at the start of the play, when the Eynsford Hills' have difficulty getting a cab, thus symbolizing the economic predicament and their problems in functioning on a level of society accustomed to using cabs. Bernard Shaw's view of the lower class, again, is portrayed through the brute necessity prompting Eliza to "wheedle a few last coins from the opera-goers" at Covent Garden (Crompton 142). Crompton comments on *Pygmalion*, "All the time [Shaw] is treating us to Eliza's plangent diphthongs he is also dissecting the manners of the girl in the middle-class family, Clara Eynsford Hill" (143). Compared to Eliza, Clara comes off worse, for she is pushing and deals poorly with strangers, especially with that of Higgins at the introduction of the play. Extremely suspicious, she is just as quick to take offense as Eliza, yet her retort is not quite as comical. Eliza's pushiness, on the other hand, is easier to understand considering her desire to escape from the slums and attain self-respect and independence required of a bourgeois world.

Typification has in fact become very popular in Marxist cultural theory which has searched for figures who represent dynamic social processes: "the elements and tendencies of reality that recur according to regular laws, although changing with the changing circumstances."

(Adorno and Horkheimer 102). The idea of being a representative example of something, such as an ideal type, though, presumes a reality, a something of which the ideal type can be an example and against which it can be verified, reintroducing the dualism and objectification of social reality, on the other hand, is distinguished from the concept of correspondence, which can refer to either resemblances between seemingly different practices based on their growth from a shared social process, analogies between the activities, or displaced connections in Adorno, where “while the immediate evidence is direct, the plausibility of the relation depends not only on a formal analysis of the historical social process but on the consequent deduction of a displacement or even an absence” (104). All these senses of correspondence refer to similarities between appearances, whereas homology refers to similarities between forms and structures of things, or in origin and development. So the homology between different events or objects demonstrates the form of social and historical development by which they are organized. On the other hand, ‘correspondence’ and ‘homology’ can be in effect restatements of the base-superstructure model and of the ‘determinist’ sense of determination. Analysis begins from a known “structure of society, or a known movement of history. Specific analysis then discovers examples of this movement in cultural works. The most evidence practical effect is an extreme selectivity. Only the cultural evidence which fits the homology is directly introduced”(106).

The only concept that can avoid treating history and social structure as known objects that can be made into the basis of social analysis in *Pygmalion*. One scene of importance in this matter is at Mrs. Higgins' at-home, “where Eliza, now master of enunciation as a parrot might be master of it, delivers pompous recitations and spicy Lisson Grove gossip with the same impeccable air” (143). Eliza regales of her aunt's death with a mixture of her new façade and a hint of her old humorous vulgarity. She does manage to think and feel naturally behind the

vener, though. Contrarily, Clara is full of pretentiousness, lessening her role as a vital character. She even outdoes Eliza's parroting by repeating the word "bloody" as the latest thing. Shaw's distaste for profanity provoked him to overuse the word in order to ridicule Clara's naiveté. As Clara and Eliza differ in their demeanor due to social differences, Eliza and Alfred Doolittle similarly diverge in light of social contentions.

Eliza's reaction to her transformation differs from that of her father's, Alfred Doolittle, due to their contrasting circumstances of rising into higher classes. Introduced by Shaw with the full complement of phonetically spelled cockney sounds, *Pygmalion* remains "the most complete and most effective treatment of low speech generally and cockney dialect in particular" (Mills 50). Their similarities cease to exist at this point. Alfred Doolittle, a common dustman, is a "thinking man" (qtd. in Mills, 52). He possesses better than average, if not superior, intellectual qualifications, though with questionable moral proficiency. The latter characteristic translates to his unique brand of rhetoric, an unembarrassed avocation of drink and pleasure at other people's expense. Alfred's character incorporates Shaw's aim to expose the "vanities of philanthropy" for he shows how a man's behavior is a consequence not of his character, but of his situation (Crompton 144). Alfred differs from Eliza in this aspect, for he is thrust into a higher social class, not by updated speech or manner, but by money.

Higgins writes a letter to Ezra D. Wannafeller, a former American millionaire who founded the Moral Reform World League, jokingly about Alfred, claiming he is "the most original moralist at present in England to the best of [Higgins'] knowledge" (Goldstone 74). Wannafeller's death results in the bestowment of three thousand dollars to Alfred via his will. Alfred Doolittle becomes extremely popular in the smartest society by a social talent, which triumphs over every prejudice and every disadvantage. Rejected by the middle class that he

loathes, Alfred shoots up at once into “the highest circle by his wit, his dustmanship, and his Nietzschean transcendence of good and evil” (Nethercot 273).

Unlike Eliza, who craves to become a member of the lower middle class, Alfred finds his promotion to a higher class to be an encumbrance. This is evident from the following lines:

Alfred, finding that his job as a garbage collector is too low on the social scale to have any moral standards attached to it, realizes that he already has, in a sense, the prerogatives of a duke, and is loath to rise. I was free. I touched pretty nigh everybody for money when I wanted it, same as I touched you, EnryIggins. Now I am worried; tied neck and heels; and everybody touches me for money. ( Shaw 74)

Adam Elsie comments on “middle class morality” and the “undeserving poor,” for he is burdened by the responsibility of money that he is not prepared to carry on his shoulders (73-75). Such a character exemplifies Shaw's socialist disinclination toward the poor as a class because this type of person is dangerous and reprehensible. In short, “Doolittle is whatever society wants to make of him” (MacCarthy 146).

Williams describes literature reflects the society as “literature of the people”, as it “attempts to relate literature to the social and economic history within it has been produced” (67). He tries to break off traditional ties, and emphasise social and economic limitations that surrounds literature. He argues:

It is true that literature has always been embedded in our society, however it only became more widespread with the emergence of industrialisation and the bourgeoisie, as bourgeois society was created by a capitalist mode of production. Culture is a process of surplus value, which will always be controlled

by social and economic factors, however without it, our society would never develop. (67)

Obviously, the relationship between literature and society must have been conceived of as intimate for the methods of one discipline to seem applicable to the objects of another: literature was embedded in social practices, was itself a social practice, yielding representations of other social phenomena, and could be analyzed as the worldview of a class, an ethnic group, a nation, or a gender at a particular historical moment. Most of these “approaches” assumed that in the related dyad literature/society, “literature” was the representational, symbolic, or signifying entity, while “society” was the set of human relationships and conditions informing the lived experience of the readers and writers. No matter how intertwined literature and society were imagined to be, however, the relationship between literary and social studies in those days in America was essentially nonreciprocal.

George Bernard Shaw is shown to be critical of society and its conforming classes, both lower and upper statuses. Those unfortunate enough to have grown up in the slums of England give away their lowly origins due to their distinct mannerisms and accents. For comical use, Shaw implements these characteristics in Eliza’s character, only to emphasize her uncouthness. Shaw also takes care to use this judgment solely on language to ridicule the superficiality of upper class. Higgins’ role in the play compares to benevolent character of Colonel Pickering. While Higgins demeans Eliza from the start, Pickering treats Eliza as an equal member of society. Higgins’ derogatory behavior, though, did not discriminate between Eliza and own mother. Another view of these characters is both of Eliza’s teachers’ failure to realize the sacrifices their pupil has made, only to view their final product, a fine young lady. This very transformation, though, does have its perks. Eliza gains the strength she needs to venture out into



the professional world by herself after being forced to change her ways by Higgins and Pickering. This very strength results in her independence and departure from Higgins, only to marry Freddy Eynsford Hills. Clara Eynsford Hills, though, is used by Shaw to compare to Eliza in the area of middle-class manners. The last of Shaw's illustrious comparisons is that of Eliza Doolittle and her father, Alfred Doolittle. Both of these characters' views differ in the perspective of how each attains their middle-class status. Alfred is forcefully burdened by the responsibility of actually having money, whereas Eliza tries to change everything about her to gain a respectful position in the professional class. Mr. Doolittle's character exemplifies Shaw's contempt for the poor class and the morals that have risen from such standards. Status quo of Shaw's era reveals the criticism of social rank to be the unified theme of *Pygmalion*.

Marvin Harris, a cultural anthropologist, is responsible for the most systematic statement of cultural materialist principles. Cultural materialism is a systems theory of society that attempts to account of their: origin, maintenance and change. Cultural materialism is based on two key assumptions about societies. First, the various parts of society are interrelated. When one part of society changes, other parts must also change. This means that an institution, such as the family cannot be looked at in isolation from the economic, political, or religious institutions of a society. When one part changes it has an effect on other parts of the system. This component of sociocultural systems consists of the organized patterns of social life carried out among the members of a society. Each society must maintain secure and orderly relationships among its people, its constituent groups, and with neighboring societies. Harris further asserts:

Infrastructure, Structure, and Superstructure. The major principle of Cultural Materialism concerns the relationships between these components ...the conscious and unconscious cognitive goals, categories, rules, plans, values, philosophies, and

beliefs about behavior elicited from the participants or inferred by the observers.(49)

The mode of production and reproduction (infrastructure) “probabilistically determines”(strongly influences) political and domestic structure, which in turn probabilistically determines the behavioral and mental superstructure. The link between sociocultural systems and individual behavior is through individual cost/benefit decisions regarding sexual behavior, children, work, and living standards. Modern England was populated by the middle class society. *Pygmalion* excels in the depiction of the middle class morality in the play ,which makes his an advocate of the contemporary culture. George Bernard Shaw uses the term “middle class morality” a lot in his play, *Pygmalion*, but what point is he trying to make in so doing? Especially in the case of Alfred Doolittle, one of the “undeserving poor”(54), even the lowest in society has their place, but just because they are 'economically-challenged' does not necessarily mean that they are the lowest of the low in society.

It could be said that the condescension of the high class onto the other two puts their moral standing lower than them, but at the same time both the middle and lower classes use everybody else with persuasive antics and unenviable standards to swindle their way to getting what they want. Alfred Doolittle in this sense extorts money from Higgins merely by outwardly playing the card of a beggar. Higgins certainly does not believe him, but since he is delighted by how well he plays his game, he pays Doolittle anyway.The following lines from the play highlight this issue:

Alfred is most certainly not one of the "lowest" of the low. Being a retired pickpocket and con artist, he knows how to play people-- especially the higher

classes. In a sense, there is a sort of superiority to him in those capabilities, but would it be fair to say that it makes him better than those he steals from?(31)

Shaw uses his play *Pygmalion* to depict what he wants his audience to see a fallacy in the social structure. We are taught to see the high class as “better-thans” (47) and privileged, but are they really? They look down on the working class for merely needing to work to earn their keep, and their politics and ruthless social gambits are fueled by greed and the unnecessary to be on top. The low class consists of the beggars, laborers, and the unemployed, and they resent the upper classes for walking over them to the extent that they do.

The character Alfred Doolittle in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* outlines his views of the middle-class and the undeserving poor. We first see this character, played by Wilfred Lawson, when he comes to pinch Professor Higgins, portrayed by Leslie Howard, for money in the name of his daughter, Eliza, depicted by Wendy Hiller. Higgins is quickly charmed by Doolittle and offers to give him twice as much as he asks for. Doolittle passes it up under the explanation that ten pounds would force him to feel prudent—something he detests and avoids by staying at the station of “undeserving poor.”

Later in the story, Doolittle finds himself shoved into position of middle class; and, suddenly, he has to change the way he lives his life. He has to marry his wife. He has to give to charity. He remarks that, as dissatisfied as he is at this change in lifestyle, he has to maintain it. The tragedy of being middle-class is that one's freedom is replaced by fear and struggle. “Intimidated, that’s what I am,” he asserts to Mrs. Higgins ( Shaw 56). If he does not continue to keep the money he receives, then he will be a waste—something there was no danger of becoming when his life was deliberately wasteful. Before Doolittle received the annuity, he complained about the middle-class's attitude towards him. He described them as not giving him anything

because he was unworthy. He complained that middle-class morality was “just an excuse for never giving me anything” (78). Doolittle professed his deservingness, which was based on his need. Basically, the main change in his state of being lies the loss of his right to self-interest. Shaw uses Doolittle to demonstrate that middle-class morality is centered on obligation and responsibility.

Modernist society judged females as the docile objects to entice the males. This view was powerful in case of the love and marriage when the females were supposed to be passive and silent. But this view of the contemporary society is challenged by Shaw in the play *Pygmalion*. Here Shaw aims to modernize the contemporary culture. Love is a term meaning different things from generations to cultures. In *Pygmalion* Marriage and prostitution are closely linked. These institutions are very much related in Shaw's plays, especially in Mrs. Warren's profession. From his unusual standpoint of being committed to a celibate marriage, Shaw apparently feels free to denounce marriage as an exchange of sexuality for money similar to prostitution. Ironically, while her father expresses no regrets when he is led to believe that Liza will take up this profession, it is she who denounces it. She declares that she was less degraded as a flower-seller than as a “genteel” lady trying to make an appropriate marriage because as a flower-seller, at least, she wasn't selling her body (76).

Williams considers tradition to be the most powerful means of incorporation, as long as we see tradition not in the traditional Marxist fashion but as an active process of selection, “an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present”, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification (37). From a whole possible area of past and present, in a particular culture, certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and practices are neglected or excluded.

Yet within a particular hegemony, and as one of its decisive processes, this selection is presented and usually successfully passed off as ‘the tradition’, ‘the significant past’ (115-116). Tradition gives a selection of the past in order to provide continuity with the present. The active sense of tradition is especially important as it gives us a clue as to where to find counter-hegemonies, in the discarded past material separated from “the tradition,” which can be taken up and used to create an alternative tradition, such that tradition as a mode of incorporation is both powerful and vulnerable (28).

This process of the creation of a tradition is usually thought to take place in identifiable institutions, particularly ones involved in socialization. Educational institutions, for instance, are sites where selected knowledge and skills are taught to children as ways of making them recognize what social reality is and how to live in it, along with other institutions, such as religious institutions, the media, and certain state institutions. These are often thought of as locations where tradition is primarily contested. While this understanding of the role of institutions is partially true, for Williams an often neglected and equally if not more important are non-institutional formations as sites where hegemonic processes are transformed and traditions are contested. Formations are conscious movements and tendencies (literary, artistic, philosophical or scientific) which can usually be readily discerned after their formative productions (Williams 12). Often, when we look further, we find that these are articulations of much wider effective formations, which can by no means be wholly identified with formal institutions, or their formal meanings and values, and which can sometimes even be positively contrasted with them (William 119). Formations are specialized practices, occurring outside of institutions but which can enter into institutions, stemming from meanings and values in the wider and more diffuse social sphere.

In *Pygmalion* Eliza defies men with her daunting “I am a good girl, I am” echoed repeatedly throughout the play (55). Here Eliza is defying societal expectations of young women in her position. Shaw's feminism is not only shown in the character of the defiant and feisty flower girl but also in the character of Higgins' mother, who does not approve of her son's behavior. Mrs. Higgins rejects the way men view women. She tells Higgins and Pickering that they are babies playing with a “live doll” (10). To Higgins and Pickering, Eliza is nothing but a doll for them to play with. Mrs. Higgins' outburst “Oh, men! men!! men!!!” at the end of Act Three (168) also emphasizes Shaw's dissatisfaction with the doll like image of women. It is Higgins who sounds the ultimate feminist call in the play when he tells Eliza in Act Five, “I think a woman fetching a man's slippers is a disgusting sight: did I ever fetch your slippers? I think a good deal more of you for throwing them in my face. No use slaving for me and then saying you want to be cared for: who cares for a slave?” (100). While Higgins vocalizes these thoughts in the play, it is hard to imagine him actually putting them into practice in a marriage with Eliza, for example. She would forever be fetching his slippers.

In *Pygmalion* Shaw is obviously presenting the theme of female emancipation because Liza not only becomes a “lady,” but also an independent woman. The play is delightful. Shaw calls it a “romantic comedy,” but ending has a problem. A true comedy moves towards marriage. But Shaw's play does not. In the play version, Mrs. Higgins returns at the end dressed to attend the wedding of Liza's father. She and Liza prepare to leave. Higgins isn't going because he can't behave himself in church. The play ends as follows:

HIGGINS: Oh by the way, Liza, order a ham and a Stilton cheese, will you?.....

LIZA: ....Colonel Pickering prefers double Gloucester to Stilton and you don't notice the difference. I telephoned Mrs. Pearce this morning not to forget the ham.

What you are to do without me I can't imagine. (She sweeps out.)

MRS. HIGGINS: I'm afraid you've spoiled that girl Henry. I should be uneasy about you and her if she were less fond of Colonel Pickering.

HIGGINS: Pickering! Nonsense. She's going to marry Freddy. Ha! Ha! Freddy!

Ha! Ha! Ha!!!! (He roars with laughter.) (87)

And so she does marry Freddy as Shaw explains in an Afterward published with the printed text of the play. With the help of Colonel Pickering Liza and Freddy set up a flower shop! Shaw insists the play is still a comedy because it pokes fun at the foibles of Victorian society and exposes its hypocrisy. Shaw simply felt that a marriage to Higgins at the end would make the play overly-sentimental and that such a marriage the traditional happy ending would detract from the play's serious social themes.

Finally, Shaw's *Pygmalion* is the representation of the modernist virtue of money, marriage and morality. Shaw presents these themes with the help of different characters from working class to upper class. The modernist practices of money, marriage and morality get highly institutionalized during the period that play was written. In *Pygmalion*, we observe a society divided, separated by language, education, and wealth. Shaw gives us a chance to see how that gap can be bridged, both successfully and unsuccessfully. As he portrays it, London society cannot simply be defined by two terms, "rich" and "poor". Within each group there are smaller less obvious distinctions, and it is in the middle, in that gray area between wealth and poverty that many of the most difficult questions arise and from which the most surprising truths emerge. Shaw also represents the issue of females. Back when Shaw wrote *Pygmalion*, women

could not vote in the United Kingdom; in 1918 women over the age of 30 were given the right, and it took another ten years for all women to be given a voice. Shaw's depiction of women and attitudes toward them is impressively and sometimes confusingly varied. They are shown in conventional roles as mothers and housekeepers and as strong-willed and independent. The play pays special attention to the problem of women's place in society. Every single day we talk about ourselves, saying "I did this," "I did that," "I am," and "I'm not," but we don't usually think about what "I" means. In *Pygmalion*, Shaw forces us to think this through. Some characters want to change who they are, others don't want to change at all. Things get even more complicated when identities are made up, constructed.

Shaw uses the conflict between Eliza and Higgins to express his own thoughts on the diversity of people. He likes to set these characters on two different sides of a spectrum and develop how they relate. Although the play has a resolution, it is not exactly happy ending. Higgins and Eliza continue on their respective paths of complete opposites but not in the same way as before. Whereas previously, the thing separating them was social class, at the end of the play, the largest gulf is primarily between their goals in life. Higgins' intent is to better the world through himself, and Eliza's purpose is to better herself through the world. In short, Eliza and Alfred Doolittle, originally living in bad conditions, represent the working class. What happens to Eliza and her father expresses Shaw's belief that people are able to improve their lives through their own efforts, but they have to consider that their character might change as well. Doolittle shows how difficult it can be to change one's whole personality.

*Pygmalion* illustrates the difference and tension between the upper and lower class in the Victorian period. A basic belief of the period was that a person is born into a class and that no one can move from one class to another. Shaw, on the contrary, believes that personality is not



defined by birth. Instead, he thinks class, culture, marriage and morality are ideological construction of the society. As to the play, the barriers between classes are not natural and can be constructed and destroyed. The play looks at middle class morality and upper-class superficiality as ideological construction, and claims that all people are worthy of respect and dignity.

## Works Cited

- Adorno, T.W. & Horkheimer, M. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. London: Verso, 1979.
- Cappo, Emily. *Feminist Upsurge: A Review*. London: HarperCollins, 2008.
- Carr, Patt M. *Bernard Shaw*. New York, NY: Frederick Ungar Co., 1976.
- Crompton, Louis. *Shaw the Dramatist*. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska UP, 1969.
- Dukore, Bernard F. *Bernard Shaw, Playwright: Aspects of Shavian Drama*. Columbia, MO: Missouri UP, 1973.
- Elsie, Adams. *Pathos in Gender Narrative*. London: HarperCollins, 2005.
- Goldstone, H., Alan J.L., & George B. S. *Pygmalion and My Fair lady*. New York: Signet Classics, 1975.
- Gramsci, Antonio . Buttigieg, Joseph A, ed. *Prison Notebooks*. New York City: Columbia University Press.1981.
- Harris, Marvin.*The Rise of Anthropological Theory: A History of Theories of Culture*. California: AltaMira Press.2010 .Print.
- MacCarthy, Desmond. *Pygmalion in Shaw*. London:Macgibbon and Kee, 1950.
- Mills, John A. *Language and Laughter: Comic Diction in the Plays of Bernard Shaw*. Tuscon, AR: Arizona UP, 1969.
- Nethercot, Arthur H. *Men and Supermen: The Shavian Portrait Gallery*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1954.
- Wallace, Howard . *England After Modernism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.
- Williams, Raymond . *Culture and Society*. London: Fontana. !981.
- Yan, Lee. *Moral Thoughts in Shaw's Dramas*. Newyork, Penguin, 2009