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**WOMEN'S POSITION IN BERNARD SHAW'S
DRAMA**

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ABSTRACT

Feminist criticism has made a considerable impact on literary studies in western cultures as it has brought to light many misogynistic approaches woven into the fabric of literary texts. One of the most significant meanings of feminist thought, or perspective, has to do with refusing to be contained in or by ready-made systems of signification. It is about providing women with a wider psychic space by searching for new meanings besides rereading and re-evaluating the old ones. What this study presents is a rereading of some of Bernard Shaw's (1856-1950) celebrated plays in terms of the position ascribed to female characters through various associations. The axis of the analysis of the plays chosen as exemplifications of the Shavian line of female characters has been based upon the implications of the texts themselves rather than the author's external comments about the plays and the biographical information about him; for the core of theatre is the dramatic text itself and its live performance. And, more significantly, it is fiction that bears the latent thoughts and desires. Accordingly, within the process of reading presented in this study, the mode of thinking that has informed Shaw's drama has been redefined through some concepts drawn from Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis besides the relevant historical context. The main purpose of this study is to expose the fact that Shaw's drama offers the female little scope for self-development and self-realisation.

ÖZ

Batı kültürlerinde, feminist eleştiri kuramları, pek çok yazınsal metnin dokusuna sinmiş, kadını ikincil konuma iten düşmanca yaklaşımların açılanmasında etken olarak yazınsal inceleme alanını önemli ölçüde etkilemektedir. Feminist yaklaşımın en önemli işlevlerinden biri yerleşik ve kalıplaşmış anlam dizgelerinin sınırlarını aşp bir yandan var olan anlamları yeniden değerlendirirken, bir yandan da yeni anlamlar üreterek kadına daha kapsamlı bir tinsel alan sağlamaktır. Bu çalışmada, İngiliz oyun yazarı Bernard Shaw'un (1856-1950) dört ünlü oyunu örnek olarak seçilip yazarın çeşitli bağlantılar aracılığıyla kadına yakıştırdığı konum irdelenmiştir. Bu süreçte, yazarın kişisel yorumları ya da yaşamöyküsü değil, yazdığı metinlerin içerdiği çağrışımlar temel alınmıştır. Çünkü tiyatro sanatının özünü oluşturan etmen oyun metni ve bu metnin gösterimidir. Daha da önemlisi, bastırılmış, örtük düşünce ve isteklerin en etkin biçimde anlatıma ulaştığı metin türü kurmaca metindir. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmada sunulan metin okuma örneğinde, Shaw'un dram sanatının yeniden tanımlanması amacıyla, ilgili tarihsel bağlamın yanısıra yer yer Freud ve Freud sonrası dönemlere özgü bazı psikanaliz kavramlarından da yararlanılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı Shaw'un dram sanatının kadına özgelişim ve özgerçekleştirim doğrultusunda çok dar bir hareket ve düşünce alanı sunmuş olduğu gerçeğini ortaya koymaktır.

PREFACE

Literature can be defined as an enriching representation of life. It is, in effect, at times closely related to life, and at times loosely related; but, whatsoever, it *is* related to life. And specifically dramatic representation has long been recognised as capable of bringing the various facets of the social and psychological constructions of human beings to life much more vividly than the other forms of literature. The performance of a play is an effective way of communicating with a public as it involves the audio-visual representation of the discursive structures inherent in the constructions in question; and in this respect, the live nature of theatre performance has the potential to shape the dynamics of the spectator's mental life. Yet throughout its history, apparently by virtue of the perceived threat of its potential subversiveness, theatre has quite often been subjected to censorship.

What seems to underlie the control over this specific kind of cultural production is the dominance of the patriarchal thought and its resistance to radical or revolutionary alterations in the moral codes and modes of living it presupposes. As a consequence of the patriarchy's predilection for the maintenance of the established order and the entrenched notion that the essential existence is male, theatre has traditionally been considered a fundamentally male arena. Within the so-called great canon of playwrights, one can hardly find female "classics" to point to, and consequently, the dramatic representation of the female has generally been constructed by the male through the application of male parameters. It is a well-known fact that in patriarchal discourse the nature and social role of the female are conceptualised and defined in relation to a norm which is male. Accordingly, the discourse in drama has basically been masculine; in other words, the female – the half of the humankind – has been trapped in a system of masculine representations. As the possessor of meaning, or the *logos*, the male has created a symbolic world in

which the notion of gender is based upon an asymmetrical, dichotomous system of thought, associating the male with the *infinite* and the female with the *finite*.

Many things have been said about Bernard Shaw, for he is deemed one of the eminent English dramatists whose work merits a resurgence of interest. And many critics maintain that he has created strong female characters, and that his image of woman is quite progressive. Apparently some cultural assumptions become so deeply rooted that not many critics recognise them as such. It is true that one can detect in Shaw's drama a commitment to the improvement of social conditions; however, a close reading of his texts would reveal a basically binary mode of thinking and a latent desire to see the male as the essential existence, which would show that he is not particularly flexible on issues of gender and role identification.

We cannot reconstruct the past in its own terms by rereading the classics; yet by trying to understand the cultural history of the humankind we can understand the cultural constructions of the present better and perhaps envisage new structures and relationships, which will be different tomorrow than today.

I am grateful to Professor Zeynep Ergun for her constructive criticism and invaluable suggestions; she has been generous with her wide knowledge, and she has given generously of her time and energy to help me in the completion of this study.

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INTRODUCTION

The socioeconomic climate that seems to have informed George Bernard Shaw's (1856-1950) work is centred upon the power relations of the capitalistic construction of economy. In such a system, which is based on the notion of liberal individualism, the qualities of the individual's life are generally measured in material terms, in other words, in terms of wealth and the status it engenders; that status has the meaning of certain privileges in the utilisation of social rights connected with educational, legal, and even religious establishments as well as power over other persons who do not do the owning. Thus material things shape the personhood of human beings on both practical and psychic planes. As Ruth Robbins points out, "The economic and spiritual organisation of societies profoundly affects the meaning of personhood within them"¹; accordingly, material things produce in the individual a sense of worth besides wealth. This is the outcome of the shift in the societal constructions from community benefits to personal profits, which can be traced back to the gradual replacement of the rural (agricultural) way of producing and living – after the break-up of the medieval feudal system – by the urban (industrial) way of producing and living, which is based on trade and manufacture. This move, together with the rise of Protestantism, which is grounded on a repudiation of the mediation of priesthood between the individual soul and God, is what lies at the root of the liberal thought – the dominant political and economic mode – of Western Europe and Britain. Consequently, the development of the bourgeoisie is the result of, in Toril Moi's words, "patriarchy's predilection for liberal humanism as a 'legitimizing ideology'."²

¹ Ruth Robbins, *Literary Feminisms*, Houndmills, Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000, p.21

² Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, New York, Methuen & Co.Ltd., 1987, p.64

What is legitimised within the ideological context in question is the rights of the individual, and accordingly the discourse adopted is one of freedom and self-determination. As a free and self-determining being, the individual person is supposed to be understood as unique and as having a capacity for rationality. Alison Jaggar states in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* that liberal political thought holds a conception of human nature that locates one's uniqueness as a human being in one's capacity for rationality, and liberals define reason stressing either its *moral* aspects or its *prudential* aspects, that is, they define it as either the ability to comprehend the rational principles of morality, or the ability to calculate the best means to achieve some desired end.³ This conceptualisation, which forms the basis of the modern sense of individuality, brings with it the position of an autonomous and self-fulfilling personhood but it also entails the observance of certain rules concerning other individuals' rights: as Robbins observes, "The individual person ... is valued in his own right, and has certain rights (legal, social, economic, political, familial and rights of property) attached to his personhood ... and yet he is also part of a community of like-minded men who share most of the same views, privileges and rights."⁴ And Rosemarie Tong puts it as follows:

Whether liberals define reason largely in moral or prudential terms, they nevertheless concur that a just society allows individuals to exercise their autonomy and to fulfil themselves. The "right," liberals assert, must be given priority over the "good." In other words, our whole system of individual rights is justified because these rights constitute a framework within which we can all choose our own separate goods, provided that we do not deprive others of theirs. Such a priority defends religious freedom, for example, neither on the grounds that it will increase the general welfare nor on the grounds that a godly life is inherently worthier than a godless one, but simply on the grounds that people have a right to practise their own brand of spirituality. The same holds for all those rights we generally identify as fundamental.⁵

³ Cited by Rosemary Tong, *Feminist Thought*, London, Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989, p.11

⁴ Robbins, op. cit., p.21

⁵ Tong, op. cit., pp.11-12

However, within the context of historical truth, the above-mentioned fundamental rights, which are in effect derived from the notion of *laissez-faire* policy, have generally been assigned to the male world. Indeed, from the outset, the very concept of the individual person has been, and continues to be, designated as male, and therefore, both the practical and psychic consequences of material things are connected with the male sphere. Acquisition of wealth brings the male a status that comprises privileged relationships with the fundamental institutions of society – both at social and personal levels, which has the meaning of having power over wives and children besides employees. In a sense, the individual's – male's – worth and power are measured in material terms within the realm of the capitalistic marketplace.

It is true that in such an economic system it is difficult to achieve an equal distribution of wealth among men themselves as initially no individual can enter the market with an equal capital, intelligence, talent or luck, though every individual would strive to acquire as much wealth as possible. As Robbins states, "Allegiance to the liberal individual is also an alliance with competitive capitalist economics, and wherever there is competition, there are losers as well as winners."⁶ Naturally, therefore, not every individual can take a fair share from the market; so, in practical terms, an entrepreneurial economic system cannot form the basis of an egalitarian mode of living (though liberal economy presupposes *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité*⁷), since such a system is bound to obliterate all forms of equality by eventually constructing a class system in which some individuals attain the position of the owner of the means of production, whereas the others can only attain the position of a contributor to the labour force. And this state of things – the introduction of private property – has the meaning of objectification of numerous entities and construction of a class society that is manifested mainly as the dualistic structure of employer/employee, which is, in a sense, the dualism of ruling class/working class.

⁶ Robbins, op. cit., p.25

⁷ See Moi, loc. cit.

In short, the economic system mentioned above can in essence be seen as the origin of an order that is structured upon the duality of the rich and the poor, or rather the powerful and the powerless. Within the context of liberal feminism, which has undoubtedly evolved from the school of political thought called liberalism, some feminists, as Tong observes, “tend to deemphasize men’s power over women and quite often suggest ‘that men are simply fellow victims of sex-role conditioning’.”⁸ What is overlooked in this approach, which is obviously the reflection of an “unquestioned belief in the values ... of traditional bourgeois humanism of a liberal-individualist kind,”⁹ is the fact that women encounter specific problems in fulfilling themselves under patriarchy besides class distinctions.

Literally all the problems in question arise from the stunting gender role, namely femininity, perpetually imposed by patriarchy on the female sex. This gender role, whatever form it takes in accordance with the cultural context, fundamentally entails the assumption that women are, by nature, less capable than men both at physical and intellectual levels. This so-called natural order inevitably leads to the subjection of women to the rule of the *father*. The *father* essentially conceives woman as a childbearing and childrearing – nurturing – being (quite often symbolised by the fertility of the earth), and eventually confines her to the private sphere, which means exclusion from the public sphere. Therefore, traditionally, man belongs to the public world, which is the world of universalism, of impartial rules and laws, of freedom, equality, rights, property contract, self-interest, justice and political obligation; whereas woman belongs to the private world, which is the world of subjection, inequality, nature, emotion, love and partiality.¹⁰

At this point, one can sense an endeavour on the part of patriarchy to celebrate male paradigms as human paradigms, as a result of which many women are denied the chance to develop their rational powers; and thus the potential of many women remain inert. Consequently, women are excluded from the world of

⁸ Tong, op.cit.,p.4

⁹ Moi, op. cit., p.6

¹⁰ See Carole Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation: A Critique of Liberal Theory*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1979, p.190

knowledge, which means an exclusion from the sources of power in both economic and social fields. The fact that the confinement of women to the powerless has taken place throughout much of history explains the reason why many women have come to, and to a certain degree continue to, internalise a false belief that they are somewhat inferior to men and that they naturally deserve less power than men. Centuries-old male thinking and writing that reflect the segmentation of reality through the invention of hierarchical opposition have been a crucial determinant in women's mode of defining themselves. To the majority of women it has seemed quite natural that woman should exist in man's world on his terms and should be known through the mediation of male language. Luce Irigaray argues that:

What we know about woman, including her sexual desire, has been told to us from a male point of view. The only woman we know is "the masculine feminine," the phallic feminine, as man sees her.¹¹

Without doubt, such a conditioning of women's minds, which is in effect a form of psychological oppression, is a manifestation of, in Annette Kolodny's words, "the male fear of sharing power and significance with women."¹² This fear lies at the root of many women's poor access to education, to well-paid work, and even to food. There is no doubt that amongst such deprivations education is the most significant as it is the most suppressing in terms of the development of women's consciousness.

One gathers from the accounts of historical truth that the particular exclusion of women from gaining the means by which they might reach the sources of power has found its strongest expression within the structures of liberal-capitalist economy. For although the identification of material success with personal worth and the resultant state of competition have on the theoretical plane encompassed men and women alike, women have often suffered more (continue to suffer more) as, due to the social structures of gender imposed on their biological sex, they have often been

¹¹ Quoted by Tong, *op. cit.*, p.226

¹² Annette Kolodny, "Dancing Through the Minefield," *The New Feminist Criticism*, Ed. by Elaine Showalter, New York, Pantheon Books, 1985, p.163

denied the power to enter the public sphere. Historical accounts tell us that a great majority of western populations were deprived of even limited educational opportunities until the end of the nineteenth century; however, women in particular have traditionally been denied the chance to develop intellectually. During the long reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) in Britain, the flourishing of the laissez-faire system brought about a profound social stratification rendering the middle class the strongest stratum of the society. Working men and women (particularly women) hardly had even the opportunity to learn how to read. Those few women who belonged to the wealthy stratum (specifically aristocratic or upper-class women) were usually taught to read, but even they had to wait until the end of the nineteenth century to acquire access to a university education.

It is usually accepted that the long Victorian era cannot be viewed, in Jerome Hamilton Buckley's words, "as a static entity, a unique whole to be described by a single sweeping formula."¹³ Buckley argues that "Viewed in its long perspective, nineteenth century culture appears entirely relative to the manifold developments of a changing society."¹⁴ Yet John Morley defines Victorian England as "a paradise for the well-to-do, a purgatory for the able, and a hell for the poor."¹⁵ Therefore, whatever the innovations – on scientific and philosophical planes – might have been, the most conspicuous aspect of the dominant politics of that era seems to be a tendency to maintain the supremacy of wealth, which underlies the sexist bias of the liberal tradition based on "the construction of a public/private split which consigns women to the 'private' realm of feeling, nurturance, intuition, domesticity and the body, in order to clarify a 'public' realm of reason, efficiency and objectivity as masculine."¹⁶ The image of the nurturing female body, which signifies a form of objectification, is what underlies the promulgation through both medical and fictional texts of the discourse of maternity specifically associated with middle-class women.

¹³ Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture*, London, Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966, p.5

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7

¹⁵ Quoted by Buckley, *ibid.*, p.5

¹⁶ Philip Rice & Patricia Waugh, "Feminism: Introduction," *Modern Literary Theory*, Ed. by. Philip Rice & Patricia Waugh, London, Arnold, 2001, p.5

The bourgeois ideal, which emerged in the mid-eighteenth century and dominated the Victorian era, entails the confinement of female sexuality to reproduction; in other words, the primary role assigned to the middle-class woman is wifing and mothering. Sally Shuttleworth explains the situation as follows:

Motherhood was set at the ideological centre of the Victorian bourgeois ideal. Virtually any reference to motherhood in the social texts of the era seemed to call forth, as if by necessity, yet one more recitation of the maternal creed. We hear endlessly of the mother's sacred mission to rear children, and of her spiritual grace which, filling the domestic sphere, uplifts her weary husband on his return from the corrupting world of Mammon. Few ideological constructs seem to arouse such uniform responses in the era; men and women, conservatives and reformers alike, seem to endorse this identikit picture. Even with the beginnings of the women's movement in the 1860s, female reformers were reluctant to voice a challenge to the sacred ideals of motherhood.¹⁷

The motivating force behind this ideological construction of maternity appears to be, in Shuttleworth's terms, "the middle class's claims to social leadership through moral superiority."¹⁸ "But motherhood was not solely a spiritual mission," observes Shuttleworth, "it was also an intensely physical process, and a mode of social productivity vital to the middle class's maintenance of power."¹⁹ One cannot have any doubts as to the fact that such an account also denotes the deprivation of women of a vital position in the public sphere during the Victorian age.

It is rather paradoxical that one can detect the recurrence of the constraining ideology of womanhood of the Victorian era almost a century later during the rule of an authoritarian right-wing government with Margaret Thatcher as the Prime Minister. During the so-called "Thatcher's Reign" (1979-1990), feminism encountered a general backlash, as Thatcher held the opinion that feminism was

¹⁷ Sally Shuttleworth, "Demonic Mothers: Ideologies of Bourgeois Motherhood in the Mid-Victorian Era," *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender*, Ed. by Linda M. Shires, London, Routledge, 1992, p.31

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.32

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

unnecessary, and argued that women can have *both* meaningful lives as housewives and mothers and make a significant contribution to their families and society by entering paid labour or public, professional life, as she had done.²⁰ However, she herself makes clear the double-standard in her conceptualisation of women's position in society by advocating a discriminatory gender construction; she claims that:

It is possible, in my view, for a woman to run a home and continue with her career *provided that two conditions are fulfilled*. First, her husband must be in sympathy with her wish to do another job. Secondly, where there is a young family, the joint incomes of husband and wife must be sufficient to employ a first class nanny-housekeeper to look after things in the wife's absence. *The second is the key to the whole plan.*²¹

As it can readily be comprehended, Thatcher's discourse of women's equality entails the subjection of a female employee to a female employer on the one hand, and the subservience of a wife to her husband on the other.

In short, the advocacy of a strong traditional family in the context of the gender politics of the Thatcher administrations might very well be traced back to the enterprise culture created during the Victorian age. Within such a culture, the access of women to the public sphere inevitably has, in practical terms, the meaning of access to male power on its own terms. The liberal feminism of the late nineteenth century (now labelled "classical," or "libertarian") is characterised by the advocacy of such an access through the acquisition of civil liberties – voting rights, education rights, and property rights. For instance, one of the women's organisations in Britain, the Fawcett Society, which was founded in 1866, strived for, besides the granting of suffrage, the acceptance of equal status for women in the home and in public life, and equal educational and job opportunities.²² In other words, the aim of liberal feminism of the nineteenth century was the acquisition of the same civil rights and economic

²⁰ See Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury & Jackie Stacey, "Introduction II: Feminism, Marxism and Thatcherism," *Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies*, Ed. by. Sarah Franklin, Celia Lury & Jackie Stacey, London, HarperCollins *Academic*, 1991, pp.42-43

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.43

²² See *Women in Britain*, London, HMSO Publications Centre, 1991, p.71

opportunities for women as for men, which in effect meant the achievement of, in Chris Weedon's words, "full equality of opportunity in all spheres of life without radically transforming the present social and political system."²³ Therefore it would be apt to identify this liberal movement as a reformatory, not as a revolutionary approach. For the gender justice it aimed at was of a nature that would set up invidious class distinctions among women generating winners and losers just like the male liberal world. The problem inherent in this approach was the presumption that many women desired to be like men, and would be able to become like men when given the same education, economic opportunities, and civil liberties as men, which denoted an aspiration to masculine values.

What was envisaged through the discourse of gender equality within the context of the above-mentioned liberal feminism was a gender-neutral society, and the female winner signified an upper-middle-class woman who could afford to have a proper education and work outside the home by hiring another woman, or perhaps several women, to carry on the domestic labour and childcare (familial unit has always been deemed essential to societal structure), whilst the female loser signified an initially disadvantaged woman who had no other choice than being a labourer either in a wealthy woman's house or in a factory.

To sum up, the liberal feminism of the nineteenth century can be defined as a reformatory movement concerned solely with bourgeois values though the impetus it gave to women's liberation cannot be denied. On the other hand, several historical and literary (though somewhat in a fantasied form) texts testify to the fact that for many years during the age in question quite a few women suffered from severe financial problems besides the second-class status ascribed to women in general by the patterns of family and social life as a result of the changes the industrialisation process brought about. Historically, this process can be traced back to the agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century (1870-1902), which led to the decline of the rural way of life and economy – the process began much earlier with

²³ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989, p.4

the shift to a manufacturing economy – and consequently the accumulation of vast masses in urban districts. Urbanisation denoted a more complex, a more divided civilisation, and altered social emphases basing them on the ethic of competition. The effect of this ethic was, in G. H. Bantock's words, "to reduce man to the level of economic man, one whose psychological motivations were thought of largely in terms of self-interest."²⁴ According to Bantock, "Notions of a public morality in terms of a diffused public good hardly existed among ordinary people."²⁵

It is a commonly recognised fact that, within the context of material values, the emphasis on the individual's self-interest is bound to prompt the utilisation of the disadvantaged by the advantaged. Indeed, Victorian womanhood had for numerous women no other meaning than being utilised by the owners of the means of production: many poor women were drawn into textile mills, factories and workshops, and they were made to work long hours under conditions both degrading and detrimental to their health, as they were almost always employed in the least-skilled and lowest-paid grades of work.²⁶

As for feminism, securing women's suffrage was the primary goal of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century feminist movement. According to Sandra Stanley Holton's account, in the pursuit of votes for women during the 1900s and 1910s (during the reign of Edward VII, extending into the reign of George V), some suffragettes struggled through petitioning alongside the conventional publicity and educational methods of the public meeting, and the production of pamphlet and periodical literature on the subject. On the other hand, the members of the militant wing of the suffragette movement expressed a growing impatience through the assertive harassment of leading members of the Liberal Party (prior to the 1906 general election), street demonstrations, and street-corner and factory-gate speaking; these early modes of militancy were gradually extended to attempts to provoke public disorder, to attacks on public building and art treasures, to arson, bombing and

²⁴ G. H. Bantock, "The Social and Intellectual Background," *From James to Eliot*, Ed. by. Boris Ford, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1983, p.17

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ See *Women in Britain*, p.80

vandalising pillar boxes, and to the orchestration of large-scale window-smashing raids in London's West End (but these women never attacked human beings). And some of these women suffered even to the point of imprisonment and torture. Such activities led to the frequent imposition on militant suffragists of short prison sentences. From 1909, some suffragist prisoners resorted to hunger strike. The government retaliated initially with the use of forcible feeding, and subsequently with the introduction of the Cat and Mouse Act in 1913, which allowed the repeated arrest of prisoners released on licence to recover from the hunger strike. One of the leading militant suffragists, Emmeline Pankhurst was constantly in and out of prison during 1913 and 1914; and her daughter, Sylvia Pankhurst was imprisoned nine times during the first half of 1914.²⁷

With the granting of partial suffrage in 1918 (women aged thirty and over gained the vote) British feminists attempted to achieve a significant reformation of society: during the 1920s, new feminist groups were created, an important feminist journal was established, an intense debate over the nature of feminism clarified some of the assumptions underlying feminist ideology, and significant legislation was enacted improving the status of wives and mothers.²⁸ However, as Harold L. Smith observes, by 1930, due to postwar social and cultural patterns, feminism seemed much less of a threat to traditional structures; Smith points out that:

The First World War unleashed a powerful current of cultural conservatism which helped shape the direction of postwar feminism. Alarm over the perceived wartime changes in sex roles strengthened the forces seeking to restore traditional roles.... The 'full flowering' of the Victorian domestic ideology occurred in the inter-war years. Public concern over the declining rate of population growth also contributed to changes intended to encourage women to become mothers. The increased preoccupation with marriage and motherhood helped ensure that those who wished

²⁷ Sandra Stanley Holton, "In Sorrowful Wrath: Suffrage Militancy and the Romantic Feminism of Emmeline Pankhurst," **British Feminism in the Twentieth Century**, Ed. by Harold L. Smith, Aldershot, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1990, p.8

²⁸ See Harold L. Smith, "British Feminism in the 1920s," *ibid.*, p.47

to make this central to feminism would find a receptive audience, while increasing the resistance to feminists wishing to improve women's employment opportunities.²⁹

Thus, in the years following 1918, the diversity within feminism became more apparent. The so-called new and equality (libertarian) feminists differed as to which reforms should have highest priority. New feminists focused on the reproductive function of women by referring to maternity as the most important of women's occupations, accusing the equality feminists of seeking to become like men, of adopting male values and priorities. Equality feminists, on the other hand, maintained that new feminists placed a dangerous insistence on women's reproductive function, which encouraged traditional notions of femaleness, thereby making it harder for women to escape from traditional roles.³⁰

Besides such conflicts, the passage of the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 granting women aged twenty-one and over the suffrage on the same basis as men weakened feminist pressure for drastic change by removing what was, in the eyes of British women, the last great symbol of women's inequality.³¹ Smith holds the idea that "What seemed in 1928 to be an important victory for feminist reformers now appears to be one of a series of successful steps by Conservative-controlled governments which strengthened women's loyalty to traditional institutions and roles."³²

As a general rule, writers do not remain aloof from social movements. Accordingly, the dynamics of the women's movement of the periods outlined above received the literary attention. Bantock states that before the First World War male hegemony suffered a reverse in the rise of the independent-minded New Woman and the suffragette movement,³³ which manifested itself as ambivalent and contradictory attitudes towards the female figures of fictive representations. As a prolific writer,

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, p.48

³¹ See *ibid.*, p.61

³² *Ibid.*, pp.61-62

³³ Bantock, *op. cit.*, p.21

Shaw, too, examined many of the social problems of the periods in question, including women's quest for equality. Being a member of the Fabian society, which was based on an empirical approach and became the "symbol of social democracy, of gradualism, of peaceful permeation, of avoidance of revolution,"³⁴ he consistently claimed in his essays to be egalitarian with respect to the conventional assessment of the relative role of the sexes.

Therefore, it is rather amazing to note that some critics rank Shaw among feminist writers. According to Kate Millett, a well-known feminist, Shaw's work is amongst "the most famous products of revolutionary agitation."³⁵ And K.K.Ruthven, claiming that "There is the exemplary feminism of various male writers who succeeded in not being prisoners of their sex,"³⁶ cites Shaw as one of those male writers totally relying on Shaw's lengthy essays and not ever mentioning his dramatic pieces.

Indeed, one can come across, amongst the numerous issues Shaw comments upon in his non-dramatic work, the problem of women's oppression about which he makes such egalitarian remarks that they impress one with their apparent understanding as regards the problem in question. For instance, within the context of his critique of the prevalent conventionality and artificiality of the British drama at *fin de siècle*, Shaw maintains that "To [a romanticist] [woman] was not a human being or a fellow-creature, but simply the incarnated divinity of sex"³⁷; and he even ventures to criticise Queen Victoria, defining her as the representative of "the lies a woman must either believe or pretend to believe before she can graduate in polite society as a well-brought-up lady."³⁸ Again, in his critique of a play titled *The Fanatic*, mocking at the dispute between two male characters over the nature of the diet to be prescribed to a female character, he points out that "The unfortunate

³⁴ Ibid., p.32

³⁵ Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, London, Virago Press Ltd., 1993, p.129

³⁶ K. K. Ruthven, *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p.11

³⁷ Bernard Shaw, *Our Theatres in the Nineties*, Vol.III, London, Constable and Company Ltd., 1948, p.174

³⁸ Ibid., p.178

patient's own views are left completely out of account.... The question is one of ... the husband's authority versus the doctor's authority: never for a moment is it suggested that a short way out of the difficulty would be to allow the lady to order her own dinner."³⁹

Moreover, the views Shaw presents in his *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism* (1928) concerning the issue of prostitution under the capitalist system do seem egalitarian:

Let not anyone imagine that men escape prostitution under Capitalism. If they do not sell their bodies they sell their souls. The barrister who in court strives 'to make the worse appear the better cause' has been held up as a stock example of the dishonesty of misrepresenting for money.... The barrister is an innocent figure who is used to distract our attention from the writer and publisher of lying advertisements which pretend to prove the worse the better article, the shop-man who sells it by assuring the customer that it is the best ... the clerk making out dishonest accounts ... the journalist writing for Socialist papers when he is a convinced Liberal ... the professional politician working for his party right or wrong ... the solicitor using the law as an instrument for the oppression of the poor by the rich, the mercenary soldier fighting for a country which he regards as the worst enemy of his own, and the citizens of all classes who have to be obsequious to the rich and insolent to the poor. These are only a few examples of the male prostitutions...

We see, then, that when the reproach of prostitution is raised neither woman nor man dares cast the first stone; for both have been equally stained with it under Capitalism.⁴⁰

Again, when enumerating the external pressures on women, Shaw points out that "Women are forced by their circumstances to be peaceful, economical, and provident for the sake of their children: that is, of the race; but they are equally

³⁹ Ibid., p.230

⁴⁰ Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, Sovietism and Fascism*, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1982, pp.224-225

forced to admire and encourage pugnacity in men, their bodyguards.”⁴¹ And he observes in a treatise, “Our society, being directly dominated by men, comes to regard Woman, not as an end in herself like man, but solely as a means of ministering to his appetite,”⁴² and concludes that “to treat a person as a means instead of an end is to deny that person’s right to live”⁴³; then he proclaims: “Unless Woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and to everyone, but herself, she cannot emancipate herself.”⁴⁴

However, in the bulk of Shaw’s dramatic work, one finds demonstrations of an essentialistic mode of instituting femaleness through the identification of the biological with the social, that is, the sex with the gender, and the glorification of the female’s reproductive role, an approach quite contradictory to the seemingly progressive views he presents in his non-dramatic work.

Now, designating certain characteristics as male-specific and others as female-specific, viewing femininity as innate/natural to women, in short, the allegiance to the notion of “Nature,” has been one of the greatest obstacles in the struggles for change. With the aim of distancing women from the limiting conceptions of their “nature” that result in sexist stereotyping, feminists have exerted a great deal of effort into making a distinction between the concepts of sex and gender, defining sex as a biological category and gender as the social role, or the cultural meaning, imposed on sexual identity. According to Elin Diamond,

Gender refers to the words, gestures, appearances, ideas, and behavior that dominant culture understands as indices of feminine or masculine identity. When spectators “see” gender they are seeing (and reproducing) the cultural signs of gender, and by implication, the gender ideology of a culture. Gender in fact provides a perfect

⁴¹ Bernard Shaw, *Everybody’s Political What’s What*, London, Constable and Company Ltd., 1944, p.133

⁴² Bernard Shaw, “The Quintessence of Ibsenism,” *Major Critical Essays : The Quintessence of Ibsenism, The Perfect Wagnerite, The Sanity of Art*, London, Constable and Company Ltd., 1932, p.36

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.37

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.40

illustration of ideology at work since “feminine” or “masculine” behaviour usually appears to be a “natural” – and thus fixed and unalterable – extension of biological sex.⁴⁵

If, as Robbins points out, “... femininity and masculinity are seen as processes rather than givens, and if they are processes which take place in social contexts as well as in biological bodies, the processes and their meanings can be changed.”⁴⁶ Accordingly, in terms of women’s struggle for self-identity, the crucial question to be asked is whether or not the author “helps to expand the reader’s (or the spectator’s) notions of what is *possible* for women.”⁴⁷ In Shaw’s drama, however, one cannot find a profound interest in searching a means to construct femininity along different lines.

At this point, it would be appropriate to cite some of the theoretical interventions Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) offered to feminist literary studies. Now, according to the theory of human nature developed by Freud (whose emergence paralleled Shaw’s), the mind is divided into the conscious and the unconscious: the conscious is the part where logical thinking takes place, whereas the unconscious is the part where the repressed desires, or the unfulfilled wishes, are stored. The unconscious is the place where one puts anything that social conditioning renders a taboo subject. The content of the unconscious is not easily accessible, but it quite often comes to the surface through dreams and fantasies, or daydreams.

In Freud’s psychoanalytical approach, the therapeutic methods, such as dream/fantasy analysis and free association are not limited to the cure of nervous disorders; he extends psychoanalytic exploration to discover how the normal mind operates, and claims that the unconscious plays a huge part in determining the

⁴⁵ Elin Diamond, “Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism,” *A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre and Performance: On and Beyond the Stage*, Ed. by. Carol Martin, London, Routledge, 1996, p.123

⁴⁶ Robbins, op. cit., pp. 110-111

⁴⁷ See Bonnie Zimmerman, “What Has Never Been”, *The New Feminist Criticism*, p.219

behaviour of all of us.⁴⁸ Indeed, it is a fact that many people indulge in a certain amount of fantasy and daydreaming in order to make life more meaningful and bearable.⁴⁹ As for dreams, it is quite common today for people to see dreams as wish-fulfilment fantasies.⁵⁰ Defining psychoanalysis as “a new and deeper science of the mind,” Freud concludes that “It would be equally indispensable for the understanding of the normal.”⁵¹ And he maintains that:

Previously psycho-analysis had only been concerned with solving pathological phenomena and in order to explain them it had often been driven into making assumptions whose comprehensiveness was out of all proportion to the importance of the actual material under consideration. But when it came to dreams, it was no longer dealing with a pathological symptom, but with a phenomenon of normal mental life which might occur in any healthy person.⁵²

Dreams and fantasies are, in Freud's psychoanalytical discourse, manifestations of the workings of the unconscious the underlying motives of which are mainly sexual; and these motives are usually disguised by means of symbols. It would be apt, at this point, to cite Colin Wilson's comment on the relation between Freud and Shaw. Wilson defines Freud's theory as one that “found the true source of human behaviour in the ‘lower impulses’ of the subconscious (unconscious) mind,”⁵³ and draws a contrast between Freud's work and Shaw's:

What Shaw was asserting was diametrically opposed to this. According to Shaw, man possesses ‘higher impulses’ that are just as instinctive as his lower impulses. Freud was a reductionist; he reduced the higher to the lower; Shaw was an evolutionist who saw the lower as a distorted version of the higher.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ See Ruth Berry, *Freud*, London, Hodder & Stoughton, 2001, p.33

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, p.61

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, p.25

⁵¹ Sigmund Freud, “An Autobiographical Study,” *The Freud Reader*, Ed. by. Peter Gay, London, Vintage, 1995, p.30

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.29-30

⁵³ Colin Wilson, *Bernard Shaw: A Reassessment*, New York, Atheneum, 1969, p.148

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, Wilson admits that Freud made a great impact on modern science. He states that Freud's theory was the perfect antidote to Victorian high-mindedness and concludes that:

[Freud's] achievement in liberating the age from Victorian rationalism was greater than Shaw's, for it carried more weight. He emphasised that human behaviour is determined by vast forces that lie below the level of everyday consciousness, and this in itself was one of the greatest revolutions in modern thought; it completely altered the concept of human personality so that it came to include the 'depths.' And this was as much 'revolution' as his age could absorb.⁵⁵

It is obvious that, by defining the impulses of the unconscious as "lower," Wilson reflects the dualistic and inhibiting normative system of the dominant patriarchy. Furthermore, Freud posited some ideas that seem sexist today – particularly some aspects of his theory of the Oedipus complex, according to which the phallus is seen as the essential sexual organ and an object of envy to the female. However, as Ruth Berry suggests:

We have to remember that it was very much the norm for women to defer to men. The man was the undisputed boss within the family, and women tended to lead very restricted, boring lives. This, in combination with the strong taboos about sex, meant that women's psychology was as yet very poorly understood.⁵⁶

Therefore, it is exactly Freud's own identification with patriarchy that helps to explain many of its assumptions. And one cannot think of any reason whatsoever for exempting Shaw from occasional associations with Freud's dream/fantasy symbolism.

Now, when viewed from a feminist angle, Freud's psychoanalytical discourse does seem misogynistic to a certain degree as it is apparently phallogocentric in its description of the psychic construction of the female in terms of lack of a penis;

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Berry, op. cit., p.15

however, if this pessimistic account of women is viewed as a description of a particular culture, and not as an interpretation of a universal human nature, and if only the structures psychoanalysis identifies, and not their content are taken to be universal,⁵⁷ this discourse can be quite illuminating and can give an impetus to the politics of women's liberation. Weedon explains the significance of psychoanalysis for contemporary feminist concerns as follows:

The importance for feminism of psychoanalysis ... lies in the challenge it offers to discourses which assume the unified, self-present subject of rationality, and to theories of innate biologically determined sexual identity. The concept of an unconscious and the separation of the psychic structures of femininity and masculinity from direct biological determination are both important. They are stages in the development of a theoretical position from which the cultural meanings of gender and the forms of subjectivity in and through they are realized, become open to transformation.⁵⁸

As Robbins observes, "Feminisms forage amongst discourses, and use what they can for their own purposes"⁵⁹; accordingly, "Psychoanalytic theory is a tool to be used, not an idol to bow down before."⁶⁰

In conclusion, what seems to be the most important among Freud's discoveries is the concept of the unconscious, which denotes an unregulated psychic realm to which repressed desires are consigned. The unconscious, as opposed to the conscious, can explain many aspects of human behaviour by surfacing through several processes amongst which dreams and fantasies are the most revealing as they bring to the surface the inner and obscure parts of the mind. Freud finds a close relationship between fantasies and dreams: "Language, in its unrivalled wisdom, long ago decided the question of the essential nature of dreams by giving the name of

⁵⁷ See "Introduction," **The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and The Politics of Literary Criticism**, Ed. by. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, Houndmills, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989, p.5

⁵⁸ Weedon, op. cit., p.3

⁵⁹ Robbins, op.cit., p.111

⁶⁰ Ibid.

‘day-dreams’ to the airy creations of phantasy.”⁶¹ Moreover, he sees fantasies and dreams as the outcome of the conflict between the two main principles of mental functioning, namely the pleasure principle and the reality principle, and claims that they are both driven by the need to fulfil a wish. And, most significantly, he relates all literature and art to wish-fulfilment. He defines the work of creative writers as fantasizing, or creating daydreams, and states that “The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfilment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality.”⁶² He puts this correction – transformation – as follows (rendering the male coterminous with artistic creativity):

Art brings about a reconciliation between the two principles in a peculiar way. An artist is originally a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction which it at first demands, and who allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy. He finds the way back to reality, however, from this world of phantasy by making use of special gifts to mould his phantasies into truths of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of reality.⁶³

And within the “reflections of reality” that Shaw presents in his plays, female prostitution becomes more accentuated than male prostitution, and is perceived as a threat to family life; “mother woman” figures reflect the idea that procreation is the most vital of all the functions of humankind and it is, on woman’s part, a slavery to Nature not to man; many female characters are educated by male instructors; and the female characters that attempt to enter the public sphere are rendered sexless extensions of the male. To put it another way, one can find in Shaw’s dramatic work a latent desire to keep the conventional gender constructions intact and establish the male as the essential being.

⁶¹ Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,” *The Freud Reader*, p.440

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.439

⁶³ Sigmund Freud, “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning,” *ibid.*, p.305

I

MRS WARREN'S PROFESSION

What Shaw presents the audiences in *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1898) is his picture of the moral orientation of women and men in a society based on material values and self-interest. It is a society in which the majority of people are slaves to the private enterprise system, which renders many a person unfortunate and poverty-stricken. Again, it is, by necessity, a rather relentlessly hypocritical society as its prevalent motto seems to be "The end justifies the means." Shaw is quite ironical and critical in his approach to such a societal construction, and he apparently lays a great emphasis on the exposition of its evil aspects.

Significantly, Shaw achieves the exposition in question mainly through the exhibition of the supposed consciousness-raising, or awakening, processes ascribed to two female characters that belong to successive generations. Consequently, one might get the impression that *Mrs Warren's Profession*, as its title also implies, is basically a gynocentric, a woman-centred, play; however, gynocentrism does not necessarily involve a genuine insight into the specific problems women encounter due to the sexist bias of the patriarchal gender construction system. It is a fact that one can discern an endeavour on the author's part to present, with a Marxist tendency, the degeneration of a failing society under the capitalistic class system and criticise the objectification of a certain group of women by that system; however, as Showalter puts it, "The experience of women can easily disappear, become mute, invalid, and invisible, lost in the diagrams of the structuralist or the class conflict of the Marxists."¹ Any form of feminist reading of the discursive and representational structures presented in *Mrs Warren's Profession* can surface the oppression or

¹ Elaine Showalter, "Toward a Feminist Poetics," *The New Feminist Criticism*, p.141

resistance that are involved in those structures: one cannot find a perspective or a voice in the play that can be associated with a genuinely feminist approach, for it does not seem to be invested with a concern with women's issues per se.

Ostensibly, Shaw draws a contrast between the modes of the two women's – a mother and her daughter – awakening to the social and economic injustice of the society they live in, his aim being to present a transition in terms of a progressive movement from one generation to another, imputing on the latter woman, the daughter, the function of moral criticism. In a sense, the mother and the daughter seem to be placed, in Weedon's terms, "in competing subject positions."² Yet the developmental cycles of the two women's personhood can in essence be seen as interdependent and ultimately intersecting as both women are doomed by the male language to be integrated into the male world, as a result of which neither woman is linked with a process that would lead to an authentic femaleness although each seems to be concerned with the position of women in society in her own way.³

The integration in question comes to the surface in a rather ironical and comical way at the very beginning of the play when Vivie Warren, Mrs Warren's daughter, makes her first appearance on the stage. Shaw's primary method of creating comic elements seems, as the majority of his dramatic texts testify, to be the use of hyperbolic discourses; accordingly, Vivie is made to present herself through overstated expressions denoting an extreme form of self-confidence and resolution. And the name Vivie/Vivian might be taken as an ironical symbolisation of the vivacity attached to her; it is ironical in that her vivacity is presented in a subtly masculinised form.

It is apparent that Vivie is supposed to create through her hyperbolic words and gestures the image of a fully emancipated woman that transgresses the norms of acceptable and appropriate femininity. And it seems significant that this state of

² Weedon, op. cit., p.26

³ See J. Ellen Gainor, *Shaw's Daughters: Dramatic and Narrative Constructions of Gender*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1991, p.34

transgression is initially presented through the reaction of a male character: when the kind and timid advocate of art, Praed, receives a warm and friendly welcome from Vivie at their first meeting, he expresses a great amazement at her informal manner, alluding in the meantime to a generation gap and a transition from illusionary romanticism to pragmatic realism:

PRAED... It was so charming of you to say that you were disposed to be friends with me! You modern young ladies are splendid: perfectly splendid!

VIVIE [*dubiously*] Eh? [*watching him with dawning disappointment as to the quality of his brains and character*]

PRAED. When I was your age, young men and women were afraid of each other: there was no good fellowship. Nothing real. Only gallantry copied out of novels, and as vulgar and affected as it could be. Maidenly reserve! Gentlemanly chivalry! Always saying no when you meant yes! simple purgatory for shy and sincere souls.

VIVIE. Yes, I imagine there must have been a frightful waste of time. Especially women's time.

PRAED. Oh, waste of life, waste of everything. But things are improving.⁴

It seems paradoxical that Praed, who is described in the preliminary stage instructions as "*a gentleman ... hardly past middle age ... with waves of grey and white*"⁵ in his hair, approves whatever Vivie says. But it is rather ironical that whilst he apparently tries to prove that he has a free-thinking and open mind, and that he rejects any established rule or custom hyperbolically claiming "I am a born anarchist,"⁶ he exhibits such a chivalrous manner that he ultimately creates the image of a conventionally gentle and protective patriarch: he treats Vivie like a lady addressing her as "Miss Warren" or "Miss Vivie" throughout the play; and when Vivie attempts to fetch him a chair at their first meeting, he lays, metaphorically speaking, his physical strength at her service by exclaiming "Oh, pray, pray! Allow me."⁷ However, Vivie's gestures besides her style of speech prove that she is not, in

⁴ Bernard Shaw, *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Standard Edition, London, Constable & Company Ltd., 1931, Act I, pp.179-180

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.177

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.179

⁷ *Ibid.*

the conventional sense of the word – specifically in the senses of fragility and elegance – ladylike at all; moreover, the author makes her exhibit aggressive modes of behaviour: she brings a “*chair forward with one swing*”⁸; “*She shuts the gate with a vigorous slam*”⁹; she shakes Praed’s hand with such “*a resolute and hearty grip*” that Praed’s fingers “*are slightly numbed by her greeting.*”¹⁰ And during their conversation Vivie shocks Praed with her forthrightness of conviction along with her outspokenness, which is apparently indicative of a persona that is freed from all the inhibitions of the conventional forms of femininity.

What underlies the formation of the persona in question is apparently the acquisition of a reversed gender construction that is reflected as an inverted psychic orientation. One of the main reasons of this situation appears to be, as one gathers from Vivie’s own account, the fact that she has been deprived of a familial unit while growing up in a materialistic society:

VIVIE....Since I was a child I have lived in England, at school or college, or with people paid to take charge of me. I have been boarded out all my life. My mother has lived in Brussels or Vienna and never let me go to her. I only see her when she visits England for a few days.¹¹

It is apparent that Vivie has been given the chance to be educated even at a college, but has been deprived of a parental figure; in her account of her life there is only a mention of a distant and mysterious mother that is solely identified with money. Yet there is no sighing for a family in her curt speech, which is totally devoid of sentimentality:

VIVIE....I dont complain: it’s been very pleasant; for people have been very good to me; and there has always been plenty of money to make things smooth.¹²

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid., p.178

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p.183

¹² Ibid.

With these words Vivie reveals the fact that the only world available to her has been a world centered upon material values and that without being aware of it she has already been integrated into this world. However, it is quite ironical that she is presented as integrated into the male realm of this world, an integration epitomised by her, as the well-meaning, gentle Praed puts it, “magnificent achievements at Cambridge,”¹³ that is, by her recent achievement in Cambridge’s math tripos. Apparently, Vivie has received a masculine education – as mathematics is a field that has traditionally been ascribed to the male intellect, indicating the association of the male with rationality and the power to establish order – whereby she has acquired boldness, resolution, and a greed for material success. The discourse of calculation she uses when she talks about the tripos in question is rather appalling for such an artistic and sentimental man as Praed:

PRAED....It was perfectly splendid, your tying with the third wrangler...

VIVIE. It does not pay. I wouldnt do it again for the same money.

PRAED [*aghast*] The same money!

VIVIE. I did it for £ 50.

PRAED. Fifty pounds!

VIVIE. Yes....But I wouldnt do it again for that. £ 200 would have been nearer the mark.

PRAED [*much damped*] Lord bless me! Thats a very practical way of looking at it.¹⁴

However, Vivie seems to be aware of the supposedly negative aspects of the educational system she has been through:

PRAED. But surely it’s practical to consider not only the work these honors cost, but also the culture they bring.

VIVIE. Culture! My dear Mr Praed: do you know what the mathematical tripos means? It means grind, grind, grind for six to eight hours a day at mathematics, and nothing but mathematics...Outside mathematics, lawn-tennis, eating, sleeping,

¹³ Ibid., p.180

¹⁴ Ibid.

cycling, and walking, I'm a more ignorant barbarian than any woman could possibly be who hadn't gone in for the tripos.

PRAED [*revolted*] What a monstrous, wicked, rascally system! I knew it! I felt at once that it meant destroying all that makes womanhood beautiful.¹⁵

Here Vivie and Praed seem to be talking at cross purposes. Vivie's choice of outdoor activities, such as lawn-tennis, cycling, and walking signify that she chooses to live outside the *home* as these activities do not belong to the domestic sphere. And it is apparent that such activities, combined with mathematics, denote a mode of self-fulfilment on her part, whereas they signify the loss of femininity according to Praed, who throughout the play beckons Vivie to "romance and beauty," representing patriarchy's predilection for the confinement of the female to personal and familial relationships. Nevertheless, what becomes the loss of "womanhood" in Praed's discourse of femaleness (which is undoubtedly based upon the relegation of the female into the realm of the romantic and beautiful) does not seem to be of much consequence to Vivie:

VIVIE. I don't object to it on that score in the least. I shall turn it to very good account, I assure you.

PRAED. Pooh! In what way?

VIVIE. I shall set up in chambers in the City, and work at actuarial calculations and conveyancing. Under cover of that I shall do some law, with one eye on the Stock Exchange all the time. I've come down here by myself to read law: not for a holiday, as my mother imagines. I hate holidays.¹⁶

Thus Vivie creates the image of a free-thinking woman who desires, through a male education, to enter the aggressive world of decision-making and investment internalising in the meantime the masculine qualities in those fields. The world in question is a relentless world in which money is identical with power and one has to have a good deal of money in order to survive. Vivie hates holidays as apparently they represent a void, a waste of time for her; and in this respect she reflects the

¹⁵ Ibid., p.181

¹⁶ Ibid.

Puritan creed of hard work and individual effort. However, her intention to keep one eye on the Stock Exchange implies her aspiration for bourgeois values and reflects in a sense the ongoing shift towards a totally capitalistic society where money earns money, undermining the initial Puritan norms.

Yet, on Vivie's part, survival in such a world signifies the adoption of a masculine taste as well as a greed for power:

PRAED. You make my blood run cold. Are you to have no romance, no beauty in your life?

VIVIE. I don't care for either, I assure you.

PRAED. You can't mean that.

VIVIE. Oh yes I do. I like working and getting paid for it. When I'm tired of working, I like a comfortable chair, a cigar, a little whisky, and a novel with a good detective story in it.¹⁷

The symbolic significance of the traditional attributes of a male taste – cigar, whisky, detective novel – is reinforced by the visual symbolisation of a masculine attire: when Vivie is introduced into the play, she is described in the stage instructions as wearing a “*plain business-like dress*,” which is not “*dowdy*,” and moreover, “*a chatelaine at her belt, with a fountain pen and a paper knife among its pendants*.”¹⁸

Now, a chatelaine is something that belongs to the female sphere: it is a hooklike clasp for suspending things like keys, trinkets, etc. worn (in the past) at the waist by women. However, the author's focusing on the fountain pen and the paper knife amongst the pendants of Vivie's chatelaine can be considered to be quite significant when viewed from the Freudian perspective. Freud, identifying fantasies with dreams, defines the unsatisfied wishes underlying such products of the mental life as follows:

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.178

These motivating wishes vary according to the sex, character and circumstances of the person who is having the phantasy; but they fall naturally into two main groups. They are either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject's personality; or they are erotic ones.¹⁹

Freud asserts that the major part of a dream's, or fantasy's, content is disguised by means of symbols, but he admits the difficulty of finding the correct interpretation of a dream symbol and explains the underlying cause in terms of repression, emphasising in the meantime the similarity between dreams and fantasies:

If the meaning of our dreams remains obscure to us...it is because of the circumstance that at night there also arise in us wishes of which we are ashamed; these we must conceal from ourselves, and they have consequently been repressed, pushed into the unconscious. Repressed wishes of this sort and their derivatives are only allowed to come to expression in a very distorted form. When scientific work had succeeded in elucidating this factor of *dream-distortion*, it was no longer difficult to recognize that night-dreams are wish-fulfilments in just the same way as day-dreams – the phantasies which we all know very well.²⁰

Freud bases the major part of his psychoanalytic research on the “abundant use made of symbolism for representing sexual material in dreams,” and asserts that “many of these symbols occur with a permanently fixed meaning.”²¹ For instance, he suggests the following interpretations:

All elongated objects, such as sticks, tree-trunks and umbrellas...may stand for the male organ as well as all long, sharp weapons, such as knives, daggers and pikes...Boxes, cases, chests, cupboards and ovens represent the uterus, and also

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming,” *The Freud Reader*, p.439

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.440

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Vol.V, Trans. by. James Strachey and Anna Freud, London, Vintage, 2001, p.351

hollow objects, ships, and vessels of all kinds. Rooms in dreams are usually women....It is highly probable that all complicated machinery and apparatus occurring in dreams stand for the genitals (and as a rule male ones)...Nor is there any doubt that all weapons and tools are used as symbols for the male organ: e.g. ploughs, hammers, rifles, revolvers, sabres, etc. In the same way many landscapes in dreams...may clearly be recognized as descriptions of the genitals.²²

Thus one might very well suggest that Vivie's carrying a fountain pen and a paper knife (and keys), and her smoking cigars, together with her grasping in the third act a male character's (Frank's) rifle, can be related to Freud's discourse of symbolism and interpreted as a symbolisation of her aspiration for the phallus – the emblem of masculinity and masculine power – in terms of both ambitious wishes and repressed erotic wishes. Throughout the play, her ambition to attain a competitive power is rendered quite overtly, but her sexuality remains so obscure that one gets the impression that the author has perhaps envisaged her as an abnormal or even sexless being, an attitude reflecting, besides the sexual inhibitions of a prudential society, a sexist or at best confused state of mind on the part of the author as regards women's participation in the public sphere.

In the historical context, the character of Vivie apparently represents one of those few women who were given the chance to acquire a university education as a result of the struggle of some pioneer women in the late-nineteenth century England. In a broader sense, it can be suggested that the characterisation of Vivie is an allusion to the progressive women (primarily suffragists) of that period whose efforts to gain equal rights with men ended up in the creation of the concept of New Woman. According to Patricia Stubbs,

The vague but popular phrase "the new woman" was coined in the nineties in an effort to describe women who had either won or were fighting for a degree of equality and personal freedom.²³

²² Ibid., pp.354-356

²³ Quoted by Gainor, op. cit., p.15

And J. Ellen Gainor defines the traits associated with the figure of the New Woman, which recur in that era in both fictional and journalistic portraits, as follows:

The new woman was noted for independence of spirit and action; she refused to conform to the conventional, male-determined code of feminine behaviour or to accept an inferior status legally, intellectually, or socially. This personal adventurousness manifested itself externally in such “unwomanly” activities as cigarette smoking and in the rejection of traditional, purely decorative and cumbersome feminine attire in favor of a more practical wardrobe that suited an active lifestyle. The new woman was notorious for her outspokenness, particularly as it pertained to her sexuality and the freedom she sought in personal relationships. She was also an advocate of women’s education and the creation of professional opportunities in fields traditionally barred to women, and she often eschewed maternal and domestic roles – at least as the sole recourse for a woman whose only other legal option was spinsterhood and potential destitution...Primarily middle-class, New Women took stances “on matters of personal choice”...whether they pertained to lifestyles or professional options.²⁴

Yet, as Margery M. Morgan observes, what Shaw portrays in Vivie is the supposedly the negative aspect of the New Woman,²⁵ which is, within the psychic context of the play, the repudiation of the nurturing female self. In a sense, Vivie’s hefty handshake that hurts and numbs men’s hands, cigar-smoking, mathematical prowess and straight-talking coalesce into an image that is very conspicuously a parody, in Jean Chothia’s definition, “a caricature,”²⁶ of the New Woman in question. In his account of the feminist movement at the turn of the century, Smith states that “Feminists were perceived as spectacled, embittered women, disappointed, childless, dowdy, and generally unloved.”²⁷ Vivie is not “dowdy,” but she is certainly a caricature of the New Woman; and though her attempt at self-assertion,

²⁴ Ibid., pp.15-16

²⁵ See Margery M. Morgan, “The Deathliness of Compromise,” *Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman and Saint Joan*, Ed. by A. M. Gibbs, Houndmills, Macmillan Education Ltd., 1992, p.76

²⁶ Jean Chothia, *English Drama of the Early Modern Period, 1890-1940*, Harlow, Longman Group Ltd., 1996, p.45

²⁷ Smith, op. cit., p.62

albeit caricature-like, can be seen as a sign of concern, she does not seem to be linked with any specific concern for the problems women in general encounter under patriarchy. The line that Shaw gives her early in the first act, "Yes, I imagine there must have been a frightful waste of time. Especially women's time," (quoted above) is the only line that, in Gainor's words, "gestures in a feminist direction,"²⁸ and "it becomes clear during the course of the play that Vivie is more the voice of Shaw's work ethic, which applies to men and women alike, than a spokesperson for women alone."²⁹ And the reason for the introduction of Vivie's character through a lengthy conversation with Praed seems to be the accentuation of this caricature since they are drawn as two contrasting figures; in other words, Praed's function appears to be the embodiment of what Vivie has lost, or rather what she has left behind when moving beyond the confines of the entrenched norms of femininity. Consequently, it might be suggested that the delineation of Vivie's character conveys a male writer's resistance to women's claims on the world outside the home.

The mother figure, Mrs Warren, is fundamentally treated likewise though she is seemingly cast as a contrasting figure. According to the plot line, she is a woman with a past who meets her grown-up child; as a matter of fact, she arranges a meeting between her old male friends (there is no mention of any female friends) and her daughter, apparently aiming to introduce with great pride her successful daughter to the male personages of the play. She prides herself on her success in providing her child, her "little Vivie," with a good education; after having introduced Vivie to Sir George Crofts, she asks him: "Well, George, what do you think of her?"³⁰ This feeling of pride is the reflection of what Praed hints at prior to Mrs Warren's entrance: "Well, you must have observed, Miss Warren, that people who are dissatisfied with their own bringing-up generally think that the world would be all right if everybody were to be brought up quite differently."³¹

²⁸ Gainor, op. cit., p.35

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Shaw, op. cit., p.185

³¹ Ibid., p.183

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Thus, on the one hand, Mrs Warren creates the image of a stereotypical parent by identifying herself with her child's success; moreover, she at times acts as a caring and protective mother (The first thing she says to Vivie is "Vivie: put your hat on, dear: you'll get sunburnt,"³² reflecting the conventional notion that darkening of the skin would erase the whiteness/paleness of the female – the visual symbol of the female's purity), and at times claims a parental authority over Vivie (She patronisingly defines her as "that little girl of mine"³³), which is highlighted through the tender-heartedness of Praed:

PRAED. I think, you know – if you don't mind my saying so – that we had better get out of the habit of thinking of her as a little girl. You see she has distinguished herself ... Vivie is a grown woman. Pray, Kitty, treat her with every respect.

MRS WARREN [*with genuine amazement*] Respect! Treat my own daughter with respect! What next, pray!³⁴

Yet on the other hand, she creates the picture of an easy and frivolous woman (reinforced by the description of her in the stage instructions as "*showily dressed in a brilliant hat and a gay blouse fitting tightly over her bust*,"³⁵) unscrupulously finding pleasure in embarrassing a former lover who is paradoxically an ecclesiastic:

MRS WARREN [*swooping on the Reverend Samuel*] Why, it's Samuel Gardner, gone into the Church! Well, I never! Don't you know us, Sam? This is George Crofts, as large as life and twice as natural. Don't you remember me?

REV. S. [*very red*] I really – er –

MRS WARREN. Of course you do. Why, I have a whole album of your letters still: I came across them only the other day.

REV. S. [*miserably confused*] Miss Vavasour, I believe.

MRS WARREN [*correcting him quickly in a loud whisper*] Tch! Nonsense! Mrs Warren: don't you see my daughter there?³⁶

³² Ibid., p.184

³³ Ibid., p.185

³⁴ Ibid., pp.185-186

³⁵ Ibid., p.184

³⁶ Ibid., p.193

And prior to this recognition, the audience learns from the conversation between Reverend Garner and his parasitic and irreverent son Frank that Mrs Warren keeps those infatuated letters to use as a weapon when necessary:

FRANK. Well, you told me yourself, when I was making such an ass of myself about the barmaid at Redhill, that you once offered a woman £ 50 for the letters you wrote to her when –

REV. S. [*terrified*] Sh-sh-sh, Frank, for Heaven's sake!....when I wrote those letters I put myself into the woman's power. When I told you about them I put myself, to some extent, I am sorry to say, in your power. She refused my money with these words, which I shall never forget. "Knowledge is power" she said; "and I never sell power."³⁷

Reverend Garner's story creates the image of a woman who attempts to usurp the power and authority the male gains through the ownership of language. And the fact that the amount of money Gardner offered Mrs Warren is the same as the amount of money Vivie won at the math tripos tie the mother and the daughter in terms of aspiration for material power, yet differentiating them in terms of the means of attaining that power.

Again prior to the recognition scene in question, Crofts talks to Praed in private, unravelling a crucial mystery of Mrs Warren's life:

CROFTS....Look here: did Kitty ever tell you who that girl's father is?

PRAED. Never.

CROFTS. Have you any suspicion of who it might be?

PRAED. None.

.....

CROFTS....I only say, if you know, you might at least set my mind at rest about her.

The fact is, I feel attracted.

PRAED [*sternly*] What do you mean?

³⁷ Ibid., pp.191-192

CROFTS. Oh, dont be alarmed: it's quite an innocent feeling. Thats what puzzles me about it. Why, for all I know, *I* might be her father.

.....

PRAED....Well, as you are, at all events, old enough to be her father, I dont mind agreeing that we both regard Miss Vivie in a parental way, as a young girl whom we are bound to protect and help.³⁸

All this textual information establishes Mrs Warren at the outset as a grotesque combination: the male language links her with both conventional motherhood and wantonness; she tries to create the image of an angelic mother, but she has a fake surname, an illegitimate child, and an album of letters to keep former lovers silent (a portrayal that might be identified as a subtle parody of Virgin Mary). Further on in the play, Frank Gardner, undoubtedly presuming that he has the power to judge since he is a male, epitomises this combination as "She may be a good sort; but she's a bad lot, a very bad lot."³⁹

The persona ascribed to Mrs Warren is obviously structured upon a dualistic axis; in other words, she represents an ethos of double-standard. Nevertheless, the following dialogue between Reverend Gardner and Frank Gardner reveals the fact that Mrs Warren's persona is the mirror image of the double-standard of the male world's normative system:

FRANK....I want to introduce you to her. Do you remember the advice you gave me last July, gov'nor?

REV. S. [*severely*] Yes. I advised you to conquer your idleness and flippancy, and to work your way into an honorable profession and live on it and not upon me.

FRANK. No: thats what you thought of afterwards. What you actually said was that since I had neither brains nor money, I'd better turn my good looks to account by marrying somebody with both. Well, look here. Miss Warren has brains: you cant deny that.

REV. S. Brains are not everything.

³⁸ Ibid., pp.187-188

³⁹ Ibid., Act III, p.221

FRANK. No, of course not: theres the money –

REV. S. [*interrupting him austerely*] I was not thinking of money, sir. I was speaking of higher things. Social position, for instance.

FRANK. I dont care a rap about that.

REV. S. But I do, sir.

FRANK. Well, nobody wants you to marry her. Anyhow, she has what amounts to a high Cambridge degree; and she seems to have as much money as she wants.⁴⁰

On the one hand, Frank, an idle, parasitic and self-seeking personage who asserts his manhood with the rifle (his phallic emblem) he carries, thinks of attaining the power that money brings by marrying Vivie (he even claims: “She loves me”⁴¹); and he does not seem aware of the fact that he is objectifying himself. On the other hand, Reverend Gardner pompously scorns Vivie, with whose mother he had a liaison in his youth.

Indeed, the hypocritical manners of those male characters prevail throughout the play. When Frank is left alone with Mrs Warren in the cottage which is the main setting of the play, he unabashedly courts her (whilst courting Vivie as well):

MRS WARREN....I’d a good deal rather be in Vienna.

FRANK. Let me take you there. [*He helps her to take off her shawl, gallantly giving her shoulders a very perceptible squeeze as he does so*].

MRS WARREN. Ah! Would you? I’m beginning to think youre a chip off the old block.

FRANK. Like the gov’nor, he?...

MRS WARREN. Never you mind. What do you know about such things? Youre only a boy. [*She goes to the hearth, to be farther from temptation*]⁴²

It is clear that Mrs Warren tries to act as a maternal figure, a situation symbolised by her approaching the familial hearth, the domestic shell, celebrated in the days of high

⁴⁰ Ibid., Act I, p.191

⁴¹ Ibid., p.190

⁴² Ibid., Act III, pp.194-195

Victorianism⁴³; yet she finds it difficult to resist this devilish boy's temptation and momentarily yields to it. However, she ultimately represses her libidinal urge and resorts to her position of motherhood evidently pretending to observe the rules of patriarchy that do not approve a woman's sexual relationship with a man who is younger than herself:

She pretends to box his ears; then looks at the pretty laughing up-turned face for a moment, tempted. At last she kisses him, and immediately turns away, out of patience with herself.

MRS WARREN. There! I shouldnt have done that. I am wicked. Never you mind, my dear: it's only a motherly kiss. Go and make love to Vivie.

FRANK. So I have.

MRS WARREN [*turning on him with a sharp note of alarm in her voice*] What!

FRANK. Vivie and I are ever such chums.

MRS WARREN. What do you mean? Now see here: I wont have any young scamp tampering with my little girl. Do you hear? I wont have it.

FRANK [*quite unabashed*] My dear Mrs Warren: dont you be alarmed. My intentions are honorable: ever so honorable; and your little girl is jolly well able to take care of herself. She dont need looking after half so much as her mother. She aint so handsome, you know.

MRS WARREN [*taken aback by his assurance*] Well, you have got a nice healthy two inches thick of cheek all over you.⁴⁴

This scene seems to be part of the playwright's design to render Mrs Warren's character identical to Frank's as far as moral values are concerned, a situation testified by the remark Frank makes when he talks about Mrs Warren behind her back:

⁴³ See Robert Squillace, "Self-Isolation and Self-Advertisement in the Old Wives' Tale," *Seeing Double: Revisioning Edwardian and Modernist Literature*, Ed. by. Carola M. Kaplan & Anne B. Simpson, Houndmills, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996, p.90

⁴⁴ Shaw, op. cit., p.195

FRANK. Viv: theres a freemasonry among thoroughly immoral people that you know nothing of. Youve too much character. Thats the bond between your mother and me: thats why I know her better than youll ever know her.⁴⁵

Frank's insolence finds its ultimate expression in his definition "She's an old wretch,"⁴⁶ echoed in Crofts's unfinished statement "The old –"⁴⁷

It is evident that the male world very easily assigns Mrs Warren to the category of "wretch"; either overtly or covertly, all four of the male personages of the play (significantly in collaboration with Reverend Gardner's wife and daughter, who are told to have gone to town on the day Mrs Warren comes to their house, and never appear on the stage) tend to scorn such women as Mrs Warren though apparently they co-exist with them. In this respect, the cottage where the six characters – Vivie, Mrs Warren, Praed, Crofts, Reverend Gardner and Frank – meet seems to form a microcosm of an exploitative societal structure with the characters in question as members of it. If taken in terms of Freud's discourse of dream/fantasy symbolism, the cottage can metaphorically be perceived as representing the uterus and the actions of the male characters as the rape of the female – not only in terms of sexuality, but also in terms of an authentic female identity.

The majority of Shaw's female protagonists feel a strong affinity for paternal figures – the paternal law and order – and, ironically, have an inclination to reject, in a sense, "the comforting belief in the omnipotent Mother who guards and can ensure the daughter's life,"⁴⁸ eventually rendering maternal figures ineffectual instructors. Accordingly, Vivie is made, apparently due to moral scruples, to side with the male world in her judgement concerning her mother's position: when she questions her mother about her origins, she exhibits a rather stern and ruthless attitude:

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.220

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.225

⁴⁸ Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1989, p.115

MRS WARREN....I've been noticing these airs in you ever since you got that tripos or whatever you call it. If you think I'm going to put up with them youre mistaken; and the sooner you find it out, the better...Do you know who youre speaking to, Miss?

VIVIE [*looking across at her without raising her head from her book*] No. Who are you? What are you?

MRS WARREN [*rising breathless*] You young imp!

VIVIE. Everybody knows my reputation, my social standing, and the profession I intend to pursue. I know nothing about you....Now pray dont begin to cry. Anything but that. I really cannot stand whimpering. I will go out of the room if you do.

MRS WARREN [*piteously*] Oh, my darling, how can you be so hard on me? Have I no rights over you as your mother?

VIVIE. Are you my mother?

MRS WARREN [*appalled*] Am I your mother! Oh, Vivie!....[*distracted, throwing herself on her knees*]...I am your mother: I swear it. Oh, you cant mean to turn on me – my own child! It's not natural.⁴⁹

Vivie's unconsciously pompous and scornful reaction to this domineering/whimpering mother image, or rather her apparent desire to negate the existence of a questionable maternal figure ironically brings to mind, besides moral values, the consequences of the "penis envy" that Freud ascribes to little girls within his conceptualisation of psychic construction of the sexes. According to Freud, the mother is the first love object of early childhood, and during what he calls the phallic stage, a stage that lasts from about the age of three to five years following the oral and anal stages and preceding the Oedipus complex, sexual differences are discovered by children, giving rise to a castration complex in boys and penis envy in girls:

The genital zone is discovered at some time or other...When a little boy first catches the sight of a girl's genital region, he begins by showing irresolution and lack of interest; he sees nothing or disavows what he has seen, he softens it down or

⁴⁹ Shaw, op.cit., Act II, p.206

looks about for expedients for bringing it into line with his expectations. It is not until later, when some threat of castration has obtained a hold upon him, that the observation becomes important to him: if he then recollects or repeats it, it arouses a terrible storm of emotion in him and forces him to believe in the reality of the threat which he has hitherto laughed at. This combination of circumstances leads to two reactions, which may become fixed and will in that case, whether separately or together or in conjunction with other factors, permanently determine the boy's relations to women: horror of the mutilated creature or triumphant contempt for her.

A little girl behaves differently. She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it...The first step in the phallic phase...is...a momentous discovery which little girls are destined to make. They notice the penis of a brother or playmate, strikingly visible and of large proportions, at once recognize it as the superior counterpart of their own small and inconspicuous organ, and from that time forward fall a victim to envy for the penis...Here what has been named the masculinity complex of women branches off. It may put great difficulties in the way of their regular development towards femininity, if it cannot be got over soon enough...a girl may refuse to accept the fact of being castrated, may harden herself in the conviction that she *does* possess a penis, and may subsequently be compelled to behave as though she were a man...After a woman has become aware of the wound to her narcissism, she develops, like a scar, a sense of inferiority. When she has passed beyond her first attempt at explaining her lack of a penis as being a punishment personal to herself and has realized that that sexual character is a universal one, she begins to share the contempt felt by men for a sex which is the lesser in so important a respect, and, at least in holding that opinion, insists on being like a man...

A third consequence of penis-envy seems to be loosening of the girl's relation with her mother as a love-object. The situation as a whole is not clear, but it can be seen that in the end the girl's mother, who sent her into the world so insufficiently equipped, is almost always held responsible for her lack of a penis.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Sigmund Freud, "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes," *The Freud Reader*, pp.673-675

As Berry observes, “Freud’s views on this stage reveal a misogynistic attitude – the phallus is seen as all-important, and in fact he seems to regard it as the *only* sexual organ.”⁵¹ However, the fancy portrait that Shaw attaches to Vivie seems to, in an amazing way, justify Freud’s views in question. It seems that Vivie remains fixated in her penis envy and, blaming her mother for such a lack, links herself to the position of phallic, or paternal, authority. Her questioning of her mother evokes, in a sense, the image of the confessional: she is the confessor, and her mother is the sinner.

None the less, Mrs Warren is paradoxically granted by the author the power to deliver a lively tirade to articulate her self-defence, and consequently her confession comes to be a strong critique of the social conditions she is circumscribed by. In the meantime, the real nature of her “profession” comes to light: what she professes is prostitution, the self-selling practised by many women for centuries, which undoubtedly signifies the objectification of the female body for patriarchal pleasures. In Mrs Warren’s case, this objectification is placed within the context of capitalist relations of exchange: what underpins prostitution is the desperate conditions of a society’s poor:

MRS WARREN....Do you think I was brought up like you? able to pick and choose my own way of life? Do you think I did what I did because I liked it, or thought it right, or wouldnt rather have gone to college and been a lady if I’d the chance?⁵²

The irony embedded in Mrs Warren’s phrase “gone to college and been a lady” is quite significant, for in her discourse “a lady” signifies a socially acceptable woman; moreover, it is Mrs Warren that has given Vivie the chance to become what she is. Yet the ungrateful child, who is unaware of the economic realities, defends the rational power of the individual indifferently:

⁵¹ Berry, op. cit., p.51

⁵² Shaw, op. cit., p.208

VIVIE. Everybody has some choice, mother...People are always blaming their circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can't find them, make them.⁵³

Challenged by Vivie's supercilious and self-assertive judgement, Mrs Warren tells a strong story about an impoverished childhood, which is ironically based on an inverted Cinderella motif:

MRS WARREN....D'you know what your gran'mother was?...She called herself a widow and had a fried-fish shop down by the Mint, and kept herself and four daughters out of it. Two of us were sisters: that was me and Liz; and we were both good-looking and well made...The other two were only half sisters: undersized, ugly, starved-looking, hard working, honest poor creatures...They were the respectable ones. Well, what did they get by their respectability? I'll tell you. One of them worked in a whitelead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week until she died of lead poisoning. She only expected to get her hands a little paralyzed; but she died. The other was always held up to us as a model because she married a Government laborer in the Deptford victualing yard, and kept his room and the three children neat and tidy on eighteen shillings a week – until he took to drink. That was worth being respectable for, wasn't it?⁵⁴

What is described here is the dissatisfaction of the mother-heroine with the role models and opportunities that life offers to her. Motivated by her sister – her alter ego – who goes on the streets but returns “in a long fur cloak, elegant and comfortable, with a lot of sovereigns in her purse,”⁵⁵ Mrs Warren goes into the “business”; in other words, she escapes by way of prostitution from the exiguous circumstances of the working class within which the respectable half sisters do not flourish, and women have to choose between living in a respectable poverty or prospering in questionable activities:

⁵³ Ibid., pp.208-209

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.209

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.210

MRS WARREN....Where can a woman get the money to save in any other business? Could you save out of four shillings a week and keep yourself dressed as well?...if you have a turn for music, or the stage, or newspaper writing: thats different. But neither Liz nor I had any turn for such things: all we had was our appearance and our turn for pleasing men. Do you think we were such fools as to let other people trade in our good looks by employing us as shopgirls, or barmaids, or waitresses, when we could trade in them ourselves and get all the profits instead of starvation wages? Not likely.⁵⁶

Here Mrs Warren speaks the language of an enterprise culture, or capitalism, which in effect ties her up with her daughter's discourse. Through this language she reveals the fact that in a materialistic system based on a great discrimination between the dominant culture and subordinate groups, women like her, "will make use of whatever power is left to them: in particular their sexual power to attract men because they are taught, and have learned their lesson well," and "they can only draw power from sexual relationships rather than having any autonomous potency of their own."⁵⁷ It is clear that the only means for Mrs Warren to attain to the bourgeois life and values she yearns for is the objectification of her body, which signifies becoming an object to be utilised, an object "devoid of subjectivity or personhood,"⁵⁸ in short a reductionism on the woman's part. Nevertheless, the audience soon learns that Mrs Warren is not only an object herself but is also a producer of objects, a fact she paradoxically reveals with pride:

MRS WARREN....The house in Brussels was real high class...None of our girls were ever treated as I was treated in the scullery of that temperance place, or at the Waterloo bar, or at home....No: I never was a bit ashamed really. I consider I had a right to be proud of how we managed everything so respectably, and never had a word against us, and how the girls were so well taken care of.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.211

⁵⁷ Robbins, op. cit., p.27

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.10

⁵⁹ Shaw, op. cit., pp.210-213

What Mrs Warren reveals is the fact that her business is just like any other business in the capitalist system, and that in actual fact she and her sister have looked after their girls better than the society they live in; thus she creates in a sense the image of a successful entrepreneurial woman that speaks the language of competitive individualism (which obviously echoes Vivie's discourse of competition) central to the dominant enterprise ethos of the system.

Although the term is never used in the play, it is evident that Mrs Warren is a procuress, the proprietor of a chain of brothels in several cities in Europe, a situation which must have been quite familiar to the audiences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Michael Holroyd's account, prostitution was a much debated-on topic in the newspapers towards the end of the nineteenth century. After the legalisation and institutionalisation of prostitution in some European countries in 1870s, several English girls, the profession being permanently illegal in Britain, were reported to have gone to cities like Brussels or Vienna to work in the brothels of those cities. On the other hand, London was full of clandestine brothels that were run by bribing the police. It was generally held that the underlying cause was the importance attached to the middle class family life with the husband as the master of the house and the wife as the domestic angel who was responsible for bearing/mothering many children and whose sexual pleasure was never the issue; consequently, the husband went to the women of lower classes to satisfy his sexual needs.⁶⁰

In such a context, it appears that it is the materialistic and prudish society that is to blame for the evil, or crime, in question, not Mrs Warren. Therefore, Mrs Warren's profession ultimately becomes, paralleling Marxist theory, a metaphor for the exploitations of that society in which even marriage is a form of self-selling – a legal and respectable form of prostitution:

⁶⁰ Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw: The Search for Love*, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1990, pp.290-291

MRS WARREN....What is any respectable girl brought up to do but to catch some rich man's fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him – as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing! Oh, the hypocrisy of the world makes me sick!⁶¹

To sum up, in a society based solely on the profit motive, in Mrs Warren's words, "The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her"⁶²; in other words, the interactive structure of power and economic dependency inherent in such a system compels women at any level of society to survive by marrying some man who has sufficient material power to raise a family.⁶³ At this point, one can also detect an allusion to the views presented by Mary Wollstonecraft, who achieved fame as a feminist author in 1792 with the publication of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; Wollstonecraft protests in her *Rights of Woman* that for many young women finding a wealthy husband is the sole purpose of their existence: "To this object their time is sacrificed, and their persons often legally prostituted."⁶⁴

As a matter of fact, Mrs Warren is placed "in the privileged position of marginality"⁶⁵: her marginal position – outside marriage, outside the home – gives her a critical distance that shapes her understanding of the injustice of the society in question. Yet, as one reads it between the lines, she is paradoxically rendered quite ambitious to fit in with this society through maternity as well as material values; she speaks from the position of conventional maternity when she reveals her ideals concerning her daughter's future: she wishes Vivie to marry a wealthy man. When she learns that Frank will bring no money with him if he marries Vivie, she curtly objects to this prospect:

⁶¹ Shaw, op. cit., p.211

⁶² Ibid., pp.212-213

⁶³ See Chothia, op. cit., p.44

⁶⁴ Quoted by Jane Moore, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, Plymouth, Northcote House Publishers Ltd., 1999, p.2

⁶⁵ Gallop, op. cit., p.114

MRS WARREN....Your love's a pretty cheap commodity, my lad. If you have no means of keeping a wife, that settles it: you cant have Vivie.⁶⁶

And when she learns that Crofts, with whom she is apparently in a symbiotic relationship as he is her chief shareholder, wants to marry Vivie, she revolts at such a prospect, knowing what a reprobate he is; thus she clearly reflects her wish to keep her daughter outside her questionable world:

MRS WARREN. I'd put you out and pack you back to London pretty soon if I saw any of your nonsense. My girl's little finger is more to me than your whole body and soul.⁶⁷

Moreover, she attempts to impose her ideals on her unbending daughter:

VIVIE [*quite unmoved*]...Do you expect that we shall be much together? You and I, I mean?

MRS WARREN [*staring at her*] Of course: until youre married. Youre not going back to college again.⁶⁸

It is not difficult at this point to discern that Mrs Warren desires to achieve her self-fulfilment and gain recognition through her child. To put it another way, reproduction, which is a bodily function and essentially considered the mother's domain, comes to signify on Mrs Warren's part the production of a new way of life – the possibility of living life anew with Vivie; within such a context, the name Vivie connotes “a new life”. The implication is reinforced when Mrs Warren draws an analogy between her sister, Liz, who “is living down at Winchester now, close to the cathedral, one of the most respectable ladies there,”⁶⁹ and Vivie:

⁶⁶ Shaw, op. cit., p.198

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.202

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.205

⁶⁹ Ibid., p.210

MRS WARREN....Liz was such a perfect lady! She had the true instinct of it, while I was always a bit of a vulgarian. I used to be so pleased when you sent me your photos to see that you were growing up like Liz: youve just her ladylike, determined way.⁷⁰

Obviously, Mrs Warren cherishes the illusion that she can recapture the innocence and respectability of the past (like her sister) through a supposedly ladylike and determined daughter whom she certainly sees as her own creation; besides, as it is understood further on within the play, she has no intention whatsoever to change and give up her unmentionable but profitable job. Nevertheless, Vivie, believing that the situation described by her mother to be over (for Mrs Warren uses mostly past tense when presenting her case), becomes through an about-face overcome with an idealistic admiration of her mother's courage, which she conveys with an unexpectedly sentimental and hyperbolic allusion:

VIVIE [*fascinated, gazing at her*] My dear mother: you are a wonderful woman: you are stronger than all England.⁷¹

It is apparent that here Vivie sees as rebellion an action or a choice of lifestyle that is in reality and basically an acquiescence and a defeat. And at this stage, she thinks she has reached the truth concerning the economic realities; for the moment, the pragmatic wisdom ascribed to Mrs Warren as well as the honesty with which her case has been presented seem to alter the mother/daughter relationship from unyielding opposition into a mutual affection leading Vivie to speak in defence of her mother against the insults of the male characters:

VIVIE....Please treat my mother with as much respect as you treat your own.

FRANK. My dear Viv: she wouldnt appreciate it: the two cases require different treatment....It's no use, Viv: your mother's impossible...

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.213

⁷¹ Ibid.

VIVIE....Is she to be deserted by all the world because she's what you call a bad lot?
Has she no right to live?⁷²

Vivie's words "she's what you call a bad lot" denote that she has in effect adopted Frank's – the male's – language. Yet when Crofts, whom she deflates by refusing his offer of marriage – the status of being a rich Lady Crofts – reveals the fact that Mrs Warren continues to manage a chain of continental brothels (euphemistically mentioned as "public houses"), she actually tries to defend her mother:

VIVIE. My mother was a very poor woman who had no reasonable choice but to do as she did. You were a rich gentleman; and you did the same for the sake of 35 per cent. You are a pretty common sort of scoundrel, I think.⁷³

Robert F. Whitman, pointing out that the truth Vivie appears to have reached is undoubtedly a half-truth, claims that "What Vivie does not see is that in the process of beating the system at its own game Mrs Warren has herself become the personification of the capitalist, exploiting both the desperation of poverty and the conflict between sexuality and social mores, thereby having a vested interest in perpetuating the idealisms of Victorian prudery."⁷⁴ Quite significantly, Whitman makes no mention of male prostitution that underlies female prostitution, an approach revealing in a way the fact that in *Mrs Warren's Profession* the emphasis is on female prostitution rather than male prostitution.

It is true that the understanding Vivie gains is not complete, for in actuality she never understands her mother or "the girls": the author does not make her realise the fact that prostitution is not in effect worse than the exploitation inherent in the industrial world, the imperialist world or the capitalist world, and what the prostitute exploits is after all her own body and the appetites of her customers. Therefore, Vivie's final enlightenment is again in essence self-centred: when Crofts, becoming a representational type, tells her that her Cambridge education was paid for with

⁷² Ibid., Act III, pp.219-221

⁷³ Ibid., p.226

⁷⁴ Robert F. Whitman, *Shaw and the Play of Ideas*, London, Cornell University Press, 1977, p.194

money from their organisation of prostitution, and that in their society “all the rest are pocketing what they can, like sensible men,”⁷⁵ she indulges in a remorseful self-absorption:

VIVIE [*conscience stricken*] You might go on to point out that I myself never asked where the money I spent came from. I believe I am just as bad as you....I feel among the damned already.⁷⁶

The nearest she comes to outright criticism of the oppression that the rotten societal structure exerts on “the girls” is in a resentful comment she makes towards the end of the third act:

VIVIE....When I think of the society that tolerates you, and the laws that protect you! when I think of how helpless nine out of ten young girls would be in the hands of you and my mother! The unmentionable woman and her capitalist bully.⁷⁷

Vivie’s comprehension of the vices of the capitalist system, which evokes the Marxist notion that capitalism is prostitution on both public and private planes, is not followed by any form of subversion. Her principal reaction is a revulsion against the social milieu that her mother and her set represent, a revulsion that appears to be fortified by the shadowy motif of incest introduced into the play at the end of the third act: Crofts, resolute in his machismo, tells Vivie and Frank in a fit of pique that they are half-brother and sister. The reaction of the two young people is shock and bewilderment, which is conveyed through a rather melodramatic scene imbued with Freudian connotations:

FRANK [*after a pause of stupefaction, raising the rifle*] Youll testify before the coroner that it’s an accident, Viv. [*He takes aim at the retreating figure of Crofts. Vivie seizes the muzzle and pulls it round against her breast*].

⁷⁵ Shaw, loc. cit.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp.226-227

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.227

VIVIE. Fire now. You may.

FRANK [*dropping his end of the rifle hastily*] Stop! Take care. [*She lets it go. It falls on the turf*]. Oh, you've given your little boy such a turn. Suppose it had gone off! ugh! [*He sinks on the garden seat, overcome*].

VIVIE. Suppose it had: do you think it would not have been a relief to have some sharp physical pain tearing through me?⁷⁸

Whilst Frank is made to feel obliged to assume the role of a protective and avenging patriarch, which is recognisably the stereotypical attitude of the chivalric male, Vivie is apparently connected with the supposed masochism of femininity in terms of morality and sacrifice. Yet her usurpation of the rifle, the repressed sexual urges aside, might very well be deemed, as the imagery attributed to her throughout the play testifies, to be symbolic of her mimetic relationship with the male world. The fact that in the following act, which is the last act of the play, with an unexpected twist of the plot, both Vivie and Frank are presented as freed from the scruple of consanguinity and contemptuous of the incest taboo seems to justify this interpretation. David J. Gordon argues that the evaluation of the motif of incest in the play is indicative of indecisiveness and fudging on Shaw's part on the ground that he does not render the theme the due elucidation.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the final stage in the development of Vivie's character bears a strong implication of an attempt on her part to usurp the male power.

The final stage mentioned above comprises Vivie's rejection of all kinds of temptations (ironically evoking the biblical story of the temptation of Christ). In the last act the audience discovers her in her City office indulged in her work and smoking cigarettes. In the course of the act she is visited by Frank, Praed and her mother. Frank, who comes in carrying a stick (the urbanised counterpart of his rifle), tells her that his father denies Crofts's allegation and offers her "love's young

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.228

⁷⁹ David J. Gordon, **Bernard Shaw and the Comic Sublime**, Houndmills, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1990, p.87

dream”⁸⁰; Praed tries to persuade her to travel in Europe “to saturate [herself] with beauty and romance.”⁸¹ But Vivie’s response to them is in the form of repudiation:

VIVIE....There are two subjects I want dropped, if you dont mind. One of them [*to Frank*] is love’s young dream in any shape or form: the other [*to Praed*] is the romance and beauty of life...If we three are to remain friends, I must be treated as a woman of business, permanently single [*to Frank*] and permanently unromantic [*to Praed*].⁸²

Vivie’s last visitor is her mother, who, “*sly and urgent, half whispering*,”⁸³ offers her a moneyed life:

MRS WARREN....It means a new dress every day; it means theatres and balls every night; it means having the pick of all the gentlemen in Europe at your feet; it means a lovely house and plenty of servants; it means the choicest of eating and drinking; it means everything you like, everything you want, everything you can think of.⁸⁴

And apparently Mrs Warren does not intend to renounce her career even for her daughter, her grounds being her predilection as well as social imposition:

MRS WARREN....I must have work and excitement, or I should go melancholy mad. And what else is there for me to do? The life suits me: I’m fit for it and not for anything else. If I didnt do it somebody else would; so I dont do any real harm by it. And then it brings in money. No: it’s no use: I cant give it up – not for anybody.⁸⁵

As for Vivie, she seems ready to move beyond complicity with an immoral and hypocritical society by rejecting her mother; but quite significantly her discourse

⁸⁰ Shaw, op. cit., Act IV, p.232

⁸¹ Ibid., p.234

⁸² Ibid., p.235

⁸³ Ibid., p.242

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp.244-245

of power intersects with her mother's, which creates a subtextual similarity between the two female characters:

VIVIE....I am like you: I must have work, and must make more money than I spend.

But my work is not your work, and my way not your way. We must part. It will not make much difference to us: instead of meeting one another for perhaps a few months in twenty years, we shall never meet: thats all.⁸⁶

Vivie fundamentally accuses her mother of having "lived one life and believed in another."⁸⁷ Indeed, Mrs Warren, as Gainor points out, "wants Vivie to be her opposite: educated and socially acceptable, but still espousing her traditional Victorian values of womanliness and marriage."⁸⁸ It is significant that though Mrs Warren defines the institution of marriage as the legal form of prostitution, she wants Vivie to get married. Vivie seems exempted from such hypocrisy, and in this context the two women are certainly differentiated. Yet, as Gainor aptly argues, "Shaw scatters throughout the play some resemblances between the women and their work that prove haunting in the aftermath of reading or performance."⁸⁹ Indeed, there are several resemblances between Mrs Warren and her daughter. One of the most conspicuous resemblances is that at the top of act I, Vivie explains to Praed that for relaxation "I like a comfortable chair, a cigar, a little whisky, and a novel with a good detective story in it " (quoted above); and at the opening of act II, after an invigorating stroll with Frank in the evening air, Mrs Warren exclaims, "I could do with a whisky and soda now very well,"⁹⁰ although she has no inkling that Vivie shares her taste for strong spirits. Shaw conveys no value judgement in connection with the women's predilection. But it is interesting that he should generate such an association between the two women. Again, both women are made to operate within the patriarchal structure.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.245

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.246

⁸⁸ Gainor, op. cit., p.36

⁸⁹ Ibid.,p.38

⁹⁰ Shaw op. cit., p.194

⁹¹ See Gainor, loc. cit.

Significantly, such similarities are subtextually rendered inherent to these women's natures, since there has been virtually no contact between them during Vivie's life to date⁹²; these subtle connections create a significant analogy between the mother and the daughter.

Again, the paradoxical recognition remains that Mrs Warren is the product and a participant of the system criticised in the play, and Vivie is the product of her mother's career (she equally participates in that system by turning herself into a parody of a male); she is, in Chothia's words, "only who and how she is because her mother made money."⁹³ She renounces her mother's money, which she undoubtedly considers tainted, but retains the power to earn money, which has been provided by her mother. In short, though apparently one is associated with experience and the other with innocence, both women in effect cling to the male values inherent in the entrepreneurial system. To put it another way, Mrs Warren is made to sell herself, and Vivie is made to sell her female self in order to survive in that male world on equal terms with men.

Chothia also suggests that "It was crucial to Shaw's challenge to the audience that there is no catharsis; the bad are not punished in any material way, and the good are inevitably compromised."⁹⁴ Indeed, Mrs Warren is not at the end given the penalty of death like the golden-hearted prostitutes of the Courtesan Play, as Martin Meisel observes, "a genre lastingly defined by *La Dame aux Camélias* (1852) of Alexander Dumas fils."⁹⁵ Mrs Warren seems to be an anti-type of Marguerite Gautier, the penitent whore of *La Dame aux Camélias*, who denies her own desire – eradicates her self – and dies as a "noble girl."⁹⁶ Without doubt for the sake of realism and rationalism, Mrs Warren is granted the right to become a representational type to defend herself and her kind:

⁹² See *ibid.*, p.39

⁹³ Chothia, *op. cit.*, p.45

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Martin Meisel, *Shaw and the Nineteenth Century Theater*, Westport, Greenwood Press Publishers, 1976, p.141

⁹⁶ See Lesley Herris, *Acting Women: Images of Women in Theatre*, Houndmills, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1992, p.92

MRS WARREN....The big people, the clever people, the managing people...do as I do, and think what I think...I don' mean anything wrong: thats what you dont understand: you head is full of ignorant ideas about me. What do the people that taught you know about life or about people like me? When did they ever meet me, or speak to me, or let anyone tell them about me? The fools!⁹⁷

None the less, Mrs Warren is doomed by the authorial fantasy to an everlasting and self-conscious objectification:

MRS WARREN....From this time forth, so help me Heaven in my last hour, I'll do wrong and nothing but wrong. And I'll prosper on it.⁹⁸

And ironically reminiscent of Nora Helmer, the heroine of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, "*Mrs Warren goes out, slamming the door behind her,*"⁹⁹ exclaiming "Lord help the world if everybody took to doing the right thing!"¹⁰⁰ Though her exclamation reflects a seasoned sense of reality, she is ultimately rejected by her only child, who in effect never learns a retrospective generosity: Vivie excludes her mother from her life, and that is undoubtedly a retribution for Mrs Warren.

In this context, the positions of the two women intersect again: Vivie is described at the end of the play as relieved upon her mother's departure ("*The strain on Vivie's face relaxes; her grave expression breaks up into one of joyous content.*"¹⁰¹) and immersing herself in her work; nevertheless, her rejection of all possible romance – not only romance with Frank, in other words, her movement from a specific to a general repudiation seems rather significant. In a sense, she is given the chance to enter the public sphere, but ultimately it is achieved at the expense of womanhood; subtextually any prospect of an authentic femaleness is stifled within her persona.

⁹⁷ Shaw, op. cit., p.246

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.246

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.247

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

In the final analysis, Vivie is left in an ambiguous state, seemingly troubled both sexually and emotionally. And quite significantly, both women, the phallic mother and the phallic daughter, are ultimately left outside the home, reflecting a covert discontent with the perceived message of women's emancipation that poses a threat to the English domestic sphere.

Now, it is true that one finds in *Mrs Warren's Profession* a frank treatment of the issue of prostitution and a strong critique of the exploitation of the working class by the possessors of the means of production. Yet one wonders: why does the author link Mrs Warren with the *wrong* so emphatically, the irony notwithstanding? Why does he caricature a career girl? And why does he make her judge her mother and treat her so harshly? Robbins observes that:

Men fear becoming women, becoming feminised. And by extension, they perhaps also fear women becoming men.¹⁰²

It would perhaps be apt to quote here John Ervine's comment, which clearly reflects the traditional notion of femininity: "Vivie ... would, in life, be remarkably unattractive to the mass of men: a woman almost certain to live in perpetual virginity."¹⁰³

Consequently, one finds lying at the core of the play's social criticism a submerged metaphor of a male containment as a reflection of the deeply-rooted belief systems of patriarchy.

¹⁰² Robbins, op. cit., p.4

¹⁰³ John Ervine, *Bernard Shaw: His Life, Work and Friends*, New York, William Morrow & Company, 1956, p.255

II

MAN AND SUPERMAN

“APOLLO: ... Mark the truth of what I say.

The mother is not the true parent of the child
Which is called hers. She is a nurse who tends the growth
Of young seed planted by its true parent, the male.
So, if Fate spares the child, she keeps it, as one might
Keep for some friend a growing plant. And of this truth,
That father without mother may beget, we have
Present, as proof, the daughter of Olympian Zeus:
One never nursed in the dark cradle of the womb;
Yet such a being no god will beget again.”

Aeschylus, “The Euminides,” 466 B.C.¹

“The union of Ann and Tanner is hopeful because it will presumably produce offspring who will combine their opposing qualities; who will combine, that is to say, Tanner’s intellect with Ann’s instinctive practical force ... Shaw’s Superman would be a synthesis of matter and mind ... in the descendants of Tanner and Ann her power could be the instrument of his intelligence. The highly developed man must lower himself to unite with the primitive and earthly so that progress can be made beyond this level.”

J. L. Wisenthal, “Symbolic Marriage,” 1974²

¹ **The Oresteian Trilogy**, Trans. by. Philip Vellacot, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1959, pp.169-170

² J. L. Wisenthal, “Symbolic Marriage,” **Bernard Shaw: *Man and Superman* and *Saint Joan***, pp.92-93

These quotations are just two examples of the myriad manifestations in literature of centuries-old assumptions regarding the notion of female/male productivity/creativity in the social world of humankind, motherhood being the sole domain of productivity/creativity allowed to the female. Through the mythical discourse such assumptions reach across the centuries to determine the representation of the axis of the female life-cycle in the contemporary domain of literature. One cannot discern a literally great difference between Apollo's verdict concerning Clytaemnestra (who justifies her murder of her husband, Agmmemnon, by his murder of her daughter, Iphigenia, and is in turn killed by her son, Orestes) besides his praise of the androgyneous goddess Athena (who is born from Zeus's head and sides with the male sphere confirming its primacy), and Wisenthal's interpretation of the female/male relationship displayed in Shaw's *Man and Superman*, which seems to capture Shaw's association of the female with nature/earth/matter. Apparently, throughout the centuries, there has not been much change in terms of female Otherness in the social structure of humankind.

In *Man and Superman* (1903) Shaw presents his own dramatic version – his fantasy – of the significance of the female's reproductive function and the underlying nature of a passionate attraction between the two sexes. He elaborates this fantasy through an overt allusion to the popular Don Juan story – the story of the irresistible, much sought-after libertine, the legendary Spanish lady-killer of the late Middle Ages. Ostensibly reversing the roles of the female and the male in mating, Shaw displays the amorous relationships between the sexes as a chase of the male by the female, which must have seemed quite subversive to the conservative spectators and readers of the early years of the twentieth century. C. B. Purdom states that "In 1903, when the play was published, people found the idea shocking, for it wasn't nice to say that the initiative in sex was with the woman."³ And Gainor mentions the "lingering Victorian conventions that preclude the admission of female sexual desire

³ C. B. Purdom, *A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw*, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963, p.196

or any active role in the process of mating,”⁴ highlighting the fact that the play’s 1903 publication had not quite left the Victorian consciousness and attitudes towards women behind.

Again, Eric Bentley states that “The most unusual feature of the play viewed as a Victorian farce is ... a Shavian inversion. The woman courts the man.”⁵ Could such an inversion be considered a subversive approach? Bentley, after stressing Shaw’s keenness on the use of irony, continues:

But one learns also to expect that the primary simple inversion in a Shavian play is only the beginning of the irony. By giving an active sexual role to a woman Shaw not only shocks the Victorians, he implements his own anthropological myth. More important, he broadens the whole basis of relations between the sexes as shown on the stage. ‘The natural attraction of the sexes’ he presents as a physical, biological fact. Which is low and shocking. But the second irony is that this ‘lowness’ is interpreted – and incontrovertibly – as ‘higher’ than the conventional view, for what Ann Whitefield wants is not sexual pleasure but motherhood.⁶

Would such an interpretation suffice for perceiving this play as a text which explicitly or implicitly aims at searching for the ways of female authenticity and autonomy?

In the first place, the notions of highness and lowness, the extolment of woman’s virginity, maternity and subservience as opposed to the condemnation of the wilful or aggressive or “fallen” woman, are undoubtedly two forms of rendering women’s status marginal or peripheral, which means excluding women from the continuous flux of culture in social life. The degree and effectiveness of patriarchal control over women seem to have varied from one historical moment to another; and the Victorian era is known as a period during which women were most

⁴ Gainor, *op. cit.*, p.247 n.

⁵ Eric Bentley, *Bernard Shaw*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1967, p. 106

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.106-107

enthusiastically idealised and most thoroughly subordinated.⁷ Tong points out that “[The] belief about women’s moral purity is exactly what Victorian men used to keep women on high pedestals away from the world of politics and economics”⁸; hence the confinement of women to the domestic sphere and personal relationships. It is a fact that in the patriarchal tradition of narration, when women are the central focus, as Rosalind Coward observes, “the only space where knowledge and understanding for women is produced is,” as a general rule, “across love and marriage.”⁹

The portrayal of the female characters in *Man and Superman* is very much in line with the dualistic normative system mentioned above. This is particularly the case in the portrayal of the main female character, Ann Whitefield. Right from the start, Ann is placed within the normative system in question, which is articulated by the male characters forming her social milieu. Actually, she is placed within a metaphorical dialectic of idealisation and condemnation of the male language.

At the opening of the play, the audience is introduced to two male characters, namely Roebuck Ramsden, an elderly businessman, and Octavius Robinson, a young man of poetic/romantic temperament. Ramsden and Octavius talk about the death of the late Mr Whitefield, and the audience learns that Mr Whitefield was Ramsden’s friend and has left two daughters, Ann and Rhoda (she does not appear in the play), and that Octavius and his sister Violet are his adopted children. In accordance with the entrenched patriarchal assumption that women – specifically young women – should not be left on their own and should be guarded by men, Ramsden believes that he is to be made trustee and guardian of Ann and her sister: “I have no more doubt than I have that you’re sitting there that the will appoints me Annie’s trustee and guardian.”¹⁰ And in his opinion, Ann is the embodiment of innocence and filial subservience:

⁷ See “Introduction,” *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and Politics of Literary Criticism*, Ed. by Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, Houndmills, The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989, p.3

⁸ Tong, op. cit., p.137

⁹ Rosalind Coward, “Are Women’s Novels Feminist Novels?” *The New Feminist Criticism*, p. 234

¹⁰ Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1981, Act I, p.46

RAMSDEN: ... What does she know about the real value of men at her age? [*More seriously*] Besides, she is a wonderfully dutiful girl. Her father's wish would be sacred to her. Do you know that since she grew up to years of discretion, I don't believe she has ever once given her own wish as a reason for doing anything or not doing it. It's always 'Father wishes me to,' or 'Mother wouldn't like it.' It's really almost a fault in her. I have often told her she must learn to think for herself.¹¹

Ann is even "mad about her duty to her parents,"¹² and ultimately "She is only a woman,"¹³ according to Ramsden. According to the desperately smitten Octavius, on the other hand, Ann is an idol, his "highest happiness"¹⁴; and he expects to marry her. However, with the entry of John Tanner, the main male character, the nature of the imagery concerning Ann is totally altered. Tanner enters in a state of panic and announces that Ann's father has appointed him, with Ramsden, joint guardian of Ann, a situation which is paradoxically his own doing:

TANNER: ... [Mr Whitefield] told me one day that you were to be Ann's guardian; and like a fool I began arguing with him about the folly of leaving a young woman under the control of an old man with obsolete ideas.

RAMSDEN [*stupended*]: My ideas obsolete!!!!!!

TANNER: Totally. I had just finished an essay called Down with Government by the Greyhaired; and I was full of arguments and illustrations. I said the proper thing was to combine the experience of an old hand with the vitality of a young one. Hang me if he didn't take me at my word and alter his will ... appointing me as joint guardian with you!¹⁵

Both Ramsden and Tanner are horrified at being thus linked together: Ramsden does not want Tanner, who as Octavius's schoolfriend has been in and out of Whitefields' house, to come into contact with the two young women anymore on the grounds that

¹¹ Ibid., p.44

¹² Ibid., p.46

¹³ Ibid., p.51

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.49

Tanner is the author of “the most infamous, the most scandalous, the most mischievous, the most blackguardly book that ever escaped burning at the hands of the common hangman.”¹⁶ The irony of this is that Ramsden claims that “I have stood for equality and liberty of conscience ... Whitefield and I lost chance after chance through our advanced opinions,”¹⁷ and still considers himself to have advanced opinions, but announces that “I draw the line at Anarchism and Free Love and that sort of thing.”¹⁸ As for Tanner, he is annoyed at having any sort of responsibility for Ann as he believes that “I cant control her,”¹⁹ for “She has plenty of money and no conscience.”²⁰ He supposedly has a much more realistic idea of Ann than the romantic Octavius and the once-progressive Ramsden, which he conveys through a hyperbolic discourse:

TANNER: ... Ramsden: get me out of it somehow. You dont know Ann as well as I do. She'll commit every crime a respectable woman can; and she'll justify every one of them by saying that it was the wish of her guardians. She'll put everything on us; and we shall have no more control over her than a couple of mice over a cat.... Ive been refusing all the way from Richmond; but Ann keeps on saying that of course she's only an orphan; and that she cant expect the people who were glad to come to the house in her father's time to trouble much about her now. Thats the latest game. An orphan! It's like hearing an ironclad talk about being at the mercy of the wind and waves.²¹

Thus initially, Tanner's hyperbolic discourse – in particular the metaphors “cat” and “ironclad” – and Octavius's remarks, such as “[Tanner] is so desperately afraid of Ann,”²² might suggest that further on within the play the audiences will be presented with an image of a strong and wilful woman who will challenge the *dominant*; however, the actuality of the dialogue pattern belies this impression. Again, in a stage instruction, Shaw states that Ann wears a black and violet costume

¹⁶ Ibid., p.45

¹⁷ Ibid., p.46

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.49

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., pp.48-49

²² Ibid., p.47

apparently with the aim that the colour violet, being one of the colours that symbolised the movement of women's rights at the end of the nineteenth century, would evoke the idea of emancipation on Ann's part, but the play itself proves it to be an intentional fallacy, or rather a significant irony.²³ For it becomes apparent as one reads between the lines that Ann is fundamentally placed within the context of a *duel of the sexes* and, like the other female characters of the play, is confined to the private – the domestic – sphere; and she is merely a genius in finding her own way of fitting in with a repressive patriarchal society.

Actually, what is foregrounded on the part of Ann in the cosmos of the play is cunning and slyness, that is, hypocrisy. As soon as she appears on the stage, she creates the image of a cunning young woman who has the ability to get her ways with her elders. Her self-definition as "I am too young, too inexperienced to decide,"²⁴ which echoes Ramsden's previous definition of her as "a young and inexperienced woman,"²⁵ and her witty answers to Tanner, such as "I am sure you would never purposely force me into a painful dilemma, Jack,"²⁶ reflect her strategy for survival and signify that she will strive to get what she wants through a diplomacy directed at manipulating those men's weak points – Ramsden's expectance of dutifulness and Tanner's alleged valuing of conscience – which obviously means she will struggle to gain male approval and validation.

Ann's first step is persuading Tanner to be her joint guardian with Ramsden, which she accomplishes (in fact, both men feel obliged to acquiesce in this paternal responsibility as they cannot evade it without upsetting the will²⁷). Thus she agrees to live under the moral supervision of two male advisors – father surrogates – by announcing "I do not think any young unmarried woman should be left quite to her own guidance."²⁸ And the seriousness with which the two men take their responsibility for Ann's position in terms of morality, thinking that they have the

²³ Ibid., p.54

²⁴ Ibid.,p.58

²⁵ Ibid.,p.51

²⁶ Ibid.,p.57

²⁷ See Purdom, op. cit., p.197

²⁸ Ibid., p.56

power to educate her, is rather ironical: Ramsden attempts to forbid her to read Tanner's book,²⁹ whilst Tanner claims that "I am your guardian; and it is my duty to improve your mind,"³⁰ and "Your father's will appointed me your guardian ... I shall be faithful to my trust."³¹ It is ironical, for Ann impresses the audience as a fully formed young woman, who makes only a pretence of taking her elders' advice. It is understood from her revelation to Tanner in the final act, "[My father] asked me who I would have as my guardian before he made that will. I chose you!"³² that from the outset she has been determined to have Tanner ultimately as a mate.

None the less, it is obvious that Ann's seemingly independent and determined state of mind does not go beyond the bounds of traditional femininity; for she is substantially circumscribed by the traditionally feminine concerns: as it becomes apparent in the course of the play, the only activity granted to her is the covert pursuit of the loved man. Therefore, she is essentially a conventional female figure, a reflection of woman's movement from the father to the husband – from one patriarch to another.

On the other hand, Tanner, the antagonist in this duel of the sexes, and Octavius are placed within the context of patriarchal authorship. When the two men are left alone for a while, they adopt the discourse of male creativity subtly rendering the *pen* the proof of male potency:

TANNER: Tavy: do you want to count for something in the world?

OCTAVIUS: I want to count for something as a poet: I want to write a great play.

TANNER: With Ann as the heroine?

OCTAVIUS: Yes: I confess it.³³

²⁹ Ibid., p.57

³⁰ Ibid., p.75

³¹ Ibid., Act IV, p.205

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., Act I, p.60

Apparently, Octavius idolises Ann as a muse as Dante did Beatrice,³⁴ envisaging himself as a creator and Ann – the female – as his creation. This situation evokes Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's observations with respect to the traditions of Western literary culture:

Like the metaphor of literary paternity ... [there is a] corollary notion that the chief creature man has generated is woman.... From Eve, Minerva, Sophia, and Galatea onward ... patriarchal mythology defines women as created by, from, and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity.³⁵

And Gubar, quoting from Jacques Derrida, who in his critique of what he calls phallocentrism describes the literary process in terms of the identification of the pen with the penis, the hymen with the page, argues that:

This model of the pen-penis writing on the virgin page participates in a long tradition identifying the author as a male who is primary and the female as his passive creation – a secondary object lacking autonomy, endowed with often contradictory meaning but denied intentionality. Clearly this tradition excludes woman from the creation of culture even as it reifies her as an artefact within culture.³⁶

Although Tanner's supposedly realistic cast of mind contrasts with Octavius's romantic cast of mind, his discourse of female/male creativity perpetuates the underlying polarisation of the sexes: when he talks about the position of the artist (necessarily male) in society and the function of woman in the world, he centres his ideas upon the separation of artistic and maternal functions:

TANNER: Tavy: thats the devilish side of a woman's fascination. She makes you will your own destruction.

OCTAVIUS: But it's not destruction: it's fulfilment.

³⁴ Ibid., Act II, p.91

³⁵ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1979, p.12

³⁶ Susan Gubar, "The Blank Page and the Issues of Female Creativity," *The New Feminist Criticism*, p.295

TANNER: Yes, of her purpose; and that purpose is neither her happiness nor yours, but Nature's. Vitality in a woman is a blind fury of creation. She sacrifices herself to it: do you think she will hesitate to sacrifice you?.... do they allow us any purpose or freedom of our own? Will they lend us to one another?...

OCTAVIUS: What matter, if the slavery makes us happy?

TANNER: No matter at all if you have no purpose of your own, and are, like most men, a mere breadwinner. But you, Tavy, are an artist: that is, you have a purpose as absorbing and as unscrupulous as a woman's purpose.... mark you, Tavy, the artist's work is to shew ourselves as we really are. Our minds are nothing but this knowledge of ourselves; and he who adds a jot to such knowledge creates new mind as surely as any woman creates new men.... Of all human struggles there is none so treacherous and remorseless as the struggle between the artist man and the mother woman.³⁷

What is most noteworthy in the characterisation of Tanner besides his associating the female with flesh/nature and rendering sexual desire impersonal (a theme that will be discussed further on within the text) is his power of delivering lively tirades; as G. E. Brown observes, "It is as though Tanner can be triggered off into a ... flow of ideas on almost any subject,"³⁸ whereas Ann is made to remain reticent and express her desires through oblique utterances – she remains speechless, metaphorically speaking. By virtue of the female's integration into the male-dominated societal structures, speaking her mind might signify a demand for the seizure or the overthrow of masculine power: woman's desires are reduced to silence in terms of a culture that does not allow them to be expressed; the dominant male language is so powerful that women do not dare to speak as woman outside the context of nonintegration.³⁹

Thus Ann remains reticent regarding her real intentions almost until the end of the play, and her reticence, reflected as discretion, together with the disguise of timidity, signifies her way of avoiding conflict and complication, that is, her way of

³⁷ Shaw, *op. cit.*, Act I, pp.60-62

³⁸ G. E. Brown, *George Bernard Shaw*, London, Evans Brothers Ltd., 1970, p.46

³⁹ See Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, Ed. by. Margaret Whitford, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995, pp.137-138

conforming to a world which does not allow her to speak her mind: "All timid women are conventional: we must be conventional, Jack, or we are so cruelly, so vilely misunderstood."⁴⁰

In this respect, Ann's position is an archetypal example of "a diametrical opposition of men and women,"⁴¹ specifically in regard to Tanner's, who seems to be endowed with frankness and outspokenness (in effect he is an extremely talkative proselytiser, a fact connecting him with Satan in terms of the logos of temptation). Through Tanner, male language labels Ann as a "hypocrite," but does not question the underlying causes either explicitly or implicitly as apparently it would be self-defeating.

Irigaray points out that women have always been reputed to "lie" and "deceive."⁴² As the motif of the *lie* is reiterated throughout the text, *hypocrisy* becomes a *leitmotif* in the play. "[Hypocrisy] is, of course," Morgan points out, "the vice traditionally associated with English society,"⁴³ and it is one of the main themes of Shaw's drama in the context of middle class morality, but in *Man and Superman* it is specifically attributed to female characters. Ann is the only female character explicitly defined as a hypocrite, but Violet, Miss Ramsden and Mrs Whitefield are made to exhibit hypocritical manners as well.

The story of Violet's hypocrisy forms the second strand – the sub-plot – to the main plot of the play. While the main characters – Ann, Tanner, Octavius, Ramsden and Mrs Whitefield – talk about Mr Whitefield's will, a scandal threatens to emerge concerning Violet. By a series of misunderstandings these characters are led to believe that Violet has become pregnant while still unmarried, which is apparently a stereotypical exemplification of histrionic deception. The general reaction is one of anger and despair. It is a situation that is "worse than death"⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Shaw, op. cit., Act II, p.96

⁴¹ Ferris, op. cit., p.114

⁴² Irigaray, op. cit., p.138

⁴³ Morgan, op. cit., p.73

⁴⁴ Shaw, op. cit., Act I, p.64

according to Ramsden, and “wickedness”⁴⁵ according to Miss Ramsden; Octavius “sinks upon a chair, crushed,”⁴⁶ and Mrs Whitefield “[goes] home crying.”⁴⁷

Society, as embodied by this chorus of disapproval, is scandalised by illegitimacy, for Violet becomes a “destructive creature” who “corrupts custom.”⁴⁸ However, Violet appears on the stage as a dignified and self-possessed woman, and puts down everybody by revealing that she has all the time really been married to the man whose child she is about to bear; and when Tanner (whose supposedly revolutionary ideas she abhors) states that “Ramsden as good as accused me of being the unknown gentleman,”⁴⁹ she becomes an advocate of the conventional female morality:

VIOLET: Oh, how infamous! how abominable! how disgracefully you have all been talking about me! If my husband knew it he would never let me speak to any of you again.⁵⁰

Thus the “destructive creature” is “dramatically transfigured into a life-giving female who promotes marriage and female devotion to the male.”⁵¹ Accordingly, Violet expresses a self-righteous sense of revenge: “Miss Ramsden: I have borne your hard words because I knew you would be sorry for them when you found out the truth.”⁵² Her alleged pregnancy remains forgotten after the first act, and it becomes clear in the course of the play that matrimony is on her part the means of gaining financial security. She obstinately keeps her husband’s name a secret (claiming that “I have kept my marriage a secret for my husband’s sake,”⁵³) in order to get the approval of her father-in-law, the Irish-American billionaire Malone (who in fact wishes his son

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.80

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.63

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.81

⁴⁸ See Ferris, op. cit., p.115

⁴⁹ Shaw, op. cit., p.83

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp.83-84

⁵¹ Ferris, loc. cit.

⁵² Shaw, op. cit., p.82

⁵³ Ibid.

to marry a noble English girl to purchase a title), which in the final act she succeeds in doing by using her irresistible feminine persuasiveness:

VIOLET: I am sure you would not be unreasonable with him, Mr. Malone.... My social position is as good as Hector's.... Many of my relations would object very much to my marrying the grandson of a common woman, Mr. Malone. That may be prejudice; but so is your desire to have him marry a title prejudice.... Why do you want to make Hector unhappy?⁵⁴

In addition to such arguments, she tactfully sides with Malone during the quarrel between the father and the son, and thus gains economic security through a "go-getting bitchery."⁵⁵

In short, Shaw creates a counterpoint of the motives underlying Ann's and Violet's hypocritical manners: as Bentley points out, "Ann begins by getting an inheritance and then spends her time landing a man," whereas "Violet begins by landing a man and then spends her time making sure she gets an inheritance too."⁵⁶ To put it another way, Violet has already captured a "bird": when she first appears on the stage, she wears "*a very smart hat with a dead bird in it*,"⁵⁷ foreshadowing Don Juan's metaphor "[Woman] only throws away the bait when the bird is in the net."⁵⁸

And the maiden Miss Ramsden, who is the embodiment of prudery, upon hearing about Violet's pregnancy, humiliates her by keeping her in the housekeeper's room and tries to turn her into an outcast, but in the meantime claims that she has been helpful: "I offered to help her."⁵⁹ Besides, her sarcastic response to her brother, who starts to soften regarding Violet's situation, "Oh, she will get all the sympathy she wants from the men,"⁶⁰ paradoxically evokes a sense of jealousy and, more

⁵⁴ Ibid., Act IV., p.182-184

⁵⁵ Morgan, op. cit., p.73

⁵⁶ Bentley, op. cit., p.106

⁵⁷ Shaw, op. cit., p.81

⁵⁸ Ibid., Act III, p.157

⁵⁹ Ibid., Act I, p.80

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.81

significantly, frustration as all she does is acting as a guardian of male bastions and she sees them being abandoned from within.

As to Ann's mother, Mrs. Whitefield, her hypocrisy seems to stem from the position of marginality and negligibility ascribed to her, which is reflected by Tanner's description of her as "nonentitized."⁶¹ Gainor holds that "No Shavian mother demonstrates the process by which older matriarchs lose force in the world of the plays better than *Man and Superman's* Mrs Whitefield."⁶² Indeed, Mrs. Whitefield's code of behaviour creates the image of a submissive and passive mother, who is consistently dominated by others. However, it is her ready admission of her own conventionality as well as her rejection of parental responsibility that seem in effect to render her an impotent and ineffectual figure; she readily confirms the male's primacy in moral issues:

MRS WHITEFIELD [*hastily*]: Now, Ann, I do beg you not to put it on me. I have no opinion on the subject; and if I had, it would probably not be attended to. I am quite content with whatever you three [Ann, Tanner, and Ramsden] think best.

ANN: Mamma knows that she is not strong enough to bear the whole responsibility for me and Rhoda without some help and advice. Rhoda must have a guardian; and though I am older, I do not think any young unmarried woman should be left quite to her own guidance.... I feel that I am too young, too inexperienced, to decide. My father's wishes are sacred to me.

MRS WHITEFIELD: If you two men wont carry them out I must say it is rather hard that you should put the responsibility on Ann. It seems to me that people are always putting things on other people in this world.⁶³

Apparently, Mrs Whitefield does not want to take any responsibility, any burden, on herself, though she, alluding to Ramsden and Tanner's initial dispute over the issue of guardianship, hypocritically accuses them of refusing to carry their share. Yet it becomes clear further on within the play that this accusation mirrors the profound

⁶¹ Ibid., p.60

⁶² Gainor, op. cit., p.202

⁶³ Shaw, op. cit., pp.56-58

resentment she feels towards Ann, her own daughter, who seems to minimise her mother's parental role whilst putting everything on her. When Mrs Whitefield learns that Ann has told Octavius, "You know that my mother is determined that I shall marry Jack [Tanner],"⁶⁴ she tells Tanner: "Ann puts things into people's heads by telling them I want them when the thought of them never crossed my mind."⁶⁵ And she tells Octavius that:

MRS WHITEFIELD [*thoughtfully*]: Then I'm very sorry for you, Tavy. It's only her way of saying she wants to marry Jack. Little she cares what *I* say or what *I* want!⁶⁶

Again she tells Tanner that:

MRS WHITEFIELD: ... I dont know why it is that other people's children are so nice to me, and that my own have little consideration for me.... what [Octavius] sees in her so wonderful, goodness knows: I dont.⁶⁷

And she agrees heartily with Tanner's view of Ann:

TANNER: ... I can stand everything except her confounded hypocrisy. Thats what beats me.

MRS WHITEFIELD: ... Oh, she is a hypocrite. She is: she is. Isnt she?⁶⁸

Moreover, she slyly tries to persuade Tanner to marry Ann, subtly implying that she would like him to take her revenge, which, according to Tanner, signifies reduction through the fraud of womanly morality:

MRS WHITEFIELD: ... She'd suit you better than Tavy. She'd meet her match in you, Jack. I'd like to see her meet her match.... She's afraid of you. At all events,

⁶⁴ Ibid., Act IV, p.192

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.198

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.197

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 197-198

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.200

you would tell her the truth about herself. She wouldn't be able to slip out of it as she does with me.... I'm glad somebody sees she is not an angel.⁶⁹

TANNER: ... As she has now reduced you to the point of being willing to sacrifice me at the altar for the mere satisfaction of getting me call her a liar to her face, I may conclude that she is a bully as well. She can't bully men as she bullies women; so she habitually and unscrupulously uses her personal fascination to make men give her whatever she wants. That makes her almost something for which I know no polite name.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, she tries to keep up appearances – to maintain the role of a caring, loving, and nurturing angel mother – when Tanner attempts to define the mother/daughter relationship with clear-cut definitions:

TANNER: Aha! ...You detest her...

MRS. WHITEFIELD [*rising, shocked*]: Do you mean that I detest my own daughter! Surely you don't believe me to be so wicked and unnatural as that, merely because I see her faults.

TANNER [*cynically*]: You love her, then?

MRS. WHITEFIELD: Why, of course I do. What queer things you say, Jack! We can't help loving our own blood relations.⁷¹

Siding with the male sphere and thus betraying her own side, Mrs Whitefield projects onto Tanner the conventional duty of keeping her daughter *in her place*. What seems to underlie this picture of mother/daughter relationship is the fact that within a male-dominated world the female is consistently beckoned towards the father's law. Tanner tries to universalise this process by claiming that "The voice of nature proclaims for the daughter a father's care and for the son a mother's,"⁷² which justifies Irigaray's observation that "Within the male symbolic ... the daughter has to

⁶⁹ Angels are male by definition; the usage of the word changes later on (after Christianity has been established once and for all) and the Victorian mind creates the idea of the "angel in the house" which is connotative of Satan – the fallen angel.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.198-199

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 200

⁷² Ibid., Act II, p.97

reject her mother and turn towards her father.”⁷³ Irigaray’s critique of the classical – Freudian – psychoanalysis seems to have a strong relevance to Shaw’s rendering of the mother/daughter relationship within the context of basic female/male relationship:

In the beginning, writes Freud, the little girl is nothing but a little boy; castration, for the girl, amounts to accepting the fact that she does not have a male organ; the girl turns away from her mother, “hates” her, because she observes that her mother doesn’t have the valorizing organ the daughter once thought she had; this rejection of the mother is accompanied by the rejection of all women, herself included, and for the same reason; the girl then turns towards her father to try to get what neither she nor any woman has: the phallus; the desire to have a child, for a woman, signifies the desire to possess at last the equivalent of the penis; the relationship among women is governed either by rivalry for the possession of the “male organ” or, in homosexuality, by identification with the man; the interest that women may take in the affairs of society is dictated of course only by her longing to have powers equal to those of the male sex, and so on. Woman herself is never at issue in these statements: the feminine is defined as the necessary complement to the operation of male sexuality with an unfailingly phallic self-representation.⁷⁴

And Julia Kristeva identifies a daughter’s specific relationship with her mother as a relationship based on an intense love-hate, and she explains the underlying construction as follows:

“Feminine identity” is the “woman effect” and the “maternal function.” The maternal function has to do with the pre-oedipal process.... The pre-oedipal stage is defined by primary, oral, and anal satisfactions, by a lack of differentiation among need, demand, and desire, and by a piecemeal body that is not yet identified as one’s own body because the identity of the ego and the superego already depend on language and the father. The individual’s socialization thus requires that this primitive relationship with the mother be repressed or sublimated. The incest taboo,

⁷³ Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991, p.161

⁷⁴ Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader*, p.119

which is constitutive of the social order as well as the order of language, is in the end a mother taboo for the boy and the girl. Yet the man finds a maternal substitute in his sexual partner, while the woman is forever exiled from this archaic territory because her sexual partner is usually a man. For a heterosexual woman, the mother is the rival, which explains why the love and hatred directed at the mother are so violent.⁷⁵

Again, Irigaray bases the presupposed rivalry between the mother and the daughter on the absence of a maternal genealogy, arguing that one can readily think of examples of the mother/son relationship, enshrined in Christian doctrine and iconography, but there are no linguistic, social, semiotic, structural, cultural, iconic, theoretical, mythical or religious representations of the mother/daughter relationship.⁷⁶ In other words, the mother/daughter relationship is a non-symbolised relationship; cutting off maternal genealogy leaves only one parental figure, the father, and only one genealogy, the paternal one⁷⁷ as a result of which:

Women are forced by the patriarchal contract into becoming rivals. Girls learn to turn away from and even hate their mothers. As the woman is inserted into the male economy she, like men, learns to objectify her mother, take her mother as an object.... this has consequences for women's identity. In so far as a woman identifies with her mother, she is forced to take herself as an object too: she cannot reduce her mother to an object without reducing herself to an object likewise because they are of the same sex.... so long as the symbolic does not distinguish between mother and woman, it is a place which women have to fight over. Every woman then has to take the place of the mother in an aggressive rivalry that allows no possibility of the *with*. In this economy women are forced into substitution and hate for the mother.⁷⁸

Irigaray concludes that women need a language (langage) of their own in order to be able to express themselves in the subject position:

⁷⁵ **Julia Kristeva: Interviews**, Ed. by. Ross Mitchell Guberman, New York, Columbia University Press, 1996, p.110

⁷⁶ See Whitford, **Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine**, p.76

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*, p.181

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.181-182

It is necessary for a symbolism to be created in order for there to be love between them. This love is in any case only possible at the moment between women who can speak to each other. Without that interval of exchange, or of words, or of gestures, passions between women manifest themselves in a ... rather cruel way.⁷⁹

Indeed, the female characters in *Man and Superman* seem to reject each other and remain open solely to the female mode imposed by the male's mastery. As Morgan observes, "The behaviour of all women in the play comes to suggest a composite female image,"⁸⁰ that is, an affectedly tactful female image in line with conventionality. Yet it is Ann's calculation and mendacity that the play as a whole hinges on. Although, due to her playful manner, she is rendered as quite an amiable comic type (in this respect she is contrary to Violet, who seems rather rigid and repellent), Tanner, who is supposed to see her as a human being and not as an idol like Octavius does, perpetually tries to expose her allegedly negative aspects through his preaching, seemingly in order to stave her off and preserve his independence.

However, when viewed with an acute attentiveness, it becomes apparent that in effect Tanner himself is the embodiment of hypocrisy as he fundamentally behaves in accordance with the double standard system of the male sphere. For instance, on the one hand he celebrates Violet's pregnancy by exclaiming "I congratulate you, with the sincerest respect, on having the courage to do what you have done,"⁸¹ on the other, he is shocked whenever Ann acts in an allegedly unconventional way.

Again, when Tanner preaches revolution in the relationship between parents and children, proposing the "supersession of the old and worn-out by the young and capable,"⁸² he asks Ann to go on a trip with him in order to "break [her] chains,"⁸³ but when Ann readily accepts his offer by a tactful response ("Yes, I will come, Jack,

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp.43-44

⁸⁰ Morgan, loc. cit.

⁸¹ Ibid., Act I, p.81

⁸² Ibid., Act II, p.97

⁸³ Ibid.

since you wish it”⁸⁴), he is appalled, and runs away. Therefore, it would not be inappropriate to claim that Tanner’s progressiveness in effect remains totally verbal, and that in essence he is a totally prudish male. He (like the other male characters) exhibits no insight into the fact that Ann (like the other female characters) is obliged to adopt covert modes of behaviour as she is not given the right to voice her desires.

In fact, there is no voice in the play to articulate the fact that the reduction of women’s freedom of movement equally represses their desires, leaving them incapable of self-expression, and that desire kept secret finds other channels of expression.⁸⁵ And fundamentally the only role assigned to Ann – the female – is to be a woman “who [is] to define herself by her relationships with men.”⁸⁶ The attribution of such a position to women is obviously the reflection of the fact that, in Rhoda K. Unger’s words, “Virtually all women exist within a social hierarchy in which ‘male is greater than female’.”⁸⁷ This is a system whereby women are to be passive and submissive. Unger puts it as follows:

The sexes are separated by implicit rules about interpersonal gestures and styles. Women are expected to use a less assertive style than men and violators can be viewed as sexually aggressive rather than interpersonally assertive. Perceptions and misperceptions about the meaning of nonverbal behaviours for women and men appear to function in a way that maintains power asymmetries between the sexes.⁸⁸

Therefore, one has to be blind not to notice the suppressing, degrading, virtually misogynistic approach to the female sex beneath the surface of this comedy of the duel of the sexes.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.98

⁸⁵ See Robert Squillace, “Self-Isolation and Self-Advertisement in The Old Wives’ Tale,” **Seeing Double: Revisioning Edwardian and Modernist Literature**, Ed. by. Carola M. Caplan and Anne B. Simpson, Houndmills, Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996, p.90

⁸⁶ Adrienne Rich, “ ‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’: on Lies, Secrets, and Silence,” **Feminist Literary Theory**, Ed.by.Mary Eagleton, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001, p.85

⁸⁷ Rhoda K. Unger, **Resisting Gender: Twenty-Five Years of Feminist Psychology**, London, Sage Publications Ltd., 1998, p.145

⁸⁸ Ibid.

At this stage, Tanner's degrading attitude (full of narcissistic overtones) towards Ann inevitably remind one of the comments paradoxically made by an old woman in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "Thou goest to women? Do no forget thy whip!"⁸⁹ Without doubt, Tanner's figurative style is quite reminiscent of Nietzsche's regarding women: his male language is his metaphorical whip.

Moreover, Tanner – a would-be revolutionary philosopher, a would-be iconoclast – uses several metaphors associating Ann – the female – with bestiality in order to define what he sees as predatoriness in her: "You might as well refuse to accept the embraces of a boa constrictor when once it gets round your neck"⁹⁰; "The boa constrictor doesnt mind the opinions of a stag one little bit when once she has got her coils round it"⁹¹; "Why, man [Octavius], your head is in the lioness's mouth"⁹²; "She breaks everybody's back with the stroke of her paw; but the question is, which of us will she eat?"⁹³; "Cats would have more sense"⁹⁴; "Remember that the next time you meet a grizzly bear or a Bengal tiger, Tavy"⁹⁵; "It is the tame elephants who enjoy capturing the wild ones."⁹⁶ Tanner's counterpart in the dream scene of the third act, Don Juan, who claims to be a philosopher and is more puritanical than Tanner, adds his pathetic fallacy and simile to these associations: "Life seized me and threw me into her arms as a sailor throws a scrap of fish into the mouth of a seabird."⁹⁷ And he sums up these associations in one definitive metaphor: "A woman seeking a husband is the most unscrupulous of all the beasts of prey."⁹⁸

All these associations made by the male protagonist, though presented in a hyperbolic and humoristic mode, are virtually the workings of a fantasy – a dream – of connecting the female with a lower order in the chain of beings in accordance with

⁸⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Trans. by. Thomas Common, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1997, p.63

⁹⁰ Shaw, op.cit., Act I, p. 49

⁹¹ Ibid., p.77

⁹² Ibid.,p. 60

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.67

⁹⁵ Ibid.,p. 62

⁹⁶ Ibid.,Act II, p. 97

⁹⁷ Ibid., Act III, p. 155

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.156

the biblical discourse that perpetuates the convention of subordinating the female to the male. This process can be traced back to the story of the beginning of life on the earth as told in Genesis in the Old Testament: God creates animals after creating plants, and finally he creates man in his own image; and then he gives man the right to rule over all the living things:

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."⁹⁹

Moreover, man is given the power to name:

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave name to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.¹⁰⁰

It is apparent that in this biblical context animals belong to a lower order of being and are meant to be creatures to be ruled as well as to be utilised. However, it is quite ironical that the wild animals Tanner associates Ann with are the ones that are not eatable and should be detested according to God's orders; and this is an implicit form of degradation on another plane:

Do not eat any detestable thing. These are the animals you may eat : the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. You may eat any animal that has a split hoof divided in two and that chew the cud.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ "Genesis," **Old Testament**, 1:28

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:19

¹⁰¹ "Deuteronomy," *ibid.*, 14:3-6

But the equation of Ann with the boa-constrictor – the serpent – has the greatest significance as “every creature that moves about on the ground is detestable,”¹⁰² and “the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.”¹⁰³ In the long line of the tradition of symbolism, the most popular snake figure appears to be the biblical serpent, which is the embodiment of Satan in the Garden of Eden. Traditionally, snakes are thought of as fear-inducing and most of all symbolise sly and treacherous persons.¹⁰⁴

As for the other wild animals: the lion is fundamentally associated with masculinity because of its strength (apparently, Tanner, at one level, sardonically hints at Ann’s “unwomanliness” in chasing him), and though it has conflicting associations in various contexts, it is usually a symbol of an aggressor against whom all are defenseless, the opponent who always destroys (and the lioness is undoubtedly a symbol of both motherhood and predatoriness)¹⁰⁵; the tiger is another predatory animal whose power inspires fear and wonder, but apparently it is quite often associated with femininity as in the medieval bestiaries, which praise the “motherly love” of the female tiger¹⁰⁶; the cat has a predominantly negative reputation in symbolic tradition, but most of all it is considered to be the typically feminine animal – a creature of the night, a witch – and it is generally assumed that it is tireless and cunning when going after its prey¹⁰⁷; the bear, as a dangerous animal, is at times the embodiment of the devil’s power in symbolism, and although the word for “bear” is masculine in gender in most languages, the bear can also stand for feminine, earth-like qualities (warm fur, brown like the earth itself, and care in rearing the offspring)¹⁰⁸; and the elephant is an animal whose chastity is celebrated and, because of its strength and longevity, is considered a symbol of the victory over

¹⁰² “Leviticus,” *ibid.*, 11:41

¹⁰³ “Genesis,” *ibid.*, 3:1

¹⁰⁴ See Hans Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism*, Trans. by. James Hulbert, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1992, pp.310-313

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, pp.209-211

¹⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, p.344

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, pp.59-60

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, pp.32-33

death in the tradition in question,¹⁰⁹ which apparently symbolises the female's endurance in her replenishing the earth.

From these associations that Tanner creates with his power to name, one draws the conclusion that he fantasises himself as a superior man chased by women; to put it bluntly, he fantasises himself as an "untouchable" being. In this respect, the play seems to parody some of the characteristic constituents of the genre of romance. In the fantasies represented by such narratives, the heroines usually adore the power of the heroes (but they are essentially passive – they do not chase), and there is no real admittance of any criticism of this power. In the male protagonists, as Rosalind Coward points out, "the qualities desired are age, power, detachment, the control of other people's welfare."¹¹⁰ It seems that amongst such characteristics, the one that is most emphatically attached to Tanner is an apparent "detachment" with the meaning of "aloofness". Rosalind Coward explains this "untouchable syndrome":

The hero is remote, too good for sexual intrigue, better still a priest someone, in short, who ought not to feel sexual passion. The heroine alone awakens his desire. The desire he feels for her is so great that he has to come off his pedestal, gather her in his arms and crush her to his chest.¹¹¹

Tanner, too, comes off his pedestal towards the end of the play, but up to that point he seems to remain impervious to Ann with the pretext that "I am fighting for my freedom, for my honor, for my self, one and indivisible,"¹¹² which might suggest that he conceives himself as a unified entity, a totally rational artist-philosopher, subtly projecting what he apparently sees as primitive impulses onto Ann through the motif of predatory animals. Here it would be apt again to resort to Freud's interpretation of dreams as he expands the use of symbolism in dreams into other processes of mental work:

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, p.116

¹¹⁰ Rosalind Coward, "Female Desire: Women's Sexuality Today," *Feminist Literary Theory*, p. 189

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 191

¹¹² Shaw, *op.cit.*, Act IV, p.205

This symbolism is not peculiar to dreams, but is characteristic of unconscious ideation, in particular among the people, and it is to be found in folklore, and in popular myths, legends, linguistic idioms, proverbial wisdom and current jokes, to a more complete extent than in dreams.¹¹³

And he unravels the dreams of being pursued by wild animals as follows:

Wild beasts are as a rule employed by the dream-work to represent passionate impulses of which the dreamer is afraid, whether they are his own or those of other people. (It then needs only a slight displacement for the wild beasts to come to represent the people who are possessed by these passions...). It might be said that the wild beasts are used to represent the libido, a force dreaded by the ego and combated by means of repression. It often happens, too, that the dreamer separates off his neurosis, his 'sick personality', from himself and depicts it as an independent person.¹¹⁴

However, what seems most significant is the fact that, on the whole, Tanner's assumptions are without doubt reflections of the association of the female with nature, an association being an integral part of the hierarchical system of dichotomies constructed by the dominant patriarchy. It is generally agreed that what has generated this system is the dichotomous couple male/female, which is a dualism valorising one side above the other (the syntax itself denotes it). According to Hélène Cixous, "The first term of man/woman is the term from which the second departs or deviates. Man is the self; woman is his Other."¹¹⁵ In her critique of patriarchal modes of thought, she presents a long list of dichotomous pairs found in masculine writing and thinking: Activity/Passivity, Sun/Moon, Culture/Nature, Day/Night, Father/Mother, Head/Emotions, Intelligible/Sensitive, Logos/Pathos.¹¹⁶ In Cixous's view, these dichotomies associate man with all that is active, cultural, light, high, or generally

¹¹³ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams and On Dreams*, Vol. V, p.351

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.410

¹¹⁵ Quoted by Tong, *op. cit.*, p.224

¹¹⁶ See "La Jeune Née", p.115; *Moi*, *op. cit.*, p.104

positive and woman with all that is passive, natural, dark, low, or generally negative.¹¹⁷

The paradigm underlying the evaluation of Ann is this fundamental “male/female opposition with its inevitable positive/negative evaluation.”¹¹⁸ The most foregrounded opposition in the play is the opposition of nature and culture. There is a lot of textual evidence to support this view. Tanner’s talkativeness is quite often set in a comic mode through hyperbole (his counterpart Don Juan is cast in a more serious mode), but there is an undeniable fact that it is Tanner/Don Juan that represents the intellectual content of the play. And only male characters are associated with what can be considered as the products of the intellect – philosophy, art, economy, politics – that form the cultural systems; only men discuss such issues. Whereas Ann comes to be an embodiment of what is primitive in nature. Don Juan has his explanation concerning the power of the male:

DON JUAN :...First Man has multiplied on her hands until there are as many men as women; so that she has been unable to employ for her purposes more than a fraction of the immense energy she has left at his disposal by saving him the exhausting labor of gestation. This superfluous energy has gone to his brain and to his muscle.¹¹⁹

In reference to such a context, it is perceived that all of Ann’s energy has gone to her instinct to hunt a male and reproduce. In other words, she is connected with what is low: in the above-mentioned binary logic, as Sherry Ortner points out, “nature is always seen as representing a lower order of existence.”¹²⁰ Perhaps the most connotative of such connections is in the following scene between Ann and her supposed victim-to-be:

¹¹⁷ See Tong, loc.cit.

¹¹⁸ Moi, op.cit., p.105

¹¹⁹ Shaw, op.cit., Act III, p. 148

¹²⁰ Quoted by Moi, op.cit., p.178n

ANN : ... [*She laughs and throws her boa round his neck.*] Doesn't it feel nice and soft, Jack?

TANNER [*in the toils*]: You scandalous woman, will you throw away even your hypocrisy?

ANN: I am never hypocritical with you, Jack. Are you angry? [*She withdraws the boa and throws it on a chair.*] Perhaps I shouldn't have done that.

TANNER [*contemptuously*]: Pooh, prudery! Why should you not, if it amuses you?

ANN [*shyly*]: Well, because—because I suppose what you really meant by the boa constrictor was this [*she puts her arms round his neck*].¹²¹

That Ann actually wears a boa¹²² reinforces the effect of the metaphor. The boa constrictor – the serpent – as an evil-surrogate is a recognised cultural stereotype evoking the biblical discourse: she is associated with Satan/ Mephistopheles/ Lucifer, the devil, who is the Prince of Darkness (Tanner even calls her “my dear Lady Mephistopheles” in the first act and “Devil” in the last act), and consequently she is associated with Hell, which in the dream scene is depicted as the place of “vulgar pursuit of happiness”¹²³ and a “Palace of Lies”¹²⁴ by the ethereal Don Juan. One gets the impression that Ann is eager to seduce Tanner into committing the original sin, but the fact that she has to achieve this through marriage, that is, the social institution of reproduction, adds another signification to her boa: the social hold over her, which she intends to impose on Tanner as well. Again, if taken in Freudian terms, the serpent becomes a symbol of the phallus, the emblem of masculine power, as Freud claims that in dream-work the most important symbols of the male organ are the snakes,¹²⁵ and accordingly it could be said that her boa signifies, besides the sexual urge, her submittance to and identification with the patriarchal order.

Paradoxically, female reproductiveness is recurrently extolled by Tanner on a theoretical plane on the grounds that it is a way of creation. According to Tanner, child bearing is a female's “highest purpose and greatest function – to increase,

¹²¹ Shaw, op.cit., Act I, p.77

¹²² A kind of stole in the form of a snake for women in that period.

¹²³ Shaw, op.cit., Act III, p. 140

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.166

¹²⁵ See Freud, op. cit., p.357

multiply, and replenish the earth”¹²⁶; therefore “the completed womanhood” should be “crowned”.¹²⁷ However, identifying reproduction with marriage, he sets himself against marriage because he conceives himself as a higher being – an artist-philosopher – than the ordinary man, and claims that he is not apt to become “a mere breadwinner.” Neither is the romantic artist Octavius:

TANNER: ... You have your poems and your tragedies to work at: Ann has nothing.

OCTAVIUS: I cannot write without inspiration. And nobody can give me that except Ann.¹²⁸

Apparently, Ann can only be a *muse* for Octavius and a *mother woman* for Tanner, according to whom marriage “would be hell on earth,”¹²⁹ (he only talks about the devastating effects of marriage on men) as “Of all human struggles there is none so treacherous and remorseless as the struggle between the artist man and the mother woman,” (quoted above).

Either in a romantic or realistic way, both men are associated with the *mind* (thinking and writing) whereas Ann is associated with the *body* (physical strength and beauty). Thus female creativeness is fundamentally confined to reproduction, for in Tanner’s terms “Vitality in a woman is a blind fury of creation,” (quoted above). Therefore, Ann, as a representative of the supposedly predatory mother woman, seems, in a sense, “trapped in the association of women with flesh/nature.”¹³⁰

Could the entrapment in question be considered the male’s reaction to the female ability to procreate? Could it be seen as a challenge/a lack that the male seeks to overcome by harping on the female lack of penis? Could the act of writing (pen-

¹²⁶ Shaw, op. cit., Act I, p. 64

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., Act II, p.91

¹²⁹ Ibid., Act I, p.51

¹³⁰ Lynda Hart, “The Theory of Total Blame,” *A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre and Performance: On and Beyond the Stage*, p.114

penis) be a surrogate for the creation of the child? Now, according to Weedon's account of feminist readings:

From the time when Freud's work first began to be influential women psychoanalysts have attempted to rewrite aspects of Freudian theory in ways which make it more acceptable to women. This rewriting has concentrated on giving new meanings to psycho-sexual development, usually by an explicit appeal to actual historical social norms and values, or on developing new theories of female sexuality and subjectivity. In both cases attention has shifted from the castration complex and the resolution of the Oedipus complex to the pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother.

As early as 1917, Karen Horney argued that Freud's assumption of the parallel psycho-sexual development of girls and boys, which is distinguished by their different reaction to the absence or presence of the penis, might be "the expression of a one-sidedness in our observations, due to their being made from the man's point of view." ... Staying within the framework of Freudian analysis, she suggested that it is possible to substitute for the importance of the penis the "by no means negligible physiological superiority of the female capacity for motherhood." ... This would motivate male "envy of pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood as well as of the breasts and of the act of suckling," which Horney claimed to have discovered in her psychoanalysis of men.... Horney's rewriting of the meaning of psycho-sexual development appeals to the social values of the society in which she lived. It involves making signifiers such as the penis and the breast, which in Freud have universal fixed meanings, relative and plural. She concludes, for example, that the theory of female penis envy, just as male creativity in science and the arts might be seen as over-compensation for men's lack of procreative power.¹³¹

Again, Nancy Chodorow theorises the psychic structures of femininity and masculinity in terms of the practice of parenting instead of the abstract and universal positionality of the Oedipus complex, and maintains that a fundamental change in

¹³¹ Weedon, *op. cit.*, pp.55-56

the social organisation of family life would lead to a transformation in the structure of gender roles. According to Chodorow:

Women's mothering also reproduces the family as it is constituted in male-dominated society. The sexual and familial division of labor in which women mother creates a sexual division of psychic organization and orientation. It produces socially gendered women and men who enter into asymmetrical heterosexual relationships; it produces men who react to, fear, and act superior to women, and who put most of their energies into the nonfamilial work world and do not parent. Finally, it produces women who turn their energies toward nurturing and caring for children – in turn reproducing the sexual and familial division of labor in which women mother.¹³²

Chodorow holds that if the present organisation of parenting were changed and if men took a greater responsibility in childcare, the dominant norms concerning the positions of femininity and masculinity would be transformed; and this process would contribute to the abolition of sex inequality:

We live in a period when the demands of the roles defined by the sex-gender system have created widespread discomfort and resistance. Aspects of this system are in crisis internally and conflict with economic tendencies. Change will certainly occur, but the outcome is far from certain. The elimination of the present organization of parenting in favor of a system of parenting in which both men and women are responsible would be a tremendous social advance. This outcome is historically possible, but far from inevitable. Such advances do not occur simply because they are better for "society," and certainly not simply because they are better for some (usually less powerful) people. They depend on the conscious organization and activity of all women and men who recognize that their interests lie in transforming the social organization of gender and eliminating sexual inequality.¹³³

As for the nineteenth-century bourgeois ideology, Shuttleworth observes that the Victorian constructions of motherhood, which involved the middle classes'

¹³² Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Berkeley, University of California, 1979, pp.208-209

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p.219

claims to moral and hence social supremacy through a healthy reproduction, led to irreconcilable ideological contradictions. She explains the Victorian notion of motherhood as follows:

Ideals of motherhood had to perform important ideological labor: they helped constitute and maintain the gendered social hierarchy and its division of labor, they vindicated the middle class's claims to social leadership through moral superiority, and sanctioned, by their maintenance of a strict division between the realms of home and work, whatever questionable practices the bourgeois male might have to pursue in business. But motherhood was not solely a spiritual mission, as so many descriptions seemed to suggest. It was also an intensely physical process, and a mode of social productivity vital to the middle class's maintenance of power. From the beginnings of the foundation of the bourgeois ideal in the mid-eighteenth century, we start to hear dire warnings which reach a crescendo in the Victorian era, that middle-class women are failing to fulfil their reproductive duties, producing sickly, puny children, while the threatening mass of the working classes are producing bouncing, healthy babes.¹³⁴

Yet the vital role ascribed to the female within this ideology has some conflicting psychic consequences on the part of the male:

Contradictions within constructions of the maternal role were not confined to the split between materiality and spirituality, but were indeed legion. For example, conflicts between the projections of motherhood and wifehood abound. Emphasis on female domestic supremacy seemed to offer potentially dangerous images of female empowerment, while the intense ideological focus on woman's reproductive role threatened to marginalize male creativity.... Like the working classes, women represented to the bourgeois male imagination an ever-present threat to their dominance, a threat, moreover, that was enshrined within the sanctuary of their own home.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Shuttleworth, op. cit., p.32

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp.32-33

Hence the male's claim to the position of controller of the purse-strings, and demand for subservience from the female.

It is a recognised fact that the male's fear about any form of female power – within or outside the home – manifests itself in various modes. Perhaps it would be apt, in this respect, to point out that Tanner's remark "Will [women] lend us to one another?" evokes a special moment in the cultural history of England, of which Ferris gives an interesting account based on Kathryn Rendall's research (1986). Now, though traditionally a male-dominated arena, the theatre itself must at times have exacerbated such a fear. In the history of English drama, the Queen Anne era (1695-1714) stands out as one of those rare moments during which women abrogated a cultural activity previously the property of men. Encouraged by Queen Anne, who, being a woman of intelligence, ability, and virtue, served during her reign as a model for women who aspired to greatness in any field; and women acted, managed theatres, wrote plays, and within the narratives of those plays centred women protagonists. In other words, female playwrights challenged the supremacy of male playwrights and received strong support from women in the audience, which led to an influential link between the success of women dramatists and the patronage of female theatre-goers. The issues the female playwrights addressed were similar to those of their male counterparts – specifically in terms of the theme of marriage as both male and female dramatists took for granted that marriage for women was an inevitable event; but the female dramatists placed women in the forefront of the narrative action rendering them more intelligent and active than usual, and treated the theme of marriage in terms of the loss of opportunities – freedom, independence, and education – for self-fulfilment on women's part; and, more significantly, they emphasised women's friendships, in other words, they focused on the priorities and obligations of female friendship, which was a startling break from traditional stereotyping: women either preferred or ultimately chose women's company over that of the limited possibilities with men. And, quite significantly, men's reaction to the perceived threat of female solidarity was taking refuge in coffee houses.¹³⁶ Ferris

¹³⁶ See Ferris, *op. cit.*, pp.155-157

gives an enlightening account of this aspect of the early eighteenth-century history of England:

These portrayals of friendships between women ... have no theatrical precedent; until then (male) writers had always represented comradeship between men as the ultimate nourishing intimacy. Depicting women as faithful and steadfast rather than antagonistic or jealous breaks with conventional image-making and radically offers a different vision of the possibilities of female autonomy. With women so evidently encroaching upon territory which had, in a previous century, clearly been defined as "male," the social and cultural hierarchy which had rested on the assumption that men had more intrinsic worth than women, that they belonged to a higher order which justified their historical dominance, began to crumble. With a well-liked, intelligent, reigning queen, and female dramatists so actively creating in the arena of the public stage, the patriarchal fiction of the inherent frailties, incompetence and ignorance of women began to appear blatantly false. The men who witnessed the narrational centring of women's friendship in the playhouses and observed the female faction of the audience clap enthusiastically could no longer assume that affectionate and intellectual loyalties existed solely man-to-man. So they took their masculine allegiances and defended them within the male-only confines of the eighteenth century coffee houses.... During the reign of Queen Anne there were some five hundred coffee houses catering to every variety of male companionship....The coffee house, less exclusive and pretentious than the later men's club, provided an informal atmosphere, cheap non-alcoholic drinking, and political, military and general interest news with additional access to important business transactions. It sustained and elevated the stale and smoky exclusivity of male friendship while rescuing the potency of masculine identity under such threat elsewhere.¹³⁷

Nevertheless, "After the death of Queen Anne," concludes Ferris, "the prominence of women playwrights declined rapidly, and with them the short-lived public focus on the importance of women's friendship."¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp.157-158

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.158

The discrimination – the polarisation – between the gender roles presented by Tanner (with overtones of megalomania) is fortified in the dream scene by Don Juan's philosophy of Life Force and Superman, which Tanner occasionally hints at in the actual comedy part of the play. The long dream scene, which is in the form of an intense debate, purports to add a metaphysical dimension to the comedy. Nevertheless, it can be said that this scene is virtually imbued with the same fundamental wishes as lie within actual dreams; these wishes, when viewed from the Freudian perspective, can be defined as ambitious or erotic wishes. In his dream, Tanner unites these two forms of wishes by taking the hero of a legend as his model with an apparent nostalgia – as if he were sorry not to be living in Don Juan's day – and transforming that hero into a man of a high intellect. "Every one of the dreams can be replaced by an optative clause,"¹³⁹ claims Freud; Tanner's optative clause would be "If only I were a Superman." He assigns himself the position of a godlike being, and the cerebrality that pervades the scene seems to be a reflection of an attempt on Tanner's part to assert his manhood. Now, the legendary Don Juan might be seen as a representative of the type of man who remains fixated in his attachment to his mother, his first love object; in other words, he remains fixated in a never-ending childhood. Yet as the father's authority and prohibition against incest create counter-forces, such as shame, disgust and morality (for the super-ego arises), the mother becomes unattainable. However, "It seems that the unconscious never forgets,"¹⁴⁰ and thus in his search for his mother, "the love-objects may replace one another so frequently that a *long series of them is formed*,"¹⁴¹ and, more significantly, the desire for the mother is sublimated. Freud states that:

These affectionate impulses were originally of a completely sexual nature but have become *inhibited in their aim or sublimated*. The manner in which the sexual instincts can thus be influenced and diverted enables them to be employed for

¹³⁹ Freud, *op.cit.*, p.647

¹⁴⁰ Christopher Badcock, *Essential Freud*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1992, p.86

¹⁴¹ Sigmund Freud, "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men," *The Freud Reader*, p.389

cultural activities of every kind, to which indeed they bring the most important contributions.¹⁴²

Hence the sublimation of sex into *heads*.

In Tanner's dream, which is set in a void that represents Hell (which might also be taken as a symbol of the uterus and perhaps the desire to be reunited with the mother), the mythical figures connected with the Don Juan legend, Doña Ana (Ann), Don Juan (Tanner), the Devil (the romantic brigand-chieftain Mendoza, whom Tanner meets in Sierra after he escapes from Ann) and the Statue (Ann's father-surrogate Ramsden) discuss the notions of Heaven and Hell. Ana /Ann is again cast as a passive recipient of the cultural domain: wisdom belongs to the male. Furthermore, in this scene she is drawn as a more conventional type – a champion of chastity, marriage and religion. Unconsciously she defends the identity defined for her by the male. And she is again ridiculed by Don Juan, who claims that as a philosophic man he has a divine mission of "helping Life in its struggle upward"¹⁴³; what interests him is not amorous relationships (he even claims to be famous for running away from women) but the evolutionary force in Nature, "the force that ever strives to attain greater power of contemplating itself."¹⁴⁴ He links the earth to Hell and defines it as a place of "such romantic mirages as beauty and pleasure,"¹⁴⁵ and therefore he wants to escape from it to take refuge in Heaven, which is "the home of the masters of reality,"¹⁴⁶ and where "you live and work instead of playing and pretending."¹⁴⁷ As for Ana, he thinks she belongs to Hell, the place of human folly:

ANA: ... I am going to Heaven for happiness.

DON JUAN: Then you must stay here; for Hell is the home of the unreal and of the seekers for happiness.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴² Sigmund Freud, "Sublimation of Sexual Instincts," *ibid.*, p.24

¹⁴³ Shaw, *op. cit.*, Act III., p.141

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.140-141

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.139

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.140

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.139

Besides, the Devil, who is in effect drawn as a wise personage (contrary to Ana), reminds one of Ann's tactfulness with his diplomacy towards Don Juan, whose ideas he finds dangerous for Hell :

THE DEVIL: Not that we dont admire your intellect, you know. We do. But I look at the matter from your own point of view. You don't get on with us. The place doesnt suit you.¹⁴⁹

Actually, the Devil's resemblance to the brigand-chieftain, Mendoza, is in itself an implication, as the name "Mendoza" alliteratively evokes the allegedly worst side of Ann's character: *mendacity*.

It is quite contradictory that at the core of Don Juan's theory of the Life Force lies the extollment of marriage. What Don Juan wants is a reform in the present state of marriage which he defines as "a mantrap with simulated accomplishments and delusive idealisations."¹⁵⁰ He is not subversive; he merely conceives a marriage of contraries based on an impersonal purpose because he claims that "The Life Force respects marriage only because marriage is a contrivance of its own to secure the greatest number of children and the closest care of them."¹⁵¹

In such a context, sexual attraction is euphemistically, almost defamiliarisingly, rendered something impersonal:

DON JUAN: ... Can a woman serve her country if she refuses to marry any man she does not personally love?...the woman of noble birth marries as the man of noble birth fights, on political and family grounds, not on personal ones.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.136

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.,pp.156-157

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.156

¹⁵² Ibid., pp.161-162

In Don Juan's discourse of femininity, the woman's natural instinct is so strong that he cannot negate it:

DON JUAN: ... I had come to believe that I was a purely rational creature: a thinker! I said, with the foolish philosopher, 'I think; therefore I am.' It was Woman who taught me to say 'I am; therefore I think.'¹⁵³

Here Tanner refers to the famous premise of a seventeenth century philosopher, René Descartes. This premise, "I think, therefore I am," (*Cogito, ergo sum*) is the first principle of Descartes's deterministic philosophy, which is known as Cartesian philosophy. According to Descartes, the bodies of men and animals are machines, and animals are regarded as automata that have no feeling or consciousness. Men have a soul, and although there is an interaction between the soul and the body, the body is governed by the soul and the soul is, in a sense, wholly independent of the body. So, basically, there are two substances, mind and matter, and mind is more certain than matter. In this dualism of mind and matter, with the belief that God has given man the faculty of judgement, the truth about the body is supposed to be known by the mind alone, not by mind and body jointly.¹⁵⁴ "Our soul is of a nature entirely independent of the body,"¹⁵⁵ claims Descartes explaining his train of thought as follows:

I ... concluded that I was a substance, of which the whole essence or nature consists in thinking, and which, in order to exist, needs no place and depends on no material thing; so that this 'I', that is to say, the mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body, and even that it is easier to know than the body, and moreover, that even if the body were not, it would not cease to be all that it is.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Ibid., p.154

¹⁵⁴ See Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1967, pp.542-548

¹⁵⁵ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*, Trans. by. F. E. Sutcliffe, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1968, p.76

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p.54

So Tanner/Don Juan, by inverting Descartes's *cogito*, implies that the female, with her power of instinct, has imposed on him the importance of the body as a bearer for thoughts. On the other hand, with this inversion he relates his discourse to a nineteenth century philosophy by alluding to Nietzsche's Persian sage Zarathustra, who says:

Behind thy thoughts and feelings, my brother, there is a mighty lord, an unknown sage – it is called Self; it dwelleth in thy body, it is thy body. ... Ye despisers of the body ... ye can no longer create beyond yourselves.¹⁵⁷

Thus Tanner constitutes a peculiar synthesis, grounded again on the reduction of the female to body, as a projection of one's sexual drives on to another being; and, in a sense, he creates a metaphor for a sexual union – a union of Hell and Heaven. Accordingly, to this inversion of Descartes he adds: "I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it."¹⁵⁸ Yet he concludes that "The philosopher is Nature's pilot ... to be in Hell is to drift: to be in Heaven is to steer."¹⁵⁹

So Don Juan leaves Hell and goes to Heaven, where there are no beautiful women, and the dream scene ends with Ana running after him – *drifting behind the steering Superman* (who undoubtedly is/will be a male). Shaw does not clearly define what he means by Superman, but it is obvious that, in his outline of the future, as Beatrice Ethel Kidd observed (in 1904), "Superman is the author's conception of the ultimate development (or at any rate an approaching development) of the male human being."¹⁶⁰

Apparently Ana's intuition – woman's intuition! – tells her that she is to serve that male whose theory of the evolutionary Life Force is quite analogous to Charles

¹⁵⁷ Nietzsche, op.cit., p.31

¹⁵⁸ Shaw, op. cit., p.165

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.169

¹⁶⁰ Quoted by Gainor, op. cit., p.208

Darwin's theories of Creative Evolution and Natural Selection – specifically regarding the notion of “the Extinction of less-improved forms.”¹⁶¹ Darwin observes:

The improvement of one being entails the improvement or the extermination of others ... as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection ... whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.¹⁶²

After this dream, which is obviously the expression of a male's yearning for supremacy, comes the inevitable end : Ann's forcing Tanner to marry her through several manoeuvres, and Tanner's supposedly involuntary submission (since he can not beget any super being without a womb – as if he were a God in need of a Virgin Mary to beget a Christ).

In the context of seduction, Ann virtually becomes a symbol of feminine fraud, but in the scene in which she talks to Octavius openly, some positive aspects are added to her persona:

ANN: ... Getting over an unfavorable impression is ever so much easier than living up to an ideal. Oh, I shall enrapture Jack sometimes! ... I doubt if we ever know why we do things. The only really simple thing is to go straight for what you want and grab it. I suppose I dont love you, Tavy.¹⁶³

Here she is honest and serious, and has common sense. This ephemeral turnabout is reminiscent of Aristotle's definition of “characters” in drama:

What a personage says or does reveals a certain moral purpose; and a good element of character, if the purpose so revealed is good. Such goodness is possible in every

¹⁶¹ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1985, p.459

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 458-460

¹⁶³ Shaw, *op.cit.*, Act IV, pp.194-195

type of personage, even in a woman or a slave, though the one is perhaps an inferior, and the other a wholly worthless being.¹⁶⁴

Within the world created in the play, the most conspicuous “goodness” attributed to Ann is that there is nothing subversive in what she does. There is a strong implication for this at the beginning of the play:

TANNER: ... I shatter creeds and demolish idols.

ANN [*bored*]: I am too feminine to see any sense in destruction. Destruction can only destroy.¹⁶⁵

On the surface level, Ann may seem liberated, but in the final analysis, she is not reckless of the gender role imposed on her. Weedon points out that:

The social institutions which we enter as individuals ... pre-exist us. We learn their modes of operation and the values which they seek to maintain as true, natural or good. As children we learn what girls and boys should be and, later, women and men.¹⁶⁶

Ann is ultimately a stereotypical woman who accepts and internalises the form she finds herself in. She has neither the power nor the courage to destroy anything to construct something different. For fundamentally she is not associated with *knowledge*, which “brings with it the possibility of power and control.”¹⁶⁷ The male – Tanner/Don Juan – has the ability to unravel the motive of the female’s – Ann’s – pursuit of him; in such a realm of meaning, femininity does not require brainwork. Accordingly, though Ann is the embodiment of the Life Force, she is completely excluded from the knowledge of the Life Force theory (in effect she, with her pragmatism, incessantly pricks Tanner and punctures his allegedly imposing concept of the Life Force):

¹⁶⁴ Aristotle, *Poetics*, Trans.by. Ingram Bywater, w.place, w.date, p.242

¹⁶⁵ Shaw, op.cit., Act I, p.74

¹⁶⁶ Weedon, op.cit., p.3

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p.14

TANNER: ... I am in the grip of the Life Force.

ANN: I dont understand in the least: it sounds like Life Guards.¹⁶⁸

Tanner seems to intellectualise something that in effect stands outside the bounds of the intellect, and, moreover, presumes that as a male he has the right to control Ann – the female:

TANNER: ... I am your guardian; and it is my duty to improve your mind.¹⁶⁹

In this context of *father's law*, the only thing Ann can crave for is the archetypal role of nurturing female. In her struggle to assume this role, she becomes conspicuous for her hypocrisy, which is a reflection of “the old social prejudice that women are essentially deceivers, dissemblers, playactors,”¹⁷⁰ but eventually she is rendered a lovable creature in such a way that even the most conservative audiences would forgive and sympathise with her, as she in effect creates the image of a woman with a historic and noble mission. This mission is marrying a man of intelligence (and perhaps becoming his mother) and bearing his children, and thus contributing to the eugenic progression of her society in particular and humankind in general, in other words, contributing to the evolutionary Life Force in its empirical struggle to attain an “omnipotent, omniscient, infallible and unilludedly self-conscious, godlike being.”¹⁷¹ She will fulfil the duty that supposedly Nature's/her will demands of her (which echoes Arthur Schopenhauer's doctrine that will is superior to knowledge¹⁷²): creating with her body – with her “corporeal endowments.” And in this process, with an almost masochistic urge (reflecting the conventional association of the female with altruism), she will sacrifice herself:

¹⁶⁸ Shaw, op.cit., Act IV, p.203

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., Act I, p.75

¹⁷⁰ Ferris, op.cit., p.x

¹⁷¹ Shaw, op.cit., Act III, p.149

¹⁷² See Bertrand Russell, op. cit., p.727

ANN: It will not be all happiness for me. Perhaps death.¹⁷³

In the final analysis, all the female characters seem to pay lip service to the dominant male norms, and thus hypocrisy is linked with the artificiality and impositions of these norms. However, one can easily detect beneath this critique of bourgeois morality an endeavour to universalise the gender polarisation and the notion that the *pregnant mind is necessarily male*.

So the irony is that the real victim is Ann herself, not Tanner, as he claims to be. When Don Juan says “She only throws away the bait when the bird is in the net,” he obviously uses the metaphor of a *captured bird* to symbolise the supposed victimisation of the male by the female. Besides, what he previously says about birds seems to reinforce this identification: “The birds, as our friend Aristophanes long ago pointed out, are so extraordinarily superior, with their power of flight.”¹⁷⁴ And the dead bird in Violet’s hat apparently completes the dual association: the aspiring male killed by the mother woman on one hand, the new (revolution) killed by the old (convention) on the other. However, the fact that Don Juan also associates birds with “love and beauty”¹⁷⁵ – the encoded attributes of femininity – leads to another connotation: metaphorically killing woman’s – the *seabird’s* – potential. Like the Ancient Mariner’s Albatross, the woman is “laid full low with [the man’s] cruel bow.”¹⁷⁶

And, from the beginning till the end of the play, nobody calls it into question.

¹⁷³ Shaw, op. cit., Act IV., p.206

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., Act III, p. 150

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Other Poems*, New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1992, p.16

III

PYGMALION

Amongst the phallocentric myths of creativity, the Pygmalion myth stands out as a genuine exemplification of overcompensation for the male's lack of procreative power. Within the context of Greek mythology, the story in question runs like this: Pygmalion was the king of Cyprus, and he was a sculptor as well. He lived in a village called Amathus; and he was renowned as a misanthropic man: he disliked all other company, particularly the women of Amathus, whose general conduct disgusted him. He was frustrated by the vices of the women around him. These women, known as Propoetides, were the embodiment of all the vices of the female disposition; for they had denied the divinity of Aphrodite, the goddess of Love, and in return Aphrodite had punished them by making them lose all sense of shame so that they gained bad reputations for themselves. Pygmalion, disenchanted with the degraded and depraved women that populate his world, was devoted to his statues as he felt they were the only beautiful things around him. One day he fell in love with Aphrodite, whom he believed in as a goddess, but because she would not lie with him, created an ivory image of her; in other words, he decided to sculpt his own vision of feminine perfection. The beautiful statue, significantly made out of ivory white as snow, radiated purity, chastity, gentleness and obeisance. He fell so much in love with this statue that he laid it in his bed and fondling it started to pray to Aphrodite to bring the statue to life, and Aphrodite, seeing him pining for his stone woman, pitied him and breathed life into the statue. Thus the statue became a beautiful woman. Pygmalion named her Galatea and, his love for her being reciprocated, took her as his wife, and they lived happily ever after.¹

¹ See Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Vol.I, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1966, p.211; Jacqueline Fisher, "Introduction," Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, London, Longman Group Ltd., 1991, p.xvi; Ferris, op. cit., p.89

This mythical story, or fable, is centred upon the creativity of a king – a male; therefore, it is obviously one of the self-regarding fantasies of the male imagination. It is a widely recognised fact that pivotal to these fantasies is the entrenched notion of woman as a muse, as a source of inspiration for male creativity: the female's beauty inspires the artist and is deemed essential to his creativity. But the Pygmalion story is supposed to denote a further level of male creativity: in this story, as Ferris points out, "The male artist moves from being inspired by his female model to the ultimate act of creating her."²

The classical myth of Pygmalion was first recorded by the Roman writer Ovidius (43 B.C.-A.D.18) in his *Metamorphoses*. In this work Ovidius links all the stories of classical mythology. However, he deals with those stories rather subjectively, inscribing the notion of male superiority on the pages of literary history; therefore, as a peculiar exemplification of this subjective male stance, his version of the Pygmalion myth merits quoting at length:

The foul Propoetides dared to deny the divinity of Venus (Aphrodite). In consequence of this, through the wrath of the goddess they are said to have been the first to prostitute their bodies and their fame; and as their shame vanished and the blood of their faces hardened, they were turned with but small change to hard stones.

Pygmalion had seen these women spending their lives in shame, and, disgusted with the faults which in such full measure nature had given the female mind, he lived unmarried and long was without a partner of his couch. Meanwhile, with wondrous art he successfully carves a figure out of snowy ivory, giving it a beauty more perfect than that of any woman ever born. And with his own work he falls in love. The face is that of a real maiden, whom you would think living and desirous of being moved, if modesty did not prevent.... Pygmalion ... kisses it and thinks his kisses are returned. He speaks to it, grasps it and seems to feel his fingers sink into the limbs when he touches them; fond words of love, now brings it gifts pleasing to girls.... He drapes its limbs also with robes, puts gemmed rings upon its fingers and a long necklace around its neck; pearls hang from the ears and chains adorn the breast....

² Ferris, loc. cit.

He lays it on a bed ... calls it the consort of his couch, and rests its reclining head upon soft, downy pillows, as if it could enjoy them.

And now the festal day of Venus had come ... Pygmalion, having brought his gift to the altar, stood and falteringly prayed: "If ye, O gods, can give all the things, I pray to have as wife —" he did not dare add "my ivory maid," but said, "one like my ivory maid." But golden Venus ... knew what that prayer meant; and, as an omen of her favouring deity, thrice did the flame burn brightly and leap high in air. When he returned he sought the image of his maid, and bending over the couch he kissed her. She seemed warm to his touch. Again he kissed her, and with his hands also he touched her breast. The ivory grew soft to his touch and, its hardness vanishing, gave and yielded beneath his fingers ... The lover stands amazed, rejoices still in doubt, fears he is mistaken, and tries his hopes again and yet again with his hand. Yes, it was real flesh! The veins were pulsing beneath his testing finger. Then did the Paphian hero pour out copious thanks to Venus, and again pressed with his lips real lips at last. The maiden felt the kisses, blushed and, lifting her timid eyes up to the light, she saw the sky and her lover at the same time. The goddess graced with her presence the marriage she had made.³

Endowed with a godlike power, Pygmalion not only creates life, but creates female life as he would like it to be, that is, he creates a responsive, obedient, and most significantly chaste female; as Ferris puts it, "Thus Pygmalion gains possession of female perfection, the ideal erotic object shaped to the pattern of his own desires and wishes."⁴ What lies at the core of such fantasies seems to be a desire to create an ideal female object for the use of the male. Though in actuality it is a goddess – a female godlike being – that brings Pygmalion's statue to life, the Pygmalion myth is ultimately considered a myth of male primacy as the dominant patriarchal discourse of symbolism foregrounds a godlike male's power to perfect and define an image that exists outside his male self as feminine, as an Other. Pygmalion is ultimately defined as the creator of an ivory woman who in effect has no name or identity or voice of her own. Thus, on a symbolic plane, he is made to evade the supposed

³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Vol. II, Trans. by. Frank Justus Miller, London, William Heinemann Ltd., 1960, pp.81-85

⁴ Ferris, loc. cit.

humiliation, shared by many men, of acknowledging that it is *he* who is really created out of and from the *female* body.⁵

It is a well-known fact that with the establishment of Christianity the power to breathe life has totally been ascribed to God the Father, who is believed to have created the whole universe and all the living things out of nothing. Consequently, the notion that the creative gift is the male's quality has come to be an entrenched belief, a belief that has generated a more emphatically phallocentric world excluding the female from the cultural domain and forcing her to express her creativity within the confines of domesticity. Within the context of this traditional entrapment of women, as Susan Gubar puts it,

The phallus as the transcendent incarnate turns woman's self into an object, an other.

Woman is not simply an object, however. If we think in terms of the production of culture, she is an art object: she is the ivory carving or mud replica, an icon or doll, but she is not the sculptor. Lest this seem fanciful, we should remember that until very recently women have been barred from art schools as students yet have always been acceptable as models.⁶

In *Pygmalion* (1913), Shaw creates his own myth of male creativity by reinvigorating, in a sense, a mythology. The classical myth of Pygmalion underlies the whole structure of the play. Although Shaw apparently denies and inverts the established pattern of the original myth, he retains its symbolical significance as he bases the action on mythological archetypes and constructs the plot on the metamorphosis the main female character undergoes.

The symbolical significance mentioned above finds its expression through a seemingly realistic surface that comprises a strong critique of class discrimination imposed by the capitalistic system. Thus the transformation of Eliza Doolittle, the heroine, is elaborated within the framework of socially and economically based

⁵ See Susan Gubar, "The Blank Page and the Issues of Female Creativity," *The New Feminist Criticism*, p.292

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.293

issues, such as class-consciousness, points of references in the fixation of human beings in a hierarchical structure and prospects for class mobility.

Historically, the notion of class mobility seems to be a reflection of the feeling of unrest besides fresh hopes specific to the Edwardian age (1901-1910), a feeling that stemmed from the questioning of the preconceptions of the Victorian middle classes towards the end of the nineteenth century. In Edwardian England, the social and economic stabilities of the Victorian age – country houses with numerous servants, a flourishing and confident middle class, and, most importantly, a strict hierarchy of social classes – remained unimpaired⁷; in fact, according to the account of Carola M. Kaplan and Anne B. Simpson, during the epoch spanning King Edward VII's ascension to the throne in 1901 (after Queen Victoria's death in the same year) and extending to the break of the First World War in 1914 – thus extending into the reign of George V (1910-1936) – class distinctions, disparities and social inequities between the rich and the poor prevailed in the societal structure: it was believed that one per cent of the population owned nearly seventy per cent of the country's wealth. However, some historians define Edwardians as significant, early heralds of social instability; the rise of English Socialism and the Labour Party suggested a shift in power from one class to another causing an upheaval in the components of society, an upheaval that was in effect rooted in the commencement of the industrialisation process. Besides the strikes of the working class (dock and railway strikes in 1911, coal strikes and the Port of London strike in 1912) that generated a conflict between labour and capital, advances in technology and significant contributions in physics and psychology (with Einstein's relativity theory appearing during the Edwardian years and Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* translated into English in 1913) have been listed by chroniclers as cultural markers of social change. Similarly, some historians point out that although the Boer War ended in 1902, as the Edwardian era progressed, an increasing paranoia about international affairs and specifically about the German threat expressed itself in an invasion psychosis among the general public. Accordingly, on the intellectual level there was anxiety and unrest. Within

⁷ See *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Gen. ed. M. H. Abrams, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1987, pp.2196-2197

such a context, even the militant tactics of the suffragettes were seen as evidence of the violent, agitated Edwardian frame of mind. In short, the beginning of the new century was a period of change and insecurity.⁸

The opening scene of the first act of *Pygmalion* is quite significant in terms of revealing a hierarchical social stratification. A peculiar mixture of contrasting figures with contrasting voices apparently reflects the range of differentiation between human beings in a stratified societal structure. Shaw assembles these figures under the roof of a church – the only social institution where there is supposed to be no discrimination between human beings – and thus juxtaposes material and spiritual values evidently in order to accentuate the formation of a microcosm of such a societal structure. Amongst the group of people that on a rainy summer night take shelter in the portico of a church⁹ are two ladies, a mother and her fretful daughter, who send their Freddy (the son) to look for a cab (reflecting the responsibilities of the male within familial relationships), “an elderly gentleman of the amiable military type,”¹⁰ another gentleman defined as “the Note Taker,” a flower girl and a mob labelled as “Bystanders”. The ladies and the gentlemen are in evening dress, and as a dialogue between the mother and the daughter demonstrates, they belong to a class that can afford an evening enjoyment at a theatre and hire a taxi cab to go home:

THE MOTHER....But he ought to have got us a cab by this time.

A BYSTANDER....He wont get no cab not until half-past eleven, missus, when they come back after dropping their theatre fares.

THE MOTHER. But we must have a cab. We cant stand here until half past eleven. It's too bad.

THE BYSTANDER. Well it aint my fault , missus.

⁸ Carola M. Kaplan and Anne B. Simpson, “Introduction,” *Seeing Double: Revisioning Edwardian and Modernist Literature*, pp.viii-ix

⁹ In the initial stage instructions Shaw states that it is St Paul’s church in the Covent Garden area. Covent Garden’s Piazza was the first designed square in London and the area was used for the building of new theatres after The Restoration from 1660 onwards, following an eighteen-year closure for all theatres during the rule of Cromwell; it also housed the largest fruit and vegetable market until 1973, when the market was moved to Nine Elms in Vauxhall. See Fisher, *op.cit.*,p.xviii

¹⁰ Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1971, Act I, p.17. This is the revised and more popular version of *Pygmalion*: Shaw revised the play for the 1938 film by changing some dialogues and adding new scenes.

THE DAUGHTER. If Freddy had a bit of gumption, he would have got one at the theatre door.¹¹

The colloquial style of speech of that bystander (His words “He wont get no cab not until...” would be “He won’t get a cab until...” in Standard English) besides his mode of addressing the mother (“Missus” being used among servants when referring to the woman who is the head or wife of the head of a house or family) denotes that he belongs to a lower class. Another bystander’s remark concerning The Note Taker’s attire reinforces the denotation of the points of references in a divided class system: “It’s aw rawt: e’s a gentleman: look at his bə-oots.”¹² However, the ultimate degree of poverty and deprivation is presented through the shabby old clothes, “boots...*much the worse for wear*,”¹³ dirty hair and teeth, and, in Gordon’s definition, the “broad cockney whine”¹⁴ of the flower girl. At the opening of the play, Shaw attempts to capture her accent:

THE FLOWER GIRL. Nah than, Freddy: look wh’ y’ gowin, deah. (Now then Freddy, look where you’re going dear)...Theres menners f’ yer! Te-oo bunches o voylets trod into the mad. (There’s manners for you! Two bunches of violets trodden into the mud)...Ow, eez yə-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y’də-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel’s flahrzn then ran awy athaht pyin. Will yə-oo py me f’them? (Oh, he’s your son, is he? Well, if you had done your duty by him as a mother should, he would know better than to spoil a poor girl’s flowers and then run away without paying. Will you pay me for them?)¹⁵

Then he recedes to the usual pattern of spelling by stating in a stage instruction that “*Hère, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London.*”¹⁶ (According to Fisher’s account, Shaw tried to change the spelling system of the

¹¹ Ibid., p.14

¹² Ibid., p. 20

¹³ Ibid., p.15

¹⁴ Gordon, op.cit., p.149

¹⁵ Shaw, op. cit., pp.15-16

¹⁶ Ibid., p.16

English language, for he thought the twenty six letters of the English alphabet did not suffice for a correct pronunciation; he worked out an alternative alphabetic system based on forty two letters, and left a large amount of money in his will for the introduction of a new alphabet, but his wishes were not carried out.¹⁷⁾

The flower girl's coarse pronunciation and accent are combined, besides her recurrent exclamation, "Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo!" with several colloquial and slangy expressions that clearly mark her position in terms of social status: "Aint no call to meddle with me, he aint,"¹⁸ "I dont want to have no truck with him,"¹⁹ and "Worrited and chivied"²⁰ are some examples of her peculiar colloquialism presented in the first act; and her slangy idiom includes such words as "Tanner" (sixpence) and "Garn!" (Go on), which she subsequently repeats several times. With regard to the use of a supposedly lower form of language, the flower girl and the bystanders literally form a chorus: the slang words, such as "Bloke" (man), "Tec" (detective), "Copper's nark" (police informer), and "Toff" (gentleman) render the bystanders, like the flower girl, quite different from the ladies and the gentlemen, denoting that they belong to an uneducated – disadvantaged – social class.

Yet what is more noteworthy in this context of discrimination is the self-defensive tone in the discourse of these members of the lower class. Most probably stemming from the sense of guilt imposed on them by the oppressive and prejudiced upper classes, this self-defence, echoed first in a bystander's statement "It aint my fault, missus," (quoted above), finds its strongest expression in the hysterical protestation the flower girl resorts to upon hearing from a bystander – who apparently exhibits a protective manner towards someone whose social status is close to his – that while she was trying to sell a bunch of flowers to the elderly gentleman, the Note Taker was listening to her and writing down every word she said. Taking him for a policeman, she tries to defend herself against the perceived threat of

¹⁷ Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp.vii-ix

¹⁸ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p.23

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.24

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.26

punishment for daring to speak and bargain with a gentleman – a member of a higher class which does not seem accessible to her:

THE FLOWER GIRL [*springing up terrified*] I aint done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman. Ive a right to sell flowers if I keep off the kerb. [*Hysterically*] I'm a respectable girl: so help me, I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower off me....Oh, sir, dont let him charge me. You dunno what it means to me. Theyll take away my character and drive me on the streets for speaking to gentlemen....I'm a good girl, I am.²¹

The flower girl's emphasis on her respectability and her fear of losing her character convey the insecurity of her marginal position in the societal structure and, in a sense, the susceptibility of all the deprived working class women to societal prejudices, a theme introduced earlier through the mother's suspicious questioning concerning the flower girl's calling her son by his name:

THE MOTHER. Now tell me how you know that young gentleman's name.

THE FLOWER GIRL. I didn't.

THE MOTHER. I heard you call him by it. Dont try to deceive me.

THE FLOWER GIRL [*protesting*] Who's trying to deceive you? I called him Freddy or Charlie same as you might yourself if you was talking to a stranger and wished to be pleasant.²²

Even after she learns that the Note Taker is not a "copper" or a "copper's nark," but an expert in linking people's speech to their background – to where they come from, the flower girl, not feeling reassured yet, keeps on protesting and expressing her concern for her physical and moral well-being:

THE FLOWER GIRL....He's no gentleman, he aint, to interfere with a poor girl....He's no right to take away my character. My character is the same to me as

²¹ Ibid., pp.19-23

²² Ibid., p.17

any lady's.²³

As it can readily be seen, the flower girl's consistent protestation involves a deep longing for a better and more secure social position as well as an assertion of an essential similarity to the upper-class people. However, the Note Taker, who soon makes his presence felt as the possessor of the *logos*, seems to act as a spokesperson for the privileged that are intent on keeping the unprivileged in their place:

THE NOTE TAKER [*explosively*] Woman: cease this detestable boohooing instantly; or else seek the shelter of some other place of worship.

HE FLOWER GIRL [*with feeble defiance*] I've a right to be here if I like, same as you.

THE NOTE TAKER. A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere – no right to live....you squashed cabbage leaf, you disgrace to the noble architecture of these columns, you incarnate insult to the English language.²⁴

The Note Taker's association of the flower girl with a supposedly lower object of nature – some food stuff – seems to justify the rebellious reproach one of the bystanders direct at him: "You take us for dirt under your feet, don't you?"²⁵ Thus it can be concluded that, by introducing the flower girl into the play within such a mixed milieu, Shaw draws a parallel between two forms of social injustice: the flower girl belongs to the weaker side of the poverty-stricken stratum, in other words, she is a victim of sex discrimination as well as class discrimination.

The theme of discrimination is reinforced by the educated exchange of the Note Taker and the elderly gentleman, as Gordon points out, "playing out an irresistibly improbable recognition scene,"²⁶ that takes place after all the other personages – except the flower girl – leave the stage:

²³ Ibid., pp.24-25

²⁴ Ibid., pp.26-27

²⁵ Ibid., p.24

²⁶ Gordon, loc. cit.

THE GENTLEMAN....I am myself a student of Indian dialects; and –

THE NOTE TAKER [*eagerly*] Are you? Do you know Colonel Pickering, the author of Spoken Sanscrit?

THE GENTLEMAN. I am Colonel Pickering. Who are you?

THE NOTE TAKER. Henry Higgins, author of Higgins's Universal Alphabet.

PICKERING [*with enthusiasm*] I came from India to meet you.

HIGGINS. I was going to India to meet you.²⁷

These two possessors of the *logos* joke about the possibility of transforming the flower girl into an upper-class woman: Higgins self-assertively lays claim to a godlike power, articulating in the meantime a mocking irony in regard to the artificiality of the notion of ladyship:

THE NOTE TAKER. You see this creature with her kerbstone English: the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English.²⁸

And upon hearing the sound of the church clock, Higgins, with godlike condescension, "*throws a handful of money into the basket*"²⁹ of the flower girl and leaves the stage following Pickering.

Motivated by Higgins's self-assertive joke that overlaps with her yearnings, and her newly acquired wealth, the flower girl arrives at Higgins's house at Wimpole Street to hire him as a teacher; in other words, she, as Gainor points out, "independently chooses to seek out Higgins's tutelage."³⁰ Since it is the male sphere that controls the public realms of discourse, she has to strive to learn to understand the male's language in order to attain a better social position. Annette Kolodny observes that:

²⁷ Shaw, op. cit., p.27. India was a colony of Britain from 1856 until 1947.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., p.28

³⁰ Gainor, op. cit., p.227

Though masters need not learn the language of their slaves, the reverse is never the case: for survival's sake, oppressed or subdominant groups always study the nuances of meaning and gesture in those who control them.³¹

Indeed, the didactic older male/young female pupil relationship is based on a master/slave relationship as Higgins treats the flower girl like an object throughout the play. In other words, Higgins remains in a subject position, whereas the flower girl is consistently placed in an object position. He does not even ask her name when she comes to his house in the second act, and the audience learns her name only when Pickering, who has come to live in Higgins's house, courteously asks it. To put it another way, "Eliza's active entrance into the teacher/pupil situation"³² involves a struggle against a dehumanising treatment by an insensitive, rude, bullying male. This situation is clearly articulated through Pickering's seemingly humanistic approach:

LIZA....[*To Pickering*] Oh, sir: youre a gentleman: dont let him speak to me like that.

PICKERING [*in good-humored remonstrance*] Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?

HIGGINS [*looking critically at her*] Oh no, I dont think so. Not any feelings that we need bother about. [*Cheerily*] Have you Eliza?

LIZA. I got my feelings same as anyone else.³³

Apparently, Pickering, as a representative of colonialism, knows what kind of discourse to use to keep the underdog in her/his place, whereas Higgins is always direct in his manner. Higgins is in effect from the start a self-dependent and egotistic person; more significant still, though depicted in a stage instruction as "*a robust, vital, appetizing sort of man of forty or thereabouts*,"³⁴ he, as Christopher Innes

³¹ Annette Kolodny, "A Map for Rereading," *The New Feminist Criticism*, p.62 n

³² Gainor, op. cit., p.226

³³ Shaw, op. cit., Act II, p.43

³⁴ Ibid., p.33

observes, “quite clearly represents a mechanistically distorted view of life,”³⁵ symbolised by “a life-size image of half a human head, shewing in section the vocal organs,”³⁶ besides “a phonograph, a laryngoscope, a row of tiny organ pipes with a bellows, a set of lamp chimneys for singing flames with burners attached to a gas plug in the wall by an indiarubber tube, several tuning-forks of different sizes...and a box containing a supply of wax cylinders for the phonograph”³⁷ in his drawing room, which has apparently been converted into a laboratory. It is a simple and comfortable looking, masculine room of a celibate scientist; it is, in a sense, a description of Higgins’s identity. He seems to be rejecting the traditional function of a drawing room as a centre for familial life, since the materials he uses for his experimentation in phonetics apparently occupy a prominent place in his. Therefore, the state of his drawing room can in essence be taken as a visual expression of the association of Higgins with the *mind*; and that mind is in the form of a clinical intellect. There is nothing feminine in this room; and the only object that could be associated with sensual pleasures is “a dessert dish heaped with fruit and sweets, mostly chocolates”³⁸ that stands on the piano; and the fact that chocolates comprise the majority of the sweets can be taken as the symbolisation of a childish spirit besides a repressed sensuality.

The way Higgins is dressed is another facet of the process of visual expression mentioned above. In a stage instruction, he is depicted as wearing “a professional-looking black frock-coat with a linen collar and black silk tie”³⁹; his attire is certainly of a formal and costly kind (that the dominant colour in his attire is black links him with death/mourning besides evil/Satan). And, moreover, he has a housekeeper working for him. These facts denote that he is a prominent patriarchal figure who does the *owning* in terms of wealth besides knowledge.

³⁵ Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.32

³⁶ Shaw, op. cit., p.32

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., p.33

³⁹ Ibid.

Higgins's scornful attitude towards Eliza, who dares, relying in effect on the supposed power of her hard-earned money, to go to the house of an upper-class individual to buy his knowledge, is phrased in rather denigrating terms which also bear explicit connotations of violence:

HIGGINS....Why, this is the girl I jotted down last night. She's no use...Be off with you: I don't want you....Pickering: shall we ask this baggage to sit down, or shall we throw her out of the window?⁴⁰

And this denigration is mirrored in Mrs Pearce's – the housekeeper – mode of behaviour, which is without doubt the manifestation of, besides class-consciousness, a need to side with her master for survival's sake:

THE FLOWER GIRL. Don't you be so saucy. You ain't heard what I come for yet. [*To Mrs Pearce, who is waiting at the door for further instructions*] Did you tell him I come in a taxi?

MRS PEARCE. Nonsense girl! What do you think a gentleman like Mr Higgins cares what you came in?....How can you be such a foolish ignorant girl as to think you could afford to pay Mr Higgins?⁴¹

Nevertheless, to Mrs Pearce's surprise, Higgins does not turn down Eliza's request. His motive in granting Eliza what she wants is not the money she offers – assuming with a pathetic naivety that the small amount of money she has would provide her with the power to bargain with a wealthy individual on equal terms – but Pickering's proposal to make a challenging wager which obviously stimulates the male creative impulse he is associated with:

PICKERING. Higgins: I'm interested. What about the ambassador's garden party? I'll say you're the greatest teacher alive if you make that good. I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you can't do it. And I'll pay for the lessons.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.37

⁴¹ Ibid., pp.37-38

⁴² Ibid., p.40

Higgins's response to Pickering, who becomes his alter ego in the course of the play, is in the form of a metaphorical expression of his passion for creativity, which the naïve flower girl takes literally:

HIGGINS [*tempted, looking at her*] It's almost irresistible. She's so deliciously low
– so horribly dirty –

LIZA [*protesting extremely*] Ah-ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo-oo!!! I aint dirty: I washed my
face and hands afore I come, I did.⁴³

“She's so deliciously low”: the lower the state of the raw material, the higher the degree of refinement; the more challenging the task, the greater the achievement. Contrary to Higgins, who is mainly concerned with the social geography of vowel sounds, Pickering seems to be concerned with linguistic meaning – the semantic; to put it another way, Higgins is linked with the *form*, whereas Pickering is linked with the *content*, and thus Pickering adds such a significance to the flower girl figure in this complex female/male relationship. Consequently, Eliza's persona comes to signify for Higgins a piece of mud to mould into the image of female in his mind, or perhaps a blank – virgin – piece of paper on which he, with the formative power he is granted, can write a female's history. He considers this prospect of creating a refined woman a great chance to prove his worth:

HIGGINS....Never lose a chance: it doesnt come every day. I shall make a duchess
of this draggletailed gutter snipe.⁴⁴

Accordingly, during the process of this transformation achieved through speech education, Higgins seems to assume the role of a surrogate father as well as the role of a teacher – two complementary versions of the male formative power, a situation foreshadowed in a dialogue preceding the commencement of the education in question:

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

MRS PEARCE. Dont cry, you silly girl. Sit down. Nobody is going to touch your money.

HIGGINS. Somebody is going to touch you, with a broomstick, if you don't stop snivelling. Sit down.

LIZA [*obeying slowly*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-oo-o! One would think you was my father.

HIGGINS. If I decide to teach you, I'll be worse than two fathers to you.⁴⁵

This situation is backed up by Eliza's being an orphan, brought up in a motherless home:

LIZA. I aint got no parents. They told me I was big enough to earn my own living and turned me out.

MRS PEARCE. Wheres your mother?

LIZA. I aint got no mother. Her that turned me out was my sixth stepmother. But I done without them. And I'm a good girl, I am.⁴⁶

The rejection of the function of a maternal figure in Eliza's identity formation seems to be part of the author's design to fortify the paternal and pedagogical roles ascribed to the main male character, justifying in a sense his possession of control over her, so that Higgins can claim: "The girl doesnt belong to anybody – is no use to anybody but me."⁴⁷

Thus the relationship between Eliza and Higgins is constructed on an essentially binary system of conceptualisation that yields variant readings: father/child, teacher/pupil, upper class/lower class, wealthy/poor, master/slave, creator/creation, and accordingly, subject/object, culture/nature, intellect/emotion, powerful/weak, clean/dirty... And the motives of the two figures are in sharp contrast with each other in terms of self-fulfilment: Higgins aspires to greatness, whereas Eliza, while living on the margins of the society, yearns for a valid stature

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.39

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.43

⁴⁷ Ibid.

which she thinks would bring her security and respectability. And, though she explicitly states that she intends to go on earning her life ("I want to be a lady in a flower shop stead of selling at the corner of Tottenham Court Road."⁴⁸), she conveys, through a very covert mode of expression, her desire for marriage as well:

MRS PEARCE....But you dont know anything about her...She may be married.

LIZA. Garn!

HIGGINS. There! As the girl very properly says, Garn! Married indeed! Dont you know that a woman of that class looks a worn out drudge of fifty a year after she's married?

LIZA. Whood marry me?⁴⁹

Whereas Higgins, though apparently aware of social realities, seems to be totally self-sufficient and exempted from such supposedly ordinary scruples as he is essentially cast as a man of transcendent genius; indeed, he arrogantly declares: "I can do without anybody. I have my own soul: my own spark of divine fire."⁵⁰

However, the play is subtitled "A Romance," and the story of Eliza's rise certainly raises romantic expectations that are quite in line with those found in the popular Cinderella story, a story, as Innes points out, "had been reworked so many times that it had achieved the status of social myth."⁵¹ Thus the dynamic of another function, that is, the function of being a prospective lover is added to Higgins's persona rendering him a teacher/father/lover figure in this Cinderella-Pygmalion story of transformation. Despite the underlying irony and the seeming heterodoxy in the representation of social and psychological realities culminating in the ambiguity of the ending, the symbolic significance of these myths are maintained throughout the play: as both myths are male-authored myths, they are both based on the assumed power of the male to shape a female life; and the heroines of both myths are made to fall in love with the heroes.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.37

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.42

⁵⁰ Ibid., Act V, p.133

⁵¹ Innes, op. cit., p.31

When considered in the context of the history of drama, it can be seen that *Pygmalion* is centred upon the conventions of the nineteenth-century Romantic Comedy genre, which had three characteristic story motifs: the first was misalliance between classes; the second, closely related to the first, was a Cinderella-Galatea motif of transformation and testing; the third was the opposition of youth and age.⁵² The axis of all three motifs is the notion of female weakness, a fact invoking one of Freud's misogynistic comments on the female psyche: though Freud acknowledges his incapacity to comprehend what the true and authentic womanhood means by saying "We are ignorant of what characterizes a feminine brain," he, nevertheless, identifies the feminine mental qualities with "shyness", "modesty", and a "need for instruction and assistance."⁵³ This identification captures the dominant atmosphere of *Pygmalion*, and the last phrase has particular relevance to the position Eliza is situated in – as apparently there are no other options open to her, she seeks for the male's instruction and assistance.

"One intriguing element of the discourse of gender in the Victorian and Edwardian eras is the uniform assumption, on the part of the theorists, of the stability and universally shared understanding of the connotations of 'masculine' and 'feminine',"⁵⁴ observes Gainor, quoting Carolyn Heilbrun's comment on the longevity of these assumptions:

If we are still, in our definition of sexual roles, the heirs of the Victorian age, we must also recognize that our definitions of the terms "masculine" and "feminine" are themselves little more than unexamined, received ideas. According to the conventional view, "masculine" equals forceful, competent, competitive, controlling, vigorous, unsentimental, and occasionally violent; "feminine" equals tender, genteel, intuitive rather than rational, passive, unaggressive, readily given to submission. The "masculine" individual is popularly seen as a maker, the "feminine" as a nourisher.⁵⁵

⁵² See Meisel, op. cit., p.161

⁵³ Sigmund Freud, "The Sexual Aberrations," *The Freud Reader*, pp.244-245

⁵⁴ Gainor, op. cit., p.81

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Then Gainor quotes from Dr. Beatrice M. Hinkle's essay "On the Arbitrary Use of the Terms 'Masculine' and 'Feminine'" published in *The Psychoanalytic Review* in 1920 on the grounds that it supports Heilbrun's sense of the ongoing impact of the Victorian conception of gender:

Masculine immediately brings the collective picture of strength, aggressiveness, courage, a fighting, dominating, conquering figure, sexually polygamous, with vigorous action in both the physical and intellectual spheres. The creative, constructive, adventurous, independent human being is, of course, the male.

Obversely, the feminine characteristics are presumed to be passivity, submissiveness, timidity, weakness, emotionalism, with instability and perverseness as the most dominant traits; gentleness, sweetness, spirituality, chastity as her great virtue; in short, all the qualities with which we associate infantilism, which is another word for the ideal feminine character.⁵⁶

Indeed, the "creative, constructive, adventurous, independent" Higgins infantilises Eliza; putting himself on a pedestal – since he is established as a "maker", he sees her as a *lack*, for within such a system of binary distinctions feminine "lack" seems necessary to shore up the fiction of masculine wholeness.⁵⁷

Consequently, the first three acts of the play move along a plot line that overtly resembles the fairy-tale plot of *Cinderella* besides the seemingly different plot of the Pygmalion myth, for the supposed transformation of a ragged cockney girl into a "princess" is certainly in the form of a Cinderellan metamorphosis. Meisel points out that:

In a society where the duchess and the flower girl can be said to belong to two nations, a miraculous transformation is almost a necessary part of a match between

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp.81-82

⁵⁷ See Lynda Hart, "Motherhood According to Karen Finley: The Theory of Total Blame," *A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre and Performance: On and Beyond the Stage*, Ed. by Carol Martin, London, Routledge, 1996, p.115

the classes. Despite their beauty and their goodness, Cinderella and Galatea in the nineteenth-century romance had to be touched by the magic wand of an education.⁵⁸

The Cinderella and Galatea motifs seem to have served on the author's part as dramatic points of departure apparently by virtue of the theatrical appeal they have for the audiences. For, in Meisel's words, "The transformation of Eliza, from flower girl to what Higgins calls 'my creation of a Duchess Eliza,' by learning to speak and to play the part of a lady, is in fact a staple of theatrical romance."⁵⁹

Yet, as the story of her transformation is set within a seemingly realistic framework, Eliza has to work hard to achieve her goal and, moreover, the "prince" she encounters is rather different from Cinderella's. Quite significantly, her prince is cast as a scientist-creator; Higgins, together with Pickering, represents the patriarchal tradition of rendering the male the primary possessor of scientific knowledge on the grounds that the male is a more intelligent and a more rational being than the female. As Luce Irigaray observes:

Scientific discourses and serious scientific practices are still the privilege of men, as is the management of the political in general and of the most private aspects of our lives as women. Their discourses, their values, their dreams and their desires have the force of law, everywhere and in all things. Everywhere and in all things, they define women's function and social role, and the sexual identity they are, or are not, to have. They know, they have access to the truth; we do not.⁶⁰

Again, Eliza's creator seems very far from being a romantic and benevolent prince; Higgins is delineated as a rather harsh personage evidently in order to elude the peril of sentimentality (since it is supposedly a female trait). Carried away with the idea of achieving a miraculous transformation, he entrusts Mrs Pearce with the cleaning of the slovenly girl – apparently knowing that it is something inappropriate for a male

⁵⁸ Meisel, op. cit., p.171

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.170

⁶⁰ Luce Irigaray, "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," *The Irigaray Reader*, Ed. by. Margaret Whitford, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1995, p.35

to carry out – by giving her several orders in a very brusque and offensive manner; he does not show any concern for Mrs Pearce's or the girl's feelings evidently presuming that giving orders is his natural right and taking the traditionally inferior position of women for granted:

HIGGINS....We'll start today: now! this moment! Take her away and clean her, Mrs Pearce. Monkey Brand,⁶¹ if it wont come off any other way. Is there a good fire in the kitchen?

MRS PEARCE [*protesting*] Yes; but –

HIGGINS [*storming on*] Take all her clothes off and burn them. Ring up Whiteley⁶² or somebody for new ones. Wrap her up in brown paper til they come.

LIZA. Youre no gentleman, youre not, to talk of such things. I'm a good girl, I am; and I know what the like of you are, I do.

HIGGINS. We want none of your Lisson Grove⁶³ prudery here, young woman. Youve got to learn to behave like a duchess. Take her away, Mrs Pearce. If she gives you any trouble, wallop her.

LIZA....No! I'll call the police, I will.

MRS PEARCE. But Ive no place to put her.

HIGGINS. Put her in the dustbin⁶⁴

Through his derogatory discourse that connects Eliza with Monkey Brand, brown paper and dustbin, Higgins overtly situates the desperate girl in an object position. In the meantime, he appears to be insensitively dismissive of the sort of shame that her lower-class background has given her. Whereas Eliza seems intent on clinging to her puritanical upbringing knowing clearly that it is only a short step from selling flowers on the streets to selling her body to those who can afford it.

In effect, the threat of physical violence remains in the air throughout the play, and from her protestation in the first act, "I'm a good girl, I am," through her

⁶¹ Very strong soap used for cleaning kitchen pots and pans.

⁶² A famous London store of the day.

⁶³ A slum area in west London at that time. In the first act, Higgins concludes from the way Eliza speaks that she was born and brought up in that area.

⁶⁴ Shaw, op. cit., Act II, p.41

taunt in the fifth act to Higgins, “Wring away. What do I care? I knew you’d strike me some day,”⁶⁵ Eliza persistently expresses concern for her sexual and physical safety.⁶⁶ However, in actual fact, Higgins’s threats of violence remain totally verbal. Moreover, one can discern an endeavour on the author’s part to ground Higgins’s arrogance, abruptness and aggressiveness on an unconscious attractiveness besides a childish innocence and lack of consciousness apparently in order to conciliate the audiences’ sympathy. And these traits, in combination with some flaws seemingly added to Higgins’s godlike persona to render him a credible human being, are mainly expressed through Mrs Pearce, who is in effect drawn as a maternal figure invested with a seeming authority to guide:

MRS PEARCE....theres more ways than one of turning a girl’s head; and nobody can do it better than Mr Higgins, though he may not always mean it....Of course I know you dont mean her any harm; but when you get what you call interested in people’s accents, you never think or care what may happen to them or you.⁶⁷

Furthermore, Higgins himself, after having been instructed by Mrs Pearce to behave during Eliza’s education (as Eliza would model herself on him), claims that he is childish in spirit:

MRS PEARCE....Will you please be very particular what you say before the girl?....youre not at all particular when youve mislaid anything or when you get a little impatient. Now it doesnt matter before me: I’m used to it. But you really must not swear before the girl....might I ask you not to come down to breakfast in your dressing-gown, or at any rate not to use it as a napkin to the extent you do, sir. And if you would be so good as not to eat everything off the same plate, and to remember not to put the porridge saucepan out of your hand on the clean tablecloth, it would be a better example to the girl. You know you nearly choked yourself with a fishbone in the jam only last week.

.....

⁶⁵ Ibid., Act V, p.137
⁶⁶ See Gainor, op. cit., p.229
⁶⁷ Shaw, op. cit., Act II, pp.40-46

HIGGINS. You know, Pickering, that woman has the most extraordinary ideas about me. Here I am, a shy, diffident sort of man. I've never been able to feel really grown up and tremendous, like other chaps. And yet she's firmly persuaded that I'm an arbitrary overbearing bossing kind of person. I can't account for it.⁶⁸

Again, when Eliza, frightened at the thought that she might lose her "character" and "respectability" at the hands of Higgins, attempts – though reluctantly – to run away, Higgins, with a turnabout, starts to coax like a child dangling several options in front of her to persuade her to stay and submit to his experiment:

HIGGINS....Eliza, the streets will be strewn with the bodies of men shooting themselves for your sake before I've done with you....And you shall marry an officer in the Guards, with a beautiful moustache: the son of a marquis, who will disinherit him for marrying you, but will relent when he sees your beauty and goodness.⁶⁹

With these prospects Higgins overtly parodies the popular romances based on the rise of women of low rank through the magical wand of men of high rank, trying at the same time to utilise Eliza's desperate yearnings. Furthermore, he creates a parody of what Meisel calls "a seduction scene"⁷⁰:

HIGGINS [*snatching a chocolate cream from the piano, his eyes suddenly beginning to twinkle with mischief*] Have some chocolates, Eliza.

LIZA [*halting, tempted*] How do I know what might be in them? I've heard of girls being drugged by the like of you.

Higgins whips out his penknife; cuts a chocolate in two; puts one half into his mouth and bolts it; and offers her the other half.

HIGGINS. Pledge of good faith, Eliza. I eat one half: you eat the other. [*Liza opens her mouth to retort: he pops the half chocolate into it*]. You shall have boxes of them, barrels of them, every day. You shall live on them. Eh?

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp.51-53

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.42-45

⁷⁰ Meisel, op. cit., p.175

LIZA [*who has disposed of the chocolate after being nearly choked by it*] I wouldnt have ate it, only I'm too ladylike to take it out of my mouth.⁷¹

This “seduction scene” bears another of Shaw’s fairy-tale allusions: it subtly invokes *Snow White*,⁷² another popular fairy tale based on a metaphor of male creativity as well as a dichotomous imagery concerning the female characters, for it certainly has an oblique reference to the evil queen’s – stepmother to Snow White – tricking Snow White into eating the poisoned portion of the apple she offers by breaking it in two first and eating the unadulterated portion, as a result of which Snow White falls into a deathlike sleep and, placed in a glass coffin by the dwarfs, lies in the forest as a lifeless being until the day when a prince brings her back to life and takes her as his wife. Cixous’s views on such male-authored myths are quite revealing:

One cannot yet say of the following history “it’s just a story.” It’s a tale still true today. Most women who have awakened remember having slept, *having been put to sleep*.

Once upon a time...once...and once again.

Beauties slept in their woods, waiting for princes to come and wake them up. In their beds, in their glass coffins, in their childhood forests like dead women. Beautiful, but passive; hence desirable: all mystery emanates from them. It is men who like to play dolls. As we have known since Pygmalion. Their old dream: to be god the mother. The best mother, the second mother, the one who gives the second birth.⁷³

Gainor suggests that “Shaw’s association of Higgins with the evil stepmother adds a dark tone to *Pygmalion* – one that contrasts with the fairy godmother transformation of the slavey Cinderella,”⁷⁴ and links that dark tone with the reiterated threat of violence directed at Eliza. However, as far as similarity between *Cinderella*

⁷¹ Shaw, op. cit., p.44

⁷² See Gainor, op. cit., p.228

⁷³ Quoted by Gainor, ibid., pp.227-228

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.229

and *Snow White* is concerned, there is a crucial point that should not be overlooked: it is the fact that in *Cinderella* the transformation Cinderella undergoes through the fairy godmother's magical wand is an ephemeral process, a preliminary and preparatory stage in her transformation; it is ultimately the prince that achieves the real and permanent transformation by granting her a new identity through an alteration in her social position.

In effect, all three of these myths – *Pygmalion*, *Cinderella* and *Snow White* – are fundamentally invested with a mode of imagery that characterises the secondary status of woman. Therefore, they can all be defined as metaphors for men's supposed power of transformation grounded on the assumption of male creativity as given. Accordingly, the allusion to *Snow White*, reinforced by the mirror motif (the mirror in Eliza's room reflects her newly acquired identity), ultimately seems to highlight Higgins's supposed power to awaken a woman. And the dark tone in question seems to be more closely related to the moral issue brought forward by the personages around Higgins: paralleling Eliza's protestations "I'm a good girl, I am," and "I've heard of girls being drugged by the like of you," Mrs Pearce and Pickering react negatively to Higgins's temptation of the girl suspecting his designs. For it seems incredible to all of them that such a wealthy and intellectual man should have taken on the education of a poor and ignorant girl so far beneath him and picked off the streets as if she were, in Mrs Pearce's words, "a pebble on the beach,"⁷⁵ without a commonly recognised motive, that is, the desire to exploit the weaker. Higgins's interest in such a girl seems rather suspect to Mrs Pearce and Pickering though both of them have the function of conveying his essential goodness – Mrs Pearce exhibits Higgins's childish ignorance, and Pickering, taking on the gentleness and benevolence Higgins lacks, subtextually imposes the idea that, since he likes him, Higgins can be seen as a likeable person. When Higgins tries to tempt Eliza by offering her "chocolates, and taxis, and gold, and diamonds,"⁷⁶ in his parody of the seduction of lower-class women by upper-class men in the traditional romances of

⁷⁵ Shaw, op. cit., p.42

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.45

the materialistic system, Mrs Pearce ventures to warn him revealing the lower classes' emphasis on morality:

MRS PEARCE. Mr Higgins: your tempting the girl. It's not right. She should think of the future.⁷⁷

Then Pickering asks:

PICKERING. Excuse the straight question, Higgins. Are you a man of good character where women are concerned?⁷⁸

And Higgins himself tries to find a legitimate reason for Eliza's staying in his house:

HIGGINS....[*He goes to Mrs Pearce and begins coaxing*]. You can adopt her, Mrs Pearce: I'm sure a daughter would be a great amusement to you.⁷⁹

In the meantime, Eliza's biological father, Alfred Doolittle, who is drawn as a caricature of a dustman, arrives at the house, as Higgins ironically puts it, "to rescue her from a fate worse than death,"⁸⁰ though he admits that "I never brought her up at all, except to give her a lick of a strap now and again."⁸¹ However, beguiling the two gentlemen with his casuistic rhetoric and eloquence in explaining that he is "one of the undeserving poor,"⁸² morality is something that he "cant afford,"⁸³ and "middle class morality" is "just an excuse for never giving me anything,"⁸⁴ he settles the matter for five pounds; in other words, he sells his daughter for five pounds, as Gainor points out, "acting out the exchange of women in patriarchal culture."⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.50

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.43

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.57

⁸¹ Ibid., p.63

⁸² Ibid., p.59

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp.59-60

⁸⁵ Gainor, op. cit., p.230

Higgins seems to submit to everything in order to hold Eliza, but, as his private conversation with Pickering (whom he apparently sees as his only match) testifies, his interest in her proves to be thoroughly scientific and artistic. In this conversation, he exposes his incapacity to love a woman through a dichotomous reasoning based on an explicit misogyny:

HIGGINS....I find that the moment I let a woman make friends with me, she becomes jealous, exacting, suspicious, and a damned nuisance. I find that the moment I let myself make friends with a woman, I become selfish and tyrannical. Women upset everything. When you let them into your life, you find that the woman is driving at one thing and you're driving at another....So here I am, a confirmed old bachelor, and likely to remain so.

PICKERING....If I'm to be in this business I shall feel responsible for that girl. I hope it's understood that no advantage is to be taken of her position.

HIGGINS. What! That thing! Sacred, I assure you...You see, she'll be a pupil; and teaching would be impossible unless pupils were sacred. I've taught scores of American millionairesses how to speak English: the best looking women in the world. I'm seasoned. They might as well be blocks of wood. *I* might as well be a block of wood.⁸⁶

Reminiscent of the "life-size image of half a human head" in his laboratory, Higgins's phrase "blocks of wood" is obviously a metaphor for his apparent imperviousness to the beauty of women, whom he sees as chaotic creatures. Apparently, this imagery is meant to be the expression of his reductive dismissal of women, which distances him, in a sense, from the ordinary human life-cycle whilst subtextually revealing the twisted logic of a problematic state of mind. None the less, on the surface level, Higgins impresses the audience as a transcendent and isolated figure totally absorbed in mental work, therefore, not apt to be easily tempted by women. Whitman's comment, which clearly reflects the dominant male viewpoint, captures the role Shaw allocates to Henry Higgins: Whitman points out that the major Shavian heroes, such as Higgins, Caesar, Don Juan, Undershaft and the early

⁸⁶ Shaw, op. cit., pp.50-51

longlivers of *Back to Methuselah* share “the feeling of almost godlike isolation that characterizes the lonely heights of the realist,” and Eliza’s “development follows much the same pattern as other ‘learners’: Barbara Undershaft or Cleopatra or Ellie Dunn.”⁸⁷ Then he explains the pattern in question as follows:

They all start out in almost complete spiritual and intellectual opposition to a figure possessing superhuman clarity of perception and strength of purpose, whom they never really understand, but who in a series of educational confrontations, lifts them to higher levels of self-consciousness and of realism in their awareness of the world around them. Characterizing these superhumanly perceptive teachers or models as godlike is not mere hyperbole. In a very real Shavian sense these figures partake of godhead, and their function, whether in the dimension of “world-historical” events or on the private and domestic level, is to encourage or coerce more ordinary mortals into a larger participation in, or exercise of, their own potential divinity.⁸⁸

Whitman’s discourse of criticism itself seems imbued with hyperbolic allusions – particularly in terms of the dimensions of those supposedly godlike heroes’ functions – yet it fits with Shaw’s rendering quite well. Likewise, Gordon comments that “The strength of *Pygmalion* has much to do with the unresolved tension between the ‘higher’ consciousness of Higgins and the ‘lower’ consciousness of Eliza.”⁸⁹ Indeed, in *Pygmalion*, Shaw establishes a conspicuously asymmetrical relationship between Eliza and Higgins specifically with regard to the nature of their consciousness and maintains it throughout the play. The “lower consciousness” ascribed to Eliza contrasts deeply with the “higher consciousness” ascribed to “godlike” Higgins; and as a lively but ignorant and hysterical young woman the only thing she can understand is that her teacher is of an egotistic and apathetic nature: “Oh, youve no feeling heart in you: you dont care for nothing but yourself.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Whitman, op. cit., p.208

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp.208-209

⁸⁹ Gordon, loc. cit.

⁹⁰ Shaw, op. cit., p.44

These male critics' readings are quite in line with Shaw's conceptualisation of male supremacy, but the note of admiration in their interpretations is detectable; and they seem to gloss over the incapacity of those male figures supposedly "possessing superhuman clarity of perception and strength of purpose" to understand the female characters they supposedly educate and "lift to higher levels of self-consciousness."

Again, such male critics overlook the fact that in *Pygmalion*, most significantly, the physical violation of Eliza is projected onto a female character, namely Mrs Pearce, undoubtedly in order to maintain Higgins's supposedly essential naivety, childish geniality and, more importantly, respectability as intact. Needless to point out, such a projection bears the significance of introducing a subtextual and oblique method of degrading women. Higgins himself never touches Eliza, but at the outset he threatens her by declaring "If you're naughty and idle you will...be walloped by Mrs Pearce with a broomstick,"⁹¹ (he obviously pictures Mrs Pearce as a *witch* with the phallic broomstick), and then he makes Mrs Pearce actually touch her; and thus fulfils his threat of violence through his servant. Though drawn as a domineering, scolding and at times flattering maternal figure paralleling Higgins's biological mother, Mrs Higgins, Mrs Pearce is ultimately in the position of an employee and is obliged to obey her employer's commands for the sake of her survival in a divided society: her employer – master – orders her to clean Eliza and when necessary to "wallop" her claiming "We must help her to prepare and fit herself for her new station in life,"⁹² and she acts accordingly. As a first step in the fulfilment of her duty, she, relying on the pseudo-authority transferred to her, gives commands to Eliza:

MRS PEARCE. Don't answer back, girl. You don't understand the gentleman. Come with me. [*She leads the way to the door, and holds it open for Eliza*].⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid., p.46

⁹² Ibid., p.41

⁹³ Ibid., p.46

Then she takes Eliza, whom she belittles by addressing her as “girl” in imitation of her master’s scornful manner, into a spare bedroom that opens into a bathroom. The transference of Eliza from the small and cold room containing “*a wretched bed heaped with all sorts of coverings that have any warmth in them*,”⁹⁴ which she used to live in at a rent of four shillings a week, to a luxurious bedroom metaphorically signifies the first stage of her transformation. However, the simile that Mrs Pearce uses clearly shows that this stage will on Eliza’s part be achieved at the expense of dignity:

LIZA. O-h, I couldnt sleep here, missus. It’s too good for the likes of me. I should be afraid to touch anything. I aint a duchess yet, you know.

MRS PEARCE. You have got to make yourself as clean as the room: then you wont be afraid of it.⁹⁵

Again, after Eliza confesses that “I’ve never had a bath in my life,”⁹⁶ and expresses her fear of having a bath rendering it identical with death – loss of character/virginity – (“It’s not natural: it would kill me.”⁹⁷), Mrs Pearce throws her reiterated assertion “I’m a good girl,” into question by saying “You know you cant be a nice girl inside if you are a dirty slut outside”⁹⁸; for the definition “slut” means “prostitute” as well as “slatern.” Eliza’s sorrowful exclamation “Boohoo!!!!” as a response to Mrs Pearce’s statement seems to fortify the impression that Mrs Pearce actually refers to the sexual connotation of that definition. That Eliza clings to her notion of decency more strongly when Mrs Pearce orders her to “take off all [her] clothes,” and “wrap [herself]”⁹⁹ in the gown she hands to her can be taken as further evidence for the impression in question:

LIZA [*all tears*] I cant. I wont. I’m not used to it. Ive never took off all my clothes

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.31

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.47

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.47

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p.48

⁹⁹ Ibid.

before. It's not right: it's not decent.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, Eliza succumbs, and Mrs Pearce acts out her mimetic relationship with her master:

*Mrs Pearce puts on a pair of white rubber sleeves, and fills the bath, mixing hot and cold, and testing the result with the bath thermometer. She perfumes it with a handful of bath salts and adds a palmful of mustard. She then takes a formidable looking long handled scrubbing brush and soaps it profusely with a ball of scented soap.*¹⁰¹

The bathtub, the rubber sleeves and the thermometer certainly evoke the cold scientific atmosphere of Higgins's laboratory. And with the addition of a phallic brush, Mrs Pearce is clearly pictured in this scene as a surrogate for her master: when "*Eliza comes back with nothing on but the bath gown huddled tightly round her, a piteous spectacle of abject terror,*"¹⁰² Mrs Pearce "*deftly snatching the gown away and throwing Eliza down on her back...sets to work with the scrubbing brush,*"¹⁰³ and "*Eliza's screams are heartrending.*"¹⁰⁴ Gainor suggests that this bath scene can be read as a symbolical "rape" scene with the implications of a lesbian context:

The phallic brush and cleansing ball are applied with the clinical coldness of the bath/laboratory's rubber gloves. That Eliza should be thrown on her back to be "cleaned," which in a bathtub would literally lead to drowning, cements the rape imagery, highlighting ... the symbolic interpretation over the literal.¹⁰⁵

And furthermore, Gainor comments that Shaw's using of a female surrogate for the male rapist might "point to a homophobic attitude in Shaw, one that conflicts

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., pp.48-49

¹⁰² Ibid., p.49

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Gainor, op. cit., p.236

with his public egalitarianism on matters of sexuality,”¹⁰⁶ and observes that:

Shaw’s conflicting feelings about lesbian sexuality appear in scenes of violence and/or conflict between women tinged with sexual aggression. He never makes these relations overt; indeed, he buries them in heterosexual contexts, masking lesbianism as he no doubt ... wanted it to be suppressed.¹⁰⁷

In the final analysis, the overall picture in this scene is one of degradation: a female character is made to take on the task of applying physical violence to Eliza, thus safeguarding Higgins’s godlike existence, whilst Eliza is purged of her dirt – her old identity – to become a thoroughly blank – virgin – page for that scientist-artist to write his success down. Supposedly endowed with the ability to erase differences in human beings, Higgins, as John Russell Brown points out, “is interested only in the limited process of creating a duchess out of a common flower girl in six months, whereas Eliza is interested in what might become of her life.”¹⁰⁸ And throughout the process in question, he regards Eliza as a thing to manipulate, showing no interest in her sexual identity. However, his apathetic attitude towards female sexuality, basically associated with his passion for his profession besides his class-consciousness, is paradoxically traced back to his excessive admiration of his mother: the motif of incest lurks beneath the private conversation between Higgins and his mother, which takes place on Mrs Higgins’s “at home” day before her visitors – the Eynsford-Hills – arrive:

HIGGINS....I’ve picked up a girl.

MRS HIGGINS. Does that mean that some girl has picked you up?

HIGGINS. Not at all. I don’t mean a love affair.

MRS HIGGINS. What a pity!

HIGGINS. Why?

MRS HIGGINS. Well, you never fall in love with anyone under forty-five. When will you discover that there are some rather nice-looking young women about?

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p.79

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ John Russell Brown, “A Personal Essay,” *Pygmalion*, Ed. by Gerard Gould, London, Longman Group Ltd., 1987, p.xxii

HIGGINS. Oh, I cant be bothered with young women. My idea of a lovable woman is somebody as like you as possible. I shall never get into the way of seriously liking young women: some habits lie too deep to be changed. [*Rising abruptly and walking about, jingling his money and his keys in his trouser pockets*] Besides, theyre all idiots.¹⁰⁹

In this brief scene Higgins provides the audience with a strong clue to his mystery – the origin and development of his peculiar mental state, which evokes the Don Juan syndrome presented in *Man and Superman*. However, contrary to the subtle and obscure treatment of that syndrome in *Man and Superman*, Higgins’s seemingly childish inhumanity – specifically to women – is overtly based upon the fact that he is profoundly attached to his mother – his first love object. The particular conditioning in regard to his object-choice in his personal relationships seems to be the outcome of his overvaluing his mother and idealising her as a unique and irreplaceable female figure. In other words, Higgins is another example of the type of man who remains fixated at the infantile stage of his life unconsciously striving to reunite with his mother. Freud’s explanation concerning the obsessional impulses of such men fits with the characterisation of Higgins peculiarly well:

They are derived from the infantile fixation of tender feelings on the mother and represent one of the consequences of that fixation. In normal love only a few characteristics survive which reveal unmistakably the maternal prototype of the object-choice, as, for instance, the preference shown by young men for mature women; the detachment of libido from the mother has been effected relatively swiftly.¹¹⁰

However, Higgins seems to be of a type whose “libido has remained attached to the mother for so long, even after the onset of puberty, that the maternal characteristics remain stamped on the love-objects that are chosen later, and all these turn into easily recognizable mother-surrogates.”¹¹¹ In this respect, Higgins’s mother is a hidden

¹⁰⁹ Shaw, op. cit., Act III, p.70

¹¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, “A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men,” *The Freud Reader*, p.390

¹¹¹ Ibid.

rival for every woman he meets, and, therefore, “every surrogate ...fails to provide the desired satisfaction.”¹¹²

Consequently, Higgins’s passion for science appears to be a form of sublimation: the inhibited sexual impulses are “sublimated – raised ... to the sexually indifferent *logos*, science, logic.”¹¹³ “Science is,” observes Freud, “after all, the most complete renunciation of the pleasure principle of which our mental activity is capable.”¹¹⁴ In short, such attributes of Higgins create the impression that, in his mental life, his umbilical cord has never been cut off, but what Freud calls “mental dams” are consistently at work. This situation seems to be intended to keep the audience waiting in suspense till the end of the play to learn whether Eliza would succeed in raising herself to the status of a love-object, while, subtextually, imposing the image of a detached man of genius.

As for Mrs Higgins, she is drawn as a domineering, scolding, but essentially caring maternal figure. Being an archetypically good woman, an example of angel mother, she is basically associated with common sense and experience, and her role is, as Gordon observes, “to explain to the men the full humanity of Eliza,”¹¹⁵ while exposing the egocentricity of those men. She reacts negatively to Higgins’s and Pickering’s boasting about Eliza’s successful performance before an audience of Eynsford-Hills. In fact, Eliza’s success in this preliminary test scene, which takes place in Mrs Higgins’s drawing room, is a pseudo-success, for she starts with a refined and mechanical mode of speech,

LIZA. The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Gallop, op. cit., p.64

¹¹⁴ Freud, op. cit., p.388

¹¹⁵ Gordon, op. cit., p.150

¹¹⁶ Shaw, op. cit., p.78

but ends up with the street talk,

LIZA....they done the old woman in....Not bloody likely.¹¹⁷

None the less, she passes the test in that the Eynsford-Hills do not recognise her as she “*is exquisitely dressed*,”¹¹⁸ and her voice and diction are perfect. Moreover, the pretentious Eynsford-Hills take her street talk as the latest fashion in high society; in consequence, Eliza charms Freddy and delights Clara:

FREDDY. The new small talk. You do it so awfully well.

.....

MRS EYNSFORD HILL [*suffering from shock*] Well, I really cant get used to the new ways.

CLARA....Oh, it's all right mamma, quite right. People will think we never go anywhere or see anybody if you are so old-fashioned....Such bloody nonsense!....Ha! Ha!¹¹⁹

This test, followed by Eliza's real test at the Ambassador's party (which marks her debut in high society), demonstrates the artificiality of class distinctions. As Innes points out, “Society defines people's values by externals, and the Eynsford-Hill family show the stupefying repression of keeping up appearances.”¹²⁰ And Higgins, rendering language – the instrument of paternity – a metaphor for civilisation, claims that “to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her” eradicates “the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul.”¹²¹ However, as a scientist he can in effect merely change the *form*. In this respect, Pickering's state of mind parallels Higgins's:

PICKERING....We take Eliza very seriously. Every week – every day almost –

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp.78-80

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p.77

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp.80-82

¹²⁰ Innes, op. cit., p.32

¹²¹ Shaw, op. cit., p.84

there is some new change...We keep records of every stage – dozens of gramophone disks and photographs.¹²²

It is Mrs Higgins that seems to be concerned about the *content* of the change in question. She clearly sees the artificiality of Higgins's creation: "You silly boy... She's a triumph of your art and of her dressmaker's."¹²³ And reminiscent of Mrs Pearce, she exposes the insensitivity of the two men in regard to Eliza's future whilst implicitly reflecting the supposed keenness of the female on maintaining the patriarchal code of morality:

MRS HIGGINS....Colonel Pickering: dont you realize that when Eliza walked into Wimpole Street, something walked in with her?

PICKERING. Her father did. But Henry soon got rid of him.

MRS HIGGINS. It would have been more to the point if her mother had. But as her mother didnt something else did.

PICKERING. But what?

MRS HIGGINS....A problem.

PICKERING. Oh, I see. The problem of how to pass her off as a lady.

HIGGINS. I'll solve that problem. Ive half solved it already.

MRS HIGGINS. No, you two infinitely stupid male creatures: the problem of what is to be done with her afterwards.¹²⁴

Again, most significantly, she reveals the almost prototypical nature of Shaw's artist-man through a statement that clearly parallels Cixous's observation quoted above: "You certainly are a pretty pair of babies, playing with your live doll."¹²⁵

None the less, within the educational context of the play, both Mrs Pearce and Mrs Higgins are ultimately rendered ineffectual teacher figures – Higgins does not carry out their instructions and remains incorrigible – as their creative power is

¹²² Ibid., p.85

¹²³ Ibid., p.83

¹²⁴ Ibid., pp.86-87

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.84

confined to domestic life and personal relations, whilst the educational role is totally attributed to the male characters.

Besides these maternal figures, Eliza, too, tries to change Higgins through what seems an upheaval after six months' slavery that entails rendering Higgins some services (Higgins tells his mother that "She's useful. She knows where my things are, and remembers my appointments and so forth."¹²⁶), and putting up with a mental and emotional cruelty. She actually passes herself off as a Duchess with her perfect speech and outfits at the garden party (the Embassy reception in the film) deceiving even an expert in language, Nepommuck (Hairy Faced Dick), who turns out to be one of Higgins's pupils, into declaring that "She is a princess."¹²⁷ However, Higgins takes all the credit when things go well; in effect, neither Higgins nor Pickering appreciates Eliza's successful performance. The change in her expression (She "looks at" Higgins "darkly," and her "beauty becomes murderous."¹²⁸) whilst sitting in stony silence in Higgins's laboratory as she listens to Higgins and Pickering lightly discussing the triumph of their bet is the first sign of her rebellion. Then, she actually tries to hurt Higgins by "*snatching up*" his "*slippers and hurling them at him one after the other with all her force.*"¹²⁹

Eliza's slipper throwing certainly creates an ironical inversion of the popular Cinderella, who has to rush back slipperless to her kitchen on the stroke of midnight; yet, subtextually, it signifies the attribution of hysteria and, more significantly, violence to the female, an attribution initially presented through the characterisation of Mrs Pearce foreshadowing the analogy between the two female figures. This attribution is reiterated when Eliza, as a response to Higgins's insulting labels, such as "insect" and "creature," "*gives a suffocated scream of fury, and instinctively darts her nails at his face,*"¹³⁰ which causes Higgins to associate her, echoing Tanner's associations concerning Ann in *Man and Superman*, with the cat: "Claws in, you

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.84

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.98

¹²⁸ Ibid., Act IV, pp.101-103

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.104

¹³⁰ Ibid.

cat.”¹³¹ But whilst Tanner’s associations remain on a metaphorical level, Eliza is overtly portrayed by the author as an instinctively witching – reminiscent of Mrs Pearce and her “broomstick” – and ungrateful female, perhaps because she is fundamentally established as a woman that ranks below Ann in terms of social position.

Eliza’s hysterical upheaval obviously serves as an outlet for thoughts and feelings that have place in her heart and brain. In this way she expresses her concern about the course of her future life; however, the reproaches she heaps on Higgins bear the implication that she desires her mentor to shape that course:

LIZA....Whats to become of me? Whats to become of me?

HIGGINS. How the devil I know whats to become of you? What does it matter what becomes of you?

LIZA. You dont care. I know you dont care. You wouldnt care if I was dead. I’m nothing to you – not so much as them slippers....Oh God! I wish I was dead.¹³²

And when she “*goes down on her knees on the hearthrug to look for the ring*,”¹³³ that Higgins “*dashes violently into the fireplace*,”¹³⁴ she certainly creates the image of a woman in love. Therefore, hers is a rebellion against the insensitivity and indifference of the man she believes has the power to shape her life and identity. She obviously wants to find favour in his sight; in other words, the controlling factor in her upheaval is the need to provoke masculine response. Not surprisingly, however, Higgins is distanced by virtue of his seemingly inherent apathy towards such scruples. Amidst Eliza’s desperate reproaches, he “*examines the dessert stand on the piano and decides that he will eat an apple...He bites a large piece out of the apple with a dreamy expression of happiness, as it is quite a good one*.”¹³⁵ One might very well read this scene as a subtle evocation of the biblical imagery, emphasising Higgins’s supposedly godlike position: his ownership of the tree of knowledge and

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., pp.104-105

¹³³ Ibid., p.109

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.108

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp.106-107

its fruit. In a condescending manner, he again dangles some options before Eliza, who seems to have alienated from her initial identity:

LIZA....What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? Whats to become of me?

HIGGINS [*enlightened but not at all impressed*] O, thats whats worrying you, is it?...I shouldnt bother about it if I were you. I should imagine you wont have much difficulty in settling yourself somewhere or other...You might marry you know...You see, Eliza, all men are not confirmed old bachelors like me and the Colonel. Most men are the marrying sort (poor devils!)...[*a genial afterthought occurring to him*] I daresay my mother could find some chap or other who would do very well.¹³⁶

Significantly, Eliza is made to imply that she has totally adopted the new identity Higgins has provided her with; she seems, true to her changed identity, unwilling to return to her previous mode of life. She even reflects, in line with Mrs Warren's discourse of legal prostitution, the conventional expectations of womanhood, which compel many women of high rank to sell themselves through the institution of marriage and forbid them to work:

LIZA. I sold flowers. I didnt sell myself. Now youve made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else. I wish youd left me where you found me.

HIGGINS....You neednt marry the fellow if you dont like him.

LIZA. What else am I to do?

HIGGINS. Oh, lots of things. What about your old idea of a florist's shop? Pickering could set you up in one: he has lots of money. [*Chuckling*] He'll have to pay for all those togs you have been wearing today; and that, with the hire of the jewellery, will make a big hole in two hundred pounds. Why, six months ago you would have thought it the millennium to have a flower shop of your own. Come! youll be all right.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.107

It seems that what is dramatised through the characterisation of Higgins is the preconceived idea that it is natural for a man of genius to be humanly impossible and incorrigible – that superiority need not comprise empathy. Eliza remains ineffectual in her rebellion against the tyrannical egotism and imperviousness of the loved man, as there is no alteration in this underlying idea till the end of the play.

On the other hand, Eliza is linked to an ordinary form of humanity and human anguish as a reflection of the entrenched association of the female with emotion; eventually, she is doomed to failure to impress on Higgins the value of her femaleness. Overwhelmed with frustration, she decides to leave Higgins's house: when she "*flings*" the ring after finding it "*down on the dessert stand and goes upstairs in a tearing rage*,"¹³⁸ and, taking a last look at herself in the mirror, "*suddenly puts out her tongue at herself*,"¹³⁹ she shows promise for emancipation, for liberation from the tutelage of Higgins: for she seems to reject the image that the mirror reflects, which is certainly the image that has been created by Higgins.

Now, at this stage, Eliza might seem freed from Higgins's world, having severed her tie with his laboratory and mirror. Yet she is not rendered totally independent of the male world: at this stage, the infatuated Freddy is brought forward as a companion for her, whilst she, quite significantly, takes refuge in Mrs Higgins's house by stating "I'll call on old Mrs Higgins and ask her what I ought to do,"¹⁴⁰ and conveying in a sense her unwillingness to sever her tie with Higgins's world and return to her former position.

Gubar argues that "the emphasis" is "on the personal in female socialisation"¹⁴¹; indeed, most of Shaw's female characters express themselves within the confines of the personal. The main focus in the characterisation of Mrs Pearce and Mrs Higgins is totally on the element of the personal. Eliza, too, is fundamentally related to the personal: though she challenges Higgins to recognise

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.109

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.110

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.114

¹⁴¹ Gubar, op. cit., p.293

her as an equal human being by declaring “I should like Professor Higgins to call me Miss Doolittle,”¹⁴² and “I wont be passed over,”¹⁴³ her reiterated reproaches concerning Higgins’s emotional atrophy almost becomes a *leitmotif* in her discourse of independence:

LIZA....You wanted to get rid of me....Oh, you are a devil. You can twist the heart in a girl as easy as some could twist her arms to hurt her. Mrs Pearce warned me. Time and again she has wanted to leave you; and you always got round her at the last minute. And you dont care a bit for her. And you dont care a bit for me....What did you do it for if you didnt care for me?....I notice that you don’t notice me.¹⁴⁴

The male characters, on the other hand, are totally related to the dynamics of the intellect: reminiscent of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s famous detective figure Sherlock Holmes and his alter ego Doctor Watson (the great detective’s power of reasoning is revealed through Watson), both Higgins and Pickering (the audience understands Higgins mainly through Pickering) are ultimately exempted from personal/familial relationships and associated with the mind. And it becomes quite conspicuous towards the end of the play that the relationship between Eliza and Higgins is literally centred upon the traditional mind/body, or culture/nature split: though Higgins expresses his desire to hold Eliza by telling her that:

HIGGINS....[with sudden humility] I shall miss you, Eliza...I have learnt something from your idiotic notions: I confess that humbly and gratefully. And I have grown accustomed to your voice and appearance. I like them, rather.¹⁴⁵

the life he offers her is a life comprising solely “Science and Literature and Classical Music and Philosophy and Art,”¹⁴⁶ – things that traditionally belong to the male world. And for the sake of social appearances (Eliza’s biological father rejects,

¹⁴² Shaw, op. cit., Act V, p. 128

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.132

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.132-134

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.133

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.136

though he becomes rich, the upkeep of his daughter by declaring “I shant interfere.”¹⁴⁷), he offers the formalisation of their relationship to date: “I’ll adopt you as my daughter and settle money on you if you like.”¹⁴⁸ He even proposes Pickering for a suitor: “Or would you rather marry Pickering?”¹⁴⁹ But he ultimately places Pickering in a position that is supposedly above such a prosaic life by saying “I dont suppose Pickering would, though. He’s as confirmed an old bachelor as I am.”¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the life Higgins offers Eliza involves rejection of marriage, which signifies solitude, or spinsterhood, in the order of the father: “You and I and Pickering will be three old bachelors.”¹⁵¹

As for Eliza, though apparently pained by the knowledge that “I couldnt bear to live with a low common man after you two,”¹⁵² she seems inclined to make a common life for herself by marrying, in Higgins’s words, “some sentimental hog or other with lots of money, and a thick pair of lips to kiss you with and a thick pair of boots to kick you with.”¹⁵³ For she is fundamentally associated with instincts that supposedly nature imposes on her; in effect, she is made to associate herself with nature:

LIZA....Freddy Hill writes to me twice and three times a day, sheets and sheets.

HIGGINS [*disagreeably surprised*] Damn his impudence!...

LIZA. He has a right to if he likes, poor lad. And he does love me.

HIGGINS....You have no right to encourage him.

LIZA. Every girl has a right to be loved.

HIGGINS. What! By fools like that?

LIZA. Freddy’s not a fool. And if he’s weak and poor and wants me, maybe he’d make me happier than my betters that bully me and dont want me.

HIGGINS. Can he make anything of you? Thats the point.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.131

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.135

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.138

¹⁵² Ibid., p.137

¹⁵³ Ibid.

LIZA. Perhaps I could make something of him. But I never thought of us making anything of one another; and you never think of anything else. I only want to be natural.¹⁵⁴

Eliza's remark, "Perhaps I could make something of him," which subtly mirrors the imitation of the creative power ascribed to Higgins, and, more significantly, her announcement, "I'll marry Freddy, I will, as soon as I'm able to support him,"¹⁵⁵ as Gainor argues, "seems a refreshingly feminist twist on the usual pattern of young female pupils' marrying men inferior in some way to their paternal teacher."¹⁵⁶ And her decision to support Freddy also signifies that she intends to enter the social/professional sphere, which is certainly larger than the domestic sphere. Yet this self-assertion is undermined through subtle connotations: though Eliza declares, "I'm not afraid of you, and can do without you,"¹⁵⁷ seemingly emancipating herself from Higgins's tyranny, informs the audience that she will retain the knowledge and, more importantly, the gender construction she has acquired during her educational process:

LIZA....I'll go and be a teacher.

HIGGINS. What'll you teach, in heaven's name?

LIZA. What you taught me. I'll teach phonetics.

HIGGINS. Ha! ha! ha!

LIZA. I'll offer myself as an assistant to that hairyfaced Hungarian.

HIGGINS [*rising in a fury*] That imposter! that humbug! that toadying ignoramus! Teach him my methods! my discoveries!...

LIZA....Aha! Now I know how to deal with you. What a fool I was not to think of it before! You cant take away the knowledge you gave me...Oh, when I think of myself crawling under your feet and being trampled on and called names, when all the time I had only lift my finger to be as good as you, I could just kick myself.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.135

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p.137

¹⁵⁶ Gainor, op. cit., p.239

¹⁵⁷ Shaw, op. cit., p.138

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp.137-138

Norbert F. O'Donnell maintains that "Liza Doolittle 'comes alive' at the moment at which she suddenly understands Higgins well enough to know that she can shake his arrogance by striking at his professional pride."¹⁵⁹ Eliza can shake Higgins's arrogance, but, as Gainor observes, "As the 'assistant to that hairyfaced Hungarian,' Eliza would place herself in the traditionally feminine position of inferiority, appropriating male privilege while maintaining a feminine identity."¹⁶⁰ The secondary status ascribed to Eliza is fortified through Higgins's reaction, which reflects at once fury and admiration:

HIGGINS [*wondering at her*] You damned impudent slut, you! But it's better than snivelling; better than fetching slippers and finding spectacles, isn't it? [*Rising*] By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this....Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you're a tower of strength: a consort battleship.¹⁶¹

Higgins's label "a tower of strength" is clearly a metaphor for Eliza's appropriation of the phallic power; on the other hand, his label "a consort battleship," which is a military metaphor, might on the surface denote that, in O'Donnell's words, "Liza is fully human because she is now prepared to engage on equal terms with Higgins in a warfare of wills,"¹⁶² but the word "consort" certainly indicates a secondary position; for a "consort" is by definition someone or something that does not have autonomy.

Consequently, what Shaw's *Pygmalion* creates seems to be a mirror image of himself – a woman who is similar to himself. Most significantly, Eliza herself is made to reflect this mimesis through the metaphor of language:

LIZA....You told me, you know, that when a child is brought to a foreign country, it picks up the language in a few weeks, and forgets its own. Well, I am a child in

¹⁵⁹ Norbert F. O'Donnell, "The Conflict of Wills in Shaw's Tragicomedy," *G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Ed. by R. J. Kauffmann, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1965, p.79

¹⁶⁰ Gainor, op. cit., p.234

¹⁶¹ Shaw, loc. cit.

¹⁶² O'Donnell, loc. cit.

your country. I have forgotten my own language and can speak nothing but yours.¹⁶³

Moreover, Eliza gives the credit for her transformation solely to the male. She tells Pickering that:

LIZA....It was from you that I learnt really nice manners; and that is what makes a lady, isn't it?...Your calling me Miss Doolittle that day when I first came to Wimpole Street...was the beginning of self-respect for me...And there were a hundred little things you never noticed, because they came naturally to you. Things about standing up and taking off your hat and opening doors....apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated.¹⁶⁴

It is apparent that Eliza evaluates Pickering's educational role merely with his outward gentleness without being aware of his insensitivity to her future besides her inner feelings. Nevertheless, in the last instance, she confirms the male primacy. She never expresses any indebtedness to Mrs Pearce and Mrs Higgins in her discourse of transformation and thus renders those female characters fundamentally ineffectual instructors.

The ending of the play seems rather ambiguous: Eliza, with her newly found poise and self-confidence, bids farewell to Higgins, "I shall never see you again, Professor. Goodbye,"¹⁶⁵ evoking the idea that she has decided to live without depending on Higgins and Pickering and that she has retained some of her flower girl identity. However, when the incorrigible Higgins responds in a cheerful and self-confident manner (associating her again with some food and objects) that:

¹⁶³ Shaw, op. cit., p.128

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p.127

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p.139

HIGGINS....Oh, by the way, Eliza, order a ham and a Stilton cheese, will you? And buy me a pair of reindeer gloves, number eights, and a tie to match that new suit of mine. You can choose the color.¹⁶⁶

she seems to reassume the role of a consort for her Pygmalion:

LIZA....Number eights are too small for you if you want them lined with lamb's wool. You have three new ties that you have forgotten in the drawer of your washstand. 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 cannot imagine.¹⁶⁷

The last line of the play consists of Higgins's ironical utterance, "She's going to marry Freddy. Ha ha! Freddy! Freddy!! Ha ha ha ha ha!!!!!"¹⁶⁸ This ending seems to reflect the author's anti-romantic intention, or his objection to romantic endings: he does not allow Eliza to marry the hero of the play, and thus the battle of passions remains unresolved. None the less, Eliza is ultimately kept, by virtue of her sex, in her place: it is strongly implied that she will not move beyond the imitative subject position, and that she will not sever her emotional bond with that male, who is essentially depicted, in a similar line to Pygmalion, as a godlike being. Therefore, in the final analysis, *Pygmalion* exhibits the assumptions of universal female dependence, reifying the male spectators' sense of power and significance in the world.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

IV

SAINT JOAN

The conventional notion of femaleness forming one of the fundamental ideological constructs of social order of the Victorian Age manifests itself even in the works of art produced during that period: virtually all the historical figures depicted in the paintings as representatives of heroic deeds are male. The same approach is noticeable in the pictures painted by the few female artists of that period as well, undoubtedly due to their endeavour to be admitted into the field. Apart from the female figures of the royalty, it is such a rare thing to find in those paintings a female figure connected with heroism of any kind. The portrayal of Joan of Arc – Jeanne d’Arc – as a hero/heroine is a unique example in this respect, representing a pseudo-break with tradition.¹

Throughout the history of humankind, as it is perceivable in almost all the products of cultural systems, the notion of heroism has more often than not been associated with the male sphere; for heroism is deemed to be a state of supremacy comprising the power of the mind as well as the power of the body, both of which traditionally are considered male traits, and accordingly heroic discourse is regarded as an integral part of the male language. The position of uniqueness attached to Joan is evidently based on her mimetic relationship with the male sphere: hence her symbolisation of faith, bravery and leadership.

In the historical context, Joan is the heroine of a story of French patriotism dating back to the Middle Ages, a story becoming in time one of the legends that Western patriarchy has approved and validated with a high esteem, bringing it a

¹ See Susan P. Casteras, “Excluding women: The cult of the male genius in Victorian painting,” *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender*, p. 117

worldwide popularity with a symbolic meaning quite analogous to that of the legend of Don Quixote. Historical accounts state that she was a young country girl who, during the long war between France and England called The Hundred Years' War (1338-1453), persuaded her fellow countrymen with her courage and piety – claiming that she heard voices from God – to fight against the English invaders, but through betrayal was held captive, handed to the Inquisition, which was an institution as powerful as the feudalist structure of that era, and burned at the stake for heresy and sorcery in 1431; the French king, Charles VII, whom she had helped to get crowned, ordered an enquiry into the trial in order to clear his royal title, the sentence of 1431 was annulled by Pope Calixtus III, and in 1920 she was canonised by Pope Benedict XV; in the same year the French parliament decreed a national festival in her honour.

Besides the apparent endeavour of France to compensate for such a cruel action that took place in its history, and to make amends to such a heroic personage as Joan, no doubt resulting from a long struggle over basic human rights within the process of civilisation, the literary world, particularly drama, has deemed this story an attractive subject matter. Due to the sensation it involves, it is a much reworked, almost a stock story of the Western drama. The sensation in question is evidently engendered by the fact of her burning together with her being a maiden, a fact connecting her with one of the most widely recognised (somewhat still prevalent in some cultural structures) founding myths of patriarchy, that is, the myth of virginity as an expression of the desire to create a symbol of female purity in line with the moral code of Christianity.

The story of this young maiden's martyrdom forms the basis of *Saint Joan* (1924), which is identified by Gordon as a play that "makes a magnificent coda to the major phase of Shaw's career, gathering together the several versions of the comic sublime"²; and although Shaw wrote several plays after *Saint Joan*, Innes

² Gordon, op. cit., p. 171

defines this play as “Shaw’s last major play.”³ And Bentley, in his admiration for Shaw, states that “Many critics seem to have regarded the Shavian pattern as a mere joke until they heard discussions of Nationalism and Protestantism on the lips of medieval dignitaries in *Saint Joan*.”⁴

Such critics render Shaw’s play a high praise, but one cannot find in their critical works any traces of an analytic concern for the sexual identity problem of Shaw’s Joan; none of them raises such an issue, or, at best, some of them deem her a bisexual being and take it for granted: G. Wilson Knight assumes that in Shaw’s character delineation “power must be bisexual,” and bases this assumption on Shaw’s own premise in the preface to *Good King Charles’s Golden Days* (1939) that primacy should be ascribed to “the man-with-woman”.⁵ This premise, which, on the surface level, may mislead one into thinking that Shaw counterbalances male traditions by including images of forceful women bearing a strength in their authenticity, is quite contradictory to the discourse in the actuality of his plays; in fact, the definition “man-with-woman” itself is quite far from telling (as the syntax also denotes), in Herris’s terms, “of that other truly democratic possibility: the relations of men *and* women”.⁶

In Shaw’s version of Joan’s tragedy, the relations in question, though somewhat elaborated with an ambivalent and ambiguous approach, ultimately take the form of a metaphor of *the relations of men and men*; for it is not difficult to discern an endeavour on the playwright’s part to assign Joan a search for self-fulfilment in the male domain on male terms. To put it another way, the above-mentioned mimesis is transformed into an integration – in the final analysis an assimilation – into the phallocratic discourse of the patriarchal symbolic order, or the father’s law; Joan’s cross-dressing, disguising as a male, moves beyond role-playing,

³ Innes, op. cit., p. 40

⁴ Bentley, op. cit., p. 101

⁵ See G. Wilson Knight, “Shaw’s Integral Theatre,” *G. B. Shaw: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 121-125

⁶ Herris, op. cit., p. 131

or berdache, and turns into an internalisation of male norms and patterns of behaviour in Shaw's dramatic language.

Meisel points out that, before dramatising Joan's story of heroism, Shaw had read the available documents concerning the court proceedings that led to her execution,⁷ and Shaw himself claims in his lengthy preface that he is telling of the historical facts,⁸ but, as one cannot deny the fact that no fictional account is totally neutral, Shaw's *Saint Joan* is ultimately his own version of reality. Rosalind Coward states that:

A feminist approach to literature has exposed how supposedly "truthful" and "honest" accounts of "reality" rely on distinct ideologies, in particular of what men and women should be like ... all accounts of reality are versions of reality. As feminists we have to be constantly alerted to *what* reality is being constructed, and *how* representations are achieving this construction.⁹

Through the power of words and images, Shaw presents a personification of an ideal – a super human being – situated in a social context which has its origin in medieval times but is extended into the present (Shaw's time), elaborating mysticism with tints of rationalism. Both the persona of Joan and the social milieu she is situated in are presented in the form of an amalgam of the past and the present: the juxtaposition of modern slang with an archaic and theological language, the presentation of a bishop who explains miracles on a rational basis, which is very unlikely for the level of consciousness of a medieval bishop, and Joan's seemingly reasonable explanations with respect to her perception of God's orders exemplify a mode of dramatisation aimed at rendering an idealistic being credible – perceptible as real. Thus a legendary figure, a saint, is transformed into an image of a genius as,

⁷ Meisel, op. cit., p. 369

⁸ See Bernard Shaw, "Preface," *Saint Joan*, Ed. by. Peter Farquhar, Harlow, Longman Group Ltd., 1989, p. 47; Here Shaw claims that "It contains all that be known about her."

⁹ Rosalind Coward, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?", *The New Feminist Criticism*, p. 227

in Raymond Williams's words, "the projection of the Superman in human terms," but ultimately representing an authorial "fantasy."¹⁰

As a fantasy, the character of Joan represents an aspiration towards power, and, due to a total commitment to a purpose, a rejection of the dynamics of ordinary human – in particular female – life-cycle. This rejection is presented as a process of change that entails several phases. In his preface to the play, Shaw states that the construction of his play consists of "the romance of her rise, the tragedy of her execution, and the comedy of the attempts of posterity to make amends for that execution"¹¹; and Meisel, analysing *Saint Joan* in terms of theatrical genres, points out that the play "begins as Melodrama, resolves into a Discussion, and ends with an epilogue in the key of Extravaganza."¹²

However, setting such designations and classifications aside, one can reread and reinterpret Joan's story from a different perspective in point of sexual identity formation: her initiation into manhood on a metaphorical plane, her attainment to masculine power of control and leadership, the consequences of this integration – a clash between the ordinary and the extraordinary – and finally the satirical implications of the authorial voice directed at the ordinary world that cannot tolerate the geniuses.

At the beginning of the play, when Joan makes her first appearance in her feudal lord Robert de Baudricourt's castle, claiming that she has orders from God to help her countrymen to raise the siege of Orleans and get the Dauphin crowned to drive off the English, she is presented as a coarse but strong and energetic peasant, having yet a girlish appearance. In the stage instructions preceding her appearance, she is depicted as "*respectably dressed in red*".¹³ Within the tradition of symbolism, red, in general, is thought of as the colour of aggression, vitality, and strength,

¹⁰ Raymond Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1981, pp. 288-289

¹¹ Shaw, op. cit., p. 44

¹² Meisel, op. cit., p. 124 n.

¹³ Shaw, op. cit., Scene I, p. 60

associated with blood (also the sacrificial blood of Christ) and fire, and symbolising both love and mortal combat.¹⁴ Red obviously foreshadows the flames Joan will be thrown into at the end of her story; on the other hand, this seems an ambiguous gender-neutral description that could indicate her initial costuming in a woman's dress. Actually, Morgan confirms this initial appearance in female clothing by stating that "Joan appears in woman's clothing only briefly at the beginning of the play."¹⁵ Thus, at the outset, Joan has the appearance of a decent female totally in line with the requirements of the patriarchy of the age she lives in, as, in Bonnie Zimmerman's words, "Costuming/dress is an external manifestation of gender roles."¹⁶

The notion of decency is reinforced by the retainment (through implication) of the myth of virginity: we learn from Joan herself that the soldiers call her "The Maid"¹⁷; and Bertrand de Poulengey, the provost-marshal, points out:

POULENGEY.... They are pretty foulmouthed and foulminded down there in the guardroom, some of them. But there hasnt been a word that has anything to do with her being a woman. They have stopped swearing before her.¹⁸

Again, when de Baudricourt warns de Poulengey against getting Joan into trouble claiming that he is "responsible for her protection" as he is "her father's lord,"¹⁹ de Poulengey draws a parallel between Joan and Virgin Mary by saying "I should as soon think of the Blessed Virgin herself in that way, as of this girl."²⁰ The state of virginity associated with decency and respectability is maintained throughout the play's ethical spectrum.

¹⁴ See Biedermann, op. cit., p. 281

¹⁵ Margery M. Morgan, "Pantomime, Irony, Romance," *Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman and Saint Joan*, p. 184

¹⁶ Bonnie Zimmerman, "What Has Never Been," *The New Feminist Criticism*, p. 219

¹⁷ Shaw, op. cit., p. 66

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 63-64

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 63

²⁰ Ibid.

The associations of Joan's virginity are paradoxically reinforced, in terms of male approval, by her pattern of behaviour which is quite contrary to the conventional patterns of feminine behaviour: she is rather curt in her idiom and manner; she is endowed with resoluteness and outspokenness, and given a direct style of speech which is reminiscent of that of John Tanner, the male protagonist of *Man and Superman*. She baffles her feudal lord – a patriarch – by addressing him as “Be you captain? ... Good morning, captain squire,”²¹ and by giving him orders in a bossy manner:

JOAN. Captain: you are to give me a horse and armor and some soldiers, and send me to the Dauphin. Those are your orders from my Lord My Lord is King of Heaven.²²

Here, however baffling and seemingly impudent, Joan is evidently using a masculine idiom to meet the male world on equal terms.

None the less, in this initial phase of masculinity, Joan is implicitly made to exhibit a state of oscillation between the assumed female and male traits – she seems to be on the borderline between femaleness and maleness, so to speak – by acting occasionally as a sly and dissembling female in accordance with Shaw's recurrent formula for delineating female protagonists. When trying to persuade de Baudricourt to give her what she wants, she attempts, in quite a coy manner, to manipulate his weakness regarding the state of power in combination with religious faith:

JOAN.... I have arranged it all: you have only to give the order.

ROBERT [*contemplating her in a stupor of amazement*] Well, I am damned!

JOAN [*with unruffled sweetness*] No, squire: God is very merciful; and the blessed

²¹ Ibid., p. 60

²² Ibid.

saints Catherine and Margaret, who speak to me every day [*he gapes*], will intercede for you. You will go to paradise; and your name will be remembered for ever as my first helper.²³

Again, when de Baudricourt yields to her temptation, she expresses her gratitude in the same cunning manner:

JOAN [*radiant, clasping her hands*] Oh squire! Your head is all circled with light, like a saint's.²⁴

And de Baudricourt actually looks up "*for his halo rather apprehensively*."²⁵

However, it is apparent that Joan resorts to such manoeuvres mainly to gain access to the male world, which entails, in the context of a warring world, being externally equipped with emblems of masculinity as well; therefore, besides the horse and the armour, as de Baudricourt's steward announces with a great amazement, she demands a sword – an emblem of the phallic power. But naturally the claim of a female for initiative in a male domain is something that would lead to a negative reaction on the part of the men of authority; and accordingly, the respectability evoked by her virginity, her ardent faith in God and her self-confidence, though quite influential, do not suffice, so she has to perform special tests, that is, work some miracles – a mystification presented in a rather comical mode – such as the sudden laying eggs of de Baudricourt's hens.

²³ Ibid., p. 62. Significantly, one of Joan of Arc's saintly voices is Margaret of Antioch, who, in one of the many stories about her, cropped her hair in a masculine style and ran away from home on the eve of her arranged marriage. Her vow of chastity is only possible to maintain in male clothing when she disguises herself as a monk. See Herris, op. cit., p.177 n.

²⁴ Shaw, op. cit., p. 69

²⁵ Ibid.

The mystification mentioned above is combined with a realistic detail: as de Poulengey explains, France is in a desperate situation as half of it is under the siege of the English and “the Dauphin is ... like a rat in a corner, except that he wont fight”²⁶; and therefore de Poulengey, being influenced by Joan’s mesmeric powers, sees her as a last resort: “She is the last card left in our hand.”²⁷ Apparently, the circumstances as well tend to be in Joan’s favour.

Nevertheless, the *miracle* motif is reiterated several times, for evidently it is an imperative that a female should perform superior actions to prove her worth and gain prominence in a prejudiced and inert society. In the second scene, in which we learn from the dialogues of the men of authority in the court that Joan has joined the soldiers (being herself disguised as a soldier) and prophesied the death of a commander, leading Captain La Hire to define her as an “Angel,” the politicised Archbishop, as a representative of the Christian Church – one of the strongest foundations of the western patriarchy – voices a fiercer prejudice than the feudal lords’:

THE ARCHBISHOP. This creature is not a saint. She is not even a respectable woman. She does not wear women’s clothes. She is dressed like a soldier, and rides round the country with soldiers²⁸

In order to surmount such an obstacle – male prejudice – Joan is made to perform a crucial test, that is, work the miracle of picking out the Dauphin who hides among the courtiers; in other words, “She knew the royal blood,” as the Dauphin comments triumphantly.²⁹ Thus she encourages and persuades the Dauphin, who is a rather pragmatic character, to take action by legitimising his position. And she gains the Archbishop’s approval as well by showing him a great

²⁶ Ibid., p. 64

²⁷ Ibid., p. 65

²⁸ Ibid., Scene II, p. 75

²⁹ Ibid., p. 81

respect: as stated in a stage instruction, "*She falls on both knees before him,*"³⁰ and uses a discriminatory idiom when addressing him:

JOAN.... My lord: I am only a poor country girl; and you are filled with the blessedness and glory of God Himself; but you will touch me with your hands, and give me your blessing, wont you? ... It must be a most wonderful thing to be Archbishop.... Oh, my lord, will you send all these silly folks away so that I may speak to the Dauphin alone?³¹

So by putting the Archbishop on a pedestal, an approach quite contrary to her dignified attitude towards the superficial courtiers, the "silly folks," she gets the response she wants:

THE ARCHBISHOP.... Gentlemen: your levity is rebuked by this maid's faith.... Come, gentlemen. The maid comes with God's blessing, and must be obeyed.³²

It is evident that she again manipulates the weak points of the authoritative male personages – the Dauphin's yearning for recognition and courage, and the Archbishop's yearning for obedience and praise – and thus gains their approval and validation. At the end of this scene she is given the command of the army, replacing la Trémouille, the Lord Chamberlain, by the order of Charles, the king-to-be.

This achievement marks the beginning of Joan's career as a leading warrior through a successful access to the realm of male authority. From this point on, she is presented, within the frame of a male discourse of heroism, as distanced from

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 81-82

³² Ibid., p. 82

literally all supposedly female traits – in particular coyness and seductiveness – and the only trait of femaleness left in her is a trace of maternal instinct hinted at in the third scene, which in turn is suppressed and transformed into a soldier's responsibility.

The process of distancing mentioned above is accentuated through the insertion of a contrary imagery of femaleness, as the use of contrary images and ideas is a typical practice in Shaw's line of dramatisation. When Joan appears in the court, as "*dressed as a soldier, with her hair bobbed*,"³³ she confronts an extreme example of conventionally decorative form of femininity in the female courtiers:

THE DUCHESS [*to the nearest lady in waiting*] My dear! Her hair!
*All the ladies explode in uncontrollable laughter.*³⁴

However, what is a matter for fun for these ladies is a matter of pride for Joan:

JOAN [*not at all embarrassed*] I wear it like this because I am a soldier.³⁵

And when "*staring after the Duchess*," "*her awestruck amazement at the figure cut by the magnificently dressed lady is not wholly complimentary.*"³⁶

These royal ladies are the only female figures that appear in *Saint Joan*; in the major part of the play, the reality of women is created for them through the phallic norms articulated in the dialogues in the form of metaphors and similes, because, as Maggie Humm very aptly observes, "Men often control reality by

³³ Ibid., p. 80

³⁴ Ibid.,

³⁵ Ibid., p. 81

³⁶ Ibid., p. 83

controlling language and myth.”³⁷ So the literary representation of the female is achieved through the use of some figures of speech which are rather denigrating as they basically associate femaleness with feminine wiles. The beginning of the third scene bears one of the most significant exemplifications of this approach: Jack Dunois, who is pictured as “brave ... handsome ... the darling of all ladies,”³⁸ asserting his masculinity with “his lance stuck up with a pennon”³⁹ and “his commander’s baton in his hand,”⁴⁰ chants a prayer to the wind to change its direction, which is in the form of a pathetic fallacy associating the wind with the supposedly base forms of female sexuality:

DUNOIS.... West wind, west wind, west wind. Strumpet: steadfast when you should be wanton, wanton when you should be steadfast ... Change, curse you, change, English harlot of a wind, change ... West wind, wanton wind, wilful wind, womanish wind, false wind from over the water, will you never blow again?⁴¹

John A Bertolini, in his complimentary review of the play, draws a parallel between Dunois’s “attempt at poetic incantation” and Percy B. Shelley’s *Ode to the West Wind*⁴² taking no notice of the metaphorical signification lying in Dunois’s words. In Shaw’s version – parody in fact – of the “Ode,” Dunois’s masculine discourse transforms the wind – nature – into a metaphor for the vices of instability and moral inferiority rendered by implication intrinsic to the female nature. And there is no voice in the whole play to oppose to such an androcentric evaluation. Zimmerman asserts that “It is certainly not evident that women ... are innately anything”⁴³; however, in Shaw’s version of artistic truth, there is no space for an

³⁷ Maggie Humm, *Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism*, Hertfordshire, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994, p. 69

³⁸ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 77

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Scene III, p. 88

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See John A. Bertolini, “Imagining Saint Joan,” *Shaw: Man and Superman and Saint Joan*, pp. 216-217

⁴³ Zimmerman, *op. cit.*, p. 206

authentic female expression. Furthermore, when viewed from a gynocentric standpoint the biggest and the most crucial irony found in the play is that Joan, the supposedly female protagonist, herself adopts the masculine discourse in question: when she attempts to put courage into the Dauphin, she uses a simile that explicitly signifies a base pattern of female behaviour:

JOAN [*earnestly*] Charlie: ... I tell thee that the land is thine to rule righteously and keep God's peace in, and not to pledge at the pawnshop as a drunken woman pledges her children's clothes.⁴⁴

It is a *drunken woman*, not a *drunken man*. Because, as the general pattern of imagery of the play testifies, one can sense an endeavour on the author's part to associate her with masculinity and, more significantly, with a higher order of being – to render her a superman/genius, a Christ-like, and ultimately a God-like figure. The mesmeric and miraculous powers ascribed to her are reinforced by the use of some aerial images: the image of “blue lightning” that Dunois's page compares the “kingfisher” to in the second scene presages her appearance as does the image of “summer lightning” in the Epilogue; and in the trial scene Joan herself uses the image of flying: “Why must I be chained by the feet to a log of wood? Are you afraid I will fly away?”⁴⁵ And again in the Epilogue, Charles (the Dauphin) makes an accusing remark about Joan's character: “You people with your heads in the sky spend all your time trying to turn the world upside down.”⁴⁶

Among these aerial images, the image of the “kingfisher” seems the most significant since it functions as a multivalent metaphor for Joan. The dialogue between Dunois and his page makes the association clear:

⁴⁴ Shaw, *op. cit.*, Scene II, p. 86

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Scene VI, p. 132

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Epilogue, p. 156

THE PAGE ... See! There! There she goes!

DUNOIS ... Where? Who? The Maid?

THE PAGE. No: the kingfisher. Like blue lightning.⁴⁷

Thus “she” kingfisher comes to symbolise Joan’s embodiment of a soaring aspiration and of something high – something free and beautiful – that ironically creates in the ordinary human beings a desire to possess it by imprisoning it – in metaphorical terms by suppressing and ultimately killing it:

THE PAGE. Arnt they lovely? I wish I could catch them.⁴⁸

As for Dunois, the beauty man, he finds in the “kingfisher” a source of inspiration for another form of praying, penitently associating it with Virgin Mary/Joan:

DUNOIS [*pacing*] Blue bird, blue bird, since I am friend to thee, change thou the wind for me. No: it does not rhyme. He who has sinned for thee.... Mary in the blue snood, kingfisher colour: will you grudge me a west wind?⁴⁹

This utterance vaguely evokes the image of, in Morgan’s words, “a visitation by the Virgin to her knight”⁵⁰; however, at this very moment, Joan, “*in splendid armor, rushes in in a blazing rage,*”⁵¹ and fills the air with an impressive aura of aggressive masculinity, undermining the association of the “kingfisher” with any form of

⁴⁷ Ibid., Scene III, p. 88

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 89

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Margery M. Morgan, “Pantomime, Irony, Romance,” **Bernard Shaw: *Man and Superman* and *Saint Joan***, p. 185

⁵¹ Shaw, loc. cit.

traditional femininity; and this situation reminds one of Darwin's observation concerning the predatoriness of the kingfisher: Darwin states that "Kingfishers, when they catch a fish, always beat it until it is killed."⁵² Furthermore, when Joan's conversation with Dunois veers round to love and marriage while discussing war tactics for driving off the English from Orleans, she exposes the nature of her psychic development, reflecting in the meantime the prejudiced assumptions of an established dichotomous system:

JOAN [*matter of fact*] I will never take a husband. A man in Toul took an action against me for breach of promise; but I never promised him. I am a soldier: I do not want to be thought of as a woman. I will not dress as a woman. I do not care for the things women care for. They dream of lovers, and of money. I dream of leading a charge, and of placing the big guns.⁵³

Again, though her meeting with Dunois creates an anticipation of it, what could be a natural sexual attraction is promptly turned into a reflection of a mere instinct of maternity: she mothers Dunois saying "I will deliver you from fear"⁵⁴; and later on she gives him a motherly kiss: as stated in a stage instruction, "*flinging her arms round Dunois, kissing him on both cheeks*,"⁵⁵ she calls him "dear comrade in arms."⁵⁶ As Morgan observes, "even here Shaw manages a sleight of hand with the lyrical scene on the banks of the Loire."⁵⁷ The vague trace of femaleness is repressed as soon as it is brought to the surface. And further on within the play, the maternal instinct is transformed into a soldier's responsibility as mentioned above:

⁵² Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, London, Harper Collins Publishers, 1999, p. 53

⁵³ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 91

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 93

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Morgan, *loc. cit.*

JOAN I wish you were one of the village babies.

DUNOIS. Why?

JOAN. I could nurse you for awhile.

DUNOIS. You are a bit of a woman after all.

JOAN. No: not a bit: I am a soldier and nothing else. Soldiers always nurse children when they get a chance.⁵⁸

Here Joan makes sure that any seemingly conventional feminine behaviour she exhibits has a plausible masculine/soldierly explanation.⁵⁹ It would be significant to point out at this stage that whatever the context is, the confinement of female sexuality to maternal instinct is a typical aspect of Shaw's drama – the libidinal dimension of the female in terms of sexual pleasure is never the issue for Shaw. Though one can discern an abstinence from sexual life in general in his drama, he recurrently adopts a coded language – an internal censorship – particularly concerning female sexuality, an approach reflecting the perpetuation of the sexual inhibitions of the Victorian Age. Though *Saint Joan* was written many years after the Victorian Age ended, it maintains the established male parameters of that period in reflecting female sexuality as a taboo subject and associating the female sex with assumedly the lower side of the binary system of values. Therefore one cannot agree with Robert Brustein in his claim that Shaw was “an arch feminist with a powerful admiration for women.”⁶⁰ Perhaps the most appropriate response to Brustein's claim is Coward's account of the achievements – however limited – of the feminist struggles:

That the equation of female sexuality with the illicit and disgusting is no longer a dominant representation, and that the possibilities of sexual enjoyment are no longer focused on motherhood are changes for which feminism has fought.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Shaw, op. cit., Scene V, p. 111

⁵⁹ See Gainor, op. cit., p. 147

⁶⁰ Robert Brustein, *The Theatre of Revolt*, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1964, p. 218

⁶¹ Coward, op. cit., p. 234

Returning to *Saint Joan*, one finds a supposedly female figure who forms her identity through male values on the ground that she has committed herself to the salvation of her country. Apparently, what is at issue here is the acquisition of psychic masculinity by a biological female. In this context, one inevitably finds an implicit analogy to the Freudian conceptualisation of gender identity formation, according to which a little girl's discovery of lack of a penis provokes a desire for this organ, and this desire, defined as "penis envy," "may result either in a masculinity complex in which the girl hopes she will one day get a penis or pretends that she has one and behaves as if she were a man, or in a recognition of inferiority and contempt for herself and the female sex in general."⁶²

Indeed Joan's situation is quite reminiscent of John Tanner's remark in *Man and Superman*: "The woman of noble birth marries as the man of noble birth fights."⁶³ Evidently, Joan is made to assume the latter role, and moreover, though, as Dunois observes, she is "young and innocent,"⁶⁴ she is associated with some traits that are superior to those of an ordinary "noble man": again in her meeting with Dunois in the third scene, her presence is associated with the changing of the wind – another miracle – that leads to Dunois's "handing his baton to Joan,"⁶⁵ evoking the image of a ceremony held to admit her power which is beyond an ordinary human being's and grant her a thorough access to a male arena, an access that entails on Joan's part the transformation into a sexless being. Thus the signification of the "kingfisher" metaphor changes: Morgan points out that "The kingfisher as a traditional symbol of Christ becomes an attribute of the androgynous Shavian saint."⁶⁶

Gainor also defines Joan as "a character of androgynous personality,"⁶⁷ which is reminiscent of Knight's definition "bisexual." Now, Freud basically deals with

⁶² Weedon, op. cit., p. 48

⁶³ Shaw, *Man and Superman*, Act III, p. 162

⁶⁴ Shaw, op. cit., Scene III, p. 92

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 93

⁶⁶ Morgan, op. cit., p. 185

⁶⁷ Gainor, op. cit., p. 138

bisexuality within the context of his analysis of inversion, and taking the anatomical bisexuality/hermaphroditism as a basis for his examination he states that:

It is popularly believed that a human being is either a man or a woman. Science, however, knows of cases in which the sexual characters are obscured, and in which it is consequently difficult to determine the sex. This arises in the first instance in the field of anatomy. The genitals of the individuals concerned combine male and female characteristics. (This condition is known as hermaphroditism.) In rare cases both kinds of sexual apparatus are found side by side fully developed (true hermaphroditism); but far more frequently both sets of organs are found in an atrophied condition.

The importance of these abnormalities lies in the unexpected fact that they facilitate our understanding of normal development. For it appears that a certain degree of anatomical hermaphroditism occurs normally. In every normal male or female individual, traces are found of the apparatus of the opposite sex. These either persist without function as rudimentary organs or become modified and take on other functions.

These long-familiar facts of anatomy lead us to suppose that an originally bisexual physical disposition has, in the course of evolution, become modified into a unisexual one, leaving behind only a few traces of the sex that has become atrophied.⁶⁸

Freud asserts that "Everyone, even the most normal person, is capable of making a homosexual object-choice, and has done so at some time in his life, and either still adheres to it in his unconscious or else protects himself against it by vigorous counter attitudes."⁶⁹ Yet it is obvious that he considers the male as the essential being; and, in this respect, it would be apt to quote his observations concerning the resolution of the Oedipus complex within the context of bisexuality, which he conveys through his biased and misogynistic approach:

⁶⁸ Sigmund Freud, "Bisexuality," *The Freud Reader*, pp. 243-244

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 462 n.

In girls the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus complex is lacking. Castration has already had its effect, which was to force the child into the situation of the Oedipus complex. Thus the Oedipus complex escapes the fate which it meets with in boys: it may be slowly abandoned or dealt with by repression, or its effects may persist far into women's normal mental life. I cannot evade the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men. Their super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Character-traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women – that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility – all these would be amply accounted for by the modification in the formation of their super-ego.... We must not allow ourselves to be deflected from such conclusions by the denials of the feminists, who are anxious to force us to regard the two sexes as completely equal in position and worth; but we shall, of course, willingly agree that the majority of men are also far behind the masculine ideal and that all human individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content.⁷⁰

The term "hermaphroditism," which is identified with bisexuality in Freud's analysis, and supposedly meaning a person or thing in which two opposite qualities (female and male) are combined, can be traced back to Hermaphroditus, the son of Hermes (the ancient Greek herald and messenger of the gods and the god of roads, commerce, invention, cunning, and theft) and Aphrodite (the ancient Greek goddess of love and beauty). Graves tells that "Flattered by Hermes's frank confession of his love for her, Aphrodite presently spent a night with him, the fruit of which was Hermaphroditus, a double-sexed being."⁷¹ According to Greek mythology, Hermaphroditus, while bathing in a pool, is haunted by a nymph called Salmacis,

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 677

⁷¹ Graves, op. cit., p. 68

who is in love with him, becomes joined with her into a single bisexual person; yet in this bisexual personality, as the order in the combination of the two names clearly denotes, the male quality remains essential.

As for the term “androgynous,” “andro” and “gyno” being two borrowings from Greek, meaning “male” and “female,” it supposedly has the meaning of “being both male and female”; yet, like hermaphrodite, the order of this compound word clearly denotes the secondary position of the female. Metaphorically speaking, the male is perceived as the prefix, and the female as the suffix; and that reminds one of Irigaray’s metaphorical definition of woman’s position in the patriarchal structure: Irigaray observes that in the patriarchal genealogy, the position of woman as object is already given; and, using language as a metaphor for this situation, she states that the subject-predicate structure of language presupposes woman as universal predicate, which signifies that the subject in language, in philosophy, in psychoanalysis, in short, in culture, is male.⁷²

In fact, Shaw’s approach to Joan’s sexual identity seems rather ambiguous; but he apparently tries to establish her within a conventional framework: he gives a professional explanation for her dress and behaviour, implying meanwhile that she has a potential for marriage. Thus he tries to assure her heterosexuality and avoid the possible interpretation of her as a woman of homosexual temperament. Indeed, in the characterisation of Joan, Shaw suppresses the sexual component. Joan is one of his only female characters that are not involved in a sexual intrigue; in the action of the play, she neither sexually pursues nor is pursued by anyone. However, masculine qualities seem to overweigh the female ones in her persona, and she is actually made to insist on her masculine sense of self. In a sense, she is drawn as a metaphor for the supposedly ideal masculine traits.

⁷² See Whitford, Luce Irigaray: *Philosophy in the Feminine*, pp. 43–45

Thus Joan, once established as an individualistic and Christ-like figure, is situated in a state of progressive isolation involving a clash with the interests of the political and ecclesiastical male figures of the play. In the fourth scene, in which she does not appear in person, the representatives of the institutions of power discuss the threat her heroic deeds pose to their future, and, defining her as a sorceress and a witch in accordance with the medieval discourse of religion, decide to burn – to destroy – her. Earl of Warwick, the representative of the English Feudalism, wants Joan burned for provoking the notion of Nationalism by going direct to the Dauphin and thus undermining the authority of the peerage: “Men cannot serve two masters,”⁷³ according to him; and the chauvinistic and bigoted English chaplain, John de Stogumber, wants Joan burned because he is bitterly opposed to French Nationalism that she symbolises, and he resorts to the alibi that “The woman is a rebel ... She rebels against Nature by wearing man’s clothes, and fighting.”⁷⁴ As for Cauchon, the Bishop of Beauvais, who represents the Burgundian Catholicism, he sees in Joan only the sin of heresy that may cause chaos: “She acts as if she herself were the Church ... It is always God and herself,”⁷⁵ and even though he claims that his “first duty is to seek this girl’s salvation,”⁷⁶ he declares that “if she does not recant in the dust before the world, and submit herself to the last inch of her soul to her Church, to the fire she shall go.”⁷⁷

What is labeled “heresy” in Cauchon’s religious discourse is emphasised in Warwick’s political discourse as “the protest of the individual soul against the interference of priest or peer between the private man and his God,”⁷⁸ and identified as “Protestantism,” a notion which is anachronistic from the historical viewpoint. The anachronisms of *Saint Joan* are a much debated-on topic in the traditionally essentialist canon of literary criticism. However, the idea of Nationalism, as M. A.

⁷³ Shaw, op. cit., Scene IV, p. 95

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 107

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 102

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 100

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 103

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 106

Cohen points out, can be traced back to the thirteenth century⁷⁹; what is anachronistic is the importation of the idea of Protestantism, which, in Shaw's version of artistic truth, becomes a metaphor for Joan's uniqueness rendering her a signifier of genius and superiority associated with the male sphere.

Joan's uniqueness is, at another level, emphatically associated with loneliness – isolation. Her appearance at the beginning of the fifth scene as praying by herself in the cathedral of Rheims after the coronation of Charles is a visual symbolisation of her isolation. At this point, an atmosphere of deepening somberness begins to prevail highlighting this situation. As a matter of fact, hers is an isolation that she herself unconsciously brings about, for she desires to keep exercising the power she has been granted. From Dunois's words we learn that she has become a public hero: "The streets are full. They are calling for The Maid ... they want to see you again."⁸⁰ Her mission is complete: she has shown France the way leading to victory, and the Dauphin is crowned. But she does not intend to go back to her village, for she is alienated from the ordinary way of living as she masochistically admits:

JOAN. Isnt it strange, Jack ? ... I am frightened beyond words before a battle; but it is so dull afterwards when there is no danger: oh, so dull! Dull! Dull!⁸¹

Shaw's line of geniuses, from Caesar to Joan, exhibits a dominant incongruity and, more significantly, imperviousness. Joan is impervious to other people's feelings, and though she is aware of the discontent she arouses in the authoritative personages, she cannot comprehend the underlying cause:

⁷⁹ See M. A. Cohen, "The Shavianisation of Cauchon", *Bernard Shaw: Man and Superman and Saint Joan*, p. 204

⁸⁰ Shaw, op. cit., Scene V, p. 109

⁸¹ Ibid.

JOAN. Why do all these courtiers and knights and churchmen hate me? What have I done to them? ... I have brought them luck and victory: I have set them right when they were doing all sorts of stupid things: I have crowned Charles and made him a real king; and all the honors he is handing out have gone to them. Then why do they not love me? ⁸²

Dunois explains this cause to her:

DUNOIS.... Do blundering old military dug-outs love the successful young captains who supersede them? Do ambitious politicians love the climbers who take the front seats from them? Do archbishops enjoy being played off their own altars, even by saints?⁸³

Nevertheless, Joan, without realising that what she has done is to create such a state of competition, insists on continuing to fight: "I will go back to the farm when I have taken Paris."⁸⁴

Apparently, Joan's imperviousness stems from her naivety, a trait rendered intrinsic to a genius in Shaw's drama. In this respect she is quite analogous to Caesar, Tanner, or Higgins; however, she surpasses them by explicitly (with overtones of narcissism) alienating herself from the ordinary world that does not pay tribute to her: "Jack, the world is too wicked for me."⁸⁵ She finds the support she needs in the voices she hears: "Only for my voices I should lose all heart."⁸⁶ And by giving a seemingly sensible explanation such as "the voices come first; and I find the reasons after: whatever you may choose to believe,"⁸⁷ turns her voices into a metaphor for her power of imagination as well as her willpower. However, this power is reflected

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 110

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 111

as hubris to the representatives of the ordinary world as expressed by the Archbishop, to whom she speaks rather insolently contrasting with her humility in the second scene:

THE ARCHBISHOP.... You came clothed with the virtue of humility; and because God blessed your enterprises accordingly, you have stained yourself with the sin of pride. The old Greek tragedy is rising among us. It is the chastisement of hubris.⁸⁸

It is evident that Shaw's Joan tends to act in line with the pattern of Aristotelian tragedy rather than lead a woman's life in her village, where, as Bluebeard gibes at her, "[She] will find the petticoats tripping [her] up after leaving them off for so long."⁸⁹ Apparently, she has ascended in power but demands more of it exhibiting a strong element of ego, and accordingly, defies both the Court and the Church: "I do know better than any of you seem to."⁹⁰ Thus with her persona as a combination of the prophetic and the peasantlike, she becomes a threat to the very existence of the society. As she does not know how to manage people, she loses support even within her own camp: her "comrade" Dunois calls her "my little saint," and "poor innocent child of God,"⁹¹ at the beginning of the fifth scene, but towards the end of the scene he indignantly mocks her by calling her "General Joan."⁹² Having served her turn, she becomes a nuisance to everybody, and even Dunois finds her demands unbearable.

However, Joan acts in a sense like a headstrong boy, and, without being aware that her attitude signifies usurpation of masculine power, expands her hubris into exalting her loneliness:

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 113

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 112

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 114

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 109

⁹² Ibid., p. 115

JOAN [*her eyes skyward*] I have better friends and better counsel than yours.... Yes:
I am alone on earth: I have always been alone.⁹³

What underlies this statement is a revelation of the development of a reversed psychic gender, a masculine subjectivity, in her childhood, a revelation rendering the attribute of heroism inherent in her psyche. Now her next step is to glorify her loneliness by identifying it with God – the greatest masculine power:

JOAN.... God is alone; and what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is His strength ... Well, my loneliness shall be my strength too; it is better to be alone with God.⁹⁴

And to convey her need for praise as a leading personage she exclaims:

JOAN.... In His strength I will dare, and dare, and dare, until I die. I will go out now to the common people, and let the love in their eyes comfort me for the hate of yours.⁹⁵

Her final words in this scene, which are in the form of a prophecy concerning her destiny, express an aspiration for immortality: “You will all be glad to see me burnt; but if I go through the fire I shall go through it to their hearts for ever and ever.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Ibid., p. 119

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 120

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

In a way, this claim echoes the words of Confucius, one of the dramatic figures of Shaw:

CONFUCIUS.... Nobody likes me: I am held in awe. Capable persons are never liked. I am not likeable; but I am indispensable.⁹⁷

So Joan, cast as a visionary-realist, becomes a metaphor for an indispensable fresh force in the quest for a self-sufficiency that comprises omnipotence and omniscience. However, she cannot realise such a hope by herself; she has to work with other persons and gain their approval. When she meets people who do not have specific aims, such as de Baudricourt or Charles, or common people who are easy to impress and rule, she can achieve the potency she seeks for. But when she meets people who, like herself, are strongly committed to a cause with differing perspectives and interests, such as Warwick, de Stogumber and Cauchon – the feudal lords and ecclesiastics – a massive clash becomes inevitable. The last scene, in which she is put on trial by the Inquisition, shows how she is crushed by such forces as a result of this clash.

The crush in question is projected as the crush of a Christ-like being – another Christ, so to speak. The biblical imagery that runs throughout the play accentuating the supernatural heroism attributed to Joan culminates in such a projection. In exemplification, Joan asserts a prophet-like state of being by prophesying her tragic end: “I shall last only a year from the beginning.”⁹⁸ Again, when she tries to impose her superiority on Charles, she self-assertively identifies herself as an otherworldly as well as a worldly being: “I come from the land, and have gotten my strength working on the land... And I come from God to tell thee to kneel in the cathedral and solemnly give thy kingdom to Him for ever and ever”⁹⁹;

⁹⁷ Shaw, *Back to Methuselah*, Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1922, Part III, p. 159

⁹⁸ Shaw, *op. cit.*, p. 112

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Scene II, p. 86

and then she adds: “Wilt be a poor little Judas, and betray me and Him that sent me?”¹⁰⁰

Indeed Joan is betrayed in the end, but not by only one Judas; a whole community composed of political and religious personages conspire to destroy her. However, when she is tried for heresy in accordance with the medieval religious discourse, she speaks with a voice which is in a different range from that of the learned men of the Bishop’s court, and defeats them though she is illiterate, a fact denoting her immunity from a static and essentialistic mode of learning. Again her voice is a masculine voice, and she retains the complementary epitomisation of male attire even if it is in the form of a page’s black (a colour symbolising evil and death) suit in contrast with her previous sartorial appearance. In fact, she gives a practical reason for her wearing men’s clothes:

JOAN.... I was a soldier living among soldiers. I am a prisoner guarded by soldiers. If I were to dress as a woman they would think of me as a woman; and then what would become of me?¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, her insistence on wearing men’s clothes becomes an alibi for the court for condemning her to death. The Inquisitor identifies her alleged heresy with her wearing of masculine clothes reflecting a fear on the part of the traditional patriarchy that Joan’s achievements might spread false ideas concerning the duties of women, which might consequently lead to chaos in the social construction:

THE INQUISITOR.... the woman who quarrels with her clothes, and puts on the dress of a man, is like the man who throws off his fur gown and dresses like John the Baptist: they are followed, as surely as the night follows the day, by bands of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., Scene VI, pp. 138-139

wild women and men who refuse to wear any clothes at all. When maids will neither marry nor take regular vows, and men reject marriage and exalt their lusts into divine inspirations, then, as surely as the summer follows the spring, they begin with polygamy, and end by incest. Heresy at first seems innocent and even laudable; but it ends in such a monstrous horror of unnatural wickedness ...¹⁰²

And D'Estivet, the Promoter, finds Joan guilty of two blasphemous crimes:

D'ESTIVET.... First, she has intercourse with evil spirits, and is therefore a sorceress. Second, she wears men's clothes, which is indecent, unnatural, and abominable; and in spite of our most earnest remonstrances and entreaties, she will not change them even to receive the sacrament.¹⁰³

What is noticeable here is that D'Estivet attaches the adjectives "indecent," "unnatural," and "abominable" to Joan's wearing of male clothing, not to her alleged sorcery, and thus, totally paralleling the Inquisitor's discourse, advocates a traditional gender construction. And ultimately, these two men represent the standpoint of the Church, which clearly evokes one of the biblical laws: "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this."¹⁰⁴

In the long line of female images in traditional literature, most notably in the image of wilful woman, as Herris observes:

Women are criticised and condemned for daring to appropriate aspects of masculinity ... This practice of women dressing as men clearly gives the lie to the

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 128-129

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 137-138

¹⁰⁴ "Deuteronomy," **Old Testament**, 21:21

old maxim 'we are what we look', at the same time it exposes gender as socially constructed, and not innate, eternal or biologically 'natural'.¹⁰⁵

So apparently what strikes the very existence of the Church is what lies beneath Joan's male disguise: her "unnaturalness" in her attempt to usurp male privileges by insistently trying to appropriate male traits, such as strength and willpower, which is occasionally manifested as a defiant sense of humour:

JOAN. Is the blessed St. Catherine an evil spirit? Is St. Margaret? Is Michael the Archangel?

COURCELLES. How do you know that the spirit which appears to you is an archangel? Does he not appear to you as a naked man?

JOAN. Do you think God cannot afford clothes for him?¹⁰⁶

And most of all it is vanity and self-assertiveness stemming from a total integration with the masculine psyche:

THE INQUISITOR.... Let us not be moved by the rough side of a shepherd lass's tongue.

JOAN. Nay: I am no shepherd lass, though I have helped with the sheep like anyone else. I will do a lady's work in the house – spin or weave – against any woman in Rouen.¹⁰⁷

Here she informs the audience that she has previously received a conventional

¹⁰⁵ Herris, op. cit., p. 147

¹⁰⁶ Shaw, op. cit., p. 138

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 135

orientation of femininity in her village; yet she attests strongly to her masculine self-identity, and, moreover, she asserts superiority in both domains – the female and the male:

THE CHAPLAIN. If you are so clever at woman's work why do you not stay at home and do it?

JOAN. There are plenty of other women to do it; but there is nobody to do my work.¹⁰⁸

At this stage, one can discern a great irony of the play by deciphering the author's characterisation of the personages that assail Joan: although he exposes those characters' static and prejudiced state of mind, paradoxically presents most of them as virtually well-meaning besides being committed to a cause just like Joan; for, though it means submitting to their will, they sincerely try to "save her soul," and maintain an order. In other words, the author neither criticises nor condemns them. As regards Joan, the author does not explicitly criticise or condemn her either, but he implicitly condemns her by denying her any form of femaleness, which evidently has the significance of condemnation of the female on a metaphorical plane. Whatever the historical reality of Jeanne d'Arc is, she appears to be a source of inspiration for Shaw to conceive a transcendent being exalted by faith and endowed with super traits which by implication belong to the male, and this transcendence is symbolised with the anachronical notion of Protestantism in the contextualisation of the play. Cauchon, as a seemingly well-meaning representative of the status quo, articulates this association:

CAUCHON.... The mighty structure of Catholic Christendom will never be shaken by naked madmen or by the sins of Moab and Ammon. But it may be betrayed

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

from within, and brought to barbarous ruin and desolation, by this arch heresy which the English Commander calls Protestantism.¹⁰⁹

The signification of this Protestantism takes another dimension through the lyric speech Joan delivers at the moment of greatest tension – when she comes face to face with lifelong enslavement:

JOAN.... Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction ... I could do without my warhorse; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind.¹¹⁰

In this speech, Joan seems to overcome the verbal hesitancy induced in women by a society in which men have had the first and the last word.¹¹¹ In fact, she exhibits a power of rhetoric which literally parallels that of the sophisticated male personages of the play, and which is quite out of keeping with her origins. Therefore, one cannot totally approve Williams's argument that "she passes to the simple romantic heroine in her relapse,"¹¹² as, whether in a romantic or a realistic mode, Joan is ultimately transformed into a *hero*; she is associated with such a power because she is set in a transcendent male psyche. The worst of the alternatives she recites concerning a life sentence is acting like a woman: dragging about in a skirt and being left behind by the male warriors as an ordinary woman evidently have the meaning of a great sacrifice – a degrading way of living – for her. In Shaw's drama, as a matter of fact,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 131

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 144

¹¹¹ See Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Toward An Understanding of L'Ecriture Féminine," *Feminist Literary Theory*, p. 329

¹¹² Williams, op.cit., p. 289

none of the female characters are associated with rhetorical skill, a situation reminding one of Cixous's critique of the traditional binary system of *logos* / *pathos*, in which *logos* is generally associated with the male and *pathos* with the female. "Thought has always worked through opposition", observes Cixous, and complains:

Man

Woman

Always the same metaphor: we follow it, it carries us, beneath all its figures, wherever discourse is organised. If we read or speak, the same thread or double braid is leading us throughout literature, philosophy, criticism, centuries of representation and reflection.¹¹³

Obviously, Joan is placed on the male side of this dichotomous system, a system which is indicative of phallocentrism, the practice of describing things associated with women as if they were deviant from a male norm, or the practice of placing the male at the centre of theoretical models, and assuming that "male" is coterminous with "human."¹¹⁴ So she goes to the stake as, metaphorically, a man of spirit – a super human being; and, in a sense, she accepts death to impose her will to live. Her burning, which is not actually shown on the stage, creates relief in some of her assailers, repentance in some, and sorrow in a few, but ultimately they all, without being aware of it, immortalise her by rendering her the status of martyrdom. For what is burned is her body – the body of a wilful female; the spirit she is associated with, symbolised by her heart – the vital organ, survives as the Executioner informs:

¹¹³ Hélène Cixous, "Sorties: Out and Out: Attack/Ways Out/Forays", *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*, p. 101

¹¹⁴ See Sara Mills, "The Gendered Sentence," *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, Ed. by. Deborah Cameron, London and New York, Routledge, 1998, pp. 65-66

THE EXECUTIONER. Her heart would not burn, my lord; but everything that was left is at the bottom of the river. You have heard the last of her.¹¹⁵

The image of a heart that would not burn, reinforced by the affectionate Brother Ladvenu's comment "This is not the end for her, but the beginning,"¹¹⁶ evokes the image of a phoenix reflecting a yearning towards an eternal state of existence. This yearning is evidently the dominant motif of the Epilogue, which is framed within an evocation of the Resurrection: Joan's spirit talks to the other characters of the play, who are travelling in the astral while their bodies sleep. Significantly, those who sent her to the stake are presented as living a humiliating life and suffering the pangs of conscience. What is in question here is an authorial design of poetic justice. As Chothia puts it, in terms of dialectic, Shaw's "strongminded characters recognise each other and, although cast as opponents, are glad to see dunderheads and time-servers bested even when ostensibly allied to them, and the audience is led to share the triumph."¹¹⁷ All of Joan's assailers penitently kneel to her, and recite their praises, but ironically when she asks them "Shall I rise from the dead, and come back to you a living woman?"¹¹⁸ they all – the medieval personages and the gentleman of the twentieth century (who comes in to announce that Joan has been canonised) alike – shy away and vanish. What Joan says when Charles compares her with his mistress provides a significant clue to the mystery:

JOAN [*laughing heartily*] Ha! Ha! I was no beauty: I was always a rough one: a regular soldier. I might almost as well have been a man. Pity I wasn't: I should not have bothered you all so much then.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Shaw, op. cit., p. 150

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 149

¹¹⁷ Chothia, op. cit., p. 156

¹¹⁸ Shaw, op. cit., Epilogue, p. 164

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 155

Why does Shaw make Joan provocatively propose she “come back ... a living woman,” after making her deny her femininity and assert her masculine identification throughout the play? Could this final turnabout imply that an authentically powerful female is more subversive and dangerous than a masculine woman, or potentially more damaging to the patriarchal order? Why does the author, from the beginning till the end of the play, so emphatically distort Joan’s sexual identity and alienate her from femaleness virtually depriving her of all the possibilities of forming an authentic womanhood?

Within the historical truth, Joan may have been an exceptional woman, but in Shaw’s artistic truth, the conflict between a Christ-like being and social institutions seems to overweigh the historical truth. Innes observes that “Christ is a recurring reference in Shaw’s work”¹²⁰; indeed *Saint Joan* bears some traces of the genre of passion play with Joan becoming, in Kristeva’s terms, “A rebel, a man of sorrows, a Christ-like figure.”¹²¹ Within the broad context Shaw gives to the legend of a saint, the sign “woman” becomes a signifier of something to be evaded, and Joan’s curtain lines (“How long, O Lord, how long?”)¹²² directed at a complacent society that is not able to understand and accept super people is fundamentally the cry of such a “man of sorrows.” For, in the final analysis, Joan becomes a metaphor for the male gift.

And bisexuality does not seem to be the path to the salvation of the female as long as it signifies identification with the male. Irigaray captures the prevalent significance of the notion of bisexuality as follows:

Parrying women’s demands to accede to their desires and their language [*langage*]? Perhaps if they try to become men, they will cease their “complaints” and “demands”? And then silence can be restored? ... How are identifications differentiated in men and women? Do women identify with the other, or do they identify the other with themselves? ... they identify with the other. How could they

¹²⁰ Innes, loc. cit.

¹²¹ Julia Kristeva, *Julia Kristeva: Interviews*, p. 170

¹²² Shaw, op. cit., p. 166

fail to do so, if there is only *one* language [*langue*] and if it is structured by principles, and especially principles of identity, which are determined by only one sex? Men begin by identifying the other with the self, assimilating, incorporating and introjecting the other so as to constitute a matrix of identifications.

At the level of sexual representatives or representations, this distribution of identifications means that all there is is a *double polarity* within the economy of a *single sex*. Because anyone who identifies with the other surrenders the “identity” of his or her sex, and anyone who identifies the other with the self reduces the other to his or her own. So where might bisexuality lie for women? When they have become other – masculine or phallic – what place is left for women, for their desire of *jouissance* as women? In what is imposed upon them in a secondary way by such identifications?¹²³



¹²³ Luce Irigaray, “The Poverty of Psychoanalysis,” *The Irigaray Reader*, pp. 99-100

CONCLUSION

A literary text, specifically a complex one, may accommodate and permit many modes of reading, suggesting endless interpretations; therefore, the process of interpretation should always be considered fragmentary, and one should not lay claim to any finality of judgement. However, if one aimed at exploring the limitations and impediments in the way of female imagination, any form of rereading of the texts that comprise the literary history would reveal how for centuries female readers/spectators/writers have been subjected to the dominance of male expression, limiting women's access to, and means of, expression. And any attempt to analyse the range of views found in literary presentations would help comprehend how the masculine biases of literature and culture have tried to fit the female between the lines of the male's dualistic set of values and structures.

Though associated at times with women's struggle for emancipation, Shaw's work cannot be considered to be outside the shared systems of the dominant patriarchal culture; for an exploration of the ways in which his image of woman is manifested proves that his writing and conceptual frameworks *are* within the system, or the status quo, and that he carries over the influence of the dominant social and literary values. Some of his female figures might seem strong at psychic and, interestingly, physical levels, yet they are ultimately denied any prospect of an authentic femaleness. The female characters that endeavour to enter the public sphere usually resort to male forms and become masculinised; in other words, they become the extensions of their male counterparts.

Though Shaw actually presents in some of his plays seemingly independent-minded and resolute female characters, an attentive reading of his delineation of such characters would reveal a mode of thought that does not easily tolerate deviations in

patriarchy's entrenched norms of gender construction. In the characterisation of such women, he apparently takes the male's supposed physical and mental powers as norm. More significant still, in his critique of the bodily and mental exploitations inherent in the capitalistic system, the female's sexuality, or sexual identity, becomes invisible amongst the work-related concerns. Thus in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, the only play in which Shaw focuses on upon a career girl, Vivie becomes an aggressive, masculinised caricature of the English New Woman of the late nineteenth century, the author's social criticism notwithstanding. The heroine of *Saint Joan*, Joan of Arc, is totally transformed into a metaphor for the supposedly male virtues, such as bravery and leadership. Amongst other exemplifications, Lina Szczepanowska of *Misalliance* stands out as an emblem of the usurpation of the male traits: covered by an aviator suit, helmet, and goggles, she insists on behaving and looking masculine, displaying remarkable physical strength. And in *The Music Cure*, a female character that claims she is a hard, strong, independent, muscular woman is ironically named Strega – Italian for witch. Quite significantly, such female characters are either left troubled sexually or destroyed.

Whatever forms the strong female figure takes, the underlying notion of binary gender construction remains constant in the Shavian line of female characters; the female's difference is basically assumed under male parameters. And it appears that Shaw's favourite type of strong woman is his "Life Force woman," Life Force being an inescapable force in nature that draws the female and the male together and strives to create the Superman. This force is most often acted upon by women, a situation exemplified by Ann Whitefield of *Man and Superman*, who actively and desperately tries to capture John Tanner, the intellectual hero of the play, despite the male's objections to marriage. Celebrating the institution of marriage, Shaw conceptualises the female's primary function in the world as mothering; his vision of sexual relationship as the basis of marriage and consequently the basis of reproduction constitutes the background for his vision of women as the breeder of children. Moreover, his "mother woman" figures are presented as totally governed by their maternal instincts.

None the less, one finds at the core of Shaw's drama a conspicuous dilemma with respect to the female's maternal role. On the one hand, he celebrates childbearing – the biological function of the female – so that some of his main female characters become rather aggressive in their quest for the fulfilment of this function. On the other hand, most significantly, he presents a state of mind that does not seem inclined to acknowledge what humankind – and life – owes to the mother. The interaction between his parental and filial figures is basically determined through the dynamics of paternity; and the maternal figures remain ineffectual in the psychic orientation of their children. Specifically daughters are consistently beckoned towards the father. Daughters consistently seek the tutelage of a father or a father surrogate and thus yield to the paradigms of a male-oriented world. Therefore, the normative system that informs Shaw's drama might be identified as a reflection of the fact that the power and dominance of patriarchy rest upon the suppression of and control over the mother.

It can be said in the last instance that the evaluation of the female in Shaw's dramatic work is totally androcentric, for a male figure seems to loiter in the background in godlike omnipotence. Within the semantic world of his drama, women do not have much say in their definition as the male language has the power to name and create reality. Consequently, reminiscent of God the Father, who is supposed to have created Adam out of clay, the Shavian Pygmalion moulds and shapes – creates – a woman with his power to control reality by controlling language and myth. Therefore, one finds, in the final analysis, a yearning on Shaw's part for the metaphysical comfort of a masculine epistemology. And when viewed in terms of challenging the agreed definitions of womanhood, most of his plays that purport to be comedies might seem less funny.

The stage, as a visual form of art, involves scopic pleasures and the body, and has the power to provoke us and make us think. One expects to find in the dramatic world progressive and supportive representations based on images and ideas that have the power to inspire to revolt against the oppression and exploitation of women stemming from the lingering sexual discrimination in patriarchal cultures. To put it

another way, one expects to find in the dramatic world representations of genuinely moving and changing discourses.



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