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George Bernard Shaw's Feminist Vision in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion*.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

Ouahiba Tamouh
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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to assess the development, consistency and comprehensiveness of George Bernard Shaw's feminist vision. To this end, this study proposes to explore the playwright's feminist stance in three plays which represent different periods in his dramatic career: *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion*. Such works are analysed in the light of three poetics: the Marxist Feminist Theory, The Gynoecocentric Theory and the Socialist Feminist Theory.

This research work is divided into five chapters. The first two set the scene for a better understanding of the dramatist's feminist thinking as they shed light on the social, cultural and literary backgrounds of the plays discussed. The first chapter in particular examines the social, economic, legal and political status of Victorian women. It highlights the central role played by the feminist movement in the struggle for the dismantling of the patriarchal system. The second chapter surveys the representation of the woman question by Shaw's predecessors and contemporaries. Furthermore, it discusses the position of Victorian women in the theatre as dramatists, actresses and actor manageresses. It also marks the role they played in the emergence of an English feminist drama by the late- nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

The chapters that follow are devoted to a thematic and textual study of the plays. The third provides a Marxist feminist analysis of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. It reveals that, by the early 1890s, as a Fabian feminist, Bernard Shaw was concerned mainly with the economic dimension of woman's oppression. His feminist comitment was part of his reformist socialist project.

The fourth chapter offers a feminist reading of *Man and Superman* in the light of L. F. Ward's Gynoecocentric Theory. The study of this play underscores the development of the Shavian feminist vision. It shows how, by the early twentieth century, apart from his interest in woman's economic independence, the playwright asserted her superiority over man, a superiority which stems from her reproductive power. This power is, in his view, the prime mover of creative evolution. Therefore the chapter explains how Shaw's vitalist philosophy was centred on his feminist convictions.

Pygmalion, the last play in this dissertation, is discussed from a Socialist Feminist standpoint in the fifth chapter. The study of this work brings to light Shaw's ability to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the woman question by the second decade of the twentieth century. By this time, he argued that the overthrow of patriarchal dominance would result, not only from outer reforms such as the establishment of Socialism, but from women's inner revolt against oppression as well; in other words, from their psychological development. Hence the analysis of *Pygmalion* highlights the fact that in this period Shaw's feminist engagement transcended his socialist concern.

Finally, in the conclusion I assert that the three plays, i.e. *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion*, dramatise a comprehensive, consistent, and developing feminist vision. Such characteristic features confirm Shaw's longstanding commitment to the cause of woman's liberation and his repudiation of the dominant phallocentric theatrical tradition.

Key words: Feminism - Woman - Independence - Emancipation - The Patriarchal System – Oppression - Rights - Socialism - Revolt

Résumé

Le but de ce mémoire est d'évaluer le développement, la constance et l'exhaustivité de la vision féministe de George Bernard Shaw. Cette étude s'attache à explorer la position féministe du dramaturge dans trois pièces théâtrales représentant différentes périodes de sa carrière de dramaturge : *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion*. Ces ouvrages sont analysés en utilisant trois théories qui sont respectivement: la théorie marxiste-féministe, la théorie gyno-écocentriste et la théorie socialiste-féministe.

Ce travail de recherche est divisé en cinq chapitres. Les deux premiers préparent la base d'une meilleure compréhension de la pensée féministe de Bernard Shaw puis qu'ils mettent l'accent sur la dimension sociale, culturelle et littéraire des pièces étudiées. Le premier chapitre étudie la situation socio-économique, légale et politique des femmes victoriennes. Il souligne le rôle principal du mouvement féministe dans la lutte pour le démantèlement du système patriarcal. Le deuxième chapitre étudie la représentation de la situation de la femme par les dramaturges qui ont précédé Shaw et ceux de la même génération. En outre, il évoque la situation des femmes victoriennes dans le théâtre en tant que dramaturges, actrices ou gérantes de théâtres. Il marque également leur rôle dans l'émergence du théâtre féministe anglais à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle et au début du vingtième. Les chapitres suivants son consacrés a l'étude, proprement dite, de ces pièces. Le troisième déroule une analyse marxiste-féministe de *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Il démontre le fait qu'au début des années 1890 Bernard Shaw, en tant que fabien féministe, était principalement intéressé par la base économique de l'oppression de la femme. Son engagement féministe constituait une partie de son projet réformiste-socialiste.

Le quatrième chapitre donne une lecture féministe de *Man and Superman* en ayant recours à la théorie gyno-écocentrique de Ward. L'étude de cette pièce met en évidence le développement de la vision féministe shavienne. Il démontre comment, au début du XXe siècle, outre son intérêt pour l'indépendance économique de la femme, le dramaturge confirmait la supériorité de cette dernière ; supériorité qui ressort de sa force de reproduction. Il pense que ce pouvoir est le stimulus primordial de l'évolution créative. Par ailleurs, ce chapitre nous explique comment la philosophie vitaliste de Shaw était basée sur ses convictions féministes.

Pygmalion, la dernière pièce dans ce mémoire, est discutée à partir d'un point de vue socialiste-féministe dans le cinquième chapitre. L'étude de cette œuvre révèle la capacité de Shaw à présenter une analyse plus complète de la question féminine pendant la seconde décennie du vingtième siècle. A cette époque, il déclarait que le renversement de la dominance patriarcale pourrait déboucher non seulement sur des réformes extérieures telles que l'édification socialiste mais aussi sur la révolte des femmes contre l'oppression ; autrement dit, à partir de leur développement psychologique. En conséquence, l'analyse de *Pygmalion* démontre que pendant cette période l'engagement féministe de Shaw set plus marqué que son militantisme socialiste.

Pour conclure, j'insiste sur le fait que les trois pièces, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion,* expriment une vision féministe complète, constante et évolutive. Ceci démontre l'engagement permanent de Shaw dans la cause de l'émancipation feminine et sa rupture avec la tradition théâtrale phallocentrique dominante.

Mots clefs : Le Feminisme - La Femme - Independance - Emancipation - Le Système Patriarcal - Opprétion - Droits - Socialisme - Révolte

Contents

Introduction

Feminist criticism emerged in the late nineteen-sixties as a new branch of literary theory. Such theory had its impact on the novel first. Some years later, it became an established trend in theatre studies as well. Literary texts can be examined from various feminist critical positions since feminist criticism is not monolithic. The various feminist approaches depend on other general theories, most notably Marxism and psychoanalysis. The task of the feminist critic is to assess the writer's response to gender issues through a feminist reading of the latter's literary works. This thematic and textual study reveals how the writer either consolidates or subverts the dominant patriarchal discourse which systematically represses and others woman.

Over the last decades, the English drama of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries hase provided an important outlet for feminist theatrical scrutiny. This drama emerged during one of the most crucial and influential periods in English history; a period that gave birth to a democratic spirit which encouraged the rise of various reformist movements including the feminist one. By the second half of the nineteenth century, women began their organized and militant struggle against patriarchal dominance; a struggle that resulted in some gains. Thereby the woman question became one of the most prominent issues of the period. By the *fin-de-sciècle*, the remarkable change in the status of Victorian women had its impact on the theatre; an impact which recharted the map of this cultural institution turning it from an exclusively masculine enterprise to a new platform for feminist demands. The plays of George Bernard Shaw were instrumental in the shaping of this new perception of the English theatre. They dramatized the experience of women, discussed their problems and concerns and made their claims more outspoken. As an engaged dramatist who believed that 'art [was] judged good or bad according to its effect on human welfare'[1], Shaw aimed at the dismantling of different oppressive systems, including patriarchy.

The bulk of feminist criticism dealing with Shavian Drama includes a number of books, articles and theses, most notably, *Socialism and Superior Brains: The Political Thought of Bernard Shaw* written by Gareth Griffith in 1995, *Fabian Feminist: Bernard Shaw and Woman* (1977) edited by Rodelle Whinthrop, 'Shaw's life: a Feminist in spite of himself', an article written by Sally Peters which appeared in *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw* edited by Christopher Innes 1998. In addition to two important dissertations '*Power Laced in Petticoats Shavian Women and the Life Force'* by Melanie Francis and Judith Granger's, '*Widening the Scope of the Shavian Heroine (*1997). Some of these works concentrate on the study of a specific aspect of Shaw's feminist drama. The theses mentioned for instance explore in detail the dramatist's representation of the female character. They analyse different types of Shavian heroines. My research work belongs to this trend in Shavian studies. Yet its purpose is to shed a new light on Shaw's feminism by providing a more exhaustive analysis of some of the main Shavian feminist plays. This thesis proposes to examine the playwright's feminist stance throughout different periods in his dramatic career so as to assess the comprehensiveness, the persistence and the development of his feminist vision. Thus this study will attempt to answer the following questions: To which extent could Bernard Shaw, as a male dramatist, subvert the long-standing phallocentric theatrical tradition? To which extent could his feminist drama consolidate and enrich the then current feminist debate? Was Bernard Shaw fully committed to the cause of woman's emancipation?

This thesis concentrates on the study of three Shavian plays: *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893), *Man and Superman* (1903) and *Pygmalion* (1912). My selection of these works as case studies is motivated by two main reasons. First, because they discuss a wide range of feminist issues and present prominent female characters. Second, as they are written in different decades, i.e. in different periods in Shaw's dramatic career, their study will make the evaluation of both the development and the consistancy of the playwright's

feminist thinking a more valuable task. The three plays will be read in the light of three different feminist theories: the Marxist Feminist Theory, L. F. Ward's Gynoecocentric Theory and the Socialist Feminist Theory. I deem this choice pertinent on two accounts. On the one hand, it will be instrumental in bringing out both the comprehensiveness and the development of the playwright's feminist vision; on the other hand, since these feminist critical approaches address the woman question from diverse perspectives and hence offer different explanations for woman's oppression, their employment will widen the scope of this research work and enrich the feminist discussions it will raise. These feminist theories will be explained later in a detailed way.

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter assesses the status of Victorian women in two sections. The first section gives a survey of the Victorian social, economic and political scenes so as to pinpoint the different factors and cultural forces which kept women on the margin of society. The second section reveals the gradual improvement in Victorian women's life conditions with the advent of the feminist movement. It sheds light on the different feminist campaigns and the resulting achievements. Finally, it assesses the development of the feminist debate by the *fin-de-siècle*. Hence this chapter makes the reader more familiar with the socio-economic and cultural context in which Shaw's plays were written and performed.

The second chapter paves the way for a better understanding of the playwright's feminist stance as it provides an overview of the Victorian dramatic scene; more particularly, it concentrates on the representation of the woman question by Shaw's predecessors and contemporaries. Part of this chapter is devoted to an examination of the major impact of Ibsen's feminist plays on the new English drama of the 1890s. This part brings out the affinities of Shaw's dramatic work with Ibsen's especially as far as the issue of feminism is concerned. The last part in the chapter underlies the important role played

by women dramatists, actresses and actor manageresses in the emergence of an English feminist theatre by the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The third chapter explores *Mrs Warren's Profession* from a Marxist feminist viewpoint. A number of critical concepts and notions are quite essential in this study. They include such concepts as alienation, ideology and consciousness-raising and the notions of the sexual division of labour, the link between woman's labour and her personality in addition to the Marxist feminist perception of the issue of prostitution. This chapter highlights the economic bases of woman's oppression. It underscores Shaw's conviction, as a Fabian feminist dramatist, that "sexism is endemic in capitalism"[2]. The study proposes to present the playwright's feminist engagement as part of his reformist project as a Fabian militant whose aim was to secure gender equality through the dismantling of the capitalist system and the establishment of socialism.

In the fourth chapter, I intend to discuss Shaw's feminist vision in *Man and Superman* in the light of L.F.Ward's Gynoecocentric Theory. I propose to explain how the playwright's Creative Evolutionist Theory (fully developed by the early 20th century) is centred on his feminist assumptions. As a vitalist philosopher, Shaw was still preoccupied with the woman question; yet, he addresses this issue from a different perspective in *Man and Superman*. Indeed apart from his denunciation of the gender inequalities that the capitalist system maintains, he concentrates more on the celebration of woman's innate and fundamental role in the reproductive function. He perceived it as the central mover of Creative Evolution. Hence, the aim of my feminist analysis of *Man and Superman* is to reveal how the new Shavian socialist scheme, a Creative Evolutionist scheme founded on both institutional reforms and biological progress, assigned the major role, in communal development, to the female sex.

The last chapter provides a socialist feminist reading of *Pygmalion*. Through the use of this critical approach, I intend to investigate Shaw's feminist insight from a wider perspective so as to bring to light the comprehensiveness of his feminist thinking as dramatised in this play. *Pygmalion* presents a non-monocausal explanation of woman's oppression. It argues not just for the enhancement of her social standing and educational capacities but for a change of self-perception as well as important measures to break the bounds of patriarchal dominance. Thus the study of this play intends to reveal how, by the second decade of the 20th century, Shaw had reformulated his feminist vision. He addressed the woman question from a wider angle and thereby recognised that the establishment of socialism couldn't guarantee woman's emancipation. It had to be sustained by an increase of female's self-esteem and feminist consciousness.

Before explaining the feminist theories which will be applied in the analysis of the plays selected in this dissertation, it would be necessary to define a number of concepts that are crucial in any feminist reading, e.g. *femaleness, femininity, gender, patriarchy, othering and ideology*. A distinction should be made between the terms "femaleness" and "femininity" which, as Toril Moi states, remain thoroughly confused so as to serve patriarchal interest. To disentangle this confusion, feminists insist that *femaleness* is related to biology or nature while *femininity* is a social and cultural construct. It is related to gender since this latter is defined as a social category that encompasses ''the words, gestures, appearances, ideas and behaviour a dominant culture understands as indices of feminine or masculine identity.''[3] Patriarchy, broadly defined as a system of male dominance over women imposes certain attributes as the defining features of feminine behaviour such as passivity, subservience and modesty. From a phallocentric point of view, femininity is thus related to marginality as Julia Kristeva argues. Patriarchal discourse constructs the woman as "the other" of the Self which is masculine. It advocates a binary thought according to which "the other" "the woman'' is the inferior and thus the

dominated one while "the Self" or the man is the powerful, and thus the dominant one. The woman thus is positioned as "the other", commonly defined in relation to the male subject as mother, daughter, wife, etc. She is unable to take up a subject position. By contrast, the feminist discourse is defined as ''the one discourse where man cannot play the star part.''[4]

Another important concept in feminist criticism is *ideology* 'It refers to a system of cultural assumptions or a discursive concatenation of beliefs or values which uphold or oppose social order or which otherwise provide a coherent structure of thought that hides or silences the contradictory elements in social and economic formation.'[5] In Marxist terms, ideology belongs to the superstructure while being rooted in the material base and is thus determined by it. According to this base-superstructure model of society, 'the society's mode of production generates a superstructure; a layer of legal political and social ideas that in turn bolsters that mode.'[6] This set of values, representations and beliefs are determined by the economic interests of the ruling class which is at the same time the ruling intellectual force. In this sense ideology is a constructed version of reality. For Althusser it represents 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.'[7] That intellectual system, rooted in ruling class interests, conditions the form of all social relations including gender relations. A related concept to ideology is what Althusser terms ideological state apparatuses. The dominant ideology in society is practised in the cultural universe which is represented through institutions and organizations such as school, church, art and the legal system which all ensure that people within a state behave according to its rules. Such institutions generate and maintain the ideology which people internalize as 'normalcy'.

The first play, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, will be analyzed from a Marxist feminist perspective. Feminists were engaged in debates with other critical theories including Marxism. Both feminist and Marxist critics consider that literature value lays in its potential for social criticism and emancipation and that certain social and economic

processes influence literature and are conveyed through it. Thus the text cannot be read in isolation from its immediate context. Although Marx and Engels subsumed gender oppression underneath broader class exploitation believing that woman's oppression would dissolve along with the abolition of private property, their philosophies gave rise to a set of concepts and ideas which have become central to Feminist Theory. They include the concepts of *alienation, consciousness-raising,* the theories of *Historical Materialism* and the *sexual division of labour* in addition to Marx's and Engels's analyses of prostitution and bourgeois marriage. The relevance of such concepts and aspects of Marxian theory to feminist criticism will be explored later in more detail.

It would be important to note that the book Engels wrote in the year 1884, *The Origin of The Family: Private Property and The State,* is widely regarded as the pivotal Marxist document for feminist theory. It offers a comprehensive explanation of the origins of patriarchy. In it Engels establishes a link between gender oppression and class exploitation. He claims that primitive communal societies were organized in a matriarchal fashion; women played the principal role in production and thus acquired a remarkable status. However, with the establishment of private property, patriarchy took over. Women's domestic work became less valuable than the increasing wealth accumulated by men outside the household. For Engels 'the overthrow of mothers' rights constituted the world historical defeat of the female sex.'[8] The family was transformed into a monogamous male-dominated entity where the husband is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat.[9] Engels suggests two liberating steps for women which can be taken with the dissolution of the institution of private property. First, the introduction of women into public industry and second, the socialization of house-work and child-rearing.

Marxist feminism is thus a theory that provides a materialist understanding of women's oppression. Marxist feminists see the dismantling of capitalism as a way to liberate women since sexual inequality is rooted in the economic base of society. They

consider that women's oppression is the product of the political, social and economic structures associated with capitalism. Marxist Feminism thus establishes a link between two systems of domination patriarchy and capitalism which 'operate as mutually conditioning.'[10] Its central concern is women's economic well-being and independence.

The Marxist notion of *consciousness-raising* is given a feminist slant by Marxist feminists who view woman exploitation as a form of class oppression which is maintained because it serves the interest of capitalism. Raising women's consciousness is an important issue in Marxist feminist theory. Women need to develop a true consciousness of their oppressed condition. Such awareness is revolutionary since it allows women to recognize who and what is causing their distress. 'It is a question of gaining the consciousness that they are oppressed as women, that they are not inferior and that patriarchy need not be inevitable.'[11] The practice of consciousness-raising is central to feminism since it unifies women as a group and thus strengthens their resistance to patriarchal dominance.

The Marxist Theory of the *division of labour* and the concept of alienation are also relevant to Marxist Feminist Theory. Due to their concern for the economic status of women, Marxist feminists express a specific interest in the organization of labour, adopting in common with other Marxists the base-superstructure model of society. They perceive the organization of labour as constituting the underlying economic structure which conditions the form of all social relations. Marxist feminism draws a parallel between women's work and economic status on the one hand and their self-image and private lives on the other hand. It is based on the assumption that 'women's work shapes women's thought and thus female nature.'[12] In her work *Women's Oppression Today* (1980), the Marxist Feminist critic Michel Barrett mentions the sexual division of labour in addition to the economic organisation of the household, the educational system and the operations of the state as the roots of women's oppression under capitalism. The capitalist system oppresses women by confining them to the home or by giving them the most unfulfilling

and low-paying jobs. Hence the woman is economically dependent on the man who occupies a higher position because he is the provider and the controller of women's labour power. In Marxist Feminist terms, this is the base upon which patriarchy rests. The sexual division of labour is naturalized and thus legitimized by gender ideology which identifies women with passivity and emotion while it presents man as a rational and responsible being. As a result, it maintains the patriarchal capitalist system.

A related concept to the theory of the sexual division of labour is *alienation*. This is central to Marxist Feminist Theory. It is defined by Robert Heilbraner as 'profoundly a fragmenting experience.'[13] This sense of loss and estrangement is basically caused by the specialization of labour and the allocation of certain groups to certain tasks, i.e. the division of labour. Alienation takes different forms.

First, alienation from an object or loss of ownership. Workers are alienated from the products of their own labour. They have no say in their prices and no role in deciding to whom or where their products will be sold. Second, alienation from one's self. In his *Karl Marx*, Allan Wood suggests that 'we are alienated if we either experience our lives as meaningless or ourselves as worthless, or else are capable of sustaining a sense of meaning and self-worth only with the help of illusions about ourselves or our condition.'[14] This state of disharmony is caused by the inability to achieve self-realization; as an example, workers are alienated from themselves because labour which is supposed to bring them pleasure and self-esteem is the very cause of their oppression. Third, alienation in social relations. Under capitalism human relations take on an alienated nature. Persons who are or should be connected in certain ways are instead viewed as separate. Each individual feels himself or herself only when detached from others. Workers regard one another as enemies due to the competitive spirit of the capitalist economy.

Although both women and men can experience alienation, its effect on women is worse and more oppressive. Because of the sexual division of labour, women are often confined to the home. Hence they are alienated because they cannot achieve self-realization. Even when they enter the public world, their work is alienating because it is not freely chosen. Caroll Paitman underlines a difference in the quality of women's presence in the public sphere from that of men by stating that 'It is not that women are absent from the paid work place, it is rather that they are present differently as secretaries, prostitutes, nurses, social workers, child care workers...'[15]

Marxist feminists provide a deep analysis of the issue of prostitution. From their perspective, since under capitalism most women do not have a sufficient access to the work place, they are forced to sell their sexual services in order to survive financially. In Marx's view prostitution is only a specific expression of the general prostitution of the labourer. The women's sexuality becomes a commodity which she sells because she has nothing of a comparable value to sell. Prostitutes are in fact oppressed workers reinforcing and perpetuating an exploitative scheme. They experience all forms of alienation. Capitalism as a system of power relations generates an ideology that defends prostitution as the exercise of free choice. From a Marxist Feminist viewpoint, under this system the traffic in women – a term first introduced by the 19th century feminist and anti-prostitution activist Emma Goldman to refer the phenomenon of the commodifition of women in patriarchal societies – is a profitable organized business. Marxist feminists consider bourgeois marriage as a form of prostitution. They see the difference between the ordinary courtesan and the wife as merely a difference of degree and not of kind 'The wife does not hire out her body like a wage worker on piece-work, but sells it into slavery once and for all.'[16] Apart from her sexual services, the wife prostitutes other services like house work, child care and emotional support in return for financial security. As Michele Barrett suggests, a redivision of labour is necessary for ending women's economic oppression.

This would be possible with the dismantling of capitalism which for Marxist feminists is a way to fight prostitution whatever form it takes. All the concepts and notions explained before including consciousness-raising, the link between patriarchy and capitalism, the theory of the sexual division of labour and its accompanying gender ideology, the relation between women's work and women's thought, alienation and the Marxist Feminist analysis of prostitution will be central to the feminist reading of *Mrs. Warren Profession*. They will help us to provide a better understanding of Shaw's feminist vision.

In this dissertation, the feminist analysis of the second play, *Man and Superman*, will be carried out in the light of the Gynoecocentric Theory, a theory originated in the work of the American sociologist Lester Frank Ward (1841-1913). The latter was commonly referred to as the founding father of American sociology. He was deeply committed to the cause of equality and liberation. He argued that all men have an equal right to the exercise and enjoyment of their faculties. The bulk of his support came mainly from socialist and feminist groups. His gender-related work is of a special importance for he was a major contributor to the early sociological discussion of gender in late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although most of the Victorian thinkers tended to see woman's subordination as part of the natural order, a few sociologists, including Ward, defended woman's rights. They participated in the development of an important trend in the discipline of sociology known as the sociology of gender. Due to the striking parallels which I have found between Ward's feminist thought and G. B. Shaw's, I will devote the fourth chapter of this dissertation to a feminist reading of *Man and Superman* in the light of Ward's Gynoecocentric theory and his reflections on a number of gender-related issues, including woman's subjection within the institutions of traditional marriage and patriarchal family and the importance of her participation in the reforming and development of society.

According to Ward's Gynoecocentric Theory, the female sex is primal in both origin and importance while the male sex is a later addition by nature to any species for the purpose of reproduction. In 1888, Ward first set down his theory whereby

> the primary purpose of the male sex is to enable the female, or type form, to reproduce, after performing which function, the male for is useless and a mere cumberer of the ground […] The female sex is primary in point both of origin and of importance in the history and economy of organic life.[17][sic]

Ward explains later in *Pure Sociology* (1903) that

> the female sex, which existed at the beginning, continues unchanged but the male sex; which did not exist at the beginning made its appearance at certain stages, […] even in the present life of the globe. The female is not only the primary and original sex but continues throughout as the main trunk, while to it a male element is afterward added […] The male is, therefore, as it were, a mere after thought of nature.[18]

Therefore, Ward believes that the female sex is primal in the biological order. He explains that females in early societies were the primary protectors of their children, the centre of their families and the objects of male competition but not domination. In his view, the female reign over the social group, which he terms Gynoecocracy, was the earliest phase of human development. Ward notes that under such conditions "social placement would likely be established through one's relationship to the mother."[19] This recognition of an exclusive female line kinship reflects Ward's deliberate neglect of paternity.

Ward explains the first human evolution from Gynoecocracy to androcracy or male rule with its patriarchal family system as follows: all dual sex species, he said, began as matriarchs. However, the social change from Gynoecocracy to androcracy emerged at a certain point of history as a consequence of the discovery of paternity. Men became conscious of their potential for economic and family kinship power. They began to have other pursuits than reproduction and nourishment of the offspring – the main purposes for which they were created. Ward concludes that this "led eventually to the subduing of the female herself."[20] Man's abuse of power took different forms. Women were beaten, forced to do hard labour, bought and sold as workers for sexual purposes. Moreover, their labour

services were used to further expand male power and wealth. This process, Ward believes, completely reversed the social system.

Ward notes that the biological theory, which concerns the origin of the sexes that most theorists adopt, is androcentric. It serves as the basis of man's view about his superiority over women. In *Pure Sociology*, he writes:

> In evolutionary biology women are treated by most theorists primarily as means of procreation not as social actors in their own right. Such theorists almost always present human evolution as primarily the result of male activity and natural selection with woman serving only as an unimportant accessory except as a reproducer.[21]

In this book, he makes it clear that gender rules are a mere cultural construction arguing that throughout all human history, women had been powerfully discriminated against and held down by custom, law, literature, religion and public opinion. In his view, in order to legitimate their oppression of women, men developed a series of rationales often attributing evil powers to them describing them as malicious and vile for example. His attack on Romanticism, in *Pure Sociology*, is part of his denunciation of these unexamined assumptions and negative evaluations of women. According to Ward, Romanticism has a harmful effect on the future evolutionary development of the female sex. Because men desire to keep women in an inferiority status, unable to develop their mental capacities and strengthen their personalities, they celebrate the ideal of Romanticism as one of the best feminine qualities. The Gynaecocentric Theory comes as a response to the androcentric view of human history. It clearly reverses the religious version of the origin of the sexes. Ward asserts that women play an active role in the perpetuation and development of the human species for they are, as he says, "similar to great apes in their ability to choose their mates; this ability gave them an advantage."[22]

Another important aspect in Ward's feminist thought lies in his denunciation of the current institutions of marriage and family. He claimed that marriage was dictated by economic needs and that its permanence was founded on the subjection of woman. With

the advent of the patriarchal family institution with its appropriation of woman for economic purposes, he said, the position of women declined greatly. Thus the family is, for Ward, a mere economic arrangement which reduces the wife to a worker for the husband's benefit. It was originated for 'the more complete subjugation and enslavement of women and children and for the subversion of nature's methods in which the mother dictates who shall be father and guard her offspring by her instinctive maternal affection.'[23] Throughout his study of early human groups, Ward concludes that in earlier times when women were free from marriage, they were more equal in their relation to men, the sexes freely commingled as there were less social restraints. He remarks that it is in such societies that the fittest environment for the most efficient humain evolution is established. In *Pure Sociology*, he said that

> all attempts on the part of society to regulate the relations of the sexes, though necessary they may be to the maintenance of the social order, interfere with the biological principle of crossing strains and securing the maximum variation, development , and vigour of the stock.[24]

Thus the institution of marriage needed to be reformed so as not to hinder the progress of nature's evolution.

Much of Ward's work anticipated many aspects of the post-1970s sociological literature on gender. Throughout the 20th century, his feminist thought had a great impact on a number of progressive and feminist writers including Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the radical feminists Mary O'Brien, Adrienne Rich, Robin Rolland and the existentialist feminist Simone de Beauvoir, many of whom had reproduced his arguments about female biological superiority over man. It is surprising that such an influential thinker had been neglected by those with the power of historical definition. I think it would be important to recover some of his lost insights and arguments. My study of *Man and Superman* will show how his Gynoecocentric Theory is incorporated into Shaw's Creative Evolutionist Theory and how the two supporters of the woman question share the same reflections on a number of gender issues.

My reading of *Pygmalion* will be carried out from a socialist feminist standpoint. More specifically, it will be dealt with in the light of the ideas and the insights of both Juliet Mitchell and Alison Jaggar, two of the main socialist feminist theorists. The socialist feminist project can be understood as "nothing less than the confluence of Marxist, radical and arguably psycho-analytic streams of Feminist thought".[25] Dissatisfied with the limitations of other feminist theories, mainly their mono-causal explanation of woman's oppression, socialist feminist scholars, including Jaggar and Mitchell, developed a more comprehensive and unifying approach to the woman question. They assume that in order to achieve independence and self-fulfilment, women have to break the bounds of the biological, sexual, social, economic and more importantly psychological oppression imposed on them by the patriarchal order. Though transcending the limitations of sexuality, reproduction and class is indispensable to women's emancipation, their full liberation can be attained only with the transformation of their psyches: 'If a woman is to become a self, a subject, she must, like man, transcend the definitions, labels and essences limiting her existence. She must make herself be whatever she wants to be.'[26] Accordingly, the move from the margin to the centre requires an outer as well as an inner revolution against patriarchy.

Like Mitchell who asserts that apart from the exterior factors which oppress women such oppression lays in the human psyche, Jaggar underscores the complexity of female's subordinate status. Her synthesis is based on the concept of alienation which in her view provides a theoretical framework that accommodates the main insights of Marxist radical, psychoanalytic and liberal feminist thought. Jaggar explains that under capitalism, women experience a deep sense of alienation: "they are in *special gender-specific ways* separated from all those processes and people [they] need to achieve wholeness as persons" [27]. Work, sex, motherhood and intellectuality which should be sources of woman's integration as a person, become instead the very causes of her sense of estrangement. She feels at odds

with everything and everyone including herself. So as to eliminate such oppressive relations, women need to know the causes of their oppression and to understand that it does not just lurk in social institutions and cultural structures but exists in the mind as well. Thereby, socialist feminists discuss the woman question from a larger perspective. They assume that because woman's oppression is a complex phenomenon, its suppression requires consistent and serious efforts at various levels. This comprehensive feminist approach with its quintessential concept of alienation will provide a better understanding of Shaw's feminist stance in *Pygmalion*.

Thus this research work consists of five chapters. Since the contextualization of the literary work is part of the feminist critical enterprise, the analytical chapters will be preceded by two introductory chapters which set the ground for the assessment of Shaw's feminist vision. The first chapter sheds light on the status of the Victorian woman. It underscores the major role played by the feminist movement in their gradual emancipation from patriarchal dominance. The second chapter provides an overview on the representation of the woman question on the Victorian stage. Furthermore, it concentrates on women's participation in the emergence of a feminist English drama by the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. The three chapters which follow deal with the feminist analysis of the three plays' major constituent elements including themes, characterization, and language. The third chapter is concerned with the analysis of *Mrs Warren's Profession* from a Marxist feminist standpoint while the fourth provides a feminist reading of *Man and Superman* in the light of the Gynoecocentric Theory. The third play, *Pygmalion*, is discussed in the last chapter from a Socialist Feminist critical position. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the results of this study.

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I

The Status of Victorian Women:

From Oppression to Emancipation

This chapter provides a general analysis of women's position in the Victorian period. It traces their gradual evolution from submission to emancipation and shows how in each stage of this development, their image and role in society were determined by different factors. The chapter will be divided into two sections. The first one will be a survey of the different aspects of Victorian life that reflected the dependent position of women and an analysis of the factors and the forces that kept them on the margin of society. The second section will provide an overview on the development of the feminist movement in England throughout the second half of the 19th century. In this section, I will show first the way in which the rise of a feminist consciousness in England came as a reaction to the oppression endured by Victorian women. The part that follows will mark the rise of mid-nineteenth century women's rights movement. Special emphasis will be laid on the different campaigns launched by its militants and the goals reached on the feminist front. The last part in this section will be an exploration of the feminist debate of the *fin-de-siècle*. It will best illustrate the improvement in Victorian women's status and will show how this improvement was part and parcel of the new atmosphere that society at large witnessed by the turn of the century.

1- The Subjection of Victorian Women

Victorian society was dominated by a patriarchal order. Women were living in a world revolving around men. Every aspect of their lives reflected their belittling and property-like status. Their dependency was reinforced by diverse culturally-held beliefs. In the social field, Victorian middle class women had a clearly defined social role within the family unit. Their domestic seclusion was brought about by the processes of industrialization and urbanization. Under such circumstances, there occurred a gradual withdrawal of well-to-do middle class women from paid labour. The traditional idea that families were income-earning units was replaced by the capitalist ideology of separate spheres for men and women .The world of middle class women was then narrowly centred

on the home, while the masculine public world was increasingly expanding. In this period, many thinkers promoted this phallocentric capitalist ideology in their writings. For instance, the Victorian economist John Vincent argued in his study of the British liberal party that: "the great moral idea of liberalism was manlinesss."[1] Hence liberalism with its masculine identity was a factor that reinforced the public/private dichotomy.

The Victorians argued that the social idealization of the home as a place of tranquillity and security was a way of protecting the qualities of women from the harshness of the materiel public world of men. Within their domestic realm, women played an essential role mainly as mothers, especially with the expanding emphasis on the importance of direct and close maternal involvement in the care of children. This centrality of motherhood was taken for granted in both anti-feminist and feminist writings. The emergence of this 'ideology' was mainly due to the growing impact of conservatism and evangelicalism on Victorian society. Religious tracts emphasized the fact that within their homes women had a great moral mission. They were regarded as guardians of religion and morality which could be threatened outside the home, and were expected to make religious values appealing to their husbands. Moreover, they were required to expand their mission to their local communities and even to wider society. This mission can best be explained in the words of the philosopher Fredrick Harrison. : "the true function of women is to educate not children only but men, to train to a higher civilization not the rising generation but the actual society, and to do this by diffusing the spirit of affection and self-restraint, self-sacrifice, fidelity and purity"[2]. The discussion of Victorian women's mission leads to a central question; how can Victorian women be subordinate to men and at the same time assume the leadership in social regeneration?

In Victorian society, marriage as a social institution perpetuated women's oppression. The conditions of Victorian married women were so difficult that many

feminists likened their situation to that of slaves. They were responsible for large families and were required to devote their lives to the service and entertainment of their husbands. Because of their lack of outside activities and interests, Victorian women suffered more than men from unhappy marriages. Their wretchedness was sometimes increased by marital violence; indeed some of them were victims of their husbands' ill-treatment. Victorian women often endured such violence and found themselves compelled to accept their property status within marriage since it was the only way for them to survive financially. Under such circumstances, Victorian marriage generally lacked any form of mutual affection and respect. The social oppression of women within marriage was aggravated by the permanency of its ties. It was very difficult for women to obtain divorce since ending marriage was generally effected by a private act of Parliament which was extremely expensive. Even when women could obtain divorce they were unable to have the custody of their children; a fact which increased their misery and suffering. Single women too suffered from difficult problems. Under the fallacious Victorian idealization of marriage, their lives were regarded as insignificant. Unlike married women, they lacked the financial security that marriage provided.

Education was another stumbling block which kept Victorian women away from attaining an equal social status with men. As a result of the valorisation of maternity and marriage above intellectual pursuits, every aspect of Victorian girls' education prepared them for their destined career as wives and mothers, and prevented them from acquiring interesting skills. They were denied access to the schools and universities attended by their brothers. Men justified this gender discrimination in education by the view that the enhancement of woman's intellectual status would disturb the social balance; if educational and job opportunities were opened for women, they would neglect their domestic duties and hence jeopardize the solid unity of family. Men did not just exclude Victorian girls from serious formal education; they enslaved their minds as well. Notions

of meekness, submissiveness and ignorance were represented as female achievements. John Stuart Mill claimed that "All women are brought up from the very earliest years in a belief that their ideal of character is the very opposite of men, not self- will and government by self-control, but submission and yielding to the control of others"[3]. The intellectual differences between men and women were constantly justified by men of science and medicine who based their arguments on the assumption that since women had smaller brains, less emotional control and less bodily strength than men, they were incapable of reaching an equal intellectual status. Similar ideas were expressed by psychologists who argued that women's mental development ceased at an earlier age than that of men due to their psychological rigidity. The promotion of such ideas by influential thinkers made it more difficult for women to obtain equal opportunities with men in the field of education.

In the economic field both middle-class and working-class women were oppressed by the advent of industrialization and the rise of capitalism. However such economic changes affected them differently. For Victorian middle-class women, paid labour had come to an end. Regardless of their philanthropic activities, they had very limited contact with the public sphere. The range of activities that had been opened to them in pre-industrial society was by this time reduced to very few occupations, mainly teaching and governing. The enhancement of their domestic role reinforced their economic subordination to men. Michael Barett argues that another way for the government to exclude women from the public world was by not supporting birth control measures as women's constant child-bearing prevented them from undertaking any outside activity. Barett claims that "to be at the mercy of reproductive biology is at the social rather than the individual level a political decision rather than a biological determination".[4] Thus a relation between the provider male and the dependent female characterized Victorian economy.

Working-class women, unlike their middle class counterparts, were part and parcel of the public world. Due to their social destitution, they were forced to participate in the family upkeep. Their work provided cheap labour and thus was needed for the expansion of production. Due to the sexual division of labour, women were excluded from many skills by male workers in an attempt to preserve their jobs. Female workers were also subjected to sex-based differences in wages. The exploitation of married women workers was even greater. They were subjected to both husband and master. In addition to their work outside the home, they were entrusted with heavy domestic chores. Working-class women generally participated in textile and laundry work in addition to domestic service. Their deplorable conditions at factories were a crucial issue throughout the 19th century. Thus regardless of their differing circumstances, both middle class and working class women were subjected to economic oppression.

The legal establishment increased to a great extent woman's dependency. Victorian laws were mainly supportive of male domination. This situation of injustice affected especially married women and prostitutes. The legal framework of Victorian marriage denied women their autonomy since their legal personalities were subsumed by their husbands. According to the Common Law doctrine of coverture under marriage contract, women and men became one person and this person was represented by the husband. This law dictated that married women could not enter into contract or make a valid will without the consent or the participation of her husband. It gave him also legal rights over any property she might have before or after marriage. The husband had also the right to 'correct' his wife physically, a fact which led to an increase in domestic violence. Even when married women wanted to obtain divorce, they were restricted by their legal disabilities. Much worse was the fate of prostitutes.

In addition to the sexual and economic exploitation they endured, prostitutes were enslaved by State regulations. The Contagious Diseases Acts which had been first introduced in 1862 embodied Victorian sexual double standards since they applied only to women not to their male clients. Their real purpose was to provide healthy prostitutes for men. In fact such legislation did not oppress just prostitutes but all women as the police could round up any woman without proving that she were prostitutes. The laws concerning prostitutes and married women established the male basis of Victorian legislation.

Women's sexual oppression was a result of the hypocrisy of Victorian society. The wide-spread cultivation of an outward appearance of dignity and the encouragement of such vices which were primarily oppressive to women like prostitution and sexual violence in marriage were two sides of the same coin. The Victorians held strongly to a conviction that women were sexually passionless. This assumption was termed by Havelock Ellis as women's sexual anesthesia. The emergence of such stereotypes was due to the strength of Evangelicalism among middle class Victorians. The Evangelicals believed that since women were 'naturally' spiritually elevated, they should not express any sexual desire. Later in the century, scientific and medical views came to reinforce this belief in women's sexual passionlessness. Great stress was laid on the differences between male and female anatomy and physiology and on the connection between those differences and their differing sexual natures. William Acton was one of the main 19th century medical practitioners who advocated this view of female sexual restraint. He argued that "once women were degraded by sexual desire, their original purity could not be regained."[5]

Politics was another domain where Victorian women were strongly oppressed. They were explicitly banned from any participation in local or national elections. Knowing that politics was the most male-dominated era and that even Victorian women were not strongly motivated to obtain the franchise (at least before the Suffrage Movement), one

would understand why gaining the vote for women was one of the longest battles. In fact the Victorian women's lack of influence on the political scene was not just an oppression in itself but also the source of other disabilities. If women enjoyed political rights, they should alter their underdog status.

Thus Victorian women suffered from all forms of oppression. They were denied their rights and freedom. Social institutions, religious teachings, the legal and the economic systems all maintained males' supremacy and women's subjugation. However, the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a remarkable change in women's status thanks to the serious and incessant efforts of various feminist activists to bring the patriarchal oppressive system to an end.

2. The Struggle for Victorian Women's Rights

The oppression faced by Victorian women provided a stimulus for feminist demands. However, before the1850s such demands were claimed only by occasional female and sometimes male voices. Women's rights were then the concern of some individuals who were devoted to the improvement of the quality of women's lives. This period marked the first challenges to the assumption of the natural inferiority of women, and the first discussions of many feminist issues which were to be taken up by later generations of feminists e.g. improving women's education, widening their job opportunities, attacking the sexual double standard, reforming marriage and asking for political rights. Thus this period prepared the ground for the emergence of a strong feminist movement by the second half of the 19thcentury.The Enlightenment philosophy of natural rights, the Liberal political economy and the Industrial Revolution gave prominence to ideals of individuality, self-reliance and economic independence.

Hence, in voicing their demands for women's rights, early feminists applied such ideals to the situation of women. This group of feminists included many influential figures who dared challenge patriarchal oppression in an iconoclastic way. Mary Wollstonecraft was undoubtedly the most prominent feminist of this period. The novelty and the radicalism of her ideas presented for many feminists a great stimulus throughout the 19th century. Besides Mary Wollstonecraft, there were other outstanding figures belonging especially to the conservative and philanthropic circles, the Owenites and the radical Unitarians such as Anna Wheeler, Harriet Martineau and William Thompson. W. G. Fox and W.B Adams also played a crucial role in promoting the cause of women's liberation.

i. Mid-Victorian Feminism

By 1850, the struggle for women's rights developed from being the interest of some individual men and women to a more collective concern. The advent of organized feminist campaigns brought considerable change in women's status. The feminist activists of mid-century were very powerful and influential. They acquired the institutional recognition with the establishment of the first women's centre *Longham Place Circle.* Furthermore, the emergence of women's journals, reviews and periodicals provided a space for feminists to spread their ideas and publicise their activities. The feminist debate of the second half of the 19th century was characterized not just by protest against the injustices that women suffered from but by a celebration of their distinctive qualities and merits as well.

The champions of such activism were middle-class feminists and hence the issues they discussed and the claims they advocated were appealing much more to middle-class than to working class women. Nonetheless, they were not ignorant of the needs and the problems faced by working class women especially in regard to their working conditions, domestic violence and sexual exploitation. Middle-class notions and ideals of femininity became central to the feminist discourse of the mid-century; feminists accepted certain

prevailing ideas about the distinctive qualities of womanhood. However, they argued that since women were more spiritual than men, they should be given the right to assume their own responsibilities and to enjoy a sense of independence and self-assertion. They also used the assumption of women's moral superiority in their demands for larger educational and job opportunities. They argued that since women were required to raise the moral standards of their families and society, they should be educated and entitled to a large public role .In this domain, feminists also made use of the enhanced role of mothers. They claimed that in any occupation or public activity women would contribute to the general welfare of society.

In their demands for women's rights, mid-Victorian feminists benefited from the central role given to religion by Victorian middle-class. Some of them reinterpreted religious texts from a feminist perspective asserting that Christianity secured for women all their rights and recognized no sexual differentiation since the same duties were laid down for men and women.

There were some differences between mid-Victorian feminists in their way of analyzing, discussing and promoting the cause of women's emancipation. Those differences were due to their differing personal experiences, social conditions, and political leanings. However, their aim was one: the emancipation of the female sex. The issues in which they were interested included the improvement of women's education, widening their job opportunities, gaining political rights, the removal of legal restrictions and the suppression of sexual double standards. The period of the second half of the 19th century witnessed the advent of organized feminist campaigns which aim was to attain legal, social and political reforms as a way to improve women's status.

By the 1850s, the campaigns to foster legal reforms marked the first step in mid-Victorian feminist activism. They were meant to improve in particular the lives of married women and prostitutes, the main victims of Victorian legislation. The year 1854 witnessed the publication of two important works which attacked the legal disabilities from which Victorian women were suffering; these were Caroline Norton's *English Laws for Women* and Barbara Leigh-Smith's *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws of England Concerning Women*. In 1855 Leigh-Smith formed a committee whose intention was to reform law and give married women rights to property ownership and children custody in case of divorce. The committee soon became a nation-wide campaign group.

The campaigns to improve the situation of married women involved many influential feminists like Bessie Rainer-Parks, Elizabeth Wellstone-Hohm, Florence Nightingale and many others. *The Women's Suffrage Journal* which Lydia Baker began in1870 with the aim of promoting the cause of women's suffrage played an important role in exploring the legal situation of women. It staged a continuous attack on traditional laws pertaining to the property and legal rights of married women and dealt at length with the question of child custody and women's sexual exploitation within marriage.

After a long struggle, feminist efforts in this domain brought considerable improvement in the life of married women. In 1878, after an amendment to the Matrimonial Causes Act, married women were able to secure the custody of their children in case of divorce. In 1882, the Married Women Property Act entitled them to become legal agents, able to own property and control money. Thus, feminists were able to improve the situation of married women by removing some legal disabilities which restricted their lives.

Another campaign was directed against the State regulation of prostitution and towards restoring the legal rights of prostitutes. The Contagious Diseases agitation which began in 1869 with the formation of the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was under the leadership of Josephine Butler, a prominent feminist and social reformer. The campaign involved a powerful national sensitisation and mobilisation. Its members were able to gain a large support especially from religious groups as they developed religious rhetoric which tied the campaigns legal objective with an ideal of moral reform. The campaign proved high female solidarity through the participation of many feminists like Mary Carpenter.

The situation of prostitutes was explored in the writings of those feminist activists and also in *The Shield,* the weekly paper founded by the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. It provided constant information about the horrors of the acts and reported the debates of Parliament on the subject of prostitution. In it, Josephine Butler published many letters attacking the role of the police, magistrates and brothel-keepers in the enslavement of prostitutes. The Contagious Diseases agitation finally brought the repeal of the acts in 1886 but prostitution persisted as a serious problem representing one of the most crucial factors of the Victorian Women's dependent position.

Mid-Victorian feminists were also aware of the importance of raising women's social position. Since the 1850s, there had been constant discussions about improving the life of single women, reforming marriage and widening women's educational and job opportunities. In many articles and pamphlets, mid-Victorian feminists defended celibacy; they even illustrated how rewarding the life of single women could be through their own personal experiences since many of them were unmarried but were able to assert their personalities and challenge the Victorian assumption that marriage was the only gateway to respectability. Frances Power Cobbe was one of the most prominent feminists who

discussed this question especially in her article *The Question of Celibacy and Marriage*. Feminists insisted on the need of opening new possibilities for educational and job opportunities to celibate women as a means of gaining financial independence.

Improving the position of married women was also a prominent issue in mid-Victorian feminist writings. Many Victorian feminists participated through their activities and writings in combating this severe problem. In 1851 John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taller wrote an article in which they advocated new laws to protect women from domestic violence. Similarly, in the 1860s Frances Power Cobbe's *Wife's Torture in England* contained the fullest report on married women's victimization. Later in 1869, Mill provided one of the best known 19th century works which attacked Victorian marriage. In it he expressed deep interest in marital problems and advocated marriage reforms. This concern with the status of married women was shared by Lydia Backer and many other feminists. The second half of the 19th century also witnessed large-scale discussions, especially those held by the Kensington Society, on the situation of daughters. Many feminists claimed that parental authority should be limited and that daughters should have the right to enjoy moral and intellectual autonomy.

During this period, feminists were intensely committed to the question of woman education. The fight for women's access to Higher Education was led by Emily Davies. Together with many feminists she campaigned for the admission of women to Cambridge University degree courses. Her main achievement was the establishment of Girton College at Cambridge in 1869. Some of the main works which dealt with the question included Bessie Rayner Parker's *Remarks on the Education of Girls* and Emily Sheriff's *Intellectual Education and its Influence on the Character and Happiness of women*. Women's entry into Higher Education was a way to break free from the social restraints imposed on them; their progress in this domain was slow but steady.

Discussions about woman education were frequently accompanied with a demand for widening their employment opportunities. Feminists rejected the assumption that women's public role should be reduced to the fields of philanthropy and teaching. They advocated women's admission into a wide range of occupations, especially medicine. Many feminists recognized the economic basis of women's oppression arguing that it was the lack of access to employment that kept women in subordination and even led them to choose immoral ways, mainly prostitution as the only means of survival. This relationship between morality and the economic situation of women was explored by many feminists particularly Josephine Butler and Barbara Leigh Smith and by famous writers like Samuel Butler and G. B. Shaw. The establishment of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women played a major role in the cause of women's employment. Feminist activists in this campaign based their argument on the assumption that widening women's employment opportunities would put an end to several problems like prostitution and would even improve marital relations since marriage would no longer be just a means of financial support for women.

The last feminist campaign in the second half of the 19th century was that of the women's suffrage. This political agitation began by the late 1860s. It is important to mention the major role that John Stuart Mill played in this connection. For him, "obtaining the right to vote was an important step towards the moral improvement of the human kind,"[6] Mill proposed an amendment to the 1867 Reform Act that would give women the same political rights as men and published a number of works on this issue including *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1851) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869). His writings and speeches were used by feminists as a support for their claims to gain political rights.

In 1868, after the defeat of Mill's amendment to the Reform Bill, female political groups amalgamated and formed the National Society for Women's Suffrage; however, nearly up to 1897 the campaign remained at a relatively ineffective level until the establishment of the National Union of Women's Suffrage societies by Millicent Fawcett in 1897. It advocated non-violent means of campaigning leading suffrage deputations to Parliament addressing private and public meetings and publishing articles and letters. Though the unions were active on a wide front, feminists were unable to achieve their aim in obtaining the right to vote; so by the early 20th century, the advent of the militant campaign with the formation of women's social and political unions stimulated a range of new strategies, resorting to violent means of protest. It was after more than 60 years that women's claims for political rights were realized by obtaining full suffrage in 1928. The slow pace and lack of success of the suffrage campaign in the 19th century was due to the fact that even male universal suffrage was not obtained in this period. Granting women the right to vote was thus achieved thanks to the efforts of many feminists who were devoted to this cause.

Thus there was a great progress in the promotion of women's rights during the second half of the 19th century especially in terms of removing the legal restrictions on married women, and prostitutes, attacking sexual double standards, improving girls' education and gaining access to universities, opening some job opportunities to women in addition to the wide discussions held on questions of celibacy, the situation of daughters and domestic violence. The different campaigns to achieve legal, social and political reforms witnessed the participation of a large number of feminists who contributed through their writings and active engagement to effect a considerable change in Victorian women's lives. Though there were still some hindrances and unachieved aims, feminist's efforts in this period marked a promising start for later improvements in women's status.

ii. The Feminist Debate of the *Fin-de-Siècle*

The last years of the 19th century were characterized by an inescapable sense of newness invading Victorian society. It became apparent in all fields including the woman question. Late-Victorian feminists argued that the new situation of women required new attitudes. Thus they reshaped the feminist debate by adopting new ideas and claims and advocating more effective strategies. They aimed at the reconstruction of a new image of womanhood. The feminist debate of the *fin-de-siècle* was thus a reformulation of the early and mid-Victorian feminist discussions in accordance with the broader changes which affected society at large.

By the 1890s, advancement in women's social position began to be visible in view of the improvement of their education and the increasing choice of occupations opened to them. The period was characterized by an increase in the number of educated girls and the advent of women graduates. Education granted this generation of Victorian girls' great enthusiasm and the ability to assert their personalities and participate in many aspects of public life. So unlike earlier generations many of those girls were seeking freedom from marital and familial ties. The concern with women's intellectual status was combined with a concern with their physical fitness. The introduction of gymnastics for women, the advent of the bicycle and hence of women cyclist and the emphasis on the social and economic desirability of birth control all raised an interest in women's health. Women gave up their moral mission and combined their domestic duties with outside activities and interests. So this new social position of late-Victorian women stimulated new feminist discussions. Main issues included the questions of celibacy, birth control and women's intellectual and physical self-realisation.

Other concerns with women's sexual autonomy and the problems of working-class women were more in accordance with the prevailing medical and scientific ideas and

economic conditions. The issue of women's sexuality was put forward in a more militant way during the 1890s. This question was discussed mainly by medical practitioners especially psycho-analysts and psychologists who were deeply interested in the study of sex and gender. Havelock Ellis's *Man and women* (1893) was one of the most influential works of this period. In it Ellis provided an exhaustive study of sexual characters in men and women. His study came as a reaction to the social oppression of women based on the so-called biological inferiority. He asserted that men and women's fitness for any kind of social activity or role should be determined by experience rather than by social prescriptions. His work was thus an attack on women's social oppression and an assertion of the existence of a distinctive female sexuality. The tolerance of such discussions of women sexuality by science and medicine encouraged late-Victorian feminists to adopt this question as one of the major feminist issues of the *fin de siècle*. Those feminists promoted more sexual freedom for women and agitated against wives' sexual oppression. As a result, the assumption of women's moral chastity around which mid-Victorian feminist debate had been organized, ceased to be a defining ideal of womanhood.

As the socialist movement took on a renewed life in the *fin-de-siècle*, there was as Olive Banks pointed out, "a decline in the number of feminists with predominantly liberal national political orientation and a rise in the number of feminists who were also socialists."[7] They advocated more freedom for women by attacking the Victorian sexual double standards and claiming economic independence. They believed that women's economic subordination was the source of their oppression and opposed any legislation which imposed double standards either in sexual matters or with regard to women's working conditions. Both socialism and feminism became powerful reformist movements by the turn of the century. Hence socialist feminists were among the most outstanding groups who defended women's rights.

The Fabian society was one of the most influential socialist organizations that appeared in the 1880s and that played a major part in the cause of women's emancipation. The society was founded in England by a group of middle-class intellectuals whose view of socialism differed from that of Karl Marx in two main ways. First, unlike Karl Marx, the Fabians aimed at the replacement of capitalism by socialism through gradual reform rather than through revolution. Their socialism was practical in character and focused on the solution of contemporary social problems. Second, they rejected Marx's assumption that gender oppression should be subsumed underneath broader class oppression. G. B. Shaw, Sidney Web and Havelock Ellis were among the society's most outstanding members: they believed in gender equality and promoted socialism as a means to secure the establishment of equal citizenship for men and women. Moreover, they shared a belief in the emancipating value of work and genuine education for women. Shaw was an active Fabian; He lectured on behalf of the society's causes, wrote a number of Fabian tracts and provided money to found *The New Age,* the independent socialist journal. His socialist views were advanced in many plays like *Pygmalion, Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Major Barbara.* Shaw was interested in the spread of socialism among women, he wrote *The Intelligent Women's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* and converted some women, like Annie Besant, to the socialist movement.

The Fabian society not only defended women's rights through its male members; it also provided membership for many women and gave them the opportunity to express their views and voice their claims. Fabian women sought to free working-class women from capitalism and put an end to sexual hierarchy. Class difference was a central issue in their analysis of women's economic conditions. Among them were Anny Besent, Charlotte Wilson and Beatrice Web; by the early 20th century they formed the Fabian Women's Group to discuss their own concerns and claim their rights in a more militant way.

Many Fabians participated in the formation of the Labour Party in 1900. The period witnessed the emergence of a group of feminists affiliated with the newly formed group who were particularly concerned with the welfare of working-class women. In the 1880s and 90s there was an overall expansion in factory production and the industrial employment of women. As a result, discussions about women's working conditions, exploitation and oppression became central to the feminist debate of the *fin-de-siècle*. Those feminists asserted that it was they, through their connection with the Labour movement, and not mid-Victorian feminists who were capable of understanding the needs and the problems of working-class women. Women joined trade-unions in large numbers and made their voices heard through the National Federation of Women Workers.

Thus the new position of late-Victorian women stimulated larger and more effective feminist discussions by the end of the nineteenth century. Late-Victorian feminists included the question of women's sexual freedom and the problems of working class women as major issues in their feminist agenda. This was essentially due to the impact of socialism, the labour movement and scientific and medical discussions on the woman question. As a result, the feminist debate of the *fin-de-siècle* was intensely affected by the cultural climate of the period.

Thus the Victorian era is a remarkable period in the history of the English feminist movement. Victorian women were the victims of the patriarchal order that operated in different ways and under several guises to keep them in a dependent position. They were subjected to social, economic, legal, sexual and political injustices. Men used the force of religion, education, science and medicine to maintain their authority and to justify such inequalities. However, the second half of the 19th century witnessed a reaction against patriarchal dominance. The champions of the mid-century feminist movement spoke on behalf of women and defended their rights. The legal, social and political campaigns they

organized and the discussions they held on many issues such as celibacy, the situation of daughters and sexual violence all brought a considerable improvement in the status of Victorian women. By the late 1890s feminists reached their aims. The period marked a remarkable evolution in Victorian women's position. To hasten the pace of that evolution, late-Victorian feminists took advantage of the new social, intellectual and economic situation to spread their ideas and make their claims more outspoken.

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II

The Woman Question on the Victorian Stage

Having analysed the status of women in Victorian society, we shall now attempt to shed light on their representation on the London stage. The first part of this chapter will be a general overview on the theatre in the 1860s and the 1870s. Special emphasis will be put on the neglect/ignorance of woman issues by Shaw's immediate predecessors and on the inferior status of the mid-Victorian actress. The part that follows will be devoted to the impact of the drama of Henrik Ibsen on the English theatre of the 1890s, especially as concerns the issue of feminism. Affinities between Ibsen's drama and that of Bernard Shaw will be underlined in this connection. The last part will be an exploration of the ways in which the woman question was represented in the plays of Shaw's contemporaries and a highlighting of the main tendencies of the period. This part will also assess the participation of women playwrights in the new drama of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

1. Mid-Victorian Drama

The English theatre of the 1860s and 1870s played a minor role in the development of the new drama of the 1890s – at least as far as the representation of the woman question is concerned – and in the formulation of Shaw's feminist vision. By this time the English audience had no literary or intellectual interest in the theatre. The latter thus remained essentially a vehicle of entertainment and was basically a profit-seeking enterprise. Playwrights had no desire or perhaps no capability to deal substantially with the issues of their time. Their plays triggered off no effective social, moral or political discussions. They were highly conventional in their treatment of characters and exploration of themes. They were characterized by their sentimental leanings and romantic endings and rule of patience. Those plays were thus a far cry from the subversion of Romanticism and the promotion of intellectual pursuits which characterize Shaw's early plays. Melodrama was the most popular mode of the period. Playwrights who 'wallowed' in this genre were more concerned with form than

content; they presented a mere collection of type characters involved in series of 'fixed' intrigues. Their plays had a conventional bourgeois moral outlook and arose no controversial debates.

Most English dramatists of the period were influenced by the French playwright Scribe and his well-made plays which thrilled English audiences through translation and adaptation. In this form of drama, the Aristotelian doctrine of the supremacy of plot had been driven to such an un-proper extreme that it lost its originally organic relation with characters and themes. Shaw opposed the well-made play for two main reasons: first because its ready-made morality fabricated foregone conclusions with no thought-provoking action; secondly because in his view incidents are less interesting than the motives that create them and the people involved in them. Plot for Shaw was mechanistic. It allowed no interaction between human beings. Their actions and emotions were part of an artificial framework aimed at satisfying the expectations of the audience. Shaw made a distinction between plot and story. He considered the latter a natural development proceeding from human emotion, human desire and conflict among characters. The well-made plays of this period had no originality and no true literary merit.

The silencing of Victorian women in the theatre was one of the main cultural practices. Women were given minor roles and were generally regarded as a generic entity rather than as individuals. Plays were dominated by feebly drawn conventional melodramatic heroines, a mere representation of the angel-in-the-house icon. This theatrical type appeared for instance in Albery's *Auriana* Beran's *Syral's Success* and Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea*, the theatrical forerunner of Shaw's *Pygmalion*. In this latter play, Galatea is portrayed as self-sacrificing unlike Eliza whom Shaw used to subvert the Ovidian myth and express his feminist convictions.

The playwright who, somehow, differed from his contemporaries was T. W. Robertson. He could be distinguished from them in his representation of the female character especially in the roles interpreted by Mary Wilton, a famous actress. In his plays *Ours* (1866) and *School* (1869) Robertson presented women who, though operating within the confines of middle class femininity could nevertheless assert their independence and personalities.

In those days, some women rebelled against the prison-like domestic life and defied socio-economic norms by working as actresses. Such women broke specific cultural taboos and were thus branded by a large section of society as immoral. The patriarchal assumption that the actress is only a prostitute was very popular. It reflected the strongly held conviction that acting for women was a fall from virtue. This is the reason why actresses were not able to shake off the masculine control on the theatre yet. On the one hand, they were given very limited and unchallenging roles which depended basically on their appearance rather than on their performance. In order to achieve success, the actress had to be young, charming and good-looking. On the other hand, they were subjected to the control of the actor managers who selected plays for production and cast them according to their prejudices. As the actress Charlotte Moreland put it: "for a woman in this career success or failure is consequent on her powers of fascinating the one man who has her career in his iron grasp."[1]

Hence the English plays produced in the theatre of the 1860s and 1870s were quite conventional by all standards. They were directed at an audience that sought mere entertainment. At that time the woman question had not yet attracted English playwrights. Women were still absent from this male-dominated theatre both as principal actresses and as playwrights. It was only by the 1890s that the English drama

achieved a true ‘reform’ and evidenced feminist leanings. This was essentially due to the influence of the Norwegian dramatist Henrick Ibsen, on of the founders of the New Drama.

2. The Impact of Ibsen

Ibsen was introduced to England in the 1870s by Edmund Gosse – a literary critic and biographer. Gosse wrote a number of reviews of Ibsen's plays and published in 1873 an extended article entitled ‘Ibsen, the Norwegian Satirist’. Moreover, in 1898 he wrote the playwright's biography. However, his efforts had reached only a small literary circle. The campaign for popularizing the Norwegian dramatist in England was taken up by G. B. Shaw and William Archer who were able to reach a large theatre-going public and to influence their taste. Their efforts consisted in the production of Ibsen's dramatic works upon the English stage. Hence, since 1889 English audiences witnessed the performance of most of Ibsen’s plays including *A Doll’s House*, *Ghosts*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Pillars of Society*, and *The Lady from the Sea*.

Shaw’s publication of his Fabien lecture, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891) was an important landmark in this campaign. This essay, Shaw claimed, was an exposition of the philosophy of which he believed Ibsen was a leading exponent. Despite its great success, the book was fiercely attacked by many critics for two main reasons; some of them blamed Shaw for devoting his study to Ibsen the social reformer rather than the dramatist, while others went even further claiming that Shaw attributed his own philosophy and ideology to Ibsen and was thus "talking about himself rather than about Ibsen."[2] Apart from *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, the great number of articles written by Shaw on Ibsen’s drama which were published weekly from 1895 to 1898, in addition to the recurrent hints to the Norwegian playwright’s literary genius in

the prefaces to his works, mark Shaw's admiration for Ibsen's dramatic work.

Ibsen's introduction to England was met with a great deal of difficulty; for his plays were often the subject of public controversy. They were defended only by avant-garde theatre critics mainly Archer and Shaw – the most outstanding supporters of the new drama. But more conservative critics headed by Clement Scott, the spokesman for middle class audiences, who championed the drama of mere entertainment, were deeply hostile to Ibsen; they considered his works a threat to current morality and well-established English values. Moreover, the emergence of hundreds of articles assaulting Ibsen and minimizing his literary merit deepened such hostility. Though the attack on Ibsen and his plays retarded to some extent his canonization in England as a great master, the critics' debate in itself can be regarded positively since it was a stimulus for the development of a new drama in England. Ibsen's plays changed the whole tradition of 19th century English drama. His iconoclastic attitudes and daring themes exposed mainly in a series of social plays, shocked English audiences. These plays expressed a revolt against ready-made morality and an attack on social conventions and haloed ideals. In *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, Shaw implied that such revolutionary ideas were the substance of Ibsen's plays.

Both Ibsen and Shaw considered every social question as material for drama and gave their plays a didactic and social function. In his extension of social and ethical debate, Ibsen was an exponent of realism. This is apparent in his exploration of themes, treatment of characters and use of language. He was attracted to realism for highly unconventional reasons "not because it offered him the opportunity to document the surface of life, but because it permitted him to penetrate the surface to the hidden truth beneath"[3]. This approach to realism through which Ibsen challenged the romantic tradition was later adopted by G. B. Shaw and best explored in the latter's *Plays*

Unpleasant.

At the level of dramatic technique, Ibsen freed the English drama from the minor stage conventions such as the aside and the soliloquy. He also introduced a distinctive feature which is the substitution of a serious discussion for the conventional unravelling of the situation in the last act of the so-called well-made play; as Shaw put it, "Ibsen wrote Scrabian plays with a twist."[4] While the well-made play is composed of an exposition in the first act, a situation in the second and an unravelling in the third; Ibsen's plays are composed of an exposition, a situation and a discussion. This new element was highly appreciated by many playwrights including James Joyce and was skilfully adopted by Bernard Shaw who claimed that Ibsen's plays "are all talk"[5], thus arguing for the importance of discussion and dialogue in the dramatic art.

In *Our Theatre in the Nineties*, Shaw stressed the pre-eminence of Ibsen's characters above social dogma and thus joined Archer's argument that the Norwegian dramatist's greatness comes from "his understanding and representation of human character and his ability to portray character in dramatic action more than from anything else."[6] Ibsen endowed his characters with a sense of credibility and psychological profundity. He skilfully devised circumstances and situations in which such characters most vividly reveal themselves. Most remarkable is the pre-eminence of his female characters. They are perceived by Shaw as major participants in Ibsen's social debate which can be represented, as he claimed, through "the agency of a villain idealist and an unwomanly woman."[7] Ibsen's line of new or unwomanly women include Nora *(A Doll's House*), Lona *(Pillars of Society*) Rebecca *(Rosemersholm)*, Elida *(The Lady from the Sea),* and Hedda (*Hedda Gabler*). Through their portrayal as emancipated and strong-minded women, able to achieve self-realization, Ibsen revolted against the inferior status ascribed to women both in society and in the theatre.

The view of Ibsen as a dedicated feminist and of his plays as an important outlet for feminist criticism was promoted by many critics. Shaw in particular argued that: "Ibsen appealed to the rising energy of the revolt of women against Idealism."[8] *A Doll's House* is one of Ibsen's ground-breaking plays where he fully expressed his feminist ideas. The transformation of Nora from a doll for her husband to a resolute and autonomous woman smashed the pre-Ibsen conventional theatrical feminine type.

One of the most valuable contributions of Ibsen to the English New Drama of the 1890s is that his plays allowed actresses to supersede the passive status which limited their acting capabilities mainly through the promotion of substance over spectacle and the creation of an interpretative engagement between the actress and the audience. Elizabeth Robins and Janet Achurch were among the well-known interpreters of Ibsen's female roles upon the English stage. Shaw tried frequently to convince famous actresses "to play Ibsen if only for their own glory."[9]

Like Ibsen, Shaw provided brilliant female roles throughout his long dramatic career. He had epistolary exchanges with many famous actresses such as Ellen Terry and Patrick (Stella) Campbell and promotes female acting. Shaw declared that the English theatre "was in need of more women of the clever positive type"[10]. Among the most successful interpreters of his plays were Janet Achurch, Patrick Campbell and Lila McCarthy. Hence, late-Victorian actresses achieved a sense of autonomy and occupied a larger space on the stage first through the performance of Ibsen's plays and then thanks to the efforts of the English dramatists of the *fin-de-siècle,* most notably Shaw, in whose plays women dominated the scene.

It is worth noting here that Ibsen's plays in England were frequently produced by women especially during matinee performances. The advent of the actress manageress by the 1890s participated in enlarging the opportunities available to actresses, as well as challenging the desire to keep the theatre under masculine control. Janet Achurch, Florence Farr and Elizabeth Robins were among the women who proved a great success in this profession. The advent of the actress manageress was recognized by Bernard Shaw in the preface he wrote for William Archer's *The Theatrical World of 1894*: "we can not but see that the time is ripe for the actress manageress and that we are on the verge of something like a struggle between the sexes for the dominion of the London Theatre."[11]

Ibsen thus played a major part in the development of late 19th century feminist English drama. To express the greatness of his influence Archer said, "if I were asked to lay my hand on a single English play which was not obviously imitated from or directly influenced by Ibsen I should not know where to turn."[12] His drama was highly influential both at the level of form and content. Its novelty made the plays of the English dramatists of 1860s and 1870s seem artificial and old-fashioned. It paved the path for later developments. Pinero and Jones were among the English dramatists whose plays seemed to echo Ibsen's. Shaw commented that such playwrights imitated Ibsen's plays in their posing of moral problems without having "problematic views" and that "all they wanted was to capture some of his fascination."[13] Shaw himself was influenced by the Norwegian dramatist more than any other member of the new school of English drama. Yet he frequently repudiated such influence without denying his esteem for Ibsen's work and thought, which in many ways he regarded as akin to his own. Shaw probably revolted against the critics who regarded him as a mere disciple of Ibsen without taking into consideration the fact that, with the production of each new play, he developed his own philosophy and dramatic methods and thus asserted the

originality of his work.

3. The Woman Question in the New Drama

It was in the last decade of the nineteenth century that the new English drama, heralded by the translations and productions of Ibsen's plays, fully developed. Indeed, the improvement started in the 1880s with the emergence of Pinero, Jones and Wilde. Though the works they produced in this decade were not as successful and popular as those produced in the 90s, they were of a greater literary merit than those of their predecessors. Discussions about women's rights appeared rarely in the theatre of the 80s. Perhaps the best known play that concerned itself with the feminist issue was Pinero's *The Weaker Sex (*1888). This comedy was originally judged good; however, some critics had a number of reservations about the way in which Pinero handled the theme considering it rather shallow.

With the coming of the 1890s, the general quality of plays and the standards of theatre criticism were upgraded. The renaissance of the English theatre, as Jones labelled, it was supported by the formation of non-commercial organizations such as the Independent Theatre (1891) and The Stage Society (1899) which presented plays refused by the Censorship Board or by other stages. In this decade, the theatre was growing in importance as a social institution. The horizon of drama expanded to make room for the discussion of contemporary social issues including the woman question. English dramatists of the *fin-de-siècle* sensed that there was a climate already established by Ibsen which was receptive to such serious ideas and thus opted for this subject- matter in most of their plays. In this drama, women played the star part. They generally presented two types which dominated the English stage of the 1890s: The" Fallen Woman" and the "The New Woman". Although they seemed different, these two categories had much in common. Both challenged the conventional ideal of

womanhood and revolted against the Victorian ethos. The crucial question that should be asked here is how far were the English dramatists of this period advanced in their feminist discussions and representations? In other words, to wich extent could their plays actually subvert the conventional theatrical images of women?

Fallen Women or as they were called "women with a past" occupied a large space in late- Victorian drama and appealed to a wide-ranging audience who sought in the theatre a representation of real life. Issues of prostitution and woman sexuality in general became the main interest of many groups by this time, especially feminist circles. Such discussions were brought to the theatre where every well-known dramatist presented a fallen woman piece. Pinero's Mrs. Tanqueray, Jones's Mrs. Daine and Mrs. Audrey, Wilde's Mrs. Erlynne and Mrs. Arbuthnot and Shaw's Mrs. Warren all embody the fallen woman; but to which extent were those dramatists able to subvert earlier theatrical representations of this character?

The answer to this question will be in the following chapter, more particularly in the part devoted to a comparison between Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* and the best known 1890s plays centred en the issue of prostitution. Yet, generally speaking, both Pinero and Jones were not feminists in sympathy. Though their plays placed the fallen woman in the centre, they lacked the daring to grant her the right to break the bounds of patriarchal dominance and the freedom to express herself. This is what Oscar Wilde managed to do in some of his plays. However, his feminist treatment of the issue of prostitution was not as advanced as that of Bernard Shaw.

The New Woman was a new type of female character that began to figure on the English stage by the 1890s. It embodied girls seeking emancipation and equality with men in their revolt against the dominant Victorian ideal of femininity.

The term the 'New Woman' was coined by novelist Sarah Grand in 1894 and became a keyword in the critical discourse of the period. New women were females who challenged middle class Victorian ideals of the dependent wife and mother and subverted the popular stereotype of the passive helpless melodramatic heroine. The New Woman was a symbol of revolt. She generally appeared dressed in manly fashion, smoking a cigar and defying all social conventions. This " condensed symbol of disorder and rebellion"[14] as termed by Carol Smith Rosenberg, was so shocking to late-Victorian spectators and critics that the majority of them considered this character an element of discourse rather than an embodiment of existing category of women; as commented by one writer: " we do not believe in the New Woman's existence . She is a caricature, we read of her in books and we see her on the stage but we have never met her."[15] There was a general tendency among late-Victorian playwrights to present the New Woman in a satirical way often drawing her as an ugly woman dressed in a men's clothes or sexually deviant, as Sydney Grandy did in his *The New Woman (1894),* though other playwrights mainly Pinero and Jones avoided such unsympathetic image and provided a more favourable representation of this character in their plays including *The Notorious Mrs Ibsmith (1895)* by Pinero and *The Dancing Girl (*1891*)* by Jones, they generally remained within the confines of the dominant phallocentric ideology and conventional morality.

Thus the English theatre of the 1890s was deeply influenced by the social world that engendered it. It was dominated by women's issues such as prostitution, sexual autonomy and woman education. However, Most of those dramatic works could not be referred to as feminist since late-Victorian playwrights often lacked the intention or perhaps the daring to serve the woman cause. Although such plays offered women a larger space on the stage, they often denied them the opportunity to express themselves freely. Such male-made images of women generally reflected the late-Victorian

dramatists' conformist attitudes. Such plays satisfied the expectations of conservative audiences and critics and avoided censorship which was still one of the main problems faced by more daring works like Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession*. This was the general climate in which Shaw's first plays appeared. This dissertation will show how Shaw was able to overshadow his contemporaries in his portrayal of the Fallen Woman and the New Woman.

3. The Emergence of the Woman Playwright

Believing that no male dramatist could do justice to the woman question and in an attempt to challenge the conception of the theatre as a masculine institution, some women, most of whom had already achieved success in acting or theatrical management, started playwriting. They included Elizabeth Robins, Elizabeth Baker, Sisley Hamilton and Janet Achurch. Their first plays appeared in the 1890s. They were centred on many issues like women's sexuality in *Mrs Lisingham* (1894) by Constance Fletcher and motherhood in *Alain's Wife* (1893) by Robins. By the first decade of the 20th century, there emerged a number of propaganda plays written by women to support the Suffrage campaign. This body of Suffrage drama includes Gertrude Gaining's *Women's Influence* and Elizabeth Robins *Votes for Women* (1907). The latter was the force behind the establishment of the Actresses' Franchise League in 1908 of which the playwright was a founding member. Hence, the period witnessed an interaction between the political and theatrical activities of women.

Apart from supporting the Suffrage cause, women playwrights contributed to the Edwardian debate on the woman question by raising other feminist issues such as women's economic subordination in Hamilton's *Just to Get Married* and by celebrating women's choice of celibacy, education and a career. In most of their plays, the heroines

are portrayed as self- sufficient, independent from marital and family ties and often politically active. The figure of the Fallen Woman survives in this feminist drama written by women. However, it is treated unconventionally in plays like *Votes for Women* where the heroine Vida was able to develop from a sexually oppressed woman to a political activist freed from all forms of subordination. Such plays by women were often produced by women theatrical managers like Any Horniman and Sarah Bernhardt who demonstrated an interest in women's writings and allowed them the opportunity to compete equally with male dramatists to have their plays performed. Such women managers often risked financial loss for women's play were not as popular as those of their male counterparts.

In their pursuit of the theatrical career, women playwrights faced vehement opposition from many critics like Walter Pusant and Beerbohm Tree and even from Bernard Shaw– the supporter of woman's emancipation. This prejudice was based on the wide-spread conviction that women lacked the power of concentration required for playwriting. Shaw attacked some plays by women such as *Alain's Wife, Mrs Daintree's Daughter* and *Theresa Fleming* accusing the dramatists of emotional excess or sentimentalism. He often proceeded to rewrite woman's plays to his own specifications as he did with *Alain's wife.* Even when a male critic praised a play by a woman as William Archer did with Constance Flecher's *Mrs Lisingham*, he would attribute the play's success to the woman playwright's masculine style. Belittling women's attempt to assert themselves as dramatists was part of the long-held tradition of keeping the theatre under masculine control.The significant participation of women in the New English Drama was often overlooked. This was essentially due to the male bias of the canon. Theatre history is male-made history. It focuses essentially on the male cast of playwrights. In an attempt to re-chart the theatrical map, recent revisionist feminist activities in the field of theatre studies have aimed at the reconsideration of

women's participation in late-Victorian and Edwardian dramas.

Thus the English drama of the second half of the 19th century witnessed a remarkable development especially in its treatment of the woman question. Shaw's immediate predecessors expressed no social engagement. Their drama aimed at mere entertainment. Women were on the margin of this masculine theatre which neither discussed their problems and experiences nor gave them the opportunity to bring them to light. However, the situation changed gradually in the 1890s. The introduction of Ibsen's feminist plays to the English stage and the militancy of the English feminist movement made women part and parcel of the theatrical world of the period. Women-centred plays presented a large section of the new English drama. However, late-Victorian dramatists often tempted to represent the woman question in a somehow conventional way. Their discussions of feminist issues and construction of the female character often lacked the daring and the frankness that put Shaw's plays ahead of their time. By the turn of the century, women were not only the subject of drama; they also participated in its making. Women playwrights contributed to the development of a feminist English drama. However, the space they occupied was still limited if compared to that of their male counterparts.

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III
Mrs. Warren's Profession: A Marxist Feminist Reading

This chapter is devoted to a Marxist feminist-oriented study of George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* a play written in 1893 and published five years later in a volume entitled *Plays Unpleasant*. In it, Shaw discusses the woman question from a socialist perspective basing his analysis on his conviction that "equality between the sexes is an essential component of socialism."[1] Indeed, part of the social reform he aimed at as a socialist was to secure woman's rights. In this play, he exposes the patriarchal character of capitalism. He is preoccupied with the discussion of the economic basis of woman's oppression. In his view, patriarchy and capitalism are mutually supportive as they are both exploitative systems based on hierarchical relations.

This study contains an analysis of the constituent elements of the play which reflect Shaw's socialist feminist inclination. I will first explore the range of feminist issues around which the playwright centres his work including prostitution, the association of prostitution with bourgeois marriage and the problem of incest. Through his treatment of the theme of prostitution, Shaw expresses his protest against the injustices that women suffer from under capitalism. In his view, it is the patriarchal structure that promotes this social evil and turns it into a big profitable international business. It even entraps former prostitutes, forcing them to participate in its exploitative scheme. The analysis of this theme will shed light on the capitalist system's ideology of the sexual division of labour which maintains women's economic subordination by restricting them to the most alienating 'profession'. The chapter will then underscore the playwright's exposure of the hypocrisy of capitalist society and the patriarchal character of its institutions and organisations.

The second theme which will be explored in this chapter is Shaw's association of prostitution with bourgeois marriage. It underlies his conviction that the reform of the institution of marriage is an important step in the path of woman's emancipation. The focus will then shift to the discussion of the issue of incest through which Shaw delves deeper in

his study of the reification of women under capitalism, a reification which is an index of their ‘sex-ploitation’.

After the play's thematic study, my emphasis will lay on the analysis of Shaw's representation of the female character as another marker of his feminist militancy. In this part, I will first underscore his anti-patriarchal and unconventional treatment of the character of the fallen woman. Second, I will explore his advocacy of woman's economic independence, physical capability and intellectual advancement as well as his belief in androgyny through the study of the character of the New Woman. Finally, I will highlight the similarities between these two characters and discuss the impact of the capitalist system on their relationship and personalities. The part that follows will be devoted to Shaw’s unconventional use of language. This study will end with a brief comparison of *Mrs Warren's Profession* with other woman-centred plays written during the 1890s and the early 20th century. This point will crystallise Shaw's advanced feminist thinking and his influence on his contemporaries.

Information taken from the play`s preface and some comments on its stage directions, which are complementary to the dialogues, will lead this analysis to a better understanding of the playwright's feminist stance. Shaw gave specific attention to the presentation of his texts; he generally added lengthy introductions and detailed stage directions to his plays so as to enhance the readers' enjoyment and understanding of them. In the preface to *Mrs Warren's Profession,* he discusses a number of issues including censorship, the mission of Art and the criticism the play received after its private performances and its first public performance in New York. In it he also launches his attack on the established theatre of his time and gives some comments upon the themes and the characters of the play and its feminist thrust. Thus my aim in this chapter is to identify and assess the feminist thinking of Bernard Shaw the Fabien socialist playwright through

the analysis of such constituent elements of the play as themes, characterization, language and stage directions.

In *Mrs Warren's Profession*, there is in fact little plot development; the discussion interpenetrates the action. Shaw substitutes the new device of discussion to the traditional dénouement in the last Act of the so-called well-made play. This novelty marks Shaw's indebtedness to Ibsen. It helps him provide a thorough and comprehensive exposure of the late-Victorian cynical 'business-with-pleasure' ethos.

1. Shaw's Indictment of the Trafficking of Women

In *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Shaw's discussion of the issue of prostitution reveals his concern with the economic basis of women's oppression under capitalism. As a committed socialist, he argues that women are driven to prostitution under economic necessity and underlines the material and social conditions that lay behind this social practice. Living in a capitalist society, Mrs. Warren and her sister Liz resorted to prostitution since, as Mrs. Warren puts it, "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. If she is in his own station of life, let her make him marry her; but if she is far beneath him, she can't expect it" [2]. The two sisters lived in poverty and experienced difficult circumstances in both private and public spheres; they had no father or brother to depend on financially. Moreover, the openings left to them as poor girls with limited education were deeply exploitative, offering what Mrs. Warren called starvation wages with which no woman could respectfully live. So they were forced to prostitution; for all they had was "their appearance and their turn for pleasing men" (Act II, p. 249).

Shaw attacks the capitalist phallocentric ideology which obscures the power dynamics that lays behind prostitution. He shows how the patriarchal capitalist system does not just drive women to sell their sexual services but often prompts former victims to

perpetuate the (trade) in their turn. Hence the play makes it clear that prostitutes are oppressed workers who reinforce – unwillingly – an exploitative system. Trapped in the capitalist machinery, Mrs. Warren and Liz did not only continue to prostitute themselves beyond economic necessity; they promoted the trafficking of their own kind as well; by establishing a chain of brothels throughout Europe. As Petra Diaries-Thrun commented: "Shaw focused on the prostitutive entanglement of society in which women became not only instruments but executers of patriarchal power"[3]. Ill-treatment and slave wages were among the exploitative practices to which the system resorted in order to promote this profitable business. The six hundred girls who worked in the factory owned by Crofts's brother, (the MP), were forced into prostitution as a result of financial insecurity and social deprivation.

The way Shaw dramatizes the consequences of women's economic dependence in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is highly unconventional. He declares his resentment to capitalism, under which he says: "Prostitution was practically compulsory"[4], the alternative being starvation. He underscores the fact that, due to its patriarchal character and prostitutive impulse, that system turned former victims into victimizers who reinforced the objectification of women and hence patriarchal dominance. Shaw's analysis of the theme of prostitution sidesteps traditional moralistic interpretations. Arguing from a socialist perspective, he shows how women's status is conditioned by the capitalist mode of production and he thus condemns the social evil of prostitution from an economist perspective. His treatment is rational rather than sentimental. It marks a difference between his play and those of his contemporaries who deal with the same issue. This point will be elaborated on in more details later on.

That Shaw makes of the economic exposure of the white slave traffic a central issue in this play confirms – in anticipation – Brecht's remark that "His literary preoccupation

does not separate him from life"[5]. The last decade of the 19th century in England witnessed a growing organized sex trade under the prevailing social, legal and economic structures of capitalism. This traffic in English girls had been a thriving international business. Shaw's reference to Brussels, Vienna, Budapest and Ostend was quite daring and challenging since it pointed at the major centers of sexual license to which many English girls were shipped and then sold to continental brothels. English procurers covered public places like railroad stations and advertised in the press "using popularly understood euphemisms in the notices"[6], searching for young beautiful girls to send to European brothels under the pretext of training them for artistic careers. The suppression of continental prostitution was very difficult to effect for the business was protected and maintained by influential people. In his article *Mrs Warren's Profession and English Prostitution*, Raymond S. Nelson speaks about Belgium where many English girls slaved as prostitutes. He explains how the Belgian police usually accepted bribes to permit this traffic in women "encouraged perhaps by the example of the king himself who spent eighteen-hundred pounds a year buying British girls"[7] dispatching them later to various continental brothels. Some of Shaw's contemporary critics, including Emma Liggins, attacked what they considered his "valorisation of the existence of brothels in this play"[8]; which came, in their view, as a reaction to the repressive measures taken by the National Vigilance Association to close brothels and thus force the prostitutes back into the streets. Emma Liggins bases her argument on the following rejoinder by Mrs. Warren: "The house in Brussels was a real high class, a much better place for a woman to be in, than the factory where Ann Jane got poisoned. 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" (Act II, p. 248). However, in my opinion, Shaw's intention here was to protest against the wretchedness that women faced in factory work and in other exploitative jobs rather than take for granted the existence of brothels. Moreover, it is quite expectable to hear such lenifying words from Mrs. Warren who rules the Brussels brothel.

Actually, Shaw criticizes the capitalist economy which generated the practice of the sexual division of labour, a division which disadvantaged women through occupational segregation. Women were given the most low-paying and unfulfilling jobs and thus remained economically dependent. The play tells about the hard working conditions of many of them, including Mrs. Warren's step-sister, who worked in a white lead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week, the six-hundred factory girls who earned starvation wages and Mrs. Warren who had been exploited in a number of jobs, working as a scullery maid in a temperance restaurant, then as a waitress and then as a bar maid working fourteen hours a day for four shillings a week. Shaw's reference to the fact that the factory girls had no families to fall back on and that Mrs. Warren and her sisters had no male provider in their family is quite significant. It strengthens his attack on the capitalist system which underpaid women under the assumption that they worked only to supplement the wages of their fathers or husbands. The play sheds light on the sense of alienation that women workers experienced in their professions, which instead of bringing them self-realization and economic independence, were a major cause of their distress and subjugation. As an example, Mrs. Warren's step-sister who worked in a whitelead factory died of lead poisoning. Due to this gender-based division of labour and its consequent objectification of women, most of them turned to prostitution which is also alienating since it commodifies women as objects of exchange. Hence what capitalist society offered women as alternative was "not morality and immorality but two sorts of immorality" (p. 201).

As a socialist, highly concerned with the economic well-being and independence of women, Shaw suggests that women should enjoy equal access to respectable and well-paid occupations. He believed that "any society which intended to found itself on high standards of integrity of character should organize itself in such a fashion as to make possible for all men and women to maintain themselves in a reasonable comfort by their industry without

selling their affections and convictions."[9] In *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* his denunciation of the evil of poverty was part of his reformist scheme. It appears in other plays such as *Major Barbara* and *Widowers' Houses*. The point he focuses on is that poverty is as anti-social as prostitution; thus he rejects the widely-held view that poverty is connected with moral worth. In his view, the economic independence of women is indispensable to the practice of virtue.

Mrs. Warren's Profession is also an exposure of the hypocrisy of capitalist society and its false system of morality. In Shaw's view, this society wore the mask of respectability while it promoted evil and encouraged what he called the scandal of underpaid virtue and overpaid vice. In it those who followed the path of morality perished like Mrs. Warren's step-sisters: one, the victim of lead poisoning and the other, the wife of a drunken labourer whereas those who did wrong were rewarded: Liz owned a house near the cathedral and became one of the most respectable ladies there; one of the prostitutes who worked in Mrs. Warren's brothel married an ambassador and Sir George Crofts and his partner Mrs. Warren prospered from the white slave traffic. Assuming the role of a moral revolutionary, Shaw attacks in the play Victorian ideals which were, in his view, but a pleasant mask that conceals an ugly reality; this hidden truth, he explains, is that "the penalty of virtue is starvation and the reward of vice immediate relief" (p. 10). Prostitution allowed Mrs. Warren not just to survive but to move upward socially and also to become a successful businesswoman, able to grant her daughter opportunities that she herself never enjoyed. It is quite ironical that Vivie's respectable position and high education were secured thanks to her mother's ill-gotten gains and influence and Liz's friends. The cynical capitalist society that Shaw attacks in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* turned a blind eye on the exploitative practices since it profited from them and permitted immorality as long as it was swept under the carpet. Shaw puts his denunciation of this society in Crofts's words: "As long as you don't fly openly in the face of society , society doesn't ask any

inconvenient questions and it makes precious short work of the cads who do" (Act III, p. 265).

Indeed Shaw brings to the light of day the hidden reality that lies beneath the veneer of gentility; in fact a large section of society benefited from Mrs. Warren's Profession while it condemned Mrs. Warren as immoral and disrespectful. He attacks society's institutions and organizations, mainly school and church, through which the capitalist patriarchal ideology was implemented. He exposes the social hypocrisy of the people involved in the educational system and the church as represented by Reverend Samuel Gardener. He is described as "externally pretentious, booming, noisy, and important. Really he is that obsolescent social phenomenon, the fool of the family dumped on the Church by his father the patron, glamorously asserting himself as a father and clergyman without being able to command respect in either capacity" (Act I, p. 227). He is often ridiculed by most of the characters, especially his son who discloses the secrets that he got drunk and bought his sermons instead of writing them himself. The Reverend was one of Mrs. Warren's clients and could even be Vivie's father. In the preface to the play, Shaw mentions other people who share in the profits made by Mrs. Warren and George Crofts. They include the newspaper proprietors, the restaurant keepers, the landlords and "in short all the trades to which they were good customers" (p. 208). One of the aims of the play was to raise in each theatregoer and reader some sense of responsibility for the social wrongs of society.

2. Shaw's Repudiation of Bourgeois Marriage

Part of the comprehensive analysis of the issue of prostitution that Shaw provides in this play is the association he establishes between prostitution and bourgois marriage. He considers that those who were involved in prostitution were not just poor ill-reputable girls but even the respectable ones who were, as Mrs Warren says, "brought up to catch some

rich man's fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him" (Act II, p. 249). She comments upon social hypocrisy and wonders "if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing" (Act II, p. 249). Shaw, thus, shows that bourgeois marriage is a form of prostitution under the mask of respectability. Speaking about Vivie, George Crofts pictures the commodity status that women occupied in the marriage market under the capitalist male-dominated system: "I will settle the whole property on her and if you want a cheque for yourself on the wedding day, you can name any figure you like in reason" (Act II, p. 240). Hence, this form of marriage was tantamount to the paid gratification of men's lust. It prevailed in Victorian society as most women had no other means to secure a safe financial situation. This underlying connectedness between prostitution and bourgeois marriage, as two sides of the same coin, is a predominant theme in Shaw's works. It reaches at least as far back as *The Irrational Note* (1880) then reappeared in the preface to *Getting Married* (1908) where he likens the difference between the two to that between "trade unionism and an unorganized casual labour"[11]. He asserts again in 1928 in *The Intelligent Women's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* that "capitalism acts on women as a continual bribe to enter into sex relations for money whether in or out of marriage"[12].Through this argument, Shaw subverts the Victorian idealistic image of marriage. He was not an anarchist who advocated its abolition but rather a reformist who aimed at the improvement of its conditions. He argues that if women enjoyed economic independence, marriage would no longer be based on exploitation and alienation but on mutual respect. Women would be able to choose freely their partners since their economic necessity would no longer exist.

Vivie and Frank's relationship reflects Shaw's iconoclastic attitude towarsds marriage. Vivie is both materially and intellectually superior to Frank who wants to marry her to secure financial independence. Thus Shaw on the one hand challenges patriarchal dominance by reducing the male to the dependent and thus the inferior status; on the other

hand he subverts the Victorian romantic view of marriage. Furthermore, through the character of Vivie, he valorises celibacy and hence revolts against the Victorian's assumption that marriage was the only way for women to respectability. Vivie is portrayed as self-controlled, free-thinking, and independent and therefore able to secure a respectable position in society.

3. Incest

Another prominent theme through which Shaw depicts the commodification of women under capitalism is incest. The play shows how incest is one of the major problems created by prostitution. As D.H Lawrence comments, "promiscuous sexual intercourse must inevitably result in the raising of the insoluble question of consanguinity"[13]. Quite surprisingly most of the critics who read the play from a feminist perspective focused on Shaw's exploration of the theme of prostitution, dismissing the importance of the incest theme in their understanding of Shaw's feminist stance. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, incest exists on two levels, biological and social. The following definition of the term provided by Petra Dierkes-Thrun in her article 'Incest and the Trafficking of Women in G. B. Shaw's Mrs Warren's Profession: "It Runs in the Family' clarifies this division; "incest admits a wide range of contaminated and contaminating erotic desires some of which may be social as well as sexual"[14].

The suspected consanguinity, between Vivie and Frank on the one hand and Vivie and Crofts on the other, generates problematic family connections. Though he suspects her to be his own daughter, Crofts proposes marriage to Vivie who is in turn the girl-friend of Frank Gardner, possibly her half- brother, as Crofts reveals in Act III. Thus, the Reverend Sam Gardner is another candidate for fatherhood. It would be important to consider Vivie's and Frank's reactions to Crofts's revelation through the following dialogue:

Frank: You remember what Crofts said?

Vivie: Yes.

Frank: That revelation was supposed to bring about a complete change in the nature of our feeling for one another. It placed us on the footing of brother and sister.

Vivie: Yes.

Frank: Have you ever had a brother?

Vivie: No

Frank: Then you don't know what being brother and sister feels like? Now I have a lot of sisters; and fraternal feeling is quite familiar to me. I assure you my feeling for you is not the least in the world like it…… That's not brother and sister. It's exactly what I left an hour before Crofts made his revelation. In short, dear Vivie, it's love's young dream.

Vivie: Does it make any difference? I mean in your imagination or conscience; for of course it makes no real difference.

Frank: [*shaking his head*] None whatever to me.

Vivie: Nor to me.

Frank: [staring] But this is ever so surprising! [*He goes back to his chair*]. I thought our whole relations were altered in your imagination and conscience, as you put it, the moment those words were out of that brute's muzzle.

Vivie: No, it was not that. I didn't believe him. I only wish I could.

Frank: Eh?

Vivie: I think brother and sister would be a very suitable relation for us.

Frank: You really mean that?

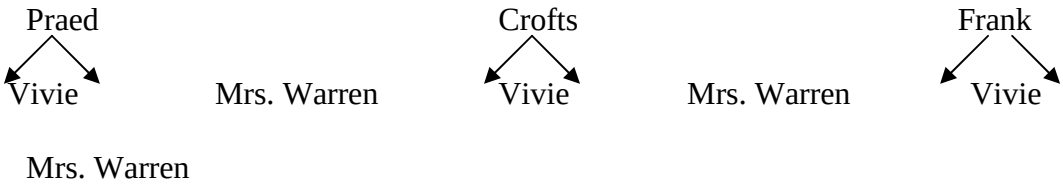
Vivie: Yes. It's the only relation I care for, even if we could afford any other. I mean that. (Act IV, p270-271).

From this conversation it appears that Vivie and Frank react to the suspicion of incest in a highly unconventional way. A revelation of this kind would undoubtedly lead to a tragic end in a conventional melodrama. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* after Crofts' revelation, Shaw creates the possibility of such melodramatic turn of events, when Frank directs his rifle at Crofts (possibility of murder) and when Vivie reaches from the Rectory garden in

disguise (possibility of a tragic action) than quickly drops it. Moreover, the playwright does not reveal who Vivie's father is because he was not as much interested in the treatment of incestuous family relation as in bringing light to the existence of erotic social desires. This was Shaw's own way to deceive the expectations of his audience and to draw their attention to the deeper social aspect of the incest theme.

Shaw leaves the situation in limbo as the biological incest plot is not resolved. None of the characters know who Vivie's father really is, not even Mrs. Warren, as Shaw states in a letter he wrote to the actress Janet Achurch "Mrs. Warren is uncertain who the girl's father is but conveniently keeps all the old men at bay by telling each one that he is the parent, turning ignorance into a powerful tool for her manipulation of the male characters."[15] This lack of certainty deepens the sense of obscurity and emotional ambivalence and as a consequence serves the social incest plot.

Indeed, Shaw discusses the extension of these impure desires from family connections to the more complicated social network of relations and hence highlights the social trafficking of women in a patriarchal system. The three principal male characters Crofts, Frank and latently Praed all treat Mrs. Warren and Vivie as interchangeable commodities expressing an incestuous simultaneous desire for the two women without regard to their ties to one another. This interchangeability of male interests in the mother and daughter is embodied in three erotic triangles:



For these men, the two women are freely tradable commodities. Frank, Vivie's boy-friend, tries, in Acts II and III, to seduce the mother who was possibly his father's partner. He

moves back and forth between the two women taking advantage of his youth and physical attraction to achieve both sexual gratification and financial independence. Similarly, George Crofts, Mrs. Warren's partner and possibly Vivie's father, transfers his erotic interests from one woman to the other using the power of money. More implicit is Praed's relation to the two women. He too might be hiding impure desires behind the mask of friendship. Praed, who is a close friend to the mother, seemingly playing no role in her questionable past, always insists on his so-called parental interest in Vivie. It is not clear whether Praed is not lying about his past involvement with Mrs Warren. Moreover, it is quite possible that he is really Vivie's father. He uses his sentimentality and gentleness to attract the two women. Hence, through these triangular relationships, Shaw criticizes incestuous male desires that objectify women and generate problematic social connections.

Since an intimate relationship between the mother and daughter will be a threat to patriarchal power and an obstacle in the transfer of male erotic interest in the two women, Shaw shows how both Frank and Crofts often try to keep Mrs Warren and Vivie apart. The possibility of a solution to the mother and daughter conflict in Act II provokes Frank's revolt as it threatens to diminish his importance and make his attempt to attract both women more difficult. Frank speaks to Praed while Mrs. Warren and Vivie are coming:

> Frank: Come! Honestly, dear Praddy do you like seeing them together?
>
> Praed: Oh, why not?
>
> Frank: [*His teeth on edge*] Don't it make your flesh creep ever so little? That wicked old devil is up to every villainy under the sun, I swear.
>
> *Vivie and Mrs. Warren walking affectionately together*.
>
> Frank: Look, she actually has her arm round the old woman's waist. It's her right arm: she began it. She's gone sentimental, by god! Ugh! Ugh! Now, do you feel the creeps?

Each time Mrs. Warren and Vivie start to reconcile with each other, Frank and Crofts interfere to disrupt their alliance, often by distorting the mother's image in the eyes of the

daughter. As an example, in Act III, Frank describes Mrs Warren as a "thoroughly immoral person, an old wretch, a very bad lot" (Act III, p. 259). In the same chapter, Crofts discloses Mrs Warren's secret and reveals to Vivie who rejected his offer of marriage that the business he shared with her mother is not wound up and that it is the management of a chain of brothels throughout Europe. Thus Shaw's exploration of the incest theme in *Mrs Warren's Profession* contributed largely to his deep analysis of the woman question as it reflects both the sexual and the social trafficking of women under capitalism. Shaw thus shows how male impure desires objectify women in their private as well as public lives. The presentation of such uncomfortable taboo topics as prostitution and incest and the harsh attack on Victorian ideals on stage provoked many critics. For instance, the reviewer for the *New York Herald* wrote that "the play was morally rotten, [and] defended immorality" and stressed that "worst of all it countenanced the most revolting form of degeneracy by flippantly discussing the marriage of brother and sister, father and daughter."[16]

4. Shaw's Feminist Representation of the Fallen Woman and the New Woman

Shaw's feminist stance is expressed not just through the themes he explores but through his representation of female characters as well. Unlike the well-made play where the characters' development is overshadowed by the supremacy of plot, in Shaw's plays the action is character-driven. His protagonists are decision-makers who affect the course of events. What characterizes his plays is the pre-eminence of his female characters who overstep dramaturgical bounds, displacing the male protagonist and claiming a central place. They were generally "too surprising to be acceptable"[17]. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is a woman-centred play. Through Mrs. Warren and Vivie, Shaw subverts conventional theatrical images of women and expresses his iconoclastic and egalitarian vision. As we shall see, he deeply analyses the characters of the Fallen Woman and the New Woman focusing on new aspects in their personalities, experiences and relationship.

i. Mrs. Warren: the Fallen Woman

Through the character of Mrs. Warren, Bernard Shaw disrupts both dramatic and social conventions. Unlike most of his contemporaries, he refuses to condemn the prostitute as a scapegoat for moral corruption and sexual promiscuity.He declares in his preface that the aim of his play is to throw the whole guilt of prostitution on the British public itself. This unconventional treatment of the character of Mrs. Warren shocked late Victorian audiences who expected to see the prostitute either as reclaimed, embracing religion or as punished, dying miserably by the end of the play. This absence of cathartic climax provoked also the protest of some critics such as Max Beerbohm who claimed that "Shaw had written an academic debate with no appeal to the heart though he should have made the play a hallowing tragedy capable of moving the audience to pity and fear"[18]. However, what those critics missed is that Shaw's intention was to raise his audience's consciousness rather than play upon their theatrical sensibilities and satisfy their aesthetic expectations. His drama appeals to the intellect rather than to passion. Frank Wadleight Chaudler was among the few critics who interpreted Shaw's attitude towards Mrs. Warren in a different way. In his book *Aspects of Modern Drama,* he argues that "Shaw condemns the individual who has made of her environment a pretext for wrong-doing rather than the conditions of the environment itself"[19]. I consider that Shaw was the first late Victorian playwright to give his fallen woman the opportunity to react openly and daringly against the romantic logic of the conventional stage precisely by staging her 'front and centre'. He subverts patriarchal assumptions through his resistance to the project of reclamation and purification of the prostitute. Mrs. Warren is in no need of philanthropic intervention since she was forced to prostitution. It is quite daring that instead of expressing any feelings of regret and humiliation, she exposes the phallocentric ideology and expresses her refusal of patriarchal values by stating "it is only good manners to be ashamed of it. It is expected from a woman, women have to pretend to feel a great deal that they don't feel …… what is

the use of such hypocrisy [….]. I never was a bit ashamed" (Act II, p. 245) "why shouldn't I have done it?" (Act II, p. 248) "I should have been a fool if I'd taken to anything else" (Act II, p. 250). Hence, in her view, it is society that should be ashamed of its oppressive practices rather the women who were driven to prostitution by the patriarchal system.

In her final speech, Mrs. Warren voices Shaw's most iconoclastic attitudes and harshest attacks on capitalist society which demanded morality and purity from women while treating them in the most immoral way. "Oh, the injustice of it! The injustice! The injustice! I always wanted to be a good woman. I tried honest work; and I was slave driven until I cursed the day I ever heard of honest work. I was a good mother; and because I made my daughter a good woman she turns me out as if I was a leper. Oh, if I only had my life to live over again! I'd talk to that lying clergyman in the school. 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" (Act IV, p. 285). If we only imagine the impact of this speech on the late-Victorian audience we will be able to understand the extent to which Shaw was un-orthodox and anti-patriarchal in his treatment of the figure of the fallen woman. He thus creates a new end to an old story; which made his play truly less popular among the masses but undoubtedly more controversial and subversive.

Some scholars accused Bernard Shaw of advocating an absolute social determinism in this play owing to his clear indictment of society. In my opinion the playwright went beyond mere determinism by penetrating deeply into the psychology of his fallen woman. Mrs. Warren was victimized by a system of power relations. So as to break the bounds of patriarchal power, she turns from the part of victim to that of an active participant in the system's exploitative scheme. Her promotion from a prostitute to a brothel keeper can be read in the light of Michael Foucault's theory of docile bodies, "the desire by subjugated bodies to participate in the very economy that suppresses them and hence achieve a certain

amount of power and autonomy within that system."[20] This point is best explained in the following conversation between Mrs. Warren and Vivie.

> Mrs. Warren: Vivie, do you know how rich I am?
>
> Vivie: I have no doubt you are very rich.
>
> Mrs. Warren: But you don't know all that means: you're too young. 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. (Act IV, p 281)

Hence, in Mrs. Warren's opinion, her profession assures her not only comfort and luxury but also a way of challenging patriarchal domination.

Through this presentation of the psychology of his protagonist, Shaw counters the Victorian theatrical discourse which constituted the prostitute as either an innocent and helpless victim of male lust or, as he says in the preface, "a fiend in human form" (p. 203). He thus questions the philanthropists' stereotypical view of the prostitutes as a homogenous pigeon-holed group; it is worth noting that Mrs. Warren's sister Liz, who was also a prostitute but who conforms to patriarchal assumptions and whose experience satisfies the audience's expectations, never appears in the play. As if Shaw wanted to say that such recurrent stories as Liz's should no longer be staged since their staging did not contribute to social change. In his view, the way to reform, and hence progress, is through the dramatization of reality with greater depth, and through the exploration of new areas in human experience.

Part of the playwright's repudiation of the stereotypical image of the prostitute lays in his emphasis on the complexity of Mrs. Warren's personality. Shaw highlights the contradictions that she embodies. She is both a victim and an exploiter, kind-hearted but manipulative, unscrupulous but at the same time admirable, oppressed but quite dynamic and powerful. In an article entitled *Shavian Dark Comedy*, Richard Hornly underscores the

importance of Shaw's stage directions, mainly the description of the costumes in the understanding of his dramatic creations. In one of the play's performances Richard Hornly reports that "the costumes although more or less in period were designed for emblematic statements than for historical accuracy. For example, Mrs. Warren's dress has the lurid pink and charcoal colours of Good and Plenty candy box a ludicrous extreme for the 1890s but expressive of the ambiguities in her character"[21]. I want to add that this technique was also used to distinguish Mrs. Warren the prostitute from Mrs. Warren the mother. In Act I, she is introduced to the reader in this way: "Mrs. Warren is between forty and fifty, formerly pretty, showily dressed in a brilliant hat and a gay blouse fitting tightly over her bust and flanked by fashionable sleeves; rather spoilt and domineering, and decidedly vulgar, but, on the whole, a genial and fairly presentable old blackguard of a woman" (Act I, p. 220). This description tells much about the fallen woman's unconventionality, sexual attraction and defiance of patriarchal values. Whereas in Act IV when Shaw wants to focus on Mrs. Warren the mother, he notes that "the brilliant hat is replaced by a costly black silk mantle" as "she has done her best to make herself matronly and dignified" (Act IV, p. 278). This skilful use of stage directions, including the description of the costumes, enabled Shaw to picture his characters on the page as they appear on the stage and consequently made them more credible.

The fallen woman who was often vilified and stigmatised as an outcast is endowed in this play with many admirable qualities. Shaw notes in the preface her vitality, thrift, practicality, care for her daughter and managing capacity and equals them with "high English social virtues." (p. 201) In each side of Mrs. Warren's personality, we read the dramatist's refusal to reproduce the stereotypical image of the fallen woman. The marginalized and disadvantaged member of society occupies the stage centre front and is given both the freedom and space to voice her thoughts and beliefs in the most daring way. She launches her attacks on the members of the establishment and the conventional

morality they promote. In the following conversation with Vivie, she denounces the educational system:

> [*Mrs. Warren continues desperately*]
>
> Mrs. Warren: Listen to me: you don't understand: you've been taught wrong on purpose: you don't know what the world is really like".
>
> Vivie [*arrested*] taught wrong on purpose! What do you mean?
>
> Mrs. Warren: I mean that you're throwing away all your chances for nothing. You think that people are what they pretend to be: that the way you were taught at school and college to think right and proper is the way things really are. But it's not: It's all only a pretence, to keep the cowardly slavish common run of people quiet. 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! Would they ever have done anything for you if I hadn't paid them? (Act IV, p. 282)

Mrs Warren is even given the right to insult the churchmen, calling Reverend Samuel Gardner an old stick-in-the-mud and the school clergyman a liar and a fool. Shaw establishes a comparison throughout the play between this character, the supposedly immoral woman, and Samuel Gardner the seemingly respectable clergyman, portraying by showing the former as more honest and witty. Every speech by Mrs. Warren reveals a woman true to herself. Note for example the frankness with which she expresses her attachment to her profession.

> Vivie: Tell me why you continue your business now that you are independent of it. Your sister, you told me, has left all that behind her. Why don't you do the same?
>
> Mrs. Warren: Oh, it's all very easy for Liz: she likes good society, and has the air of being a lady. Imagine me in a cathedral town! Why, the very rooks in the trees would find me out even if I could stand the dullness of it. 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 didn't do it somebody else would; so I don't do any real harm by it. And then it brings in money, and I like making money" (Act IV, p. 283-284.)

In this speech by Mrs. Warren, as in many others, Shaw uses her cynicism for satirical purpose. Mrs. Warren`s pessimistic attitude to her society reflects Shaw's feeling of scorn and indignation against the socio-economic situation. He argues that unless the system is

reformed, social evils like prostitution will continue to grow. The playwright is thus able to picture the world from his protagonist's viewpoint and recapture the fallen woman's voice, dramatising skilfully the way she feels, thinks and reacts.

Part of the harsh response the play received was due to this unconventional representation of the character of Mrs. Warren. In New York, when the play was first publicly performed in October 1905, the whole cast including Mary Shaw (Mrs Warren) was accused of immorality and jailed. The press of that city then wrote, "such persons as Mrs. Warren are ordure and shouldn't be mentioned in the presence of decent people." (p. 207) Shaw defended the fallen woman in his preface: "I do not like that word ordure applied to my work, and I can afford to smile, since the world, on the whole will smile with me. But to apply it to the woman in the street, whose spirit is of one substance with your own and her body no less holy; to look your womenfolk in the face afterwards and not go out and hang yourself; that is not on the list of pardonable sins"(p. 207-208.) Mrs. Warren is a character so well fleshed out that it can attract even readers who cannot 'normally' sympathize with it.

ii. Vivie Warren: the New Woman

Not less appealing and unconventional is the character of Vivie Warren. Its representation also reflects Shaw's subversion of patriarchal discourse. In the opening of the play he underscores her qualities presenting her as "an attractive specimen of the sensible, able, highly educated young middle class Englishwoman, prompt, confident, self-possessed" (Act I, p. 214). This description entails a dismantling of the binary opposition between man's power and woman's weakness (which exists to maintain patriarchal dominance) and introduces an anti-patriarchal conception of femininity. Vivie is not the melodramatic heroine that embodies patriarchal assumptions of female's helplessness, subservience, sweetness and ignorance but rather a free-thinker, rational, intelligent, and self-reliant girl who refuses to embrace social conventions. Jill Dowlen argues that "a

feminist acting technique has to embody physical and emotional strength."[22] This is exactly what Vivie's portrait evidences. As a feminist, Shaw focuses on the importance of intellectual advancement as well as of physical fitness for women. Vivie practices sport: in the first scene Shaw mentions her bicycle and later tells us that she plays tennis. Then throughout the play, he insists on her physical strength describing how "she shuts the gate with a vigorous slam" (Act I, p. 213), "takes a chair and replaces it near the hammock with the same vigorous swing" (Act I, p. 220), "proffers her hand and takes his with a resolute and hardy grip" (Act I, p. 213), "She takes Croft's tenderly proffered hand and gives it a squeeze that makes him open his eyes" (Act I, p. 221). Through these statements and many others, the playwright expresses his rejection of the notion of female weakness and biological inferiority which is central to current Victorian discourse on gender. Vivie's education is the main source of her power and independence. After graduating from Cambridge in Mathematics, she studies Law and starts her work as an actuary. In the first scene of the play, Vivie "lays reading and making notes, her head towards the cottage and her feet towards the gate, In front of the hammock and within reach of her hand, is a common kitchen chair with a pile of serious looking books and a supply of writing paper on it" (Act I, p. 213), and in the final scene, she is in her place "at the writing table going at her work with a plunge, and soon becomes absorbed in its figures" (Act IV, P. 286). I consider that this description on the one hand reflects Shaw's belief in the emancipating value of education for women (in other words it is mainly due to her intellectual capacities and educational qualifications that Vivie is able to achieve self-realization and independence). On the other hand, it constructs a more profound image of the woman as it goes beyond the body to the intellect.

Lady Rhondda argues that "there is a tendency in Shaw's work to portray the man as the intellectually dominant partner in the relationship between the sexes."[23] *Mrs. Warren's Profession* proves that this statement is not accurate since Vivie is intellectually

superior to her boy-friend Frank. Quite ironically in their relationship, it is the man and not the woman who "had better turn his good looks to account by marrying somebody with both brains and money" (Act II, p. 239). Vivie rebels against the phallocentric ideology which disadvantages the woman by restricting her role to domestic chores. She defies the female ideal of the dependent wife and mother and enters the supposedly male domain of Mathematics and works as an actuary. Shaw's economic egalitarianism springs from his belief that dissimilarities between the sexes are only the production of social conventions. Men and women are endowed with the same capacities and should hence have the same opportunities.

Part of the unconventionality of Vivie's character lies in her adoption of a masculine sensibility and mimicking male habits. She smokes cigar, drinks whisky and likes reading detective stories. She is practical and analytically-minded. In the following conversation with Praed, she expresses her repudiation of the romantic ideal of womanhood:

> Praed: Are you to have no romance, no beauty in your life?
>
> Vivie: I don't care for either, I assure you …. I went up to town on an invitation from some artistic people in Fitzjohn's Avenue: one of the girls was a Newham chum. They took me to the National Gallery.
>
> Praed, [*approving*] Ah!! [*He sits down, much relieved*]
>
> Vivie: [*continuing*] To the Opera
>
> Praed [*still more pleased*] Good!
>
> Vivie: And to a concert where the band played all the evening: Beethoven and Wagner and so on. I wouldn't go through that experience again for anything you could offer me. I held out for civility's sake until the third day; and then I said, plump out, that I couldn't stand any more of it and went off to Chancery Lane.(Act I, p. 217-218).

Through Vivie's deviancy from the Victorian ideal of femininity, Shaw counters dominant gender ideology which identifies women with emotions and men with reason. It is worth noting that Vivie's attire reflects her practicality as well as her interest in education, she wears a "plain business-like dress, but not dowdy; She wears a chatelaine at her belt, with a fountain pen and a paper knife among its pendants" (Act I, p. 214). Such a way of dressing

parodies the dominant stereotype of the glamorous middle-class woman; it is a means of dismantling the male gaze and thus freeing the female body from its objectified position.

This representation of Vivie Warren is emblematic of Shaw's belief in the androgynous nature of personality. The Human Kind, in his view, is a blend of the masculine and the feminine. The playwright was influenced by "the newly emerging scientific psychoanalytic discourse informed by the works of Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter and John Addengton Symonds."[24]. His declaration in a speech he made in 1927 that "a woman is a person exactly like myself"[25] was based on this androgynous principle which allows him to get beyond the culturally-imposed image of womanliness and thus provided an anti-essentialist and an anti-patriarchal conception of gender. In her article "Shaw's Life: a Feminist in Spite of Himself", Sally Peters notes that Shaw even offers women the signifying pole of gender in his declaration that "man is only a woman in petticoat"[26] as he makes the petticoat the essential mark of gender.

In her pursuit of emancipation and progress, Vivie Warren transcends many temptations which are in fact restrictions that try to hold her back. These temptations are romance and idealism, wealth and high social position achieved through bourgeois marriage, love and sexual passion and finally family ties. They are represented respectively by Praed, George Crofts, Frank Gardner and Mrs. Warren. Praed manages to win Vivie's friendship but cannot attract her to his world of romance, beauty and art. There is a fundamental difference between their characters and worldviews. Her practicality and analytical mind shock his esthetical sensibility and delicate nature. In their relationship, there is an apparent reversal of gender roles. As in Ibsen's plays, it is the woman who is the realist while the man is the idealist. Vivie rejects Praed's temptations and declares to him "my Praed once for all there is no beauty and no romance in life for me. Life is what it is and I prefer to take it as it is" (Act IV, p. 273). Asking him to treat her as "a woman of business permanently unromantic" (Act IV, p. 274), Vivie revolts against the stereotypical

image of the Victorian woman. Her assumption that Praed's ideals are but illusions and masks that hide the ugly face of society later proves to be true when Shaw reveals that Brussels and Ostend which are for Praed places of romance and beauty are in fact the very centre of social hypocrisy and sexual exploitation.

Society's corruption and hypocrisy is embodied in the character of George Crofts whose lure of wealth and social prestige implied in his proposal to Vivie are strongly resisted by her. She knows very well that they are sources of subservience rather than independence. Another obstacle in her way to self- realization is what she calls love's young dream. Vivie the pragmatic mathematician has a sentimental and a romantic side to her personality which is revealed in Act III when she plays with Frank. However, she does her best to keep that side hidden as she knows that it will only make her vulnerable. She decides to abandon Frank who obviously is not worthy of her emotions. In the final scene when she finds his note, "she opens it unconcernedly and reads it quickly, giving a little laugh at some quaint turn of expression in it. And "goodbye, Frank" (she tears the note up and tosses the pieces into the wastepaper basket without a second thought" (Act IV, p. 286). After she discovers that her mother is a procurer, Vivie is convinced that sexual passion leads to subjugation; therefore she evades any physical contact with Frank when he "holds his arm to her. "Come and be covered up with leaves again" she answers with a cry of disgust "not that you make all my flesh creep" (Act IV, p. 267). She takes the decision to stay permanently single (Act IV, p. 274). The horror she feels at her mother's lifestyle is translated into a fear of sexuality in general. Vivie even abandons her mother and the luxury she offers her as she recognizes that she represents the most insidious threat to her self-determination and freedom. The total break in their relationship occurs in the last act when Vivie sends her monthly allowance back to be placed to her mother's credit and tells her "asked them to send you the lodgement receipt. In future, I shall support myself" (Act IV, p 280). She decides "I don't want a mother" (Act IV, p. 284). This mother-daughter

relationship will be reserved for a later discussion. At this juncture, it is important to add that Vivie rejects even the Church and its religious teachings represented by Reverend Samuel Gardner. The modern woman has transcended conventional religion and the phallocentric ideology it promotes. Her intellectual advancement and high education put her in a higher position than the clergyman himself. To the latter, observing that he has not seen her at church since she came, Frank replies: 'Of course not: she's a third wrangler. Ever so intellectual. Took a higher degree than you did; so why should she go to hear you preach?' (Act I, p. 227) Vivie manages to step out of the trafficking of women into freedom and progress. Thus she transgresses all barriers so as to achieve her independence. Through this character, Bernard Shaw undermines the Victorian ideal of the self-sacrificing 'womanly' woman. In his view, women should give up any person or thing that would get in their way to progress.

Throughout the play, Vivie is in pursuit of selfhood. She lives in continual doubt and is thus at a loss. She does not know her father and relatives, she does not know even her mother very well as she had no information about her past and profession. She also wonders whether Frank is her half-brother or not. It is only in her work that she finds a sense of certainty, clarity and assurance. In my view, Shaw's choice of the domain of Mathematics and the profession of an actuary for Vivie is quite significant as they best represent this sense of accuracy and foresight. Vivie thus "substitutes work for people"[30] since she finds in it a means of salvation. I consider that her final image embodies a contrast between despair and contentment, disillusionment and hope for the future, alienation and self-realization:

> Mrs. Warren goes out, slamming the door behind her. The strain on Vivie's face relaxes, her grave expression breaks up into one of joyous content, and her breath goes out in half sob half laugh of intense relief. She goes buoyantly to her place at the writing table, pushes the electric lamp out of the way, pulls over a great sheaf of papers and is in the act of dipping her pen in the ink when she finds Frank's note. She opens it unconcernedly and reads it quickly giving a little laugh at some quaint turn of expression in it", and: "good bye Frank. She tears the note up and tosses the pieces into the

> wastepaper basket without a second thought then she goes at her work with a plunge and soon becomes absorbed in its figure" (Act IV, p286).

Although this scene pictures Vivie as a strong and determined girl able to give up all the people who would hamper her progress, it conveys her feeling of regret for the price women must pay to achieve independence under capitalism. I think that the scene in fact indicates that Shaw encouraged and supported the women's struggle for liberty and rejection of patriarchy but was at the same time indignant against the system which obliged them to make sacrifices and live in isolation. Some women scholars such as Kerry Powell, Ellen Gainor and Ann Arbor argue that Shaw's portrayal of the new woman is ambiguous while others like Tracy C. Davie even consider that it reflects his "extreme antipathy to self- determining non-reproductive women."[31] To my mind, Vivie's representation is openly feminist; it marks the playwright's belief as a feminist and a socialist in the necessity of women's economic, social and intellectual emancipation. Progress is a key notion in his drama and Shaw invites' women to pursue it as men do. Perhaps the only reserve he has about Vivie's character concerns her excess of rationalism and exaggerated denial of femininity. According to him, "what women should do at the start of the process of emancipation is not to repudiate their femininity but to assert its social value, not to ape masculinity but to demonstrate its insufficiency."[32]

iii. An Exploration of the Mother-Daughter Relationship

In addition to the analysis – in performance – of the characters of the fallen woman and the new woman that Shaw provides, he centres his play on their mutual relationships. Through it, he explores the impact of the economic mode of production on family ties. Under the capitalist system Mrs. Warren and Vivie's relationship was based on the purely quantative values of exchange and thus took on an alienating nature. Vivie was brought up in boarding schools. She hardly knows her mother and rarely sees her. What connected them was just the money Mrs. Warren used to send her. By the end of the play Shaw shows that Vivie feels no attachment to her mother for when she learns that the

source of the money she received was from brothel management she easily abandons her. After their brief reconciliation by the end of the second act – a scene that would generally mark the end of the conflict in any conventional melodrama – *Mrs Warren's Profession* culminates in a scene of family crisis which offended the Victorian audiences who were familiar with the conventions of the well-made play according to which characters react in a melodramatic way. The severing of family ties was part of the general social dislocation that women experienced under capitalism. Shaw's iconoclasm lies in his dismantling of the Victorian idealist image of family life. Vivie rejects the biological blood relationship with her mother and chooses an intellectual affiliation with her boss, Honoria Frusser. In her view, it is in this freely chosen symbolic family rather than in the imposed biological one that she can enjoy moral, intellectual and financial autonomy. The image of the mother in this play is also revolutionary. The portrait of Mrs. Warren does not conform to the Victorian ideal of motherhood as the fountain-head of love, tenderness and self-sacrifice. It is apparent that whenever she wants to play the role of a conventional mother she fails and is ridiculed.

In the preface to the play, Shaw wrote: "Mrs. Warren is not a bit a worse woman than the reputable daughter who cannot endure her" (P. 200). It can be understood from this statement that the playwright blames Vivie for not being understanding and forgiving towards her mother. I consider that in the play Shaw manifests a marked tolerance towards both. They enjoy the same right of speech and are given equal opportunities to defend their viewpoints freely. Shaw passes no judgment. The conflict he dramatizes is not between clear right and wrong as he states in the preface to *Man and Superman* speaking about his dramatic creations in general "they are all right from their several point of view."[33] This attitude indicates that on the one hand Shaw sees some merit in the struggle of both women and on the other hand he wants to stimulate his audience's thought and critical sense

without imposing his own view on them. Charles Berst concludes that "the play belongs to both Vivie Warren and her mother."[34]

Though Mrs Warren and Vivie are in conflict throughout the whole play, with the exception of their brief reconciliation scene, the detailed study of their characters indicates that they share many things and resemble each other in many ways. Generally their qualities are the same. They are intelligent, business-like, independent, not self-sacrificing, strong and domineering. They both challenge the conventional ideal of womanhood and revolt against Victorian values each one in her own way. They are true to themselves and have the courage to attack social hypocrisy and current morality. They also share the devotion to work and the impact it has on their personalities and relationship. Vivie is practical and business-like. She treats her mother with indifference and coldness while Mrs. Warren the procurer and ex-prostitute is seducive and a seducer. She is not a self-sacrificing mother. According to her, Vivie has to do her duties as a daughter and care for her in return for the money she spent on her and the resulting loneliness she endures. Finally, they both experience alienation. In a male-dominated capitalist society they live in a state of disharmony with the system. Mrs. Warren is alienated mainly because she is driven to prostitution as the only means of survival. Her body thus becomes a mere commodity. Whereas in the case of Vivie, the disrupting experience she goes through is reflected in her isolation by the end of the play. She feels herself only when in isolation from others. I consider that the dramatist drew these similarities between mother and daughter to raise the consciousness of women and make them aware that though they may differ fundamentally from one another and have conflicting views, they still share many things and experiences. So that to challenge patriarchal dominance and serve the woman cause, they should focus on their common points and strengthen their relationship of sisterhood.

In *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Bernard Shaw thus provides a feminist representation of women. Both Mrs. Warren and Vivie play the star part and affect the course of events. Through their complexity, psychological profundity and unconventionality, the playwright redefines the concept of femininity from a feminist perspective and hence subverts current Victorian discourse on gender which positioned the woman as the marginalized other defined only in her relation to men. In this play the Warren family is composed only of two women. I consider that through the absence of the male figure, Shaw wants to free them from this subordinate status. The play is about women and thus it is they who dominate the dialogue and even when they are absent from the scene, they are the subject of men's discussions. The actresses who played the complex roles of Mrs. Warren and Vivie and other Shavian parts had to depend not on their appearances but rather on the ability to raise the audience's consciousness and to reach to their intellect. They were thus required to possess high acting capabilities.

5. Shaw's Subversive Use of Language

Language in *Mrs Warren's Profession* is another marker of Shaw's commitment. The characters use of language is part of the cultural cues any writer uses in his construction of gender identity. In his work on sex-differentiated language, *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), Robin Lakoff argues that "discrimination against women was evident in the way they are thought to use language"[35]. Shaw's predecessors and part of his contemporaries generally adopted the patriarchal assumption that woman's speech is powerless. Their female characters' vocabulary is limited and their sentences simple. They use requests instead of commands and speak in a hesitant and unassertive way. The topics they discuss are limited and often considered as trivial, their use of short turns and males' inattentiveness to their speech are among the strategies those playwrights used to abuse their interactional rights and thus weaken their presence. By contrast, their male counterparts occupy a dominant position through their use of language. Their speech

expresses self-assertion; they often use the imperative mode in mixed interactions giving women commands, warnings and instructions. They use long turns, complex sentences, rich vocabulary, and discuss various subjects. Women, who are silenced, display positive listening to their talks.

In *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Shaw subverts this patriarchal assumption. The language his characters speak is not sex-differentiated. The social network possibilities opened to his female characters in dialogue is wide. They have various interactants and it is noticeable that in mixed sex interactions where the man generally disempowers the woman, they skilfully control language and are given interactional attention and hence have a remarkable presence. Mrs. Warren and Vivie use speech strategies usually used by male characters in other plays. For example, Mrs. Warren orders George Crofts to "come […] sit up and take [his] steak out of [his] mouth" (Act I, p. 222) and Vivie orders Frank to hold his tongue and stop being silly (Act IV, p. 273). And in another instance she warns him, "I want to give you a warning, Frank. You were making fun of my mother just now when you said that about the Rectory garden, that's bared in future. Please treat my mother with as much respect as you treat your own" (Act III, p. 259). Mrs. Warren too warns Crofts when she suspects that he is interested in her daughter "I'd put you out and push you back to London pretty soon if I saw any of your nonsense" (Act II, p. 239). The language the two women use reflects their clarity of thought, self-assertion and strength of character. Shaw often uses the terms sharply and defiantly to render their utterances. As an example, in the Second Act, when Reverend Samuel Gardner expresses his rejection of a marriage between his son and Vivie, he tells Mrs. Warren: "Surely Mrs. Warren you know the reason", she answers [*defiantly*]: "I know no reason, if you know any you can tell them to the lad or to the girl or to your congregation if you want" (Act II, p. 234). In Act III when Crofts proposes marriage to Vivie, she answers [*sharply*] "my no is final I'll not go back from it" (Act III, p. 262). Mrs. Warren and Vivie are even allowed to use insults,

subverting the patriarchal assumption that women must have a refining influence on language. As an example, Mrs. Warren declares to Crofts, "you are stingy as you are vicious" (Act II ,p. 240) and for Vivie, he is "a pretty common sort of scandal" (Act III, p. 264) and "brutal waster" (Act II, p. 244). The male characters are absent from two long scenes in Acts II and V. The whole space is devoted to Mrs. Warren and Vivie. Thus their intentionality in speech is given a greater sway. They are offered the freedom to discuss their relationship and speak about their experiences, problems and convictions without men's interference. The fallen woman who was usually silenced and marginalized uses in this play long turns. Her speech to Vivie in the second act, which takes nearly two pages of the play, was surely surprising to a generation which, Shaw says, "considered a speech of more than twenty words impossibly long"[36]. Vivie by contrast uses short turns. This is of course not a sign of her speaking incompetence but rather part of her practical character. In both Mrs. Warren and Vivie's speeches, there is generally no emotional expressiveness contrary to what was common in conventional plays. They instead impart Shaw's indictment of capitalist society and attack on hypocrisy and conventional morality. In *Mrs Warren's Profession,* Shaw's use of language is thus a vehicle through which he empowers the woman and marks her effective presence and equality with man.

6. *Mrs. Warren's Profession*: A Feminist Play ahead of its Time

This feminist play which daringly criticizes society's hypocrisy and exploitative practices reflects Shaw's revolt against the theatre of his time which in his view was a theatre of containment as it presented social issues, including the woman question, in a conventionally soothing manner. Shaw's contemporaries, mainly Pinero and Jones, carried their discussions of women issues as far as their audience would permit. They appealed to their passion rather than to their intellect and could not go beyond the sentimental. As an example, their fallen woman plays, *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* and *Mrs Diane's Defence,* "had given the prostitute standard stage primarily to talk of her sentimental regrets and

self-loathing and to demonstrate her emotional volatility"[37]. They are tempered by conservative endings which reflect the playwrights' conformist attitudes. Paula Tanqueray, the ex-prostitute, committed suicide as she was unable to escape her past and Mrs. Daine who led an indecent life was condemned by her society and thus lived in despair. In a review of *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, Shaw argued that '"Paula Tanqueray is an astonishingly well-drawn figure as stage figures go nowadays" – but no more than that, a purely theatrical construction drawn from Pinero's "own point of view in terms of the conventional systems of morals"'[38]. In his view, Pinero was unable to provide an authentic account and deep exploitation of the prostitute's experience. His work, like that of John's, reproduced dominant gender ideology through their stereotypical representation of the fallen woman and conventional treatment of prostitution presenting it as a phenomenon caused only by woman's immorality rather than by economic circumstances.

Oscar Wilde's plays, preoccupied with this issue, were more advanced. In his *Lady Windermer's Fan* (1893), for example, the fallen woman voices Wilde's attack on Victorian morality. This play subverts current stage representations of this type as Lady Windermer get beyond her past and starts a new life by marrying a gentleman. However Wilde was still less daring than Shaw in his representation of the woman question. His analysis of the issue of prostitution in these plays was not as deep and comprehensive as Shaw's. This is perhaps due to the fact that he was not committed to a specific socio-political cause. His art was gratuitous, so to speak. He was unlike Shaw who was "not an art for art's sake man and would not lift [his] finger to produce a work of art if [he] thought there was nothing more than that in it"[38].

It is by the early twentieth century that Shaw's influence on English playwrights became apparent, especially in terms of his feminist discussions of the issue of prostitution and subversive representation of the fallen woman. Feminist woman dramatists such as

Sisly Hamilton and Elizabeth Robins wrote a number of 'suffrage plays' which challenged the theatrical convention of the fallen woman by emphasizing the social and economic conditions that force women into selling their bodies. In *Marriage as a Trade* (1909) for example, Hamilton argued that without decent employment opportunities, women had no choice but to turn to prostitution whether in or out of marriage. She thus restated Shaw's argument about the 'kinship' of bourgeois marriage and prostitution. Other Edwardian women authored plays also subverted patriarchal discourse through their feminist representation of the new woman character. Like Vivie Warren, the heroines of such plays were portrayed as self-sufficient, financially autonomous, and independent from marital and family ties. As an example, Veda in *Votes for Women* (1907) by Robins is presented as a highly educated and politically active woman who serves the woman cause. By contrast, English plays of the 1890s were less daring in their representation of this figure. In *The Notorious Mrs Ibsmith* by Pinero, the protagonist, Inias, is a writer and public speaker for the cause of woman's emancipation. However by the end of the play, she is reduced to the conventional stereotypical image of the self- sacrificing romantic woman. Other dramatists provided an openly anti-feminist image of the new woman such as Sidney Grandy. In his play *The New Woman* (1894), he ridicules a group of independent women devoted to the cause of woman's liberation representing them as caricatures.

Thus the 1890s woman-centred plays generally replicated patriarchal Victorian discourse on gender. Shaw's contemporaries endorsed society's patriarchal value system and complied with its conventional morality. By contrast, *Mrs Warren's Profession* shows that Shaw manifested a more serious engagement with the issue of feminism and promoted a truer image of woman. He protested against the system's exploitation of women with utmost courage and audacity.

The aim of the *Plays Unpleasant* including *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Shaw stated, was to make people thoroughly uncomfortable, to make them think in order to bring them to a conviction of sin. In this play, he reveals hidden truths, revolts against Victorian ideals, attacks current morality and exposes dominant gender ideology. Thus it is due to its daring that the play had remained under the ban of the Lord *Chamberlain*- the play censor- until 27 July 1925 when it was publicly performed in England for the first time by the Mc Donna players at the Prince of Wales Theatre in the West End. The playwright considered the long ban on his work an explicit attempt to protect the evil that it exposes. The remarkable presence of women during the play's private performance by the Stage Society in 1902 provoked conservative critics who denounced this dramatic work as immoral, scandalous and improper for the stage. They argued that such taboo subjects such as prostitution and incest should not be discussed, nor even mentioned in the presence of women. Shaw reacted against their attacks by asserting in the preface that

> Mrs. Warren's Profession is a play for women; that it was written for women; that it has been performed and produced; mainly through the determination of women that it should be performed and produced; that the enthusiasm of women made its first performance excitingly successful; and that not one of these women had any inducement to support it except their belief in the timeliness and the power of the lesson the play teaches.(P.200)

When the ban on the play was lifted in 1925, Shaw commented that the economic situation it depicted remained the same and that "we still do everything for the virtue of British womanhood except pay for it" [39].

Thus this Marxist-feminist reading of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* shows that since the early 1890s George Bernard Shaw was an outspoken feminist. His analysis of feminist issues, anti-patriarchal treatment of the female character and unconventional use of language all reveal his egalitarian vision. Shaw discusses the issue of prostitution from a feminist perspective. He argues that patriarchal capitalist system forces destitute women like Mrs. Warren and her sister Liz to engage in that profitable big international commerce

under economic necessity. It even induces former victims to join in its exploitative practices, thus encouraging the trafficking of other women. He exposes the system's phallocentric ideology which maintains gender-based inequalities mainly through the sexual division of labour. It restricts women to exploitative and alienating professions that do not secure for them financial independence. In Shaw's view, society must not demand morality from women unless it fights poverty and provides equal distribution of wealth. He attacks society's artificial system of morality promoted through its patriarchal cultural institutions such as school and church which maintain woman's oppression. He makes clear that these ideological state apparatuses in fact embody social hypocrisy as they participate in the capitalist exploitative scheme.

The linkage he establishes between bourgeois marriage and prostitution gives a greater depth to his discussion of the woman question. He considers that marriage in Victorian society is a purely financial arrangement and hence believes that there is no difference between women who marry to secure their economic independence and those who work as prostitutes. The reform of the institution of marriage in his opinion can be achieved only with the suppression of women's economic subordination. Through the discussion of Vivie and Frank's relationship, Shaw challenges the Victorian idealist image of marriage, subverts patriarchal assumptions and valorises celibacy. The daring and anti-melodramatic treatment of the incest theme reveals further his feminist commitment as it underscores both the sexual and the social trafficking of women. The playwright shows how wide-spread prostitution generates problematic family connections and how male incestuous desires can exist even on the level of the more complicated social network of relations.

Apart from the feminist issues that Shaw discusses in this play, his construction of the female character is another marker of his advocacy of woman's rights and

advancement. Both Mrs. Warren and her daughter Vivie are represented in an anti-patriarchal and anti-melodramatic way. They express Shaw's revolutionary ideas and iconoclastic attacks on capitalism and the sexism it engenders. Elaine Aston in her book *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* states: "To be feminist means to look at things from a feminist perspective or a female perspective."[40] According to this definition, Shaw is a feminist playwright for he proves in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* that he has the ability to see women as they really are and to see the world from their own perspective. Shaw was ahead of his time in his representation of the fallen woman and the new woman.

The playwright discusses the implications of the mode of production on women's private life and family ties through his deep analysis of the mother-daughter relationship. He repudiates the Victorian idealist image of family life and motherhood and provides a more credible image, one based on his belief that the exploitative capitalist system alienates women in both public and private spheres. He sheds light on the similarities between the characters of the fallen woman and the new woman and gives each one the right to defend herself and to voice her thoughts and convictions. Their use of language is highly subversive. It marks Shaw's belief in equality between the sexes. Unlike most Victorian playwrights who positioned the woman as the other, imposing many restrictions on her talk so as to disempower her presence, Shaw presents in this play male and female characters whose language is not sex-differentiated. Hence in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* the socialist feminist playwright Shaw defends the view that "since woman's oppression is entrenched in the structure of capitalism, the struggle for women's liberation and the struggle for socialism cannot be disengaged"[41]. He thus contributed to the feminist debate of the 1890s as his play spread feminist ideas in the theatre making it a new influential pulpit for the defence of woman's rights.

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IV
Man and Superman: A Feminist Reading in the light of the Gynoecocentric Theory

This chapter provides a feminist analysis of George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman* in the light of L. F. Ward's Gynoecocentric theory. The play dramatizes Shaw's theory of Creative Evolution centred on his notion of the Life Force. His conception of evolution counters Darwin's; it is highly optimistic and vitalist. It owes much to the Lamarckian school and parallels in many ways the evolutionary theories of Samuel Butler and Henri Bergson. Moreover, Shaw's creative evolutionist theory is characterized by its feminist implications. It is founded on Gynoecocentrism. Through the story of Ann and Tanner around which the play evolves, the playwright dramatizes his belief in the superiority of woman's natural position, a superiority whereby she plays the fundamental and most important role in the evolutionary process. Ann (the mother-woman) and Tanner (the man of genius) serve the Life Force in differing ways. Shaw skilfully pictures the battle of their wills, providing a deep analysis of the relation between the sexes. This battle, as he explains, generally ends with the triumph of woman over man. She eventually succeeds in downgrading him to the role of bread winner. Their marriage symbolizes Shaw's hope for the creation of the Superman. Through Ann and Tanner's relationship, the playwright provides a feminist and anti-conventional treatment of the issue of marriage.

In *Man and Superman*, Shaw integrates the Don Juan legend into his theory of Creative Evolution. His new version of the myth differs fundamentally from earlier versions. It is characterized mainly by its feminist import. In it, it is the woman who plays the active role in sexual selection so as to serve the great purpose of Creative Evolution. This version has philosophical implications. The Shavian Don Juan is a servant of the Life Force. He personifies Shaw's concept of the Superman. The play sheds light on the different obstacles to evolutionary progress which delay the advent of the Superman. They include capitalism, bourgeois marriage and conventional morality. Shaw explains in this play the political need for the Superman and accordingly outlines the political implications of the sex question since it is woman's mission to chase the man of genius,in whom lies the

hope for the creation of a superior human being who will play a major role in political reforms.

In this play, Shaw provides an anti-patriarchal representation of the female character. He portrays Ann and Violet in a feminist and realistic way subverting the phallocentric ideal of the passive romantic heroine .Through the character of Ann, he conveys his unconventional views on the issues of motherhood and sexual attraction. The feminist portraits of both Ann and Violet are also revealed through their subversive use of language. Their speeches reflect their strong presence, self-assertion and defiance of patriarchal dominance. Furthermore, the frequent use of animal imagery in the play is another important aspect of Shaw's feminist scheme. This Shavian play, resolutely rooted in the twentieth century marks both a remarkable development and consistency in the playwright's progressive vision and feminist thinking especially when compared to one of his first plays, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*.

The preface to the play is an "Epistle Dedicatory" to Arthur Bingham Walkley, the *London Times* drama critic, under whose request Shaw wrote *Man and Superman* on the Don Juan theme. In it, he refers to a number of issues most of which he discusses in detail. Such issues include the stereotypical representation of the subject of sexual attraction in the English theatre and, in earlier literary versions of the Don Juan legend, the philosophical and feminist implications of his own version, the conflict between the mother-woman and the man of genius and the political aspect of the sex question. Shaw added to this dramatic text, *The Revolutionist Handbook*, written by his protagonist Tanner. The book underscores Shaw's iconoclastic views on different subjects such as marriage, capitalism, biological progress and the political need for the Superman. Both the 'Epistle Dedicatory' and the *Revolutionist Handbook* will be central to my feminist study of *Man and Superman*.

Accordingly, I will begin this chapter with a brief explanation of Shaw's theory of Creative Evolution as dramatized in the play. I will then analyze the feminist dimension of this theory and show how it is reflected through the playwright's discussion of the conflict of wills between the mother-woman Ann and the man of genius Tanner and also through the legendary import of the play .The study of the representation of Ann and Violet followed by the analysis of the playwright's use of language and imagery will further explain the playwright's feminist stance. The last point in this chapter will be an assessment of the development and the consistency of Shaw's feminism through a brief comparison between *Man and Superman* with *Mrs. Warren's Profession.*

1. Shaw's Theory of Creative Evolution

Shaw's Evolutionist Theory came as a response to Darwin's theory of Natural Selection based on the notion of the survival of the fittest. In Samuel Butler's view, Darwin was "the apostle of luck" since his "natural selection comes down to the preservation of lucky races"[1]. Shaw goes even deeper in his assessment of Darwinism. In Darwin's view, the universe is founded on struggle, bloody competition and mere chance for it lacks design or purpose. In it man is deprived of free will. Shaw condemns Darwin's pessimism and declares in the preface to *Back to Methuselah* that "what damns Darwinian Natural Selection as a creed is that it takes hope out of evolution, and substitutes a paralyzing fatalism which is utterly discouraging"[2]. He considers that since Natural Selection is accidental it is actually unnatural. In the dream sequence Act III, the devil is the exponent of the Darwinian concept of evolution. He is cynical and pessimistic for he believes that:

> the power that governs the earth is not the power of Life but of Death; and the inner need that has nerved Life to the effort of organization, organizing itself into the human being is not the need for higher life but for a more efficient engine of destruction. The plague, the famine , the earthquake, the tempest were too spasmodic in their action; the tiger and crocodile were too easily satiated and not cruel enough; something more constantly, more ruthlessly, more ingeniously destructive was needed; and that something was Man, the inventor of the rack, the

> stake, the gallows, the electric chair ; of sword and gun and poison gas, above all, of justice, duty, patriotism, and all the other isms by which even those who are clever enough to be humanely disposed are persuaded to become the most destructive of all the destroyers[3].

In the devil's view, the colossal mechanism has no purpose and therefore serves only short-sighted personal aims unlike his opponent Don Juan who is a devoted servant of the Life Force.

Shaw's creative evolutionist theory was founded on the evolutionary ideas of Lamarck and paralleled in many ways the theories of Samuel Butler and Henri Bergson. J. B. Lamarck (1744-1839) argued that there was a progressive and perfecting development in life. He ascribed evolutionary changes to a drive from within the creatures themselves in response to their circumstances and not mere natural selection. His theory of *Use and Disuse* had a profound effect on Shaw's theory.

It suggests that a more frequent and continuous use of any organ gradually strengthens, develops and enlarges that organ, and gives it a power proportional to the length of time it has been so used, while the permanent disuse of any organ imperceptibly weakens and deteriorates it, and progressively diminishes its functional capacity, until it finally disappears. This activity results from the willed efforts of living creatures to respond to environmental changing conditions and to supply new needs. Hence will is the driving force of Lamarckian evolution. Shaw applied Lamarck's principles which concern basically the animal species to the human beings in his formulation of his creative evolutionist theory.

The Shavian theory of evolution is similar to that of his contemporary and fellow-writer, Samuel Butler. This latter, too, objected vehemently to the mindless and materialistic universe that resulted from the Darwinian view of nature. Butler asserted the

existence of a supreme force, a designer who organizes the universe and urges it onwards and upwards. In *God the Known and God the Unknown,* Butler writes "I can demonstrate perhaps more clearly than modern science is prepared to admit, that there does exist a single being or animator of all living things, a single spirit whom we cannot think of under any meaner name than God"[4]. It is this spirit which Shaw called the "Life Force". Both he and Butler reproduced Lamarck's argument that organisms have the ability to create new organs and to acquire new instincts and faculties.

Another major thinker who followed the neo-Lamarckian school and who shared various evolutionary ideas with Shaw is the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941). In his book, *Creative Evolution (1907),* he explained his evolutionist theory which revolves around his concept of "Elan Vital": "It is the vital force reflected in free will which demands that we progress through time and change rather than remain stagnant"[5]. It is in fact Shaw's "Life Force" and Butler's God. Bergson underscored the idea that the individual wills not only survival but change and progress as well. The striving for development, he said, is a biological necessity. Evolution in his opinion is slow and consistent rather than disjointed. It can be achieved only through the individual's free will and intuitive impulse towards perfection.

According to the Shavian vitalist philosophy dramatized in *Man and Superman*, the universe is purposeful, governed by "life's incessant aspiration to higher organization, wider, deeper, intenser, self-consciousness, and clearer self-understanding" (Act III, p.165). Man plays the central role in this evolutionary progress since it is his will which is its driving force. Shaw argues that to serve life's internal perfecting tendency, man will acquire through time new physical powers and mental faculties which will enable him to live longer and will ultimately prevent his blundering into death. As a vitalist, Shaw is convinced that death is only an acquired habit which though has become so rooted and

automatic that man must do it in spite of himself. It can eventually be forgotten and got rid off as he explains in *Back to Methuselah.* In *Man and Superman,* he asserts that in the battle between the forces of life and those of death and degeneration, "life wins after a fashion" (Act III, p. 148). Shaw's evolutionist theory is a doctrine of liberation for the individual. It frees him from the Darwinian helplessness and pessimism. His will is the agent of the "Life Force" which helps it to attain its purpose. As Don Juan asserts, "where there is a will there is a way , whatever Man really wishes to do he will finally discover a means of doing"; "the brain will not fail when the will is earnest" (Act III, p.158). Man, responding to life's vitalist impulse towards perfection, will himself evolve into a Superman. Thus Shaw who was dedicated to the cause of progress generated a meliorist and optimistic concept of evolution. He underlined its spiritual thrust as opposed to the Darwinian mechanistic materialism. He assumed that creative evolution bridged the gap between science and religion and was to become the new religion of the twentieth century.

2. Shaw's Adoption of the Gynoecocentric Theory

The feminist dimension of Shaw's evolutionist theory distinguished it from earlier phallocentric theories, especially Darwin's theory of Natural Selection. Sexism is a central feature of Darwin's evolutionary narrative. According to his theory of Natural Selection, since men were exposed to far greater selective pressures than women, especially in warfare and competition for mates, food and clothing, they evolved faster and therefore attained a superior status than that of women. Darwin believed that the female is both physically and intellectually inferior to the male. In his view, the differences between the sexes are so great that as he said he was surprised how they belonged to the same species. Natural Selection required that "many traits including genius and higher powers of imagination and reason are transmitted more fully to the male than to the female offspring." [6] In this way, it maintained male supremacy. The Darwinian "Female Inferiority

Doctrine" gained a remarkable popularity among scientists and anthropologists throughout Europe for a long period of time.

It is worth noting that apart from the Darwinian concept of evolution, Bergson and Butler's evolutionist theories overlooked women's role in evolution. Unlike Lamarck who recognised the female's ability to make new acquisitions and to allow her offspring to inherit them and hence participate in human development:

> all the acquisitions or loses brought by nature on the individuals through the influence of the environment in which the race has long been placed and hence through the influence of the predominant use or permanent disuse of any organ. All these are preserved by reproduction to the new individuals provided that the acquired modifications are common to both sexes or at least to the individuals which produce the young.[7]

However, feminism in the Lamarckian theory is not as major a characteristic as it is in Shaw's theory.

In the third act of the play, Shaw skilfully presents the Gynoecocentric theory in a speech by Don Juan who is indeed the first literary figure who provides an exposition of this theory on stage.

> Don Juan: "sexually, woman is Nature's contrivance for perpetuating its highest achievement. Sexually; Man is woman's contrivance for fulfilling Nature's behest in the most economical way. She knows by instinct that far back in the evolutional process she invented him; created him in order to produce something better than the single-sexed process can produce. Whilst he fulfils the purpose for which she made him, he is welcome to his dreams, his follies, his ideals, his heroisms, provided that the keystone of them all is the worship of woman, of motherhood, of the family of the heart. But how rash and dangerous it was to invent a separate creature whose sole function was her own impregnation! For mark what has happened. First Man has multiplied on her hands until there are as many men as women, she that 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 labour of gestation. This superfluous energy has gone to his brain and to his muscle. He has become too strong to be controlled by her bodily, and too imaginative and mentally vigorous to be content with mere self- reproduction. He has created

> civilization without consulting her, taking her domestic labour for granted as the foundation of it". (Act III, p. 147-148)

Don Juan adds that civilization "is an attempt on man's part to make himself something more than the mere instrument of woman's purpose" (Act III, p. 148). This speech summarizes the main points of the Gynoecocentric theory already explained in the introduction to this dissertation. It underscores Shaw's conviction that throughout the history of evolution, the female's role in the reproductive function has been more primal and fundamental than that of the male. As the first servant of the "Life Force", endowed with an instinctive vitality and an evolutionary zeal, woman created man for the purpose of assisting her in the creation of a superman: a being greater and more perfect than both of them. Thus as Tanner says: 'the whole purpose of nature is embodied in the woman' (Act I, p. 61). This purpose is the perpetuation and the betterment of the human race.

Shaw explains how at a certain point in history, man unsatisfied with his secondary biological role, began to create a separate sphere for himself excluding woman from it. Man strives in his own way through his new preoccupation to advance mankind to a higher level of consciousness and intellectual awareness. In other words, to become an instrument of the "Life Force" in his own right. Shaw concludes that woman as a more ruthless agent of life's creative evolutionist impulse than man, usually succeeds in turning him back to his original biological functions of reproduction and nourishment. In the Don Juan interlude, Dona Ana embodies the generative vital tendency of the "Life Force"; she is a symbolic mother of the entire human race. Her exit line underscores the importance of woman's reproductive role which, as the critic Sally Peters Vogt writes, is "the essence of creative evolution itself"[8]. Ana: "Not yet created!" [Speaking about the Superman]. "Then, my work is not yet done" [crossing herself devoutly] "I believe in the life to come" [crying to the universe] "A father! A father for the Superman!" (Act III, p. 173). I consider that Shaw's use of the phrase "crying into the universe " is very significant as it refers to

the universal dimension of the Gynoecocentric theory. Since the beginning of Creation, woman has been the selector of a father for the Superman and will always remain devoted to this mission. Through the story of Ann Whitfield and Jack Tanner around which the play evolves, Shaw explicitly expresses his conviction that the mother-woman plays an eminent role in the evolutionist creative process.

3. The Conflict of Wills between the Mother-woman and the Man of Genius : two Agents of the Life Force

Man and Superman presents an openly feminist and unconventional discussion of the relation between the sexes, more specifically between the mother woman and the man of genius represented by Ann Whitfield and Jack Tanner. The mother-woman is dedicated to the cause of the perpetuation and the advancement of the human race. Her will is the prime mover of creative evolution. Endowed with the power of sexual selection, she devotes her vitality, sexual attraction and creative instinct to secure the best available paternity for her offspring. She seeks a well-bred male, a man of genius above all other men, for she intuitively and instinctively knows that in him lies the hope for the creation of the Superman. The man of genius too serves the Life Force but he has a different plan from that of the mother-woman. He uses his intellectual rather than instinctive energy. He is ‘selected by nature to carry on the work of building up an intellectual consciousness for her instinctive purpose’ (p. 20). He is “a great founder of religion as well as a painter, sculptor or a musician" (p. 21).

The man of genius is characterized by a peculiarity of character and mind. His unconventional ethical values, high social consciousness and intellectual capacity make him an outstanding figure in society. However, his advanced ideas and achievements are most of the times vehemently attacked since they generally challenge and subvert society’s moral code and conventional ideals. Jack Tanner published his *The Revolutionist*

Handbook and Pocket Companion in which he launched his iconoclastic doctrine and new vision. This book was harshly attacked by the papers. It is described by Ramsden as 'the most infamous, the most scandalous, the most mischievous, the blackguardliest book that ever escaped burning at the hands of the common hangman.' (p. 45) This shows that the man of genius, like the mother-woman, aims at change and progress; and that is why he is the one who attracts her. She finds her match in him but the problem is that, contrary to her, he perceives their marriage as a threat to his artistic independence and creative vitality. This conflict between the man of genius and female-induced domesticity is expressed by Tanner thus: "Marriage is to me apostasy, profanation of the sanctuary of my soul, a violation of my manhood, a sale of my birthright, shameful surrender, ignominious capitulation, acceptance of defeat". (Act IV, p. 20).

These two agents of the Life Force are thus engaged in a power struggle. Each one of them wants to assert himself and to fulfil his purpose which transcends the merely personal and which is as absorbing and unscrupulous as that of the other. Tanner describes the ruthlessness of this struggle to Octavius in these words: "of all human struggles there is none so treacherous and remorseless as the struggle between the artist man and the mother-woman. Which shall use up the other? That is the issue between them. And it is all the deadlier because, in your romanticist cant, they love one another" (Act I, p. 62).

To ensure the continuation and the evolution of the race, Shaw mobilizes women. He urges them to pursue their mates and to hunt them down. This is exactly what Ann Whitefield did actively and successfully. Her plan to capture Tanner starts from the beginning of the play. The will which appoints Jack as her co-guardian is in fact hers and not her father's. It allowed her to keep in close touch with him. She then continues her efforts to attach him to her; she seduces him with her charm and power of fascination, she takes his hand, pats his cheek and coaxes him. She lies to him so as to remove her younger sister from possible competition and even when he fled to Spain, she captured him. Hector

describes her as “a regular Sherlock Holmes” (Act IV, p. 175). This idea of the chase is pictured in a concrete way in many instances of the play as when Ann smothers Tanner as a boa constrictor would. In Shaw's view it is the woman who takes the initiative in the sex duel, since she is more aware of the natural law than the man. He claims in the ‘Epistle Dedicatory’ that the belief that the initiative in sex relations must always come from the man is only a feeble romantic convention set up by men “to protect themselves from the negative aggressive persecution of woman's business” (p. 18). This theme of the pursuing woman and retreating man clearly reverses the cultural stereotype of active male and passive female. It was often treated in the plays of Shakespeare as Shaw remarks.

The sense of humour which prevails throughout the play springs mainly from the fact that Tanner thought that Ann wanted to pursue Octavia. He remains unaware of her real intention until he is informed by his chauffeur Straker, that it is he who is her intended prey. Note how ironic his speech to Octavius is when he warns him of the danger he thought him in: “You think that you are Ann's suitor, that you are the pursuer and she the pursued, that it is your part to woo, to persuade, to prevail, to overcome. Fool: it is you who are the pursued, the marked down quarry, the destined prey. You need not sit looking longingly at the bait through the wires of the trap: the door is open, and will remain so until it shuts behind you forever” (Act II, p.91). It seems that truth dawned too late upon Tanner. Melanie Francis claims that “the confrontation between the two sexes was never portrayed in such a complex and a humorous way as the battle for power between Ann Whitefield and John Tanner.”[9]

In this power struggle, it is the woman who triumphs. She eventually succeeds in turning the man of genius back to his specifically biological function as a protector and nourisher of their offspring. Tanner is described in the last scene as a broken man caught in the grip of the Life Force. He surrenders to the will of his victorious mate; which represents in fact the universe's will and which is clearly more ruthless than his. Shaw

claims that “it was in *Man and Superman* that men were first warned of women's terrible strength and men's miserable weakness.”[10] Tanner recognizes Ann's power of domination from the beginning of the play. He rejects the guardianship because he is sure that “[he] can't control her and she can compromise [him] as much as she likes” (Act I, p.49). Such a speech entails a clear subversion of patriarchal discourse especially as it is uttered by a male character.

Many critics, including William Irvine, Bruce R. Park and Melanie Francis, identify Tanner with Shaw himself. In his book *George Bernard Shaw, A Man of the Century,* Archibald Henderson explains that this identification goes back to the first London production of the play in which Granville-Barker who played the role of Tanner was made to look like Shaw”[11]. Of course the text proves that the relation between the two is deeper than mere physical resemblance. Tanner is like his creator, a reformer and an iconoclast “who shatters creeds and demolishes idols” (Act1, p.74). He exposes conventional morality which he thinks stands in the way of improvement and is only a mask that hides the hypocrisy of society. For example, Tanner wonders how Octavius and Ramsden who thought that Violet’s pregnancy was illegitimate, condemned the father as a damned scoundrel but at the same time insisted that he had to make reparation by marrying her. Many instances in the play even show that the playwright selects this character as a spokesman for his egalitarian vision. In the second act, for instance, Tanner urges Ann to seek freedom and emancipation. He tells her that “the first duty of manhood and womanhood is the declaration of independence” (Act II, p.97). Frederick Burg and Melanie Francis draw attention to another similarity between the playwright and his protagonist. They note that, though Shaw had his philandering with women, he always considered himself an innocent pursued as Tanner does. This latter is deeply aware of the major contribution of the mother-woman to the perpetuation and the advancement of the human race. For him, motherhood is woman's “highest purpose and greatest function.”

(Act I, p.64.); her solemn initiation into womanhood." (Act II, p. 84). The fact that he supported Violet and sympathized with her before knowing that she was legally married, reflects his respect for the single mother too. His repudiation of the widely held angelic view of woman is part of his struggle to unmask ideals and to free both men and women from all restrictions which delay their advancement.

In Shaw's view, Tanner must resist Ann's will as long as he can in order to protect his independence as an artist and a philosopher. This belief reflects the fear of any artist (including Shaw of course) that marriage will restrict his creative potential and reduce him to a mere bread winner. Tanner's final wish that the articles his friends "are preparing to heap upon us, will be instantly sold, and the proceeds devoted to circulating free copies of the Revolutionist's Handbook." (Act IV, p. 208) indicates his strong desire to keep serving the Life Force in his own way, instead of being just an instrument for the fulfilment of Ann's purpose. It seems to me that, though the playwright urged his hero to resist being trapped into marriage, he enjoys his surrender since in it lies the hope for the creation of greater genius. The play shows that marriage is for the man of genius a destiny that he meets against his will whereas for the mother-woman it is a triumph, a source of power. It is she who selects her mate. Ann is endowed with the intuitive knowledge and the creative impulse which help her to recognize Tanner as the fittest father of her offspring. She does everything to secure him as a husband, not for the pursuit of her own pleasure but rather because she assumes the responsibility nature gives her since "the race must perish without her travail" (p. 20). Ann embodies Shaw's hope for change. He is quite sure that she will pursue, not romantic illusions, but Creative Evolution. Her rejection of Octavius, the romantic artist, proves that The following description shows the extent to which Octavius idealizes her:

> To Octavius she is an enchantingly beautiful woman, in whose presence the world becomes transfigured, and the puny limits of individual consciousness are suddenly made infinite by a mystic beginning in the east, or even back to the paradise from which it fell. She is to him the reality of romance, the inner good sense of nonsense, the unveiling of his eyes, the freeing of his soul, the abolition of time, place, and circumstance, the etherealization of his blood into rapturous rivers of the very water of life itself, the revelation of all the mysteries and the sanctification of all the dogmas. (Act I, p. 54).

Ann subverts the stereotypical image of the romantic woman. She challenges idealism which hinders evolutionary progress. Her attitude towards marriage is practical rather than romantic. It reflects Shaw's clear reversal of the binary opposition of (men-mind) (woman-emotion). In fact Octavius perverts not just the proper end of marriage but of art as well. He dedicates his artistic creativity to the gratification of feminine beauty, diverting it from its original purpose which is, in Shaw's view, raising the common consciousness of mankind. In the preface to *Plays Pleasant*, the playwright describes romance as "the great heresy to be swept off from art and life."[12] These two agents of the Life Force, Ann and Tanner, are both realists who debunk ideals and step over the bounds of romantic illusions. Their union by the end of the play symbolizes Shaw's hope for the creation of Superman. The discussion of the legendary aspect of the play will provide a better understanding of this concept and of Shaw's feminist stance.

4. Shaw's Reversal of the Don Juan Legend: a Feminist Version

The legendary framework of the third act of *Man and Superman* enlarged the play's popularity and enriched its feminist and philosophical discussions. This act in which Shaw presents his own version of the Don Juan legend is generally referred to as the dream sequence, the Don Juan in hell sequence or the Don Juan interlude. It was usually performed separately for it has all the constituent elements of a complete play. Yet it is skilfully integrated in the main play as it provides a further analysis of its major themes and characters. In the preface to *Man and Superman*, Shaw referred to earlier literary representations of the Don Juan figure which influenced his own version of the legend in

different ways. From Tirso de Molina – a Spanish monk, who invented the stereotypic Don Juan, he took the condemnation of amorousness which he regards as an obstacle to progress. From Molière, he drew the satiric technique which he appropriated and reversed and from Mozart, he borrowed the operatic form using the opera *Don Giovanni* as his model. His characters are distinguished by their specific operatic voice tones. In the preface to *Back to Methuselah,* he writes in 1901 "I took the legend of Don Juan in its Mozartian form and made it a dramatic parable of Creative Evolution."[13]

Unlike earlier versions of the Don Juan legend, the Shavian Don Juan story has a feminist dimension clearly reflected in the playwright's anti-conventional approach to the subject of sexual attraction. Shaw was convinced that the enormous superiority of woman's natural position dictates that it is she who pursues her mate and traps him into marriage. Therefore, his Don Juan is "the quarry instead of the huntsman" (p. 18). He is claimed by Donna Ana by natural right an evolutionary purpose that transcends the merely personal pursuit of romance and pleasure. The dream sequence transforms the legend of rape and seduction into a story of courtship and marriage showing explicitly how the sexual impulse is directed to a greater purpose – referred to by Shaw as nature's most urgent work – when sexual selection is freed from the bounds of tradition and convention, i.e. when the woman is given the right to choose freely her mate. *In Man and Superman "*Don Juan had changed his sex and became Donna Juana, breaking out of the *Doll's House* and asserting herself as an individual instead of a mere item in a moral pageant." (p. 13). Although Don Juan escapes to heaven, Donna Anna is still determined to hunt him down. In the Shavian world, the amorous roles of the two sexes are reversed to serve Creative Evolution. Many critics appreciated this reversal. William Erving, for example, considered that "the omnipotence of woman in modern life demands no less."[14]

Shaw repudiates the romantic illusions of the Don Juan legend. His own version is characterized by its philosophical implications. He gives his Don Juan a new *reason d'être* making him a philosopher and an expounder of Creative Evolution. He does so because as John Austen and many other critics remarked, he was repelled and bewildered by the demeanour of Don Juan in earlier versions. As an example, Shaw described Byron's Don Juan as only a vagabond libertine. He said that "in fact, he is not a true Don Juan at all" (p. 12). Unlike De Molina's protagonist who was sent to eternal damnation and cast into hell, the Shavian Don Juan has been regenerated. He was a romantic libertine on earth but when he appears in the third act of the play, he is in hell bored with its eternal happiness and perpetual pleasures. He becomes a contemplative philosopher, a servant of the Life Force. Only in heaven, the home of truth and evolution, can he fulfil his new purpose and that's why he longs to go there. He wants "to spend his eons in contemplation" because "in the pursuit of his own pleasure, his own wealth, his own fortune he has never known happiness" (Act III, p. 140). Turning the arch-sinner of the traditional legend into a spokesman for Creative Evolution who repudiates Idealism and romance was a brilliant dramatic reversal of literary conventions. Furthermore, it reflects the idea of evolution around which the play evolves since the Shavian Don Juan turned from a licentious hero into a man of ideas. According to Carl Henry Mills, in 'Man and Superman and The Don Juan Legend', this legendary figure was "brought up to date" (15).

To deprive Don Juan of his amorous role and to free the legend from its traditional romantic illusions was in fact part of Shaw's feminist scheme in *Man and Superman.* The sexual adventurer who appeared in earlier versions objectified women. He pursued them only to gratify his lust. By contrast, the servant of a greater purpose than romance and pleasure in Shaw's play adopts a new philosophy of life, a vitalist philosophy centred not just on the respect of woman but on the recognition of the enormous superiority of her natural position as well. Don Juan expresses his belief in Gynoecocentrism as I mentioned

earlier. He is convinced that woman is the source of life and the prime mover of the creative evolutionist process: "The eternal feminine draws us ever upward and on" (Act III, p. 140). In this respect Shaw's Don Juan is quite similar to Goethe's Faust since the latter too recognizes the existence of "an eternal womanly principle in the universe." (p. 12) that urges the human race towards perfection. In the postscript to *Back to Methuselah* Shaw writes, "Goethe rescues us from this horror [the pessimism born of mechanistic materialism] with his eternal feminine that draws us forward and upward which was the first modern manifest of the mysterious force in Creative Evolution."[16] That is what made Goethe's Faust share many other qualities with Shaw's Don Juan . They both strive for perfection; serve humanity and the Life Force and incessantly search for a deeper and a clearer self-understanding.

The character of Don Juan represents Shaw's Superman. It is he who provides details about this figure and hence leads the reader to a better understanding of Shaw's philosophy of Creative Evolution. *Man and Superman* marks a development in the playwright's progressive vision. In it his focus shifts from communal progress represented by institutions and organizations to biological evolution. He concludes that "only biological change is permanent and significant. Man will improve his social habits only when he has improved himself biologically by evolving into a higher animal,"[17] in other words, into a Superman. In Shaw's view, this aim can be attained as Tanner explained in the *Revolutionist Handbook* by the old method of trial and error. Every birth is an experiment or an attempt by the Life Force to replace the man by the Superman. Shaw argued that to create the Superman, society must eliminate all obstacles which stand in the way of evolution including private property, and its consequent class barriers, i.e. traditional marriage and conventional morality. Since capitalism generates a rigid class structure which delays the advent of the Superman and hampers good breeding, it is necessary to dismantle it and to establish an egalitarian society in which men and women can mate

freely. In such a society marriage founded on the intermingling of social classes which is highly desirable on eugenic grounds will replace traditional bourgeois marriage. Convinced 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 for them. For honour, chastity, and all the rest of moral figments, it cares not a rap." (Act III, p156). The playwright encourages even free mating or free union which in his view can give birth to the Superman. However, such unions are desirable mainly in societies in which socialism secures woman's independence and equality with man. It is only under such circumstances that she can freely choose her mate and hence serve the Life Force: "The pair may be utter strangers to one another, speaking different languages, differing in race and colour, in age and disposition, with no bond between them but a possibility of that fecundity for the sake of which the Life Force throws them into one another's arms at the exchange of a glance" (Act 3, p. 161). Shaw perceives the sex question as a matter of practical race welfare rather than ethics. Therefore, natural selection which aims at the creation of the Superman must not be restricted by any social, moral or economic considerations.

The Shavian Superman is a servant of the Life Force. His brain is "the organ by which nature strives to understand itself." (Act III, p. 169) and to overcome all the limitations imposed on its perfecting tendency. This Superman is a genius endowed with an intense intellectual capacity and artistic ability devoted to the service of his society. He aids evolutionary progress by raising the common consciousness of his fellow-citizens and by working for their social, political and economic well-being. In *Bernard Shaw and The Puritan in Hell*, Gassner remarks: "Don Juan's vision of the superman is a vision of an improved species of men who would give Shaw the better society for which he agitated as a socialist."[18] As is explained in *The Revolutionist Handbook*, the need for the Superman by the turn of the twentieth century is mainly political. Disappointed by what he called the political incompetence of the democratic English society, Shaw envisions his Superman as

a saviour, a philosopher-statesman whose mission is the reform of society's political institutions and the re-establishment of democracy in a more efficient way. Thus in *Man and Superman*, Shaw sheds light on the political implications of the sex question. The initiative that woman takes in sexual selection is as he says "politically the most important of all the initiatives." (p. 22) This feminist argument reflects Shaw's recognition of woman's positive influence on the political scene, an influence which he indirectly suggests, gives her the right to play a more direct political part and to enjoy equal political rights with man. This claim came as a support from Shaw to the then feminist political campaigns.

Thus the Shavian Superman epitomized in the figure of Don Juan is a worshipper of the Life Force, a reformer and an iconoclast. Most importantly, he is a devoted believer in the superiority of Woman's natural position that springs from the primacy and importance of her reproductive role. Apart from the legendary figure of Don Juan, there are occasional references in Shaw's works, including *Man and Superman*, to other fictional characters and even to great artists who are considered by Shaw as Supermen. They include Shakespeare, Goethe, Wagner and his Siegfried, Ibsen and his God Emperor, Shelley and his Prometheus and Nietzsche and his Ubermensch. The fact that the playwright presented the third act of the play as a dream reveals his hope for the creation of a race of supermen. Tanner who is the dreamer is expected to be the father of a future superman and that is why Shaw establishes a parallel between this character and that of Don Juan making the latter the magnified portrait of the former. However, the mysterious force behind Creative Evolution which aims at the creation of a superior human race is an eternal feminine power embodied in the characters of Ann Whitefield and Dona Anna.

5. Shaw's Representation of The Female Character

In *Man and Superman* the female portraits represent another marker of Shaw's feminist stance. The image of the female in this play subverts earlier phallocentric theatrical representations. The Shavian woman is intelligent and self-possessed. She plays an active part in the enhancement of the evolutionary process.

i. Ann Whitefield :The Shavian Acquisitive Woman

Ann Whitefield, the play's protagonist, is one of the Shavian acquisitive heroines i.e. possessive females endowed with the capacity to hunt a man down in order to fulfill the purposes of evolution. This type includes other female characters that appeared in his early novels such as Lydria in *Cashel Byron's Profession* and Orietta in *Love Among The Artists.* This indicates that though Shaw's dramatization of his concern for biological progress was more prominent in his 20th century plays *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah* , it started much earlier in the 1880s. Ann plays a dynamic part in *Man and Superman*. She is powerful, active, self-confident and self-controlled. Her creative energy, intuitive knowledge and keen desire to exercise her free will in selecting a father for the Superman are her means of initiating change and hence of participating in Shaw's evolutionary scheme, She enjoys all the qualities of the liberated modern woman as summarized by Gladys Crane in her essay "Shaw and Woman's Lib": " The freedom of a career choice, the freedom of thinking about herself as a woman, an accurate self-evaluation, self awareness and a sense of personal worth."[19] Ann is an unwomanly woman who challenges the phallocentric ideal of feminine behaviour and transcends the stereotypical image of the romantic passive female. In his description of his protagonist, Shaw insists on her strong physical presence and power of fascination; a fascination which reflects the feminine vitality central to his Creative Evolution Theory:

> Ann is a well formed creature, as far as that goes and she is perfectly ladylike, graceful, and comely, with ensnaring eyes and hair. Besides, instead of making herself an eyescore, like her mother , she has devised a mourning costume of black and violet silk which does honour to her late father and reveals the family tradition of brave unconventionality by which Ramsden sets such store but all this is beside the point as an explanation of Ann's charm. Turn up her nose ,give a cast to her eye , replace her black and violet confection by the apron and feathers of a flower girl strike all the aitches out of her speech , and Ann would still make men dream" (Act I, p. 54).

After attending a performance of *Man and Superman,* the feminist activist, Mrs. Pankhurst was fascinated by this character. she declared that Ann "strengthened [her] purpose and fortified [her] courage."[20] Ann exhibits all the qualities required for the mother of the future Superman. To give birth to him, she engages in a vital egalitarian union with Tanner whom she intuitively recognizes as the fittest father for her offspring.

Shaw's describes Ann as a liar, a hypocrite, a 'bully' and a *coquette*. Yet, in the Shavian universe, such attributes generally do not mark defects in woman's character; they rather signal her power and wit. According to Shaw, in patriarchal societies "a cunning and attractive woman disguises her strength as womanly timidity, her unscrupulousness as womanly innocence, her impunity as womanly defencelessness. Simple men are duped by them."[21] Ann pretends to be an ignorant woman and a dutiful daughter, her ideas and decisions prove that she is a liberated woman who dares revolt against patriarchal discussion. Many attacks have been launched against this character mainly because it is through it that the playwright presents his unconventional and anti-patriarchal theory of sexual attraction. Frank Harris, for instance, described Ann and other Shavian acquisitive heroines as "unpleasant creatures, practically unsexed women; their bodies are as dry as their minds and even when they run after their men, the pursuit has about as much sex-appeal as a train time-table."[22] Perhaps Harris and other critics expected Ann and Tanner's story to be romantic and sentimental. This was not Shaw's aim at all. His approach to the relation between the sexes subverts the conventional and stereotypical representation of this subject.

Some scholars such as Sally Peters and Lady Rhondda accused Shaw of reinforcing the conventional dichotomy of woman as body, man as mind and of confining woman to a limited domestic role in *Man and Superman*. The feminist analysis of the play and especially of Ann's character reveal the inaccuracy of such an argument. Here the female body is celebrated as the linchpin of woman's liberation, a source of power rather than objectification.

It is no longer a stumbling block in woman's path towards emancipation. Apart from this fact, Ann's vitality springs not just from her physical attraction and reproductive power but from her mental capacities as well. She is "one of (the) vital geniuses" (p. 54). She is more intelligent and witty than all the men in the play, including Tanner, (the revolutionist philosopher). The play subverts the predominant androcentric theory which envisions woman's domestic role as inferior to man's activities in the public sphere. According to Shaw's Creative Evolutionist theory, though woman's reproductive role and man's intellectual one represent alternative ways of serving the Life Force, woman's contribution to the evolutionary process is more fundamental and important than that of man. Furthermore, the study of Ann's character shows clearly that the marital and maternal role of woman is not repressive mainly because it is freely chosen. Ann selects it not as the only respectable and economically visible role available to her but because it offers her a deep sense of self- satisfaction and power. Shaw declared later, in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism,* that "woman's work of child bearing and rearing is the most important and vital work of woman, vitally necessary to the extention of society."[23] Nonetheless, Shaw never confines woman to the domestic sphere; he argues that motherhood is not every woman's vocation. Some women, like his wife Charlotte, pursue selfhood and emancipation through intellectual achievements instead of motherhood.

ii. Violet

Though Violet does not play a major role in *Man and Superman* as does Ann, she is endowed with an outstanding personality and she enjoys a remarkable presence. She is "impenitent and self-possessed" (Act I, p. 81), elegant, intelligent and respectful. Contrary to her romantic brother Octavius, she is "as hard as nails" (Act II, p. 195) "in her, there is no mercy" (Act I, p. 81). Such a description entails an explicit repudiation of the romantic image of the female. Violet is quite practical in her relation with Hector. She considers that money is as important as love. She orders her father- in-law, Mr. Malone the millionaire, to support his son. Hector's father who first objected to his marriage considering that it would not be profitable to his family since Violet was a middle class woman, changed his mind later. He became convinced that she "[would] be a grand woman for Hector. I will not exchange her for ten duchesses" (Act IV, p. 193). He even decides that "[he] will do nothing without consulting [her]" (Act II, p. 191). Accordingly both Violet and Ann are portrayed according to feminist norms. They step over the bounds of patriarchal dominance and therefore break the stereotypical image of the female character.

6. Shaw's Feminist Use of Language and Imagery

Apart from his exploration of a range of feminist issues and his anti-patriarchal representation of female characters, Shaw's use of language and imagery in *Man and Superman* also reveals his feminist stance. Ann's and Violet's speeches, which express self- assertion and strength of character, subvert patriarchal discourse. They reflect the dynamic and effective roles both women play. They are both given interactional attention from their male counterparts in mixed sex conversations. Furthermore, they enjoy the right to express themselves freely and frankly. As an example, Ann tells Octavius that she "supposes she does not love him but sometimes she feels as if she should like to make a man of him somehow." (Act IV, p. 167) And Violet tells Tanner that she hates him and that she thinks one does not take the things he says seriously "They are very disagreeable

and rather in a bad taste" (Act II, p. 83) Occasionally they both use the imperative mode when addressing men. In her speech with her father-in-law, Violet orders him "you must enable your son to keep up his position, it's his right" (Act IV, p. 183). The nicknames and short-names Ann gives to her male friends reflect Shaw's subversion of phallocentric discourse with their down-grading implications. She calls them with the names she selects even if they do not like them. She calls Ramsden, Granny; Octavius, Ricky-Ticky-Tavy and Tanner, Jack**.**

Ironically, Ann is first presented as a submissive female who speaks in a gentle and low musical voice. Many utterances in her first conversation with Tanner, Ramsden and Octavius reflect her pretended submissiveness. For instance, when asked to choose between Ramsden's sole guardianship and that of Tanner, she answers "I feel that I am too young, too inexperienced to decide" (Act I, p.58). The fact that Shaw begins with this conventional image of the female character and then quickly subverts it was part of the techniques he generally uses to deceive the romantic expectations of the audience. Many of them who imagined Ann to be the romantic lover and dutiful daughter discovered throughout the plot that this character is far from complying to their expectations.

Animal imagery is another marker of *Man and Superman's* feminist implications. In his description of Ann Whitefield, Tanner often uses a set of such images. She is a spider, a bee, a lioness, an elephant and a tiger. As the spokesman for Shaw's theory of Creative Evolution, Tanner is aware of what Carl Henry Mills calls "the predatory nature of Shaw's vital woman."[24] Such ruthlessness is fundamental to the process of evolution; it helps the mother-woman to triumph in her struggle with the man of genius. It is such a triumph which generates the hope for the creation of the Superman. Furthermore, the animal imagery underlines the female's instinctive biological vitality described by Tanner as "a blind fury of creation." (Act I, p. 60). In his preface to *Getting Married*, Shaw asserts

that "physically there is nothing to distinguish human society from the farmyard."[25] This statement reflects the comprehensiveness of his theory of Creative Evolution since it suggests that both in the animal and the human species; it is the female who plays the major and fundamental role in biological progress.

7. An Assessment of Shaw's Feminist Vision: a Comparison between *Man and Superman* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*

Shaw's feminist commitment is characteristically explicit in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman*. It is central to his Fabian socialism and Creative Evolutionist theory. Indeed his socialism, his feminism and his vitalist philosophy cannot be separated; they all mark his strong and consistent commitment to progress. A decade before the performance of *Man and Superman*, Shaw set the theatrical foundation for his Creative Evolutionist project in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. The replacement of Capitalism by Socialism, for which, he pleaded in this latter play, was conditioned by the creation of a superior human race. Equality which, in his view, "is essential to good breeding," (p. 215) can be attained only through the establishment of Socialism. In an egalitarian socialist society, an environment conductive to the change and progress for which he worked seriously and incessantly will be created. When freed from the economic, social and sexual oppression imposed on them by the patriarchal capitalist system, women will be able to fulfil their creative evolutionist mission. They will freely choose their mates; thereby marriage will be based on compatibility. According to Shaw such egalitarian unions between men and women will enhance the evolutionary process. He sees in them the hope for the creation of the Superman. Under such conditions, marriage and motherhood will empower woman rather than disable her. Furthermore Socialism will serve Creative Evolution because it will give both sexes the opportunity to work. Shaw the evolutionist believed that each one must be an active participant in the progressive scheme.

By contrast to Socialism which enhances human progress through the establishment of equality, Capitalism, vehemently attacked in *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* stands as an obstacle to Creative Evolution. It hampers sexual selection through its objectification of women and the maintenance of class and gender inequalities. Its promotion of prostitution delays biological evolution as it has a negative influence on eugenic breeding. In The *Revolutionist Handbook,* Shaw asserts that "property will destroy society unless society destroys it" (p. 217) arguing for the necessity of dismantling the oppressive capitalist system. Elsewhere he establishes a parallel between biology and politics through his comparison of the anarchy and destructiveness of Capitalism with that of Darwinism. His aim was to change such unfavorable conditions and to adjust the environment to the requirements of biological progress. His defence of woman's rights and exposure of the exploitative practices of Capitalism in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* mark a major step towards the fulfilment of that aim.

The remarkable development of Shaw's progressive vision, clearly visible in *Man and Superman*, reveals new preoccupations in Shaw's socialistic reformism. By this time, Shaw the Fabian had formulated his specific socialist vision. He underscored the fact that even if Socialism was established, it could not be valid and permanent without an improvement in human nature itself. Fifteen years after the publication of *Man and Superman,* the dramatist still defended the same view. He argued in *Socialism and Culture* that "Socialism will be pioneered by men of religious conviction who believe in Creative Evolution, who feel that man has undergone an evolution which raised him from a speck of protoplasm to the comparatively wonderful thing he is at present, and that the same fire that has brought him all that distance can carry him still further until he attains a power and wisdom which we should now call divine."[26] So biological progress will set the tune for social political and economical reforms and make them more effective. In fact, the playwright was disillusioned with the failure of Socialism to reach the masses. He believed

that progress in the human race would ensure the large popularity he thought the system deserved. Accordingly, to serve the Life Force, biological evolution and institutional progress should be complementary to one another and mutually supportive. Shaw underscores the principal and efficient role woman is entitled to play at both levels of progress when equality rules over society. His preoccupation with the woman question was part and parcel of his reformist mission both as a Fabian Socialist and Creative Evolutionist.

In *Man and Superman* Shaw opened new vistas for the feminist debate. Unlike *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* which revolves around the denunciation of woman's economic and sexual oppression and defence of her social, educational and professional rights, issues frequently discussed by the *fin-de-siècle* feminist activists, this play is centred on the celebration of woman's vitalist biological function and its contribution to the progress of humanity as a whole. *Man and Superman* proves that Shaw was ahead of his time. His new feminist argument enriched the early 20th century feminist debate and raised it to a higher level giving it a universal dimension. Even the claim for woman's political rights in this play which came as a support to the Suffragette's campaign is presented in a new way. Shaw's strategy was different from that of women political activists and perhaps more effective. The comparison between *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman* shows that the playwright discusses some issues from different perspectives such as the ideology of the separate spheres, marriage and motherhood. The subversion of the patriarchal ideology of separate spheres is one of the major themes of both plays. However it is presented in different forms. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Vivie the new woman, breaks the bounds of domestic seclusion and plays an active role in the public sphere. In her view, marriage and motherhood are oppressive and restrictive by contrast to work and intellectual pursuits, through which she seeks independence and emancipation. Unlike her, Ann Whitefield the acquisitive heroine of *Man and Superman* perceives the marital and

maternal roles as a source of power. She is quite conscious of the female's superiority and ability to control males. Hence, in this play, Shaw subverts the phallocentric ideology of separate spheres in two ways. First, through his challenging of the patriarchal notion that Woman's domestic role is inferior to man's public role. Second, through his rejection of woman's domestic seclusion and his arguing that woman is free to choose her function in life. She can be a wife and a mother, a worker or both. Apart from this remarkable development of Shaw's feminist thought, the comparison between the two plays reveals a clear consistency in various feminist arguments such as the exposure of patriarchal hypocrisy, the repudiation of conventional morality, romance and idealism and the denunciation of conventional marriage.

Thus this feminist analysis of *Man and Superman* reveals that by contrast to earlier ando-centric evolutionary theory mainly Darwin's, his own creed of Creative Evolution is characterized by its feminist implications. It is founded on Gynoecocentrism. In Shaw's view, woman's power stems from the supremacy of her natural position. It is she who plays the primal and fundamental role in reproduction and not man. Driven by her feminine creative instincts and evolutionary impulse, she takes the initiative in sexual selection. It is her mission to select the fittest father for the Superman. The dramatist therefore defends woman's sexual rights and repudiates the oppressive institutions of patriarchal family and bourgeois marriage.

The mythic aspect of the play reinforces the playwright's feminist arguments. Don Juan who embodies the Shavian Superman is pursued by Donna Anna for an evolutionary purpose. He is, as Shaw writes in the 'Epistle Dedicatory': "no longer victor in the duel of sex" (P. 14). The play provides an unconventional approach to the issue of sexual attraction as it strips the Don Juan legend of its romantic illusions and phallocentrist bias. The dramatist sheds light on the political aspect of the sex question by underlying the

political need for the Superman. His discussion of this issue entails an implicit advocacy of woman's political rights.

Shaw's feminist stance is reflected not just in terms of the issues he discusses but in terms of his portrayal of the female character, his use of language, and imagery as well. Anne Whitefield (the Shavian vital woman) plays an active and efficient role in the play. She is endowed with a set of qualities. She incarnates the mysterious feminine power which Shaw believes is the driving force behind Creative Evolution. The language both Anne and Violet employ subverts patriarchal discourse. It marks a strong and influential female presence in the play. The analysis of the playwright's use of imagery explains further the feminist implications of his Creative Evolutionist Theory. Such images underscore the biological vitality of the female and the power of her creative energy, central to biological progress.

Man and Superman reflects a clear development in Shaw's feminist thinking. In it he centred his feminist discussion on the celebration of woman's natural superiority over man more than on the defence of her equal rights with him as he did in earlier plays mainly *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Furthermore, in this work he addressed some issues from new perspective such marriage, motherhood and the Capitalist ideology of separate spheres for men and women. The study of this play also highlights consistency in a number of Shavian feminist arguments mainly the repudiation of Romance, Idealism and the patriarchal code of morality. Indeed, by the early twentieth century, Shaw who believed that 'ultimately, power resides in the female'[27] reshaped his reformist scheme and readapted it to his new feminist vision. Therefore, he asserts in *Man and Superman* that since woman plays the major role in Creative Evolution, her emancipation is indispensible to the enhancement of the progress of the human race.

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V
Pygmalion: A Socialist Feminist Reading

This chapter provides a socialist feminist analysis of *Pygmalion*, one of the most popular Shavian works, published in 1912 and performed all over Europe and North America before its first staging in London at His Majesty's Theatre , in April 1914. Shaw's sense of fun and humour, brilliantly expressed in this comedy, appealed to the popular taste of this time. The theatre was an important medium through which he transmitted to the masses his main preoccupations as a feminist and a socialist playwright highly interested in reform and progress. The playwright offers a comprehensive analysis of the woman question through his account of Eliza's metamorphosis and her relation to her Pygmalion, Professor Higgins. An account in which he reshapes the Pygmalion myth and adapts it to his feminist convictions. The preface to *Pygmalion* is of a little importance. It is in fact quite useless, at least in the understanding of the play's feminist implications. By contrast, the sequel is complementary to the dramatic text and indispensible for its feminist import.

The main aim of this study is to explore Shaw's socialist feminist vision through the analysis of the play's major constituent elements. The chapter will begin with a thematic study. This part will focus on the discussion of a number of issues including Eliza's metamorphosis, the repudiation of romance, and the reversal of the Pygmalion myth. The concepts of alienation and consciousness-raising, in addition to the notion of woman's social and psychological development which are central to Socialist Feminist Theory, will be instrumental in the exploration of such themes. The second part will be devoted to the analysis of the female character and its language usage. The chapter will conclude with a brief comparison of *Pygmalion* with both *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman*. In this final part, I will assess the development of the playwright's feminist stance.

1. Eliza's Metamorphosis

Pygmalion portrays in details the experience of the common flower girl Eliza Doolittle who, living in a class-based society, suffers from a high sense of alienation as daughter, worker and pupil. Eliza was born in Lissen Grove in the notorious London East End, which as she says: "was not fit for a pig to live in".[1] She was brought up in a gutter. Her dirty and shabby clothes reflect her deplorable condition. Shaw introduces her as being

> "not at all a romantic figure. She is perhaps eighteen perhaps twenty, hardly older. She wears a little sailor hat of a black straw that has long been exposed to the dust and soot of London and has seldom if ever been brushed. Her hair needs washing, rather badly. Its mousy colour can hardly be natural. She wears a black shoddy coat that reaches nearly to her knees and is shaped to her waist. She has a brown skirt with a coarse apron. Her boots are much the worse for wear. She is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be but compared to the ladies, she is very dirty. Her features are no worse than theirs, but their conditions leave something to be desired and she needs the services of a dentist" (Act I, p. 8.9).

Work which is supposed to bring people a sense of self-fulfilment and happiness is for this lower-class girl a source of bewilderment and dehumanisation. She spends long hours in the streets beseeching people to buy flowers from her. She is often scorned and ill-treated. Even her friends "ridicule [her] when they have the chance" (Act II, p. 47). Her relation with her father is no less conflicting. He is a "disgrace to [her]" (Act II, p. 48). When he learned that she moved in to Higgins's house, he paid Higgins a visit and proposed to sell her to him for five pounds since " as a daughter, she is not worth her keep" (Act II, p. 43). He asserted that if the Professor's intentions were not honorable, he would ask fifty. Thereby, Eliza has no sense of belonging neither in her family, nor among her fellow workers.

In this play, language is an important social marker which, on the one hand manifests Eliza's low education and hence lack of financial security, and on the other hand perpetuates her social dislocation. The Lissen Grove lingo which the girl speaks does not just indicate her class background; it even imprisons her within the confines of poverty since it stands as an obstacle to her social and economic advancement; as Professor

Higgins remarks: “Her kerbstone English will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days” (Act I, p. 16). Through his exploration of this theme, Shaw underscores the fact that in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, in the hierarchical English society, language was “the deepest gulf that separate[ed] class from class and soul from soul” (Act III, p. 64). Furthermore, he notes society’s social prejudice against the Cockney slang. Eliza is often ridiculed and insulted by her teacher who embodies the society’s elite. For him “a woman who utters such depressive and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere, no right to live […] she incarnates insult to the English language” (Act I, p. 16). Reports on the teachings of English in elementary school published in 1909 stated that “Most dialects have their own distinctive charms and historical interest; but cockneyism seems to have no redeeming features, and need only to be heard, to be condemned” [2]. The English scholar and phonetician, Henry Sweet (1845-1912) pointed at this prejudice by asserting that the Cockney slang seemed very ugly to educated people. It would be important to note that in many instances of the play, Shaw draws a parallel between Sweet and Higgins. The two Henries are important phoneticians; both often turned back on a group of speakers and jotted down phonetic records of their conversations and usually sent post cards written in their patent short hands.

The ill-mannered Professor Higgins abuses his pupil in different ways. He makes fun of her, threatens and insults her with many names calling her for instance “squashed cabbage leaf” (p. 16), “silly girl” (p. 12) and “unfortunate animal” (p. 49). He considers that the girl has no feelings that he needs not bother about her. The proper way to treat her is to give her orders since “she is incapable of understanding anything” (Act I, p. 31). More alienating is Eliza’s relation to herself, which is undoubtedly affected by all these oppressive ties and miserable conditions. Throughout the play, she keeps repeating “I’m a good girl, I am”, a statement which reflects her lack of self-confidence and fear of being accused of dishonesty and unchastity. Even when she tries to defy Higgins, she does this in

a feeble way. Her low self-esteem is furthermore manifested in her rejection of her own image, of her own body. In the second act, while taking a bath, she hangs a towel over the looking glass.

The objectified and bewildered Eliza decides to effect a change in her life so as to become a lady in a flower shop. Encouraged by Colonel Pickering who proposes to cover the expenses of the experiment, Higgins decides to turn the common flower girl into a duchess. He promises to win his bet in three months if the girl has a good ear and a quick tongue. Such a transformation requires a series of changes of appearance, manners and language. Eliza needs first a cleansing and re-clothing. Higgins orders his housekeeper to give her a bath and to burn all her clothes and bring her new ones. The filthy Eliza of the first act appears in the second act as " a dainty and exquisitely clean young Japanese lady in a simple blue cotton kimono printed cunningly with small white jasmine blossoms" (Act II, p. 46). She is so good-looking that she impresses Higgins, Pickering and even her father who ironically gets out of her way "deferentially and apologises: Beg pardon, Miss" (Act II, p. 46). Later on in the embassy party, she appears dressed in a more fashionable way: "she is in opera cloak, evening dress, diamonds, fan, flowers and all accessories" (Act III, p. 67).

Eliza's outer change is followed by an improvement in her pronunciation and manners. After receiving an intensive linguistic training from Higgins, the Cockney flower girl learns to speak in a refined way and beautiful tones: "she is getting on like a horse on fire" (Act III, p.53). When meeting Mrs. Higgins, she speaks to her "with pedantic correctness of pronunciation" (Act III, p. 57). And when she attends the grand reception, her beautiful gravity of speech fascinates her hostess who considers that "she speaks English perfectly" (Act III, p. 70). In parallel with this linguistic tutoring, Eliza is educated in the behavioural norms of the English upper classes. Her manners are refined. She walks

with “fashionable air” and seats down gracefully. Yet, Eliza owes this improvement in her manners more to Pickering than to Higgins, for while the latter treats her in a considerate and respectful manner calling her Miss Doolittle as if she were a true lady, the former always humiliates her. In Act one for instance, Higgins thunders when ordering her to have a seat whereas Pickering courteously invites her to do so, considerately placing the chair in the convenient position. Mrs. Pearce the housekeeper, too contributes to the transformation of Eliza’s appearance and manners. Such a change has been so great that the lower class girl fascinates the fashionable ladies at the ambassador’s party: “They stop talking to look at her, admiring her dress, her jewels, and her strangely attractive self. Some of the younger ones at the back stand on their chairs to see” (Act III, p. 69). The interpreter Nepommuck asserts that her name cannot be Doolittle because Doolittle is an English name and she is not English: “she is Hungarian and of royal blood” (Act III, p. 70). Thanks to her physical, behavioural and linguistic advancement, the marginalised Eliza climbs one by one the social rungs. She becomes a ‘duchess” who, accordingly, wins people’s respect and admiration.

Eliza’s metamorphosis conveys Shaw’s outspoken social satire. It reflects his feminist socialist belief in the innate equality of individuals and the superficiality of class disparities. Twenty years before *Pygmalion*, George Gissing expressed the largely held belief in the impossibility of social mobility. He wrote:

> The London work girl is rarely capable of raising herself, or being raised, to a place in life above that to which she was born; she cannot learn how to stand and sit and move like a woman bred to refinement, any more than she can fashion her tongue to graceful speech.(2).

Eliza’s experience proves this assumption wrong; an assumption which entails not just class but gender bias as well. The Cockney flower girl easily surmounts class barriers, becoming a fashionable lady. She shows that social mobility can be as simple as role playing. In the preface to the play, Shaw asserts that such a transformation of “the flower

girl Galatea by the phonetician Pygmalion is neither impossible nor uncommon" (p. 5). Though the change in his life has been more accidental than that attained by his daughter, Alfred too occupies a new position in society as a millionaire. The dustman "clad in the costume of his profession, including a hat with a back brim covering his neck and shoulders" (Act II, p. 39) turns into a gentleman:

> He is resplendently dressed as for a fashionable wedding, and might, in fact, be the bridegroom. A flower in his buttonhole, a dazzling silk hat, and patent leather shoes complete the effect (Act VI, p. 84).

Indeed Shaw underscores the artificiality of social markers which generate class inequalities. He launches a fierce attack on the English ideals of gentility and ladyhood.

The play exposes the hypocrisy of the English middle and upper classes and the shallowness of their value system. Their notions of respectability and social acceptability seem to be based on such superficial markers as appearance and speech. It is quite ironical that once they improved their extrinsic conditions, both Eliza and her father become integrated into the fashionable London society. In the fourth act, Doolittle is addressed as a gentleman. Both Mrs. Higgins and Colonel Pickering accept his invitation and prepare themselves to attend his wedding. He is no longer a blackguard. Similarly, The Eynsford Hill too changed their opinion about Eliza at Mrs. Higgins's. While in the first act Eynsford Hill pitied the Flower Girl and her snobbish daughter treated her in a domineering way, in the third act, this very girl equipped with a new set of social markers fascinates then. Clara "is devouring her with her eyes" (Act III, p. 57). She is so impressed that she considers Eliza's utterance "not bloody likely" (Act III, p. 60) as a part of the latest slang (the new small talk). The transformation of the dustman into an ethics lecturer by the end of the play is undoubtedly a scoffing scorn on middle class ideals and prejudices.

Both father and daughter denounce a class system thoroughly based on surface appearances. Eliza reproaches Higgins; "why did you take my independence from me, why did I give it up? I'm a slave now for all my fine clothes" (Act VI, p. 100). Doolittle likewise considers Higgins as the agent of his ill-luck: "you've ruined me, destroyed my happiness. Tied me up and delivered me into the hands of middle class morality" (Act V, p. 86), " I was happy, I was free" (Act V, p. 87). However, in contrast to her father, who remains prisoner to middle class ethos, Eliza grows conscious that the change in her life must not stop at this stage. Though her fine clothes, refined manners and correct pronunciation have improved her social standing, she is still in the grip of patriarchal dominance. The scene following the Embassy party demonstrates that Higgins' domineering treatment of Eliza continues though she has won his bet. After their return, he speaks solely about his own success, giving her no word of credit or praise. He does not even notice her presence. So as to belittle her achievement, he describes the whole experience as "a silly notion, a bore" (p. 73), "simple purgatory" (p. 74). In a scene that marks the beginning of a climatic confrontation between the teacher and his pupil, Eliza "snatches up Higgins's slippers and hurls them at him one after the other with all her force" (Act IV, pp. 74-75). This reaction shows Eliza's success in shaking off her fears and sense of belittlement. She eventually decides to leave Higgins's home: "she makes for the door. Every movement expresses her furious resolution" (Act VI, p. 80).

By this stage, Eliza has reached a high sense of self-awareness. She realises the causes of her alienation and therefore takes the first step towards self-fulfilment and emancipation. In the final act, her confrontation with Higgins at his mother's home manifests a great character development. She is more resolute, confident and self-possessed. She expresses her gratitude for Pickering since "[she] owes so much to [him]" (Act V, p. 91). She repudiates Higgins's influence on her and criticizes his character and teaching methods. In contrast to the inconsiderate Higgins, it is Pickering who sets for her

the real example of respectability and self-restraint because he treats her as an equal; as she says:

> "It was from you that I learnt really nice manners; and that is what makes one a lady, isn't it? You see it was so very difficult for me with the example of Professor Higgins always before me. I was brought up to be just like him, unable to control myself, and using bad language on the slightest provocation. And I should never have known that ladies and gentleman didn't behave like that if you hadn't been there (Act V, p. 92).

Many things Pickering does spontaneously increase Eliza's self-respect. He addresses her as "Miss Doolittle", and treats her in a gentle way. Eliza assumes that "apart from the things anyone picks up (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 is treated" (Act V, p. 93). Her personality has undoubtedly evolved enough to make such an intelligent claim. By the end of the play, Eliza becomes an independent woman able to perceive Higgins as an equal. She is possessed with a will to change. She confronts Higgins defiantly: "I won't be passed over, I can do without you. Don't think I can't" (Act V, p. 94). And she vehemently tells him that she will marry Freddy and will support him by teaching phonetics, offering herself as an assistant to his rival Nepommuck. This decision shakes his professional pride and leads him to lose his self-control, "he lays his hand on her" (Act V, p. 103). As Milton Crane remarks: "This loss of self-control on Higgins's part is an indication that his confusion is complete and therefore Galatea has subdued Pygmalion"[3]. His resorting to physical abuse is an indication of defeat, a reaction of frustrated rage resulting from the failure to dominate her.

Accordingly, Eliza's metamorphosis transcends the merely external social markers to an inner re-creation. It leads to (the birth of an independent spirit. While the first three acts of the play trace the change in her appearance, manners and language, the last two acts focus on a deeper character development. Higgins offers Eliza only outward signs of

respectability, an artificial transformation. Eric Bentley describes the Higgins/Eliza relationship in terms of a doll-maker and a doll. He says that:

> Higgins tries to make of Eliza a mechanical doll in the role of a duchess. Or rather he tries to make from one kind of doll –a flower girl who cannot afford the luxury of being human–another kind of girl– a duchess to whom manners are an adequate substitute for morals. [4]

Shaw himself referred to this relation in the play when Mrs. Higgins accused her son and Pickering of being "a pretty pair of babies, playing with their live doll" (Act III, p. 63). Shaw intentionally omitted the scene of the embassy party describing it only in his stage directions, making it clear that his play is not about changing appearances. If it had been so, then the last two acts would have been useless. In fact, it is in these two acts that Shaw dramatizes his main concern as a playwright, "the struggle between human vitality and the artificial system of morality"[5]. Out of the doll's house, Eliza comes alive, independent of all oppressive relations. The genuine transformation in her life results in the increase of self-esteem; it is the outcome of her inner revolution against her sense of alienation.

The conflict between the mechanical and the vital aspect of life in fact dominates the whole play. In the opening scene, the market and the church, money and flowers stand for these two aspects. Higgins's laboratory loaded with scientific equipment, his notebook in which he reduces people to mere sounds and even the slippers thrown in his face all reflect the mechanistic and artificial life that Eliza fiercefully rejects. Clearly, *Pygmalion* is centred on the theme of identity construction. As Jean Reynolds remarks: "Shaw attacked the popular belief that every man possesses a stable and unchanging essence or self"[6]. Reading the play from a feminist perspective, it is apparent that through Eliza's experience, the playwright invites oppressed women to effect a change in their lives. Such a process of rebirth, as he explains, requires an inner much more than an outer development. In other words, it requires feminist-consciousness raising more than social mobility.

2. Shaw's Subversion of Romance

Part of the feminist implications of the story of Eliza's metamorphosis lays in its subversion of the Romantic genre which generally consolidated patriarchal discourse. After the play's publication and first staging in Berlin, many critics and audiences expressed their dissatisfaction with its inconclusive and unromantic ending. During the play's first performance in London on 11 April 1914, the actor-manager Sir Herbert Beerbohmtree who played the part of Higgins threw flowers from the balcony to the departing Eliza just before the final curtain, in an attempt to meet such expectations of an emotional attachment between Pygmalion and his duchess. During the play's first American tour, Eliza returns in the final scene to ask Higgins 'what size?' Shaw strongly denounced such sentimentalization of his play. The sequel he added to the play in 1916 expressed his protest against such conventional preconceptions and romantic falsifications. In it he wrote: " The rest of the story need not be shown in action, and indeed, would hardly need telling if our imaginations were not so enfeebled by their lazy dependence on the ready-mades and reach-me-downs of the ragshop in which Romance keeps its stock of "happy endings" to misfit all stories" (p. 105). Furthermore, he explains that his play is subtitled *A Romance in Five Acts* only because the tranfiguration it records, is quite-fairy like. Eliza is like Cinderella turned lady.

As far as the expected romantic union between Eliza and Higgins is concerned, many details in the play adumbrate its impossibility, including the way in which the two characters are presented. Eliza is "not at all a romantic figure" (Act I, p. 7) and Higgins is "of the energetic, scientific type, heartly even violently interested in everything that can be studied as a scientific subject, careless about himself and other people including their feelings" (Act I, p. 21). Besides, the two address one another in a totally unsentimental way. Higgins calls his duchess "ungrateful wicked girl" (p. 28), "idiot" (p. 104), and "little

fool" (p. 104), while she in return refers to him as "unmanly coward" (p.15) and "selfish brute" (p. 74).

Eliza doesn't marry her Pygmalion because "he has not the makings of the married man in him" (p. 107). He is a confirmed old bachelor and likely to remain so. For him, Eliza is not an object of sexual desire. In fact, if she had been so, then he would have "purchased" a wife and thereby would have been as unscrupulous as her father. His forceful objection to her marriage with Freddy is only a manifestation of his possessive nature. She is for him a mere property which he doesn't want to lose. Indeed, Higgins feels no sexual attraction to any young woman; even the best looking ones "might be blocks of wood" (Act II, p. 36) for him. In a conversation with his friend Pickering in the second act, Higgins explains his relation to the other sex.

> PICKERING: Excuse the straight question, Higgins. Are you a man of good character where women are concerned?
> HIGGINS: [*moodily*] Have you ever met a man of good character where women are concerned?
> PICKERING: Yes, very frequently.
> HIGGINS: [*dogmatically lifting himself on his hands to the level of the piano,* and *sitting on it with a bounce*] Well, … 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.
> PICKERING: At what, for example?
> HIGGINS: [*coming off the piano restlessly*] Oh, Lord knows! I suppose the woman wants to live her own life; and the man wants to live his; and each tries to drag the other on to the wrong track. One wants to go north and the other south; and the result is that both have to go east, though they both hate the east wind (Act II, p. 35).

Perhaps Higgins's escape from emotional and sexual partnership and his resistance to domesticity reflect on the one hand "Pygmalion's" constant attempt to preserve his divine-like power of dominance which can be weakened by affectionate and sexual attachment. They reflect on the other hand, the artist's determination to protect his creative independence.

Apart from these probabilities, Shaw reveals in the sequel what he calls “the clue to Higgins’s inveterate old-bachelordom” (p. 106). It is his excessive admiration and attachment to his mother who sets a standard for him against which very few women can struggle. Such a remarkable woman has effected a disengagement of her son’s passion for art from his sexual impulse, a quality that distinguishes him from other common men who generally, as Shaw remarks, consider all passions as modes of sex. Therefore, even if this parental fascination had not existed, Higgins would still have been indifferent to women, since his sexual and emotional interests are secondary to his absorbing passion for Milton and the universal alphabet. Eliza is instinctively aware that she can never get her complete grip of this old bachelor, since she can come neither “between him and his mother, the first necessity of the married woman” (p. 107), nor between him and his profession.

Even if it were possible, a marriage between Eliza and Higgins would be a misalliance. The play’s ending is the most fitting one because “Pygmalion" is incapable of perceiving the other as an equal. Even when he invites her to return to his home, Higgins tells Eliza that he will keep treating her in the same domineering way. Higgins: “If you come back, I shall treat you just as I have always treated you, I can’t change my nature. I don’t intend to change my manners” (Act V, p. 96.) Eliza will always be for him no more than a servant. She must break free from him otherwise “her little drama must be spoiled’ (p. 105). And as a consequence, the play’s feminist strength would be undermined. Shaw insists on the irrelevance of a romantic attachment between the two because “the dramatic impact of Eliza’s story comes from her emerging victorious in the struggle to free herself.”[8] When she decides not to marry Higgins, she announces a strong determination to free herself from his domineering superiority. This determination marks her emancipation from an alienating status. Though Eliza “has secret, mischievous moments in which she could get Higgins alone on a desert island, away from all ties and with nobody else in the world to consider, and just drag him off his pedestal and see him making love like any

common man" (p. 107) her feminine instinct and feminist consciousness lead her to distinguish between her daily life and the life of dreams and fancies. She is aware that her Pygmalion's relation to her is "too godlike to be altogether agreeable" (p. 118) Shaw ends *Pygmalion* with an ultimate slap in the face of the conventions of his audience. Instead of the excepted romantic marriage, the characters are invited to another wedding. It is that of Alfred Doolittle. Yet Eliza too should marry, for "if Higgins was a predestined old bachelor, she was certainly not a predestined old maid" (p. 107); and even if she didn't marry during the play, the sequel informs us that this was among the projects she was to realize later. Guided by her instinct in this matter, she chooses Freddy with whom she can find the emotional and sexual satisfaction she was looking for. Besides, unlike Higgins, Freddy treats her as an equal, inspite of his advantage of social standing. Even in the sequel, Shaw continues his frustration of all attempts to sentimentalize Eliza's story. He states that the life of the new couple is not so romantic because it is full of economic difficulties. Had Colonel Pickering not given Eliza a wedding present of £500, she and her husband would have spent a penniless honey-moon. Even when they opened a flower shop, it didn't pay for a long time because they didn't know how to keep it. After long hard times, at last the business began to prosper. Eliza's marriage to Freddy is part of her pursuit of happiness and self-realization. It subverts the patriarchal binary opposition of the dominant and economically superior male versus the submissive and dependent female.

Shaw's *Pygmalion* has been adapted in different film versions and even in a musical comedy. All adaptations present a romanticized ending, a reconciliation between Higgins and Eliza. The first movie appeared in Germany in 1935. It was followed by a Dutch one in 1937. But the most famous and successful filmed version was the one produced by Gabriel Pascal in 1938. It won the Volpy cup at the Venus film festival and two Academy awards, one ironically for Shaw. Dissatisfied with the film's ending, Shaw referred to the award as "an insult"[9] Pascal's version concludes with a scene in which Higgins leaves his

mother's flat and returns to his laboratory. He accidentally turns on his recording device; it has Eliza's voice saying "I washed my face and hands before I came, I did" when he turns off the recording, the voice continues. Eliza is at the door. He looks at her but doesn't rise from his seat, then turns his back to her, pulls his hat forward over his face and asks "Eliza, where the devil are my slippers ?" and the film ends. Many latter stagings of the play incorporated this ending.

Similarly, in the musical *My Fair Lady* by Alan Jay Lerner and Fredrick Loewe (1956) and the subsequent film musical *My Fair Lady* (1964), Eliza returns to Higgins. The musical ends with a romantic scene. Higgins walks in the streets of London in search of his lost Eliza, then returns home to find her waiting for him. The two lovers stare at one another with warm affection. Freddy has vanished. The musical's producers assumed that it was indispensable to replace the ending of Shaw's *Pygmalion* by a happier and more sentimental one so as to satisfy the romantic expectations of a musical comedy audience. Besides, in the preface to the text of *My Fair Lady*, Lerner stated that "he was not convinced that Eliza should end up with Freddy"[10] From a feminist view point, it is clear that the ending of Pascal's film is more disappointing than that of the musical for while in the latter Higgins welcomes Eliza as his beloved, in the former, she is still no more than a servant to him.

Undoubtedly, the ending of Shaw's *Pygmalion* is the most suitable conclusion to the story of Eliza Doolittle who eventually evolves into a self-possessed and independent woman "free to pick and choose" (p. 106). By contrast to other versions which depict her as a sentimental, feeble girl who surrenders to her Pygmalion, in the Shavian version, she has grown so powerful and confident as to decide not to live under Higgins's thumb. Shaw's *Romance in Five Acts* in fact questions the romance genre in all possible ways. Such devices, mainly the subversion of the romantic ending are not as some critics,

directors and audiences thought "an arbitrary bit of sarcasm, appended to the play merely for spiteful humor"[11]; they are part and parcel of Shaw's feminist project. The playwright was troubled, not just with the audience's conformist views and conventional expectations, which stand as an obstacle to free and original thinking, but objected to the way in which both Sir Herbert BeerbohmTree and Patrick Campbell acted the parts of Higgins and Eliza as well. This is for instance part of his instructions to Campbell as a director 'when Eliza emancipates herself-when Galatea comes to life-she must not relapse, she must retain her pride and triumph to the end. When Higgins takes your arm on consort battleship' you must instantly throw him off with implacable pride.'[12] Shaw wanted the actress to act in a defiant way so as to convey Eliza's newly acquired strength of character.

3. Shaw's Reversal of the Pygmalion Myth: A Feminist Version

Besides his subversion of romance, the dramatist used another strategy so as to achieve his feminist end. It is the reshaping of a myth that contributed to the patriarchal literary tradition. Shaw's play is based on Ovid's account of the Pygmalion myth which appeared in his *Metamsorphoses*, an epic poem written between AD 2 and AD 8. It is about 250 legends and myths. The theme of metamorphose gives a kind of unity to such diverse stories. The Pygmalion myth in the Ovidian version presents two contrasting metamorphoses. On the one hand, a group of women are turned into stones and; on the other hand, an ivory statue is turned into a real woman. The Cyprian women deny the divinity of Venus, the goddess of love. They spent their days in wickedness and shame. Pygmalion, a famous sculptor and a devoted worshipper of Venus, feels disgusted "by the greatness of vice which nature had put in the female mind. So he remained for a long time unmarried, with no companion to share his bed."[13] He escapes this unpleasant reality and seeks refuge in art and illusions. He sculpts the statue of an outstandingly beautiful woman from snowy ivory. Pygmalion idealizes his masterpiece. He is fired with love; "he kisses and feels kissed in return, he talks and embraces, and believes that the limbs yield to the

touch of his fingers and fears to bruise her when he presses them. He addresses it with fond words of love and brings it gifts pleasing to girls."[13] Venus takes two important decisions: first, to punish the debased women and second, to reward the faithful sculptor. She therefore transforms the fallen women into stones and responds to Pygmalion's request, miraculously animating his statue. The ivory becomes a real girl of flesh and blood. Pygmalion marries this ideally beautiful and innocent woman. Then, "Pathos is born, child of a perfect love."[14]

Ovid's account of the myth reveals an outspoken patriarchal bias. The poet reinforces the conventional phallocentric dichotomy of whore versus angel, the fallen woman versus Pygmalion's wife. He places woman on the margin. She is completely silenced. In the first metamorphosis, the stereotyped fallen women become mere stones. In the second metamorphosis, the woman is presented as a statue and even when she becomes alive, her status remains the same. She is as powerless as before. Whether a statue or a real woman, she exists only to satisfy Pygmalion's desires. He is the creator and the dominant partner whereas she is no more to him than an object of sexual interest. *Pygmalion* marks Shaw's repudiation of the Ovidian phallocentric account of the myth. The playwright endows his own version with interesting feminist views. As I explained earlier, his Galatea (Eliza Doolittle) achieves an independent status. She voices her thoughts and feelings, makes choices and makes decisions. But apart from this empowerment of the female character, the demeaning of Pygmalion's ultimate superiority, the point on which I shall focus in this part is another important strategy through which Shaw subverts the original myth. His goal is attained through the employment of several devices including the infulflement of Pygmalion's narcissistic enterprise, the dismantling of his god-like image and the ridicule of his creative power.

Indeed Pygmalion is a narcissistic figure. In the play, Professor Higgins is presented as a self-centered and arrogant man. He walks over every one. He magnifies his own character and knowledge and treats Eliza as "dirt under his feet" (Act I, p. 13). Higgins says to his mother: "You let her alone, mother. Let her speak for herself. You will jolly soon see whether she has an idea that I haven't put into her head or a word that I haven't put into her mouth. I tell you I have created this thing out of the squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden." (Act V, p. 92). [He] thinks that "he wasted the treasures of [his] Miltonic mind" (p. 100) "and [his] hard-owned knowledge and the treasure of [his] regard and intimacy" (p. 78) on her. He is completely self-absorbed, lives in a cloud of self-esteem. The recreation or the transformation of the female is in fact a narcissistic enterprise. In his search for a confirmatory self- image, Pygmalion chooses a woman "he can refashion after an idealized image of middle-class feminity."[15] She is generally a lower-class woman. The female is thus appropriatedly turned into a mere reflective surface for the masculine self, only a feminized other. Thereby, the creation of Galatea is a narcissistic self-referential act. Pygmalion's infatuation with his own creation marks his obsessive self-admiration. Higgins is fascinated by the duchess he has made out of the flower girl only because she reflects his creative power and artistic skill. She is a medium through which he can flaunt his own greatness.

In *Pygmalion*, however, the creation turns over her creator. She shakes his arrogance and betrays his narcissistic expectations. Eliza wants to be an independent self rather than a mere reflective other to the master Higgins. In act IV, the scene in which "Eliza takes a last look at herself in the glace and suddenly puts out her tongue at herself then leaves', (Act IV, p. 80) when she was about to leave Higgins' home, is very significant. Eliza mocks and repudiates the doll image that Higgins has created; she becomes aware that she is there only to fulfil his narcissistic enterprise.

Another way in which Shaw subverts the phallocentric ideology which dominates the Pygmalion myth is his deconstruction of Pygmalion's god-like image. Higgins is dragged off his pedestal. The playwright underscores his defect. He is abusive, narrow-minded and ill-mannered. He offends his mother's guests and "can't behave himself in church. He makes remarks out loud all the time on the clergyman's pronunciation." (Act V, p. 104). He is in fact quite child-like; i.e. "like a very impetuous baby" (Act I, p. 21), who needs constant control to keep him out of mischief. Higgins cannot do without others. He is dependent on his mother, his house-keeper and even on Eliza. After this latter left his home; he "can't find anything and [doesn't] know what appointments [he] has got." (Act IV, p. 84). Quite ironically, this Professor who spends his time and energy changing others is both incapable and unwilling of change himself. To use Shaw's term, he is incorrigible. He does not show any character development throughout the whole play. Higgins: "I can't change my nature, and I don't want to change my manners." (Act V, p. 96). This Shavian comic figure is certainly a parody of the idealistic image of Pygmalion which the myth presents.

The play entails a deliberate ridicule of Pygmalion's creative experiment. Higgins has turned Eliza to a mere mechanical doll or a robot. He has deprived her of her spontaneity and naturalness. At Mrs. Higgins's and in the grand reception, for instance, she acts to a set pattern. Higgins's creative capacities can produce no more than an artificial transformation which is, in the flower girl's view, "just like learning to dance in a fashionable way. There was nothing more than that it is." (Act V, p. 94). To effect a deeper and more striking change in the girl's character and thinking, Higgins needs the assistance of his friend Pickering and of his housekeeper Mrs. Pearce. The two can be regarded as real Pygmalions. Actually, the label suits the Colonel more than it does Mrs. Pearce and even more than it does Higgins himself since Pickering's influence on Eliza's personality is far greater and more effective than that of the Professor and the housekeeper.

But what about Eliza's role in her own metamorphosis? Of course, this is an important point in the play. While the myth pictures the female as a totally passive and submissive character, Shaw's play empowers her by highlighting such capacities and qualities of hers which are central to her character development. Throughout the play, Eliza demonstrates a set of qualities. She is ambitious, energetic, practical, resolute and possessed with a strong will to change. She has a fine ear and a sharp tongue which allows her to learn good English in a short period of time. She is even able to play the piano "quite beautifully" (p. 64). Besides, such natural capacity, Eliza acquires self-respect and self-awareness which qualify her to become an emancipated woman.

Quite ironically, in the Shavian version of the myth, Pygmalion himself is in need of a metamorphosis. Both Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Pearce try to reform the Professor's character and to refine his manners. In the following speech, for instance, he is given a set of instructions by his house-keeper:

> Then 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 sauce-pan out of your hand on the clean table-cloth, it would be a better example to the girl you know you nearly choked yourself with a fish bone in the jam only last week. (Act II, p. 37).

Mrs. Higgins repeatedly rebukes her son for his lack of manners as well as his silly behaviour. She treats him as a little boy, constantly giving her orders: "No, stop fidgeting and take your hands out of your pockets. [*With a gesture of despair, he obeys*]." (Act III. p. 53). Therefore, Shaw uses all possible means to demean Pygmalion's dominant superiority and patriarchal power. Some critics overlooked the play's feminist intentions. William Irvine, for instance, states in his *Universe of George Bernard Shaw* that "*Pygmalion* is shameless art for art sake, a fairy tale told with relentless logic and realism."[16] The analysis of the play's semantic aspect and mythic framework leads us to a completely different

interpretation. The play updates and reshapes the Pygmalion myth so as to transmit Shaw's socialistic leanings and feminist sympathy.

4. Shaw's Feminist Representation of the Female Character

Besides his examination of a set of feminist issues, Shaw gives prominence to the female character. Regardless of their age, profession and social standing, women play dynamic and influential parts in *Pygmalion.* They are active agents in the Shavian Feminist enterprise.

i. Mrs. Higgins

Mrs. Higgins is a self-confident and emancipated woman, endowed with a high artistic sensibility and intellectual capacities. The walls of her room are decorated with 'a portrait of hers as she was when she defied fashion in her youth in one of the beautiful roffettian costumes, and few good oil paintings from exhibitions in the Grosvenor Gallery thirty years ago' (Act III, p. 51). Such decorations together with the view on the river Thames from the windows and the flowers in pots which fill the balcony reflect the liveliness of her feminine environment; which contrasts with her son's mechanical and austere environment. Mrs. Higgins is an uncommon remarkable mother. Higgins is fascinated with her intelligence, personal grace and dignity of character. Quite ironically, in her presence, this tyrannical master turns into a foolish child who needs her advice and directions to put him on the right track. This wise woman brings a sense of order and balance to the chaotic universe of the Professor and the Colonel both of whom she describes as 'infinitely stupid male creatures' (Act III, p. 65). She sympathises with Eliza. Mrs. Higgins asks her son 'on what terms does the girl live with you? What is to be done with her afterwards?' (Act III, p. 63). This outstanding woman and mother exerts a remarkable and influential presence.

ii. Mrs. Pearce

Mrs. Pearce's character is quite similar to that of Mrs. Higgins. She is likewise self-controlled, independent and "bossy". Besides running Higgins's house and taking care of his affairs, she tries to reform his ill-manners and rude behaviour. She objects specially to his inconsiderate treatment of Eliza.: 'Well the matter is, sir, that you can't take a girl up like that as if you were picking up a pebble on the beach… you don't know anything about her' (Act I, pp. 27-28) 'I want to know on what terms a girl is to be here and what is to become of her when you finished your teaching' (Act I, pp. 29-30). Mrs. Pearce shares the same worries with Mrs. Higgins and the two show more allegiance to Eliza than to Higgins. They manifest a strong feminine solidarity.

iii. Clara

Clara plays a minor role in the play. Unlike Eliza, Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Pearce, she is a shallow and a snobbish person, a prisoner of middle class artificialities and prejudices. She insists on imitating all that is up to date. For Higgins and his mother, she is a disagreeable person and for her own mother "a social failure" (p. 111). She is ridiculed and rejected by her acquaintances and by the painters and the novelists who fascinate her; yet she cannot charm them. She is in short "an utter failure, an ignorant, incompetent, pretentious, unwelcomed, penniless, useless, little snob" (p. 113). However, as a feminist, Shaw mobilizes Clara to produce a change in her life and to free her from the state of alienation imposed on her by such disqualifications. The Sequel gives an account of her metamorphoses. Clara "had a startling eye opener then on being certainly awakened to enthusiasm by a girl of her own age who dazzled her and produced in her a dashing desire to take her for a model" (p. 113). Eliza's transformation arose in Clara a determination for change. Her will was strengthened by the influence of H. G. Wells's novels on her character. The new-born Wellsian realizes her dreams. She meets her favorite novelist; one

who comes up to her expectations. She takes a job in an old furniture shop and starts to make new friends especially with persons who share her literary interests.

5. Shaw's Feminist Use of Language

In *Pygmalion*, the female character's language usage is part of Shaw's empowerment of the woman. Eliza, Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Pearce speak in a way that defies the patriarchal ideal of the passive submissive female, thus expressing their self-assertion and resolution. Both Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Pearce often use the imperative mode when addressing Higgins. Mrs. Pearce: "Resolutely you must be reasonable Mr. Higgins! Really you must! You can't walk over everybody like this!" (Act I, p. 27) "Nonsense sir, you mustn't talk like that to her" (Act I, p. 28). Mrs. Higgins: "Go home at once!" (Act III, p. 52) "Stop fidgeting and take your hands out of your pockets!" (Act III, p. 53). Though Eliza generally doesn't give Higgins orders, she too challenges his arrogance by speaking to him in a defiant mood and an assertive way, especially in the final act when she achieves self-fulfillment. Eliza: (*standing up and facing him*) "I won't be passed over', 'I can do without you, don't think I can't" (Act V, p. 97). In this act, Eliza enjoys a more visible presence. She occupies a larger space so as to voice her thoughts and feelings. It is quite remarkable that even in the first acts when she was still suffering from all kinds of alienation, many of her speeches indicate her sense of equality. A sense which at this stage she voices in a meek way as she was still lacking the required self-confidence and strength of character. THE FLOWER GIRL: [with a feeble defiance] "I have a right to be here same as you' (Act I, p. 16) 'I have my feelings the same as anyone else" (Act I, p. 32).

Eliza, Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Pearce go even further in their defiance of Higgins's domineering stance. They offend him by using insults. Mrs. PEARCE: "It is you that are wicked" (Act I, p. 28). Eliza: "Oh, you are a brute" (Act I, p. 29). Mrs. HIGGINS: "You silly boy" (Act III, p.62). Though Clara appears only in two scenes of the play and her

presence is not as effective as that of the other female characters, she too proves the false nature of the patriarchal assumption that woman's speech is powerless. In the first act for instance, she insults her brother: Clara "you selfish pig" (Act I, p. 08), and orders Mr. Higgins: "Don't dare speak to me" (Act I, p. 14). It is noticeable that in the scenes where the woman is off-stage, she is the subject of male conversation. In the second act for instance, Higgins and Pickering discuss their relation to Eliza and Higgins's relation to women. In another conversation, Alfred Doolittle joins them and they all speak about his daughter. Thereby, the woman is in the center in *Pygmalion* whether she is on or off stage. Her language usage manifests the effective role she plays and the strong personality she is endowed with.

6. An Assessment of Shaw's Feminist Vision: A Brief Comparison of *Pygmalion* with *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman*

In *Pygmalion*, as in *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman*, Shaw dramatises his egalitarian vision. He continues his denunciation of the capitalist system and the patriarchal class-based society it generates. However, by this time, he presents his social criticism in a highly satirical and comic way, a way quite different from that of his early problem plays such as *Mrs Warren's Profession.* This is mainly due to the fact that, by the second decade of the 20th century, his reputation as a feminist and socialist playwright was firmly established, his feminist and socialist views had gained larger popularity. Therefore, he felt more at ease to demonstrate his dramatic artistic skills. Thereby, instead of working more basically on the play's thematic aspect, as he did before, he skilfully employed figures of speech such as humour and irony which contributed to the literary dramatic merit of his work and widened its popularity. Apart from this technical development, *Pygmalion* marks a remarkable progress in the playwright's feminist thinking. While in *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman* Shaw envisioned the dismantling of capitalism and the establishment of socialism as the main solution to the

subjugation of woman, in this play, he explains that the feminist project, in fact, transcends such social, political and economic reforms. It implies that women must play a more central role in their own struggle against patriarchy. If women do not revolt against their inner sense of alienation, against the enslavement and the oppression that lie in the mind, all outer changes will not be as rewarding as they should be. Therefore, though the establishment of socialism paves the way for gender equality, it must be sustained by an increase in woman's self esteem and feminist consciousness.

Apart from their common emphasis on the superficiality of the class system which maintains gender inequalities, *Pygmalion* and *Man and Superman* share two other important points. First, both underscore woman's major role in sexual selection. Both Ann Whitefield and Eliza Doolittle are free to choose their mates. They are guided by their feminine instincts in this matter. They subvert patriarchal ideals and frustrate romantic expectations. Second, in both plays, Shaw reshapes and reverses a myth so as to make it serve his feminist purpose. However, whereas in *Man and Superman* he turns the libertine Don Juan into a feminist, a philosopher and a spokesman for the Life Force, in *Pygmalion*, he chooses instead to ridicule the hero of the myth and to deprive him from his fascinating power so as to make him inferior to the woman who appears in the original myth as his mere property. Furthermore, in the two Shavian versions of the myths, the woman is freed from sexual oppression. She gives the lie to the conventional image of the passive, romantic female i. e. 'the angel in the house'. The comparison between the three plays reveals further a persistence in a number of Shavian attitudes which serve the woman question including the repudiation of conventional morality, romance and idealism and the denunciation of bourgeois marriage.

Reading *Pygmalion* from a Socialist Feminist standpoint leads to the conclusion that Shaw has formulated a more comprehensive feminist vision through Eliza's

experience. He explains how woman's alienation is not monocausal. It is due to extrinsic as well as intrinsic factors. Thereby, to reach a state of emancipation and self-realization, woman needs not just an improvement in her social standing and educational qualifications but more importantly psychological development as well .i.e. an increase in self-esteem and self-awareness. Shaw believes in people's innate equality. He exposes the superficiality of the social markers and the class barriers which obscure this reality.

The play subverts the romance genre in various ways. This is part of the feminist project since it leads to the deflation of the conventional phallocentric image of the passive romantic heroine. Eliza is an active, practical woman who defiantly repudiates patriarchal ideals and romantic expectations. The play's mythic dimension contributes further to the importance of the feminist debate it raised. By utilizing different devices, Shaw rubbed the original *Pygmalion* off its patriarchal bias. His own version is endowed with a strong feminist thrust. Besides its exploration of different feminist issues, *Pygmalion* presents memorable and influential female characters, able to transgress the bounds of patriarchal dominance. Their subversive language usage is an important marker of their emancipated personalities. Though the play seems less provocative and less doctrinal than earlier Shavian works such as *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Man and Superman*, it contributes much to Shaw's feminist legacy.

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Conclusion

The main concern of this dissertation has been to shed light on Shaw's feminism by providing an assessment of his feminist vision. To fulfill this purpose, I have explored the dramatist's feminist stance in three plays: *Mrs. Warren's Profession, Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion*. Such works, which represent different periods in the playwright's dramatic career, have been analysed in the light of different feminist theories: Marxist Feminism, the Gynoecocentric Theory and Socialist Feminism respectively. This feminist study reveals the development, the consistency and the comprehensiveness of Shaw's feminist thinking. It underlies his long commitment to the cause of woman's emancipation and his major contribution to the growth of an English feminist drama which at long last, subverted the long- standing phallocentric theatrical tradition.

This study brings out the exhaustiveness of the Shavian feminist vision. The dramatist was able to discuss various aspects of woman's oppression and to defend gender equality in all fields. In the three plays, as this feminist study revealed, he sheds light on the economic basis of woman's oppression. He denounces the exploitative practices of the capitalist economy which engendered gender inequalities. Such a denunciation takes a more militant tone in *Mrs Warren's Profession*. The Victorian ideology of separate spheres for men and women and the ideology of the sexual division of labour alienated women through domestic seclusion and occupational segregation. Women were systematically disadvantaged. They were given the most low-paying and exploitative occupations. Unable to secure financial independence, many of them resorted to prostitution as the only means of survival as Mrs Warren and her sister did. Shaw reveals how capitalism encouraged and promoted the trafficking of women considering it a profitable international venture. Thereby, he brings out the hypocrisy of the Victorian patriarchal society and its ideological state apparatuses, mainly school and church, which maintained woman's oppression. The defence of woman's economic rights was an important issue in Shaw's feminist agenda. In his opinion, the sexes must enjoy equal income and must have the same access to different

job opportunities. This could be achieved, as he showed in his plays, through the dismantling of the capitalist economy and the establishment of socialism which, according to him, could secure woman's financial autonomy.

Apart from his advocacy of women's economic rights, Shaw was committed to the improvement of their social status. In the three plays, he discusses a number of social issues from a feminist perspective including marriage, celibacy, motherhood and education. Shaw repudiates the Victorian idealization of the patriarchal institution of marriage and family, and underscores the reification of women in the marriage market. As he explains, there was an urgent need to reform the institution of marriage which in his view was nothing but a form of legalised prostitution since it turned into a mere financial arrangement. In *Mrs Warren's Profession*, for instance, Vivie, the new woman, steps over such oppressive marital and family ties. She achieves self-realization as a single woman through intellectual pursuits rather than marriage and motherhood. The role of education in the emancipation of women is an important issue in *Pygmalion* as well, as I have explained in the fifth chapter. Thanks to her intellectual advancement, Eliza – the Flower Girl – was able to enhance her social standing. In the latter play as in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Shaw highlights the negative impact of the capitalist system on the family through his exploration of the father-daughter and the mother-daughter relationships respectively. Both Eliza and Vivie experience alienation and social dislocation in their own families.

In *Pygmalion*, and more daringly in *Man and Superman*, Shaw defends women's sexual rights. He presents an anti-patriarchal image of the marital relationship. In both plays, it is the woman who chooses her mate. It is she who takes the initiative in the sex relation as she is free from all social, economic and sexual restraints. Under such conditions, marriage becomes for the female a source of empowerment. *Man and Superman* celebrates the female body as the source of women's liberation. It underlies the active and fundamental role that the female plays in the reproductive function. The play

therefore subverts the patriarchal binary opposition of the passive female versus the active male and repudiates the phallocentric Victorian assumption of women's sexual frigility. As the fourth chapter marked, in this play, Shaw dramatizes the feminist view that woman's oppression is not caused by female biology as an end in itself but rather by man's control of that biology, i.e. by his control over the female body. Shaw believes that the ultimate female power lies in her reproductive role since it is the prime mover of Creative Evolution. It incarnates nature's evolutionary impulse towards perfection.

Furthermore, the analysis of *Man and Superman* has shown that the dramatist brings to light the political implications of the sex question. Here, he explains how free and egalitarian unions like that of Ann and Tanner can promote society's political advancement since they embody the hope for the creation of a superior human race, a race of supermen who will in turn play in Shaw's opinion a major role in political reforms and in the establishment of a democratic state. Indeed, Shaw indirectly defends women's political rights in this play by bringing out the important influence they can have on the political scene when emancipated from all the restrictions imposed on them by the phallocentric capitalist system.

As the study of *Pygmalion* has revealed, besides his advocacy of institutional reforms as a way to improve woman's status, Bernard Shaw highlights the psychological implications of patriarchal oppressive relations. Apart from its institutional basis, the sense of alienation that women suffer from lies, most of the time, in their psyches as they are unable to perceive themselves as equal to men. So as to bring the patriarchal system to an end, Shaw insists in this play that women must effect a psychological change, an inner development. They must be aware of their innate equality with men. *Pygmalion* shows how though Eliza transgressed all socio-economic barriers, she remains a prisoner of Higgins's domineering stance. She achieves her independence only when she shakes off her fears and revolts against her inner self-alienation, i. e. only when she triumphs over her

oppressive relation to herself first and then to Higgins. The increase in self-esteem and self-consciousness in the playwright's own view allows women to play a more efficient role in their feminist struggle.

Apart from his examination of most current feminist issues and his defence of woman's rights in various fields, Shaw's ability to dramatize the experiences of different women in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion* is another marker of the exhaustiveness of his feminist reflections. My analysis of Shavian female characters has asserted that the playwright speaks on behalf of the woman regardless of her age, class, and profession or any other consideration. The fallen woman, Mrs. Warren, her daughter Vivie the New Woman, the acquisitive heroine Anne Whitefield and the lower-class flower girl Eliza Doolittle have different personalities and world views; yet they all share the experience of alienation under patriarchal dominance. The dramatist depicts how each and every one of them reacts to this situation in her own way. As Stephen Heath remarks: 'to render woman's experiences visible is clearly an anti-patriarchal strategy.'[1] As a feminist playwright, Shaw does not provide a specific definition of femininity or appropriate feminine behaviour in his plays. Therefore, he counters the existentialist patriarchal discourse which stereotypes women. Because they were able to subvert the dominant theatrical phallocentric image of the woman, Shavian females have often been criticized by a number of male scholars. Frank Harris, for instance, wrote: 'everybody has noticed this vital defect in Shaw's women, the lack of mystery, grace, divinity, allure and charm.'[2] Shaw purposefully distanced his female characters from all such stereotypes which are all part and parcel of the patriarchal idealistic image of the passive Romantic heroine, an image that consolidates woman's marginalization.

Shaw's plays thus responded to the growing feminist agitations of the period. They were centred on current feminist discussions. They provide a comprehensive exploration of the woman question. The dramatist's outspokenness on gender issues and his identification

with the woman made him 'a *patron saint* of the women's movement.'[3] His iconoclastic attitudes and daring ideas exercised a great influence on the new generation of rebellious Victorian women. They contributed to the reshaping of their image and role both in society and on the stage. F. C. Burnaud described the impact of Shaw's feminist drama on the theatre going public. Speaking about the audience at the Royal Court Theatre during the Barker-Vedrenne management, which Shaw dominated, she wrote: 'the female element pre-dominates over the inferior sex as something like twelve to one.'[4] Since Shavian feminist drama was devoted to the defence of woman's rights in all fields, it was appealing to most feminist activists regardless of their tendencies or preoccupations. Suffragettes for instance recognized Shaw's major role in the emancipation of women. Therefore, they sought his political backing. The playwright in turn endorsed their claims and defended their rights in a number of essays and letters published in different newspapers mainly *The Times, The New Statesman* and *Suffragettes*. He even joined one of their meetings in 1907. Other groups, too, canvassed Shaw's support. As an example, in 1912 the actress Lena Ashwell, president of the Female Art Club, asked him to speak on behalf of professional women.[5] Thus Bernard Shaw, as a feminist playwright, manifested a serious interest in the improvement of the status of Victorian women. He devoted most of his plays to the support of the feminist cause.

Besides its comprehensiveness, Shaw's feminist thinking is characterized by its consistency. This feature is brought to light through the comparison of the three plays explored in this research work. The persistence of the playwright's feminist arguments for more than twenty years proves that his reflections on the woman question evidenced a long standing feminist commitment rather than a mere response to a current social and literary vogue. The denunciation of the patriarchal character of the capitalist system and the oppressive society it engenders is one of the recurrent feminist issues in Shaw's drama including *Mrs. Warren's Profession, Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion*. This issue

reflects the socialist tendency of the playwright's egalitarian vision. Moreover, such feminist dramatic works expose the hypocrisy of the conventional moral code which maintained male supremacy. They also subvert the stereotypical image of the relation between the sexes through the repudiation of bourgeois marriage and patriarchal family. Another strategy revealed through a comparison of the female portraits in the three plays studied in this thesis lies in the playwright's deconstruction of the phallocentric image of the passive romantic heroine. Shaw constantly reverses gender rules by presenting the female rather than the male as the active, practical and reasonable person. Such iconoclastic figures appealed to the audience's intellect rather than to their emotion. They were intended to raise women's consciousness and encourage them to react against enslavement and subjugation. The consistency of Shaw's feminist vision is further ascertained through a comparison between *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion* at the technical level. By the early twentieth century, the playwright utilized a new device which underlined his feminist engagement. It lies in the reversal of two famous myths: the Don Juan myth in *Man and Superman* and the myth of Pygmalion in *Pygmalion*. As I have noted in the fourth and the fifth chapters of this dissertation, in each play Shaw reshaped a myth that contributes to the patriarchal literary tradition. He subverted its phallocentric discourse and readapted it to his feminist principles. Therefore, the feminist study of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, *Man and Superman* and *Pygmalion* confirms the dramatist's fervent devotion to and militant struggle for the cause of woman's liberation.

The exploration of Shaw's feminist stance throughout different periods in his dramatic career also highlights a clear development in his feminist vision. The third chapter of this dissertation underscored the fact that the playwright's aim in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was to expose and to denounce the exploitative practices of the patriarchal capitalist system which enslaved Victorian women through the maintenance of their economic subordination to men. As he explained in this play, Capitalism and patriarchy are

mutually supportive oppressive systems. Therefore, he asserts that the dismantling of the former would automatically put an end to the latter. The establishment of socialism, in his view, would secure men and women equal rights and opportunities since gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of socialism. Thus in this play, the Fabian feminist Bernard Shaw envisioned woman's emancipation as an integral feature of a general reform. His feminist engagement was part and parcel of a broader socialist reformist agenda. Since *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is centred on the discussion of the economic basis of woman's oppression, its main concern is to examine woman's relation to the public sphere. It reveals how the phallocentric capitalist ideology of the sexual division of labour objectified and alienated females specially lower-class and uneducated ones like Mrs. Warren and her sisters. Furthermore, the play brings to light the experiences of rebellious women, like Vivie Warren, who were able to break the bounds of patriarchal dominance thanks to their high educational qualifications which secured them financial autonomy. Work is for Vivie the main source of her self-realization and liberation from all sorts of oppression.

A decade after *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Bernard Shaw widened the scope of his feminist discussion in *Man and Superman*. As a devoted believer in Creative Evolution, the dramatist related the emancipation of the female sex to the advancement of human kind. As I have explained in the fourth chapter of this thesis, this play marked a turning point in the playwright's feminist stance and hence in his reformist vision in general. By this time, he came to the conclusion that the establishment of an egalitarian progressive society required not just institutional reforms but biological progress as well, i. e. an improvement in human nature, in the human race. Shaw perceived these two forms of change as complementary to and mutually supportive. Gyno-ecocentrism formed the basis of Shaw's vitalist philosophy as he proclaimed woman as the source of life, of Creative Evolution. In *Man and Superman*, Shaw explained how the female's fundamental

reproductive role embodies a mysterious feminine power that urges life towards perfection since it aims at the creation of a race of supermen. The playwright's conviction that since the fulfilment of this aim will guarantee the permanent and effective communal progress proves that by the early twentieth century his progressive vision became centred on his feminist principles. Gender equality in his view will lead to the establishment of the most suitable environment for the advancement of society.

As this feminist study has explained, *Man and Superman* has revealed a remarkable development in Shaw's feminist vision. While in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* he defended gender equality mainly in the social and economic fields, in this play he focused more on the celebration of woman's natural superiority over man, without neglecting the importance of her economic independence which is part of his belief in Gynoecocentrism. Furthermore, in this work, he dramatized the experience of a domestic heroine, Ann Whitfield. Therefore, he was more concerned with the experience of woman in the private world rather than in the public sphere as he did in the previous play. *Man and Superman* explores, on the one hand, woman's relation to her body which is presented as the linchpin of her emancipation; on the other hand, the play presents the sex relation in an iconoclastic way since it portrays the female as an active and free partner, as the one who takes the initiative in this relation. As Shaw explains, when the female enjoys her sexual rights, she will enhance the process of Creative Evolution. In this case, her marital and maternal roles will no longer be a source of alienation. Thus, in *Man and Superman*, the dramatist discusses a number of feminist issues such as motherhood and marriage from a different perspective than that of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Even his repudiation of the phallocentric ideology of the separate spheres takes a different form. More importantly, his feminist representation of the female body and sexual and reproductive role enriched the current feminist debate and raised it to a universal level since it implies that the emancipation of women is a precondition for the progress of humanity. As a feminist play,

Man and Superman was ahead of its time. The feminist argument about the importance of woman's biology which it dramatized was reproduced by later feminists, mainly radical and existentialist activists.

The comparison of *Pygmalion* with the two other plays analysed in this research work reflects further the continuous advancement of Shaw's feminist thinking. As the playwright was highly aware of the different forms of oppression that women were subjected to, i. e. of the different factors and forces which maintained male supremacy, in each feminist play, he addressed the woman question from a specific angle so as to examine a particular aspect of woman's status under patriarchal dominance. Yet, in *Pygmalion* he was able to present a more comprehensive feminist vision since he investigated the cause of woman's liberation from a wider perspective. As I have shown in the fifth chapter, this work dramatized Shaw's belief that though the replacement of capitalism by socialism was a major step towards the improvement of woman's status, it couldn't, of its own ensure gender equality. Shaw explains how besides such outer reforms as the advancement of woman's social position and intellectual status, the overthrow of patriarchal dominance required an inner revolt on the part of the female, a progress at the level of her psyche so as to overcome the sense of alienation that is rooted within as well as without. Therefore, in *Pygmalion* the playwright is concerned mainly with woman's relation to herself. He argued that only when this relation is sane, could the female achieve her independence and self-fulfilment. Thus in this period, Shaw's feminist project not only embedded but went beyond his socialist concern. Hence the comparison of the three feminist plays studied in this thesis marks an incessant progress of the Shavian feminist vision. In each dramatic work, the playwright forged a new perception of the woman question. He was constantly revising his feminist ideas and reshaping his anti-patriarchal dramatic discourse. This salient feature of Shaw's feminist thinking enlarged the popularity

of his plays among women activists for decades. 'At different times, different factions among the feminists have been attracted to different aspects of his work.'[6]

As a male feminist playwright, Shaw played a major part in the reshaping of the male-dominated English dramatic scene. Throughout his long dramatic career, the playwright produced a large number of feminist plays which daringly subverted the dominant phallocentric dramatic discourse as they decentered man and accorded the central role to the woman. Apart from the works analysed in this dissertation, such plays include *Major Barbara, Candida, You Never Can Tell, Getting Married* and *Saint Joan* which won him the Nobel Prize in 1925. Shavian feminist drama appealed to Victorian and Edwardian women who were seeking their emancipation from patriarchal dominance. It had a profound influence on their personalities and psyches and encouraged their awareness as it was intended to arouse the intellect. As they recognized Shaw's major contribution to the cause of feminism, many actor manageresses produced his works throughout the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. This certainly enlarged the popularity of his feminist ideas among women. As I mentioned in the third chapter of this study, some of the female dramatists as Sisley Hamilton and Elizabeth Robins who started their careers in this period had been influenced by Shaw the feminist. In her article, 'Virginia Woolf's Revision of a Shavian Tradition', Andrea Adolph suggested that the playwright served as a model even for Woolf, especially in her first and only dramatic work *Fresh Water* (1923). She asserted that 'if his influence cannot be traced directly to her work, one can still see that he made a strong mark upon her life. Their friendship was maintained over time through a course of correspondence and social meetings.'[7] Woolf herself wrote in a letter to Shaw in 1914

> when I first met you at the Webs I was set against all great men, having been liberally fed on them in my father's house. I wanted only to meet business men – and (say) racing experts. But in a jiffy you made me reconsider all that and had me at your feet. Indeed you have acted a lover's part in my life for the past thirty years, and though I dare say it's not much to boast of, I should have been a worse woman without Bernard Shaw.[8]

It would be interesting to assess Shaw's influence on his contemporaries and successors, a point which needs further investigation.

As this research work comes to its end, I think it interesting to have a glimpse at Shaw's personal relationships with women. This part draws a parallel between his private experience and his dramatic vision. It also sheds light on the major role played mainly by his mother, his sisters, his wife and his female friends in the shaping of his feminist convictions. The influence of Shaw's mother Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly on her son's personality and literary work had been profound. This remarkable woman challenged the Victorian ethos and patriarchal dominance. She was an amateur singer.Financially and emotionally self-sufficient. In 1873, she abandoned her drunken husband and moved to London with her musical teacher *George John Vandeleur Lee* with whom she had a passionate relationship. There, she started a career as a music teacher. Three years later, Bernard joined his mother. He says about this period in his life: 'My mother worked for my living instead of preaching that it was my duty to work for her. Therefore, take off your hat for her and blush.'[9] Shaw's two sisters were as intelligent and independent as their mother. They too broke social constraints. Lucy, for instance, had a passion for music like her mother. She worked as an opera singer.

By contrast to his close relationship to his mother and his intense admiration for her strong personality and independent spirit, Shaw was contemptuous of his father. The latter was irresponsible and a drunkard. In a letter to the actress Ellen Terry in June 1897, Shaw described how his sudden recognition of his father's alcoholism converted him into a teetotaller:

> The first moral lesson I can remember as a tiny child was the lesson of teetotalism, instilled by my father, a futile person you would have thought him. One night, when I was about as tall as his boots, he took me out for a walk. In the course of it, I conceived a monstrous, incredible suspicion. When I got home, I stole to my mother and in an awestruck whisper said to her, 'Mama, I think Papa's drunk.' She turned away with impatient disgust,

> and said, 'when is he ever anything else?' I have never believed anything since: then the scoffer began.[10]

George Carr Shaw was so distanced from his wife and children that even when he died in 1885 neither she nor they attended his funeral. Shaw's disrespect for patriarchal authority, embodied in the image of the father, had certainly been instrumental in the formulation of his feminist tendency. It is worth noting that the young Shaw was more attached to Lee than to his father, especially as they were in close contact with one another for many years since Lee moved in with the Shaws in a *ménage à trois* in 1866. Bernard Shaw recognised that 'the fact that one of the men of the house was an artist, a conductor, and a man of a quite exceptional temperament and energy, must have had a considerable influence on [him].'[11]

In 1889, after his long bachelordom, Shaw married the Irish millionairess Charlotte F. Payne Townshend. Charlotte was, like Shaw's mother, an outstanding and rebellious woman, a free-thinker. She was an active Fabian socialist. The couple's marriage which lasted 45 years remained unconsummated as Shaw himself declared: 'As man and wife, we founded a new relation in which sex had no part. It ended the old gallantries and philandering for both of us.'[12] This egalitarian union founded on mutual love and respect preserved the independence of both partners. Charlotte thus rejected motherhood. She pursued her self-realisation through intellectual advancement.

Undoubtedly, Shaw's intimate relationships with such emancipated women as his mother, his sisters and his wife had a direct impact on the shaping of his feminist thinking as an iconoclastic dramatist. This impact is clearly apparent for instance in his constant repudiation of the phallocentric Victorian ideal of the self-sacrificing womanly woman. In his plays as well as in his non-dramatic works, Shaw repeatedly argued for the importance of selfishness and individuality in woman's liberation. Early in 1878, in his essay *My Dear Dorothea*, subtitled "A Practical System of Moral Education for Females", he instructed

Dorothea–a five years old girl– 'let your rule of conduct always be to do whatever is best for yourself. Be as selfish as you can.'[13] Thirteen years later, he asserted in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*: 'unless a 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 […] in that repudiation lays her freedom.'[14] Most of the dramatist's female portraits reflect this conviction. They subvert the patriarchal image of the passive submissive female. The character of Vivie in *Mrs Warren's Profession* is certainly one of the best examples of this type of Shavian heroines.

It is remarkable that actresses played a central role not just in Shaw's dramatic work but in his private life as well. The playwright had a number of love affairs with Florence Farr, Ellen Terry, Janet Achurch, Mrs. Patrick Campbell and Molly Tomkins among others. He himself admitted that '[he] is, and always has been, an incorrigible philanderer, retaining something of the obsolete gallantry of the Irishmen of [his] generation.'[15] Yet, he 'always asserted that [he] didn't pursue women. [He] was pursued by them.'[16] Furthermore, throughout the 1880s and the 1890s, he had been attached to a number of married women in an attempt to recreate, the sort of *ménage à trois* that his mother had established for herself. These women include the social activitist Annie Besant, May Morris, the daughters of his friend William Morris and Edith Nesbit. In my opinion, such polygamous relationships reflect the profound influence that the mother exercised on Shaw's character. Her independent and defiant personality had been so appealing to him that he admired women who enjoyed the same liberty. He was attracted mainly to actresses because they were a symbol of revolt and liberation. Besides, perhaps throughout each experience , Shaw wanted to know more about the female, especially as she always appealed to his intellect more than to his passion. All his relationships with women were platonic; they were forms of intellectual encounters rather than sexual attachments.

Nonetheless, some critics consider that Shaw's personal relationships with women had a negative impact on his reputation as a fervent feminist. Such critics promote an unfavourable image of the dramatist presenting him as an exploiter of women who 'used them as pawns in the drama of his own self-aggrandizement.'[17] Marguerite Peters was among the scholars who supported this view. She claimed that

> listening to the voices of the women who had known him, I found it impossible to retain my own original view of Shaw as women's champion … I could no longer trust the man, could I trust the works? I returned to them and found I could not. The same ambiguous attitudes towards women which Shaw displayed personally are present in his art. Where although ambiguity might be expected, it has often been overlooked.[18]

Although this research work proves this assumption wrong as it asserts Shaw's sincere feminist commitment and outspoken anti-patriarchal dramatic discourse, I think this counter-argument is worth investigating since it opens up new vistas in gender theatrical studies devoted to Shavian drama. This study therefore sheds light on an important aspect in Shavian works, an aspect that reflects the image of supporter of woman's rights who worked incessantly to secure gender equality.

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الهدف من هذه الأطروحة هو تقييم تطور، ثبات و شمولية النظرة النسوية لجورج برنارد شو. لذا تناقش هذه الدراسة موقف الكاتب من قضية تحرير المراة في ثلاث كتابات مسرحية تمثل فترات مختلفة من حياته ككاتب مسرحي وهي مهنة السيدة وارن، الرجل و الرجل الخارق و بيغماليون. هذه الأعمال محللة من خلال ثلاث نظريات هي النظرية النسوية الماركسية و النظرية الجينوئيكوسنترية و النظرية النسوية الاشتراكية .

هذا البحث مقسم إلى خمسة فصول .الأولان يساعدان القارئ على فهم أفضل للفكر النسوي الدرامي لشو، اذ انهما يشرحان الخلفية الاجتماعية والثقافية والأدبية للمسرحيات المناقشة في هذه الأطروحة. يدرس الفصل الأول الحالة الاجتماعية و الاقتصادية و القانونية و السياسية للمرأة الفيكتورية. كما يشير إلى الدور الرئيسي للحركة النسوية في الكفاح من أجل القضاء على النظام الأبوي. الفصل الثاني يبحث في تمثيل قضية المرأة من طرف من سبقوا شو ومن عاصروه. يتطرق هذا الفصل ايضا إلى وضعية النساء الفيكتوريات في المسرح كمؤلفات أو ممثلات أو مديرات. كما يشير إلى دورهن في ظهور المسرح النسوي الانجليزي في أواخر القرن التاسع عشر و بداية القرن العشرين.

الفصول التي تلي مخصصة لدراسة المسرحيات الثلاث. يعرض الفصل الثالث تحليلا نسويا ماركسيا لمهنة السيدة وارن. يبين اهتمام برنارد شو في بداية 1890، كفابي مناصر للمرأة، بالجانب الاقتصادي لاضطهادها. لقد كان التزامه في صف المرأة جزءا من مشروعه الإصلاحي الاشتراكي.

الفصل الرابع يعرض قراءة نسوية للرجل و الرجل الخارق على ضوء النظرية الجينوئيكوسنترية لوارد. تبين دراسة هذه المسرحية تطور نظرة شو النسوية في بداية القرن العشرين. بغض النظر عن تاييده لاستقلالية المراة في الجانب الاقتصادي، اكد الكاتب تفوقها على الرجل النابع من دورها الاساسي في استمرار و تطور النسل. في نظر شو، هذا الدور هوالدافع الرئيسي لتطور الخلق. يشرح لنا هذا الفصل كيف تركزت الفلسفة الحيوية لشو على قناعاته النسوية .

بيغماليون، أخر مسرحية في هذه الأطروحة، تتم مناقشتها انطلاقا من نظرة نسوية اشتراكية في الفصل الخامس. تظهر دراسة هذا العمل قدرة شو على التحليل الشامل لقضية المرأة خلال العقد الثاني من القرن العشرين. في هذه الحقبة صرح أن إسقاط النظام الأبوي يمكن أن ينتج عن الإصلاحات الخارجية مثل الاشتراكية وعن ثورة المرأة على الاضطهاد على حد سواء أي انطلاقا من تطورها النفسي. وبالتالي يبين تحليل بيغماليون تجاوز التزام شو في صف المرأة اهتمامه بالاشتراكية.

في الختام، أؤكد على كون هذه المسرحيات الثلاث، مهنة السيدة وارن، الرجل و الرجل الخارق و بيغماليون، تعبر عن نظرة نسوية شاملة وثابتة ومتطورة. هذه الخصائص تعكس الالتزام الدائم لشو بقضية تحرير المرأة و رفضه للعرف المسرحي الذكوري السائد في تلك الفترة.

الحركة النسوية –المرأة – الاستقلالية- التحرر- النظام الأبوي –الاضطهاد- الحقوق- الاشتراكية- تمرد

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