SHAW, SUBJECTIVE INEQUALITY, AND THE SOCIAL MEANINGS OF LANGUAGE IN PYGMALION

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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.¹

With these words George Gissing stressed his conviction that social transformation, whether passive or active ('raising or being raised'), was still, for a member of the London underclass in the late nineteenth century, a virtual impossibility; twenty-one years later, however, George Bernard Shaw was resolutely to prove him wrong in the person of Eliza Doolittle, the Lisson Grove flower-girl who, transplanted to the social environs of Wimpole Street, is turned into an 'artificial duchess'² by means of the science of phonetics. Gissing's emphasis on nature, and the sense of innate inequality which this implies, is thus displaced by Shaw's belief in nurture, and the conditioning effects of social circumstance; Eliza indeed proves herself more than capable of 'being raised' and of being educated in the social and linguistic mannerisms of 'a woman bred to refinement', perhaps most notably in the way in which she can, and does, 'fashion her tongue to graceful speech'.

The Pygmalion myth in Shaw's hands, predictably endowed with social meaning, becomes therefore not only a paradigm of social mobility, but also a paean to inherent equality, with its thesis, as Nicholas Grene has pointed out, that 'a lady is only a flower-girl plus six months phonetic training, a gentleman only a dustman with money'.³ Eliza's education in the behavioural norms of the English upper classes, and in the markers, and particularly the linguistic markers, of superior social status, is as a result used as a means of exploring not only the potential for individual advancement in an 'age

² G. B. Shaw, Androcles and the Lion, Overruled, Pygmalion (London, 1916), Pygmalion, iv. 162 (unless otherwise specified, this edition of Pygmalion will be used throughout).
of upstarts', but also, and more importantly, the very foundations of social equality and inequality, and the values and value judgements, the perceptions of worth and status, which come in turn to surround them.

The nature of social equality, as well as its importance, are of course prevailing Shavian themes, attributable in a number of ways to his childhood education in the sensibilities of social class ('No Shaw could form a social acquaintance with a shopkeeper nor with a Roman Catholic; and naturally the Shaw parents impressed that fact on their children and thereby made arrant snobs of them'). The legacy of such social consciousness was, however, soon overlaid by the more overriding preoccupations of a (Fabian) social conscience; already in 1873, Shaw's loathing of the estate agent's office where he worked derives from the way in which it was 'saturated with class feeling', and his conversion to socialism in the early 1880s was only to give a firmer intellectual framework for such already ingrained perceptions. The social consciousness of his early years and the social conscience of his later ones unite, however, in the writing of Pygmalion, and in his treatment of social illusion and social reality Shaw produces a text which combines the seemingly divergent spheres of socialist parable and social comedy of manners.

Its success as both socialist parable and social comedy depends nevertheless not only upon some understanding of Shaw's own social and egalitarian preoccupations, but also upon some consideration of the wider social, linguistic, and perhaps more particularly, socio-linguistic, contexts upon which it draws. The century into which Shaw was born, for example, was witness to the rise of entirely new conceptions of social identity, the class distinctions with which Pygmalion deals coming into being only along its course; the working classes in which Eliza is firmly located in Act I hence receive lexicographical recognition in OED only in 1816, the upper classes to which she aspires appear only from 1826. Reflecting fundamentally different perceptions of social labelling and social hierarchies, the nuances of class, first recorded in 1772, were to create the major social preoccupations of the nineteenth century. Class consciousness, first recorded in 1887, is, in effect, the issue which was to dominate Pygmalion, mirrored most obviously in the linguistic signals of social identity which provide the key to Eliza's transformation.

4 Pygmalion, 1. 114. 5 G. B. Shaw, Sixteen Self Sketches (London, 1949), 91. 6 Cited in M. Holroyd, Bernard Shaw: I, The Search for Love 1856–1898 (London, 1988), 53. 7 OED dates the use of the word class in its modern sense ('a division or order of society according to status; a rank or grade of society') to 1772, citing Hanway's Observations on the Causes of Dissoluteness which reigns among the lower classes of the people in illustration.
‘It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him’, states Shaw in his Preface, stressing the social meanings subsumed within language, and especially spoken language. In this context, however, it becomes additionally important to recognize that the stratified social meanings which accent now encompasses, and with which Pygmalion deals, are, like class and its attendant ramifications, themselves largely products of the nineteenth century alone.

These recent changes in social structure in fact seem to bring the new and socially connotative values surrounding accent in their wake, the escalation in its social significance being more than apparent in contemporary comment; whereas for Joseph Priestley in 1762 pronunciation had been merely an ‘ornament’ of correct speech, for William Savage writing in 1833 its role as determiner of social identity is clearly well established. Pronunciation is ‘the talisman that will enforce admiration or beget contempt; that will produce esteem or preclude friendship; that will bar the door or make portals fly open’.

This role of accent as a determiner not only of social status but also of social acceptability is thus in turn adopted as the major vehicle for Shaw’s social critique in Pygmalion. Presented in terms of Eliza’s metamorphosis in the hands of the phonetician, Henry Higgins, it reflects Shaw’s sensitivity not only to the way in which doors may be barred by details of language, but also, and more fundamentally, to the way in which divisions of social inequality had come in turn to be mirrored by determinants of linguistic inequality, by systems of markers superficial in themselves but endowed with great and potentially divisive social significance.

Higgins’s basis in the real phonetician, Henry Sweet, Reader in Phonetics at Oxford from 1901, but known personally by Shaw from the late 1870s, can in consequence be seen to take on additional significance. As Shaw and Sweet were aware, for example, phonetics, though still a ‘new science’, was in fact potentially far more than the mere study of articulation and voice production, and it was precisely its potential for playing a social role which was, in strikingly similar ways, to interest them both. As a result Sweet can in a number of ways be seen to provide not only the model for Higgins, but also the impetus for the entire play. As he wrote in his Handbook in 1877, ‘When a firm control of pronunciation has thus been acquired,

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8 Pygmalion, Preface, 99.
9 J. Priestley, A Course of Lectures on the Theory of Language and Universal Grammar (Warrington, 1762), 250.
provincialisms and vulgarisms will at last be eliminated and some of the most important barriers between the different classes of society will thus be abolished.\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Pygmalion} can, in effect, be seen as Shaw’s response; as Higgins himself phrases it in the play—thereby closely echoing Sweet in his perceptions—pronunciation, no longer merely an ornament, is instead ‘the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul’.\textsuperscript{12}

The ‘deep gulf’ separating Eliza and Higgins in the beginning of the play is thus initially established in linguistic terms, Eliza’s phonemic and grammatical divergence from the norms of standard English working as a concise symbol of her social unacceptability, just as Colonel Pickering’s social and linguistic location in ‘Cheltenham, Harrow, Cambridge and India’\textsuperscript{13} establishes the converse. Eliza’s social identity, and attendant social ostracism, is hence determined by the linguistic shibboleths of /h/ dropping and double negation, by her realizations of \textit{paying as pyin}, and of \textit{flowers as flahrz}, and by the connotative values which had come to attend such usages. Though she is acknowledged as ‘a human being with a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech’,\textsuperscript{14} the separation of ‘soul from soul’ by matters of pronunciation is nowhere clearer than in Higgins’s eloquent range of synonyms for Eliza’s social identity; she is ‘a squashed cabbage leaf’,\textsuperscript{15} ‘a draggle-tailed guttersnipe’, ‘a baggage’, ‘deliciously low’ and ‘horribly dirty’.\textsuperscript{16} Rendered scarcely more than animate by such epithets, their use nevertheless serves to emphasize that fusion of social and linguistic judgement which had come to prevail by the end of the nineteenth century and which was, moreover, to extend into our own.

As David Crystal noted in 1987, ‘We . . . only have to speak, to provide . . . innumerable clues about our personal history and social identity’,\textsuperscript{17} but Shaw stresses in \textit{Pygmalion} that such clues, in an era unduly sensitized to the social import of language, may indicate not only our past, and our present, but may also determine our future: Eliza’s ‘kerbstone English’, whilst graphically describing her present social location, is also ‘the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days’,\textsuperscript{18} and Eliza herself recognizes that even the minor transition to employment within a flower-shop is impeded by perceptions of her linguistic infelicities—she states, thereby compounding

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\item \textsuperscript{11} H. Sweet, \textit{A Handbook of Phonetics} (Oxford, 1877), 196.
\item \textsuperscript{12} \textit{Pygmalion}, iii. 157.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid. i. 112.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid. i. 114.
\item \textsuperscript{15} This additional epithet appears in the film version of \textit{Pygmalion} (London: Penguin, 1941), 27.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Pygmalion}, ii. 123, 120, 123.
\item \textsuperscript{17} D. Crystal, \textit{The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language} (London, 1987), 17.
\item \textsuperscript{18} \textit{Pygmalion}, i. 115.
\end{itemize}
such infelicities by the use of a flat adverb, 'they wont take me unless I can talk more genteel'.

Language, and especially pronunciation, as Shaw presents it, may therefore combine to work not only as a social determiner, but also, and more dangerously, as a social determinant, preventing the 'equal rights and opportunities for all' which Shaw gave as his definition of socialism in 1890. Fabianism and phonetics thus achieve parallel aims in Pygmalion, the solution to such linguistic, and attendant social, determinism being shown to rest in the possibilities of linguistic, and hence social, transformation as worked by Higgins upon Eliza by means of her education in the nuances of phonemic propriety. Shaw's point here, however, is less a recommendation of remedial phonetics for the problems of a class-based society than a consideration of the nature of equality in itself, and of the superficial issues which may obscure such knowledge.

Equality, and the nature of social identity, in fact come to provide dominant motifs within Eliza's conversation; 'My character is the same to me as any lady's', she stresses to Higgins in Act I, and, though 'wounded and whimpering' in Act II, she continues to assert the Fabian truth that money alone leads to rank: 'I wont be called a baggage when Ive offered to pay like any lady'; just as, in the tumult and confusion of the opening scene, she states, albeit 'with feeble defiance', 'Ive a right to be here if I like, same as you'. Such comments are used to point the difference between the undeniable facts of innate equality, and the social, including the linguistic, fallacies which nevertheless may inhibit its recognition.

Such discrepancies are underlined further by Shaw himself in his stage directions; though 'compared to the ladies, she is very dirty', this first description of Eliza makes the salient point that she is, however, 'as clean as she can afford to be'. Cleanliness, like accent, becomes yet another trapping of social circumstance, an accident of birth and class. Like accent also, cleanliness, or rather its converse, initially constitutes a marker of Eliza's social ostracism, and is likewise to be subject to transition during Eliza's social transformation. The ease with which it is removed, however, serves to stress the way in which markers of class may have their significance overstated as determinants, as well as determiners, of individual identity; though Eliza was, for example, deemed entirely unworthy of discourse by Clara

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19 Ibid. ii. 121.
20 G. B. Shaw, What Socialism Is (Fabian Tract No. 4, 1890). Cited in Holroyd, Shaw, i. 182.
21 Pygmalion, i. 113.
22 Ibid. ii. 120.
23 Ibid. i. 114.
24 Ibid. i. 107.
Eynsford-Hill in Act I, her acquisition of the right accent, plus the elimination of the dirt, makes her instead an object of emulation by Act III, irrespective of the fact that the substance of her conversation, in terms of true propriety, still lacks the conventions appropriate for polite conversation.25

This disjunction in terms of social meaning between superficial markers and substantive difference is nowhere made clearer than in the scenes detailing Mrs Higgins’s ‘At Home’, where it is used to produce some of Shaw’s richest comedy, as well as to exercise to the full his talents as Fabian social critic. The scene unites (with the addition of Mrs Higgins herself) the social grouping of the beginning of the play: the Eynsford-Hills, Pickering, Higgins, and Eliza. Eliza, however, bereft of her basket of flowers, and equipped with a new set of social markers, produces a completely different impression; rather than falling over her as he did in Act I, Freddy Eynsford-Hill instead falls in love with her, and his sister Clara is likewise fascinated, described as ‘devouring her [Eliza] with her eyes’.26

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Eliza at this stage still remains fundamentally the same, distinct only in superficial details from ‘the dragle-tailed guttersnipe’27 of Act II. In modern society, however, as Shaw illustrates, it is precisely these superficial details which tend to be endowed with most significance, and upon which acceptability and its criteria tend to depend; Eliza, upon entering the room, ‘produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty . . . that they all rise, quite fluttered’. Such distinction is in turn reinforced by both her ‘studied grace’ and ‘great beauty of tone’ but it is above all Eliza’s ‘pedantic correctness of pronunciation’, and the social meanings with which it is imbued, that were to occupy Shaw primarily in this passage.28

Shaw plays heavily on the role of accent as the major social determiner of identity and acceptability, producing a comic dichotomy in Eliza’s conversation between what she says, and how she says it. Her many faux pas in terms of conversational propriety indeed seem as a result to be transcended entirely by the social significance of her adoptive RP and the social as well as phonemic prestige surrounding it. ‘What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done

25 See e.g. Eliza’s discussion of the drinking habits of her father (III. 152): ‘It never did him no harm what I could see. But then he did not keep it up regular. On the burst, as you might say . . . When he was out of work, my mother used to give him fourpence and tell him to go out and not come back until he’d drunk himself cheerful and loving-like. There’s lots of women has to make their husbands drunk to make them fit to live with.’
26 Ibid. III. 150.
27 Ibid. II. 123.
28 Ibid. III. 150.
her in’, expounds Eliza upon the untimely demise of her aunt,29 thereby uniting the idiom and expression of her social origins with the new social status suggested by her enunciation. The connotative values of class contained within the latter clearly dominate in terms of social meaning, displacing the significance of non-standard tense relations (and even the major solecism of swearing) and rendering Eliza no longer a representative of ‘kerbstone English’ but instead the epitome of linguistic fashion, and an exemplar of the ‘new small talk’ for the impressionable Clara (‘It’s so quaint, and gives such a smart emphasis to things that are not in themselves very witty. I find the new small talk delightful and quite innocent’).30

Higgins, as he promised, has in effect created a new social identity for Eliza, bridging the ‘gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul’ by an exercise in phonetics, and expenditure on her dress. The presentation of the class divide in such terms is thus made to reflect the many paradoxes and pretences which surrounded, and still surround, questions of social worth and social acceptability. In this context it is salient, as well as salutary, to remember that Higgins’s first reactions to Eliza’s ‘Lisson Grove lingo’31 denied her social, and indeed, individual worth at all: ‘A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere—no right to live.’32 Eliza’s innate equality can thus only be seen, even by Higgins himself, once she has gained access to symbols of social equality, and the pattern is precisely the same for her father. As Alfred Doolittle gains a fortune, so Eliza gains an accent (though losing another) and with such trappings both become more than capable of playing the social roles of lady and gentleman.

Equality and inequality in social terms are thereby proven to be both extrinsic and subjective; this is clearly Shaw’s thesis from a socialist point of view. From a linguistic point of view, his thesis is perhaps more striking. Long before the advent of sociolinguistics, Shaw seems to have been aware not only of the marked co-variation of accent and class, but also of the social side-effects of what R. A. Hudson has termed the ‘subjective inequality of language’, or, in other words, aware that ‘linguistic inequality can be seen as a cause (along with many other factors, of course) of social inequality, as well as a consequence of it’.33 This fact, of language as both cause and consequence of class divisions and class distinctions, is indeed at the heart of Shaw’s perceptions in Pygmalion, Eliza’s ‘kerbstone English’ being not only the product of her social deprivation, but also the factor

which will ultimately reinforce it, and which, as Higgins is made to stress, ‘will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days’.34

Shaw himself recurs often in his writings to this notion of accent as social impediment, though perhaps most pertinently in his 1906 comment that ‘most Englishmen and women would almost rather die than be convicted of speaking like costermongers and flower girls’.35 This comment, giving additional emphasis to Shaw’s perceptions of linguistic disadvantage and its social correlations, serves more significantly, however, to underline the particular social resonance of the cockney in then contemporary English society, a fact which is, moreover, used by Shaw to add a further dimension to the social meanings already evident in Eliza’s transformation.

A knowledge of the underlying social and linguistic contexts is again useful; the cockney, throughout the nineteenth century, is, for example, not only seen as a kind of social pariah, but also becomes, in terms of the prevailing prescriptive ideology, a butt for all the linguistic sins of the age, the stereotype of every linguistic, and particularly phonemic, infelicity. The strength of contemporary feelings was indeed such that even Henry Sweet was drawn to remark on the way in which ‘The Cockney dialect seems very ugly to the educated Englishman or woman because he—and still more she—lives in a perpetual terror of being taken for a Cockney’.36 A report on the teaching of English in elementary schools, published in 1909, went still further: ‘Most dialects have their own distinctive charm and historical interest; but Cockneyism seems to have no redeeming features, and need only to be heard to be condemned.’37 The linguistic prejudice manifest in such statements was of course merely a marker of attendant social prejudice, but nevertheless, for many in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such statements were adopted as social facts, employed, as by Gissing, to reinforce perceptions of the inherent rather than imposed inequality surrounding the cockney.38 Shaw’s transformation of not only a flower-girl, but moreover an undeniably cockney flower-girl, into a lady of such distinction that she can be mistaken for a Hungarian princess thereby takes on added social force. Few other things in fact could have demonstrated his belief in underlying equality so well.

34 Pygmalion, 1. 115.
38 Gissing’s description of Mrs Yule’s accent in New Grub Street (1891) can be taken as representative: ‘Mrs. Yule’s speech was seldom ungrammatical, and her intonation was not flagrantly vulgar, but the accent of the London poor, which brands as with hereditary baseness,
In this, as Nicholas Grene recognizes, Shaw ‘challenges the assumption that there is anything more to gentility than money and the arbitrary shibboleths of social behaviour. Socially we are what we sound like, and if we can change our voices we change ourselves’,39 or rather, and perhaps rather more accurately, we can change the way in which others perceive us, even if we do happen to belong, at least originally, to that social substratum of the cockney. The socialist parable of Pygmalion is primarily made to reside, therefore, in Shaw’s analysis of the inherent superficiality of those symbols commonly used to determine social acceptability; only Eliza’s education in linguistic manners and behavioural norms, together with the external trappings provided by Pickering, can be said in any real sense to differentiate her from the ‘squashed cabbage leaf’ of Act I. No longer ‘giving herself away as soon as she opens her mouth’, the implications of this fact are, however, extended by Shaw to provide yet another, and perhaps more profound, kind of social education for the character of Clara in the play.

Clara, presented throughout in terms of her undue reliance on the markers of social status, undergoes, as we have seen, a comic conversion on the subject of Eliza, recoiling from her in disgust in Act I, revering her by Act III, unaware of course that the Miss Doolittle of the latter, and the bedraggled flower-seller of the former are one and the same. Forced to contemplate the difference between identity and social identity, Clara thus receives a social education of a rather different kind to that already experienced by Eliza—or, as Shaw puts it in his Epilogue, ‘Clara’s snobbery went bang’: 

on being suddenly wakened to enthusiasm by a girl of her own age who . . . produced in her a gushing desire to take her for a model, . . . she discovered that this exquisite apparition had graduated from the gutter in a few months time. It shook her so violently, that when Mr H. G. Wells . . . placed her at the angle of view from which the life she was leading and the society to which she clung appeared in its true relation to real human needs and worthy social structure, he effected a conversion . . . comparable to the most sensational feats of General Booth.40

‘Worthy social structure’ and ‘real human needs’ are of course the substance of Shaw’s message. Phonetics becomes the agent of Fabian ideals in the consummate ease with which it levels class distinctions and fills in class divides, providing, as a cancelled passage of

still clung to her words, rendering futile such propriety of phrase as she owed to years of association with educated people’ (p. 154).

40 Pygmalion, Epilogue, 199–200.
Pygmalion made clear, the means for 'the regeneration of the human race through the most difficult science in the world'.

Clara's regeneration, together with that of Eliza, thus stands as part of the myth of re-creation employed in the play. Alongside this, however, must also be considered the parallel social transformation of Alfred Doolittle, gaining money rather than modifications of accent in his role of natural philosopher to the Wannafeller Moral Reform World League. Like Eliza, his original social location is determined merely by the superficial rather than the innate; his occupation as dustman heightens the dirt which had been prominent in the early social definitions of his daughter, but its greater abundance nevertheless makes it no more difficult to remove. Like Eliza, Alfred Doolittle was 'as clean as he could afford to be' and the acquisition of £3,000 a year rapidly effects a transition within such necessary markers of acceptability, their repercussions readily perceptible in the parlourmaid's responses when he presents himself at Mrs Higgins's Chelsea apartment:

**The Parlor-maid.** Mr Henry: a gentleman wants to see you very particular.

*H. O. B.* Oh, bother! I cant see anyone now. Who is it?

**The Parlor-maid.** A Mr Doolittle, sir.

**Pickering.** Doolittle! Do you mean the dustman?

**The Parlor-maid.** Dustman! Oh no, sir: a gentleman.

The parlour-maid's incredulity when Colonel Pickering suggests that the 'gentleman' may in fact be a 'dustman' is all too self-evident. Self-evident also is Shaw's point about the nature of social perceptions and social class, made more pertinent by its consideration of the role of money within a capitalist society, and the fact that though accent may operate as a dominant social determiner, money may at times work still better. Class is after all based primarily on the divisions of socio-economic status, and, as Shaw comments in Sixteen Self Sketches, it is only 'sufficient equality of income [that] ... will break down class segregation'. As other contemporary commentators stressed, however, not only will sufficient money break down the barriers of class, it will also break down those of accent; 'the deliberate, cold-blooded omission of an "h" is abhorrent to educated ears', noted G. Hill in 1902 with reference to that most obvious shibboleth of social and linguistic convention, but 'the possession of a very large income' will nevertheless 'ensure forgiveness'.

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41 This appears on p. 72 of the Hanley Collection typescript, held in the library of the University of Texas. Cited in L. Crompton, *Shaw the Dramatist* (London, 1971), 249 n. 10.
42 *Pygmalion*, v. 170–1.
Doolittle, though addressing himself to ‘Enry Iggins\textsuperscript{45} rather than Henry Higgins, is still therefore to be given entirely unquestioning acceptance as a gentleman.

As all this goes to prove, the virtues of gentlemen and ladies do not necessarily have anything to do with the ramifications of social status and social identity, though their social trappings, whether in terms of phonemes or property, do. Even Alfred Doolittle, however, feels the pressure of the social expectations which accompany the acquisition of worldly wealth, lamenting to Higgins: ‘Ill have to learn to speak middle class language from you, instead of speaking proper English. Thats where youll come in; and I daresay thats what you done it for.’\textsuperscript{46}

As David Crystal makes clear, ‘More than anything else, language shows we “belong”, providing the most natural badge, or symbol, of public and private identity.’\textsuperscript{47} Eliza sheds the language of her social origins, and even her father acknowledges some sense of what is more appropriate for ‘belonging’ to his new social location; the public identity of both has changed. In such changes, however, both are, as Alfred Doolittle realizes, ‘disclassed’,\textsuperscript{48} and this, in effect, poses the more serious problems for their ultimate social identity. Bearing the social symbols of the upper classes, they can no longer ‘belong’ to those from which they came. The problems are less for Alfred Doolittle himself: wielding his dustmanship ‘like a banner’, he becomes, as Shaw describes in his Epilogue, ‘extremely popular in the smartest society’ by means of ‘a social talent which triumphed over every prejudice and every disadvantage’.\textsuperscript{49}

Eliza’s case is different; she gains not only the social advantages of her accent, but along with it, as Mrs Higgins warns early in the play, ‘the manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady’s income’.\textsuperscript{50} In effect, once Higgins’s bet is completed, Eliza belongs nowhere; no longer possessing her ‘kerbstone English’ she is ill-equipped to return to the gutter, and though possessing in abundance the social markers of a ‘lady’, she lacks the financial means to give them social reality. Her role in Wimpole Street ends with her victory at the ambassador’s garden party,\textsuperscript{51} after which it, and she, are redundant: ‘What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do?

\textsuperscript{45} This pronunciation of Higgins’s name is specified in the text of the film version of Pygmalion (1941), 120.
\textsuperscript{46} Pygmalion, v. 174.
\textsuperscript{47} Crystal, Encyclopaedia of Language, 17.
\textsuperscript{48} Pygmalion, Epilogue, 196.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. III. 158.
\textsuperscript{51} In the revised text of 1938, this is changed to the Embassy Ball.
Whats to become of me? The social consequences of linguistic change, and the new public identity which it comports, are made still clearer in the final Act of the play; as Eliza stresses to Higgins: 'when a child is brought to a foreign country, it picks up the language in a few weeks, and forgets its own. Well, I am a child in your country. I have forgotten my own language, and can speak nothing but yours.'

The solution is of course in terms of Eliza's original social ideal, the 'lady in the flower shop', a role uniting her new social abilities with those more pragmatic ones gained earlier beneath the auspices of Covent Garden. Replacing the corner of Tottenham Court Road with Kensington, Eliza is able to 'belong' once more, linguistically, socially, and, perhaps more importantly, materially, no longer condemned to feeling 'a child' in a 'foreign country'.

Shaw's study of the social markers which make up the seemingly insurmountable divisions of class is therefore none the less valid, or far-reaching, for all the apparent lightheartedness of the play. Its social meaning can be seen above all to reside in the stress placed on innate equality, against the arbitrary values placed on the symbols which obscure it, on the differences of income and enunciation which may spuriously suggest acceptability or otherwise. The social, and linguistic, manners in which Eliza receives her education belong of course only to the latter, or at least superficially, but, as Higgins tells her at the end of the play, a true social education may ultimately combine to give them another and altogether different value: 'The great secret, Eliza, is not having bad manners or good manners or any other particular sort of manners, but having the same manner for all human souls: in short, behaving as if you were in Heaven, where there are no third-class carriages, and one soul is as good as another. In a typically Shavian paradox, the manners on which *Pygmalion* 's comedy has primarily been based are themselves used to convey Shaw's socialist convictions about the insubstantiality of class and its distinctions: Higgins, intolerant and ultimately oblivious of social conventions, treats all duchesses as flower-girls; Pickering, with the politeness which makes him address Eliza as 'Miss Doolittle' even in the beginning, treats all flower-girls as duchesses. In the final count, it is this sense of social behaviour which matters most: 'Really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper

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52 *Pygmalion* (1941), 106. In the 1916 text of *Pygmalion*, this reads, 'What's to become of me? What's to become of me?' (IV. 163).
53 Ibid. v. 180.
54 Eliza's eventual social location, as Shaw stresses in a letter to Gabriel Pascal (24 Feb. 1938), 'is not a Bond Street shop, but a South Kensington one: half florist's, half greengrocer's and fruiterer's' (*Collected Letters 1928–1950*, ed. Dan H. Lawrence (London, 1989), 494).
55 *Pygmalion*, v. 184.
way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated’, says Eliza,\textsuperscript{56} giving final expression to the ‘real human needs’ and ‘worthy social structure’ which, as Shaw has always been aware, continue to lie behind the superficialities of social disguise.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid. v. 180.