

“Can the Subaltern [Teach]?”:

A Postcolonial Semiotic Reading of George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*

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Throughout his literary career, George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) used literature as a means to address social issues. In doing so, he succeeded in ‘speaking truth to power’ to borrow Edward Said’s words. Shaw’s dramatic art has often been appreciated for its philosophical undertones and social consciousness. The aim of this paper is to address the oppressive reality women endure in their roles as ‘live dolls’ or ‘toy objects,’ or as being considered merely a means to an end. Here, we investigate whether women can have a say in patriarchal societies by considering one of Shaw’s most discussed plays, *Pygmalion* (1912), from postcolonial and semiotic perspectives in light of Gayatri Spivak’s influential essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. The researcher will also explore how Shaw employs the juxtaposition of characters, conflicts, and settings to signify ideological barriers from a semiotic analysis. The role of women has traditionally been defined according to models put forward by the male privilege. In *Pygmalion*, Shaw unequivocally demonstrates how women are marginalized by the indigenous power structure that thrives on patriarchy and class-based privilege, but he also portrays women as equal to men in capability and sufficiently able to confront their male oppressors. By exuding confidence and creating their own spaces to assert their voices against injustices, women break down the barriers that separate them from their male counterparts and share common ground or centric position. In spite of being marginalized, the female characters developed by Shaw possess a strong will and resist forces hazardous to their survival. In *Pygmalion*, the main character, Eliza Doolittle, is a victim but does not suffer in silence. She is represented as the ideal of a courageous, talented, and determined woman who rises above societal conventions. Eliza resists imposed authority and the hegemony of the elite classes. Hence, the subaltern, in this play, breaks out in an attempt to be recognized.

Keywords: subaltern- postcolonial- oppressor- oppressed- semiotics- *Pygmalion*

One day, we shall explode the negative silences and paralyzing terror imposed upon us by tyranny of dominating cultures and their languages of conquest. We shall discover the authentic voices of our self-naming and renaming, reclaiming our role as composers, speaking for ourselves, because we too have tongues, you know! One day! (Mugo 87)

Introduction:

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was a world-renowned playwright whose plays were appreciated for their lyrical impulse and profundity of thought. He did not adhere to any established dramatic tradition but created a tradition of his own by bringing theatre closer to real life. For Shaw, theatre was a platform to bring life on the stage. He produced fifty plays of different categories. The relevance of his dramatic art lies in the fact that he made an authentic representation of several burning social issues and introduced radical subjects, such as struggling for emancipation, self-identity against the oppressive forces of society, women's rights and independence, and the breakdown of the family, to mention a few. Being a "realist," Shaw accepted that drama by virtue of experience can work as a more potent medium to bring social awareness. His plays, in this respect, reflect the idea that "True drama is created by bringing life to theatre and theatre to life" (Priestly 14).

This paper addresses one of Shaw's most famous plays, *Pygmalion*, that draws on the Pygmalion myth found in the tenth book of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. The myth tells of the misogynist sculptor Pygmalion on the

island of Cyprus, who fashions a statue of his feminine ideal, Galatea, far superior to any woman of flesh and blood. Awakened to life by the goddess Venus, Galatea marries Pygmalion and the two live happily ever after. It is a relatively short and uneventful myth which echoes in stories as varied as *Frankenstein*, *Pinocchio*, and *Coppelia*. *Pygmalion* is focused around Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics, taking notes at people's speech near Covent Garden at night. He can detect from their pronunciation where they are from. Higgins meets Colonel Pickering, an expert of Indian dialects, boasting that, by teaching proper pronunciation, he could pass the "sniveling" flower girl nearby off as a duchess.

The following day, Eliza Doolittle, the flower girl from act one, visits the professor's home and asks him to teach her "how to speak English well" in order to "work in a florists shop." Pickering bets Higgins that he will pay for the expenses if the professor could transform the flower girl into a lady. Higgins is determined to carry out the experiment. Meanwhile, Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle visits Higgins and demands a five pound note for taking Eliza from his home. Greatly interested in Doolittle's rhetoric of "the undeserving poor," Higgins gives the money to Doolittle, who leaves fully gratified. Some months later, Higgins visits his mother on one of her at-home days. There he takes Eliza to see how she can act as a lady before his mother's guests, Mrs. Eynsford Hills and her family, Clara and Freddy. At the party, Freddy "becomes infatuated" with Eliza who "gracefully" sits on the ottoman. Although good in pronunciation and manners, Eliza makes mistakes in talking about her aunt's death and uttering words unsuitable in polite company like "bloody likely." While Higgins and Pickering are having fun with their experiment, only Mrs. Higgins is worried about the

girl's future. Later, Eliza experiences success at an embassy ball, a dinner party, and the opera. However, on the night after coming back to Higgins's home, Eliza looks distressed while Higgins and Pickering are congratulating themselves, not paying attention to her presence or her feelings.

Indignant at the indifference, Eliza throws Higgins's slippers "with all her force" at his face, asking him twice "what's to become of her." The next morning, a flustered Higgins visits his mother's home with Pickering, telling her that Eliza is gone. Mrs. Higgins then tells them that Eliza is upstairs and calls her down. Ignoring Higgins, Eliza thanks Pickering for treating her as a lady from the beginning. Eliza wanted "a little kindness," wanted to be treated with some human warmth, but Higgins never considers human feelings, "always treating a lady like a flower girl." As the end approaches, Eliza leaves Higgins, declaring, "I will marry Freddy" and be "a teacher of phonetics." Although enraged by her impudence, Higgins finally realizes that she is a fellow human being or "a consort battleship," as Higgins describes her after the experiment is over.

Upon closer examination of the play, it is clear that several themes are intertwined. First, the play serves as an attack on the artificialities of class divisions, and that a common flower girl can fool the so-called polite company of the upper class and can be successful at a ball just by talking and behaving like a lady. However, the play also reveals the difficulty of solving the class-based problems in the sense that, without the economic foundation, it is meaningless to be a lady or a gentleman. Another important theme revealed in the play is its feminist consciousness in the sense that a new female image is born in Eliza Doolittle, much like Nora in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1910). What makes *Pygmalion* different from

Ibsen's work is that Eliza articulates her case and has a great debate with Higgins. As in *Candida* (1898), Shaw makes it clear that men as well as women need to grow up to face reality. Finally, and more importantly, *Pygmalion* has a tinge of post-colonialism in the sense that Higgins praises English as "the language of Shakespeare, Milton and the Bible" and tries to maintain its standard. Though his passion is sincere, Higgins's opinion is linguistic chauvinism in the age of world English today.

Aspects of Post-colonialism in *Pygmalion*:

Western colonialism, an oppressive ideology can be traced back to the Renaissance and post-Renaissance periods in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe. The Renaissance is an age of discovery and conquest of new territories. European missions to the New World at that period focused upon cultural or "linguistic colonialism," where the English language was considered the superior language, a gift or treasure that European or English conquerors could endow the savages with. Therefore, the English language was the best medium for civilization and progress. The oppressive practices of European colonization could be justified by two main principles seen in *Pygmalion*.

The first of these justifications was the inability of the indigenous people to speak a language that could be understood by the conquerors. At that time, Europeans conceived that the major aspect of civilization was the ability to communicate in a language that they could understand. Therefore, any nation that did not use a European language was regarded as uncivilized, and therefore needed intervention.

The natives were to be exploited and oppressed- they did not even deserve enlightenment because they were “dumb brutes created for our service” (qtd in Greenblatt 23). Consequently, the indigenous languages of the natives were completely denied alongside their cultures and identities. As a result, the natives, who refused to be humiliated and tenaciously held to their identity, were largely exterminated. Either indigenous peoples should submit willingly to oppression or they would be utterly devastated for their cause. In *Pygmalion* Higgins tells Pickering:

You see this creature with her kerbstone English; the English that will keep her into the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador’s garden party. I could even get her a place as lady’s maid or shop assistant, which requires better English (*Pygmalion* 8).

As this quote shows, Higgins represents colonial power and plays the role of the westerner who wants to transform the “creature,” the unnamed flower girl, into a duchess and to speak his own language. In his book, *Shakespeare’s Talking Animals*, Terence Hawkes argues that Prospero represents colonial power, and the same can be said of Higgins “imposes the “shape” of his own culture, embodied in his speech, on the New World, and makes that world recognizable, habitable, “natural”, able to speak his language.” (12)

The same argument can be said about *Pygmalion*, where the binary opposition of the colonizers superiority and the colonials inferiority is

strongly revealed in Higgins's words to Eliza when he hears her speaking English in a "disgusting" way:

A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere - no right to live. Remember that you are a human being with a soul and the divine gift to articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespeare and Milton (*Pygmalion* 8).

On another occasion, Higgins orders his housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce, to clean the flower girl and to "burn her clothes." (*Pygmalion* 16), to which Eliza replies "you're no gentleman, you're not, to talk of such things." On a different occasion, Higgins tells Eliza:

Eliza: you are to live here for the next six months, learning how to speak beautifully, like a lady in a florist's shop. If you're good and do whatever you're told, you shall sleep in a proper bedroom, and have lots to eat, and money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis. If you're naughty and idle you will sleep in the back kitchen among the black beetles, and be walloped by Mrs. Pearce with a broomstick. At the end of six months you shall go to Buckingham Palace in a carriage, beautifully dressed (*Pygmalion* 20).

To Higgins, Eliza is not a human being to be respected. Rather, she is an experiment, a project, or just a bet by which he wants to prove only that "he is the best teacher alive" (*Pygmalion* 16). Therefore, Higgins wants to give her a new language, a language that will enable her to have a new identity. Higgins tells his mother:

But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul (*Pygmalion* 43).

When Eliza left Higgins's home in the fourth act, denoting her psychological transformation, Higgins frantically searches for her to the extent that he calls the police. To him, Eliza is just a lost pet, a servant and not a woman to be respected or to have human feelings. Eliza is seen by Higgins as one who is there to "pick up your slippers and put up your tempers and fetch and carry for you" (*Pygmalion* 66), or she is there only to "put out the lights" (*Pygmalion* 49) It justifies the oppression by the civilized Western of the savage indigenous natives represented by Eliza Doolittle. Tiffin and Lawson argue that "Language is one of the most basic markers of colonial authority . . . the overarching power of an imperial tongue is to prohibit the "old" language. Forbidding people to speak their own tongue is the first step in the destruction of a culture." (112)

According to Palestinian-American postcolonial theorist Edward Said, the West and the East form "binary oppositions," where the West is superior and the East is inferior. Irrationality, primitiveness, and sensuality are used to describe the East, whereas rationality, enlightenment, and elevation are characteristics of the West. This ideology supports the oppressive hegemony and governs the relation between the oppressor and the oppressed. In this respect, in *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aime Cesaire explains the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed "[There is] no human contact, but relations of human domination and submission which turn the colonizing

man [oppressor] into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, . . . and the indigenous man [oppressed] into an instrument of production.” (81)

The fact that Shaw chooses the job of professor for Higgins’s occupation is significant, owing to the fact that it reiterates the main aim of the teacher (as Other/colonizer) basically to educate, civilize, and refine. In act 4, and after the experiment is over:

ELIZA (*breathless*): Nothing wrong with you. I’ve won your bet for you. . . I don’t matter, I suppose.

HIGGINS: You won my bet! Presumptuous insect! I won it. What did you throw those slippers at me for (*Pygmalion* 50)?

The pronouns “I” and “You” are considered like others to be described as signs which aid the audience to grasp the meaning of what is being said. In this respect, Susan Melrose proposes that “deictics in dramatic writing (e.g. I /you/he/she...; now/then (past)/ then (future) set up parameters to the flow of this analogical work, focusing and restraining the speed of spectator processing” (147-148). Accordingly, the didactic and instructive attitude toward Eliza by the Europeanized professor/teacher is highlighted.

The professor is seen as overwhelmingly obsessed by his struggle for authority, which is manifested in his relentless attempt to transform Eliza. This, in part, accounts for his main goal of civilizing Eliza according to his own Europeanized norms. This is skillfully depicted through the stage directions where the characters’ gestures communicate meaning:

HIGGINS: (*brusquely, recognizing her with unconcealed disappointment, and at once babylike, making an intolerable grievance of it*) (*Pygmalion* 13).

Another example:

HIGGINS: (stupent, recovering his breath with a grasp) (*Pygmalion* 13).

These previous examples show that Eliza's marginalization is multilayered. For one, she belongs to the lower class and is a woman who need the teacher to instruct, guide, and refine her. This is further illustrated in the stage directions where the actors' gestural signs make it possible for the audience to decode the full meaning, which is not determined by the vocal delivery alone" (Esslin 65).

Higgins sees no other way to improve Eliza's condition through framing her as an object or experiment. It appears to him that, through treating Eliza badly, he would have claim over her mind, and his schemes of educating, taming, refining, cultivating, and enlightening her would work out perfectly. This explains his adopted didactic discourse. It is also interesting to point out that, when this form of discourse fails, he turns to tender words in a manner that appeals to—or at least tries to appeal to—her mind:

HIGGINS: [*Snatching a chocolate cream from the piano, his eye suddenly beginning to twinkle with mischief*] Have some chocolates Eliza (*Pygmalion* 19).

HIGGINS: Pledge of good faith, Eliza. I eat one half you eat the other. [*Eliza opens her mouth to retort: he pops the half chocolate into it*]. You shall have boxes of them, barrels of them, every day. You shall live on them (*Pygmalion* 19).

On another occasion, Higgins seeks to convince the lower class Eliza of the attractions of the new lifestyle:

HIGGINS: If you're good and do whatever you're told, you shall sleep in a proper bedroom, and have lots to eat, and money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis. At the end of six months you shall go to Buckingham Palace in a carriage, beautifully dressed. If the King finds out you're not a lady, you will be taken by the police to the Tower of London, where your head will be cut off as a warning to other presumptuous flower girls. If you are not found out, you shall have a present of seven-and-sixpence to start life with as a lady in a shop (*Pygmalion* 20).

Higgins's words are significant in the sense that they promise Eliza an Egalitarian position next to her Europeanized/Westernized role as a queen or a fine lady. He attempts to make Eliza realize that learning a new language will bestow upon her a more dignified rank as a companion rather than the status of an ordinary housewife performing the boring domestic chores and duties. Higgins seems to have forgotten two important issues, namely his clash with Eliza, which in turn mirrors the conflict between Europeanized and native traditions, and Eliza's own vision of assertiveness that is culturally biased.

Analysis of Setting in *Pygmalion*:

One of the broadest definitions of semiotics “is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Eco 7). Semiotics involves the study of not only of what we refer to as “signs” in everyday speech but of anything which stands for something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. According to Keir Elam, semiotics can be best defined as:

. . . Science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such it is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of communication, i.e. the means whereby meaning are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are thus at once the different sign system and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby (1).

Eco suggests that semiotics encompasses all fields of human knowledge and is “concerned with everything that can be taken as significantly substituting for something else” (7). Eco goes further to suggest that a proper understanding of signs and their function is made possible through a culturally related system of “codes.” He perceives of culture as “a system of structured significations,” and as such it “should be studied as a communicative phenomenon based on signification systems” (22).

In tune with Eco’s views, Erika Fischer-Lichte believes that anything produced by human beings is significant in the sense that “everything that is perceived is perceived as a signifier which must be judged to have a signified; i.e. a meaning” (1). Accordingly, theater, being a cultural system,

has “the general function of generating meaning” (1). Jonathan Culler, in *The Pursuit of Signs*, directly related semiotics to literature:

A semiotics of literature is thus based on two assumptions... first, that literature should be treated as a mode of signification and communication, in that a proper description of a literary work must refer to the meanings it has for its readers; second, that one can identify the effects of signification one wants to account for (47-48).

One element Shaw employs is the juxtaposition of characters, conflicts, and settings to signify ideological barriers. For example, in Act 1, the characters are depicted as stereotypes and the settings described at opposite locations contribute in reinforcing the element of juxtaposition. In the same act, characters do not have names but titles, such as the flower girl, the note taker, and the gentleman. As Marvin Carlson states, “generic names indicate characters simply by their professions or place in society, stressing the typical at the expense of the individual” (36)

On the other hand, the flower girl signifies the anti-colonial revolutionary, or the repressed in Third World colonized countries. She is ironically considered by the oppressor or the oppressive power and the elite as a “liar,” and as a person who “has no right to live” (*Pygmalion* 8). Therefore, being oppressed, Eliza is struggling to maintain herself, not by violence but through learning a new language. In other words, the violence practiced by the oppressed is a direct result of a similar violence imposed by the oppressor. For example, in Act 4, Eliza “snatches up the slippers, and hurls them at (Higgins). . . with all her force,” adding, “there are your

slippers”. A frustrating event increases the probability of aggressive behavior. Byrne and Kelley explain, “When a behavior directed toward a goal is blocked, there develops a motive to injure whomever or whatever was the source of frustration” (380). Eliza, though silent, does exist despite the oppressive politics of colonization represented by Higgins in the play.

Alfred Doolittle is another character that shows the conflict between two opposite ideologies. According to Doolittle, the hegemony of capitalism leads to the social oppression and poverty of working class people, and as a communist, he concentrates on the workers’ problems, considering capitalism, represented in the play by middle-class morality, the reason for all the disasters that befall any community. He says:

What am I, governors both? I ask you, what am I? I’m one of the undeserving poor: that’s what I am. Think of what that means to a man. It means that he’s up agen middle class morality all the time. If there’s anything going, and I put in for a bit of it, it’s always the same story: ‘You’re undeserving; so you can’t have it.’ But my needs is as great as the most deserving widow’s that ever got money out of six different charities in one week for the death of the same husband. I don’t need less than a deserving man: I need more. (*Pygmalion*27-28)

After his financial transformation, we see Doolittle is unhappy with his new station in life. In Act 5, he argues, “Done to me! Ruined me. Destroyed my happiness. Tied me up and delivered me into the hands of the middle class morality” (*Pygmalion* 57). Like any colonized who feels trapped between “the Skilly of the workhouse and the Char Bydis of the

middle class” (*Pygmalion* 59). It is the same concept of “The Third Space,” discussed by the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha in his book, *The Location of Culture*. This “Third Space” refers to the interstices between colliding cultures, a liminal space “which gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (Bhabha 28).

Another juxtaposition in the play that also reflects the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer is the use of conflicting settings. The iconicity of setting in drama functions to provide a backdrop against which the action takes place as well as indicating certain qualities concerning the characters on the stage:

The most obvious function of the set or decor is an informational, iconic one: it “pictures” the environment against which the action of the drama unfolds, and provides much of the basic expositional information for the spectator’s understanding of it by indicating its place and period, the social position of the characters and many other essential aspects of the drama (Esslin 73).

In *Pygmalion*, the setting changes from Covent Garden to Eliza’s home, then to Higgins’s home, and then to Mrs. Higgins’s home. The settings in the play reveal the juxtaposition and foreshadow the relation between the oppressor and the oppressed. For example, concerning Eliza’s home, the stage direction reads (and she herself declares): “What harm is there in leaving Lison Grove? It wasn’t fit for a pig to live in” (*Pygmalion* 5). The stage direction indicates the sharp contrast between Eliza’s home

and Higgins's on one side and Mrs. Higgins's on another side. Higgins's house is seen as very comfortable with "a fireplace," "a comfortable leather-covered easy chair," and where "there is a clock on the mantelpiece. Between the fireplace and the phonograph table is a stand for newspapers" (*Pygmalion* 11). Furthermore, Higgins's home has "a telephone" and a piano" and his mother's is a luxurious home "looking on the river and a balcony with flowers in pots," (*Pygmalion* 53). Higgins's home and his mother's reveal a comfortable atmosphere for the colonizer whereas the colonized, represented in the play by Eliza's home, are deprived by these privileges. Signs of deprivation are rendered throughout the play's settings to reinforce the conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed. Thus, settings acquire an acting role, as Martin Esslin explains:

Properties—furniture, tools, instruments, and other movable objects present in the dramatic space and used by the characters are basically part of the overall design. "Real" objects... used in this context have the same dual aspects as the real people embodying the characters... Thus has an acting role... The objects the characters handle, the furniture they use, can also carry important symbolical meaning (81).

A Subaltern interpretation of *Pygmalion* :

Gayatri Spivak, the author of the 1988 essay on postcolonial theories, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" examines the position of the marginalized indigenous natives in the oppressor/oppressed relationship. The term subaltern is applied to those of inferior rank. By subaltern, Spivak meant the oppressed subjects of Indian society. In the early 1980s, a collective effort of

intellectuals, known as the Subaltern Studies Group, started a systematic attempt to study the general attributes of subordination expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, or any other way. Spivak concluded that subalterns are forced to maintain silence against oppression and injustice. Leela Gandhi says “Subaltern Studies defined itself as an attempt to allow the “people” finally to speak within the jealous pages of elitist historiography and in so doing, to speak for, or to sound the muted voice of truly oppressed” (2).

According to Spivak, the subaltern represents a category of lower subjects in colonial/neocolonial societies who are deprived speech. That is to say, objecting or even presenting their points of view, such as the homeless, the unemployed, the day laborers, etc. Spivak investigates of the question of power, amongst other issues, where she traces the position of women as marginalized and oppressed, or subaltern. She focuses on women as being “doubly oppressed”— once by their own societies and again by the colonial power, and they are unheard in both situations. In other words, the female subaltern is doubly marginalized: “If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak 28).

In Act 4 of *Pygmalion*, when Pickering, Higgins, and Eliza come back from three different occasions where Eliza proves to be successful and she “did the trick,” Higgins and Pickering are celebrating their own excellent results while ignoring the presence of Eliza and her role in the success of the experiment. Eliza does not speak because the male characters do not involve her in the conversation. The stage direction shows that “Eliza looks at him darkly; then rises suddenly and leaves the room,” and then she “returns with

a pair of large down-at heel slippers. She places them on the carpet before Higgins, and sits as before *without a word*,” which results in making Eliza “flinches violently; but they take no notice of her and she recovers herself and sits *stonily* as before” [therefore] Eliza’s beauty becomes murderous” (*Pygmalion* 49). Now, the subaltern can speak and takes revenge on her oppressor. The stage direction reads

Eliza tries to control herself and feel indifferent and walks across the hearth to switch off the lights...Finally, she gives way and flings herself furiously on the floor, raging...snatching up the slippers, and hurling them at him one after the other with all her force (*Pygmalion* 49).

Pygmalion demonstrates the general conflicts of value systems and portrays strong values such as traditional common sense as opposed to lesser, Europeanized values. This is clearly illustrated through Liza’s rejection of Higgins’s marriage proposal, saying, “I sold flowers. I did not sell myself” (52). Eliza’s words imply not only her refusal to adapt new values and traditions but additionally foreshadow her retreat to her own cultural values and traditions. In this respect, *Pygmalion* can be appreciated as a voyage from self-awareness to self-realization and from self-realization to self-defense. Higgins’s predicament is that he attempts to force himself upon Eliza in ways that are alien to her own understanding and culture. She believes that Higgins would isolate her from her own culture. As a result, the life Higgins promises her if she marries would be life-draining, casting her away from her culture and from what she believes to be the essence of her being. Accordingly, it would not be surprising that Eliza would never agree to conform to the new role given to her by a new value system. Though

Eliza's words might sound offensive and aggressive at times, they reflect a cultural tone rather than an individualistic attitude, a tone that the professor has fallen short of understanding.

Conclusion:

In *Pygmalion*, Shaw creates female characters that are not weak or silent but are aware and confident enough to retaliate against the wrongdoers. Semiotically speaking, in the play, Shaw employs the juxtaposition of characters, conflicts, and settings to signify ideological barriers. Shaw articulates the voices of oppressed people in society whose identities are shrouded under the cover of social prejudices. They have been dragged into darkness, doomed to survive in perpetual silence while bearing the oppressive burden of the hegemony of the elitist class. Shaw investigates the identities of those who occupy no space in the social order. *Pygmalion* signifies that the subordinate current of sublime realization is beyond the rational control of man. The last confession of Higgins that Eliza becomes “a tower of strength: a consort battleship” (71) shows that previously subordinate women can now speak and can “go and be a teacher.” Eliza wants to move on, to love, to live.

In the postcolonial text, efforts were made to articulate the silent voices of women. They were encouraged to come out of the dark spaces and to participate in mainstream social political thought and to participate in the various spheres of life. In other words, the subaltern can speak and able to be shifted from margin to center as the title of the research indicates.

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هل يستطيع التابع ان يُعلم؟:

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مستخلص البحث

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة مسرحية بيجماليون للكاتب الأيرلندي الشهير جورج برنارد شو (1856- 1950)، وتحليلها وفقا لنظرية ما بعد الكولونيالية مع الإلماعة إلى مقال الناقد الهندية جياترى اسيفاك ، الموسوم: " هل يستطيع التابع أن يتكلم؟" من ناحية ودراسة أهمية المكان في المسرحية؛ وذلك بالإشارة إلى تطبيق المنهج السيميائي (علم العلامات) من ناحية أخرى. تناول البحث تحليل الشخصية الرئيسة في المسرحية، وكيف عانت هذه الشخصية وقاومت تقاليد المجتمع والهيمنة الذكورية منتصرة عليه في النهاية. فعلى الرغم من التهميش الذى تعرضت له البطلة أثناء المسرحية؛ فقد تمتعت بإرادة قوية، ولم تعانِ في صمت، بل بدتْ شجاعة متجاوزة الأعراف الاجتماعية السائدة وقتئذ.

كلمات مفتاحية: ما بعد الكولونيالية – الهيمنة الذكورية – التابع- السيميائية – بيجماليون