

ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
ENGLISH CULTURE AND LITERATURE MASTER'S PROGRAMME

GENDER ROLES AND SOCIAL CLASS AS REPRESENTED IN
PYGMALION AND LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

Master's Thesis

Gülfer YÜCEKUL

Ankara-2023

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ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled “Gender Roles and Social Class as Represented in *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere’s Fan*” and prepared by Gülfer YÜCEKUL meets with the committee’s approval unanimously as Master’s Thesis in the field of English Culture and Literature following the successful defense conducted on 14/06/2023.



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ETHICAL STATEMENT

I accept and acknowledge that I have prepared this thesis study, prepared in line with the Thesis Writing Guidelines of Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences;

- within the framework of academic and ethical rules;
- presented the information, documents, evaluations, and results in a way that meets the rules of scientific ethics and morality,
- I have referenced each work from which I have benefited while preparing my thesis, and that
- I hereby present a unique study.

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14/06/2023

Gülfer YÜCEKUL

ÖZ

Yücekul, Gülfer. *Pygmalion ve Lady Windermere'in Yelpazesi'nde Temsil Edilen Toplumsal Sınıf ve Cinsiyet Roller*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2023.

Bu tez, George Bernard Shaw'un *Pygmalion* ve Oscar Wilde'in *Lady Windermere'in Yelpazesi* oyunlarında cinsiyet rolleri, kadın kimliği ve toplumsal sınıf temalarını ve karakterlerin kişisel ve entelektüel olarak nasıl değiştiğini incelemektedir. Hikayeleri farklı olsa da her iki oyun da toplumun beklentilerine uygun şekilde davranmak zorunda kalan kadın karakterlere sahiptir. Oyunların yapısını yönlendiren iki temel fikir vardır. İlk fikir, Wilde ve Shaw'un diğer birçok oyununda da görüldüğü gibi, bu iki oyunda da soyluluktan işçi sınıfına kadar farklı sosyoekonomik arka planlardan karakterlerin bulunmasıdır ve bu nedenle, üst sınıfa mensup Viktoryalıların alt sınıflara yönelik görüşleri ve perspektifleri açıkça sergilenir. İkinci fikir, kadınların statüsünün ve toplumsal normların kadın davranışı ve etiği üzerindeki etkisi ile ilgilidir. Gerçekten de, her iki oyunda da Wilde ve Shaw, dönemin toplumsal cinsiyet ve sosyal sınıf eşitsizliklerinin etkilerini açıkça gösteriyorlar. Dahası, hem *Pygmalion*'daki Elisa'nın dönüşümü ve Freddy ile evliliği hem de *Lady Windermere'in Yelpazesi*'ndeki Bayan Windermere'in evini terk etmesi ve Mrs. Erlynne'i kabulü ile Bayan Erlynne'in toplum tarafından kabul görmesi Viktorya toplumunda kadınların sınıfında ve ahlak yargılarında alışılmadık bir bakış açısına neden olur. İki seçilen oyun göz önüne alındığında, bu tezin amacı, oyun yazarları tarafından oluşturulan hikaye örgüsü göz önünde bulundurularak toplumda erkek ve kadın karakterlerin temsillerinin ve yaşadıkları toplumdaki koşullarının karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmesidir. Bu, Gramsci'nin ideolojisi ve feminist teoriden ek destek ile, erkek ve kadın karakterlerin nasıl tasvir edildiğine ve sosyal durumlarına bakılarak gerçekleştirilecektir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Pygmalion*, *Lady Windermere'in Yelpazesi*, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Roller, Değişim, Normlar

ABSTRACT

Yücekul, Gülfer. Gender Roles and Social Class as Represented in *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2023.

This thesis explores the themes of gender roles, female identity, and social class and how the characters change personally and intellectually in the plays "*Pygmalion*" by George Bernard Shaw and "*Lady Windermere's Fan*" by Oscar Wilde. Even though their stories are different, both plays have female characters who have to act in ways that society expects of women. There are two main ideas that guide the structure of the plays. The first idea, as seen in many of Wilde's and Shaw's plays, is that there are characters from different socioeconomic backgrounds, from the aristocracy to the working class and thus, upper-class Victorians' opinions and perspectives on the lower classes are on full display. The second idea concerns the status of women and the influence of societal norms on female behaviour and ethics. Indeed, in both plays, Wilde and Shaw do not hold back in explaining the ripple effects of the period's gender and social class disparities. Furthermore, much as Elisa's transformation in *Pygmalion* and her marriage to Freddy bring about an unconventional shift in her rank and class in Victorian society, so too does Lady Windermere's leaving her house and acceptance of Mrs. Erlynne as well as how Mrs. Erlynne was accepted by the society bring about an unconventional change in judgments of morality and fallen women. When the two chosen plays are taken into consideration, the purpose of this thesis is to compare and contrast the representation of male and female characters and their conditions in society in terms of the plotlines weaved by their playwrights, which do not correspond to the conventional expectations of society. This will be accomplished by examining how male and female characters are portrayed in plotlines, as well as their social situations, in light of Antonio Gramsci's ideology, with additional support from feminist theory.

Keywords: *Pygmalion*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Gender Roles, Transformation, Societal Norms

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INTRODUCTION

Through the study of *Pygmalion* (by George Bernard Shaw) and *Lady Windermere's Fan* (by Oscar Wilde), this thesis analyses and contrasts the depiction of male and, in particular, female characters, as well as the plotlines of their playwrights, which do not correspond to the conventional expectations of society, using Antonio Gramsci's perspective, with additional support from feminist theory. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate how both plays depict characteristics of gender roles, feminine identity, and social class in the Victorian Period, while the main female characters are created by their playwrights to demonstrate that they can undergo personal, social, and intellectual transformations.

Both *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* demonstrate the influence of social structures, specifically the beliefs and customs of the Victorian aristocracy and the constraints imposed on women during that period. Additionally, as *Pygmalion* is a social critique and a comedy of manners and *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a satire of Victorian society, they highlight the hypocrisy of upper-class English society by portraying the strict moral codes that compel female characters to conform to societal expectations of ladylike behaviour, despite being subject to patriarchal norms.

Both plays explore the impact of patriarchal culture and social status on female characters and depict women who are expected to adhere to societal expectations regarding their behaviour. Shaw and Wilde effectively illuminated the prevalent class and gender issues of their period by exploring the roles and responsibilities of Victorian women in society throughout their literary works. As a result, plays served as a reflective medium for the English society of the period. However, this thesis claims that while both playwrights show the realities of class inequality, women's status, and the hypocrisy of the upper class in their depictions of Victorian-period British society, their main purpose is to show that female characters can rise in the social ladder and be accepted by society in ways that were not possible during that time period.

George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856 to a lower-middle-class Scottish-Protestant bloodline. In the words of Arthur H. Nethercot "(...) all through his life Shaw hated the name "George" and attempted with increasing assiduity to eliminate it from both private and public use" (Nethercot "A Plea for Bernard Shaw."

2). George Carr Shaw, his father whom he was named after, was a failed corn merchant with a history of alcoholism. According to Nethercot, his aversion to the name "George" may have stemmed from his childhood disdain for his father. It can be seen that in his autobiographical essay, "Sixteen Self Sketches," Shaw put his feelings in words as "It is a rhetorical exaggeration to say that I have never since believed in anything or anybody; but the wrench from my childish faith in my father as perfect and omniscient to the discovery that he was a hypocrite and a dipsomaniac was so sudden and violent that it must have left its mark on me" (77). On the other hand, his mother was a professional singer. When Shaw was barely sixteen, his mother abandoned her husband and son and moved to London with Vandeleur Lee, where the two formed a new life by taking Shaw's older sister Lucy with them. As M. Cary Mazer states in web.english.upenn.edu, Shaw stayed in Dublin with his father, finishing his education (which he despised) and working as a clerk for an estate office (which he hated just as much as school). Thus, it should not be a surprise that Shaw's plays are full of troubled parent-child relationships: children raised apart from their mothers or fathers, abandoned, orphaned, or adopted children, and parents who think they have their children's love and loyalty when they do not. (Mazer) For instance, Eliza, the protagonist of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, is a young woman who sells flowers on the street to make ends meet. Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle, is a dustman who has had at least six wives and sees Eliza as a burden. He has no morals and is therefore a carefree man. When he finds that his daughter is at Henry Higgins' house, he follows the situation to see if he can make a profit. Besides, as Hadfield states, "Throughout the last decade of that century, perhaps no one wrote more for and about women than George Bernard Shaw, whose advanced views on the "woman question" earned him significant notice as an ardent champion of early feminism" (4), and Eliza is a part of this "woman question" throughout the change she undergoes.

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born on October 16, 1854, in Dublin, Ireland. His father, William Robert Wills Wilde, had been a successful surgeon for 39 years and owned his own clinic and hospital. As Alexander Grinstein claims, Oscar Wilde's father Sir William had various extramarital activities that were well-known and debated. While he is said to have had a number of illegitimate children, his biological son, Henry Wilson, and his two daughters, Emily and Mary, who took their father's last name, are the only ones listed in biographies. Henry Wilson served in his

father's hospital in Dublin as a surgeon and oculist. The two girls died in their twenties because their dresses with hoopskirts caught fire at a ball. Sir William's adultery with Mary Travers resulted in a scathing courtroom verdict in 1864. He completely lost faith in his career over time and passed away in 1876 (Grinstein 125). Jane Francesca Wilde (nee Elgee), Oscar Wilde's mother, was also a writer who wrote progressive essays for the Irish Nationalist newspaper under the pen names John Fanshaw Ellis and Speranza while she was younger. Lady Wilde's political writing ebbed after she got married to William Wilde in Dublin on November 12, 1851, but she carried on composing stories, poems, and fiction. Her Irish story series were especially prominent. The Wildes had three children: two boys, William Charles Kingsbury Wilde and Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, who were born around a year after they married, and a daughter, Isola Francesca, who died at the age of nine while Oscar Wilde was only thirteen. His mother was a clever person but was also narcissistic and regal. She was "distressed" (Grinstein, 155) because of many things, like her husband's obvious extramarital affair, her own lawsuits, and her grief over Isola's death. According to Alexander Grinstein, it's unclear how much she told Oscar about her problems or if he saw her sadness as a repulse of himself. Lady Wilde's biographers all accept that when Wilde was born, she wanted a baby girl. It's still uncertain how much she mentioned to Oscar about her desire for him to be a daughter. For many years, she clothed him in girl's apparel. This clearly suggests that Wilde was clothed in such a way to meet his mother's emotional needs. Some of the woman characters in Wilde's writings provide further insight into his thoughts towards his mother's temperament. Plenty of these female characters are depressed, unhappy, and altruistic. In almost every one of his plays, Wilde introduces a bold and belligerent female character as well. In his characters, aggressive behaviour differs in severity, consistency, and motive based on social background. The recurrent motif of the refusing, abstracted mother is critical (Grinstein, 155). In *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1891), for instance, Mrs. Erlynne left her newborn daughter and consorted with a boyfriend who, unfortunately, finally refused her. As Grinstein mentions, in so many of Wilde's works, the idea of a mother not showing love and affection to a child or losing a child and the tragic effects of these kinds of situations on the mother's personality can be seen. It can be thought whether Oscar Wilde was attempting to work on his own emotions of disappointment and resentment over his mother's lack of affection (Grinstein, 156).

Analysing the plays *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* from the perspective of Antonio Gramsci's theories unveils a profound exploration of societal power dynamics and cultural hegemony. Being a renowned Marxist thinker and political theorist, Antonio Gramsci delved into the notion of hegemony as a means by which dominant groups maintain their authority over society and his ideas illuminate the various ways power relations manifest and persist within cultural and social domains. Thus, by incorporating Gramsci's theories into the examination of these plays, a deeper comprehension of complex mixture of power and control interwoven within the dramas becomes attainable. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony underscores the significance of cultural institutions, such as language, education, and the arts, in shaping and upholding prevailing ideologies. Applying this framework to *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* permits an exploration of how language, social class, and gender intersect to establish and fortify power dynamics. Hence, the analysis of the plays using Gramsci's theories unveils how the interactions and struggles of the characters mirror the broader power conflicts and social hierarchies evident in their respective societies. Furthermore, Gramsci's emphasis on the agency of marginalized groups provides a lens through which to analyse resistance, negotiation, and transformation of power relationships depicted in the plays. By integrating Gramsci's ideas into the analysis, this thesis endeavours to illuminate the intricate interplay between power, culture, and individual agency within *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*.

This thesis is divided into three chapters and ends with a conclusion. The first chapter is the Theoretical Framework, and it is divided into four parts: the first part gives a brief overview of the Victorian period, Victorian women, feminine identity, and social class in Victorian society. This is important because understanding the plays requires a deep grasp of how the period affected the social, political, cultural, socioeconomic, and moral makeup of the time, as well as how it affected the position of women. The second part gives some brief information about Victorian theatre. With this part, the two Victorian plays analysed in the thesis will make more sense with a little history of Victorian Theatre. It also provides context for the plays by describing the historical and cultural milieu of their time and by discussing the customs, trends, and audience expectations of the time's theatre. Furthermore, it is easier to analyse the plays' themes, characters, and dramaturgical components if one is familiar with the

Victorian theatre background. The third part is about feminism and Marxism. This part aims to give some information about the conceptual structure of feminism by giving some theoretical information about what feminism is and how it developed. Feminism provides a framework for understanding the historical and cultural contexts in which women have been subjected to repressive gender norms, which in turn reinforce patriarchal society's assumption that women must act in a specific manner and are worthless in comparison to men. This part is also allocated to the principles of Marxism. Capitalism's class relations inevitably lead to a form of inequality that Marxism seeks to remedy. It acknowledges that class inequality is the primary cause of repression in capitalist regimes. In both dramas examined, it is clear that the female characters live in a patriarchal society, which influences the perspectives of other members of the society in terms of their behaviour or morality. Besides, it can be seen that class difference, no matter whether it is between different genders or the same, is one of the most influential determinants in one's life. The last part of the first chapter is devoted to giving information about Antonio Gramsci and his intellectual development as he helped shape Western Marxism and was one of the most influential Marxist theorists of the 20th century. Furthermore, his question about women highlights female subordination. The plays demonstrate that the characters' choices and behaviour are constrained by their social and economic conditions. The plays, nonetheless, demonstrate the capacity for opposition and rebellion towards prevalent cultural standards and principles. In this sense, both *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* will be analysed through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's ideas since Gramsci posited that cultural hegemony, which refers to the capacity of the dominant culture to sustain its power through cultural institutions and practices, played a crucial role in upholding class dominance. Specifically, the ruling class maintained its power by means of cultural hegemony, which entailed shaping the beliefs, values, and norms of society to align with their own interests. Thus, the plays can be interpreted as a form of criticism towards cultural hegemony, highlighting the possibility of resistance and subversion against prevailing cultural norms and values.

The second chapter of the thesis is dedicated to an analysis of the play *Pygmalion*, created by George Bernard Shaw in 1912. *Pygmalion* is a theatrical work set in London approximately a decade following the conclusion of the Victorian era. The play portrays a society that is heavily influenced by a prevailing social hierarchy.

The aforementioned characteristics are observable not solely in the traditions and convictions of the Victorian upper class, but also in the experiences of women who had not yet attained certain essential entitlements and freedoms. In this sense, the literary work *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw delves into the themes of social class, gender, and identity within the historical backdrop of London during the early twentieth century. Shaw is renowned for his portrayals of liberated women. The play follows the story of Eliza Doolittle, a member of the working class who sells flowers for a living. She is then mentored by Professor Henry Higgins, a specialist in phonetics, who is resolute in his mission to elevate her social status and refine her into a sophisticated, upper-class woman. The play scrutinises the influence of social class on personal identity and the intricate characteristics of gender roles and anticipations, through the characters' interactions and the obstacles they encounter. The play additionally depicts a departure from oppressive patriarchal norms or limitations.

The third chapter delves into Oscar Wilde's play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, which explores the effects of gender generalisations on human nature and female identity through the use of characters and situations. Wilde's work highlights the potential threat that gender stereotypes pose to these fundamental aspects of human existence. Similar to *Pygmalion*, Oscar Wilde's theatrical work titled *Lady Windermere's Fan* is set in London during the latter part of the Victorian period in 1891. It illustrates the duality of upper-class English society, as well as the inflexible moral principles that seek to categorise and constrain women within the framework of patriarchal societal norms. In his literary work, Wilde utilises witty dialogues and ironic humour to reveal the insincerity of the affluent English community and its flexible ethical principles that aim to restrict women to predetermined societal positions. Thus, the play offers a critical analysis of the repressive characteristics of a patriarchal society and its influence on one's independence and individuality.

Finally, all this content will be summed up in the conclusion, and the points made in *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* will be wrapped up with an assessment of the significance of the plays.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. The Victorian Period and Victorian Women

1.1.1. The victorian period

To have a deeper grasp of the Victorian Period, it is necessary first to understand its influence on social, cultural, economic, and ethical formation. If the Victorian Period is considered Queen Victoria's reign, then it began in 1837 and ended when the Queen died in 1901. Since it was a very long period that lasted nearly seventy years, her accession to the throne corresponded with the start of the decade and her death at the conclusion of the nineteenth century. It was a coincidence that a young, attractive princess who was not the King's daughter, but his niece became queen. As a consequence, she came to represent this time of thrilling but also terrifying transition. As Greenblatt states, England was the first nation to become industrialized, and for this reason, its transformation was particularly difficult, as it had to endure a multitude of social and economic issues as a result of this quick and uncontrolled industrialization. (1018) At the start of this period, economic depressions resulted from the new capitalist system, which operated on the laissez-faire principle. However, the passage of the First Reform Bill, or the Great Reform Act of 1832, marked the beginning of a period of both economic boom and despair as a result of rapid industrialisation. On June 4, 1832, the bill was enacted after being proposed by Prime Minister Lord Grey. During the Victorian period, the First Reform Bill was a very important piece of British law. According to historian Eric J. Evans, the First Reform Bill was a "crucial step on the road to democratization" (251). With this bill, more men would be eligible to vote, and the election process would be reformed. As a result of the bill, from roughly 400,000 to 650,000, or about one in six adult males, were made eligible for voting. Nevertheless, it also denied voting rights to many people, especially those from the working class and women. The significance of the First Reform Bill lies in the fact that it granted the middle class the right to be adequately represented in Parliament. This marked the end of the borough system, and both the new industrial and the old rural districts were granted the right to a representation that exceeded their income and population. As McDowall states, "At first sight the Reform Bill itself seemed almost a political revolution. (...) But there were limits to the progress made. (...) However, in spite of its shortcomings, the 1832 Reform Bill was a political

recognition that Britain had become an urban society” (134). So, although more men than before were granted voting rights under the First Reform Bill, many, especially from the working class, were still denied their democratic voice. That is why it was also a period when trade unions were highly active, leading to the working-class movement, Chartism. McDowall also adds that

Working together for the first time, unions, workers and radicals put forward a People’s Charter in 1838. The Charter demanded rights that are now accepted by everyone: the vote for all adults; the right for a man without property of his own to be an MP; voting in secret (...). All of these demands were refused by the House of Commons” (135).

This quote by McDowall highlights the struggle of the working class for political representation and the resistance of the ruling class to reform throughout the Victorian period and the People's Charter movement of 1838. The demands in the People's Charter reflect a crucial event in the development of British democracy because of the period's tense class dynamics, which stemmed from the expansion of the working class and the widening of economic disparity caused by the industrial revolution. The demands of the People's Charter, such as universal suffrage and secret voting, posed major dangers to the established social order of Victorian England. The idea of extending voting rights to the working class was formerly seen as a threat by those in power when it was limited to males of a specific socioeconomic position and who owned property. House of Commons' refusal to accommodate these requests is symptomatic of the ruling class's resistance to change and reluctance to give up power.

In the 1840s, also known as the hungry forties, the severity of these economic troubles reached its peak. Yet, as mechanisation and urbanisation quickly increased, Britain experienced some economic downturns, but it carried on expanding. People who could adjust themselves to these changes managed to take advantage of the new circumstances, making the disparity between the rich and the poor more visible. As Allitt claims, “Victorian Britain (1837–1901) was a paradoxical society and one of extreme contrasts. Very wealthy and very poor people lived side by side. The society was immensely creative but burdened with a stifling social-class system” (5). According to Thomas Carlyle's article "Captains of Industry," factory owners, merchants, and capitalists who invested in such businesses hired employees without carrying any responsibilities (1072). Carlyle referred to significant and remarkable gains, as well as impressive technical and scientific breakthroughs that aided in the growth of industry, agriculture, commerce, and communications. He, however,

stressed massive losses and bankruptcies. He believed there was a demand for reform which was also a call for action. The Corn Laws (1815-1846) increased food costs to stimulate local farming. As a result, people became unemployed and criminal attempts were high, and people were unable to find money even to buy essential nutrients such as bread. McDowall explains this by saying “The cost of bread rose quickly, and this led to increases in the price of almost everything. While prices doubled, wages remained the same” (132). With the pressures and mass protests of working-class people, Parliament repealed the tariffs known as the Corn Laws, which were originally intended to safeguard homegrown grain and wheat but, on the contrary, made it harder to import them. Because of the poor nation's worsening poverty and starvation, the landowners who originally enacted the legislation repealed it, allowing cheaper foreign-grown grains and wheat to be imported. Hence, “a system of free trade whereby goods could be imported with the payment of only minimal tariff duties” (Greenblatt 1023) was introduced.

The adoption of the system of free trade by Queen Elizabeth was essential since it showed the monarch's approval of the new economic strategy. This lent credibility to the approach and paved the way for its increased popularity. Queen Victoria opened the Great Exhibition of Industries of All Nations in London's Hyde Park in 1851. The promoters of the Great Exhibition were staunch supporters of free trade. Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, oversaw the Society of Arts, which was responsible for organising the show. Prince Albert regarded the exhibition as a chance to highlight the advantages of international commerce and competition, since he was a staunch supporter of free trade in which prices of commodities are not capped by the government. As Patrick Allitt mentions, “Historians often treat the Great Exhibition of 1851 as a symbol of mid-Victorian prosperity and self-confidence” (3). The intention of having such an exhibition was to unite all nations to observe their respective industries. However, as it was held in the Crystal Palace to exhibit Britain's economic prowess to the world and to themselves, it became something of a showcase for England. The Crystal Palace was constructed of iron and glass to reflect England's scientific and technological accomplishments while also promoting tourism; hence, there were not only machines but also a variety of other products in separate sections. The advancement of technology in England contributed to a surge in exports and trade. The railroad system made a contribution to this. As McDowall states, "The greatest

example of Britain's industrial power in the mid-nineteenth century was its railway system. Indeed, it was mainly because of this new form of transport that six million people were able to visit the Great Exhibition, 109,000 of them on one day" (138).

Following the Great Exhibition, many politicians, individuals, and organisations worked to foster Victorian prosperity. "Victorian politicians—including Peel, Palmerston, Gladstone, and Disraeli—were brilliant speakers and rank among the outstanding figures in the whole of British political history" (Allitt 6). For instance, William Ewart Gladstone, who served as Liberal Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for 12 years spanning four non-consecutive periods from 1868 to 1894, abolished tariffs. He cut defence expenses. He reduced taxes to gain the favour of the populace. He made new budgets. It was time for expeditions and imperial wars like the Crimean War, therefore he restructured the army. The Educational Act of 1870 made elementary education mandatory for all girls and boys, resulting in an increase in the educated population, making 1870 a particularly noteworthy year. One of his errors was dismantling the Catholic Church and re-establishing it in Ireland. Benjamin Disraeli served twice as the Conservative Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the first time in 1868 and the second time from 1874 to 1880. He enacted the Factory Act to govern factory working conditions. Also, he developed the Public Health Act. A Trade Union Act and national party system were also enacted.

During the Victorian period in Britain, the Representation of the People Act 1867 (commonly known as the Second Reform Bill) was enacted. Initiated by Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, the bill finally became law on August 7, 1867. It gave many men from the working class their first taste of the opportunity to vote. As historian E. P. Thompson mentions, the Second Reform Bill was a "great liberating force" (8) for working-class males. Besides as Tony Benn claims, "The enfranchisement of a previously excluded section of society" (12) was made possible by this bill. The bill's approval was a major milestone in the process of democratizing British society.

When Queen Victoria passed away on January 22, 1901, it marked the end of the Victorian period in British history. Her passing signalled the end of an era, as her reign was the longest of any British monarch until the death of Queen Elizabeth II in 2022. King Edward VII, her son, took the kingdom after Queen Victoria. So, as Patrick N. Allitt states, Queen Victoria's reign lasted for 64 years, making her the longest-

reigning British monarch in history. Her personality had a significant impact on the period, but she started not to have an interest in possessing the same level of power as her ancestors. During her reign, Britain gradually moved towards a more democratic political system. As quoted from Allitt, “The oligarchy of 1830, in which only a small minority of men, and no women, enjoyed the vote and the right to sit in Parliament, was modified by Parliamentary Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1884 so that by century’s end, most men at least were entitled to vote” (1). The stability and prosperity that had defined much of Victoria's reign came to an end with the Victorian period. Significant social, economic, and political developments had occurred, but towards the end of the 19th century, indicators of mounting civil upheaval and fiscal problems were apparent. In addition, the country was facing tougher competition from other industrializing countries, and the new century promised even more upheaval. Queen Victoria's death also signalled the conclusion of a lengthy period of sorrow; she was known as the "widow of Windsor" for the length of time she spent grieving following the death of Prince Albert, and this time period had an effect on the country's cultural, social, and political life.

1.1.2. Victorian women, feminine identity and social class in victorian society

As soon as Queen Victoria ascended to the throne, people started making demands for a more equal way of life. Instead, she supported rigid social norms, particularly those that applied to women. All of the developments that occurred during the Industrial Revolution also had an impact on the economic and social position of women as well. About the gender issues of the period, David Veevers claims that

The early modern world order was a gendered one. From social hierarchy to cultural norms, from economical production to political debate, gender shaped English society. The relationships between men and women and their place within local society were inextricably defined by their gender (189).

During the Victorian period, women did not have the same rights as men in such hierarchical societies. Therefore, men and women sought an optimal association dependent on societal norms. Kate Millett explains this as

Because of our social circumstances, male and female are really two cultures and their life experiences are utterly different – and this is crucial. Implicit in all the gender identity development which takes place through childhood is the sum total of the parents’, the peers’, and the culture’s notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression (31).

Women in Victorian culture had one fundamental purpose in society: getting married and becoming the perfect wife. If a man or woman lacked the virtues sought by Victorian culture, he or she would be rejected for being an unsuitable partner. Victorian men wanted women not only to be womanly but also innocent, or else those women would not be appropriate for marriage. As Stagl and Fahrnberger put it, “The stereotypical Victorian woman was well-mannered, reserved, modest, and overall, without passion. Her primary task was to love her husband, raise the children, and take care of the household” (6). As a result, women were assigned more feminine tasks such as taking care of the household and finding feminine ingenuity resources. Women spent their early years getting themselves ready for marriage as they were refused to have the ability to participate in a man's world. They wanted the men to care for them because they were left incapable of doing so themselves. Although it is still seen in the contemporary world, in the Victorian Period, the ideal woman was expected to be one who happily accepted her role as a docile, obedient, and domesticated member of society. Women were expected to conform to Victorian societal norms of subservience and obedience. Women who were submissive and obedient were seen as moral, while those who were not were seen as immoral. To Shaghayegh Moghari,

Victorian criteria and standards of good and evil in regards with women are surrounded over the submission and lack of submission of women. Women who are submissive are good and women who are not submissive are evil. The submissive ones remain in the society and the disobedient ones are omitted from society in order not to affect other women negatively (174).

The role of a Victorian woman was significantly impacted by cultural customs and standards, which laid a great focus on obedience and submission, and as seen above, Moghari argues that there were consequences for women who did not adhere to these expectations. So, women would have the qualities of being innocent, compassionate, and selfless. There would not be any bitterness or resentment in her because she is expected not to have any desire to achieve anything. She was more emotionally sensitive than a male, but she could also give up more for the greater good. Karl Ittman quotes from a temperance newspaper piece titled 'Mother Stay at Home':

A mother's place is at home, not at the mill. For your health, stay at home. Mill work in the day, house work at night, will wear out most women before forty. For your husband's sake, stay at home. If you wish him to be sober and keep at home - give him a clean hearth, a warm fireside, a warm welcome and a warm supper ready when he comes home. For your children's sake stay at home. How can you teach them to love God and obey you and Father when you are at the mill? (155)

As it can be understood from what the newspaper piece suggests, women were thought to have a passive existence, while men were accepted to have an active nature due to the philosophy that promoted this gender differentiation. Women were considered mentally inferior and hence more suited not to leave home.

Similar to the opposition between the men and the women there was also a distinction between the classes. People in the Victorian period were necessarily assigned to one of three social classes—the upper, middle, or working class—based on the prevailing social stratification of the time. It was the Royal Family, the Lords and Ladies, the Earls, Barons, Dukes, and Duchesses, and other nobility that made up the upper class. Their titles, properties, and wealth were all passed down via the family lineage. People in the Victorian middle class, whether they were merchants, factory owners, physicians, lawyers, or bankers, earned their fortune rather than inheriting it. The majority of the British were members of the working class. They were usually engaged in physically demanding tasks for which they were paid poorly (backinthedayof.co.uk). It can be considered that Marx and Engels stated in *The Communist Manifesto* (1970) that "society as a whole is more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat" (32). The working class (proletariat) members and the aristocracy (bourgeoisie) members, which are in opposition to one another, are the cornerstones of societal structure. This can be seen way back in the Victorian Period. The working class and the aristocracy compete with one another because the aristocrats thrive and increase their riches by exploiting the lower classes, leaving them less wealthy in the process.

In the Victorian Period, in a general sense, only males from the middle-class could rise in prominence. It was through male ties that a middle-class woman rose to her position in society. As Gorham states, "In the Victorian period, in theory at least, only middle-class men could achieve status. A middle-class woman acquired her status by connection with a man. Indeed, no middle-class girl or woman could rise her own status through effort in the world of work, because earning money, for a girl or woman, meant loss of caste" (8). So, having a job, for a woman, meant losing status, hence no middle-class Victorian woman could increase her position via diligence in the realm of labour. According to Arlene Young, a woman belonging to a middle-class who is without "a father, brother, or husband" to sustain her was "a castaway" fated to make

a living "as a governess or companion" in the home of other people as at the start of the Victorian period, being a middle-class woman meant being "a dependent – a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother", and was not typically expected to work outside of the home (3). As Bessie Rayner Parkes mentions,

The theory of civilised life in [England] and all other countries, not excluding the democratic States of America, is that women of the upper and middle classes are supported by their male relatives: daughters by their fathers, wives by their husbands. If a lady has to work for their livelihood, it is universally considered to be a misfortune, an exception to the ordinary rule. (...) All our laws are framed strictly in accordance with this hypothesis; and all our customs adhere to it more strictly still. (...) Women of the lower class may work, *must* work, in the house, if not out of it – too often out of it! But among us, it is judged best to carefully train the woman as the moraliser, the refiner, the spiritual element (74-75).

Thus, as men were expected to provide for their families, it was not required for married women to have jobs of their own. The core element of Victorian middle-class philosophy was that a man could ascend in the world via perseverance, ability, and ambition, and this type of advancement in social position was to be rewarded. However, if women did not come from rich households, they were expected to have learned the tasks such as sewing, preparing food, doing laundry, and cleaning the house before marrying. They did not often have to master these duties if they came from prosperous families, hence their maids mainly took charge of the domestic responsibilities. On the other hand, there were women who were required to carry out their duties in exchange for payment just like the maids of those prosperous families. The vast majority of these women were employed in roles that were appropriate for their genders, such as being maids to give domestic assistance or being governesses or nurses by having specialized knowledge that qualified them for these positions. Besides, lower-class women were compelled to labour in hazardous circumstances in factories or mines. Employers wanted to hire women and children for long hours and severe working conditions in exchange for a low wage. Women in the middle class, on the other hand, were obliged to stay at home. Therefore, there appeared a class distinction even among the women, as the women from higher social classes were spared the hardships that were inflicted upon the women from lower social classes. Instead, upper-class women occupied their time with activities such as needlework, drawing, reading, playing the piano, etc.

Since it was a world dominated by men, women were usually not permitted to be taught or acquire experience outside of the household. As Stagl and Fahrnberger

stated, "Her education mainly consisted of home-school due to the social traditions in the Victorian era" (6). They had weak schooling and were prohibited from seeking any sort of higher education. It was not deemed feminine by culture to dedicate time to analytical endeavours for fear of subverting men's intellectual dominance. As women were banned from universities, from pursuing a decent career, and from participating in voting, the house they lived in was the only thing they had. If they were made to work due to hardship in their family, the position they worked for would be subservient and low-paying. She would only work in challenging situations, as the payment will be pitiful, and the treatment would sometimes be harsh. Hence, women who belonged to the working class had very different life. They had to start working when they were only little children, sometimes as housekeepers, factory workers, or farm workers, and those women worked until they married. They would have the chance to quit working if their husband made enough to afford their living; otherwise, they worked their whole lives, taking only brief breaks to carry a baby. Therefore, women had to fight for power and their social status on two fronts at once: one of them is because of the social class they were born into, and the other one is on the basis of gender. Besides, because women are not compensated for their domestic labour, they are even further disadvantaged in their work life (Stagl and Fahrnberger 6).

Other than the differences mentioned above between men and women and women's status in Victorian society, there were also the cultural ideals, standards of morality, and ethics placed on women. The rules were laid down in works like "The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness. A Complete Hand Book for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society" (1-172) which described the proper behaviour expected of all women. During the Victorian times, a cliché of the ideal woman evolved for women who were expected to adhere to traditional gender roles within the confines of the home and the family. Therefore, the perfect Victorian lady was expected to be pure, completely unselfish and humble, morally responsible, and someone who has no sexual ambitions whatsoever. Etiquette and good behaviour encouraged this notion. All Victorian Period women, like the titular character in Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, "The Lady of Shalott," were relegated to a life of domestic servitude and social isolation. Tennyson's ideal lady from the Victorian period is embodied in this woman because of her gender, her destined role as a housewife, and her occupation of weaving. This exemplifies the Victorian period's views about the

public and private spheres from the perspective of men and women, demonstrating the clear gender roles that prevailed at this time.

1.2. Victorian Theatre

Literature thrived throughout the Victorian period (1837–1901) in England, making it a time of great progress and growth. Despite this, Victorian drama was uncommon and overshadowed in the nineteenth century among other literary genres, such as poetry and fiction. “The plays written and performed in the Victorian age, apart from those in the final decade of the century, have to date received relatively little scholar attention” (Greenblatt 1041). In the first half of the nineteenth century, poetry, especially lyric poetry, was the dominant literary form, but in the second half, fiction flourished. Still, theatrical productions such as Shakespeare's plays attracted large audiences. However, as P. J. Crean states, in the early years of the 19th century, due to the Licensing Act, theatrical performances were only permitted to be shown at two theatres in London: Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Therefore, in Great Britain, all plays had to be certified by Lord Chamberlain's Office in order to be played publicly under the Licensing Act of 1737, also known as the Theatrical Licensing Act. By doing so, the government gained de facto censorship powers over the stage and utilized them to ban plays that were thought to be ethically or ideologically offensive. London was abounded with new theatres because the patent theatre system could not keep up with the city's surging demand for live performances. In 1843, the Licensing Act was repealed, opening the door for other performance spaces to begin staging plays (239). Moreover, theatrical schools sprung up, and the golden period saw more outstanding performers than ground-breaking playwrights. Still, famous playwrights like Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw were frequently commissioned to pen plays presented for the upper class. As Alan S Downer claims, the theatre-goers' favourites were John Philip Kemble and Mrs. Siddons, Kean, Macready, and Irving. For example, in 1783, John Philip Kemble made his London theatrical debut in the title role of Hamlet. He was best in stiff, bitingly sarcastic parts like those written for Shakespeare's tragic characters. Famous actors like Henry Irving and Ellen Terry appeared in them at prestigious venues like the Drury Lane and the Lyceum. The wealthy audience members cared not just about the plays, but also about the performers. They knew the actors and actresses as well as the plays since they followed their careers so closely (522).

In the early Victorian period, London's wealthy upper classes swarmed the theatres in the West End. Audience members of the upper class were obligated to dress formally and act respectfully. Arriving late was also frowned upon, thus they were expected to keep to the schedule. As described by theatre historian Richard W. Schoch, "theatre-going in the Victorian era was primarily an upper-class pastime" (16). This was partly because most of London's theatres were clustered in the affluent West End. In the beginning, working-class people had a hard time getting to the theatre because of the price of tickets and public transit. However, as the century progressed, theatres began to appear in different areas of the city and the provinces in response to the rising interest in the theatre among the middle and working classes. Thus, new theatres were opened to accommodate the growing demand for entertainment from the working-class people who swamped into the major metropolitan areas as the Industrial Revolution began to take hold. As another theatre historian, Michael Booth states, "The expansion of the railway system made it possible for people living outside London to attend the theatre, and this led to the growth of touring companies and the establishment of theatres in the provinces" (27).

Plays of the time period often addressed contemporary social themes, such as gender roles, morality, and social stratification. During the Victorian period, a new kind of play emerged called the "well-made play," and according to Richard W. Schoch, "The well-made play, with its emphasis on plot and character development, was the dominant form of Victorian drama" (16). The French critic Eugène Scribe is credited with coining the phrase "well-made play" to describe a piece of dramatic writing that has a compact, logical framework and is marked by a succession of expertly designed narrative labyrinths. These plays were often seen as morally edifying and amusing in the Victorian period. They had a predictable framework that placed a high value on action, intrigue, and character growth. There was usually an obvious moral to the plays that dealt with topics like romance, family, and social standing. Additionally, the plays featured distinct act breakdowns and climaxes. French playwrights like Victorien Sardou were among the first to engage with this form. Some examples of well-made plays from the Victorian period include *The School for Scandal* by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *The Lady of Lyons* by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, and *The Bells* by Leopold David Lewis. Later, in England, writers like W. S. Gilbert and Oscar Wilde contributed to popularize it. The well-made play's impact may be seen in

modern plays as well. Although the framework of the well-made play has evolved and changed through time, it continues to serve as a template for many modern plays and films. In addition to the "well-made play," a number of new types of theatre developed throughout the Victorian period, including the music hall and the melodrama, both of which were particularly well received by the working class. However, "they were often criticized by the upper class for their lowbrow content" (Booth 27). Rebecca D'Monte asserts that it was in Britain in the early 19th century when the entertainment genre known as "music hall" was born. Various performers, including musicians, entertainers, circus performers, and dancers, would take the stage in this type of variety of entertainment. Music hall performances were frequented by the working class and were frequently staged in enormous, special-purpose theatres. The tunes were memorable and positive, and the shows were bright and enthusiastic. Music hall performances were popular among the working class because of their obscene nature and their ability to provide an escape from their daily lives. The dramatic genre known as "melodrama" was known for its over-the-top storylines and intense emotions. There were always both good and evil characters in melodramas, and the stories had strong moral lessons. The plays were notable for their performances and musical interludes. Melodramas enjoyed widespread popularity across socioeconomic strata, but they were especially well received by the working class. They were famed for their grandiose scenery and extraordinary effects and were typically performed in modest, quaint theatres. These forms of entertainment were pioneered by figures such as George Leybourne, known as "Champagne Charlie", and the actor-manager, William Terriss (244-45).

Plays from this time period generally presented women in one of two extremes: as virtuous, self-sacrificing saints or as seductive, enticing temptresses. Before the 20th century, women were not allowed to perform on stage, therefore males strove to portray women in what became known as "breeches roles" in which a male actor played a female character who wore breeches (trousers) instead of a dress. The employment of such characters as a means to achieve humorous or dramatic effects was common in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. William Charles Macready's portrayal of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* and Edmund Kean's portrayal of Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* are two well-known breeches roles. Yet, the Victorian period had a change in the number of women working in theatre as well as the portrayal of

women in plays. As Richard W. Schoch puts it "During the latter part of the century, women began to appear on stage as actresses and playwrights, challenging the patriarchal norms of the Victorian theatre" (20). Some of the notable Victorian actresses include Fanny Kemble, Ellen Terry, and Sarah Bernhardt. Playwrights like Shaw and Wilde acknowledged this shift by creating female characters that were more multifaceted and diverse in their relationships with men and other women.

As the popularity of the theatre grew during the Victorian period, it became a reflection of Victorian culture as a whole, with its plays echoing the concerns and issues of the day. As a result, moral and social standards of the day, such as decorum, the domestic sphere, and the significance of the family, were often mirrored in the topics of Victorian period plays. Gender and social stratification were other common themes. Specifically, comedies of manners criticized the attitudes and traditions of the upper classes, whereas melodramas focused on issues of love as well as devotion. During this period, morality plays were performed to educate the public on the right and wrong ways to behave. Many plays examined the constraints and confines of gender roles in society as well. The problems of the working class and the frictions between social classes were also common themes in many plays. These motifs, which were reflective of Victorian views and beliefs, were frequently employed to make commentary on contemporary social and political situations. When these topics on class distinctions and social and political situations are considered, finally, cultural hegemony, as defined by Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci, may be applied to Victorian culture and theatre. Gramsci argues that society's dominant class—the upper class in this case—imposes its values and ideas on the rest of society. Plays and other types of Victorian theatre that were popular at the time would have reinforced the ideals and beliefs of the upper class and helped preserve their supremacy over other classes, as many of these works addressed problems of class differentiation and morality.

1.3. Feminism and Marxism

Marxism addresses a type of inequality that results from capitalism's class relations. It recognizes that the main stem of repression in capitalist systems is class disparity. The disparity between the genders is a different type of inequality that is addressed by feminism. It would be useful to go into more detail about Feminism,

Feminist Theory and Marxism as both Feminism and Marxism emphasize disparity and conflict as essential elements of communities.

1.3.1. The conceptual structure of feminism

Women are subjected to oppressive gender norms by society, which reinforce the patriarchal society's belief that women's inferior genetic and psychological makeup renders them worthless in comparison to men. In addition, to maintain an honourable public image, both men and women, especially women, are expected to conduct themselves in specific ways. When gender is considered, Raewyn Connell explains gender as “the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes” (11). So, as Connell states, gender, in a more colloquial sense, is concerned with how human society deals with human bodies and their continuation, and the numerous impacts of this "dealing" in our individual and collective fate. Since gender is multifaceted like other structures, “it is not just about identity, or just about work, or just about power, or just about sexuality, but all of these things at once” (11). Thus, gender roles are the expected behaviours, duties, and contributions of men and women in society. They are determined by the norms that society views women and men to be expected to uphold. Although the expectations for these functions may change over time and from one location to another, the traditional role of women is that of housewife and mother, while men are expected to work outside the home. As a consequence of gendered and societal suppression, the feminist approach, which is generally regarded as a scientific discipline that engages with the issues women face, was introduced. Feminism emerges from the movement for women's equality and independence as patriarchal culture leads women to become economically dependent on men since they are denied equal access to the justice system, financial clout, and quality education.

In his work *A Dictionary of Sociology*, John Scott describes feminism and feminist theory as “A social movement, combining theory with political practice, which seeks to achieve equality between men and women” (218). In opposition to pressurising authority and inequality, the feminist theory investigates women's challenges by analysing them from the perspective of class distinction, ethnic background, nationality, belief, and native language. In addition, feminism is a way of

thinking that encompasses the liberation of women, the investigation of their subjugation, the justification of their rights, women's personal or communal life, and the equal opportunities they are expected to have.

Margaret Walters states in her book *Feminism. A Short Introduction* that “While women in other countries have had different experiences and definitions, in England, right up until the 1960s at least, the word ‘feminist’ was usually pejorative” (3). According to Walters,

When women began to organize again in the 1960s and 1970s, the movement called itself Women’s Liberation (borrowing the term from black, Third World, and student movements). This was often shortened, sometimes affectionately, sometimes in a derogatory way, to ‘women’s lib’. But those years also saw the word ‘feminism’ being brought back into general use, and its meaning was extended (3).

This evaluation by Walters points out the intricate and dynamic characteristics of feminist language and its impact on the formation of social movements and cultural discourse.

When the roots of feminism are elaborated upon, it is seen that some sources examine the advancement of feminism in one or two feminist waves, while others analyse it in three or four wave sections. In general, researchers have acknowledged the significance of the early history of feminist movements, which consists of three waves that came one after another.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) was the first academic work to advocate for women's equality. Although it was written in Britain, it can also be shown as a basis of the first-wave in American feminism as Wollstonecraft claims that saying men and women are fundamentally different is to ignore the reality that they share the same mental faculties that distinguish them from other species (Wollstonecraft 25).

In general, first-wave feminism focused on reversing constitutional inequality and injustice and especially addressed concerns of woman’s liberation in terms of education and property rights. The period that coincides with the aftermath of the French Revolution in 1789 is the same period during which the feminist movement started to emerge as an independent movement. Even though the concept of human rights, in general, was declared during the French Revolution, in the period that followed the revolution, women continued to feel as though they were being denied

many rights, such as the right to vote. The way they were treated did not comprise Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (www.un.org).

Although first-wave feminism dates back to the 19th and early 20th centuries, the first documented rally of women to shape a movement with a common purpose took place on October 5, 1789, during the French Revolution when “frustrated with high bread prices in Paris, thousands of women abandoned their homes and market stalls, took up arms, and marched to Versailles” (Mebane 52). These women were inclined to speak up about their political views and complaints because they required socio-political transformation, and they demanded to have equal opportunities, same as men, along with a demand for bringing the curtain down for male dominance. However, in the words of De Beauvoir, “It might well have been expected that the Revolution would change the lot of women. It did nothing of the sort. That middle-class Revolution was respectful of middle-class institutions and values and it was accomplished almost exclusively by men” (131). In her article titled “Feminism in the French Revolution” Jane Abrey (1975) states that because of its little backing, this revolution failed nearly entirely. In the past and present, feminism has only attracted a small subset of the population. The vast majority of French women, who should have been the movement's natural base of support, were uninterested in pursuing social change. The majority of French women adopted that ideal of eighteenth-century femininity. “The feminist movement had been unable to reach these women. Neither its words nor its action had made any sense to ordinary women” (Abrey 59). The feminists mismanaged both strategy and tactics. Female-dominated groups frequently let themselves be distracted. As Jane Abrey explains further,

Revolutionary feminism began in a burst of enthusiasm. Its unpopularity, its own mistakes, and the blissful incomprehension and dogmatism of its opponents combined to obliterate it. While it lasted, it was a very real phenomenon with a comprehensive program for social change, perhaps the most far-reaching such program of the Revolution (62).

Since the revolution was not widely supported, most women were unwilling to risk their lives to rise against the French monarchy. The movement could not go forward practically because they had no clear idea of what kinds of rights women should have. Patriarchy was the only way of life they had ever known, as they had been born into it.

Second-wave feminism began in the early 1960s and continued for approximately two decades until the 1980s. The National Liberation movements, which started between the first and second world wars, and the Civil Rights Movement known as the large-scale struggle of U.S. minority groups through the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s created a strong driving force for women to follow in the footsteps of black people and stand up and fight for their fundamental freedoms. Despite the fact that women had gained the right to vote by that time, discrimination against them persisted.

At the time of second-wave feminism, the fight for women's rights was led by women, and it was conducted for all women. Equally important, it meant that women from diverse backgrounds — in terms of both their personal and professional lives, as well as their socio-political perspectives — were able to identify with one another. It has always been crucial for women in a culture controlled by men to band together to challenge patriarchal values. It's important to keep in mind that in her book *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir distinguished between sex and gender. She argued that while sex identification was determined at birth, gender was developed by social and cultural factors (301). This is why Beauvoir fought against patriarchy and sexism in this gendered society. A lot of other feminists throughout this time period advocated for matters like equal pay, a safe work environment, and an end to sexual harassment and assault. Betty Friedan, who wrote "The Feminine Mystique" and founded the National Organization for Women (NOW); Gloria Steinem, who was a journalist and co-founder of Ms. magazine; Margaret Sanger, who advocated for birth control; Emma Goldman, also known as "Red Emma," who became the iconographic anarchist rebel recognised for her defence of personal liberty and the rights of labourers; Audre Lorde, who was a poet, author, and black woman activist; and Bell Hooks, who is a feminist theorist and author. These women, among many others, were pivotal in the suffrage struggle and remain important voices in feminist debates.

Furthermore, during World War II, women played the roles of men by working in factories to make money while also caring for their homes and children, as many men were called to serve in the military. The women understood that it had nothing to do with their gender but rather with the roles they were expected to play. After World War II, however, men returned to their homes and resumed their traditional responsibilities, while many women found themselves out of work and back at home

caring for the household. Hence, as a patriarchal society did not require their services anymore, they were unable to maintain their former identities. After their spouses left their homes for war, women were given the right to work, but they were yet again subject to discrimination and inequity. They were expected to behave in a certain way based on their gender so that as women, they could maintain order and wellness within their households and the androcentric community. Yet, established duties for both men and women were set to shift as women began to discover their full potency. As a result, men felt pressured to impose even more limits on women, thus women would not speak up or forge their own paths. Women had no separate self because she was the man's "other" just as Simone De Beauvoir defines man as "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute - she is the Other" (De Beauvoir 16). As Peta Bowden and Jane Mummery argues, women realized they had to take action rather than passively accept the patriarchy's rules about who they could and could not be, and this understanding propelled them into Second-Wave Feminism. So, since women's contributions to the industrial workforce did not become particularly noticeable until after World War II, second-wave feminism significantly broadened the dispute to include inequalities based on gender stereotyping standards, sexuality and reproductive freedom, formal court inequalities, women's place in the family or domestic life, and women's role in society, including the work life (20). One example is the fight for women's suffrage, in which women argued that the freedom of their bodies was essential to ending male supremacy and power. Recognizing a woman's freedom to have an abortion was essential because no reliable method of contraception was available at the time as the use of contraceptives was not legalized until 1967 (Bowden and Mummery 60). Thus, as Pierceson states, Second Wave Feminism "was focused on critiquing the patriarchal, or male-dominated institutions and cultural practices throughout society" (49).

Although there are social activists who believe that the year 2008 marked the beginning of a fourth wave, others believe that Third-wave feminism, which originated in the United States of America and dates back to the recent timeframe of the 1990s–2000s, is a progression of the second wave and a reaction to the second wave's inadequacies. Many women saw the need for this third wave of feminism because they found the second to be too limited and dogmatic. As Claire R. Snyder mentions, the reaction to the second-wave's shortcomings arose. "That is to say, third-wave

feminism makes important tactical moves that respond to a series of theoretical problems within the second wave” (175) because second-wave feminists, in their fight for women's rights, narrowly focused on white women and ignored other racial and socioeconomic groups. Instead, third-wave feminists argued that all women, not only white women, should have the same rights in order to achieve social parity. They concluded that since every woman faced unique challenges at home and in her social life, she needed a personalized assessment. Both black and white females were examined separately and thoroughly, and their rights were defended in an identical fashion. So, the third-wave feminism includes a number of different varieties of feminist activities that celebrate diversity and individual freedom in women and pursue reinterpreting the meaning of feminism. This diversity encompasses women who got together from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds, religious perspectives, and socioeconomic circumstances from the entire globe. As a result, the increasing variety of women's identities prompted a shift in the third-wave feminist movement's emphasis. This is why, during the third-wave feminism, emphasis shifted from political matters and rights to legal remedies to more introspective examinations of women as individual beings. Besides, third-wave feminism, in contrast to the second, has reimagined sexual liberation from a new angle with a focus on feminism and feminist discourse.

Femininity is not the result of physiological, psychological, or cognitive distinctions. Femininity, on the other hand, is a societal concept that reflects contextual rather than biological variations among men and women. Personality is shaped by circumstances. How a girl is raised has a profound effect on a woman, who does not have all her eventual characteristics and traits at birth. What constitutes a woman is not fixed by genetics or science, but rather, she acquires her femininity through interaction with males and all the other people in society. The physical universe has worked to make women appear as docile, subordinate, and unimportant although they are not by temperament. To conclude this part, it is significant to mention what Simone de Beauvoir said in her powerful statement about the social construction of gender and the role of society in shaping the identity of women: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that

produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine” (273).

1.3.2. Principles of marxism

Marxism, a political and economic philosophy, was developed by the German philosopher Karl Heinrich Marx and German sociologist Friedrich Engels in the 19th century. Marx was born and raised at a moment of great social upheaval which led him to have a passion for his country. In his book, *Marx's Critique of Political Economy*, Ali Rattansi traces the ideas that led Marx to his philosophy: The concepts of the Enlightenment, German philosophy, French socialists, and the political economists of England and Scotland were all significant inspirations for Marx. Marx used this synthesis to create an entirely new theoretical framework (Rattansi 48). In his revolutionary zeal, Karl Marx hoped to provide a theoretical foundation to aid people of the working class in performing motivation to overthrow the existing order. To this end, the structure was to be grounded on a rational appreciation of how societal circumstances have evolved over time and into their logical conclusions. Marx's book *Das Kapital* lays down the foundation for his theory. Another work *The Communist Manifesto* is where Marx and Engels outlined the core principles of their revolutionary agenda (Marx and Engels, 241). After Marx's death, his daughter Eleanor Marx summed up the book's fundamental points by stating that this manifesto evaluates society. It shows how the feudal class system has gradually faded and how modern society is divided into two classes: “the capitalists or bourgeois class and that of the proletariat; of the expropriators and expropriated; of the bourgeois class possessing wealth and power and producing nothing, of the labour-class that produces wealth but possesses nothing” (E. Marx, 1). The bourgeoisie rose to power by utilising the proletariat to combat feudalism, and they continue to subjugate them through economic dominance. As Eleanor Marx continues to explain, The Manifesto seeks to destroy the bourgeois property system and establish a society under the control of the proletariat. It also questions traditional marriage and nationality, claiming that these ideas do not apply to the working class. The Manifesto advocates a violent revolution to topple existing society and create a world in which the proletariat has nothing to lose but their chains and everything to gain. According to Eleanor Marx, the manifesto describes how modern society is divided into two classes, the bourgeoisie who possess wealth and power but produce nothing, and the proletariat who produce wealth but

possess nothing. It also states that the bourgeoisie has used their power to enslave the proletariat after using them to fight political battles against feudalism.

Eleanor Marx also states that the bourgeoisie has led significant revolutions in history, particularly in the production system. They have developed various technologies such as steam engines, self-acting mules, steam hammers, railways, and ocean steamers. However, their most revolutionary production is the creation of the proletariat, a class that is compelled by their living conditions to overthrow the existing society (Marx, *Karl Marx. by Eleanor Marx* 289). The Manifesto ends with the words:

Communists scorn to conceal their aims and views. They declare openly that their ends are only attainable through the violent overthrow of all existing conditions of society. Let the governing classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The Proletarians have nothing to lose by it but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians of all countries, unite! (Marx and Engels, 241)

In his book called *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Peter Barry states that the aim of Marxism "is to bring about a classless society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange" (150). A proponent of communism and socialism over capitalism, Marxism analyses the impact of the capitalist system on work, production, and financial growth while advocating a worker uprising to bring about the socialist and communist alternative. In his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Karl Marx explains that

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, continued to serve as the leading thread in my studies, may be briefly summed as follows: In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent on their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society – the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness (11).

This quotation shows Karl Marx maintained that the way individuals generate commodities and services in their society is determined by their level of technological advancement rather than individual choice. These exchanges constitute the foundation of society's economic structure, which in turn determines the legal and political institutions, as well as people's cultural views and values. Marx argued that the manner

in which people generate commodities and services had a significant impact on the general nature of social, political, and spiritual activity. This suggests that altering the way people produce things needs a fundamental adjustment in the underlying material conditions of society, rather than simply changing their consciousness or beliefs. According to Marx, social change must result from a revolution of the method of production itself, rather than simply a shift in people's beliefs and all is possible with a Marxist model of society.

As Peter Barry remarks “The simplest Marxist model of society sees it as constituted by a base (the material means of production, distribution, and exchange) and a *superstructure*, which is the ‘cultural’ world of ideas, art, religion, law, and so on” (151). To rephrase, a society's regulations and social values are shaped and determined by the upper class’ views and desires, as the aristocrats are the governing class. Terry Eagleton asserts that at a later stage, new forms of productive organization are founded on a different set of social relations, specifically, those between the capitalist class, which owns the means of production, and the proletariat class, whose labour-power the capitalist class purchases for profit. Marx identifies these "forces" and "relations" of production as the "economic structure of society," or the "economic base" or "infrastructure" of a Marxist society. Throughout history, this economic foundation has given rise to a 'superstructure,' or set of laws, political institutions, and states, the primary purpose of which has been to legitimize the authority of the social class that controls the means of production. But the superstructure also includes what Marxism calls ideology, which consists of "definite forms of social consciousness" (political, religious, ethical, aesthetic, and so on). Ideology also serves the purpose of legitimizing the authority of the ruling class, as the prevalent views of any society are, in the end, those of the ruling class (Eagleton 4).

1.4. Antonio Gramsci and His Intellectual Development

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian Marxist philosopher, journalist, linguist, author, and politician. He was also a pivotal figure in the evolution of Western Marxism and one of the most prominent Marxist philosophers of the twentieth century. He was born in a little impoverished town in the Sardinia territory. He was born into a poor family that was striving to make ends meet. His father worked as a regular public worker. Gramsci was forced to work at an early age since his father had been

imprisoned. His working life was so terrible that, in his own words, he only earned enough to buy one loaf of bread every day. The thinker, who had to live in perpetual agony and difficulty, was never defeated by his circumstances and always fought for his ideas. As Fiori states, Gramsci's whole burden fell on his mother because his father was imprisoned. Despite her mother's hardships, she persevered and reared her seven children, including Gramsci. Antonio Gramsci was a sickly and frail boy when he was born. Thanks to his mother, his ill status had little impact on his life. His mother provided him with invaluable assistance in the sphere of education, particularly throughout his younger years. Gramsci dreamed of bettering himself as a kid and attempted to read in every area. He was not a particularly gregarious youngster at school and preferred to read books alone. Gramsci excelled at school, receiving the best grades in all of his studies, and this achievement drew the attention of his professors (16-17). Antonio Gramsci was aware of his personal health and family problems and the problems of the society he belonged to. When he was younger, he watched how the people on the island he was living on were battling with poverty and supporting their existence. During Gramsci's lifetime, Italy was in a state of great political turmoil, and therefore completed its political unity much later compared to other European countries. Until 1870, it cannot be said that there was a complete unity in Italy. However, after Italy completed its political unity, it began to progress within a very complex structure. At that time, Italy was in a dual structure as north and south. While Northern Italy developed by keeping up with capitalism, Southern Italy could not develop like Northern Italy. Northern Italy entered into a capitalist order, especially with the developments in the automobile industry, and thus the poor in the south began to migrate to Northern Italy. Sardinia, where Gramsci was born, is one of the most backward regions in Italy. As soon as Italy completed its political unity, the rich northern region started exploiting the southern region where the working class lived. The region, shown as created to serve capitalism, has started to be exploited more, especially through agreements with landowners and lords. The main question that bothered Gramsci and that he tried to find an answer to was why some regions of Italy developed while the region he was born in did not. All the challenges and difficulties of society during these times led the thinker to a conclusion that could not be shaken in the future. Gramsci finished his secondary school on this island. He was able to get both philosophy and language studies at the university owing to a scholarship he won in a subsequent competition. When he began working as a kid, his schooling was

interrupted, but “Gramsci won a scholarship to the University of Turin, enrolling on the Modern Philosophy course in 1911” (Jones 16). Gramsci's health problems persisted both during his undergraduate studies and after he graduated. During his academic years, the thinker was in contact with communist circles. He was influenced by the idealist philosopher Benedetto Croce while studying philology. Meanwhile, Italy was at war and battling for national unity. The government was embroiled in several conflicts and made the poor pay for the country's terrible setbacks in these battles. The Libyan initiative was, once again, one of these conflicts and projects rejected by the poor. Despite widespread resistance from the working class, the country's fascist regime attempted to interfere in Libya. Italy, however, left this battle with a crushing loss and attempted to make the working class pay the price. Many workers attempted to organize strikes in Turin after the conclusion of the war. This working-class endeavour strongly affected Gramsci and drew him into the communist movement. Gramsci's great interest in socialism had an impact on his schooling; he dropped out of university and began writing for communist newspapers. Indeed, Gramsci's socialist fight began with the formation of industrial council movements. At the outset of the communist movement, Gramsci argued that communist industrial organizations needed to be established. There were factory invasions, particularly in northern Italy, and many employees joined in these activities. These activities took on such significance that they were prevented from escalating into a revolution at the last minute. Turin was a workers' metropolis at the core of the socialist movement. “(...) he began to see how socialist politics was capable of linking the concerns of northern workers and southern peasants” (Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* xxviii) and in 1913, encouraged by these views in Turin, Antonio Gramsci joined the Italian Socialist Party and began writing for socialist newspapers. Gramsci, along with a few acquaintances he met while studying at the University of Turin in 1919, published articles in several publications, and he helped to found the weekly journal *L'Ordine Nuovo* (New Order), which supported the burgeoning Turin Factory Council movement. According to Antonio Gramsci, factory councils promoted working-class unity and helped employees comprehend their role in production and social life. He believed that the only way to dismantle the old order and assure working-class dominance was to begin constructing a new one. This journal's request garnered a lot of attention. Gramsci's idea of hegemony can be traced back to these works; thus, his theory of cultural hegemony, which highlights the importance of cultural and

ideological power in preserving the dominance of a ruling class, has become his most famous contribution to the field (Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* xix). As Ledwith states,

Gramsci turned the key to the personal as political with his reinterpretation of the traditional Marxist concept of hegemony, opening our consciousness to the public/private divide and the way that domination permeates the most intimate aspects of our being through our interactions in civil society, for example, the family, community, schools and formal religions which remain key sites of male domination. This is the basis for Gramsci's acknowledged contribution to feminist thought which has provided a tool of analysis for understanding the sites of gendered oppression in society (687).

The concept of hegemony appears as a term used in both the power struggles within each state and in determining the dominant power in relationships between states, even prior to Gramsci. It began to be debated and reshaped by socialist revolutionaries in Russia before the Soviet Union, towards the end of the 19th century. The concept of hegemony was later formulated by Lenin as a means to achieve revolution, and seen as an effective method for political organization and its popularization. Lenin explained in a letter to social democrats who rejected the idea of hegemony, that for the working class to become a real class capable of making a revolution and freeing itself from slavery, it must adopt the strategy of hegemony (Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* xxxvii). "Once again Lenin's thoughts on the subject provided Gramsci with both inspiration and a point of departure" (Jones 83).

However, the development and usage of the concept of hegemony in political science today is largely attributed to Antonio Gramsci. Lenin played a key role in determining the strategy of hegemony, which would be critical in both class struggle and the realization of socialist revolution, through prolonged discussions and debates over revolutionary groups in Tsarist Russia. As Anne Showstack Sassoon states, "Gramsci considers Lenin and his companions as revolutionaries who went beyond an evolutionary view of history because they did not wait for the revolution to occur automatically but had awakened and conquered the conscience of the people" (22) so that Gramsci was influenced by Lenin's work and closely followed the October Revolution also called Bolshevik Revolution, and the Soviet Union, in order to develop a revolutionary strategy for Italy. For this, the concept that Gramsci would also adopt became hegemony, and he became the original theorist of hegemony, explaining the analysis of which social, economic, and cultural foundations comprise the structures of power, and how a hegemony can be established. Within the context of the existing

power relations and in terms of the ruled-managed relations, Gramsci's political theory can be seen as the core element of hegemony. As Steven J. Jones states, "Hegemony is a more sensitive and therefore useful critical term than 'domination', which fails to acknowledge the active role of subordinate people in the operation of power" (41). Gramsci argues that hegemony must exist as a matter of necessity. This is because the structure's paradoxical, incompatible relations reflect on the structure's superstructure and on the ruling class as a whole, mitigating the effects of economic and political crises. It is to perpetuate the conditions that gave rise to it; minority rule, for example, must be able to protect its members' interests as if they represented the society at large. Thus, according to Gramsci, the ruling class does not merely preserve its power through economic and political methods, but also through cultural and ideological dominance. To achieve this cultural hegemony, the ruling class and the subservient classes must agree on a common set of cultural norms and values. By doing so, the dominant group can influence the social norms and values of a society, making it harder for the oppressed to rise up and oppose their authority. Yet, politico-economic dishonesty is an inevitability in the current climate.

Gramsci took action and cleared the ground for the installation of specific factory councils in the industries belonging to affluent people in the region where they resided with an announcement he made to society and his followers via the newspaper. These boards generated such a stir in society that they quickly attracted a significant number of members. The most significant aspect here was the goal of these boards' formation. These committees were concerned with the fact that factory owners developed arrangements that were not just capitalist in nature, but also technically and really production-based. Thus, starting with the 5 industries, the working class would acquire expertise about governing society and even the state. Despite its importance to the working-class struggle, industry councils were destroyed by the fascist state administration (Mussolini). Although Mussolini and the fascist administration attempted to gain the support of the working class by promising to make some arrangements in their favour, they did not follow their promise. They even tormented the working-class defenders by planning strikes at strategic spots. Enraged by the socialists' aversion to strike movements, Antonio Gramsci assisted in the formation of the Italian Communist Party in 1921. Gramsci left Italy for a while during this difficult time. When the Nazis gained control, he was in Moscow. He worked for the Comintern

in Moscow and Vienna between 1922 and 1924. There were arguments at the time regarding what policies should be developed for the construction of socialism in the USSR, as well as the relationship between socialists and the emerging communist parties of the West. Despite the fascists' attacks, he returned to his nation by being elected as an "opposition deputy" (Jones 23) to the Italian Parliament in 1924. Gramsci entered into a great struggle against fascism after being elected as a deputy and called on the working class to unite against fascism by using his title of deputy. Gramsci ascended to the post of general secretary of the party as a result of his successful battle after being elected as a deputy and entering parliament. Meanwhile, Nazi tyranny persisted, and a representative from the opposition was assassinated. Gramsci then attempted to rally all resistance to the fascist administration and launch a general strike. However, these strikes were ineffective, and fascist legislation began to be applied even more successfully. Following the fascists' second takeover in 1925, the socialist opposition party, of which Gramsci was a member, was closed by the fascist state in 1926, and Gramsci was arrested "in defiance of his immunity as an elected deputy" (Gramsci, *Gramsci: Pre-Prison Writings* xxviii) and condemned to twenty years in jail. The first of Gramsci's guilts was to put the state's security at danger by inciting class warfare. Despite the fact that the fascist administration put Gramsci in jail where the country's most brutal tortures were carried out, Gramsci did not abandon his battle and even began to cling to it more closely. With this battle, he attempted to read something even while imprisoned, and in his work *Prison Notebooks*, which he wrote while imprisoned, he identified the pathways that the working class should take against the fascist administration by addressing thinking and social illnesses in the political sphere. Gramsci's ideas in his *Prison Notebooks* are presented in an ambiguous way, leaving room for various interpretations. One interpretation focuses on Gramsci's emphasis on the importance of the working class, like Lenin, and his strategy to concentrate on this area. However, Gramsci's ideas are not limited to this field. Another interpretation relates to the concept of the historical bloc, which arises from the unity between the superstructure and the infrastructure. The third interpretation highlights Gramsci's role as a Marxist thinker who attempted to complete Marxism's incomplete aspects in the *Prison Notebooks* (Portelli 3-4).

By addressing the economic structure of the fascist administration in the society in which he lived, he investigated the link between the classes who are working

and ruling in the establishment of class consciousness in the society. Furthermore, he criticized Marxism, which served as the foundation of a socialist thought system, attempted to progress in this manner, and discussed the essential preparations. Gramsci believed that, like Marxism, a revolution must take place based on socialist ideas within society. However, there was a difference between the two thoughts since Marxism suggested that the revolution would take place within a capitalist state order, while Gramsci suggested that the working class should be the ones leading the revolution. Thus, according to Gramsci, the working class should raise its consciousness. As Sassoon states, Gramsci not only combined Marxism with his own ideas but also completed Marxism's missing parts in terms of socialism. It can thus be seen that despite being a Marxist thinker, Gramsci differed from Marx in his thoughts. Firstly, the revolutionary movements during Marx's era failed, and the only alternative to making the working class a hegemonic class in Marx's ideas was to rely on oppression. However, Gramsci pointed out that consent, along with coercion, is also involved. "Thus the building of hegemony, the gaining of widespread consent, and a democratisation of the practice of politics is an integral part of the socialist revolution in Gramsci's conception. He therefore provides an argument which can help to serve as a basis on which to develop the concept of the link between democracy and socialism" (Sassoon 223). Secondly, unlike Marx, Gramsci had the opportunity to lead the working class for an extended period and observe the movements against hegemony. Gramsci, thus, not only developed Marx's political ideas but also introduced a new perspective. By emphasizing organizational unity, Gramsci drew attention to the harmonious relationship between the leaders, members, and masses within an organization. He explained how the working class should act and perform their actions accordingly. Thus, it can be said that "In Gramsci's view, the knowledge, understanding and development of these ideological elements represent the core of revolutionary political theory" (Filippini and Barr 5). As seen, Marxism talks about a revolution, but does not provide as clear information as Gramsci does about how this revolution will be carried out. When creating his political theory, Gramsci focused on the fundamental issue of revolution thinking that "the task of revolutionaries was active opposition to the war, providing for the unhindered development of the class struggle" (Sassoon 17). While considering why a successful worker revolution did not take place in Western Europe, he also emphasized the need to focus on how this revolution could be achieved. According to Gramsci, in places where the working class

is numerically superior, the bourgeoisie has a qualitative advantage. The influence of bourgeois culture on the working class prevents the revolution from taking place. In places where the working class is not numerically dominant, it is impossible to make a revolution without peasant support. The working class must establish hegemony over other classes to set the revolution in motion. When examining the concepts that make up the thinker's political theory, such as historical bloc, hegemony, ideology, state, and civil society, in the context of Gramsci's revolution analysis, his contributions to Marxist thought will also be revealed.

From his first year in jail until his release, Gramsci stayed committed to his ideology and battled hard for it. Gramsci's philosophy was unaffected by his imprisonment or the brutal rule of fascist authority. The thinker stated in letters to his family while in jail that he would never give up on his views, even if he had to pay a hefty price for them, he had a highly stubborn mentality. In reality, the thinker's ill-treatment in prison bonds him even more strongly to his own thinking. Although he was imprisoned and detained while a deputy, he was treated harsher than regular detainees, which connected the thinker to his thoughts more. As Fiori states, Gramsci experienced many problems in his jail life, just as he did in his everyday life. Gramsci, who was usually unhealthy, had to spend most of his time in prison in the hospital. Gramsci's health had deteriorated as a result of his imprisonment; migraines, nausea, and eventual blood vomiting rendered him unable to walk. Under these circumstances, Gramsci could not bear it anymore and asked the fascist regime of the time to release him. Gramsci's request was granted; but the fascist administration frequently denied Gramsci's request for therapeutic modification, believing he intended to escape. Gramsci's health deteriorated in 1935, and he was sent to a hospital in Rome, where he continued to contact his family. In 1937, the three-year parole term came to an end. Gramsci was released and returned to his native Sardinia, but he died the following year as a consequence of a brain haemorrhage (339-340). After Gramsci's death in 1937, his sister-in-law, Tatiana Schucht, secretly removed more than thirty notebooks from the clinic and sent them to Moscow. These notebooks were filled by Gramsci from 1929 to 1935 until he was unable to write due to illness. When his writings were published after WWII, many debates erupted regarding him. It can be learned that "Antonio Gramsci died (...), on April 27, 1937, at the age of 46, after enduring more than ten years of imprisonment under the Italian Fascist regime for his political work.

His stature as a theoretician and activist of Marxism has grown consistently since his death although he is still lamentably unknown in the United States outside the confines of Italian and Marxist studies” (Counihan 3).

According to the information provided above, it can be said that Gramsci was a thinker who faced significant challenges in his everyday life, in addition to the difficulties he had when expressing his political opinions. Despite the fact that Gramsci's fight for life began at an early age, he stayed upright and attempted to establish his own ideas. In addition to his illness, he was dealing with family issues and his father's imprisonment, which set him up for a terrible life fight. Because of his professional life, he grew aware of the problems of life. Gramsci's political ideas evolved in the context of these obstacles. As Counihan states “Under the most adverse conditions - of chronic ill health on the one hand, and of an increasingly repressive political climate on the other - Gramsci's whole life was a struggle to live out the theory he so firmly and passionately believed in. His aim was to change the world by putting an end to the repressive social relations congealed by the class structure under capitalism. He believed that the realization of human potential is only possible through collectivity where all share equally in the process of determining the shape of their lives” (3). Gramsci was a theorist who, with his realistic perspective, contributed to a new dimension of Marxism. He illustrated how the elite and the general masses were connected. No matter how difficult his life was, he never compromised his ideas and was always on the lookout for new information. Gramsci's confrontational personality has also helped to establish Gramsci as a thinker who has always been on the agenda by leaving his mark on political science.

Besides, Gramsci's criticisms of the theatre, such as his ideas and observations on Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, can contribute to the study of *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* in terms of the role of gender and social class in shaping society. Thus, as Dombroski asserts in his book about Gramsci and his theatre criticisms, "the political battle [Gramsci] is waging on behalf of the proletariat cannot be won without the formation of class consciousness" and that literature is one way in which this can be accomplished (93). Gramsci apparently aimed to investigate how literature and drama can reflect on societal structures, power relationships, and cultural standards through his analysis of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. Therefore, his article on Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings*, 70) can show how Gramsci's

theory of cultural hegemony is relevant to *A Doll's House* because of the play's examination of gender norms and social stratification. Nora Helmer, the play's protagonist, is a woman caught in a traditional, patriarchal culture where women are expected to be obedient and dependent on men. Ibsen's play highlights the manner in which gender stereotypes and social class work together to perpetuate the power of the ruling class through the protagonist's struggles to express her individuality and autonomy. In this way, Gramsci's perspective on the woman question, which includes the idea that women are an oppressed class, is as important as his ideas about class struggle, such as how the financially dominant and subjugated classes are interconnected and reliant on one another. Gramsci's idea of the "woman's question" also includes how important sexuality is to the subjugation of women. Gramsci's theories also have ties to the idea of subaltern classes, which are social groupings that are on the periphery of society and often face oppression. Gramsci, in his writings, argued that it was crucial to give these marginalized people a platform from which to challenge the ruling class's worldview. This means, in the context of *A Doll's House*, giving voice to the experiences of women like Nora, who are silenced and repressed by the patriarchy, is significant. Overall, Gramsci's views on cultural hegemony and subaltern classes give a valuable framework for understanding how gender and social class are exploited to perpetuate the dominance of the ruling class, as shown in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

On the other hand, what Gramsci discusses in *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (356), can give a deeper understanding about what he thinks the purpose of literature should be. Gramsci criticizes Dario Niccodemi, a novelist and a playwright who was born in Italy, for showing the class structure with a "tender heart." In this article, he claims about Niccodemi's literature that "no distinction is made between social classes, but rather individuals become the caricatures of convention and are represented according to the moral and literary categories of good and evil, angels and satyrs...." (356) Gramsci criticizes Niccodemi because he thinks that Niccodemi disregards social reality and human passion. He thinks the only reason his literary works are liked by the people is because Niccodemi pleased them by presenting "facile moral solutions" (356). According to Gramsci, the plays he sees offer enjoyable entertainment as long as the audience members' didactic capacities allow. However, according to him, theatre has incredible educational and political potential to advance

society. In his article titled “*Morality and Standards (La Morale e il Costume)*”, it can be seen that according to Gramsci, “The drama, if it is to be truly such and not a pointless iridescence of words, must have a moral content” (Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings* 70). Especially while he is reviewing Ibsen’s play *A Doll’s House* in that article, which can guide the claims in this thesis, he adds, “[Drama] must represent a necessary conflict between two inner worlds, two conceptions of reality, two moral existences” (Gramsci, *Letteratura e Vita Nazionale* 279). To Gramsci, ethics and aesthetics in *A Doll’s House* are inextricably linked and also given realistically. In this regard, Dombroski’s article on Gramsci’s theater criticism provides significant insights into the relationship between Gramsci and theatrical texts and it can be claimed that Gramsci’s thoughts on *A Doll’s House* show that “the artistic form endows Ibsen’s world with concrete life and thus historical accuracy which is one and the same with psychological and social exactness” (Dombroski 107). Again, in his article titled “*Morality and Standards (La Morale e il Costume)*” Gramsci states that in Ibsen’s plays, women are not the only beings who can nurture their children and have great emotional love for them. Instead, he says Ibsen’s “moral conflict” cannot be separated from social and class conflict because the women on Ibsen’s stage are independent beings with logical consciences, inner needs, and certain human traits and dignity. The bourgeois characters in Ibsen’s works suffer and struggle in ways that only people from the lower classes can understand. According to Gramsci, class consciousness is formed in this way. In his article he claims that potential aristocrats cannot understand Nora Helmar’s drama, but those in the lower classes can because they experience it every day by saying that “Potential cocottes cannot understand the drama of Nora Helmar. Proletarian women, women who work, those who produce something more than pieces of new humanity and voluptuous shivers of sexual pleasure can understand it because they live it daily” (Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings* 72). Gramsci disagrees with Marx and Engels, who claim that women’s social inferiority has to do with economics. Instead, he says it has to do with cultural institutions. It is worth going back to Robert Dombroski’s book *On Gramsci’s Theater Criticism*, which claims that Gramsci examines *A Doll’s House* as a model because Ibsen’s stage is like a moral court followed by the reality of society’s institutions and traditions. While the main character of the play, Nora Helmar, is determined to do her duty, at the end of the play she is actually trying to find out whether she or the rules of society are right (93). So, Gramsci’s ideas in *A Doll’s House*

and his ideology will contribute to the study of *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* because of the ideas on the role of gender and social class in shaping society.

To illustrate, a parallel might be drawn between Antonio Gramsci and Bernard Shaw in terms of their interest in the ways in which gender and economic status impact social order. It can be remembered how Gramsci proposed that the dominant class maintains its control over society through cultural hegemony. Shaw shows how language and words may shape social status in his play *Pygmalion* and illustrates the power of words and speech in his play. Poor flower girl Eliza Doolittle is elevated to the upper classes thanks to her improved command of the English language. This supports the argument that people who dominate the language of a society hold the power over that society, and that language plays a significant part in defining class identity. Shaw examines gender norms and the pressures placed on men and women in *Pygmalion*. Eliza's early freedom of expression and agency are limited by gender norms that hold women to a more submissive role in society. On the other hand, she grows more confident and self-reliant as she perfects her English language skills. This exemplifies Shaw's view that cultural norms and gender roles may be questioned and altered via exposure to new ideas and the power of the English language. Thus, it can be claimed that both Gramsci and Shaw hold the view that societal power is controlled by those who dominate language and culture, and that gender and social class play crucial roles in moulding society. These concepts are exemplified by Eliza Doolittle and her development in the play *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw.

Similarly, Antonio Gramsci and Oscar Wilde can be claimed to both criticize gender and social class conventions and the power structures that uphold them in their ideas. According to Gramsci, the prevailing power structure is kept in place by social norms and institutions, which he calls hegemony. Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a satire on the upper class's inflexible norms. Wilde utilizes the characters in *Lady Windermere's Fan* to satirize the constraints placed on women of the upper class. Lady Windermere, for instance, is supposed to act as though nothing is wrong with her moral character despite the fact that she believes her husband is unfaithful to her. Wilde shows that there is a double standard in which males like Lord Windermere can have extramarital affairs without repercussions but women like Lady Windermere are held to a higher level of morality. So, it can be said that both Gramsci and Wilde emphasize

the role of social norms and expectations in maintaining and reinforcing power disparities, especially along gender and social class lines.



CHAPTER 2 - *PYGMALION* BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

The play *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw, which premiered in Vienna, Austria in 1913 and subsequently in England that same year, is a theatrical work that explores the societal and cultural changes that occurred during the Victorian period. Although the play is set in London approximately a decade after the end of the Victorian period, it is a reflection of the shifting values and norms that characterised Victorian society. Upon its release, the play garnered a range of reviews from critics, some praising its social commentary and others critiquing its perceived lack of depth. Yet, *Pygmalion* was also praised by critics for its cleverness, astute observations on society, and vividly portrayed characters. Shaw's masterful depiction of class distinctions through satire and his incisive dialogues were greatly revered by his admirers. The success of the actors' performances and the skilled direction of the play were also noted by certain reviewers. Conversely, *Pygmalion* was subject to criticism by certain scholars who took issue with Shaw's unconventional treatment of language and portrayal of characters. Certain critics expressed the viewpoint that the play in question is excessively didactic, with an excessive focus on social and political themes. Additionally, some took issue with the absence of a traditional romantic resolution. Still, *Pygmalion* has been a subject of much debate due to its depiction of the intricate interplay between gender and class dynamics. The portrayal of Eliza Doolittle as a mere instrument in the transformative journey has also been a subject of debate among critics, particularly in relation to Shaw's feminist themes. The play's portrayal of social class has been a subject of extensive discourse, with certain critics perceiving it as excessively mocking towards the upper classes of society, whereas others interpreted it as a commentary on the rigid social hierarchy of the period. The dynamic nature of critical reception towards *Pygmalion* is a noteworthy aspect to consider. The evolution of opinions across successive generations of critics and audiences has resulted in varying perspectives on the play. Thus, *Pygmalion* attained the status of a classic in the realm of English literature. It is extensively analysed in academic institutions and has been adapted into various mediums, such as musicals and films. *Pygmalion* draws inspiration from the eponymous myth, which finds its roots in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a compendium of Greek and Roman mythologies. The myth narrates the tale of a man who becomes enamoured with a realistic statue of his ideal woman, Galatea. Pygmalion beseeches Aphrodite, the deity of love, who later imbues vitality into the

statue, thereby enabling Pygmalion to unite in marriage with his cherished creation. The interpretation of the myth has varied over time. However, it is commonly regarded as a reflection of the potency of art in generating realistic depictions of the real world. Galatea bears similarity to the main character, Eliza, who is shaped by Higgins and Pickering to become a flawless Victorian woman, much like sculptors mould their creation. The myth serves as a metaphor for the process of Eliza's transformation into a lady, emphasising the superficiality of Victorian society's concern with etiquette, manners, and outward appearances.

The first act of *Pygmalion* serves to introduce the play's thematic elements, conflicts, and character progression, while also reflecting the social and linguistic dynamics of Victorian society and has elements to be analysed through the lens of Gramsci's concepts of social class, cultural hegemony, and class struggles. Yet, in his Prison Notebooks, Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony in different contexts and thus, it is not possible to find a direct definition of this concept in Gramsci's writings. Still, as Steve Jones states, it offers valuable insights into the social and ideological dynamics of the period considering that Gramsci's notion of hegemony emphasizes the complex and multifaceted nature of social relations and how power operates in society (5). This notion of hegemony can be seen when on a rainy day, Mrs. Eynsford Hill and her daughter Clara are waiting for Freddy to find a cab. They are members of the Victorian aristocracy who are well-dressed and have just left the theatre after seeing a late-night performance. It is evident that a dominant upper class exists, characterized by wealth, power, and control, particularly in capitalist and highly noble societies. This group of dominant upper class is composed of individuals such as the well-dressed bourgeois Eynsford Hill family consisted of Mrs. Eynsford Hill, her daughter Clara and son Freddy, who stand apart from the rest of 19th-century England. Although other people get cabs right in front of the theatre building, Freddy cannot find any which irritates his mother and his sister, Clara. This scene not only serves as a satire of Victorian Period societal conventions and expectations, highlighting the pressures people had to live up to these standards such as class, gender, and social etiquette expectations but also as an important reminder of the entrenched class-based inequities that pervaded Victorian society. The play criticises the notion that individuals of elevated social standing, such as theatre-goers, enjoy such transportation, while those from lower classes, exemplified by Eliza, encounter difficulties in availing themselves

of the same amenities. Besides, the mother's annoyance with Freddy's inability to fulfil his assumed responsibility as a male figure in the family serves as a satirical commentary on the gender roles and expectations prevalent Victorian period. During the period in question, societal norms dictated that women were reliant on men for their well-being. Men were expected to provide for their families' needs and maintain a good reputation in society throughout the Victorian period. Sons were expected to carry on their fathers' heritage and follow in their footsteps in order to preserve their social standing and financial security. Yet, as a son, Freddy is a timid young man who is only twenty, but as a part of a stereotype and being the male figure of the family, he is expected to have "a bit of gumption" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 14). Calling him helpless, his mother sends him back, saying, "don't come back until you have found a cab" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 15). This dialogue between Freddy and his mother shows Victorian morals, patriarchal society, and expectations of the time as reflected in Freddy's inability to arrange transportation and his family's response to it. Hence, Freddy's inability to locate a cab is a reflection of his failure to carry out his obligations as a son and the way his family responded to his failure serves as a powerful reminder of the significance of keeping a respectable public image and the pressure placed on sons to live up to their families' and society's expectations. Furthermore, the patriarchal society of the Victorian Period mandated that men possessed more power and influence than women. Freddy's inability to find a cab illustrates this power imbalance because he is supposed to take responsibility. His inability to do so is viewed as a weakness that denigrates both his manhood and capacity to support his family. His family relies on him to take charge and be responsible for taking care of their transportation needs. Therefore, their response to his failure reinforces gender norms and serves as significant evidence of the importance of maintaining a dignified public identity and the weighty burden placed upon males to meet the expectations of both their families and the wider community. This demanded strict adherence to a prescribed code of conduct governing demeanour, etiquette, and physical presentation. Thus, Freddy's incapacity to successfully hail a cab can be perceived as a shortcoming in fulfilling the societal norms that were deemed crucial in upholding one's social status.

The scene when Freddy accidentally crashes into Eliza, the flower girl, hitting her basket off her hands and scattering the flowers in the mud while hurriedly hunting for a cab also serves for an understanding of the class differences. He apologises and

rushes off while the flower girl says, “Nah then, Freddy: look wh’ y’ gowin, deah” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 15). This is the first time Freddy sees Eliza, but he is unaware of her as this flower girl

wears a little sailor hat of 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 is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be; but compared to ladies she is very dirty. Her features are no worse than theirs; but their condition leaves something to be desired; and she needs the services of a dentist (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 15).

As seen in the very beginning of the First Act, the class differences in *Pygmalion* are organised around the dominant symbols of family, clothes, and language showing the distinction between Eliza and the other characters. As George Eric Brown mentions, Bernard Shaw “is trying to show in this play that it is only lack of education and opportunity that cause many of Elizas of this world to remain flower girls” (94). The opening scene gathers contrasting people; “a group of proletarians - some timidly deferential, some sarcastically impolite - over against an impoverished middle-class family with genteel pretensions, a wealthy Anglo-Indian, and the haughtily self-sufficient Professor Higgins, all jostling beneath a church portico” (Crompton 74). The Eynsford Hill family and Professor Higgins are shown to be well-off monetarily. Maintaining their social standing is important for them while they are adapting to the shifting norms and values of their period. Shaw uses his characters as a means of illustrating the ever-expanding divide between the wealthy and poor classes in Victorian society, as well as the gradual dissolution of the once formidable middle class. As Arthur Ganz claims, “Shaw says that income must be equalised as the only way to abolish class and thus 'make the whole community intermarriageable’” (38). The Eynsford Hill family serves as a significant reflection of the societal shifts that were occurring during the Victorian period and through their portrayal, one of the central themes of the play is brought to light - the critical analysis of class distinctions. During the Victorian period, society was undergoing significant shifts, including changes in social classes and the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor so that the upper classes had to show their supremacy towards the lower classes. “(...) the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership” (Gramsci, *Selections From the Prison Notebooks* 45). By applying Antonio Gramsci's theoretical framework to the play, one can interpret the Eynsford Hill family as an illustration of the upper class's attempt to

uphold their social standing and entitlements amidst the shifting tides of society by seeming powerful and intellectual. They embody an aristocratic lineage trying to navigate a society in transition, where the conventional social stratification is undergoing a transformation. Thus, the Eynsford Hill family's efforts to adhere to societal conventions can be interpreted through the lens of Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony. The notion of cultural hegemony discusses how a dominant group employs ideas to exert control over subordinate groups such as people like Eliza. This dynamic is observable in the Eynsford Hill family's concerted efforts to preserve their social status through strict adherence to established societal conventions and expectations as their actions are indicative of the pervasive impact of the dominant ideologies and customs that govern and regulate society. The Eynsford Hill family serves as a satirical embodiment of the obstacles encountered by various social classes. Through this portrayal, Shaw offers a critical commentary on the notion of class divisions and the rigid social hierarchies that characterised Victorian society. Moreover, Shaw highlights the struggles of the classes in preserving their status as the differences between wealth and poverty continue to expand. The Eynsford Hill family's wish to keep their social standing and cultural standards shows how cultural hegemony can hurt people. In this context, in the light of Gramsci's ideology, it can be claimed that the aristocracy is able to preserve and strengthen their dominance in society through their command of cultural institutions, while the middle class struggles to stay up and defend their financial and social dominance. *Pygmalion's* depiction of this dynamic sheds light on the play's central themes of class struggle and the influence of culture on the distribution of power in society.

The portrayal of Eliza's treatment in *Pygmalion* serves as a significant reflection of the stark divide that existed between the upper and lower classes of Victorian society. These societal facets are depicted through a variety of elements, including language, manners, and behaviour, all of which serve to show the profound disparities that existed between these two distinct strata of society. On the one hand, there is the ignorant Eliza represented by lower-class norms, and on the other hand, there is the Eynsford Hill family who is well dressed and waiting for a cab after a night of theatre symbolising the wealth, influence, and philosophy of the upper-class. This can also be seen when Mrs. Eynsford Hill is surprised to see this flower girl calling his son Freddy by his first name as she cannot understand how such a girl has anything to

do with her son. When Eliza is asked, how she replies to them is very difficult to understand; “Ow, eez, yə-ooasan, ise? Wal, fewd dany' d-ootybawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawla pore gel's flahrzn than ranawy athaht pyin. Will ye-oopy me f'them?” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 16). Actually, the flower girl wants payment for the damage done to her flowers as Freddy accidentally hits her. Mrs. Eynsford Hill gives six pence to Eliza for her flowers without accepting the change. She gives the money out of favour not to buy the flowers and asks one more time how she knows her son's name. She still cannot get a satisfying answer. While there were rigid norms of behaviour and social hierarchies that governed interactions between people of different classes in the Victorian period, it was not necessarily improper for a lower-class person to pronounce the name of an aristocrat. Yet, Mrs. Eynsford Hill's response highlights the significance of class disparities and the possible repercussions of crossing these lines.

The first act of the play develops when Colonel Pickering seeks shelter from the rain and engages in conversation with Mrs. Eynsford Hill. He then approaches Eliza, who is selling flowers to earn a living. Eliza tries to sell him flowers, but Colonel Pickering does not have change. Eliza suggests giving him change from the money she received from Mrs. Eynsford Hill. However, Colonel Pickering offers her three half-pence from his pockets instead. Although Eliza is unhappy with his behaviour, she reluctantly accepts the money as it is better than nothing. As she collects his money, a bystander who has been taking notes in his notebook instructs Eliza to give Pickering the flowers instead of just talking. However, Eliza is frustrated when she hears this interruption, and she attempts to demonstrate her identity as a respectable girl by declaring, “I aint done nothing wrong by speaking to the gentleman. Ive a right to sell flowers if I keep off the kerb. I'm a respectable girl: so help me. I never spoke to him except to ask him to buy a flower off me” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 19). She wants to reveal her identity as if to demonstrate that she is a decent young lady, not a prostitute or anything. As such, she feels the need to demonstrate that her earnings as a flower girl are respectable. The fact that she is poor does not indicate that she is a low woman. Instead, she attempts to demonstrate her worth to a gentleman. She is merely performing her duties and deserves to be treated with respect. In addition, Shaw's play questions this class-based order. Eliza's statement can be interpreted as an attempt to

defend her dignity and worth as a person, and a portrayal of how she deserves to be treated as a lady, regardless of her social standing. As Elsie B. Adams states

In Language and Woman's Place, Robin Lakoff suggests that the word lady is a euphemism arising out of a chivalric desire to ennoble the subject. For example, we are much more likely to say cleaning lady than lady doctor: doctor carries prestige and dignity and hence does not need further elevation; but cleaning woman, we feel, lacks status. Cleaning lady is an attempt to compensate for that lack" (112).

Lakoff also argues that the concept of womanhood, in contrast to manhood, is often perceived as lacking inherent dignity, and therefore requires the use of euphemisms like "lady" to bestow a sense of nobility upon it (61). Lakoff's ideas are pertinent to Eliza's metamorphosis from a woman who sells flowers on the street to a lady who earns the respect and admiration of those around her because Eliza's transformation is an attempt to "ennoble" her rank and give her a higher position. Thus, Eliza feels the urge to show that besides being a flower girl working on the streets, she is also a respectable girl. She is not acting or impersonating anybody in this scene. She is a free-spirited young lady who expresses herself freely and honestly. Here it can also be seen that the play portrays the Victorian period's strict gender norms and expectations, which held women to be obedient and focused while men were to be aggressive and in charge. Eliza expresses her concern that the man who has been taking notes may be a police officer who is inclined to prosecute her, leading her to adopt a defensive stance. In the meantime, Professor Henry Higgins, who is taking notes, acquires significant insights into Eliza's identity. Given his professional and personal interest in phonetics, he demonstrates a remarkable ability to discern the origins of Mrs. Eynsford Hill, Clara, Pickering, Eliza, and various other bystanders based on their speech patterns, offering accurate predictions. Nevertheless, Eliza continues to assert her rights and maintain her defensive position. Still, Higgins is a harsh and rigorous man and tells Eliza that

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 of articulate speech: that your native language is the language of Shakespear[e] and Milton and the Bible; and don't sit there crooning like a bilious pigeon (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 26-27).

The quote above demonstrates how angry Higgins is with her poor command of standard English; he basically declares that she has no place in society if she cannot talk in a way that's appropriate to himself and others of his social class. Taking a look at this statement through the lens of the Victorian period, it can be seen that the

prevalent views on social rank and class at the time reflected in it. During the Victorian period, one's social standing was determined mostly by one's birth or financial circumstances. The higher classes took great pride in their cultured manners and superior education, two qualities that manifested themselves in their polished English. According to Gramsci, culture extends beyond mere education or knowledge and encompasses aspects such as "organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality". (Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings* 11). The concept of culture, for Gramsci, entails attaining an elevated level of consciousness regarding one's historical significance, purpose in existence, as well as entitlements and responsibilities. The concept extends beyond a mere cognitive comprehension and encompasses a comprehensive cultivation of an individual's character and introspective consciousness (Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings* 11). Gramsci argues for a broader view of culture that goes beyond elitist or classist notions and recognizes the diverse forms of cultural expression and identity. Yet, Higgins' superior and snobbish treatment of Eliza is reflective of this mentality. According to Gramsci, the concept of hegemony refers to the establishment of dominance by one individual or group over another individual or group. The term refers to the prevalence of a specific structure within a given societal system and hierarchy, surpassing other types of structures. (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 423). It can be remembered that it is not possible to provide a direct definition of Gramsci's concept of hegemony but still for Gramsci, the term "hegemony" refers to a form of cultural and intellectual dominance that is achieved by prioritising the interests of the bourgeoisie over those of the lower classes. This type of dominance is not founded on a repressive approach to governance. Diverse perspectives on the concept of hegemony exist, with some claiming its manifestation as a form of violence-based oppression, while others contend that it is premised on consent. The prevailing perspective, commonly acknowledged in academic discourse, suggests that the establishment of hegemony is contingent upon the acceptance of the governed. The establishment of hegemony requires exerting control not only over a specific group within a particular region, but also over all societal domains, encompassing economic, social, and cultural spheres, as well as every sector of society. Thus, individuals seeking to acquire power must initially establish their hegemonic dominance in this regard. The fundamental basis of hegemony is a combination of both coercion and consent. In order to establish a dominant hegemony

over a society, it is necessary for the ruling power to possess the ability to govern through both coercive and consensual means. (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 423). When Higgins' cruel and offensive remark about how Eliza is making unpleasant sounds like a sick pigeon mentioned above is taken into consideration, it can be said that Shaw uses Higgin's above lines to emphasise the ludicrousness of the social stratification system and the subjectivity of one's social standing. He uses Higgins' extreme beliefs to illustrate the absurdity of evaluating a person solely on the basis of their accent or their capacity to adhere to cultural norms. Shaw is making a point that one's accent or language skills should not be a barrier to achievement or social mobility by offering Eliza the opportunity to acquire appropriate English. Shaw employs the aforementioned lines by Higgin to underscore the absurdity of the hierarchical social structure and the arbitrariness of an individual's societal status. The author employs Higgins' radical ideologies to exemplify the irrationality of appraising an individual exclusively based on their accent or ability to conform to societal conventions. Shaw's argument emphasises that an individual's accent or linguistic proficiency should not impede their ability to succeed or advance socially. This is demonstrated through Shaw's provision of an opportunity for Eliza to acquire suitable English language skills. Yet, the relevance of the concept of hegemony to the relationship between Eliza and Higgins is apparent. Higgins holds a position of dominance over Eliza. Higgins attempts to assert his cultural and intellectual dominance over Eliza and compel her to conform to the societal norms and values of his social stratum, as evidenced by his pursuit of education. This instance can be interpreted as an illustration of how the ruling class establishes and sustains dominance over subordinate classes through the imposition of their cultural and intellectual norms upon them. Throughout the course of the play, Eliza's eventual refusal to submit to Higgins' dominant control and her subsequent achievement of a refined and cultured identity can be interpreted as a subversion of the prevailing power structure and an uprising towards the hypocrisy of the upper classes.

Professor Henry Higgins and the upper class are portrayed as hypocrites because of their callous disregard for Eliza Doolittle and the lower class. People from different social classes also have different accents, ways of speaking, and ways of behaving. Eliza's incompetence in speaking English, the portrayal of her profession as a working-class girl and how she is dressed are the means to show that she is of the

lower class. The harsh and cruel things Higgins tells her show that he is a kind of upper-class human being and has the right to oppress this lower-class female character. The upper class is shown as conceited and dominant in the first act, while the working class is shown to be weak and struggling. This further emphasises the big gap that existed between the socioeconomic groups in Victorian England. As can be seen, the “contrast between social appearances (form) and personal integrity (content) is inherent in Shaw’s use of language as a metaphor of civilization” (Innes 32).

When Higgins starts to talk about his ambition and his plan, he speaks about Eliza’s bad English and tells Pickering that he knows he can turn her into a duchess in three months. While Higgins is talking about his plans, Eliza does not seem to care about them until he says, “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” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 27). This part strikes her attention, as her only dream is to open a flower shop rather than make a living off of selling flowers in a basket on the streets. Being a student of Indian dialects, Pickering also supports Higgins’ plan. Especially when the experiment Higgins and Pickering will hold is considered, Higgins represents the powerful and wealthy upper class, and Eliza symbolises the lower working class. Poor working-class people, as witnessed in the Victorian period, make up a large portion of society but are consistently overlooked by the middle and higher classes despite their best efforts to improve their living conditions. Here, Shaw challenges the social conventions that maintain a clear divide between the upper and lower classes. He achieves this by depicting the working-class Eliza as a student under the tutelage of Professor Higgins. Through her linguistic education, Eliza matures into a refined lady. Shaw's emphasis on language highlights how it is a key marker of social status and how its refinement can lead to the dissolution of class barriers. Thus, Shaw demonstrates how education can be a means to eliminate class distinctions. The experiment conducted by Professor Higgins, in which he attempts to mould a naive young flower girl into a well-spoken and cultured lady of the upper class, exemplifies the influence that language and education have in creating and maintaining social stratification. With Antonio Gramsci's theories in consideration, one may infer that the experiment presented in the play represents power dynamics that exist within institutions such as the educational system, and the dominant position held by the upper class in matters related to culture and language.

Gramsci's article from 1916 called "Men or Machines" asserts that the Italian education system exhibited a marked bias towards the bourgeoisie, as evidenced by the fact that grammar schools and higher education were predominantly accessible to children of the bourgeoisie on account of their economic freedom. Hence, Gramsci provides a critique of the education system in Italy, arguing that it is characterised by a rigidly bourgeois structure that serves to perpetuate social inequalities. Specifically, he contends that the system denies equal educational opportunities to the proletariat "which is excluded from the middle and high schools as a result of the present social conditions" (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 63). Gramsci's depiction of the situation faced by the proletarian class, wherein they encounter obstacles in obtaining formal education, bears resemblance to the lack of educational prospects that Eliza initially faced prior to her encounter with Professor Higgins. Both Gramsci's argument and Eliza's story demonstrate the systemic disparities in education that are based on social class, until the point that educational opportunities are made accessible to Eliza, with the aid of a member of the bourgeoisie. By conducting the experiment, Professor Higgins gives Eliza the opportunity have an education while he is also able to reinforce his own power and authority, while Eliza is compelled to adopt the language and customs of the upper class to improve her social standing. According to Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, "every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more stratal of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields" (Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 5). The statement by Gramsci highlights the importance of intellectuals in defining the collective identity and awareness of society. He argues that there is a "stratal of intellectuals" within any society that is crucial to forging solidarity and a common understanding of one's place in the world. These intellectuals help advance the group's material well-being and also establish its moral and political values. If this idea is applied to Eliza's upbringing and evolution, the role that Eliza's intellectual milieu played in moulding her sense of self and her understanding of the world must be appreciated. As the play opens, Eliza is a low-class Londoner whose dialect is distinctly Cockney. She has little understanding of the customs of the aristocrats. Yet, after studying with Professor Higgins, Eliza is converted into a well-spoken lady of the aristocracy. Professor Higgins, who represents the upper class's educated elite, is

essential in Eliza's development. He's the one who will be doing the most of the teaching as she learns to become a successful member of upper-class society with the help of the education he provides. It is not just the language and etiquette of the upper class that is taught, but also their ideals and beliefs. Eliza's identity and awareness both change as a result of this process. She realises her place in the world and the contribution she can make to humanity. It is also worth pointing out, though, that the "stratal of intellectuals" are guiding this metamorphosis rather than letting it unfold naturally as this term refers to the higher class of individuals who hold positions of intellectual authority or influence in society. It's a demonstration of how education can transform an individual's or a group's outlook and sense of self. In the play, Professor Higgins's experiment illustrates the premise that the ruling class dominates the inferior class culturally and linguistically. Hence, within this particular context, it can be argued that Professor Higgins embodies the archetype of the "stratal of intellectuals", as he takes the responsibility of instructing Eliza in the customs and mannerisms of high society. Gramsci's conceptual foundation would likely interpret Professor Higgins' experiment as a symbolic representation of the cultural hegemony and class struggle that characterised Victorian England and continues to persist in contemporary society. According to Gramsci's ideas, the ruling class in a society exerts dominance not only through economic and political means but also through cultural and ideological control. Thus, the experiment conducted by Professor Higgins can be viewed as a manifestation of the ruling class's efforts to maintain their cultural and linguistic superiority over the lower classes. This interpretation highlights the enduring relevance of Gramsci's insights into the complex interplay between power, culture, and social class. In brief, how the play portrays Professor Higgins as a symbol of the dominant social group, utilising his cultural and linguistic expertise to metamorphose Eliza into a refined woman in accordance with the upper class's values and principles can be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural hegemony, wherein the dominant social group enforces its cultural norms, language, and conduct upon the subordinate group.

The play progresses as the rain has ceased for a time now, and everyone decides to leave. Higgins, like Pickering, places money in front of Eliza and walks away without taking any flowers. At that point, Freddy enters the scene in a cab, but he discovers that his mother and sister have abandoned him by taking the bus as soon as

the rain stops. "With grandeur" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 29), Eliza declares that she will take the taxi Freddy had brought instead of walking back home. Now, she has enough money to pay for a cab trip, and she shows the sceptic taxi driver a "handful of money" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 29). Eliza's effort to break free from her lower-class background is symbolically portrayed by her choice to take a cab, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for her pursuit of upward social mobility. Her decision to take the cab provided by Freddy, rather than walking, underscores her determination to become self-reliant and rise in social status. It also highlights her desire to invest in herself, despite facing limited resources. Upon entering the taxi, Eliza hides her flower basket and instructs the driver to take her to Buckingham Palace loudly enough for Freddy to hear. This display of showing off reflects her desire to change her social status, challenging the established norms and entrenched hierarchies of Victorian society. Upon returning home, Eliza is surprised to learn that the two-minute cab ride costs a shilling, and the driver suggests that she keep the fare to herself, leaving her humiliated. Even while in the cab, she claims to have taken hundreds and thousands of cabs before, indicating her eagerness to conceal and transcend her social class. Thus, the play's central theme of class struggle and the pursuit of upward social mobility is echoed through Eliza's decision to take a cab. This choice exemplifies her determination to improve her economic and social standing, despite facing significant obstacles.

The description of Eliza's house, in addition to her dress and occupation, reveals her social status and serves as a metaphor for the wealth gap between rich and poor in Victorian England and the sufferings endured by the latter. Eliza's home is very poorly decorated, having "a small room with very old wallpaper hanging loose in the damp places. A broken pane in the window is mended with paper (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 30). The dilapidated state of her house is a visible symbol of the poverty and lack of opportunity that she and her neighbourhood face. The residences of the upper class, on the other hand, are shown to be large, lavish, and well-furnished because of the owners' riches, social standing, and political influence. There is a popular actor portrait and ladies' dresses cut from newspapers pinned to the wall. There is an empty birdcage hanging in the window.

These are the only visible luxuries: the rest is the irreducible minimum of poverty's needs: a wretched bed heaped with all sorts of coverings that have any warmth in them, a draped packing case with a basin and a jug on it and a

little looking glass over it, a chair and table, the refuse of some suburban kitchen, and an American alarm clock on the shelf above the unused fireplace: the whole lighted with a gas lamp with a penny in the slot meter. Rent: four shillings a week (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 31).

The way Eliza's home is described shows how poor and hard life is for the lower class in the play. It also shows the class struggle and social and economic differences that were typical of Victorian England.

According to Solomon, the opening act is crucial to the play's dramatic development not only because it presents the characters or operates as a prologue but also because it kicks off the action: "Higgins makes such an impression on the flower girl that she is filled with a desire for her physical improvement, her external recreation" (61). Solomon's comment alludes to the crucial encounter between Professor Higgins and flower girl Eliza at the end of Act One. This meeting drives the plot forward by sparking Eliza's motivation to work on her outward appearance and social life. This interaction puts Higgins in a position of authority over Eliza, allowing him to exert influence over her in ways she had not even anticipated. Eliza's development into a more confident and accomplished person under Higgins' guidance is put in motion by this event. Hence, Solomon's comment highlights the importance of the play's first act in laying the groundwork for its dramatic growth. Higgins and Eliza's first meeting establishes the tone of the play and foreshadows the subsequent conflict and metamorphosis, drawing attention to the play's central themes of power and social struggle.

The events in the second act of the play contribute to a deeper comprehension of Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering. Higgins seems to be an active man in his forties. He is really interested in scientific topics. He is, nevertheless, unconcerned with himself and others, including how they feel or how he makes them feel. His demeanour shifts from time to time as well. The descriptions of Higgins are largely visible in this Act, with Pickering serving as a balancing role. Higgins represents the play's patriarchal Victorian culture, while Pickering represents a more equalitarian view. Shaw used Higgins and Pickering to comment on the Victorian period's pervasive patriarchal attitudes. The conceit of male authority is personified in Higgins, while the more equitable outlook of Pickering is on display in the play. Shaw contrasts these two individuals to demonstrate the shortcomings of patriarchal ideas and to propose a more equal social order.

The unequal social order can be seen in the scene when Eliza appears as Higgins and Pickering are discussing phonetics. Mrs Pearce, the maid, is “hesitating, evidently perplexed” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 35) to see such an ordinary young girl come to meet Mr. Higgins. Even she as the maid, concretely expresses a belittling attitude toward Eliza, saying “she says youll be glad to see her when you know what she’s come about. She’s quite a common girl, sir. Very common indeed. I should have sent her away (...)” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 35). Higgins wants Eliza in, while the maid cannot think why he takes an interest in such a girl. Eliza's treatment by Mrs. Pearce is reminiscent of Victorian England's strict class system and social standards. Her behaviour towards Eliza is a reflection of her prejudice towards her, which stems from Eliza's outward look and the manner in which she speaks, both of which are suggestive of her background in the working class and her lack of formal education. Therefore, how Mrs. Pearce treats Eliza is indicative of the social stratification of the Victorian period. The maid's actions may be seen through the lens of internalised oppression. As Lipsky puts it, the concept of internalised oppression is “turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the distress patterns that result from the oppression of the (dominant) society” (6). This concept relates to how members of underrepresented groups may accept the dominant culture's attitudes and prejudices about them, leading them to conclude that they are inherently inferior. The maid could see Eliza with disdain because she has adopted the values and norms of the upper-class society in which she works. Hence, as can be observed in Mrs. Pearce's initial treatment of Eliza, internalised oppression manifests when individuals of oppressed groups internalise the negative beliefs, attitudes, and notions about their own people that are pervasive in the dominant culture. When people internalise oppression, they may start to believe and act in ways that are similar to those used against them. To Antonio Gramsci, assimilation into the dominant culture is a possibility even for members of inferior groups. Acceptance and success in a society's hierarchical system often necessitate members of that society to assimilate into the dominant culture. According to Gramsci, individuals possess multiple "conceptions of the world" that frequently conflict with one another, resulting in an inconsistent overall understanding. As Gramsci put it, "Many of these conceptions are imposed and absorbed passively from outside, or from the past, and are accepted and lived uncritically." These concepts are what Gramsci refers to as "common sense" or "folklore." Common sense, in many instances, reinforces individuals' subordination by presenting situations of inequality

and oppression as normal and unalterable (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 421). On the other hand, another possible explanation of the maid's reaction might be attributed to the competitive nature of the lower classes' struggle to share few assets. "The supreme law of capitalist society is free competition between all social forces. Merchants compete for markets, bourgeois groupings compete for the government, the two classes compete for the state" (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 43). Accordingly, it is possible that in a society with a shortage of both supplies and opportunity, those in the lower classes had to compete with one another for employment, accommodation, and other basic requirements. The maid's treatment of Eliza might be interpreted as an attempt to establish her own supremacy within the lower class. In this way, Shaw may have included the maid's condescending treatment of Eliza as a remark on how societal power systems may be maintained even among the powerless. Members of lower classes may perpetuate oppression and unequal treatment by contributing to the alienation of others despite enduring their own challenges and forms of oppression. Thus, it can be seen that the play emphasises Victorian England's strict class hierarchies, in which one's social standing was established by one's birth and one's possessions, and in which the lower classes were often treated with scorn by the upper classes. Even someone slightly higher in rank than Eliza finds it simple to despise her. The treatment Mrs. Pearce gives Eliza is indicative of the rigid class distinctions and prejudices that persisted in Victorian England.

Eliza is there to learn better English in order to change her position in society by promoting herself from a flower girl to a shop owner. When Antonio Gramsci was thinking about many individuals in Italy who remained unable to read or write, this urged him to ask why? Too many Italians failed to look beyond their immediate communities and families, and this was why the country as a whole was so stagnant. He said, Italians

do not feel a need to learn the Italian language because dialect will do for their local and family life, because all their life of relationships is filled up with conversations in dialect. Literacy is not a need, and it therefore becomes a torment, something imposed by the wielders of power. In order for it to become a need, the general life would have to acquire greater fervour, it would have to draw in an ever increasing number of citizens and therefore make the sense of need arise spontaneously, out of the necessity for reading and writing and for the Italian language (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 67).

Gramsci's quote points out the complex relationship between language usage and social and cultural dynamics. It suggests that individuals may not perceive a necessity to acquire a specific language if their dialect effectively satisfies their communicative requirements in their existence. The significance of the aforementioned quote can be discerned within the context of Higgins' firm emphasis on the utilisation of refined English and Eliza's getting an education. This portrayal of language and education as potent tools of authority and upward social mobility is particularly noteworthy. Higgins, as a linguist, is deeply invested in the refinement of Eliza's accent and grammar, with the ultimate goal of aligning her speech with the standard English spoken by the upper class of society. His conviction stems from the belief that Eliza's Cockney accent and dialect, while charming in their own right, serve as markers of her lower-class status, thereby limiting her social and economic prospects. This perspective resonates with the above quote of Gramsci, who claims that language is not merely a means of communication, but also a reflection of the complex power dynamics that underpin social relations. Gramsci's statement underscores the critical role of language in shaping one's self-expression and identity. The Cockney accent and dialect that Eliza possesses are not merely indicative of her socio-economic standing, but also serve as integral components of her cultural legacy and individual sense of self. Thus, the actions of Professor Higgins towards Eliza reveal a complex interplay of power dynamics, cultural hegemony, and social mobility. Although he imposes his own values and beliefs on Eliza, and disregards her own linguistic and cultural identity, Professor Higgins attempts to elevate her social status by acquiring the language skills that are considered valuable in upper-class society.

When it comes to Higgins, it can be seen in the stage directions that “the only distinction he makes between men and woman is that when he is neither bullying nor exclaiming to the heavens against some featherweight cross, he coaxes women as a child coaxes its nurse when it wants to get anything out of her” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 36). Professor Higgins has a bias against men and a preference for women only when he treats women like a child might treat their nurse: when he's not yelling or being angry, he's attempting to deceive them into doing what he desires. Crompton sheds a light upon this paradoxical man;

Higgins is in many ways a paradoxical being. He is at once a tyrannical bully and a charmer, an impish schoolboy and a flamboyant wooer of souls, a scientist with a wildly extravagant imagination and a man so blind to the nature

of his own personality that he thinks of himself as timid, modest, and diffident (78-79).

In the context of the play, it can be argued that Professor Higgins employs his intellectual superiority and charismatic personality to exert control over and exploit other people. This is evidenced in the scene where Eliza Doolittle first arrives at Higgins' laboratory, where he dismisses her without listening to her concerns, despite her request for his attention. Higgins' dismissal of Eliza's concerns and his refusal to listen to her can be seen as a manifestation of his desire to exert control over her. This is compounded by his statement that he has already taken sufficient notes about her and has no further use for her. Eliza's insistence on being heard is met with resistance, further underscoring the power dynamics at play in their interaction. It is also noteworthy that Eliza's reliance on Higgins for education and social advancement is exploited by him. This is evident in her desire for private lessons, which Higgins may offer at a cost that Eliza may not be able to afford. In this sense, the power dynamics between Higgins and Eliza are further skewed in favour of Higgins. Thus, it can be argued that Professor Higgins utilizes his intellect and charisma to exert control over women, exploiting their reliance on him for education and social advancement. The power dynamics between Higgins and Eliza in the scene where she first arrives at his laboratory underscore the complexities of gender and class relations in Victorian society, particularly in terms of how power is wielded and exploited by those in positions of privilege. Of course, Higgins knows why Eliza is there, but he despises her, and while addressing Pickering, he says "shall we ask this baggage to sit down, or shall we throw her out of the window?" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 37). Nonetheless, Eliza continues with her freestyle speech, trying to save her honour and says, "I wont be called a baggage when Ive offered to pay like a lady" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 37). Eliza Doolittle's request to pay for private lessons signifies not only her sense of self-worth but also her ambition and eagerness to seize the opportunity for personal transformation. Gramsci "emphasizes that the learning process is a movement towards self-knowledge, self-mastery and thus liberation. Education is not a matter of handing out 'encyclopaedic knowledge' but of developing and disciplining the awareness which the learner already possesses" (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 54). Consequently, by investing in her own education and social refinement, Eliza demonstrates a keen awareness of the potential for change that comes with knowledge and poise. Her aspirations to transition from a flower girl to a lady in a flower shop

further highlight the transformative power of social mobility through education and etiquette. Despite Eliza's willingness to pay for her lessons and not be a burden, the dismissive attitude of the maid towards her exposes the insidious nature of social class distinctions. The maid's belittling remark about Eliza's ability to pay for the lessons once again reflects the internalized oppression that is prevalent among lower classes, perpetuating a self-defeating cycle of disempowerment. Thus, Eliza's request to pay for her own transformational journey serves as a significant reminder of the enduring human desire for personal growth and self-improvement, even in the face of societal and structural obstacles.

On the other hand, Pickering is ready to pay for the tutorship, and he encourages Higgins to see the change in her until the ambassador's garden party, saying, "I'll say you're the greatest teacher alive if you make that good. I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you can't do it. And I'll pay for the lessons" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 40). Finally, Higgins accepts to "make a duchess of this draggletailed guttersnipe (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 40) right now, and so he sends Eliza to be cleaned up. He also wants all her clothes to be burned and replaced with new ones. The maid is initially suspicious of Eliza's presence in the laboratory, and she becomes increasingly vocal in her opposition to the way Higgins treats her, saying 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" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 42). However, her suspicions are soon replaced by a sense of empathy towards Eliza. It is revealed that Eliza's parents, actually her father and sixth stepmother, told her that she was old enough to earn her own living and pushed her out. She has no one. This makes things simpler for Higgins because he and Pickering have the option of either returning her to her previous existence right now or returning her to the same environment once they have accomplished their objective. This decision seems inconsequential to Higgins, but for Eliza, this will affect her life vitally.

When Higgins and Pickering are examined, it can be said that Higgins is very harsh and wicked with Eliza, but Pickering is very respectful, hence they are very different from each other. In spite of the fact that Professor Higgins is a talented linguist, he is portrayed as being impolite, crass, and callous. He has a condescending attitude toward those around him and a lack of compassion for the plight of others. On the other hand, Colonel Pickering is shown as a good-natured and well-mannered

gentleman. He treats other people with consideration. He is kind to Eliza and shows generosity toward Professor Higgins' research endeavour, which he backs enthusiastically. Pickering suggests that for the girl to undergo a six-month teaching experiment under Higgins' guidance, it is crucial for her to have a comprehensive understanding of the purpose and implications of her participation. However, Higgins even thinks that Eliza's brain capacity is not enough to understand anything, which is again insulting. Higgins treats her as a guinea pig, which is in some cases a laboratory animal. Eliza is expected to reside there for a period of six months, during which she will be trained to speak eloquently, resembling that of a refined lady who manages a florist's shop. Compliance with Higgins' instructions will grant her access to decent sleeping arrangements, an ample supply of food, and the means to indulge in luxuries such as chocolates and cab rides. On the other hand, if she does not obey, she "will sleep in the back kitchen among the black beetles" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 46) and will be beaten by the maid. Higgins even tells her that at the end of all these, she will be transported in a carriage and outfitted in a splendid dress to attend an event at Buckingham Palace. He adds that if the King does not find her to be a proper lady, then she will be kept in the Tower of London by the police. It is evident that Higgins uses this fictional scenario to intimidate Eliza. As he has the power in his hands, he does not see any harm in oppressing her like this. According to Sarah Dillon, Professor Higgins neither considers her as a woman, nor as a human. He continually concentrates on to educate her how to speak or behave, and he gives her directives such as performing duties (Dillon 11-14). In accordance with Dillon's observation, Higgins consistently fails to treat Eliza as an equal, prioritizing her ability to speak and behave over her identity as a woman and individual. Eliza's personal needs and aspirations are not recognized by Higgins, who instead views her as a mere instrument to achieve his own goals. These actions perpetuate the patriarchal norms that dominate their culture, which require women to conform to specific behavioural expectations to be considered socially acceptable. Shaw utilizes Eliza's character to shed light on the restrictive nature of these societal norms and to emphasize the importance of actively challenging them.

During the early 20th century, societal norms presented a formidable challenge to the development of one's character. Social classes were rigidly defined, and individuals were subject to distinct expectations and limitations based on their class

background. The stratification of society often resulted in limited opportunities for those belonging to the working class, thereby limiting their exposure to the wealth and extravagance that were typical of the upper classes of society. Eliza's socio-economic origins are evident in her responses, as exemplified by her demeanour upon being presented with her bedroom. The protagonist's initial expectation of being placed in the scullery is changed upon being presented with her bedroom, leading her to express surprise, as she deems the room to be of a higher quality than what she perceives herself to deserve as she thinks "it's too good for the likes of me. I should be afraid to touch anything. I aint a duchess yet" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 47). Thus, the manifestation of astonishment upon entering her bedroom can be interpreted as a reflection of the firmly established societal norms and expectations that have influenced her perception of her entitlements and aspirations as a woman from a working-class background. As Christopher Innes states, "the material environment conditions an individual's personality. It is both an active agent determining the characters' fates and authentication of it" (19). Innes' statement proposes that Eliza's stay will not only shape her character but also determine her destiny. The bedroom represents her transformation from a low-class flower girl to a high-society lady in waiting, as well as the advantages of her new position. Eliza's character changes throughout the play as she becomes more refined in her manners and speech. In terms of social class, the background and experiences she's had have shaped her into the person she is now. That is the reason why she is so surprised to see a bathroom for the first time, where the servant will wash her. The bathroom is a symbol of the lavish lifestyle and comforts enjoyed by the upper class, in stark contrast to the confined and dirty conditions Eliza witnessed in her life as a flower girl. This new bedroom or bathroom is a new environment for her, but her fate is also determined by her environment, as she struggles to find a place in society despite her newfound opportunity to have an education and good manners. When the maid is ready to wash her, Eliza hesitates a lot as for her, it is neither right nor descent to take off all her clothes. Still, she should do whatever the maid tells her to do. The maid is also surprised to hear about Eliza's old habits, as she used to sleep without a proper nightdress but in her underclothes, which she wears during the day. The maid wants Eliza to trust her so that she can change her "from a frowzy slut to a clean respectable girl" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 48).

The comment made by the maid regarding the transformation of Eliza from a dowdy slut to a clean and dignified lady is indicative of the prevalent societal norms and values that dictate the way women are perceived and evaluated based on their physical appearance and conduct. This scene between the maid and Eliza serves to fortify the gendered contradiction that pervades Victorian society, whereby women are frequently subjected to evaluation and categorization on the basis of their physical attributes and perceived ethical conduct. Therefore, the question Pickering asks Higgins, while he is trying to learn whether he is “a man of good character where women are concerned” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 50) is significant. Pickering is asking the question because he is concerned about the situation of Eliza and since he feels responsible for her, he wants to make sure “no advantage is to be taken of her position” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 50). It is revealed that whenever Higgins becomes friends with a woman, that woman becomes jealous or suspicious thus he becomes selfish and tyrannical. For him, it is the woman who upsets everything. He does not put any blame on himself. His statement shows his contempt for women and how strongly he believes that they are not as smart as men. He does not see women as people with their own minds and emotions, but rather as things to be used and abused. Higgins reflects a deep-seated belief in patriarchal norms, which view women as less capable than males intellectually and emotionally. He does not see women as people with feelings and goals of their own, but rather as things to be exploited for his own benefit. He thinks that women are to blame for all of his stress and frustration and that they are just obstacles he has to get past before he can succeed. His inability to reflect on his behaviour and accept responsibility is symptomatic of a societal tendency in which men are rarely held accountable for their treatment of women. The way Shaw depicts Higgins' views on women reveals the flaws and risks of patriarchal ideology. As Eliza's story unfolds, he shows how women suffer when they are treated as nothing more than objects, and how crucial it is to fight against the cultural conventions that uphold this treatment. Shaw criticises this kind of treatment by saying;

(...) it is not surprising that our society, being directly dominated by men, comes to regard Woman, not as an end in herself like Man, but solely as a means of ministering to his appetite. The ideal wife is one who does everything that the ideal husband likes, and nothing else. Now to treat a person as a means instead of an end is to deny that person's right to live. And to be treated as a means to such an end as sexual intercourse with those who deny one's right to live is insufferable to any human being (Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* 38).

This quotation sheds light on the pervasive issue of objectification and maltreatment of women within societal constructs, specifically in the area of reducing women to mere instruments for the fulfilment of male sexual desires. The play portrays an intriguing dynamic between Higgins and Eliza, wherein Higgins views her as a project or experiment. Despite the absence of any sexual expectations from Higgins towards Eliza, this treatment of her raises questions about the nature of their relationship and the underlying power dynamics in the play. As a male, Higgins exhibits a tendency to overlook the unique qualities, self-governance, and affective experiences of his female counterpart, perceiving her primarily as a tool to fulfil his personal objectives and aspirations, without taking her inherent entitlements or capacity for self-determination into account. The aforementioned citation, thus, highlights Higgins' treatment as a representation of an undesirable power dynamic, wherein Eliza, as a female, is obligated to comply with the male's wishes and preconceptions, while her own autonomy and privileges are disregarded or suppressed. Shaw's statement functions as a significant evaluation of the unjust treatment of women, urging for the acknowledgement of their intrinsic value, self-governance, and entitlement to lead autonomous lives, rather than being objectified or utilised as instruments to satisfy male desires. The work in question presents a compelling critique of the patriarchal paradigm that pervades contemporary society, advocating for a more just and equitable treatment of women. This critical stance is particularly evident in the author's pointed analysis of Higgins' treatment of Eliza, which is shown to be deeply problematic and indicative of larger societal issues.

In addition to, Higgins and Pickering as the main male characters, there is also Alfred Doolittle as another significant male character of the patriarchal society. While the maid asks Higgins not to swear or do certain things in front of Eliza, Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle, appears at the door. He "is an elderly but vigorous dustman, clad in the costume of profession. (...) He has well marked and rather interesting features, and seems equally free from fear and conscience" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 53). Shaw portrays Alfred Doolittle as a character who seeks to take advantage of Eliza's new social position. As soon as he claims his daughter, to Alfred Doolittle's surprise, Higgins immediately asks him to take her and leave. Cunningly Higgins blames Alfred for having sent her daughter on purpose in order to blackmail him; otherwise, he cannot have known where she is. Higgins believes that he is a dishonest man and a liar who

tries to extort money from him. Alfred claims to have learned of his daughter's whereabouts from Eliza's landlord's boy, whom Eliza asks to transport her luggage from her home. He also adds that as a father, he comes to save the honour of his daughter. Higgins asks if he wants to take his daughter back, and why he brings her luggage with him. When Higgins insists that he must take her daughter back immediately, Alfred Doolittle changes his tune and says staying with Professor Higgins is an opportunity for Eliza. However, Alfred is still after a kind of bargain to take money from Higgins, saying that Eliza can stay, but he is open to some arrangements as a father and has his rights over his daughter. Doolittle's crass behaviour contrasts with the play's upper-class characters, who are portrayed as polite and sophisticated. Higgins views Doolittle as lacking in morals and is put off by his attitude towards his daughter. Doolittle is willing to sell his daughter and views her as a means to his own financial advancement, rather than as a person with her own aspirations and needs. He is also portrayed as an illiterate and valueless man, further emphasizing the class differences between the characters. Alfred Doolittle thinks that Eliza will change into a fine girl so that would make change into an aristocratic man as well. Higgins finds himself in a dilemma because he both thinks giving him money is a bad thing but on the contrary, he also thinks that this is his right. Although Alfred's wishes and aspirations are totally different, he acts as if he is Eliza's dear father who has his daughter's best interests at heart. If Higgins marries Eliza, Alfred thinks he will get a wedding settlement, thus he suggests Higgins marry his daughter. Doolittle's motivations highlight the monetary motivations behind marriage during the Victorian period, when women were often pressured to marry for financial gain rather than love. Shaw also criticizes the lack of agency that women had in these societal norms. Doolittle's suggestion is witty and he offers this advice as a result of his own self-centred and exploitative attitude. He does not care for Eliza beyond her potential ability to help him get ahead financially. It brings criticism of the injustice and inequality towards women that existed in Victorian England and shows how women were often pressured into marriage for reasons other than romantic love because it was viewed as their sole chance at a better social and economic position in life. Finally, Higgins gives five pounds to Alfred Doolittle and sends him away. However, Eliza comes in, dressed in good and clean clothes, and sees both her father and the others. Eliza is not happy to see her father and says, "all he come here for was to touch you for some money to get drunk on" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 63). She does not want to see her father again,

thinking he is a disgrace to her and her rejection of her father can be seen as a commentary on the societal norms that allowed men to treat women as possessions or commodities, rather than as people with their own agency.

After her father is gone, Eliza has her first lesson. She finds herself practising breakfast, lunch and dinner in her new clothes. Then, they want her to say the alphabet, but she pronounces it very badly, which annoys Higgins. Although Eliza had an elementary education, she is still not able to say the alphabet properly, hence Higgins says, “this unfortunate animal has been locked up for nine years in school at our expense to teach her to speak and read the language of Shakespear[e] and Milton” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 66). Professor Henry Higgins instructs Eliza Doolittle in the finer points of English speech and culture so that she can fit in with the higher classes. As seen in the quotation above, Higgins is complaining about how much effort and money have gone into Eliza's schooling and how she has been "locked up" or limited to the process of learning. From the perspective of Antonio Gramsci, both culture, which he defines as an “organization, discipline of one's inner self, a coming to terms with one's own personality; it is the attainment of a higher awareness, with the aid of which one succeeds in understanding one's own historical value, one's own function in life, one's own rights and obligations,” (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 57) and education play an important role in forming a society's power relations. David Forgacs states that "Questions of education and culture were always of central importance to Gramsci. His early educational thinking revolves around the problem of how working-class people can become intellectually autonomous. If this can be achieved, they can lead their own movement without having to delegate decision-making to 'career intellectuals'. They can then be capable of acting as a ruling class" (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 53). Gramsci considered intellectual independence among working-class people as a critical issue to handle since it would enable them to direct their own action and judgment rather than relying on authorities from outside their society (referred to as "career intellectuals"). Gramsci wanted people from the working class to be smart enough to lead their own class and act as a ruling class, which would force existing systems of authority to change. He thought that institutions like education and the media kept a certain ideology in power, which is called "cultural hegemony." The second act of *Pygmalion* highlights the effectiveness of education in moulding social class and maintaining upper-class

society's prevailing ideology. Professor Henry Higgins employs his linguistic and phonetic expertise to teach Eliza Doolittle, a working-class Cockney flower girl, to speak and read English in the style associated with the higher classes. As a result of this process, Eliza will be able to be seen as a member of the upper class. This shows how education can change a person's social position and keep the dominant class's cultural hegemony. Gramsci also considered that education was an important tool for the ruling class in maintaining power and influence. In *Pygmalion*, Eliza's education includes not only language skills, but also upper-class manners, customs, and ideals. This promotes the prevailing ideology and perpetuates class society's power relations. Thus, Gramsci's viewpoint might be applied to Eliza Doolittle who will turn into a lady under the supervision of Professor Henry Higgins. Eliza will be able to join the upper levels of society and question its cultural hegemony due to her education and training in proper speech and behaviour. It may be argued, however, that this shift perpetuates cultural hegemony by reinforcing the notion that one's worth is judged by their speech and behaviour, rather than their inner attributes. Yet, it can be argued that Eliza's education and training serve as a beneficial influence, as they provide her with the ability to defy the prevailing societal conventions and anticipations that are enforced by the aristocracy. The acquisition of these tools enables her to successfully convey her thoughts, deftly move in the web of social relationships, and potentially ascend the ranks of the societal classes.

The third act, set in the home of Mrs. Higgins, serves as an essential point as Shaw's astute observations on the societal constructs of class, gender, and language in the early 20th century are deftly conveyed. At the beginning of the act, it is the at-home day of Mrs. Higgins, Professor Higgins' mother, and she is expecting some visitors. As usual, she does not want her son to visit her when she has guests to welcome. However, Higgins rushes in, saying that he has come on purpose. He explains the experiment he has been working on and adds that he has invited Eliza so that she can practice what she has learned. There are two things that Eliza has learned so far; how to speak about the weather and health. He thinks that if Eliza starts talking about general things, she can make mistakes, thus she has to imitate the speeches she has been taught like a parrot. Hence, she is allowed to talk about nothing else but these two topics. While he is explaining the process of Eliza's education, Mrs. Eynsford Hill and her daughter Clara suddenly arrive which interrupts him. Before he is able to leave,

his mother introduces him to the guests. Since “Mrs. and Miss Eynsford Hill are the mother and daughter who sheltered from the rain in Covent Garden” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 72) in the First Act, Higgins feels uneasy that they might recognize Eliza. While they are chatting, Pickering arrives, which soothes Higgins a little bit but he feels uncomfortable again when Mrs. Eynsford Hill’s son Freddy also arrives. Fortunately, neither Mrs. and Miss Eynsford Hill nor Freddy remembers seeing Higgins on that rainy day. Mrs. Higgins tells them that she is going to introduce them to a new friend.

Eliza is finely attired and conducts herself as such upon her arrival. The tea party is essential because it allows the audience members to witness Eliza's evolution and her interactions with some of the upper-class characters of the play. Higgins seems nervous when Eliza introduces herself to the group, and Mrs. Eynsford Hill thinks she recognises her from somewhere. Luckily, everything turns out fine. Mrs. Higgins asks about the weather, and Eliza starts to speak about what she memorised from her training sessions like a news reporter would do.

Yet, Mrs. Eynsford Hill mentions influenza, prompting Eliza to reveal personal details about her family. For instance, Eliza talks about her aunt's death from influenza and the lack of support available to cure her. Her father's dependence on gin is also mentioned, as he gave it to her aunt as a remedy saying that “Gin was mother’s milk” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 79) and drank it himself for cheerfulness. These revelations offer insight into the hardships faced by working-class individuals. The death of Eliza's aunt serves as a reminder that basic necessities like healthcare are often denied to working-class people, highlighting their societal devaluation. Professor Higgins has been trying to mould Eliza into a lady throughout the play, and this speech is actually the culmination of his efforts as Eliza shows her newfound confidence and capacity to stand up for herself in a society that has historically marginalised her by publicly discussing an issue near and dear to her heart. While Eliza is speaking freely, Higgins is very much irritated by this speech for fear that his plan may be revealed at any time. Since her speech is a bit weird for others, Higgins says that this is a new style of speech. Higgins sends her a secret signal by coughing and looking at his watch so that Eliza tells the guests that she has to leave. Freddy is really interested in Eliza and asks if she wants to walk across the park with him. In a manner reminiscent of the play’s first act, she again informs him explicitly that she is going to take a cab. Since Pickering knows

Eliza's background, he is also in a panic like Higgins. Clara thinks that they should know new styles in order not to seem old-fashioned, but for Mrs. Eynsford Hill this new way of speech is really too much. When she suddenly asks whether Pickering agrees with her, he evades the question by saying that he has been away from England for a long time, hence he does not know if her manners are good or bad. Although Clara cannot get used to it yet, she finds "the new small talk delightful and quite innocent" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 79). At the tea party, Eliza shows off her improved demeanour and confidence, and she has no trouble carrying on a conversation with the Eynsford Hills. This scene is both a celebration of her progress under Professor Higgins' guidance and an examination of the social norms that define what it means to be a "lady." Shaw, therefore, uses the tea party as an opportunity to criticise the hypocrisy of the aristocracy. Eliza has made a good impression on the elite. They would not treat her with respect or welcome her to the tea party if they knew the truth about who she is—that she was the flower girl on that wet day and that she came from a working-class background. This exemplifies the hypocrisy of a society that places a premium on physical appearance and social graces at the expense of inner strength and moral rectitude, and the superficiality of the division between the social classes.

Eliza's opportunities are restricted by her gender and social status as a working-class woman. The only roles available to her are those of wife or housekeeper, and she has no chance of getting ahead in life otherwise. Thus, when the guests leave, Mrs. Higgins questions Professor Higgins to understand where Eliza lives and on what terms. She tries to understand if she is not his lover or wife. Higgins says that, besides having to stay with him in order to be trained every day, she is also useful as she knows where he puts his things, remembers his appointments, and so forth. Both Higgins and Pickering laud Eliza for her exceptional abilities, citing her "extraordinary quickness of ear" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 85), and her musical aptitude as evidenced by her ability to play pieces by renowned composers such as Beethoven and Brahms, and her attendance at classical concerts. Additionally, they note her remarkable linguistic talent, with the ability to replicate various dialects, a feat that took Higgins years to master. These comments highlight Eliza's impressive range of skills and suggest that her potential has been overlooked by society due to her lower social status.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Higgins is thinking about another very crucial issue about Eliza by saying "you two definitely stupid male creatures: the problem of what is to

be done with her afterwards” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 87). Initially sceptical about Higgins' efforts to refine Eliza's manners, Mrs. Higgins cautions him about the potential harm he may be causing by taking her out of the streets, making a lady out of her and letting her go “without giving her a fine lady's income” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 87). She highlights his lack of empathy towards Eliza's emotional state, viewing his experiment as shallow and inconsiderate. She is disappointed that her son does not show more compassion toward Eliza, whom she feels deserves more respect and consideration. Her progressive views on gender and social class lead her to question the moral implications of Higgins' experiment. As a strong, intelligent woman, Mrs. Higgins defies gender norms by expressing her opinions and challenging the conventions of her time. Mrs. Higgins' concerns shed light on the ethical implications of treating individuals as mere objects in the pursuit of personal goals, highlighting the importance of empathy and respect for human dignity. She considers the long-term consequences of the experiment, including the possibility of Eliza's failure to integrate into high society after the training period ends. In contrast, Professor Higgins and Pickering appear hypocritical, disregarding Eliza's well-being and treating her as a subject in their experiment. Higgins prioritizes his own ambition over Eliza's humanity, fixated on transforming her into a new person through the acquisition of upper-class mannerisms. He is very excited about the experiment he is doing with Eliza. Rather than seeing Eliza as a human being with her own thoughts and feelings, Professor Higgins treats her as a subject in his experiment. His sole focus is on transforming her into a different individual by instructing her on how to adopt an upper-class dialect. This can be seen when he 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” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 84). With this initiative, he hopes to bring people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds together. He thinks a person's speech is what makes them who they are, and that if he can alter Eliza's speech, he can alter her entire personality. He hopes that the experiment will give him both intellectual and emotional ideas, as well as prove his linguistic theories. This quote by Professor Higgins shows how proud he is, how sure he is that the upper class is better, and how little he cares about other people's feelings and experiences. He cares little for the needs of those around him, yet this does not imply he is self-absorbed. Moreover, he thinks that, as a professor of phonetics, he is helping humanity

and that anyone who stands in his way is not worthy of his attention. He just does not understand why some native English speakers do not bother to improve their grammar and pronunciation. According to him, there is a linguistic class division that serves as an outward sign of one's social class as a result of one's inability to speak with the proper accent and language. Considered in light of Antonio Gramsci's philosophy, which centres on the concept of cultural hegemony—the dominance of society by the dominant elite through the establishment and dissemination of social traditions, standards, and beliefs—it's possible to see how he would view the development of a new language as a tool for social manipulation and the propagation of elite ideology. Gramsci sees it as an attempt to bridge the "gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 84) by keeping the upper and lower classes in their places of power. This method helps to keep the dominant culture strong and makes sure that the rich continue to take advantage of the poor. Gramsci believed that "the bourgeois class poses itself as an organism in continuous movement, capable of absorbing the entire society, assimilating it to its own cultural and economic level" (Gramsci, *Selections From Prison Notebooks* 260) and in order to preserve its supremacy, the bourgeoisie needed to develop and maintain cultural and ideological hegemony or control over society's ideas, beliefs, and values. This cultural hegemony would allow the bourgeoisie to retain its power and privilege.

The events that take place in act three at the grand reception that Higgins, Pickering and Eliza attend and Eliza's debut at the Embassy Ball exemplifies the play's treatment of social stratification. Eliza is "in opera cloak, evening dress, diamonds, fan, flowers and all accessories" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 88). In the reception, Higgins meets his first phonetic student, Nepommuck, who made Higgins well-known in Europe. Unfortunately, considering Nepommuck's expertise and the possibility of uncovering her origins through her linguistic patterns, both Higgins and Pickering perceive him as a potential danger to Eliza, as he can compromise Professor Higgins' bet. Just like they thought, although Nepommuck himself is Hungarian, he comments on Eliza's surname, saying that she cannot be English. All through the reception, Eliza does her best, and she succeeds in the experiment, but she gets tired of all this effort, and they leave. "Eliza has triumphed. Higgins is satisfied, bored, and wondering what to do next. But there are two more acts!" (Bentley 82). The fact that Eliza was able to acquire and adopt the language, manners, and behaviour of the upper class and gain

acceptance into high society may be viewed as a form of victory for her. However, the statement also emphasises Higgins' contradictory emotions, as he is described as being content but bored and unsure of what to do next. This suggests that while Higgins may have accomplished his desired outcome with Eliza, he may not fully appreciate the significance of his experiment or its impact on Eliza. Thus, the mention of "two more acts" creates a sense of anticipation and curiosity about what will happen next in the play, and hints at the potential for additional complexities and dynamics to emerge in the relationship between Eliza and Higgins, as well as in the play's larger societal context of class struggle and cultural hegemony.

When this act is considered, the upper class is shown to be stiff, fake, and proud, while the working class is shown to be friendly and easy to talk to. The upper class depends on social norms to keep its position of power, and this shows how far apart the two classes are. The hypocrisy of the upper class is clear when Higgins asks what Nepommuck, his first student who made his name famous, is "doing here among all these swells" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 92) despite being a guest at the ball himself. He also calls them fools when he is about to leave the reception. He is only there to win the bet about the experiment on Eliza. He does not care about all those people. Besides, Higgins is too proud of himself although he is also scared of the fact that Nepommuck might understand the true identity of Eliza, and he overlooks him which forces Nepommuck, an interpreter who knows thirty-two languages, to teach his place by saying "You are a great cockney specialist: you place a man anywhere in London the moment he open[s] his mouth. I place any man in Europe" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 93). Another hypocrisy of the upper class can be seen in the scene in which Mrs. Higgins invited Eliza and Professor Higgins to tea. During the scene, Mrs. Higgins criticizes the aristocratic guests at the Embassy Ball for being insincere and not being true hosts. This shows how upper-class people put on a face of politeness and graciousness in front of the masses, yet privately criticise each other for their behaviour. On the whole, Act Three of *Pygmalion* goes deeper into the play's main themes of social class and differences between classes. It demonstrates how the upper class uses power to stay on top and feel superior to the lower classes. At the same time, Shaw uses Mrs. Higgins and Eliza to criticise the hypocrisy of the upper class and confront the standards of Victorian society. Therefore, it can be said that the embassy ball depicts Eliza Doolittle's transformation from a Cockney flower girl to a refined lady. Her appearance

and demeanour are strikingly different from her former self, and this leads to a change in how people perceive her. Initially, the guests at the ball are confused and derisive towards Eliza, but as she demonstrates her knowledge of proper etiquette and speaks more confidently, they begin to view her in a more positive light, indicating a significant shift in their perception of her. It is also important that Nepommuck sees Eliza as a princess and Hungarian royal blood due to her surname, Doolittle, which is not English. This reflects his own perception of her as a refined and elegant lady. His valuation of refinement and cultural capital is indicative of Victorian society's emphasis on these values. The concept of "cultural capital" refers to non-monetary values that individuals possess and employ to obtain social and economic advantages in society. The development of Eliza's education, knowledge, abilities, and cultural experiences demonstrates the relevance of cultural capital. This non-pecuniary asset consists of the cultural abilities and information that individuals gain through socialisation, education, and upbringing, and which can be used to signify social standing, taste, and refinement. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu coined the phrase "cultural capital," which comprises, among other things, knowledge of literature, art, music, languages, and etiquette, which can help individuals succeed in the job market, education, and other parts of life. In this act, the importance of social standing and manners in determining a person's perceived value in society is also highlighted. Hence, the changes in how people perceive Eliza at the embassy ball illustrate the significance placed on appearance and social status in Victorian society. Her transformation reflects the idea that one's social position is determined by factors such as speech, behaviour, and manners, rather than inherent qualities or abilities. Furthermore, the embassy ball scene explores power dynamics between men and women. The male characters, such as Higgins and Nepommuck, hold power and influence in society, whereas Eliza is a woman who has had to fight to gain a foothold in a male-dominated world. Shaw uses the scene to critique how women are often undervalued and overlooked in society.

In the fourth act, it can be seen that although Professor Higgins is still trying to change Eliza, this Act reveals her rebellious side as she realizes that this new Eliza is not herself and she does not fit in with her new identity. Adams remarks that "*Pygmalion*, which of all Shaw's plays focuses most clearly the theme of identity transformation, offers a full-scale commentary on the hazards of ladyhood. As Eliza

loses her Covent Garden speech and acquires the costume and manners of a lady, she loses the self-respect and independence that she had as a flower girl. Thus, in spite of her triumph in "passing" as a princess at the Embassy party, she despairs of her future: 'What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? What is to become of me?'" (Adams, *Shaw's Ladies* 117) The quote emphasises the ambiguities and difficulties of identity transformation, particularly in the context of gender and social standards. It implies that the process of conforming to traditional notions of femininity may not always be empowering or rewarding for women and that it may come at the expense of their feeling of autonomy. It is true that Shaw advocated social mobility and urged women to seek more freedom and possibilities. It is crucial to note, however, that Shaw's depiction of Eliza is more complicated and nuanced, reflecting his critique of Victorian gender and class conventions. While Shaw supports Eliza's desire for social mobility and upward mobility by depicting Eliza's transformation from a flower girl to a lady, he also depicts the negative effects of conforming to traditional notions of femininity and class status, which can limit the growth and potential of individuals, particularly women. Eliza's melancholy illustrates the challenge she faces to reconcile her new identity as a lady with her previous identity as a flower girl. Through Eliza, Shaw demonstrates the emotional toll that society's demands can have on individuals, as well as the difficulty of achieving genuine personal development and self-acceptance within such a confined framework. This implies that while social mobility may be desirable, conforming to cultural standards can have adverse effects on an individual's sense of self and identity, particularly in the absence of sufficient support. In other words, Eliza's new identity demonstrates that she has completed her metamorphosis process. She is now on the verge of a new life, but she is uncertain if she will be capable of sustaining herself if Professor Higgins and Eliza go their separate ways, a concern that Mrs. Higgins previously had. Also, Shaw's depiction of Eliza can be interpreted as a critique of the male-dominated society of his period. This power imbalance makes it challenging for Eliza to assert herself and fight for her own needs and aspirations. Throughout the play, Eliza's feelings of uncertainty and insecurity about her future are totally natural. Being a member of the working class who has been adopted by Professor Higgins, she is in a weak and dependent position. She is uncertain about her future and reasonably concerned that Higgins will desert her after he has accomplished his goal of transforming her into a lady. Eliza is trying to find the right moment to speak up her mind and until that time, she is forcing herself to be obedient. Higgins

and Pickering start talking about the garden party, a dinner party and the reception they have been to. Eliza acquitted herself very well and Pickering feels triumphant that she “did the trick” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 102) but Higgins feels relieved that they are all over now. Higgins understands that he will not be able to carry on this experiment as he is now tired. What Eliza accomplished and what her future holds is a mystery to her. This uncertainty and lack of control over her own destiny contribute to her emotions of hopelessness and insecurity. By depicting Eliza's problems and feelings in this manner, Shaw critiques the restrictions and inequities of this social framework. Eliza has a nervous breakdown as a result of the strain she feels to uphold her new upper-class persona. In brief, her altered demeanour is a manifestation of the inner turmoil she is experiencing as she tries to make peace with her transition from a flower girl to a lady. This outburst serves as a pivotal moment in the play because it demonstrates the emotional and mental toll that social advancement can have on a person. In this Act, she has self-realization as she has nearly reached the end of the road. The fact that Eliza is increasingly capable of standing on her own two feet has also been a source of tension for Professor Higgins. He says “No more artificial duchesses. The whole thing has been simple purgatory” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 103). The experiment is designed to be a test of his linguistic prowess, but instead, it has become a source of aggravation and monotony for him. As the phrase “artificial duchesses” indicates, the upper class is satirised for their dishonesty and the ways in which they utilise language to keep their social standing alive. When Higgins talks about his efforts to change Eliza, he uses the word “purgatory”. This gives the impression that he went through a lot of pain as he may have needed a lot of patience, energy, and determination to teach Eliza the language, etiquette, and behaviour of the upper class. It was probably quite difficult and time-consuming, requiring a lot of discipline, practice, and correction. Higgins may have felt that he was in “purgatory” with Eliza due to his unconventional methods and blunt manner of instruction. However, it was for nothing as now he loses his interest. On the other hand, Pickering is quite satisfied with the experiment. He compares Eliza to upper-class people and believes she is more real than them. She is lost as a result of the strain she feels to uphold her new upper-class persona. Her altered demeanour is a manifestation of the inner turmoil she is experiencing during her transition. This outburst is a key moment in the play because it shows how social advancement can affect a person's emotions and mind. Eliza has had her fair share of success, and she is now devastated because Higgins won his bet and is about to dump

her. She has become an educated girl out of a common street girl and as the experiment is over now, she does not have any idea what is going to happen to her which is why she starts acting wildly. When Higgins asks where his slippers are as usual, now she throws a tantrum by giving “a suffocated scream of fury, and instinctively darts her nails at his face” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 104). Although “the women in Shaw's plays do not threaten men through tigerish displays of temper; more characteristically they dominate through kittenish "feminine wiles" (i.e., deceit and cunning)” in *Pygmalion* “Even the male-dominated Eliza Doolittle shows her claws and threatens to scratch when Higgins and Pickering ignore her after her triumph in Act IV” (Adams, *Feminism and Female Stereotypes in Shaw* 18). Eliza's growing sense of self-worth and autonomy has made her less amenable to being used as an experiment; she is now more likely to stand up for herself by demanding things and criticising Higgins. This sudden aggressiveness has introduced an imbalance of power that Higgins is not accustomed to, making it more challenging for him to keep things under control. Higgins cannot make any sense out of her behaviour and asks her why she complains now as nobody, neither himself nor Pickering, Mrs. Pearce and any of the other servants treated her badly. Eliza is disappointed as he said “Thank God it's all over” (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 106) but Higgins thinks that she should be happy as now she is free and she can do what she likes. He even suggests that she can find someone to get married to, as marriage is a possibility for the majority of women at that time. When considering the time period of the play, women found it extremely challenging to shift from one class to another. They had no legal standing. The only way out was a felicitous marriage. Otherwise, lower-class women's fate was to work as housemaids, tailors, or like Eliza, flower girls.

Everything seems to be very easy for Higgins. However, Eliza is too disillusioned that she wants to go back to where she belongs. She believes she has been sold, bought and also, she has been recreated by Higgins.

Eliza: I sold flowers. I didnt sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me I am not fit to sell anything else. I wish youd left me where you found me (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 107).

The transition from "flower girl" to "lady" is highlighted in Eliza's remark. She feels that the change has devalued her to the level of what is expected of someone in her new social class. This quote also shows the double standards of the higher classes, who condemn and discriminate against those of lower socioeconomic standing while

they themselves partake in behaviour that would be considered immoral and unethical in a more egalitarian society. Another thing that Eliza says in the last act supports Eliza's words showing how angry and sad she is at the system that makes her hide who she really is and give up her freedom thus she can pass as a "lady": "If only I could go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both of you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? Why did I give it up? I am a slave now, for all my fine clothes" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 135). She is even not sure whether these fancy clothes she has been wearing belong to herself or to Colonel Pickering because she thinks that after they are done with her, they are going to find another girl for their experiment so that they can make use of these clothes. She is also thinking that if she takes anything, she might be accused of stealing. Their argument ends when Higgins finally leaves furiously to sleep. Eliza goes back to her room and gets dressed to go out. After looking at herself one last time in the mirror, she sticks her tongue out at her reflection in the mirror and leaves the house. She makes this gesture to express her annoyance and dissatisfaction with her current appearance. This decision is symbolic of her conflicted feelings about her newfound status as a member of the upper class. Eliza feels that her personality and integrity have been lost in the process of being turned from a Cockney flower girl into a lady through rigorous speech training. She feels that she has been reduced to a commodity instead of a person with her own ideas and feelings, and she's having a hard time reconciling her new image with her old one. Eliza is unhappy with the superficial modifications to her looks and the restrictions placed on her by her new identity, and she shows this displeasure by sticking her tongue out at her mirror. This shows how she did not want to follow the rules of Victorian society and fought for her independence and self-respect.

Yet, surprisingly, he comes across Freddy. Freddy is "lovelorn" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 110) and spends his time in front of the house with the hope of seeing Eliza. "He loses all self-control and smothers her with kisses. She, hungry for comfort, responds. They stand there in one another's arms" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 110-111) and then leave together. It can be remembered that at the beginning of the play, when Freddy cannot get a cab, his mother sees him as a lost and vulnerable young man who needs her care and guidance. Mrs. Eynsford Hill gets more and more annoyed and angry at him as she watches him struggle. Freddy's incapacity to take care of himself and make his own way in the world is reflected in his difficulty finding a cab. It seems

like he's a young man who cannot take care of himself and needs his mother's help. In Victorian society, men were expected to be strong, independent, and able to take care of themselves. However, they were also expected to depend on women for emotional support and guidance, like Freddy. In this way, Freddy is a safe and reassuring memory from Eliza's past. He reminds her of her former life as a flower girl and the ease with which she lived it. Eliza reaches for the safety and comfort she felt when she was her old self by letting him kiss her. Eliza wants men to acknowledge her femininity. Because of her transformation, she is no longer regarded as a person with her own thoughts and feelings, but rather as a commodity. Having repressed her sexuality and femininity in pursuit of a new identity as a lady, she is expressing them by letting Freddy kiss her. Considering that she is "hungry for comfort", she responds to the kiss, which may also represent Eliza's longing for the affection she has lost as a result of her change. By giving in to Freddy's advances, she is trying to fill the gap left by the lack of emotional contact and assistance in her new life as "Higgins lacks not only the personal tenderness Eliza craves but even the tact necessary to avoid hurting her repeatedly" (Crompton 80).

The last scene of the play, set in Mrs. Higgins' drawing-room, bears significance in its ability to advance the development of the characters, provide insightful commentary on the complexities of social class and gender, and ultimately leave the audience with an open-ended conclusion. It adds depth and complexity to the play's themes and messages. Higgins and Pickering are busy calling the police as Eliza disappears. Mrs. Higgins is surprised that they have sent the police after her and thinks "the girl has a perfect right to leave if she chooses" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 116). Professor Higgins needs her to come back because, despite his mistreatment of her, he has grown dependent on her as after she left, he cannot find anything or he does not know about his upcoming appointments. Higgins and Pickering want to find her but Mrs Higgins thinks they are like kids and they have no right to file a missing person report after her "as if she were a thief, or a lost umbrella, or something" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 117). While they are discussing Eliza's father, who no longer looks like a dustman, arrives. Instead, now he looks like a gentleman, dressed up as a bridegroom. Nevertheless, he is not happy at all. He believes that Higgins is responsible for disrupting his contentment by imposing societal norms upon him. He finally has the comfortable lifestyle he's always dreamed of, but he's also bound by the standards of civilised society. Higgins attempts

to make sense of what Eliza's father is telling him, but he does not really see how his life transformed once he gave him some money and some advice. It is revealed that a letter Higgins wrote as a joke saying that Alfred Doolittle is "the most original moralist at present in England" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 120) changed his life. By referring to Alfred Doolittle as a moralist, Professor Higgins is belittling Doolittle's views and suggesting that they are not worth considering. But this letter sent by an influential professor is taken seriously, despite the fact that its whole purpose is to mock Alfred Doolittle. So, Doolittle is offered money on the condition that he gives lectures for the Wannafeller Moral Reform League. This exemplifies the superficial and egocentric nature of society, in which people's value is determined not by their actions or moral fibre but by their financial and social standing. Shaw uses this joke to comment on the hypocrisy of individuals who claim to be moral authorities while upholding a double standard. Doolittle, who was once considered a moral outcast, is now able to lecture on morality because of his newfound wealth, which allows him to be taken seriously by the upper classes.

Lecturing is not a problem for Doolittle but what irritates and disturbs him is the fact that he has lost his freedom. The roles have shifted, and he is now the target of money, with people contacting him for money. Just like Eliza also felt, Alfred Doolittle thinks he does not fit in this world and now, he has a self-awareness which causes him to be unhappy. He is intimidated as he also feels like he is sold and bought like Eliza. However, according to Mrs Higgins, if he is an earnest person, he should not suffer that much as it is up to him to accept and refuse the situation he is now in.

On the other hand, Higgins is still looking for Eliza without knowing that she is upstairs. Mrs. Higgins reveals that Eliza had visited her earlier that day and recounted her mistreatment at the hands of both Higgins and Pickering. As a woman, she can understand Eliza. From the beginning, she has been thinking and considering what is going to happen to her at the end. She is aware that Eliza had become attached to both Higgins and Pickering while she was doing her best for them. Neither Higgins nor Pickering understood her psychology as they were focused on their victorious bet. They even did not bother to appreciate what she did but instead felt relieved that everything is over. Mrs. Higgins knows what a woman needs and blames the two men as they neither thanked her nor show any compassion. However, men are men. They think they did not have to say that to make her understand it. Mrs. Higgins asks Eliza

to come down on the condition that Higgins behaves well. Upon Eliza's arrival, she displays a demeanour of kindness and respect towards Higgins and Pickering, much to the dissatisfaction of Higgins. Eliza expects to be treated well and her reaction stems from the fact that she is essentially trying to make Higgins see this. Higgins' desire to regain possession of his creation is expressed in a rather harsh manner, as he declares, "I have created this thing out of the squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden; and now she pretends to play fine lady with me" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 126). He feels personally responsible for her existence and is frustrated that she dares to question his authority. As Adams mentioned "At first Eliza is eager to acquire what other Shaw heroines reject: step by step we witness her transformation to lady. Higgins takes credit for the accomplishment, but Eliza gives the credit to Colonel Pickering" (Adams, *Shaw's Ladies* 117) by telling Pickering that she owes him a lot as she recognises that it is not Professor Higgins, but rather Pickering, who serves as a role model for her to emulate. Colonel Pickering has been the gentleman to learn from, not Professor Higgins. She also reveals that, to her, it was when Pickering calls her Miss Doolittle on her first day that she felt her real education started and she learned what self-respect means. Lakoff analyses Eliza's situation as "At first blush it is flattering: the object of the flattery feels honored, cherished, and so forth but by the same token, she is also considered helpless and not in control of her own destiny. Women who protest that they like receiving these little courtesies, and object to being liberated from them, should reflect a bit on their deeper meaning and see how much they like that" (61). Pickering's genteel demeanour has always been important to her, even though she knew it was Higgins' nature to be that way, and he has no intention of changing his ways. Mr. Higgins is expressing the idea that good manners are not just about following a set of social rules or behaving in a certain way depending on someone's social rank, but rather treating all individuals equally by saying "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" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 132). Higgins claims to treat all human souls with equal respect and care, but his actions towards Eliza contradict this and this betrays the beliefs he claims to uphold. Based on his worldview, he treats them all equally; mostly in an impolite manner.

Now that she's a new lady, Eliza can pretend to be an aristocrat and enjoy the finer things in life thus when Pickering asks her whether she will forgive Higgins and come back, she refuses, saying that she can do without them. She says she is going to be with Freddy and marry him. Higgins despises Freddy by saying "Freddy!!! that young fool! That poor devil who couldn't get a job as an errand boy even if he had the guts to try for it! Woman: do you not understand that I have made you a consort for a king?" For Eliza, Freddy is a king because he loves her and as someone from the working class she is going to work as a teacher as Freddy "wasn't brought up to it as [she] was" (Shaw, *Pygmalion* 137). In his commentary, D. A. Hadfield offers his interpretation of Shaw's work, suggesting that it provides a navigational guide for the interactions between individuals of different genders:

There's Higgins at the end, after the newly emancipated Eliza gives him what-for and leaves, and he laughs! You have to wonder what's going on there. Is the irony so great? Has he missed his chance? Has he . . .? You talk and talk and talk to try to figure that out, you have to fill it in. I love that about Shaw. He gives you a great road map in terms of the relationships between men and women, and there's extraordinary depth in all of those relationships still today (206).

As seen in the quotation above, the fact that Higgins laughs after Eliza reprimands him indicates a degree of detachment or apathy on his behalf. It could be read as evidence that Higgins does not take Eliza's feelings or wishes seriously, and that he views her simply as a tool for his own aims. In addition, the quotation hints that there may be more going on behind Higgins' apparent reaction. The speaker wonders if the laughing is sarcastic or if Higgins has missed his opportunity with Eliza. This ambiguity and complexity characterise Shaw's writing, which frequently examines the ambiguous connections between men and women in a world where gender roles and societal conventions are in change. Higgins' reaction to Eliza's marriage to Freddy reflects the complexity of his relationship with Eliza as well as his own ideas and principles. His inability to fully respect Eliza's judgements and choices can be viewed as a flaw in his character, despite the fact that he has moments of empathy and understanding. On the one hand, he immediately reacts with wrath and disbelief since he has fashioned her into his one-of-a-kind creation, exactly as in the play's namesake tale. Professor Higgins has a strong belief in his ideal, despite his rudeness and arrogance. It takes a great deal of effort to take an unformed human being and bring out characteristics that no one could have predicted. Eliza develops her own identity, apart from Professor Higgins in every way. As Solomon states, "(...) Higgins has

succeeded so well – he has turned the frightened, easily-dominated Eliza into an independent woman – that he loses the prize possession itself” (62). Eliza does not end up with Professor Higgins as everyone believes she will; to everyone's astonishment, she ends up with Freddy. Thus, he may also be experiencing jealousy or possessiveness towards Eliza, which could explain his initial harsh reaction. This could be interpreted as a continuation of his previous possessiveness and inability to completely recognise Eliza's independence and autonomy. As so, it shows Shaw's dislike for overly sentimental plays with unattainable happy endings. Shaw was recognised for using wit and irony to disrupt conventional assumptions and question established social conventions. Higgins is used to ridiculing the rigid class system and gender conventions of Victorian England, as well as the concept of rehabilitating persons via education and training. Nevertheless, Shaw imbues his characters with depth and complexity that exceeds mere caricature. Higgins, for instance, is not merely a villain who intends to manipulate Eliza for his own ends. Instead, he is a flawed, multidimensional figure who undergoes his own development during the play. The fact that the quotation addresses the ambiguity and depth of Higgins' character as well as the complexities of his connection with Eliza demonstrates that Shaw's work continues to resonate with modern audiences. Although the play was first produced more than a century ago, its themes of social mobility, gender dynamics, and the power of language remain pertinent and thought-provoking for modern audiences.

Moreover, when Higgins despises Freddy saying that he cannot get a job even as an errand boy, Eliza declares that she will offer herself as an assistant to Higgins' first student, the Hungarian Nepommuck, and teach phonetics. This declaration makes Higgins furious. Eliza's starting to work as the assistant of Nepommuck indicates a major turning point in her development as a person. Eliza starts the play as a Cockney flower girl with a thick accent who is being tutored by Professor Higgins to speak more properly. At the play's conclusion, Eliza has proven herself to be an able and effective teacher of phonetics, exhibiting both her own understanding and the capacity to convey that information to her students. Eliza's training with Professor Higgins has given her the self-assurance and authority to assist Nepommuck. This moment illustrates Eliza's development from a poor flower girl to a self-assured and competent young woman. In addition, this scene is significant because it is a critique of the phonetics business, which Shaw viewed as a facile and superficial way of evaluating someone's character.

Shaw is making the point that phonetics is not an accurate indicator of social standing or moral virtue by having Eliza, a former flower girl, teach phonetics. This sequence is meant to cast doubt on the reliability of the phonetics business and its ability to influence cultural norms and values. Alternatively, if we view Eliza's position as Nepommuck's assistant through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's ideology, we can see that Gramsci considers education to be a crucial instrument of cultural and social hegemony, through which the dominant classes can mould the beliefs, principles, and behaviour of the proletariat. Eliza's journey from poor Cockney flower girl to assistant of an expert in phonetics is a testament to the transformative potential of education in the face of entrenched social mores. Working with Nepommuck, Eliza is not only able to show off her own expertise in the field, but also to argue against the notion that phonetics is a trustworthy gauge of social rank or moral worth. This act of subversion directly goes against the cultural norms that see education as a way to keep people in line and keep the power structure in place. According to Gramsci, Eliza's change and her collaboration with Nepommuck represent a challenge to the established social and cultural conventions. By doing this, Eliza goes against the cultural and social dominance of the ruling classes and goes against the standards of the dominant culture.

George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* continues to be a timely and thought-provoking work that examines complicated issues of social mobility, gender relations, and the power of language. Shaw examines Victorian England's harsh class system and gender stereotypes through the characters of Eliza Doolittle and Professor Henry Higgins, while also challenging conventional notions about the capacity for personal development and change. Although Higgins is a flawed and varied character, his reluctance to accept Eliza's autonomy and self-reliance reflects the difficulties of gender relations and societal standards throughout the play's time period. Shaw emphasises the possibilities for social mobility through education and language acquisition through the character Eliza, which corresponds with Gramsci's focus on education's role in resisting cultural hegemony. In addition, Higgins embodies the beliefs and presumptions of the ruling class, and his interaction with Eliza illustrates the power dynamics between different classes and genders in society. Eventually, *Pygmalion's* investigation of confusing relationships between men and women in a changing society displays Shaw's humour and sarcasm, which challenge traditional ideas and conventional societal norms. Although having been staged more than a

century ago, *Pygmalion*'s ideas continue to be relevant and captivating to modern audiences. Shaw defied Victorian England's rigid class system and gender norms and pushed women to strive for social mobility and success within a patriarchal culture. He argues through the character of Eliza that women are capable of altering themselves and accomplishing social and economic mobility through education and effort. Furthermore, Shaw underlines the inadequacies of the Victorian class system, emphasising that a person's social standing should be established not by birth but by merit and aptitude. The significance of Shaw's message in *Pygmalion* is heightened by the historical period of the play's creation. Women's suffrage was a big issue at the time, and many women began to challenge their traditional roles in society. Shaw's depiction of Eliza as a powerful, independent, and determined woman would have appealed to his audience and may have pushed some women to fight the existing system and pursue larger chances. By describing Eliza's development from a working-class flower girl to a self-assured and successful woman, Shaw provides his readers and audiences with a strong message of optimism and independence. Hence, as Solomon argues, looking at the play's framework, it's easy to see that Shaw's *Pygmalion* has a satisfying conclusion. Yet, the dramatic challenge of the play must be determined before the structure can be understood. Eliza's maturation into a "lady" under Higgins' tutelage is the play's driving force, however other issues, such as class differences and morality, are also explored. "It would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that this is just what the play is about since the action, obviously, is mainly taken up with the development of Eliza from Act I through Act V" (Solomon 61). The drama delves into not just the uncanny truth of her transformation but also the peculiar circumstances surrounding it. According to Solomon, "the inability of Higgins to dominate Eliza's spirit" is a major subject, and this friction between Higgins' attempts to dominate Eliza and her own drive to assert herself is another important aspect of the play. Nonetheless, Eliza's metamorphosis still serves as the play's primary dramatic obstacle. The extent to which Higgins controls Eliza grows increasingly important as she changes. An enormous amount of conflict arises from Higgins' attempts to exert his authority over Eliza and her will to stand up for herself. The play's critique of social stratification and middle-class morality is thus intrinsically linked to this fundamental issue of Eliza's development.

CHAPTER 3 - *LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN* BY OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, a satirical play that critiques societal conventions, had its world premiere at the St James's Theatre in London on February 20, 1892. The play is renowned for its astute discourse, adept manipulation of language, and penetrating analysis of the established conventions and duplicity prevalent in the Victorian period. *Lady Windermere's Fan* was a source of controversy and deemed indecent by certain critics during the time it was written, owing to its examination of established societal conventions and hypocritical attitudes concerning matrimony, infidelity, gender expectations, and socioeconomic status. The play presented a challenge to the prevailing ethical and communal standards of the Victorian period, which imposed rigorous demands on the conduct of women and their conformity to established norms. The play additionally portrayed the hypocrisy inherent in the social norms of Victorian times, wherein the emphasis on outward appearances and decorum often surpassed authentic emotions and veracity, thereby developing a sense of provocation and scandal during that period. Furthermore, the play scrutinised the impact of social hierarchy and the discriminative treatment of genders. The writing style of Oscar Wilde, characterised by its cleverness and use of satire to ridicule the shallow and insincere nature of the aristocracy, was perceived as unconventional and contentious by certain critics in the field. Despite the disputable nature of the subject matter, the audience found pleasure in the play's clever diction and incisive commentary on societal norms, resulting in a favourable reception among various groups. In a Guardian review from 23 August 1892 titled "Oscar Wilde's new play opens in Manchester - archive, 1892" about *Lady Windermere's Fan* and how the Manchester audience responded to it, it is noted that "Last night [they] saw it in Manchester for the first time, and with much curiosity on [their] own part to see how far Mr. Wilde had converted his public, and how far the public had obtained concessions from Mr. Wilde." He queries if Wilde has produced a real work of art that is obvious to even the Boeotians (or the stupid), or whether he has written to meet the Boeotian taste and understanding. Still, the reviewer thought that "On the whole, *Lady Windermere's Fan* is an amusing play, even if several passages are forced and tedious beyond expression." (*the Guardian*) *Lady Windermere's Fan* continues to exist as a timeless work of literature due to its enduring themes and critiques of Victorian morality that remain pertinent in contemporary times. The play's focus on societal

norms, gender-based expectations, and the discrepancies between public and personal realities strikes an emotional connection for present-day viewers. Thus, the satirical representation of the societal norms of that period by Wilde is still widely acknowledged for its cleverness, amusement, and insightful social critique.

Serving as an important exposition that introduces key characters, themes, and tone, the first act of *Lady Windermere's Fan* begins in the morning room of Lord Windermere's house as Lord Darlington comes to visit Lady Windermere and thereby establishes the foundation for the plot's development and the examination of the moral intricacies and hypocrisies of Victorian society. The house can be seen as an illustration of the protagonists' wealthy upper-class world, where they can be busy in a bureau full of books and papers or have time to relax, arrange roses, have a birthday party and socialise. The portrayal of the Windermere household and their societal engagements can be interpreted as a representation of the benefits and opportunities that accompany affluence and social standing within the aristocratic realm of play. Wilde uses Lord Darlington's visit to Lady Windermere as a lens through which to analyse the strict social rules and expectations that control the behaviour of the upper class. Lord Darlington's attention is drawn to a beautiful fan on Lady Windermere's table, and he admires it. That day is Lady Windermere's birthday and the fan is a birthday present from her husband. She replies "Pretty, isn't it! It's got my name on it, and everything" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 7). Having her name Margaret on the fan is like a proof of her identity. Through their conversation, Lord Darlington is trying to approach her with his flattering words which annoys Lady Windermere. However, according to Lord Darlington, since they have been going through hard times in the cycle of their lives, "the only pleasant things are compliments" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 8). As a Victorian-period woman, Lady Windermere is portrayed as a highly moralistic character who places great emphasis on propriety and decorum. This is exemplified by her reaction to Lord Darlington's compliments. During the Victorian period, there was a significant emphasis on morality, particularly in relation to women. As a result, women were expected to exhibit traits of modesty and virtue, and any conduct that strayed from these standards was deemed immoral. Lady Windermere's refusal to accept Lord Darlington's compliments shows her adherence to these societal norms. She recognizes that, as a man, Lord Darlington has the freedom to flirt with and compliment women without facing social consequences.

However, she shows that she is not the type of woman to be deceived by such compliments. She further questions “why a man should think he is pleasing a woman enormously when he says to her a whole heap of things that he doesn’t mean” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* 8). She cannot stand lies. Just as she is proud of her fan, she is also proud of her surname and as a married young woman, she is firm about her life. Although she likes Lord Darlington as a friend, she thinks she had better not like him if he is just like most men and she cannot understand why he pretends to be worse than most other men. As Nethercot indicates: “Certainly [Lord Darlington] is the sophisticate and the tempter of the innocent and virtuous young wife, Lady Windermere. He is the chief repository of Wilde’s wit and philosophy” (Nethercot, “Oscar Wilde and the Devil’s Advocate.” 845). Lord Darlington is an important figure through whom Wilde investigates issues of morality, desire, and societal norms. On the other hand, Lady Windermere was brought up like a Puritan. As Gramsci states “Over a certain period of history in certain specific historical conditions religion has been and continues to be a ‘necessity’, a necessary form taken by the will of the popular masses and a specific way of rationalizing the world and real life, which provided the general framework for real practical activity” (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 337). Gramsci’s words suggest that religion, including Puritanism, can be viewed as a societal creation that functions as a structure for individuals’ comprehension of the world and their conduct in specific historical circumstances. Lady Windermere’s upbringing with Puritan values can be interpreted as a reflection of her past and social milieu, wherein Puritanism was deemed an essential mode of belief and conduct for the affluent Victorian society. Although she was raised without her mother, her paternal aunt assumed the role of a caretaker and instilled in her a sense of right and wrong. Lady Windermere’s adherence to Puritan values can be interpreted as a manifestation of the societal expectations and norms prevalent during that time period. The rigorous compliance to Puritan ethics, the prioritisation of virtue and decorum, and the assessment of individuals, such as Lord Darlington, through the lens of these principles, can be seen as a product of her upbringing and the societal framework in which she exists. Yet, as it will be further elaborated, throughout the course of the play, Lady Windermere’s convictions and principles are put to test, prompting her to scrutinise the rigidity of her Puritan roots. Gramsci’s statement above proposes that Gramsci highlights the fluidity of social constructs such as religion, and the potential for individuals to undergo a transformation and question the ideologies

and principles instilled in them during their upbringing, as they acquire a more profound comprehension of themselves and the world around them. The character development of Lady Windermere and the conflicts she encounters in the play function to demonstrate the nuanced and intricate nature of Puritanism, which she once deemed essential but then bent. The excerpt from Marx's 1843 "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" that can be found in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* asserts that religion is a societal, cultural, and state-driven construct, as per Marx's perspective. The phenomenon being described is a state of consciousness that is inverted, whereby the individual's perception of the world is a reflection of the distorted reality that has been brought about by prevailing social and economic conditions. (Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" 129). According to Marx, "Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, (...) its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification" so that the attempt to challenge religion can be understood as an endeavour to fight the societal conditions that engender it since religion can be viewed as a reflection of the spiritual condition of said society. (Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" 129) According to Wainwright, in order to comprehend Gramsci's perspective, which is influenced by Marx, it is crucial to consider their criticism of religion (514). As Wainwright continues, both Marx and Gramsci believed that religion constituted a kind of erroneous consciousness that distorted individuals' comprehension of actuality and sustained the existing social order by advancing notions and principles that reinforced the dominant class. Gramsci's critique of religion centres on its function as an ideological construct that solidifies the prevailing social structure, sustains false perceptions, restricts independent thought and self-governance, and legitimises social disparities (514). In the Introduction of *Marx on Religion*, by citing Marx' statement that "Religion is the opiate of the masses," the editor John Raines states that there is a common belief that Karl Marx had a wholly negative view of religion. However, Raines adds that following this statement it can be seen Marx recognized that religion serves as a moral agency and a protest against real suffering, particularly "for the deprived and despised" (Marx, *Marx on Religion* 5). Wainwright also observed that the replacement of religious ideologies regarding human nature was imperative for the progression of communism and the reformation of the societal structure (514). Hence, when Lady Windermere is

considered in terms of Marx and Gramsci's ideas on religion, it can be seen that at the beginning of the play, she embraces her belief "as a universal basis of consolation and justification" and embraces it as if an opium. However, later on her actions can be perceived as an embodiment of the resistance against the repressive impact of religious and moral doctrines. Additionally, the play mirrors the necessity for individuals to establish their own independence and contest conventional standards to pursue their own goals and opinions and suggests that the exercise of one's own autonomy is indispensable for societal progress and that adherence to traditional norms may impede advancement. Questioning the prevailing norms and establishing one's autonomy can be perceived as an embodiment of the Marxist and Gramscian analysis of religion as an ideological apparatus that upholds the current societal structure. Lady Windermere follows her own moral doctrines and conventional standards. As a piece of foreshadowing, Lord Darlington asks her what a woman should think if her husband suddenly started to become close friends with another woman, spend more and more time with her and even pay her bills. He wants to know whether "the wife should not console herself" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 10). Lord Darlington is raising the idea of whether a married woman, such as Lady Windermere, ought to seek solace or comfort outside of her marriage in the case of her husband's suspected infidelity. While this idea can be taken as another foreshadowing, it also prompts inquiries into the societal conventions and assumptions pertaining to matrimony, loyalty, and solace. On the other hand, from a more conventional point of view compared to Lord Darlington's, males generally believe that women should trust them or forgive any wrongdoing. This is symptomatic of a deeply patriarchal society in which women are treated as commodities and are completely at the mercy of males. In this society, men possess the reins of power, and women are nothing more than commodities, to serve according to the wishes of their men. The role of women is reduced to that of a commodity, with the expectation that they will serve and amuse their male counterparts at their pleasure. For Lady Windermere, a married couple must not have other relationships and if the husband is immoral, then this does not mean that the wife also must be like him. As Ian Gregor mentions, "Here we have the usual mutual criticism of dandy and moralist with its accompanying paradoxes about things serious and trivial, but the important thing to note is that Darlington's flippant tone authenticates the seriousness of his remarks" (504). Lord Darlington says;

Do you know I am afraid that good people do a great deal of harm in this world? Certainly the greatest harm they do is that they make badness of such extraordinary importance. It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious. I take the side of the charming, and you, Lady Windermere, can't help belonging to them. (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 10).

As seen in what uttered by Lord Darlington, “At the beginning of the play, in the exchanges between Lady Windermere and Lord Darlington, Lady Windermere represents conventional moral judgment and Lord Darlington represents the ironic stance of the dandy, who very clearly replaces moral categories with aesthetic ones” (Anderson 171). Anderson's ideas suggest that Lady Windermere initially evaluates individuals according to conventional moral criteria of good and evil. In contrast, Lord Darlington's viewpoint is consistent with the dandyish convention, which frequently emphasises self-expression, artistic sensibility, and charisma above established ethical norms. There are certain changes in society and while Lord Darlington is talking about them, he also tries to prepare Lady Windermere for them. For him, the world consists of charming people or tedious people and he believes he belongs to the charming people. This viewpoint embodies Lord Darlington's dandyish position, which is in comparison with Lady Windermere's traditional and ethical evaluation. Although Lady Windermere is a moralistic person, he believes that she is also a charming person, too, because she is beautiful and attractive. However, she always tries to pursue what is morally good thus according to Lord Darlington, she is a bit old-fashioned in her thoughts. He thinks, “most women, for instance, nowadays, are rather mercenary” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 10) in marriage as there are a lot of women who look at marriage as a tradership. Lord Darlington indicates that women's decision to enter or stay in a marriage are influenced by financial incentives or materialistic factors. The aforementioned assertion denotes Lord Darlington's derisive attitude towards matrimony and his conviction that certain women may give priority to monetary stability or material opulence over sentimental or romantic aspects when establishing marriage bonds. The aforementioned statement also signifies a more extensive societal notion or stereotype regarding women's inclination towards financial incentives in matrimony. This was a prevalent theme in the Victorian period, where economic factors and social standing frequently held substantial importance in the context of marriage alliances. The play does not provide explicit clarification regarding the motive behind Lady Windermere's marriage, whether it was driven by financial considerations or not although it can be understood that she possesses considerable

wealth, and that her union with Lord Windermere has resulted in an increase in her societal status. Still, it is noteworthy to observe that Lady Windermere does not adhere to the conventional portrayal of a profit-driven woman who places material possessions above sentiments and affection. Especially in the beginning of the play, Lady Windermere is depicted as a character of virtuousness and moral standing, who places a higher value on her reputation and ideals than on material possessions and she does not even want to talk about those kinds of women who value material possessions that will come with a marriage to a wealthy man. For her, things are either good or bad and if a woman or man commits a fault, neither of them should ever be forgiven. She has a very straightforward idea that, if she has “these hard and fast rules” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* 10) her life becomes more and more simple without any exceptions. As Ian Gregor mentions, Lord Darlington and Lady Windermere portray a direct clash between the dandy and the moralist. “This is sufficiently indicative of the kind of opposition involved. But of course, it is not his attitudes that distinguish the dandy, it is the way in which those attitudes are validated by his mode of expression” (Gregor 503). His mode of expression can be exemplified as his ideas about women, the institution of marriage, the difference between charming or tedious people and how Lady Windermere thinks that he talks trivially about life, all of which can be seen throughout the acts. Yet, it must not be forgotten that “By the end of the play, this opposition will be displaced. The naïve and idealistic Lady Windermere will have learned that the world is mixed morally, a lesson she will attempt to teach her husband, who reverts to classing women as pure and impure” and Mrs. Erlynne, a fallen woman who embodies the traits of a dandy, will have overshadowed Lord Darlington’s position. (Anderson 171).

The entrance of the Duchess of Berwick and Lady Agatha Carlisle serves as an important point in the play, as it sets the stage for the subsequent conflicts and revelations. They start a discussion regarding the arrangements for the coming birthday organization planned for this evening. The Duchess of Berwick refers to dreadful people who attend such organizations. However, Lady Windermere expresses confidence that her upcoming birthday celebration will not be marred by any scandalous behaviour, which stands as a foreshadowing. Still, Duchess of Berwick continues talking about how as women they “are positively getting elbowed into the corner” and their husbands would forget about them unless they “nag at them from

time to time, just to remind them that [they] have a perfect legal right to do so” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* 12). As married women are suppressed by their husbands, they become subordinate thus they sometimes need to remind their husbands that they are still there. Wilde's portrayal of the Duchess of Berwick's words suggests that the suppression of women by their husbands is a universal reality that transcends class boundaries. The Duchess' observation that women need to "nag" their husbands to assert their presence and their rights implies that even women of the upper classes are not exempt from this kind of treatment. Thus, the play suggests that this dynamic is not unique to any particular class, but rather a product of societal norms and expectations surrounding gender roles and power dynamics within a marriage. Upper-class women like the Duchess of Berwick and Lady Windermere exploit social standards and conventions to maintain their power and prestige. Yet, Lord Darlington stands for a different view about marriage. According to Lady Windermere, Lord Darlington talks so trivially about life as he thinks marriage is a game and “the wives hold all the honours” (*Lady Windermere’s Fan* 12) by accepting the extramarital relationships of their husbands. Although Lord Darlington does not agree with Lady Windermere as for him “life is far too important a thing ever to talk seriously about it” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* 12), actually he mentions that marriage is a game on purpose. Actually Lord Darlington “intends these remarks as a warning. "The game", "the modern husband" now have a specific reference to Windermere himself and his relations with Mrs. Erlynne” (Gregor 504). The quotation provided by Ian Gregor discusses the underlying purpose of Lord Darlington's belittling comments regarding the institution of marriage and contemporary husbands. Lord Darlington's remarks are not merely a casual discussion, but rather a deliberate cautionary message to Lady Windermere regarding her husband's association with Mrs. Erlynne.

Lord Darlington employs a subtle approach to convey his dissatisfaction with Lord Windermere's conduct, avoiding direct confrontation. In contrast, the Duchess of Berwick expresses her opinions regarding Mrs. Erlynne in a more forthright manner. The upper-class characters in the play, such as the Duchess of Berwick, use values and social conventions to maintain their control over others. For instance, the Duchess of Berwick raises an important issue about a woman who “is absolutely inadmissible into society” (*Lady Windermere’s Fan* 12) because of her past and unfortunately Lord Windermere is included in the men who have got a relationship with that base woman

called Mrs. Erlynne. First of all, it can be observed that the linguistic expression of the Duchess of Berwick is indicative of the prevailing cultural norms, beliefs, and principles. Wilde employs language that is forceful and critical, exemplified by the phrase "absolutely inadmissible," in reference to Mrs. Erlynne. This rhetorical technique conveys a moralistic tone suggesting that Mrs. Erlynne's earlier deeds deem her unsuitable for inclusion in society. Such language upholds the notion that the upper classes of society possess the power to establish and maintain societal standards, with those who deviate from such norms being ostracised. The utilisation of social conventions by the Duchess of Berwick is evident in her statements, which serve as a means of exerting control. She reminds the term base woman to describe Mrs. Erlynne, indicating that her behaviour does not conform to the accepted norms of ethical conduct and propriety within the given social context. The Duchess employs social norms and conventions as a means of rationalising the exclusion of Mrs. Erlynne from high society and preserving her own social standing. This statement is indicative of Gramsci's notion that the ruling class employs social norms and standards as a means of moulding and regulating the conduct and convictions of subordinate classes. Gramsci defines hegemony as "the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 12). Thus, according to Gramsci's perspective, it can be argued that the preservation of hegemony is not exclusively achieved through the utilisation of coercion or force, but rather through cultural, ideological, and intellectual impositions. The group in power asserts its dominance and authority not solely through physical force, but also through its capacity to influence and regulate the narratives, principles, convictions, and standards that are embraced and assimilated by the broader society. The cultural and intellectual impact fosters a perception of agreement and validity among the populace, inducing them to voluntarily adhere to the objectives and guidance of the dominant group, irrespective of any potential disarray with their personal interests. "The concept of cultural hegemony" as Lears believed "can only be understood within a variety of historical and intellectual contexts" (568) hence it can be said that according to Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, those in power retain control by shaping and controlling the dominant culture, including language, beliefs, and values, and

suppressing oppositional cultures. On the other hand, Lady Windermere represents the upper class's traditional beliefs and social conventions. Her strict morality and adherence to societal norms, such as the importance of keeping appearances and rigid class distinctions, reflect the dominant culture of her social class. Lady Windermere's strict adherence to these norms eventually causes her to turn a deaf ear to what Lord Windermere tells her about his innocence and ostracise Mrs. Erlynne, an outsider who does not conform to upper-class social norms. As per Christopher Innes' perspective, an individual's personality is subject to the influence of their material surroundings. This environment not only shapes their destiny but also serves to authenticate it. Social and economic factors exert a profound influence on an individual's personality and ultimately determine their fate, as they are shaped by the cultural and societal context in which they reside. For instance, Lady Windermere's strict moral code and sense of propriety are shaped by the societal and cultural values that prioritise appearances and uphold rigid gender roles. Likewise, the conduct of Lord Windermere is subject to the impact of societal norms and conventions attributable to his affluent aristocratic status. The characters, such as Mrs. Erlynne, are also impacted by the material environment in which they exist. This is particularly evident in the societal stigmatisation of divorced women and those who rely on financial support. Christopher Innes argues that the social and economic circumstances of the characters play a significant role in shaping their personalities, while also limiting their choices and actions based on the expectations and norms of their environment (19). The characters in *Lady Windermere's Fan* are significantly impacted by societal and economic factors, which ultimately dictate their destiny. For instance, as a member of the upper-class with significant wealth and influence, the Duchess is held to high expectations regarding adherence to societal and cultural norms. These expectations include the preservation of her reputation and social standing through her affiliations and conduct. Her financial standing enables her to partake in or host parties and social events, which are perceived as a method of preserving and elevating her societal position. Her role necessitates serving as an intermediary among community members, as evidenced by her initial attempt to exclude Mrs. Erlynne from the community, followed by her subsequent efforts to reconcile Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne. Lady Windermere is held to a high standard of social conduct, resulting in her exhibiting an excessive preoccupation with external perceptions of her character. Her strict adherence to prevailing societal and cultural values results in her exclusion of Mrs. Erlynne, who

fails to align with these established norms. Consequently, this results in her incapacity to place complete reliance on her husband and prompts her to scrutinise his faithfulness. Similarly, it is expected that Lord Windermere upholds his social standing and prestige by means of his affiliations and actions, which encompasses preserving the appearance of a flawless marriage. As a result, he conceals his involvement with Mrs. Erlynne and exhibits hesitancy in disclosing the truth to his wife, owing to the potential harm it could inflict upon his social status and public image. His financial standing also affords him the ability to provide financial support to Mrs. Erlynne. Thus, it can be seen that the behavioural decisions and options of the characters are constrained by the prevailing standards and conventions of their milieu, which are moulded by the cultural and societal environment in which they dwell.

The actions and choices of the characters in *Lady Windermere's Fan* are limited by the cultural and societal norms of their environment. Lady Windermere's unwavering commitment to social conventions and her initial reluctance to consider her husband's account of his association with Mrs. Erlynne illustrate the negative impact of societal expectations on human conduct. The significance of sincerity emphasised by Lord Darlington and his subsequent recognition of the harm caused to Lady Windermere serve to underscore the pervading nature of the human condition. In this way, *Lady Windermere's Fan* can be interpreted as a form of social commentary that scrutinises the superficiality and insincerity of the aristocratic class, while simultaneously emphasising the timeless and fundamental characteristics that define our shared humanity. Given Oscar Wilde's suggestion that individuals share a fundamental similarity and that any distinctions among them are merely surface-level, it is pertinent to examine his essay entitled "The Decay of Lying," which was initially released in 1889. The essay examines how Wilde employs the conversation between Cyril and Vivian as a means of presenting divergent perspectives on the subjects of art and life. Cyril supports the conventional perspective that art ought to accurately mirror reality, whereas Vivian asserts that art should generate its own reality and that life should imitate art, rather than vice versa. According to Vivian's argument, the deterioration of the practise of deception is accountable for the deterioration of the artistic world. Additionally, she proposes that the pursuit of veracity should not be a primary objective of art, as it frequently lacks stimulation and attraction. On the contrary, Cyril advocates the significance of aestheticism, a philosophical approach

that prioritises the values of beauty and pleasure. According to Vivian's perspective, art ought to serve as a form of escapism from the banalities of daily existence, with the artist endeavouring to construct a realm that is superior and more aesthetically pleasing than reality itself. Throughout the essay, Wilde employs wit and humour as rhetorical devices to advance his arguments. He also offers a critique of the societal norms of his time period, which prioritise realism at the expense of imagination and aesthetic appeal. For Instance, in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Wilde employs the characters to unveil the hypocrisy and shallowness of the upper-class society, notwithstanding their privileged status. The characters are afflicted by comparable insecurities and imperfections as any other individual. In his essay titled "The Decay of Lying," through Vivian Wilde asserts that

Where we differ from each other is purely in accidentals: in dress, manner, tone of voice, religious opinions, personal appearance, tricks of habit, and the like. The more one analyses people, the more all reasons for analysis disappear. Sooner or later one comes to that dreadful universal thing called human nature. Indeed, as anyone who has ever worked among the poor knows only too well, the brotherhood of man is no mere poet's dream, it is a most depressing and humiliating reality; and if a writer insists upon analysing the upper classes, he might just as well write of match-girls and costermongers as once (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying* 297).

In this quote, Wilde suggests that people are essentially similar in their human nature, regardless of differences in appearance, clothing, and mannerisms. He contends that as people are analysed, it will be realised that human nature has a universal character that transcends differences. In fact, Wilde considers this ubiquitous quality to be a "dreadful" reality because it exposes the depressing and humiliating truth of man's brotherhood which implies that, regardless of social or economic differences, people share a common bond as fellow humans. Wilde's remark that "if a writer insists upon analysing the upper classes, he might just as well write of match-girls and costermongers" is a scathing critique of social distinctions. He contends that the upper classes share the same fundamental humanity as the lower classes and that writing about them as if they were a separate and distinct class is pointless. Wilde's point is that, in the end, we are all human beings, and that the shared identity, rather than superficial differences, should be the centre of attention.

According to Thomas Hobbes, nature has created humans equally in terms of both intellectual and physical aspects. "So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory".

These three characteristics of human nature will lead to constant conflict, and everyone will be in a constant state of war with everyone else (Hobbes 94-96). Hobbes also claims that in order to live in peace, people need to make agreements with each other as natural laws about the conditions that can be determined. The natural law shows what people need to do and avoid in order to sustain their lives, based on the principle of not doing to others what one does not want done to oneself (Hobbes 96-99). However, the Duchess of Berwick is eager to draw the line between herself, as a woman of a separate and distinct class, and Mrs. Erlynne, who has lost her place in society. That is why the Duchess of Berwick bears the desire to speculate and gossip about Mrs. Erlynne and label her as a base woman without having solid knowledge about her. Duchess of Berwick tells how Lord Windermere, who steps out of line, frequently visits that woman who came to London six months ago and spends a lot of time with her in her house in Curzon Street in Mayfair. The Duchess of Berwick finds it unacceptable that an individual lacking aristocratic status possesses a residence in an expensive area of London and wears luxurious outfits and suspects that Lord Windermere may be the source of all these. She advises Lady Windermere to take Lord Windermere away as the whole of London knows about this. The common sense of the Victorian period was deeply rooted in the principles and convictions of the upper class, and individuals who challenged these standards and traditions were perceived as a threat to the established societal hierarchy, as exemplified by Mrs. Erlynne. In the *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* "Glossary of Key Terms; Common Sense", editor David Forgacs claims that "Everyone, for Gramsci, has a number of 'conceptions of the world' (...) Many of these conceptions are imposed and absorbed passively from outside, or from the past, and are accepted and lived uncritically. In this case they constitute what Gramsci calls 'common sense'" (421). The concept of "common sense" implies that individuals frequently maintain unexamined and acquiescent perceptions of reality that are externally or historically imposed upon them. The application of this particular concept to *Lady Windermere's Fan* reveals that the Duchess of Berwick's initial perceptions of Mrs. Erlynne are influenced by her uncritical adherence to prevailing societal conventions and standards concerning the conduct and ethical principles expected of women. Her presumptions regarding Mrs. Erlynne's character as a morally compromised woman striving to coordinate her reentry into high society are founded upon her personal interpretation of conventional societal norms for women within their social milieu, rather than an analytical examination of the facts or

an effort to empathise with Mrs. Erlynne's point of view. Gramsci's theoretical framework is also applicable to Lady Windermere's viewpoints, given that her initial assessment of Mrs. Erlynne is rooted in a conventional understanding that a woman who abandoned her husband and relies on male financial assistance is ethically deficient. Throughout the course of the play, both the Duchess of Berwick and Lady Windermere undergo a transformation in their perception of Mrs. Erlynne and her own circumstances, leading them to recognise the fallibility of their previously held convictions grounded in common sense. The play can be interpreted as a demonstration of the application of Gramsci's concepts of common sense and transformation to the analysis of gender roles and social norms prevalent in the Victorian period. Moreover, Mrs. Erlynne undergoes a transformation as she effectively establishes her position in society through her conduct, challenging the prevailing notion that a woman who has fallen from grace cannot regain her status in society. Mrs. Erlynne is a self-made woman who was once an aristocrat. But later, her disregard for strict social conventions makes her a target of disdain and exclusion by the higher class. Her actions and choices threaten the upper class's hegemonic authority by challenging the traditional values and beliefs that they hold dear.

In this sense, the play can also be viewed as a commentary on society's struggle for dominance and control. The upper class seeks to retain power by shaping and controlling the dominant culture, whereas the lower class seeks to challenge and subvert prevalent cultural norms in order to achieve greater social and political equality. Wilde depicts the tension between these opposing forces and the fight for hegemonic power in society through the characters such as Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne. According to the Duchess of Berwick, all men, even a baby son or a teenage son are all bad. Since Lady Windermere thinks that they have married out of love, she tries to justify what she has heard while the two powers, good and bad are clashing in her head. The Duchess of Berwick even tells her how she was once deceived as after having a relationship with their maid, her husband persuaded her by saying that he would commit suicide. She, again and again, advises Lady Windermere to take Lord Windermere away from this woman. Thus, now Lady Windermere can understand what Lord Darlington tried to tell her. She wants to check her husband Arthur Windermere's bank books which he always keeps in his drawers but she is in an inner conflict. She repeats that her husband loves her and will not do anything like that.

Although she wants to check the bank book, still she is afraid to face the bitter truth. During Gramsci's university years, a professor stated that Gramsci was concerned about "how thinking makes one act ... how and why one can act with ideas ... how ideas become practical forces" (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 30). The quotation highlights the significance of ideas and their potential to impact behaviours. The play portrays how the actions of the characters are motivated by their individual ideas, beliefs and values. For example, the internal struggle experienced by Lady Windermere is indicative of the cultural expectations of the period, which prescribed that women should exhibit traits of submissiveness, loyalty, and trustworthiness as wives. Such expectations penetrated into the ideas of people and often discouraged women from engaging in critical inquiry or harbouring doubts about their husbands. Lady Windermere experiences an internal conflict as a result of the various ideas and concepts occupying her mind. She experiences a conflict between her yearning to uncover the true nature of her spouse's conduct and her fear of facing the prospect of infidelity. The aforementioned inner conflict can be interpreted as a manifestation of the restricted capacity for action and self-governance that was imposed upon women, particularly those who were married, during the Victorian period. Moreover, Lady Windermere's worry towards confronting reality may contribute to underlining the societal expectations imposed on women to uphold the appearance of an ideal marriage and household, irrespective of any hidden difficulties or uncertainties. The behaviour of Lady Windermere is influenced not only by her personal ideas but also by the ethical convictions as a result of these ideas. This statement underscores the potency of ideas and their ability to motivate individuals towards action, thereby resonating with the philosophical tenets of Gramsci.

Another important scene to delve into is when Lord Windermere realizes that his wife was checking his bank book, and says "I think it is wrong that a wife should spy on her husband" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 16). The statement made by Lord Windermere is reflective of the patriarchal society and Victorian morals of the time period. At the time, it was expected of wives to obey and submit to the authority of their husbands. The belief that a wife should not spy on her husband conveys the message that she ought to have unwavering faith in him, despite the fact that he may have engaged in activities that raise suspicion. This supports the idea that men are the more powerful gender and positions women in a role of subservience within society.

In addition, the fact that Lord Windermere is able to make such a comment gives the impression that he is the one who has the power and authority in their marriage and that his wife's acts are regarded as being intrusive and improper. This illustrates the unequal distribution of power between men and women in Victorian culture, where men enjoyed the privilege of privacy and autonomy while women were expected to be continually observed and controlled. Thus, when she confronts her husband, she is surprised that he is supporting that woman, believing that, as his wife, Lord Windermere should have protected her honour instead. Her feelings are damaged and degraded. She feels “stained” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 17). She questions who Mrs Erlynne is. Although Lord Windermere does not want to give any details about her, it is revealed that she abandoned her family a long time ago, she

was once honoured, loved, respected. She was well born, she had position – she lost everything – threw it away, if you like. That makes it all the more bitter. Misfortunes one can endure – they come from outside, they are accidents. But to suffer for one's own faults – ah! – there is the sting of life. It was twenty years ago, too. She was little more than a girl then. She had been a wife for even less time than you have (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 18).

Lady Margaret Windermere is now 22 and Mrs. Erlynne first got married 22 years ago. When her daughter was a baby, Mrs. Erlynne abandoned her daughter and husband for another man. “Mrs. Erlynne actually is none other than Margaret's own mother who became an outcast due to the blunder that she committed in her youth by running away with her lover and she is assumed to be dead by Margaret” (Kaur 890). As being a mother and being married were the duties that women were expected to pursue in Victorian Community, Mrs. Erlynne's reputation as a fallen woman is strongly tied to her refusal of the maternal duty because women who did not raise their children in a conventional manner were stigmatized as wicked. During the Victorian period, the prevailing societal expectation was that women should enter into matrimony and assume the role of a mother. Nonconformity to this norm frequently resulted in alienation and social disapproval. Women who chose not to marry or did not have children were perceived as unconventional and frequently faced derision and criticism from their contemporaries. Moreover, there was a significant emphasis placed on moral character and reputation, particularly in the case of women. The act of adultery, such as the one Mrs. Erlynne is being charged with, was widely regarded as a severe ethical transgression and would lead to exclusion from society. At the beginning of the play, Lady Windermere embodies the archetypal Victorian female

figure, fulfilling her roles as both a mother and wife in accordance with societal norms. Conversely, Mrs. Erlynne is depicted as a woman who has deviated from the traditional path of matrimony and parenting. Mrs. Erlynne is suffering due to her own actions and decisions, and this kind of suffering is more difficult to endure than misfortunes that are caused by external circumstances. This type of affliction is considered to be more difficult to withstand than challenges that are caused by external factors. However, Lady Windermere encounters a challenge upon discovering her husband's secret rendezvous with Mrs. Erlynne, whom she perceives to be a woman of questionable moral character. In the event that Lady Windermere had not reconciled with Lord Windermere, she would have been confronted with a comparable destiny to that of Mrs. Erlynne. The aforementioned analysis illustrates that Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne are constrained by the societal gender norms and anticipations that are imposed upon them. Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne exhibit contrasting characteristics, however, their respective challenges highlight the necessity of redefining the societal expectations of women, to enable them to attain authentic autonomy and self-determination. Still, it is noteworthy to acknowledge that Lady Windermere's acquired independence when he decided to leave her husband is fundamentally contingent upon the conduct of the male figures in her existence, particularly Lord Windermere. In contrast, the independence of Mrs. Erlynne is not dependent upon any male counterpart, and she is capable of forming her own path in life, albeit at a significant individual cost. According to Gramsci "The formation of a new feminine personality is the most important question of an ethical and civil order connected with the sexual question. Until women can attain not only a genuine independence in relation to men but also a new way of conceiving themselves and their role in sexual relations, the sexual question will remain full of unhealthy characteristics (...)" (Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings* 282). Similar to Gramsci's concept of women's need to achieve freedom from men, the circumstances of Mrs. Erlynne exemplify the ethical norms that women must conform to during the Victorian period while she was pursuing self-governance and self-reliance in a male-dominated society. Her previous behaviours serve as a challenge to the notion that a woman's identity should primarily revolve around motherhood. Mrs. Erlynne's decision to prioritise her personal desires and interests over her familial obligations, resulting in her abandonment of her husband and daughter, is widely regarded as a morally unacceptable course of action. It can be argued that if a man were to engage in similar

actions, he may not encounter an equivalent degree of societal punishment or criticism. Throughout history, a societal double standard has existed regarding the behaviour and choices of individuals based on their gender. Men have been afforded more liberty and autonomy in their behaviours, whereas women have been held to more strict cultural expectations and subjected to severe consequences for nonconformity. Although Mrs. Erlynne's conduct was deemed morally questionable and resulted in her being subjected to social ostracism and a damaged image, it is crucial to acknowledge the gendered nature of norms during the Victorian period, which imposed disparate expectations and standards on men and women, thereby perpetuating an inequitable and unjust social order. It is essential to ensure that men and women are held accountable for their actions equally, regardless of their gender. The consideration of gender ought not to be a determinant in the establishment of societal norms or consequences for corresponding behaviours. Moreover, Gramsci's emphasis on the significance of women cultivating new viewpoints of themselves and their roles in sexual relations corresponds with Mrs. Erlynne's attempt to redefine her identity and reconcile her past deeds with her aspiration for societal recognition. Thus, the character of Mrs. Erlynne is depicted as multifaceted, as she navigates the challenges of conforming to societal conventions and norms, while simultaneously striving to assert her autonomy and self-determination, despite encountering social exclusion and marginalisation. Throughout the course of the play, Lord Windermere's opinions towards Mrs. Erlynne undergo a transformation, depending upon the progressive occurrences and disclosures within the play's plot. However, in the first act of the play, being the only person who knows the true identity of Mrs. Erlynne, he feels a sense of responsibility towards her, and he is also annoyed with this social exclusion. He refuses the idea that he is committing adultery as well. Instead, he wants to invite Mrs. Erlynne to the birthday organization in order to change her position in the eyes of society and Lady Windermere. Lady Windermere does not accept this and threatens her husband that if that woman comes, she is going to insult her thus Lord Windermere attempts to persuade her not to do so. In reality, he is trying to save both Mrs. Erlynne's and his wife's honour and he is trying to keep this secret. Although his marriage is at risk, Lord Windermere cannot dare to tell the truth that Mrs. Erlynne is Lady Windermere's mother because it would reveal that Lady Windermere is the daughter of a woman who had committed a scandalous act. As such behaviour was considered a grave moral transgression in the Victorian period, Lady Windermere's reputation and

social standing would be irreparably damaged if this piece of information were to become public. Furthermore, it would also harm Lord Windermere's reputation and social status, as he would be seen as having married into a family with scandalous connections. Thus, in order to protect both his and Lady Windermere's reputation and social standing, Lord Windermere chooses to keep the truth about Mrs. Erlynne's identity a secret.

It is also important to examine the second act of the play which delves deeper into the plot and character development, shedding light on the characters' motivations and on the themes of marriage, morality, and reputation. This act can be analysed through the lens of Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony, which highlights the ways in which dominant groups utilise social norms, gender roles, stigma, and double standards to exert control over society and suppress any resistance or deviation from established norms. The act also displays the personal transformations of the characters, which serve as an illustration of how cultural hegemony, as imposed by the dominant class, can be challenged and altered through exposure to new information and experiences. This act begins in the drawing-room in Lord Windermere's house. It is the time for birthday organization and the guests are arriving and Lady Windermere welcomes them. Other guests such as Lord Augustus, Cecil Graham and Lady Plymdale are chatting about how many times Lord Augustus has been married and divorced which reflects Victorian marriage institution and gender roles. Another noteworthy statement made in this chat is when Lady Plymdale warns that public displays of affection between husband and wife can be dangerous because many people think that "a happy married life" is a facade and that husbands were abusive and unfaithful behind closed doors (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 24) while they are pretending to be the most caring husbands. Contemporary society places a high value on external appearances and social status, often at the expense of genuine human connections and personal happiness. Wilde uses this discussion to criticise the shallowness and hypocrisy of Victorian culture. He is emphasising the gap between the fairy tale like life expectancy and the brutal reality that many married women experienced. The double standards Wilde brings up are the ones that make it acceptable for men to be deceitful and have affairs while holding women to much higher standards of faithfulness and fidelity.

It is also important to scrutinize the scene when Lord Augustus, who is the brother of the Duchess of Berwick approaches Lord Windermere and starts questioning him about Mrs. Erlynne. He is curious about their relationship and concerned about if “she will ever get into this demmed thing called Society” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 23) but Lord Windermere tells him that she is also among the invitees and he does not need to make any more explanations about his friendship with her. As Lord Augustus is drawn to Mrs. Erlynne and wants to pursue a love relationship with her, he is eager for her to become a well-known member of society. Getting her accepted into society would provide him with more opportunities to spend time with her and let him get to know this enigmatic and intriguing woman. He is also driven by the ambition to flaunt his own high social standing and extensive network of connections because he believes Mrs. Erlynne could be an asset to his existing social circle. He can improve his own social standing and reputation by elevating her into society through Lord Windermere's assistance. Lord Augustus's desire for Mrs. Erlynne to join society illuminates numerous facets of Victorian culture. First, it emphasises the significance of social class and the desire of those at the top of society to maintain their exclusivity. As a woman with a questionable history, Mrs. Erlynne is initially thought unfit to enter into elite society. This is seen in how women, including one of the play's characters named Arabella, "are very down on her" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 23). Second, it exemplifies the severe Victorian morals and gender norms assigned to women in society. Mrs. Erlynne has been ostracised by society and deemed a fallen woman because of her past wrongdoing, which is not fully exposed until later in the play. This censure of her past conduct demonstrates the necessity of moral rectitude and the severe repercussions for individuals who do not conform to societal norms. Thus, attending the birthday organisation holds an important meaning for Mrs. Erlynne as it aids in the restoration of her social identity among the upper classes. Social identity pertains to the manner in which individuals establish their sense of self in connection to social groups, including but not limited to their familial ties, occupational affiliations, nationalities, ethnicities, or religious beliefs. It is a conceptual structure that defines individuals' self-perception and external perception within the framework of their societal surroundings. The formation of social identity can be determined by a multitude of factors, such as one's upbringing, level of education, social standing, and cultural convictions, influencing their attitudes, behaviour, and social interactions. Mrs. Erlynne's social identity was intrinsically

linked to her membership in the upper class of society. Her presence at the birthday celebration presented a chance to reassert her position within this social stratum. Thus, the attendance of Mrs. Erlynne at the birthday organization can be interpreted as a representation of her attempts to restore her social identity. The combination of Lady Windermere's fan and Mrs. Erlynne's presence at the celebration serves to highlight the different methods by which women in Victorian society were required to uphold their social identity. The fan, which serves as a symbol of Lady Windermere's status and position within the community, is not merely a decorative accessory and its significance is further reinforced by its inclusion in the title of the play. To illustrate, the scene in which Lady Windermere threatens to strike Mrs. Erlynne with her fan if she attends the birthday organization is significant because Lady Windermere is not only establishing her dominance but also attempting to preserve her social identity by threatening to use the fan, which is typically accepted as a decorative accessory frequently associated with upper-class women, as a weapon. Another scene which is important about the fan is during the birthday organisation. Lord Windermere eventually succeeds in engaging his wife in conversation, at which point she entrusts her fan to Lord Darlington. This signifies a dramatic shift in Lady Windermere's personality and her relationship with Lord Windermere. Lady Windermere valued the fan as a sign of her individuality and her husband's love at the opening of the play. When she discovers her husband's assumed infidelity; however, she believes she can abandon her identity as a wife and the social standing that comes with it. In addition, Lady Windermere's action exposes the complicated power dynamics and connections between men and women in Victorian society. The fact that Lady Windermere gives her fan to Lord Darlington instead of Lord Windermere demonstrates not only her growing emotional attachment to him, as Lord Darlington warned and prepared her for such an act of infidelity, but also shows that he may have a greater influence on her than her own husband. When Lord Windermere reminds his wife that Mrs. Erlynne is coming, they have another round of argument on this as Lady Windermere insists that she does not want her to come. Yet, Lord Windermere is very firm about it and states that "(...) if you in any way annoy her or wound her, you will bring shame and sorrow on us both. Remember that!" and he wants his wife to trust him as "a wife should trust her husband!" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 24).

Wives in patriarchal cultures are expected to put their faith in their husbands and keep quiet, reflecting the common belief that women should be discrete and meek in male-dominated societies. This illustrates how the ruling class, in this case the men, use their influence over the cultural and ideological aspects of society to maintain their power and control. Ledwith highlights Gramsci's impact on feminist theory by introducing the concept of hegemony. To him, this concept serves as a valuable analytical tool for comprehending the establishment and perpetuation of power dynamics and societal norms within civil society. According to Gramsci's theory, the ruling class sustains its hegemony not solely through physical power and intimidation, but also through the acquisition of consent and the exertion of influence over the cultural and ideological dimensions of society. This encompasses the process of moulding and sustaining gender-based standards, functions, and anticipations via establishments such as the family unit, society, educational institutions, and faith (Ledwith 687). Lord Windermere does not use physical power and intimidation towards his wife in order to invite Mrs. Erlynne to the party. Instead, he tries to persuade Lady Windermere to invite her by acquiring her consent. Nonetheless, his conduct exemplifies the perpetuation of gender-based norms and anticipations within the familial structure. As the head of the family, Lord Windermere has been charged with making decisions on behalf of the household and maintaining specific societal norms. As per societal norms, Lady Windermere is anticipated to conform to her husband's authority and exhibit subservience towards him. The perpetuation of conventional gender roles and expectations through this power dynamic serves as a means of upholding hegemonic structures within society. Yet, Lady Windermere proves this assumption wrong because she now seems to be a fearless individual who defies the norms of a male society. Despite her reputation as a woman bound by Puritan principles and rigid morality, Wilde presents her here as a strong, dynamic, and intellectual character who challenges her husband's decision which is in line with Gramsci's ideas on the "formation of a new feminine personality" and the "ethical and civil order" mentioned before. Still, her reaction is not enough to prevent Mrs. Erlynne from coming to her birthday organization as Lord Windermere is the individual responsible for household decision-making.

Considering the transformation in Lady Windermere's personality, it is necessary to highlight the third scene pertaining once again to the fan. The fan holds

significant symbolic value in relation to Lady Windermere's identity, femininity, and societal expectations. Similar to Lord Darlington's admiration of the fan in the first act and Lady Windermere's entrustment of it to him in the second act, Lady Windermere drops her fan upon the entrance of Mrs. Erlynne in the third act. The fan serves as an impulse for Lady Windermere's emotional and behavioural responses, exposing her internal struggles, aspirations, and susceptibilities, ultimately leading to the dismantling of the rigid character she has been presenting. When Mrs Erlynne approaches them, she is not acting out any kind of role there. She shows that she already knows Lord Windermere, and compliments Lady Windermere and the house while all the other guests are watching them. Since Mrs. Erlynne knows it is always easier to approach men and affect them as males are more susceptible to being charmed or flattered than women are, her plan is to approach women. As a woman with a questionable past, she is "afraid of the women" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 25) and worries that other women will be less tolerant and more critical of her. Meanwhile, Lady Windermere goes to the terrace with Lord Darlington while Mrs Erlynne interacts with other guests such as Lady Jedburgh, Cecil Graham's aunt. Mrs. Erlynne is well-informed about the social order in which she lives and knows that women wield considerable influence. that is why she seeks support and social cover from influential ladies like Lady Jedburgh. She believes that gaining the favour of powerful women will help her find acceptance in society as a whole and prevent her from being excluded while the guests keep gossiping about her.

While Mrs. Erlynne is focused on making the most of the birthday organization, Lady Windermere is frustrated and she thinks she does not deserve such treatment from her husband as she feels humiliated in the eyes of every woman around her. Lord Darlington seizes the opportunity and adds fuel to the flames by telling what Lord Windermere does as inviting Mrs. Erlynne here is "monstrous" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 28) and she should not continue living with such a man. Lady Windermere is devastated as she thinks that she gave him all her life but "He took it – used it – spoiled it!" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 28). While Lady Windermere asks for his friendly advice about what she is supposed to do now, Lord Darlington declared that he is "blindly, adoringly, madly" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 28) in love with her adding that between a man and woman, there can only be passion or love, not friendship. Lady Windermere is confused. She needs time to think over what

has happened but Lord Darlington says he is going to leave England tomorrow forever thus she has to make up her mind very quickly and be with him. The depicted scene encompasses Lady Windermere's internal struggle as she navigates her emotional turmoil, feelings of betrayal stemming from her spouse's actions, and the unexpected romantic proposals from Lord Darlington. The scene depicted by Wilde serves to illustrate Lady Windermere's multifaceted character, which extends beyond her role as a mere prey of her husband's actions. Rather, she is portrayed as an individual struggling with her own desires, conflicts, and decision-making processes. The insertion of such elements contributes to the complexity of the character and affords the audience an opportunity to observe her internal conflicts and emotional distress.

Mrs. Erlynne continues her efforts to influence the members of the birthday organisation. Certainly, she is portrayed as a skilled manipulator who employs her charm, intellect, and wit to accomplish her goals. For instance, The Duchess of Berwick informs Lady Windermere that she had a delightful conversation with Mrs. Erlynne and regrets what she had said about her previously. Through a Gramscian perspective, the change in the Duchess' perception may once again be regarded as an instance of how prevailing ideologies and cultural conventions can impact and mould individuals' perspectives and evaluations but can be revised based on new information or personal experiences. Mrs. Erlynne impresses her as an attractive and intelligent woman who has firm views on life. She reveals that Mrs. Erlynne disapproves of multiple marriages and is at ease with Lord Augustus, who has feelings for Mrs. Erlynne. The Duchess cannot understand why people speak ill of Mrs. Erlynne and she believes that her nieces are spreading scandalous rumours. However, she is also concerned about Mrs. Erlynne's beauty and believes she should travel to Homburg. This scene illustrates the hypocrisy of people. In the beginning, The Duchess of Berwick spoke negatively about Mrs. Erlynne to Lady Windermere, implying that she was unfit to attend her birthday organisation. However, when she encounters Mrs. Erlynne, she changes her mind and begins to speak positively about her, claiming that she is a lovely woman with sound values. This abrupt shift in perspective appears insincere and hypocritical. Yet, the Duchess shows her concern regarding Mrs. Erlynne's appearance by saying "Still I should go to Homburg, dear, I really should. She is just a little too attractive" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 30). It is necessary to return to the first act of the play to grasp the significance of what the Duchess of

Berwick intends to say. While the Duchess of Berwick was warning Lady Windermere about taking his husband away from Mrs. Erlynne quickly to Homburg or Aix, she also informs her that she pretended to be ill on several occasions in order to take his husband out of town to Homburg or Aix in order to distract him and watch him all day. Although she now regards Mrs. Erlynne positively, her description of her attractiveness shows that she sees her as a threat to her marriage, and her wish to go to Homburg could be interpreted as an attempt to manage the situation and avoid any infidelity

Despite her recently achieved positive feelings towards Mrs. Erlynne, the Duchess of Berwick is still wary of her. However, things are tougher for Lady Windermere. While Mrs. Erlynne speaks to Lord Windermere, Lady Windermere “watches, with a look of scorn and pain” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 32). It has been a while since she has not attended such organizations and it is not surprising for her to see that society has never changed a bit. She talks about her daughter, Lady Margaret Windermere but then she suddenly tells that she is most probably going to be Duchess Berwick's sister-in-law as Lord Augustus proposed to her several times. Mrs. Erlynne's underlying motive, despite her prior discourse regarding her daughter, is to reclaim her societal standing and prestige. This is evidenced by her deliberate redirection of the conversation towards Sir Augustus. She is aware of the fact that Lord Windermere possesses the means to alleviate her monetary difficulties. Here, Mrs. Erlynne is perceived as a formidable and astute woman who adeptly manoeuvres through the intricacies of high society to achieve her objectives. She exhibits a willingness to employ her charisma in order to sway Lord Windermere into providing her with financial resources. She exhibits an awareness of the detrimental impact on her social standing, prompting her to seek remedies by engaging in negotiations with the ruling elite, embodied by the esteemed Lord Windermere. Hence, Gramsci would argue that the interaction between Mrs. Erlynne and Lord Windermere exemplifies the perpetuation of the ruling class's dominance through the mechanism of cultural hegemony. Mrs. Erlynne has been subjected to social exclusion from the dominant group, thereby necessitating her to engage in strategic negotiations to reclaim her former position of influence and prestige. In this way, the ideology of Gramsci fortifies the notion that the dominant social group possesses the authority to determine the individuals who are incorporated into the fabric of society and those who are excluded

from society. Mrs. Erlynne's solicitation of funds from Lord Windermere can be interpreted as a compromise of her personal integrity and esteem, as she seeks to attain social validation from the aristocratic elite. This particular scene can be interpreted as a poignant commentary on the mechanisms through which dominant social groups exert their power by regulating the beliefs and values that pervade society.

Arguably, the most significant moment in the play, wherein the plot reaches its climax and the destiny of Lady Windermere's matrimony and prospects hang in the balance, is the scene at the end of the second act, during which Lady Windermere decides to leave the house by leaving a letter addressed to her husband. It is Mrs. Erlynne who finds the letter before Lord Windermere. As a woman who had a bad fate in her life, Mrs. Erlynne is devastated to read the letter. She does not want her daughter to go through similar sufferings. She is stunned to see exactly the same words that she had written before she abandoned her husband twenty-two years ago. She has always thought life punished her for what she has done but now, she thinks this is her worst punishment to see her daughter about to suffer the same fate. She manipulates Lord Windermere to prevent him from discovering his wife's absence and asks Lord Augustus to keep Lord Windermere busy so that he will not come back tonight and goes after her daughter.

The third act functions as the conclusion of the various conflicts and intricacies that emerge throughout the play, while at the same time incorporating satirical observations on established social norms, hypocrisy, and ethical evaluations. Lady Windermere is at Lord Darlington's rooms. Upon encountering Mrs. Erlynne at Lord Darlington's residence, Lady Windermere initially displays a reserved and distant attitude, maintaining her belief that Mrs. Erlynne is an unscrupulous woman. Mrs. Erlynne, however, is desperate to make her turn back to Lord Windermere. Lady Windermere's assumption that her husband has read the letter and sent Mrs. Erlynne to lure her back reflects her lack of faith in him and her concern that she would be betrayed. Mrs. Erlynne did, in fact, discover the letter and came on her own accord to help Lady Windermere. Lady Windermere's stubbornness and refusal to listen to Mrs. Erlynne's explanation further highlight the tension and conflict between them. The double standards and gender roles of Victorian society are on full display in Lady Windermere's mistrust of Mrs. Erlynne and her conviction that she is trying to manipulate her and her husband. During this time period, women were commonly

stereotyped as being manipulative and untrustworthy, especially if they did not belong to a certain social class. In the light of Gramsci's ideas, this scene can be thought to illustrate the tensions that arise when different social groupings compete for power, and it also shows how intellectuals play a role in developing the public's political and social awareness. In spite of the rumours about her and the negative associations attached to her, Mrs. Erlynne plays a vital role as a mediator in the arguments between Lady Windermere and her husband, who are members of different social classes compared to Mrs. Erlynne. Yet, Lady Windermere continues telling her terrible things; "You talk as if you had a heart. Women like you have no hearts. Heart is not in you. You are bought and sold" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 39). Mrs. Erlynne is in pain, but she cannot reveal her real identity. She desperately says;

You don't know what may be in store for you, unless you leave this house at once. You don't know what it is to fall into the pit, to be despised, mocked, abandoned, sneered at—to be an outcast! to find the door shut against one, to have to creep in by hideous byways, afraid every moment lest the mask should be stripped from one's face, and all the while to hear the laughter, the horrible laughter of the world, a thing more tragic than all the tears the world has ever shed. You don't know what it is. One pays for one's sin, and then one pays again, and all one's life one pays. You must never know that. (...) (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 39)

Mrs. Erlynne is a human being who is paying the price for her misdeeds and now is trying to escape from her destiny. Gramsci proposes that the inquiry into the nature of humanity, specifically the question of "what is man?", is a fundamental and extensively studied topic within the field of philosophy. The solution to this question can be determined through a thorough analysis of each individual and their respective characteristics. Nonetheless, the most significant question is not centred on an individual's present state, but rather on the potential of human development and how one's encounters influence one's understanding. Thus, the basis of this inquiry pertains to the correlation between human and destiny. The question to be asked ought to be: "can man dominate his own destiny, can he "make himself", can he create his own life?" The fundamental answer underlying these questions pertains to the extent to which an individual can achieve self-discovery and exert control over their future through personal effort. When responding to these questions, it is imperative to take into account the current circumstances so that the definition of humanity should be based on current circumstances rather than hypothetical future scenarios. (Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 351). Mrs. Erlynne wants to protect Lady Windermere from the anguish of social exclusion since she has first-hand knowledge

of its devastating effects. Mrs. Erlynne wants to protect Lady Windermere from the anguish of social exclusion since she has first-hand knowledge of its devastating effects. Through her actions, Mrs. Erlynne is actively trying to change her own destiny, while simultaneously seeking to prevent Lady Windermere from encountering a similar destiny. This is predicated upon Mrs. Erlynne's own experiences and comprehension of the consequences stemming from her actions. The speech Mrs. Erlynne desperately made above is an important one because it draws attention to Victorian culture's harsh and unforgiving nature. As Gramsci states while criticizing Italian women, Mrs. Erlynne is not accepted by the society she lives in as she does not remain

the female who feeds the newborn, the doll who is the more dear the more stupid she is, the more beloved and extolled the more she renounces herself and the duties which she should have towards herself, in order to devote herself to others, whether they be her family or the sick, the human waste which charity gathers up and maternally succours. The hypocrisy of charitable sacrifice is another face of this inner inferiority of our standard of behaviour (Gramsci, *Selections From Cultural Writings* 72).

The aforementioned quote by Gramsci entails a critique of the conventional gender roles assigned to women in Italian society. Gramsci highlights the societal expectation for women to dedicate themselves entirely to the service of others, particularly in their roles as wives and mothers. He further contends that this expectation of selflessness and submission is indicative of the prevailing societal norms dictating the behaviour of women, which he perceives as hypocritical and reflective of an inherent sense of inferiority. When his point of view is applied to Mrs. Erlynne, she functions as a characteristic figure of a woman who defies the conventional norms imposed upon her by society and endeavours to establish her own trajectory, notwithstanding the criticism and judgment she encounters from the community. Hence, Wilde uses Mrs. Erlynne and her story to critique Victorian England's hypocrisy, unequal treatment of women, and double standards. About Mrs. Erlynne, Rinako Miyata states that “Mrs Erlynne becomes 'fallen' because of one fatal mistake: she abandons her daughter and her husband for a love affair. She is neither a coquette nor a prostitute, but rather a female 'dandy' (...)” (129) and she has suffered the consequences of her action. She once left her daughter, and although Lady Windermere is not aware of this fact, she is in front of her daughter and utters another significant speech;

God gave you that child. He will require from you that you make his life fine, that you watch over him. What answer will you make to God if his life is ruined through you? Back to your house, Lady Windermere—your husband loves you! He has never swerved for a moment from the love he bears you. But even if he had a thousand loves, you must stay with your child. If he was harsh to you, you must stay with your child. If he ill-treated you, you must stay with your child. If he abandoned you, your place is with your child (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 39-40).

As Nethercot states this is a speech that Mrs. Erlynne pours her heart out as she has suffered a lot, and it has the same impact on Lady Windermere that it was intended to have on its audience (Nethercot, "Oscar Wilde and the Devil's Advocate" 842) so that all these words that poured from Mrs. Erlynne's heart sincerely softens Lady Windermere and in tears, she decides to go back home. When Mrs. Erlynne's speech is considered,

One cannot sense any anger or self-pity in either her words or her actions, nor any feeling of persecution that she is directing toward society. She only feels her own sense of self-affirmation and confidence. She has the strength to admit her misdeeds and, by following the accepted conventions, she saves her daughter's life by persuading her to stay when Lady Windermere tries to abandon her family (Miyata 130).

As explained by Miyata, despite experiencing social exclusion and confronting the potential repercussions of her prior deeds, Mrs. Erlynne sustains a steadfast sense of self-validation and assurance.

Although now Lady Windermere is ready to go back to her home, to her family, she is late. Lord Augustus and Lord Windermere arrive at Lord Darlington's house along with some other companions. Lady Windermere throws herself behind the curtains. The guests again start gossiping about Mrs. Erlynne. As they are suspicious of her, they ask Lord Augustus various questions about her. Lord Augustus tries to defend her saying "You want to make her out a wicked woman. She is not!" (*Lady Windermere's Fan*, 42). Yet, they are still doubtful because as Cecil Graham generalizes the women, he says;

Now, my dear Tuppy, don't be led astray into the paths of virtue. Reformed, you would be perfectly tedious. That is the worst of women. They always want one to be good. And if we are good, when they meet us, they don't love us at all. They like to find us quite irretrievably bad, and to leave us quite unattractively good (*Lady Windermere's Fan*, 43-44).

The gender roles and expectations that Cecil Graham describes in his speech regarding women are typical of the Victorian period. He perpetuates the notion that women are overbearing and judgmental because they want all males to have high

morals. This contributes to men's belief that they should be able to act freely without fear of consequences. Graham's comment also reflects the cultural bias that women prefer males who behave badly to well-behaved guys. Individuals who exhibit tedious qualities are characterised as uninteresting, lacking in liveliness, and possessing firm convictions regardless of how good or bad things are. Puritans, for instance, can be extremely tedious. Morally upright people are universally admired, but also widely viewed as boring. This furthers the belief that males need to be adventurous and risk-taking in order to attract women. Cecil Graham shares this view; he believes that if you're a good person in a romantic relationship, women will grow tired of you faster. So, Cecil thinks that he is good but Lord Darlington summarizes their situation by saying "we are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars?" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 44). Lord Darlington is implying that while everyone is experiencing hardship and negativity (the "gutter"), there are those who are able to keep their heads up and look forward by focusing on higher ideals. (the "stars"). The phrase might be seen as a critique of society's external pressures and expectations that are used to evaluate individuals rather than their inner qualities and goals. Lord Darlington is not only interested in the glamorous side of high society, but also has an understanding and awareness of the darker aspects of society; "Though associated with the glitter and aesthetic qualities of high social life, [Lord Darlington] also understood the less than glamorous world of poverty, political repression, inequality, rent boys, and prison" (Colley 189). All through the play, Lord Darlington is portrayed as a dandy. As Gregor states it's worth noting that, as Darlington's position as the dandy declines, Wilde attempts to keep this aspect alive in the play via one of his friends, Cecil Graham. "But, because Graham is nothing more than a choric voice, his wit remains unassimilated into the action of the play, and so remains a collection of cynical obiter dicta, some Wildean epigrams in search of a character" (Gregor 504). In other words, Cecil Graham's function is akin to that of a chorus or commentator with regards to the transpiring events, and his clever remarks and epigrams do not invariably pertain to the characters or occurrences in the play. On the contrary, Lord Darlington, who was initially portrayed as a dandy, is displaced by Cecil Graham, who is deficient in depth. Thus, although Cecil Graham exhibits some witty remarks, he fails to effectively delve into the underlying motifs of the play or make substantial contributions to the progression of its characters or plotline.

Lord Darlington starts talking about the woman that he has been in love with. He alludes to Lady Windermere by explaining that this woman thinks she is not free, she does not love him, and she is the only good woman he has ever met in his life. She “has purity and innocence. She has everything we men have lost” (Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* 44). During Lord Darlington’s conversation with his friends, he completes his preparations for departing from England. His friends show him a fan, laying on Lord Darlington’s table, hinting that he has a secret lover. Lord Windermere is surprised to see that the fan actually belongs to his wife. Being highly suspicious, Lord Windermere starts searching for the house to find out if his wife is with Lord Darlington. As soon as he feels something is moving behind the curtain, Mrs. Erlynne rushes forward to prevent Lady Windermere from being seen by her husband. While Lady Windermere secretly flees from the scene, Mrs. Erlynne apologizes for taking Lady Windermere’s fan by mistake. Everyone is stunned to see Mrs. Erlynne in Lord Darlington’s house. As Amanda Anderson states “Mrs. Erlynne first appears as a dandified woman who puts her own social standing above all, who is pragmatically using the little power she has in order to gain entrance into the kind of society from which, as a fallen woman, she has for so long been exiled” (171). Yet, the contrasting behaviours and decisions of Mrs. Erlynne in the play reveal her complex character. On one hand, she is a pragmatic and dandified woman who is determined to regain her social status and uses any means necessary to achieve her goals. “When we first meet Mrs. Erlynne, she speaks in the voice of the Wildean dandy, demystifying the pretenses of those around her, approaching her own project of reintegration not with humility but with élan” (Anderson 171). On the other hand, her love for her daughter causes her to compromise her own reputation and make a selfless decision in “the prospect of her own daughter’s incipient fall, a fall prompted by the seductions of Darlington” and this “causes her to falter and reveal another side: (Anderson 172)” her willingness to use deception and manipulation to achieve her ends. This particular scene demonstrates the complex nature of Mrs. Erlynne’s personality, emphasising the divergent actions and choices she exhibits throughout the play. Her purpose of approaching Lord Windermere was primarily centred on the restoration of her social standing, and she was willing to employ any available methods to attain her objectives. Nonetheless, the maternal affection she harbours for her daughter prompts her to reveal another side of herself. The transformation in the personality of Mrs. Erlynne indicates that she is a multi-faceted character who is not driven solely by egocentric motives. The display of

her readiness to make compromises for the betterment of her daughter's welfare highlights a more empathetic facet of her character. Simultaneously, the utilisation of deceit and manipulation she uses to save her daughter implies that she remains a multifaceted character with dubious intentions and behaviours. The transformation of Mrs. Erlynne's persona throughout the play contributes to the intricacy and profundity of the narrative, emphasising the contradictory demands imposed on women during the Victorian period with regard to their societal status and public image.

The play's last act serves as an awakening and self-realization for Lady Windermere. After seeing how Mrs. Erlynne saved her after "a wonderful act of self-sacrifice, doing it spontaneously, recklessly, nobly" she is still surprised that Mrs. Erlynne "accepts public disgrace in the house of another" to save her. She now thinks that "there is a bitter irony in things, a bitter in the way we talk of good and bad women..." (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 48). It is obvious that Lady Windermere is going to try to be a bit more flexible about life. She understands that life is not only black and white. According to Brooks and Heilman, it is a play about Lady Windermere's education. "Not merely that Mrs. Erlynne is a good woman. But the more general truth that good and evil are not easily determined by simple rules, that they do not often exist in pure form, so to speak; hence one must measure the evidence carefully and must avoid hasty conclusions" (77). The quotation is significant because it highlights the danger of making snap judgments based on superficial observations, and instead encourages the audience to approach people and situations with greater nuance and empathy. The quotation underscores the significance of adopting a nuanced and measured perspective in assessing individuals and their actions, as it suggests that determining good and bad cannot be reduced to simplistic rules. This is a reminder that people are complex and that their actions are often influenced by a variety of factors that may not be immediately apparent. On the contrary, this time Lord Windermere's opinions of Mrs. Erlynne change as Mrs. Erlynne "takes the whole blame upon herself and degrades herself in the eyes of her son-in-law" (Kaur 891). He now thinks "she is bad – as bad as a woman can be" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 49) and he does not want his wife to see her ever again. This time Lady Windermere, although she does not know the real truth that she is her mother, tries to protect Mrs. Erlynne. Gramsci does not separate the individual from time and space when he explains his thoughts on individuals and society. He thinks that the thoughts and

actions of individuals are influenced by the time and space in which they occur and "Common sense is not a single unique conception, identical in time and space." As per Gramsci's perspective, the development of individuals is not identical, which leads to different thought processes. Thus, this observation provides evidence that human thinking is not similar across individuals. The variability of conditions is ubiquitous and temporal. Since conditions change, the thoughts and behaviours of the individual can also change (Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks 351). Gramsci's idea asserts that the respective attitudes of Lady Windermere and Lord Windermere towards Mrs. Erlynne in the play have been subject to the influence of the circumstances in which they have found themselves. As the play unfolds, Lord Windermere's initial defence of Mrs. Erlynne against the negative opinions of Lady Windermere and the Duchess of Berwick undergoes a transformation. This shift in perspective is attributed to his encounter with Mrs. Erlynne at Lord Darlington's house. This demonstrates how alterations in circumstances can result in modifications in an individual's thinking and actions. Likewise, the transformation of Lady Windermere's unfavourable perceptions of Mrs. Erlynne occurs upon the latter's intervention in saving Lady Windermere and persuading her to reconcile with her husband. This instance serves to illustrate how the diversity of circumstances can influence individual viewpoints and dispositions. Another scene which shows how changing conditions can lead to changes in someone's thoughts and behaviours is when Lady Windermere decides to seek shelter in Lord Darlington's house as she thinks that her husband has been deceiving her. Lady Windermere's high moral standards were established early on in the play. However, Lord Darlington takes advantage of her weakness by declaring his love for her. She initially rejects him and believes his compliments to be inappropriate. Later, though, Lady Windermere leaves her home and rushes to Lord Darlington's, despite her knowledge that he expects an answer and wants to be more than friends. Without generating a major scandal, she ultimately returns to her spouse. However, what she did demonstrates the notion that individual behaviour is not consistent and that varying ways of thinking can arise due to changing circumstances. Therefore, it can be seen that Lady Windermere is a moralistic Puritan, yet now Oscar Wilde presents her with a contradictory role.

LADY WINDERMERE - What are called good women may have terrible things in them, mad moods of recklessness, assertion, jealousy, sin. Bad women, as they are termed, may have in them sorrow, repentance, pity,

sacrifice. And I don't think Mrs. Erlynne a bad woman—I know she's not. (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 49-50).

Looking at the quotation above, it can be remembered that Lady Windermere initially considers Mrs. Erlynne to be a woman of ill repute and a threat to her marriage and reputation. Yet as the play develops and more is revealed about Mrs. Erlynne's background and motivations, Lady Windermere begins to see her as a multifaceted figure with admirable traits. As Amanda Anderson mentions, “characters who tend toward an idealized conception of virtue, and a stark notion of good and bad character, come to learn that the world is more mixed than they had imagined” (167). So, Lady Windermere's shift of perspective on Mrs. Erlynne is indicative of her development as a person. She develops a more sophisticated and empathetic perspective as she abandons her early prejudices and rigid commitment to social rules. This change in outlook ultimately leads to her reconciling with her husband and with Mrs. Erlynne. Lady Windermere's words above are also significant because they highlight the danger of making snap judgments based on superficial observations, and instead, encourage the audience to approach people and situations with greater nuance and empathy.

Throughout the play, Lady Windermere's reputation as a good and moral woman is contrasted with Mrs. Erlynne's reputation as a fallen woman. As Rolf Breuer claims “Lady Windermere can continue to seem good only because Mrs Erlynne seems to be bad. Social appearances and truth are contraries but dependent on each other” (232). Breuer's statement suggests that the social appearances of characters in the play are inextricably linked to the truth of their actions and motivations and that the contrast between characters like Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne is necessary for the maintenance of social appearances and reputations. The process of evaluating an individual or their conduct as ethical or wicked cannot be exclusively dependent on firm or basic principles but necessitates a more profound comprehension and contemplation of details and subtle differences. This idea suggests that moral evaluation should avoid being excessively simple or only black-and-white, but instead should incorporate the differences and the intricate details inherent in human actions and circumstances. “Wilde suggests that general principles, whether they express or deconstruct traditional morality, gain half their meaning from the concrete context in which they are situated” (Anderson 174). This serves as a poignant reminder that individuals are complex and that their actions can be influenced by a multitude of factors that may not be immediately apparent. “Mrs. Erlynne is moved by her

daughter's danger, moved even to compromise herself, but this does not mean that she will wear sackcloth the rest of her days" and Wilde's portrayal of Mrs. Erlynne as restricted by her past and her role as a mother is contradicted by his refusal to define all her current and future actions solely based on these constraints (Anderson 174). In particular, Lady Windermere's character is presented as a devout Puritan woman who holds herself to a strict moral code. However, despite her initial reluctance to accept Lord Darlington's compliments and declarations of love, she continues to maintain a close friendship with him although she is married to Lord Windermere. When Lady Windermere becomes aware of her husband's supposed infidelity, she seeks refuge at Lord Darlington's house, which defies the societal norms and values of the Victorian period. This transformation in Lady Windermere's character highlights the complexities of human behaviour and challenges the gender roles and expectations set by society during that time period. As Loveleen Kaur states, Lady Windermere firmly believes that women who have committed societal "faults" should never be forgiven. Kaur's analysis of this statement reveals that it demonstrates Lady Windermere's adherence to high moral standards, but it is only when faced with difficult circumstances that one's true beliefs and values are put to the test. As Kaur explains, "The worth and philosophy of a person are tested only in trying circumstances" (887). (Despite Lady Windermere's professed morality and self-discipline, she is seen running away to Lord Darlington's place upon discovering her husband's intimacy with Mrs. Erlynne. This demonstrates that Lady Windermere's individuality conflicts with societal norms, leading her to leave her husband's home.

In his article titled "Morality and Standards (La Morale e il Costume)", Gramsci offers a critique of Ibsen's play *Nora: A Doll's House* which can be used to further comment on Lady Windermere as a woman. Specifically, Gramsci emphasises a distinct perspective on the perception of women and men, viewing them not solely as physical entities, but rather as spiritual beings. Gramsci highlights the notion that the family ought not to be regarded solely as an economic entity, but rather as a moral sphere in which two individuals merge intimately, complementing each other's deficiencies. He claims that women ought not to be restricted to their traditional "roles as caregivers and nurturers", but rather should be acknowledged as independent individuals with their own cognitive faculties, intrinsic desires, distinctive character traits, and inherent worth. According to Gramsci's critique, it has to be known that

woman is “a human creature in herself, with her own awareness, her own inner needs, a human personality entirely her own, and the dignity of an independent being” (Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* 70) and there is a need to adopt a comprehensive and all-encompassing perspective on gender roles and relationships, which acknowledges the multidimensional nature of individuals beyond their physical characteristics. In line with Gramsci's assertion, Lady Windermere is depicted as a multifaceted character, transcending the conventional roles of "caregiver and nurturer". She manifests as an intelligent being possessing distinct traits, inherent worth, and a developing comprehension of her own identity. The character's trajectory demonstrates a transition towards acknowledging the diverse dimensions of femininity beyond conventional societal norms and presumptions, emphasizing the intricacies of human autonomy and independence. (Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* 70)

In Kaur's view, Lady Windermere's actions demonstrate that even those who claim to adhere to high moral standards can be swayed by their own desires, stating that “her own individuality comes into conflict with societal norms” (887). Wilde's critique of the repressive nature of Victorian society is reflected in this act of rebellion. By pursuing her own goals and developing her own sense of self, Lady Windermere is rebelling against these standards. Oscar Wilde's intention in presenting this transformation in Lady Windermere is to critique the rigid gender norms and societal expectations placed on women in the Victorian era. Wilde emphasises the constraints and boundaries placed on women through the character change of Lady Windermere. It appears that Lady Windermere's initial dedication to these values was overbearing and stifling, preventing her from fully expressing her unique personality. She starts to break away from these expectations and establish her independence as she becomes closer to Mrs. Erlynne. Wilde uses Lady Windermere's voyage to argue that women should not be expected to hide their true selves or adhere to conventional norms.

Another scene which showcases the conflict between societal expectations and personal choices is when Lady Windermere decides to tell her husband what happened honestly while they are discussing about Mrs. Erlynne. However, at that moment Mrs. Erlynne comes to bid her last goodbye as she is leaving that afternoon. Before Mrs. Erlynne leaves, she wants a photograph of Lady Windermere with her son. When Lady Windermere leaves to find the photograph, Lord Windermere blames her to be a base woman as she has not been around for twenty years but then she appeared because her

daughter got married to a rich man and she saw the colour of money. When Lady Windermere brings the photograph, she deliberately sends her husband away to see if Mrs. Erlynne's carriage arrived so that she can thank her for last night as she thinks she owes her everything. Mrs. Erlynne only wants Lady Windermere to remain silent and not tell her husband about how she left the house by leaving a letter behind. As Breuer explains, "It is also paradoxical that the future marriage between Lady and Lord Windermere, apparently meant to be happy, should be built on lies" (232). Breuer's observation regarding the foundation of Lady and Lord Windermere's marriage based on lies has importance. Lady Windermere's decision to withhold information regarding her departure from her home can be regarded as an indication of deceit. This paradoxical scenario demonstrates the intricacies of human connections and the sacrifices that individuals make to preserve the facade of propriety and societal conformity as one hand, the future marriage between Lady and Lord Windermere is presented as happy and promising, yet on the other hand, it is built on a foundation of lies and deception. Lady Windermere remains unaware of the fact that Mrs Erlynne is her mother, and Lord Windermere is unaware of the extent of his wife's involvement with Lord Darlington. While Lord and Lady Windermere are talking, Mrs. Erlynne also asks if she can take the fan so that it will remind her. Lady Windermere reminds that her name is written on the fan, but their first names are the same; Margaret. Mrs Erlynne leaves with Lord Augustus. She finds a credible excuse about why she was at Lord Darlington's house that he forgives her and defends her towards Lord Windermere. They decide to get married. Lady Windermere and Lord Windermere unite again, too, as Lady Windermere says "(...) Oh, Arthur, don't love me less, and I will trust you more. I will trust you absolutely. Let us go to Selby. In the Rose Garden at Selby, the roses are white and red" (Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* 58).

As it can be remembered when the first act of the play starts Lady Windermere was arranging roses. As noted by Linda Costanzo Cahir in her article, "At the end of the play, we find Lady Windermere in a setting described as the "Same as Act I"" (10) and through the end of the last act, Lady Windermere uses the above-mentioned quote about the roses. Cahir also observes that "For Lady Windermere, roses are either red or white, people are either good or bad" (10). It could be argued that Lady Windermere's view of the world at the end of the play is still somewhat simplistic as despite encountering Mrs. Erlynne, who has redeeming qualities, Lady Windermere

still categorizes her merely as a "very good woman" at the end of the play. About the transition of Lady Windermere Nethercot claims that "For at the end of the play Lady Windermere is no longer the intolerant Puritan, certain of the unvarying standards of right and wrong, and unforgiving toward anyone who has stumbled or strayed" (Nethercot, "Oscar Wilde and the Devil's Advocate." 847). Hence, Lady Windermere's transformation is ambiguous. While she learns valuable lessons, the fact that she ultimately returns to her husband and continues her life raises questions about the extent of her transformation. The conclusion of the play may be interpreted as an illustration of the dominant influence of societal norms and expectations that regulate women's conduct. Lady Windermere ultimately yields to the pressure of conforming to the established social hierarchy by acquiescing to the dominant class's expectations and ideals, despite her initial resistance to them. The circular structure of the play highlights Lady Windermere's lack of growth and the limitations of her worldview. Lady Windermere undergoes some kind of a shift in her worldview and societal values, however, her choice to reconcile with her husband is primarily driven by her inclination to comply with societal conventions and preserve her social standing, rather than self-actualization or empowerment. Still, Wilde uses the character of Lady Windermere to criticise the Victorian period's strict moral standards while also highlighting the complexities of the human condition as he was a critic of Victorian society who believed that its strict social codes and moral hypocrisy were damaging to individuals and society. He also wants to emphasize the difficulty of breaking free from societal constraints for some people while it is noteworthy that the play also presents a challenge to the concept of hegemony, as exemplified by the character of Mrs. Erlynne, who resists established societal norms and expectations. Despite facing initial obstacles, Mrs. Erlynne ultimately succeeds in re-establishing her position within society. The aforementioned instance can be interpreted as a manifestation of opposition to hegemonic power structures, whereby people possess the ability to contest and undermine prevailing ideologies.

Based on the analysis of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, it is possible to conclude that the play is a critique of Victorian cultural conventions and expectations imposed on women. Wilde challenges the image of women being quiet and subservient to men through the figures of Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne, who reject these expectations and fight up for themselves. Furthermore, the play delves into the topic

of hegemony and how societal standards are produced and maintained through numerous institutions. As a whole, *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a drama that questions contemporary societal conventions and urges audience members to consider the role of women in society as well as the impact of societal expectations on individuals.



CONCLUSION

When both plays are evaluated, they show the insincerity and two-facedness of upper-class society in England and the rigorous moral norms that compel Eliza and Lady Windermere to be appropriately ladylike in the context of patriarchal domination in society. While the plots are distinct, both *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw and *Lady Windermere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde portray women who have to behave in a certain manner that is formed by society's ideas of women. However, in both plays, the playwrights are in favour of the women characters, and instead of only portraying the Victorian values, expectations and their effects on women, they also enhance their women characters in terms of class or position in society. Moreover, the examination of *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* illustrates the relevance of Antonio Gramsci's concepts of hegemony, which emphasise the capacity of the ruling class to uphold their authority and influence over the general population by manipulating cultural standards and principles. The behavioural patterns of female characters in the two plays are primarily influenced by the dominant social group, namely the upper class. These societal norms and values are enforced upon all members of society, irrespective of their social standing. The characters in the two plays, by challenging established norms and expectations, have initiated a disruption of the hegemonic power structures that sustain gender and class inequalities in society. Hence, the plays not only provide insight into the societal and cultural atmosphere of the Victorian period but also function as a critique of the intricate dynamics between authority, belief systems, and opposition.

Female heroines who display different appearances and behaviours from the expected image of women coded by tradition have been embodied in both writers' works. Until both Eliza and Lady Windermere undergo a kind of an awakening, Eliza places herself at Higgins' mercy to transfer her from a flower girl to a lady that can be accepted by society and Lady Windermere embraces the Puritan-like lifestyle and esteems herself as a good woman while Mrs. Erlynne is labelled as the wicked and base woman. On the other hand, the appearances and roles of relatively unconventional women in both writers' works stand out in this structure, which can also be seen as a rebellion against tradition and social rules and serves as a guiding attitude. For instance, Eliza who was despised and shrugged away in society is later accepted by

that same society and topped off her transformation with her marriage to Freddy. Similarly, Mrs. Erlynne is portrayed as an immoral lady at the play's outset, but she ends up as a good woman in the eyes of Lady Windermere who was tied to rigid societal norms and had had strict conventional ideas at the beginning of the play. Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw's works showed how they felt about society and used their characters to spread their ideas and help make people more aware. In both plays, attention is drawn to female characters who are changing, renewing, struggling, and deviant, different from the image of women drawn by tradition, as well as references to the two-faced aristocratic female and male characters. This attitude is not only a protest against traditional literary works, but it also suggests that women should lead the way in changing and transforming society's strict traditional norms and the roles that are imposed on them. This way of thinking includes the idea that the structures that women have changed and improved will lead to real social change.

When Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere* character is examined as a woman, it can be considered that while the character is attached to tradition and clings to moral elements on one side, on the other hand, she has a modern consciousness that does not accept to be a deceived woman, so that she finds the strength in herself to leave her home and seek shelter in Lord Darlington's house. Mrs. Erlynne, on the other hand, is portrayed as a "fallen woman," and she stands out as an independent person with a struggling personality, despite the fact that society cannot accept her and must push her out of it. The relevance of Gramsci's concepts of hegemony and power dynamics is evident in the societal perception of Lady Windermere as a lady and Mrs. Erlynne as a woman who has fallen from grace. This perception is a manifestation of the dominant ideology that is propagated by the ruling class to uphold their authority and influence over the subordinate classes. Therefore, it can be said that when it comes to Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne, who are on opposite ends of society, it is the people's natural perspective that identifies one as a lady and the other as a fallen woman. Lady Windermere is a young lady who is married to a well-known figure in society. The title also implies that she is addressed as a "lady" throughout the play. Her marital status and her social standing are inextricably linked. However, while how Mrs. Erlynne pays the price for her unethical conduct and society's reaction is not wrong, the point that should be examined is the need for equality in punishments for Mrs. Erlynne's infidelity or leaving her child behind. That is, there existed gendered

norms in the Victorian period. Towards men and women, there are some divergent, unreasonable, and unjust expectations and standards. While it is critical that wrongdoers have to be held accountable for their acts, this must be done regardless of gender. Infidelity should be ethically undesirable for both men and women and as a result, societal sanctions should be enforced equally on both genders. To illustrate, while gossip spreads about Mrs. Erlynne's past deeds, Lord Darlington alludes to and the Duchess of Berwick cautions Lady Windermere about Lord Windermere's alleged infidelity. While Mrs. Erlynne faces the penalties for her past infidelity, society ignores Lord Windermere's alleged infidelity. Instead of ostracising Lord Windermere like they did Mrs. Erlynne, society takes on the role of advising Lady Windermere about what she should do as a woman. As a result, it can be said that gender should not be considered for defining societal expectations or consequences for such behaviours. Gender equality must be promoted in all parts of society, including moral and ethical considerations.

When it comes to Shaw, some of his female characters stand out as independent and progressive portraits free of tradition, which stands out in the Eliza character. Eliza, who is not afraid to stand up to Professor Higgins when necessary, wants to progress to get rid of the class she was born into and escape a life where she could only be a flower girl. Eliza Doolittle, for instance, is not respected by society before she completes her transformation. In a way, as Innes states, "*Pygmalion* presents an antitype of the popular Cinderella story, which had been reworked so many times that it had achieved the status of social myth" (31). When Freddy first meets her, he does not notice her because she is an ordinary flower girl from the working-class society. Even how such a girl utters her son Freddy's name is unacceptable for Mrs. Eynsford Hill. Yet, at Mrs. Higgins' house or at the Ambassador's reception, things are different. People who once despised or simply ignored her then have a different point of view towards her. Even Freddy ends up falling in love with Eliza. This shows how those who did not conform to the norms of respectability in appearance and speech were typically viewed as less educated and lower than their contemporaries. Clothing and language conveyed social rank, respectability, and cultural values in Victorian etiquette. Formal attire distinguished classes. Victorian decorum included proper language. Manners and good grammar were required. People were supposed to talk politely and avoid slang. The Victorian period prized civility and excellent manners,

and how individuals talked showed their social rank and education. The play highlights how language can be a barrier between the upper and lower classes that ties one down to a specific place in society, as well as how it may help one to escape this boundary by developing and modifying the language. As a result of this, the characters in the play, most notably the main character, Eliza Doolittle, undergo a change that has an effect on language, social standing, and sense of self-esteem. As Innes claims "In passing off the cockney flower-girl as his 'creation of a Duchess Eliza', Higgins' experiment demonstrates the artificiality of class distinctions" (32). The Eynsford-Hill family exemplify the mind-numbing repression of "keeping up appearances" (Innes 32), and Innes's analysis shows that it is society, not individuals, that determines worth in terms of outer appearance. This exemplifies the constructed nature of social stratification, whereby worth is ascribed based on external attributes by society rather than by individuals. According to Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the aforementioned scenario exemplifies the perpetuation of dominant ideologies that serve to uphold the existing power structure and impede the progression of societal transformation. The question of what sets people from different social classes apart is brought up because of how people's clothes and the way they talk can affect how they are seen. As the play progresses, the audience is continuously reminded of the characters' social status based on aspects such as their attire, demeanour, vocabulary, morals, and wealth. Yet, it's apparent that all of these aspects together are not always possible. Henry Higgins, for example, is shown to be well-groomed, good at phonetics, and wealthy, yet his behaviour is hardly polite most of the time. Alfred Doolittle is not a decent man, but he becomes wealthy, soigne, and quite polite. When the maid answers the door for Mr. Doolittle, she identifies him as a gentleman. That's why Shaw's criticism of the phony morality of the middle and upper classes is central to his defence of the working class and his desire for social transformation. By pointing out that women in patriarchal societies are treated differently when it comes to their rights to education, their sexuality, and marriage, Shaw conveys the devalued position of women. In a patriarchal culture, a woman's only job is to take care of the home and raise children. Getting an education frees a woman from the confines of the home. It allows her to participate fully in public life, where she may earn a living, socialise with people of all backgrounds, and grow professionally. There is no biological distinction between the sexes, yet patriarchal culture perpetuates bias against women. Because of social norms, women are only allowed to work in the home or in lower-paying jobs. They are unable

to pursue careers in larger society on the same level as men. Eliza is forced to work as a flower girl in order to make ends meet after being denied the opportunity to receive an appropriate education. This is due to the fact that in Victorian England, only members of the upper class and those who came from wealthy families were able to secure the services of the most qualified teachers to educate their children. The working class, on the other hand, did not have access to these opportunities. Eliza meets Professor Higgins, who gives her the chance to change her fate by teaching her how to be a lady.

Both playwrights had literary identities that were ahead of their time when viewed through the lens of Victorian period literature. The deviant attitudes sometimes seen in their artistic creations led them to draw female characters that were ahead of the age they lived in and position their works accordingly. Therefore, they put women ahead of society and place them in an atmosphere that exalts them. It is possible to say that their efforts to exalt and empower female characters in their works and thus in society are based on their own life experiences, as mentioned in the introduction part of this thesis.

Shaw classified his female characters as womanly woman, life-force woman, the emancipated woman, and finally the new woman. The womanly woman reflects typical Victorian women who believed their place in the world was at home, drawing on a traditional woman role that is attached to the home and caring for her husband and children. As Adams proposes, Shaw's essay "The Womanly Woman" in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* can still stand as a revolutionary feminist document, with its analysis of the social conditioning causing women to sacrifice self for others; its view of a male-ruled society dictating that women minister to male appetites (...)” (17). On the other hand, female characters called life-force woman are in a fight with male-dominated society to survive as women. Shaw departs “from the nineteenth-century stereotype of the demure, fragile, "womanly" woman” and “he more often than not creates women characters who belong to types familiar in Western literature. In play after play, he presents us with various combinations of the traditional figure of temptress, goddess, or mother (usually with a capital M); and, even when he creates a woman who has broken out of a traditional "female" role, he tends to draw on another literary type - the "emancipated" woman” (Adams 17). The emancipated woman is the woman who rebels against societal rules in Shaw's works and declares her freedom.

The women in the new woman group go beyond the group of liberated female characters. In this way, Eliza can be thought to be both an example of the emancipated woman and the new woman archetype. Eliza is a character who demonstrates her motivation and drive to go through the process of becoming the New Woman. She is considered to be an example of the New Woman since she expresses the voice of the majority of Victorian women who advocated for women's rights, equality of opportunity, and independence. She is regarded as one of the Shavian women who are out of the ordinary. It is demonstrated that women of various socioeconomic backgrounds will insist on their right to be self-reliant for a variety of reasons, and one of these reasons is represented by the character Eliza. Shaw shows women from different parts of society as unconventional on purpose in his plays as a way to fight against the inequality between the classes during the Victorian period and the gender gap that limited women's roles in society. In this way, Shaw is able to criticise both aspects of the disparity.

In a similar vein, the female characters in Oscar Wilde's plays are frequently multidimensional and powerful. For example, *Lady Windermere's Fan* presents a complicated and nuanced portrayal of women, with each character depicting a distinct facet of female identity and the experience of being a woman in Victorian society. These characters frequently challenge the gender norms and sexual norms that prevailed throughout the Victorian period. The women characters in the works of Oscar Wilde can be categorised according to a few basic archetypes: the idealised woman, the femme fatale, the strong-willed and independent woman, and the victim. Lady Windermere is frequently portrayed as a model of ideality and virtue. Nonetheless, a few of Wilde's female characters are overly romanticised to the point that they seem implausible, and they usually serve as objects of attraction for the male characters, much like the femme fatales who are typically presented as being either dangerous or alluring. Wilde's female heroines, on the other hand, frequently exhibit fiery independence and an unwillingness to adhere to traditional gender stereotypes. Mrs. Erlynne is an outstanding example of a strong-willed and independent woman since she is both unrepentant and self-reliant. She questions both what society expects of women and the limits that society puts on women. She is a woman with a strong will and a strong sense of independence who questions the expectations of society as well as the constraints that are imposed on women. She does not let herself be

frightened and continues to strive for the things that she desires, despite the fact that she has been shunned by the aristocratic society. Furthermore, despite their attempts to provide the appearance of an idealised lady, a few of Wilde's female characters, such as Lady Windermere, are portrayed as desperate victims of their own actions, such as how she decided to leave her husband, or the actions of others, such as Lord Windermere's actions related to Mrs. Erlynne. Lady Windermere is a victim of the culture in which she lives, and she also feels betrayal and heartache when she finds out about her husband's mistaken adultery with another woman. In this regard, Wilde criticises the hypocritical upper-class society by demonstrating how Lady Windermere welcomes Mrs. Erlynne at the end in spite of her Puritan background and the Victorian customs that supply her with her harsh point of view. In addition to critiquing the hypocritical actions and perspectives of the aristocracy and showing how prejudice based on gender or class can be seen in his works, Oscar Wilde's goal is to demonstrate and encourage the notion that concepts may shift with time. Wilde makes an effort to demonstrate and enlighten female readers by way of the characters of Lady Windermere and Mrs. Erlynne in an effort to highlight how women may traverse these limits and question the customary expectations that are put upon them. It's possible that Wilde is intending to convey to female readers, via these characters, the message that they are capable of standing up for themselves and breaking free of the constraints that are imposed on them by society.

When the issue of transformation is discussed further, it is possible to say that Shaw and Wilde depict their characters differently in terms of transformation which also reflects the influence of Gramsci's ideas on cultural hegemony. In this regard, it is critical to evaluate the different genres of these two plays. *Lady Windermere's Fan* is a satire of Victorian society, while *Pygmalion* is a social commentary and a comedy of manners. As a result, Shaw's linear portrayal of transformation reinforces the play's fundamental message about the power of language and social standing, whereas Wilde's circular picture of transformation reflects the play's satire on Victorian society's hypocrisy. The ending of *Lady Windermere's Fan* is indeed circular in terms of this linear or circular portrayal, as explored at the end of the third chapter of the thesis. There have been some changes in her perspective and perception of the world around her. For example, she learns to see beyond superficial appearances. She understands the complexity of human relationships and realises that people and

situations are not always what they seem. Her compassion and forgiveness towards Mrs. Erlynne also show her growth as a character. As a woman she stands up to her husband's determination in inviting Mrs. Erlynne or she finds the strength and rebel soul in herself to leave behind a letter and go to Lord Darlington's house even after he declared his love to her. However, according to Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, the normalisation of dominant values and beliefs serves to uphold the existing social order. In a cyclical manner, Lady Windermere reverts back to her original mindset and convictions regarding the world, ultimately categorising Mrs. Erlynne as "good" and accepting her return to a conventional way of life by the play's conclusion.

Wilde uses Lady Windermere to criticise Victorian society's stringent moral norms and show the hypocrisy of those who claim to follow them. This is not the case with Eliza in *Pygmalion*, as she experiences a dramatic shift throughout the play. Eliza, as stated in the second chapter of this article, is a poor flower girl with a thick Cockney accent and little schooling at the start of *Pygmalion*. Professor Henry Higgins transforms her into a lady by teaching her how to speak and act like a member of the upper class. Eliza strives throughout the play to establish her place in society and assert her own identity. In the end, she refuses to stay with Professor Higgins. She goes through a significant shift and develops agency and freedom. The play follows Eliza's journey from a despised flower girl to a confident young woman, and this journey is completed by the end of the play as her transformation is not only physical but also includes a change in her social status, education, and behaviour, just like Gramsci also claims that the ruling class maintains their power and domination over the working class through cultural institutions such as religion, education, and media. Besides, Eliza's final decision to leave Henry Higgins and marry Freddy Eynsford Hill demonstrates her independence.

Furthermore, as this thesis claims, the transformations of Eliza, Lady Windermere, and Mrs. Erlynne, do not match the conventional expectations of society in their individual circumstances. For example, in the Victorian period, social class was largely determined by birth and family background, and upward mobility was limited by factors such as education, social connections, and economic resources, which were not available to lower-class women because many of them were trapped in poverty and struggling to survive. Victorian England's social and economic systems

were firmly stacked against them, and it was difficult for them to break down the boundaries that separated the lower and high classes. Eliza, on the other hand, overcomes these obstacles by adhering to Victorian aristocratic standards of class and etiquette. When it comes to Lady Windermere, as stated in the thesis, when the circumstances change, she abandons her rigorous Victorian norms and Puritanical ideals, leaving her husband and son behind. Although Lord Darlington openly professed his love for her and begged her to make up her mind and come with him as he was leaving London forever, it was his home she fled to when she believed Lord Windermere was deceiving her. This is an example of Lady Windermere's ideological shift because with what she did she did not conform to conventional expectations that she maintained a humble and virtuous demeanour at all times. It was also anticipated that a woman in that time period would forgive her husband and attempt to preserve the marriage rather than seek divorce because divorce was highly stigmatised in Victorian culture. Furthermore, a fallen woman would be difficult to reintegrate into Victorian society since she would be perceived as having violated the rigid moral and social rules of the day. She would almost certainly encounter substantial prejudice and discrimination, much as Mrs. Erlynne did from others such as the Duchess of Berwick or Lady Windermere. It would also be difficult for her to reclaim her social standing or reputation. Mrs. Erlynne, on the other hand, utilises her charm and wit to win over other members of high society, including Lady Windermere, Lord Augustus, the Duchess of Berwick, and Cecil Graham's aunt. Mrs. Erlynne, as detailed in the third chapter of this thesis, succeeds to win over Lady Windermere and others through her smart use of social customs and her ability to appeal to their sense of morality, despite some early opposition and distrust from society. She eventually regains her social standing and even receives an enticing marriage proposal. It is worth mentioning that Wilde achieves her goal of regaining Mrs. Erlynne her social acceptance by developing her as a character with great wit, intelligence, and charm, despite the fact that it was far more difficult for women who had been stigmatised as fallen women to reclaim their social rank and reputation.

It is also worth repeating that in this thesis Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony provides an effective framework for analysing the portrayal of gender roles and socioeconomic class in *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*. The dominant class wields power not only through force but also through the spread of cultural values and

standards that are internalised and accepted by subordinate groups, as seen through the lens of hegemony. Commitment to societal norms strengthens the hegemonic order, with women in particular limited by gender expectations. The transforming journeys of Eliza, Lady Windermere, and Mrs. Erlynne, on the other hand, show that hegemonic authority is not absolute and that resistance and subversion are conceivable. As a result, Gramsci's theory provides for a more nuanced understanding of how power operates in these plays, demonstrating the complicated interplay of culture, class, and gender in Victorian society.

The study of *Pygmalion* and *Lady Windermere's Fan* through the lens of Antonio Gramsci has yielded insights into the depiction of gender roles, feminine identity, and social class in Victorian society. The findings reveal that both Shaw and Wilde challenge cultural norms and expectations by portraying characters who undergo personal and intellectual growth and transformation. Gramsci's concept of hegemony is particularly relevant to understanding the role of power structures in shaping societal norms and behaviours. By examining the portrayal of male and female characters in these plays, it becomes clear that societal expectations can be oppressive and restrictive. However, the plays also illustrate the power of human agency and resistance in breaking free from cultural myths. Overall, this thesis contributes to our understanding of how literature can serve as a medium for social commentary and critique, highlighting the need to challenge oppressive power structures and promote equality and agency for all.

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Kapat

Bibliyografyayı Çıkart

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