

## TO TREAT A DUCHESS LIKE A FLOWER GIRL SOCIAL AND LINGUISTIC VALUE IN ELIZA'S "BILINGUALISM"

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### Abstract

This paper studies Eliza Doolittle's discourse, from Shaw's *Pygmalion*, particularly the claims of her "bilingualism", based on two main perspectives. Her use of language is seen from the perspective of Sociolinguistics, Eliza's linguistic status and power and gender in language. Based on Literature and Gender Studies, I approach Eliza via Butler's concept of performance, also considering class and other identities in conflict in Eliza.

### Resumo

O artigo aborda o discurso de Eliza Doolittle, de *Pygmalion*, escrito por Shaw, com ênfase em seu "bilinguismo", com base em duas perspectivas. Seu uso de linguagem é analisado pela Sociolinguística, com o *status* linguístico de Eliza e suas relações com poder e gênero. Com base em Literatura e Gênero, eu abordo Eliza por meio do conceito de performance de Butler, também considerando classe e outras identidades em conflito em Eliza.

### Introduction

Within the most important literary expressions created during modernism, *Pygmalion* undoubtedly stands out as a dramatic questioning of social issues. George Bernard Shaw's play based on the myth of Galatea revisited the idea of creating a perfect woman based on the role language plays in societal and economic relations in the society of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Surely, in contemporaneity language is not a null factor; however, by depicting Eliza Doolittle's phonetic and stylistic rebirth, Shaw raises questions about social mobility, the relations between men and women and the role of language in the construction of personal identity.

Shaw's dramatic writing attempted to construe what Hossein Pirnajmuddin and Fatemeh Arani (p. 36) call "drama of ideas", as opposed to overly realistic life depictions, common during Shaw's time. The steady pace noticeable in the play has also been seen as a futurist characteristic. As discussed by Lawrence Switzky, "Shaw's career, like the careers of many modernist artists, is polarized by charges of mechanism *versus* vitalism" (2011, p. 137). The extent to which characters such as Higgins and Eliza are lifelike is one of the relevant traits that give the play its literary recognition since its release, approximately a hundred years ago.

*Pygmalion* is more than a "makeover story". Eliza, a cockney-speaking flower girl, meets Higgins and his colleague Pickering while the characters are hiding from the rain under a church's portico. After leaving a mysterious first impression of someone with an unusual talent for placing people within two miles according to their accents, Higgins gives Eliza a sizeable amount of money. Eliza appears at his house the

following day, demanding to be taught to speak “more genteel” (Act 2). The story unfolds as Pickering challenges Higgins to fulfill a boast, made the previous night, that he could make Eliza pass as a duchess after learning from him. Both the home day scene and the Embassy Ball scene show Eliza in action after learning how to speak, dress, and behave generally, after which Pickering and Higgins are lost in self-compliments. Eliza is brought to a breaking point of self-realization of her new *status* in society in the conclusion of the scene. After a fight, she leaves Higgins’ house, gives in to Freddy’s love and, on a final intense discussion, she appears before her previous master as an independent being.

The play was turned into several adaptations to the theater, along with movies and TV series. Shaw was awarded the Oscar in 1939 for writing the screenplay for the first movie adaptation. In 1964, *My Fair Lady* was released, a musical movie version in which the audience was presented not only with a different Eliza from the one in the 1939 version, but also with a different ending, as Higgins and Eliza start a romantic relationship. However, the 1916 play itself was based on the myth of Galatea. Ovid wrote of a man who, exasperated with what he believed to be the excessive low quality of the women where he lived, decided to build the perfect woman out of ivory. Enamored by the result, he begged Aphrodite to turn Galatea human, whom he married afterwards<sup>1</sup>.

The intertextuality network around *Pygmalion* is certainly extensive. In this paper, the discussion of what entails the creation of a perfect woman – or even of a perfect human being – will be approached through the relations between language and society (including valuable work from the field of Sociolinguistics), Butler’s notion of performance, not only concerning gender, but also other roles that range from societal to economical. The aim of this article is to discuss to which extent notions of value concerning language affect societal and economical standing, and how these roles can also be seen as a form of second code (instead of a language) of performing gender and class.

Shaw’s innovative writing does not restrict itself to the content being discussed in his character’s lines. His stage directions verge on the borders of narrative, describing actions and setting through fluid sentences, in contrast with, most frequently, short descriptive sentences. Although usual stage directions are limited to their instructive content, aiming at a future producer, Shaw’s stage directions leave this veil of practicability to enter the narrative style:

Clearly, Eliza will not pass as a duchess yet; and Higgins’ bet remains unwon. But the six months are not yet exhausted; and just in time Eliza does actually pass as a princess. For a glimpse of how she did it imagine an Embassy in London one summer evening after dark. The hall door has an awning and a carpet across the sidewalk to the kerb, because a grand

<sup>1</sup> According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, available at: <<http://global.britannica.com/eb/checked/topic/484560/Pygmalion>>. Accessed on: Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> 2015.

reception is in progress. A small crowd is lined up to see the guests arrive. (SHAW, 1941, p. 88).

To a producer, saying that “Eliza will not pass as a duchess yet” does not mean much, since it lacks a practical instruction about the stage, the setting and so on. However, there is an implied instruction that time passes distinctly between the home day scene and the Embassy Ball scene. That said, while it could be questioned why Shaw would not simply instruct a producer to find a way to suggest time passing, the textual evidence in the written play suggests that *Pygmalion* was not simply written to be performed. Shaw is constantly appealing to the reader through rhetorical devices: not only he does not establish a simple passing of time, but he also appeals to the reader’s imagination explicitly by saying “**imagine** an Embassy in London” (Act 3, my emphasis). That is not the only break with a tradition in playwriting that can be found: the foreword and the afterword are distinctively original in the sense that Shaw explicitly discusses his views on language use during his time and the futures he imagines for his characters, perhaps assuming that his ending would generate questions.

As I will discuss in the following sections, one of the several claims that can be extracted from *Pygmalion* is that phonetics, as a tool for “proper” language training, could be responsible for filling an immense class abyss that would refrain certain members of the lower classes from taking a number of life opportunities. The matter of training all people to the same speech is discussed in the next section. After establishing the linguistic basis for what *Pygmalion* implies on language teaching and performance, I move to the issue of performance in itself and the several roles, or selves, that one makes use of. The emptiness of form in detriment of content, portrayed by Shaw in the highest London classes, is also discussed in Higgins’ famous claim, “And I treat a duchess as if she was a flower girl” (1941, p. 132). The selves performed and altered are seen as a basis for what we call personality, according to Vicki Kennel (2005). Eliza, being construed upon and deconstructed within, will be my focus on approaching the matter.

### 1) Bilingualism and diglossia

In *Pygmalion*, it is clear that, within the range of fields of Linguistics, phonetics is attributed the highest stance when it comes to changing one’s linguistic self. In fact, Higgins claims that “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, 1941, p. 84). By using the word “speech”, the audience is led to believe that he is considering all the characteristics of a language when working on Eliza. However, after the Embassy Ball, he distinctly calls everything after the phonetic training “a bore”. In his view, phonetics is the main engine responsible for bridging the gulf between the classes. Of course, a closer reading of the play reveals that Higgins does not represent absolute truth or correctness, since he is constantly represented as a man who is oblivious to societal and interpersonal aspects of language. Certainly,

considering the rise of Sociolinguistics as a later occurrence to Shaw's time, his point of view is understandable. His oblivion, however, directs his interest straight to recordings, sounds and "correct" pronunciation, which is exactly the kind of training that Eliza undergoes.

In order to exemplify Higgins' attitude towards language, Act 1 is an appropriate choice. During that action, Higgins maps everyone around him according solely to the sounds they make. There is no textual evidence that he pinpointed any person based on clothes or attitude, at least not consciously. If we are to take Wardhaugh's (2002) discussion on dialect and accent, Higgins approaches the differences in language as accents. His notes are only about sounds, disregarding syntactic structures or lexical items. In fact, as the home day fiasco takes place, he comments, "It is not only how she pronounces, but what she pronounces" (SHAW, 1941, p. 72), revealing his newly found concern about guiding Eliza on furthering her language instruction. During the first half of Act 3, Eliza speaks with what could be considered "perfect" pronunciation, only in order to continue using her old syntactic structures and lexical items:

LIZA [*piling up the indictment*] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in. (SHAW, 1941, p. 79)

In the previous excerpt, we can identify at least one displacement in syntactic structure ("What become...?") and one in regards to lexical choice ("done her in"). These can be seen as textual evidence for several conclusions. (1) Higgins did not think previously to approach other aspects of the English language, until that moment attributing Eliza's future success only to pronunciation. (2) Even though Eliza somewhat scandalizes Mrs. Higgins's older guests with her displaced use of language, her so-called correctness in pronunciation allows her to leave unscathed, passed off as a young lady fluent in the new small talk. (3) Higgins, although having instructed Eliza to speak only about "the weather and everyone's health", forcefully realizes that her strong personality would need a wider training than the one he has provided. She would learn, for instance, that describing a paranoid theory involving a relative's passing is considered inappropriate for a home day. Having said that, the evidence that Eliza's speech is more than just an accent is quite clear.

Wardhaugh's (2002) discussion of what can be considered a dialect questions the very feasibility of the term; conversely, however, it can be deducted that one of the definitions for dialect is a complex gray area bordering the limits between language and dialect. Usually related to geographical differences, a dialect may have literary expression, a different prosody, etc. It is not difficult to notice a close proximity with the definition of language itself. Eliza's initial speech has been treated in academic debate alternately as a dialect and a language.

It is relevant to remember that one of the most common issues concerning the differentiation between language and dialect verses on the effectiveness of communication. Of course, there are other factors involved in stating that something is a language instead of a dialect, such as a sense of nationhood, cultural differences, and so on. In *Pygmalion*, this relation becomes even more interesting: Eliza's first sentence is written as such:

THE FLOWER GIRL. Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy atbaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them? [Here, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London.] (SHAW, 1941, p. 16)

In the matter of communication, Eliza is certainly understood by those around her, which would qualify her cockney speech as a dialect. However, for the reader, the previous excerpt is particularly problematic because one has to read it aloud in order to understand the message. The stage directions apologize for representing her speech without a phonetic alphabet, but, even using the common alphabet, the enterprise hinders communication for readers who are not intimate with the various accents and dialects of London. If Eliza communicates well inside London, but her described speech seems unintelligible for those outside it, it is possible to propose that the English spoken in London is treated as a language, in which cockney is a dialect.

On the other hand, such an argument is also not adequate, knowing as everyone does that the English spoken in London is not a separate language; it is hardly classified as a dialect in itself. If Eliza's speech is not an accent, a dialect or even a language, is it even possible to define her relationship with English? Indeed, even if one of the previous categories were found adequate to describe Eliza's language, they would become obsolete when we remember that her speech changes dramatically throughout the play.

In the end, although claiming she can no longer go back to her own ways, when she begs Pickering not to let Higgins wake her from her dream (p. 95), she feels on the verge of letting her old speech out. Even when he argues with Higgins, saying that she is no longer fit for anything because she cannot simply return to the curb, she is not entirely bereft of her old cockney pronunciation. When she sees her father again in Act 5, her old sound ("A-a-a-a-ah-ow-oh!") escapes, after which Higgins celebrates his victory. Instead of being a clue of Higgins's superiority over Eliza, this is the textual evidence that Eliza has not entirely forgotten cockney English. She performs one speech or the other according to context, unless she makes an effort not to. Given that it has been established that she is not "bilingual" per se, she is still fluent in more than one kind of speech. As a result, the best alternative in regards to Eliza is her embodiment of the idea of (a repressed) diglossia.



Alan Hudson (2003) presents a thorough discussion of diglossia; conversely, it is related to different forms of the same language in regards to the prestige attributed to these forms. Ralph Fasold (1984) dedicates a chapter in his work, *The Sociolinguistics of Society*, to the comparison of different definitions of diglossia, originally coined by Charles Ferguson in 1959. His definition is careful to separate diglossia from bilingualism and mere register differences: high and low variants would be distributed according to situation, and not necessarily to the origin of the speaker. Ferguson comments on the main characteristics that constitute diglossia, that is, matters of prestige, literary heritage, acquisition, standardization, stability, grammar, lexicon, and phonology. Those characteristics all apply, for instance, for the variant Higgins teaches Eliza; not only RP is distinctly of higher prestige, but it must be taught.

It is important to note, though, that I do not claim that cockney English and RP constitute diglossia in the England of the 1910s; considering Ferguson's differentiation, they are simply dialect registers. What I do claim is that Eliza eventually becomes a diglossic subject, since her usage of low and high variants is shown to be conditioned when she sees her father before his wedding, slipping into her old linguistic habits. On the other hand, she is not a mere vessel of diglossia, since she attempts to repress her lower variant.

In *Pygmalion*, we initially have an Eliza who is only capable of speaking the lower variant of English; as she learns the Received Pronunciation, along with its prosody and structure, she does not exactly forget cockney, but it is remarkable that she blurts it out in front of her father. She is, then, making use of a situation variant, instead of a different dialect or even another language. Hudson argues that “stratification of variation in diglossia should then show sensitivity to differences in situational context without much, or indeed any, sensitivity to differences in social class” (2003, p. 3). Eliza is no longer from the working class, neither from the higher one, but she is now fluent in the two types of speech. Although she attempts not to speak cockney anymore, as a character resulting in diglossia, it is natural that she should resort to it when interacting with her father or with other individuals from her old situation, without, by doing so, effectively returning to her previous socio-economic situation linguistically. Indeed, one of the most common registers in cases of societal diglossia is the usage of the lower variant between family members, according to Fasold (1984, p. 35).

Of course, there linguistic restrictions affecting Eliza's behavior and sense of self are not only based on her class of origin. Her status as a woman also sets her as inferior to Higgins. Before I discuss, in the next section, how this difference is acknowledged (or refused to be so) by Higgins, a commentary on the most common linguistic differences in speech between men and women is relevant. Robin Lakoff, in “Talking Like a Lady”, comments on some of the linguistic expectations directed at men and women. One of those instances is the usage of curse words or other types of strong language. While sentences like “Shit, you've put the peanut butter in the refrigerator again” can be said (though it may be frowned upon) by a man, a woman would face much harder judgement for uttering the same words. Her probable output in

the same situation could be “Oh, dear you’ve put the peanut butter in the refrigerator again” (LAKOFF, 2000, p. 155).

Higgins, in fact, behaves rudely to several characters throughout the play, but he is seen as of strong temper. Eliza, when using lexicon deemed inappropriate during the home day scene, is more displaced than he ever is. Surely, she is not shunned at the moment due to her class performance, but she does not get the same allowances of her master. As power relations influence linguistic performance, we can see how the Eliza-Higgins duo represents complicated factors happening at the same time: her repressed diglossia, her limited speech as woman, and the matter of form *versus* content when it comes to her training as a “lady”.

Even though the discussion in this section is almost entirely based on Sociolinguistics, the conclusions are directly applicable to an analysis of Eliza as a displaced character in language, but not only in language. After going through Higgins’ teaching, she is potentially fluent in two situational linguistic variants, though these variants are not intended by Higgins to be situationally different in Eliza’s mind. On the other hand, that does not necessarily imply, on itself, that Eliza belongs to this or that economic class, since her language use changes according to the situation. Certainly, situations are not devoid of social or economic implications, but using a higher or lower variant does not bring her up or down. This is similar to Hudson’s example of a college professor who uses a higher form at work but does not have a problem using the vernacular variant at home. Eliza’s situation is much more complicated, though: she does have a problem resorting to her previous variant. However, this is no longer related to her speech capacity, but to her choice in performance, to be discussed in the next section.

## 2) Performance in social, gender and linguistic roles

If Shaw worked with “morals”, as something the reader could learn after reading *Pygmalion*, that moral is that categories such as “lady” or “flower girl” are more than fluid. They can be intertwined in the sense that a woman with appropriate training may be able to perform both. In addition, the duality between form and content shown in the play is also an evidence of how “lady” and “flower girl” are not characteristics of one’s “essence”. No person is either of them from birth without a cultural context to support one performance or the other. When using performance to describe “lady” and “flower girl”, I refer to Butler’s theory of gender performativity, with the intention to expand from gender to other performative selves constituting the Eliza presented to the audience. In her 1988 essay, Butler discusses a view of gender as act and performance. She resists the idea of gender as something innate to men and women:

To be female is, according to that distinction, a facticity which has no meaning, but to be a woman is to have become a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of 'woman,' to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility, and to do this as a sustained and

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repeated corporeal project. The notion of a 'project', however, suggests the originating force of a radical will, and because gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, the term 'strategy' better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs. Hence, as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. (BUTLER, 1988, p. 522)

Although *Pygmalion* shows traces of gender equality, it is not habitually regarded as a feminist play. Eliza's bashing on Act 1 is presented as due to her loud noises, characteristic of (or attributed to) her social standing and not to her gender. Nonetheless, Higgins, who had seemingly not been writing down only her speech, feels most comfortable talking her down than any of the men (regardless of class) and the rest of the women (Mrs. And Miss Emsford-Hill). After stating "distractedly" that Clara was from Earl's Court, he promptly (and probably ironically) apologizes. This apology indicated that he acknowledges differences in class and that the women he interacts with are at the two extremes. He does not employ rude language towards any of the men the same way he does towards Eliza and neither does he make use of delicate language to anyone the same way he does towards Clara. Having said that, it is arguable whether he actually treats "a lady as if she was a flower girl", as he claims in Act 5 to defend himself against Eliza's accusations of demeaning attitude.

Butler does not address class with the same emphasis that she does gender, but Jelke Boesten (2010), when commenting on her work on identity politics, considers the various factors affecting one's identity. "But norms that guide gender roles are not only differentiated by, or evolve within groups. They are differentiated within and evolve between groups according to other hierarchies based on race, ethnicity and class" (p. 9). As I discuss, the differentiation of high-class women and lower class women influence Eliza's sense of self and womanhood.

Identification does not happen only in the sphere of language, neither is language as a code essentially sexist or prejudiced. It can, however, be so through speaker usage and societal restraints, like those discussed by Lakoff and discussed previously. In a similar way than it codifies gender, language also codifies class. This is explicit in Higgins's claim that he could transform any flower girl into a lady through phonetics training. However, standardization in habits, language, dress code, etc. are not devoid of signification, but it can be restrictive. Standardizing behavior leads to lesser variations, while lesser variations would limit the spectrum of tools for self-identification.

Identification via labels is more prominent in postmodernism, as discussed by Baudrillard, Debord and others, but Butler herself comments on the matter of agency and discourse in the process of construing an identity:

If identity is asserted though a process of signification, if identity is always already signified, and yet continues to signify as it circulates

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within various interlocking discourses, then the question of agency is not to be answered through recourse to an “I” that preexists signification . . . Language is not an *exterior medium or instrument* into which I pour a self and from which I glean a reflection of that self. (BUTLER, 2000, p. 175)

Eliza is not that empty receptacle into which Higgins pours form and meaning. One of the motors for her inner conflict is the new identity she is absorbing from his lessons in contrast with her former “flower girl” identity she is told to suppress. With that, she is told not to tell stories of mysterious deaths, or not to make sounds that are coded as unpleasant in her society; she is taught to be genteel and she has lessons on how to sit and walk. Her transformation occurs in the area of language but not just that: she learns about other signifiers of class such as posture, appearance and tone of voice. On the other hand, we know that Eliza does not simply receive that information, excluding her former self. She is able to recognize the way she is treated and breaks the chain of signifiers fed to her by Higgins and Pickering by leaving and, later on, by seeking a living for herself. The way she signifies this new living is, as discussed below, a type of synthesis in her conflicted performative experience.

At the beginning of the play, we see Eliza as she performs not only “woman”, but also “flower girl”. Lacking at first the skills to perform “lady”, she suffers the “punitive consequences” mentioned by Butler in the first excerpt. By projecting her conception towards the “flower girl” x “lady” duality, I am implying that class and gender, in *Pygmalion* at least, are also historical ideas of a cultural sign, as the two selves are conjoined to form “lady” (woman + high class) and “flower girl” (woman + low class).

This idea can be further appropriated if we consider Butler’s next comment on the performance as a project, intended for cultural survival. Higgins acts as the radical force pushing Eliza out of her old “flower girl” performance in order to conform her to the culturally asserted norms of what entails the identity of a lady. However, since the very idea of a lady is a rather abstract one to which real women can only attempt to approximate, being as most people are composed of several selves, as Kennel argues:

Beyond the physical self, there exist other ways of thinking about identity or personhood. People have psychological selves, sociological selves, philosophical selves, and linguistic selves. Identity in twentieth-first century narratives is formed of a composite of these selves. Higgins may change Eliza’s linguistic and even physical selves so that she passes as a duchess, but Eliza herself changes her psychological and philosophical selves (2005, p. 76).

Kennel’s argument is useful as a complement to Butler’s ideas: not only are the conceptual categories of “flower girl” and “lady” abstractions with no corporeal and unique performance, but actual individuals have different and inconstant influences when construing their several selves. Those selves, when changed, directly influence

their performance in social situations. It is also possible to understand from Kennel how Eliza is not a mere repository for Higgins' project, partially giving in to this radical force while changing other selves through the influence of Pickering and her own decisions. She quickly masters the pronunciation deemed appropriate for performing "lady", but her first act – both in the theatrical sense of deception and in the sense of speech act as paralleled by Butler – but her psychological self has not undergone the necessary changes that would render Higgins' project complete.

When the project reaches its resolution in Act 3, Eliza has mastered the performance of "lady", after being mistaken for a princess at the Embassy Ball. After that, she begins a new struggle not only with her diglossic speech, since more was changed in her than her linguistic self. She is not a flower girl with a flawless received pronunciation, but a woman who dresses and behaves in social situations like a lady. That is when her psychological self suffers the change Kennel claims she does to herself: once she wins Higgins' bet for him, his disregard calls her attention to the fact that after the deception was deemed successful, she might be discarded along with what she was previously led to believe was a mind with talent. As she questions Higgins in Act 4, "What am I fit for? What have you left me fit for? Where am I to go? What am I to do? What's to become of me?" (106), the fragmented aspect of her new identity is exposed to the audience, as she realizes that her new linguistic, physical and behavioral selves do not match her economic class, which ultimately has not changed. Her crisis leads to her encounter with Freddy. When she accepts him romantically, Hugo Beardsmore (2002) claims she is solving her sensation of language-related inadequacy (anomie) by leaving her previous situation, but refusing to rise as up as Higgins'. He claims Eliza would always suffer, even living with Higgins and Pickering in a fellowship arrangement, because they, "her betters", could not relate to her new situation accordingly and, in addition, by marrying Freddy she chose the life of a shopkeeper, not exceedingly higher than her previous situation.

It is arguable whether Beardsmore's resolution does not rely too heavily on the sole movement between class strata. Saying that Eliza was fully able to find her place after suffering from disconnected performance skills by merely choosing a man, whose disposition allowed for a middle ground, hardly solves the entire conflict. Certainly, Eliza's conflict derives of much more than class inadequacy, as I have been arguing throughout this paper: her displacement has to do with her repressed diglossia and her mismatched selves that resulted in a conflict of identity, the latter being a common theme in modernist works.

## Conclusion

*Pygmalion* is a play that is rich in content and that can be analyzed in several different ways, contradicting the general common sense that highly praised literary works have already been discussed in all their possible aspects. This paper sought to approach the character of Eliza Doolittle from a sociolinguistic and from a literary perspective, more specifically through the concepts of performance and identity by

Butler. Eliza's feeling of displacement greatly derives from the fact that her new speech does not match her class. However, there is textual indication that she has not forgotten cockney English, even though she claims so at some point. When reacting to the vision of her father expensively dressed, about to march into his own wedding, she resorts to her old sound, which she rapidly represses. There are other moments in the play, after she has supposedly finished her training, that can be used to endorse this conclusion. Since she does not change classes by making different uses of language and since these changes are more prone to happen due to shifts in situation (being where she is, those present, etc.), her linguistic realization can be seen as an instance of diglossia, although a repressed one.

On the other hand, the changes in her linguistic self are not the only ones that take place in order to build the displaced Eliza of Acts 4 and 5. By arguing in favor of an extension of Butler's concept of gender as performance to other expressions (of gender embedded with class, in this case), "flower girl" and "lady" can be seen as performances. More than performances, they are historically constructed notions of what a girl in a certain class has to be – since it is indeed challenging to establish when the influence of one factor ends and the other one starts. Of course, it must be added that no matter how effectively a woman performs "flower girl", she still tends to be punished by society in a daily fashion, since her class has low prestige. However, as Higgins tries to force a performance of lady into her, Eliza steps into societal acceptance but has to struggle with her mismatched selves. From that realization, I agree with Kennel when he argues that the conflict moves Eliza to change her psychological and philosophical selves on her own. Though she does not break with those systems of signification, be those of gender or class, her conflict questions the conventions attributed to these categories, enabling an opening for a wider range of signifiers in identity politics.

Finally, we can look at Higgins' remark when Eliza asks for a little delicacy, as he claims that he treats her like everyone else: whereas Pickering treats all flower girls as ladies, he would treat all ladies as flower girls. In fact, it is noticeable in the text that he does not think highly of anyone as he thinks of himself, particularly towards women, who he claims to be a kind of being who brings the worst out of him. When dealing with his mother, Clara and Mrs. Emsford-Hill, for instance, there is a clear difference: although his derision is clear for the reader in his choice of words, it is not explicit. His disregard for other women in the play is hidden with mocking well manners. Higgins cannot be blamed for not seeing himself as clearly as the reader does, since that very same aloofness is what accounts for Eliza to confront him in the first place. As we look at Eliza, we see that her displacement is not simply solved by receiving the same treatment Higgins claims to dispense towards everyone. Pickering is surely more pleasing for her, but he also lacks the understanding of what their experiment has made of her. At the end of *Pygmalion*, Eliza faces the challenge of having the experience of a flower girl but the training of a lady, while being neither. Failing to treat her as an



individual who stands out of the norm, Higgins's failure to have her back is understandable.

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