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### 'Pygmalion' ve 'Vişne Bahçesi' Oyunlarında Zihinsel Özgürlük Teması

**Özet:** İrlandalı oyun yazarı George Bernard Shaw'ın oyunu olan *Pygmalion*, iyimser bakış açısının yanı sıra, bazen insanların alıştıkları inançları bırakmaları gerektiğini de hatırlatmaktadır. Benzer şekilde, ünlü Rus oyun yazarı Anton Çehov tarafından özgürlük ve kurtuluş hakkında yazılan *Kiraz Bahçesi* oyunu, özgürlüğün bağımsızlığa götürdüğü farklı yolları sergilemektedir. Çehov'un oyun karakterleri, kendilerini kontrol altında tutan sisteme ne kadar bağımlı olup veya olmadıklarını gösterirler. Her iki oyun da soyut tanımların insanlar için farklı anlamlar ifade ettiğini ve değişik sonuçlar doğurduğunu gösterirler. *Pygmalion*'da, kahraman eğitimden kaynaklı, zihinsel değişikliği ve rasyonelliğinin artması sonucunda özgürlüğe ulaşır. Bir mitolojik efsanede, Pygmalion halkın gözünden uzaklaşıp, güçlerini baltalayıp ve çilelerin içinde kıvranan ruhunun uyanması ile, olgun bir efsane haline gelir ve bu cesaretli duruş sayesinde, onur ve özgürlüğü temsil eder. Benzer şekilde, Bernard Shaw'ın uyarlamasında, Eliza, konuşma şekli, davranış, giyiniş ve görünümünü değiştirince, nihayetinde, kendi bağımsız düşüncesini sergileyip ve özgür ruhuna kavuşur. Aynı şekilde, *Kiraz Bahçesi* oyununda, sosyal hizmetlerin serbest kaldığı dönemde, bir grup insanın bu değişikliğe verdiği tepkiyi yansıtıyor. Bu karşılaştırmalı çalışma, İngiliz ve Rus toplumlarını sembolize edilen ana karakterlerinin zihinsel ve sosyal kurtuluşu sonucunda tanımlanan sosyal kimlikleri araştırmaktadır. Toplumsal olarak ileriye doğru gelişmek, özgür ruha kavuşmak ile mümkündür. Çehov'un oyunu, bize kölelik dönemi ve sonrasını göstermektedir. Firs gibi bazı karakterler, bildikleri dala yapışmış ve efendileri için çalışmaya devam ederken, Lopakhin gibi karakterler, statülerini yükseltmek için mücadele edip, başarıya ulaşırlar. Ancak yetersiz olduklarını ve aşırı derecede iş meraklı olduklarını anlamaya çalışırken, sadece aşırı derecede iş meraklı olduklarını kanıtlamaya çalışıyorlar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kurtuluş, Sosyal Kimlik, Sınıf Mücadelesi, *Pygmalion*, Çehov, Bernard Shaw

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### Reading Mental Liberation in 'Pygmalion' and 'The Cherry Orchard'

**Abstract:** *Pygmalion*, a play by the Irish playwright, George Bernard Shaw underpinned how transformation—though good—can come with certain limitations. He positively reminds us that sometimes people have to abandon beliefs they were used to. Similarly, *The Cherry Orchard*, a play about freedom and liberation by a famous Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov instructs the way liberation and freedom leads us through different paths in life to independence. Chekhov's characters expose to what extent they are dependent on the system that controls them. Both of the plays give us the dope to know liberation, comes to mean differently to any of abstract identifications and also breeds various results for different people. In *Pygmalion*, heroine's mental changes compromises freedom and liberation resulted by getting educated, in addition to the growth of rationality in her mind. Likewise, *The Cherry Orchard* reflects a group of people's reaction at the time serfs got social liberation. This comparative study investigates the effects of mental and social liberation symbolized in British and Russian societies through defining the major characters' social identity.

**Keywords:** Liberation, Social Identity, Class Struggle, *Pygmalion*, Chekhov, Bernard Shaw

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## Introduction

When George Bernard Shaw (1856 –1950), the socialist and reformist author died, Ireland lost a wealthy man who wrote fifty successful plays and won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Bernard Shaw was an open-minded intellectual who had been struggling for justice, freedom and social progress during his long life as well as his merciful, philosophical, and prominent appearance. Without complicity and fear of sticking, Bernard Shaw wrote that the writer should be a realist more than an idealist and the task of literature is to address social issues—mainly as these issues exist in society. Social realist authors try to show lives in a realistic way and Bernard Shaw historically demonstrates that the future of humanity in the long run is to progress. Shaw’s ideas about liberation are dressed up in his play, *Pygmalion*; and in one sense, these ideas are spread in Chekhov’s literary works. Anton Chekhov (1860-1904), one of the best playwrights in Russia was the son of a grocery dealer, and his grandfather had liberated himself as a peasant in Russia. Three main slogans in *The Cherry Orchard*—work, freedom and hope—are in line with the reaction of the characters and reflect some facts in the author’s real life. The contradiction in these clutches’ behavior who are not socially successful people, is one of the apparent characteristics of the main characters in the Chekhov’s play.

## Pygmalion Retells a Fable of Liberation

*Pygmalion* is a romantic-comedy play written in 1912 by George Bernard Shaw that exhaustively criticizes British society at the early twentieth century. The main characters of the play are a young lady and two linguistics professors. In the first scene, it is raining when a minor character, Freddy searches for a carriage, but all wagons are occupied. In the same breath, a flower girl, Eliza Doolittle tries to sell flowers to a gentleman, Colonel Pickering; but Professor Higgins is taking down what Eliza says. In the sequence of events, Eliza fears that Higgins might be a “copper’s nark” (Shaw, 2005, 13). There is a little hubbub, and Higgins tries to explain that he is a professor, and he is interested in phonetics. In the meanwhile, Higgins finds out the Colonel—who comes from India—is there to visit him. Pickering stays with Higgins and Eliza comes to Higgins’ residence because she wants to become ladylike. Finally, she can find a job in a flower shop. Higgins agrees her proposition and places a bet that he would pass Eliza for a duchess; but, insists that she must doll herself up. In the meantime, Eliza’s father, Alfred Doolittle shows up, and they are asked for five pounds as a hush money.

The title of the play, "*Pygmalion*" symbolizes transformation. Pygmalion is named after a Greek mythological figure. In Greek mythology, Pygmalion was a sculptor from Cyprus, who was irritated and disgusted by whores. He decides to make a sculpture, the perfect and ideal woman who turns out to be more gorgeous than expected. Then, Aphrodite—the Greek goddess associated with love, beauty, and passion—sees him and pities him after he goes to worship her; so, she gives life to the statue, Galatea. Pygmalion marries her and loves her as she pretends perfect to him. The relation of the myth to the play is quite simple; Pygmalion can be represented by Higgins, and Galatea is represented by Eliza. Eliza gets rid of her raw state or brutish stage to a lady; even Higgins says that she was better at being ladylike or gentle than most folk who were born rich and never bothered to learn. Though Higgins and Eliza never marry, it is clear that they care about each other deeply.

In the plotline, Eliza is a fast learner and Higgins wins the bet; but, Eliza feels that all she means for the both of the linguists was wagering and not more. At the end of the play, Alfred became a middle-class man who gives lectures and earns three thousand pounds a year. Besides, Eliza marries Freddy, and the colonel helps them to open their flower shop. Although they had a hard time initially, they find a way to make it work in the end. Shaw easily exploits Eliza and Alfred Doolittle; besides, the mythological origin title of the play expresses change, transformation and potential limitations on the survey to get freedom. It is evident that "Eliza obeys what Higgins and Pickering ask her to do out of her worship and love;" but, "with the awakening of her self-realization, she comes to fight against them to get personal equality and freedom. Finally, she gets respect, warmth and love from Freddy, understands what true love is and prepares to marry him though he is not as talented as Higgins and Pickering." (Haiyan&Rongqian, 2016: 44) Eliza fulfills whatever Higgins and Pickering find as requisite, but when she observes their "selfish nature," she "comes to fight against them to get personal equality and freedom." (*Ibid.*: 47) That is "the indispensable process of her self-realization;" although, finally, she touches Freddy's love, "from whom she gets respect and warmth" by understanding that through getting married, she gets "true happiness, although she is not as talent as Higgins and Pickering." (*Ibid.*)

Eliza symbolizes a change or transformation by questioning freedom. At the beginning of the play, Eliza is a girl from the lowest class of British society. She is from Lisson Grove and according to her, "It wasn't fit for a pig to live in" (Shaw, 2005, 15). She sells flower and has a peculiar accent; thereby,

Bernard Shaw had to write her lines including lots of grammatical errors, lexical error and her pronunciations to let us know her class in the society; such as, "Ow, eez yeooa san, is e?" (*Ibid.*, 10). Eliza wants to be a noble lady, and she longs for a change to improve her speaking as a noble lady. Eliza's transformation can be likened to mythical heroines in fairytales that rise nobodies—in social context—to somebodies, eventually. The main question of the play is Eliza's freedom quest in which she can no longer act the way she pleases and Higgins seems to view Eliza as his assets. Higgins makes that clear—when Alfred comes back to Eliza—by announcing, "I paid him five pounds for her." (*Ibid.*, 105). All in all, Eliza changes, but as she is indebted to Higgins and the Colonel, she never indeed gets separated from them. However, she asserts that she is not afraid of them and she can accomplish everything without getting help from them.

Alfred depicts the effects of transformation on freedom. Alfred is an odd character who comes to Higgins' home as if he truly cared about his daughter's whereabouts, but asks for five pounds instead. Alfred makes a statement about middle-class morality; whereas he does not care for the ethical rules by telling that he is too weak for moral affairs. Alfred is satisfied with his quality of life and he does not care for a better life. When he blames upper-class members for lack of morality in middle-class citizens, he believed that Higgins had caused him a significant bout of pain. Alfred accuses Higgins to make people dependent on him by saying, "I have to live for others and not for myself: that's the middle-class morality." (*Ibid.*, 103). Alfred makes us believe that transformation or growth leads us to real freedom. He seems more depressed than happy about having some money and it seems that he is delighted with living in poverty. He does not enjoy having other people depend on him, and he actually liked the days he was thrown out of the hospital.

The play explores change, growth and transformation. Eliza and her father are the characters that go through the most drastic changes. They transform to someone who is praised by society, but they both wish to go back to the time they owned nothing. Self-identity is the worthy point of notice because "When she is a common flower girl, she lives independently, while she compromises to life when she becomes the tool of Higgins and Pickering's experiment. But at last, she seeks for the freedom boldly and succeeds in self-identity." (Haiyan&Rongqian, 2016: 46) The play makes one wonder whether earning money or economical change makes a person a better one or not. Eliza goes to Mr Higgins to become a lady. She goes to someone who treats her as she wants to be treated. She ends up fetching Higgins's slippers by reminding

him of his appointments. Higgins treats her like a child; he sees her as brutish, and he uses her to win a bet. Eliza feels the need to be sure of what is hers and what is his. She cannot even use the knowledge she had gathered to make money for herself. It is clear that "Higgins's terrible behavior and commanding language do not set a good example for Eliza. His language is full of dos and don'ts which dictate his guidelines and limit Eliza's freedom of choice." (Pirnajmuddin&Shahpoori, 2011: 150) That is the reason Bernard Shaw in *Marxism for Revolutionists* wrote, "Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it." (Shaw, 2014, 4) Eliza's awakening by taking responsibility occurs in the following aspects: "the visible changes in appearance, such as dressing, language and behavior, and the invisible ones in the understanding of love and the awakening of spirit. She finds herself admiring the aristocrats of the bourgeoisie—Higgins and Pickering." (Haiyan&Rongqian, 2016: 42) However, finding out their selfishness and hypocrisy deeply, "she consciously gives up this love" by "awakening of spirit through the ordeals" until "seeking for dignity and freedom bravely, she leads a happy life." (*Ibid.*, 42)

### **A Chekhovian Concept of Liberation in The Cherry Orchard**

*The Cherry Orchard* is a tragi-comedy written by a Russian playwright, Anton Chekhov in 1903. The play is set in the period of liberation and freedom for serfs. It is about a Russian aristocrat, Ranevsky Lyubov Andreyevna who returns from Paris with her daughter, Anya and foster daughter, Varya. Lyubov comes back to her estate where to be auctioned off to pay her debts. The image of Anya blend in with the pure image of a bride—which is itself an allegory of the freshness of the Russian land. "My sunlight! My life! My springtime!" resonated in the *Cherry Orchard* was the last sentence in the play; words full of cheerful weather, welcoming the new morning of freedom, pride and prosperity rising in this land. Lyubov has a brother, Gaev and he plays imaginary billiards throughout the play; a friend, Lopakhin who is a businessman; an old manservant, Firs, as well as Dunyasha, Yasha and Epihodov. Actually, Lyubov moved to Paris because of the death of her son in his young age, and now, she hopes to buy back her estate in her aunt's name, with a loan from her aunt. Lopakhin is not in support of the idea to let it go for auction and he is not met with the best replies. Thus, he tells Lyubov about a plan to lease her property along the river bank for summer houses. Lyubov and her household throw a party on the day of the auction. Lyubov is jittery as she waits on Gaev and Lopakhin to come back when Gaev is not happy, but Lopakhin is ecstatic. Lyubov tries to understand the situation, but

she finds out that Lopakhin bought the estate. At the end of the play, everyone leaves the house; only Firs dies once he feels he has nothing to live for when he felt unwanted. Braun emphasizes social identity investigate at the time of modernization through characters who face “a crisis of identity;” it reflects a new dimension of “the aftermath of modernization.” (Braun, 2000, 111) He says through the review of the characters, the issue of identity crisis and the consequences of the modernization program are described; “Chekhov confronts the mental intentions and their objective position of his characters and makes a drama based on. On the one hand, audiences can sympathize with the feelings of characters, and they also have to experience a severe sense of tragedy, comic tragedy, or comedy—between mental emotions and objective social order.” (*Ibid.*, 111)

Freedom and liberation are two major themes of the play and they seen differently by the characters, Firs, Lopakhin and Trofimov. Firs, the old servant, is waiting for death. He has always succumbed to the situation in his youth, but even though the Peasants’ Freedom Act has been declared, he has not evaluated his liberty. Like Firs, Chekhov’s other characters in the play nor struggle, nor fail either. They do not defend themselves, or show reactions. They just wait for their fate. Similarly, Firs does not make much progress to get his freedom. Firs in act two says, “when freedom came, I was already the head footman. I wouldn’t agree to be set free” (Chekhov, 2009, 23). He is proud of his job, and he works till he can barely hear again, but still is not ready to die or leave the family he has been serving since his youth. Moreover, Firs thinks the older days were better because “the peasants were for the masters” (*Ibid.*, 23). He devoted his life to his masters and he enjoys working for them. He was not ready to die until he feels everyone is left and he is forgotten. In the play when a sound of harp-string breaks somewhere in the distance, Firs remembers the time before emancipation that he heard a similar noise. Firs reaches his freedom ultimately when he dies; and he becomes free forever, away from the obligation of serving masters. Although Firs has a chance to get liberation, he does not evaluate the benefits of getting freedom and stays as a serf.

Lopakhin is a character who takes full advantage of his freedom. He comes from a generation of serfs. He was out to make something out of nothing for himself as he becomes a very successful businessman. Lopakhin loathes his lineage; he loathes the fact he was not taught anything worthwhile by his father and describes his father as “a peasant, an idiot” (*Ibid.*, 22). However, he is not proud of himself constantly; he even likens his handwriting to that of a pig. Lopakhin’s background makes him such a complex character. He has

business sense because he wants to be the best. He is a complex character who cannot be understood at one glance and even gets annoyed with Lyubov and the others. Besides, one could see Lopakhin's drive to success when he buys the orchard, though that makes one wonder whether business overshadows friendships for him or not?

Trofimov is another character that expresses a different view of freedom. Trofimov is a weird character who lives by his own rules. He has the experience of going to school for a while, but he has not graduated and as a result, various characters in the play mock with him. He does not let the reader find out what affects him. Trofimov believes that he is impervious to love and he refers to love as trivialities. He questions every matter and everyone. He is intellectually free; thus, he thinks and acts as he prefers. His aim is to get financial freedom, but when in the act four Lopakhin offers him money, he refuses it by answering, "I am a free man." (*Ibid.*, 37). Trofimov thinks critically; he is the only one that seemed to know Lopakhin's capacity. In act two he assertively shares his feelings by saying, "My opinion of you [...] you're a rich man [...] In the same way, a carnivorous beast that eats everything" (*Ibid.*, 23). Finally, Trofimov reaches real freedom, independence and liberation by the end of the play. Now, he is able to pay off his debts, go to school and bankruptcy discharge. In conversation with Anya, Trofimov mentions that Lyubov and Gaev live off the labors of other and the only way to redeem their debt is to break off with the past. Bonyadi mentions, "Anya and Trofimov belong to the future. Trofimov is an eternal student, thinker and lives in world which promises him a good future. His dream is to have freedom and a better future, but [...] he fails in some cases and that is why he gets some grid from surrounding him people." (Bonyadi, 2012: 11) Trofimov breaks free of his chains by paying his debts and refusing to incur more debt. When Trofimov speaks of his father as a "druggist" who "proves absolutely nothing," (Chekhov, 2009, 37) he breaks away of the stereotype, 'like father, like son'.

In terms of social classes, "Chekhov himself contended that the norms upheld by a society become palpable only when they are violated, and he adopted as a kind of goal the displaying of such infractions" (Popkin, 1993, 10). First, Lyubov and Gaev succeed in becoming free of their old lives which is symbolized by the orchard in the end. Foster claims, "The orchard itself, symbolizing in the first instance a decaying social order, as it passes from blossom to destruction, comes also to signify the depredations of time and the transience of life" (Foster, 2003, 129). Koseoglu reminds, "capitalism is also criticized by Chekhov in *The Cherry Orchard* so as to highlight its destructive



impact upon individuals. In this setting, the character Trofimov becomes the spokesman of the play and emphasizes the social ills in Russian society by attacking the manners of the aristocrats and the inequality between classes” (Koseoglu, 2017: 65)

If the hero is someone who changes his own destiny; then, in the Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*, Lopakhin is a hero who puts it a bit and owns the Cherry Orchard. The power of understanding the everlasting temperament of Trofimov is also absent in Lopakhin. He is the champion who is determined to change his own status. Trofimov seems to have immortalized his cultivation despite his unwillingness to complete his undergraduate studies. He is a student who apparently does not seek his university education because of his love for freedom, nor able to love his only admirer, Anya. However, while Trofimov and his devotee Anya are at the peak of the pleasure of conversation under the brightness of moonlight about freedom, the future, liberation from the past and the cherry orchard, Lopakhin and many others keep working hard to fulfill their dreams. They neither know about the real happiness, nor have a chance to dream about it. Simply, it is clear that Lopakhin knows what he wants to get from life.

## Conclusion

In the myth, Pygmalion moves away from the public eye, and by undermining the powers of Pygmalion, Galatea becomes a mature myth by the awakening of spirit through the ordeals. Finally, she bravely seeks dignity and freedom. Identically, in Bernard Shaw’s adaptation, Eliza changes her appearance, such as language, behaviour dressing, and spirit; similarly, she acquires a sense of independence at the end by obtaining the mind of her own and taking decision independently. Her movement upwards in the social scale is a diminution of freedom through self-ownership and freedom of choice. On the other hand, Chekhov’s play teaches us about the effects of serfdom and what happens post serfdom. Some characters like Firs stuck to the only thing they knew and continue working for their lords, and some others like Lopakhin struggle to make it and raise their status, but still feel like they are still inferior and have a point to prove by being extremely business savvy.

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