WOMEN AND SOCIAL EQUALITY IN THE PLAYS OF GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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Abstract

George Bernard Shaw, according to Charles Benyamin Purdom (1963), has a large place for women as 'he honoured women, showing in his plays that they were not only to be loved, but respected, even feared.' Therefore, this study examines the voices of New Women as portrayed in the female characters of his plays: *Widowers' Houses, Mrs Warren's Profession, Major Barbara,* and *Pygmalion.*

Shaw, as a Victorian writer for whom social distinction, especially the position between the rich and the poor, was the greatest problem in society, was well placed to draw such an issue into his plays. He created female characters with various economic and social backgrounds, from the lower and the middle, to the upper-classes. Interestingly, these characters have the distinctive manner of occupying a particular rank in which some of them 'ascribe' their status from their family, whilst others 'achieve' their status after going through the process of social change. Although Shaw's plays were written around a hundred year ago, the female characters of his plays are important for examination as its topic of discussion are still relevant for women nowadays. Firstly, in terms of gender equality, even though women today have their own rights in education and the workplace, some of them are still treated unfairly. Secondly, Shaw's female characters who have strength and independent minds are always necessary because it will be helpful for women as they pursue their careers and make contributions to public life, such as in politics. Lastly, discussing the opinion of these characters about marriage may give today's women an understanding that marriage is also important for them. Nonetheless, Shaw, who stands for the feminism movement, has advocated equal rights/social equality for women by presenting women issues and inserting a doctrine of women's liberation into his plays.

Keywords: George Bernard Shaw, Social Equality, New Women, Victorian, Literature, Play

1. Introduction

Many scholars have commented on how substantially female writers expressed their voices in their fictional works during the nineteenth and the twentieth-century. John Sutherland, in his *Companion to Victorian Fiction* (1988), conveys that there were approximately 7000 Victorians who called themselves 'novelists', many of whom were women who passionately 'fashioned their experiences and observations into novels that could be as "emancipated" as their actions and demands.' Juliet Gardiner (1993: 2), in her *The New Woman*, regards many women including Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, May Sinclair, Olive Schreiner and Rebecca West as the finest writers of twentieth-century who 'first found their voices, in a vivid expression of women's feelings and needs, and in their calls for recognition and change.' However, very few studies examine how male writers fare in their attempts to vocalise female voices in literature. Ian McDonald (1990: 31) assigned this ability to George Bernard Shaw, together with Granville Barker, John Masefield, John Galsworthy, and St. John Hankin; these men became the important leading writers of the New Drama movement. He argues that these writers 'set out to tackle "the women question" just as they confronted other contemporary issues like the ethics of capitalism and the need for penal and educational reform — in a spirit of enquiry and with a zeal to right existing wrongs.' Indeed, Shaw is one of the male dramatists who shows eagerness to spread a doctrine of women's liberation. In 'The Author's Apology' of *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1898), he asserted that 'fine art is the subject, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world.'

As a male writer, Shaw could introduce female characters that became highly associated with feminist ideas. According to Watson (1964: 14), 'the relation between male writers and the female characters they create has almost always been a strange one, merged by a lack of personal sympathy.' Shaw, however, has sufficient female character development. He presents the uniqueness of the New Women character in literature, which distinguishes his works from other playwrights of his era. He employs various types of female characters whose careers are very unconventional for the real women of the nineteenth-century and vary as widely as men's careers. The diversity of Shaw's female characters, for Purdon (1963: 128), is like 'a gallery of remarkable women [that] does not exist in the works of any other modern dramatist.'

Shaw as an active writer advocates the right of women not only through his plays, but also through his early novels and other kinds of his non-fictional writings. First comes from his earliest writing *My Dear Dorothea: A Practical System of Moral Education for Females Embodied in a Letter to a Young Person of that Sex* (1878) which provokes children to move away from the dominance of adults and to act more mature than their parents. Secondly, in his *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* (1928), he talks about the economic distribution principles such as equal wages for equal work for men and women, and about the relation between women in the labour market and prostitution. This book, for Wright 1930: 120), is like a complete, clear instructional text for woman to gain an understanding of the fundamental creed of socialism.

Thirdly, Shaw's support on women rights is seen in Fabian pamphlets. Indeed, Shaw — as well as Sidney Webb, Sidney Oliver, and other Fabian established writers — have a great contribution to the society. Yet, it was Shaw who was most eager to speak out loudest about gender equality as part of socialism. No longer after joining the society in 1884, Shaw was elected as an executive member and contributed as a single writer to the second pamphlet of the Fabian Society entitled *A Manifesto* (1884: 4). In this pamphlet, he insists the equal rights to women that: 'Men no longer need special political privileges to protect them against Women; and that the sexes should henceforth enjoy equal political rights.' In another Fabian tract, *Women as Councillor* (1900: 3), Shaw criticises the absence of women representatives on London Councils. He argues that women should play important roles in the new council, particularly under the Public Health Act, as they are able and qualify to be the inspectors of workshops for public sanitation and argues that women should have seats on councils like men. This opposition to government, according to Holroyd, was began at a meeting in the Borough Council with the Health Committee in

which London Government Act that disqualified women from sitting on Borough Councils. At that meeting, Shaw publicly insisted that women should have equal rights:

> There is only one absolutely certain and final preventive for such indecency, and that is the presence of women. If there were no other argument for giving women the vote, I would support it myself on no other ground than that men will not behave themselves when women are not present (Holroyd, 1988: 417).

Lastly, his thought about ideal women can be seen in his critical essay *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1922), in which one of its chapters entitled 'The Womanly Woman' becomes very popular because it shows Shaw's ideas of an ideal woman, stating that is woman's nature to nurse children and do domestic management in the kitchen before renouncing herself:

> The sum of the matter is that unless Woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself. But her duty to her herself is no duty at all, since debt is cancelled when the debtor and creditor are the same person. Its payment is simply a fulfilment of the individual will, upon which all duty is a restriction, founded on the conception of the will as naturally malign and devilish.

This book according to Holroyd (1988: 198), is 'the most sustained and sophisticated' piece written by Shaw in his early thirties, but also involved controversy since it was 'designed to purge socialism of the flattering sentimentalities that were already becoming encrusted on its reforming bodies' and it was a 'feminist document' containing propaganda, particularly the first four chapters, which 'broke up homes and made suffragettes in the most unexpected directions.'

The abundance of Shaw's writings resulted from his activity with the Fabian Society, during which this group directed him to produce essays and articles about socialism. One such example is *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, which was written after Shaw and other Fabian essayists were urged to do something exciting for the summer public lecture of the Fabian Society in 1890. Shaw consented to study the works of Henrik Ibsen. Meanwhile, socialism is very closely related to feminism ideas; socialism aims to promote social equality, whilst feminism is more focused on gender equality. Both feminism and socialism are attempts to overthrow gender roles and to allow women to have freedoms without being subjugated by men. Shaw in *The Fabian Society: Its Early History* (1892: 31), affirms the relation between socialism and feminism that 'the spread of socialist opinions, and the social and the political changes consequent thereon, including the establishment of equal citizenship for men and women.'

Shaw's female creations, however, make for an interesting discussion, because they vocalise the various voices of Victorian women in the struggle for women's liberation. Shaw's dramas, despite their controversy, struck 'at the backbone of Victorian England and to put on the stage an unladylike heroine' (Purdom 1963: 14). He is a male writer, yet he speaks on behalf of women. He is eager to discuss gender inequality and is keen to fight for women's rights. Throughout the last decade of the nineteenth-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' (Hadfield 2010: 112).

2. The Portrayal of Women and Social Classes

Shaw, as a nineteenth-century writer for whom social distinction, especially the position between the rich and the poor, was the greatest problem in society, was well placed to draw such an issue into his plays. He created female characters with various economic and social backgrounds, from the lower and the middle, to the upper-classes. Blanche Sartorius, Barbara Undershaft, Vivie Warren and her mother, and Eliza, represent the different types of women with different positions in the social hierarchy. These characters have the distinctive manner of occupying a particular rank. Several 'ascribe' their status from their family, whilst others 'achieve' their status after going through the process of social change. According to Mark and Young (1968) ascribed status is assigned to an

individual since his/her birth, regardless of his/her abilities of performance. Whilst achieved status is not assigned at birth, it is given to those who have qualities and capabilities. Their social status, certainly, can be identified from their physical appearances and moral attitudes.

In the Victorian era, although many women from rich families were highly educated, some were careless about their learning and their future careers. They were more interested in becoming wives and taking responsibility as mothers. In the same manner, Blanche in *Widowers' Houses* is a high-class woman in the Victorian era, and yet she is mindless about her studies. When her father tells her about a learning process, she is moving closer with a petulant sigh and says: 'Oh, my education!'. Meanwhile, she is very enthusiastic about the idea of marriage. In the first act, when she meets Dr. Harry Trench, she immediately demands him to determine the date of their marriage. Upper-class ladies were supposed to behave properly and speak prudishly. Shaw, in this play, portrays Blanche, conversely, as a temperamental person. She speaks to the parlour maid in an improper manner; she is extremely rude and very brutal, even though the parlour maid loves her and speaks gently to her. She is a cruel woman who wants to evict the maid from the house and even thinks about killing her; this makes the maid's hand tremble. Blanche's bad temper is further developed in her relationship with Trench. In the final part, she speaks harshly to Trench, judging him as a mean-spirited creature. Trench realises the nature of Blanche's aggressiveness, however, and is thus more able to handle her behaviour.

The undisciplined temper of Blanche is 'not the product of ineptitude in an inexperienced dramatist; Shaw clearly intended to make her what she is' (Baker 2002: 94), Shaw was not a Utopian playwright who wanted to portray his character as an ideally perfect woman; instead, he wanted people to accept that which is usually unacceptable in the society. Baker further writes that Shaw's admission as to why he portrayed Blanche like that is because he 'want[ed] a theatre for people . . . who have some real sense that women are human beings just like men, only worse brought up, and consequently worse behaved.' According to Valency (1973: 83), Blanche 'exhibits some embarrassing traces of humanity, its characters give the impression of actors speaking the author's mind, and doing his bidding, with robotlike docility'. Indeed, the imperfect character of Blanche, with her ungovernable rages on one hand and her obedience on the other, seems to be extremely realistic. Not all women can control their emotions and behave like the conventional women of the nineteenth-century.

If in the *Widowers' Houses* Shaw presents Blanche as the only female character, as the parlour maid is not described in detail, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* he reveals two female characters: Mrs. Warren and her daughter. Here, both act as main characters who play pivotal but different roles in the drama. In the opening scene, Mrs. Warren appears to be a typical upper-class woman with the fashionable appearances. In Act III when she tells her daughter about her previous life, however, we start to realise that she was actually a working-class prostitute. Terrible financial conditions prevented her from attending college, therefore she worked as a waitress, serving drinks and washing glasses in a bar with a low salary. Becoming a prostitute was definitely not worthwhile for a lady, but it was worthwhile for a poor girl like Mrs. Warren. It enabled her to make money and to provide her daughter with a first-rate education. Prostitution, for Mrs. Warren, 'is a business decision, not a lustful fall: she goes into it as an exercise of choice, not a consequence of seduction.' (Davis 2002: 447)

Mrs. Warren is therefore a portrayal of working-class women in the Victorian age, in which many women of that time decided to become prostitutes in order to avoid starvation and slavery. According to Davis (2002: 446), 'the subject of prostitution was highly relevant to millions of Victorian women whose financial means were insufficient to allow them to survive in comfort or even provide what was necessary for basic sustenance.' The business of prostitution was very open and known in public; prostitutes existed in many places and had affordable prices. Indeed, offering sexual intercourse or selling their bodies on the streets was a hard decision for many women, but it was often necessary to avoid starvation.

Vivie Warren, on the contrary, portrays the idea of a middle-class woman. The visual description in the prologue of the play clearly implies that she is an unconventional woman with knowledge and intellectual ability 'with a pile of serious-looking book and a supply of writing paper' (p. 14), she is a 'highly educated young middle-class

Englishwoman', dressing as businesswoman. Vivie, however, does not inherit social status from her mother, rather she obtains her own status after she is professionally trained during her mathematical studies at Cambridge, where she is tied with third wrangler.

The reason why middle class-women in the Victorian period wanted to work, according to Herstein (1985: 26), was for the same reason as men: 'to work for profit was to soil one's hands, figuratively if not literally, and gentleman or gentlewomen never work for living.' Similarly, Vivie wants to start her own business by working as actuary, carrying out calculations and conveyancing in the city, because she enjoys working and getting paid for it. More than that, she is surely a perfectly splendid modern young lady, symbolising respectable middle-class Victorian women, as she is eager to work not merely for profit, but also to gain her independence as a New Woman.

Nevertheless, regarding her attitude, Vivie is a very emotional person. She frequently speaks loudly and firmly, indicating a disrespectful attitude towards her mother. Vivie behaves like a heartless daughter who has no emotional bond with her mother. Moreover, in the tension of the final scene, she argues and rebukes her mother with a voice so high that it makes her cry. Her heart is as hard as stone and she dares to say that she is will not be changed by her mother's cheap tears and entreaties. Showing such hard-heartedness in refusing her mother implies her moral weakness and unwomanly nature. Indeed, her attitudes has been criticised by Valency (1973: 97): 'She is by temperament a Puritan, and evidently a prig, and she detests the subversion of womanhood.'

Nonetheless, her temper is not as bad as Blanche's bad temper. If Blanche's anger towards her maid occurs for no apparent reasons, Vivie obviously has her reasons for such attitudes. Firstly, her overprotective mother always restrains her freedom and her desire to be independent; she still wants her daughter under her control until her marriage. Vivie, on the contrary, does not like being under control; she believes that she should be allowed to have her own way of life. Secondly, Vivie cannot accept the fact that her mother continues to work within the prostitution business and even expands with Croft. Thirdly, she is annoyed at the way her mother treats her like a little child although she is 22 years of age.

In *Major Barbara*, Shaw presents three female characters in a family: Lady Britomart and her two daughters, Barbara and Sarah. Lady Britomart is 'well dressed and yet careless of her dress, well-bred and quite reckless of her breeding, well-mannered and yet appallingly outspoken and indifferent to the opinion of her interlocutory, amiable and yet peremptory' (p. 211). She is a typical aristocratic matriarch, with good management skills, who regards all family members as part of respectable society. Therefore, she always insists that her children's attitudes are in accordance with the morality of the upper-classes. When she finds her son, Stephen, stammering during his talks about his father, she considers such a speaking manner as being unpleasant and embarrassing and as the middle-class attitude.

On another occasion, she also asserts that Barbara, who has the most brilliant career of all her siblings, should not speak as a street girl; as an educated lady, she must speak properly without any vulgarity in her speech. Lady Britomart might look like the perfect mother, insisting that her imperfect children behave perfectly, but she is a realistic woman. She states that she cannot stand with an evil man, but she still understands someone who does a wicked thing, because she realises that no human perfect, with the exception of Undershaft Andrew because he is preaching immorality.

Barbara's sister, Sarah, is a slim, bored, and ordinary girl who fashionably dressed. She is a typical conventional woman who really cares about her physical appearance and attitude as a high-class Victorian woman in general. Barbara herself, on the contrary, is more robust, jollier, much more energetic, and is simply dressed in a Salvation Army uniform or in ordinary dress on other days. She is typical of the New Woman: she behaves unconventionally, looks cheerful, and ignores her physical appearance. Unlike her mother who determines their family's stratification as upper-class, Barbara, in the last scene of the play, is feeling doubtful about her own status and says that she does not belong to any classes.

Undeniably, Barbara as an educated and experienced girl in the Salvation Army, is portrayed with morality and emotional sympathy. She looks wiser and is more mature than Sarah. She knows that her father, Andrew, is not a

good father sfor the family and she has not met him for years, but when she finds out that he is coming to their house, she precisely welcomes him and says that her father has a heart to be saved like everyone else.

The similarity of Barbara and Vivie is they are both portrayed as educated, brisk, hard-working, and business-like modern women. While Vivie is an actuarial consultant, Barbara is a Major in the Salvation Army, helping people and saving their souls. Barbara 'returns to inform and bless the compact between reason and energy and the paradox of good *in* evil, heaven *in* hell' (Morgan 2002: 481). She becomes the representative of the spiritual lady in the Orthodox Christian tradition, in which spiritual ambivalence is the example of medieval morality.

Another of Shaw's dramas, which was written six years after *Major Barbara*, is *Pygmalion*, a story of a flower girl who turns into a duchess after receiving language lessons from a professor of phonetics. In its opening scene, located in Covent Garden, people are running to take shelter in the market nearby and under the church because of the rain. Among them, there are a mother and a daughter who are arguing with each other because they cannot find a taxi to take them home, blaming the bad weather. A flower girl comes and takes a seat beside them, sorting the flowers in her basket, offering them to the mother. This opening scene shows the admirable Shaw portraying three contrasting female characters alongside their different social scales. A lady and her daughter portray the glamourous life of the middle-class family; they are looking for a taxi, a luxurious transportation method for the middle and upper groups of society in the early twentieth-century. Her daughter does not want to take a motor bus as it is the public transport of lower-class people. Yet, despite their physical appearances, they are in fact the poor people who have no house maid; they are even much poorer than the greengrocer. They are typical of a socially failed family who 'cling desperately to their upper-class status in spite of their poverty, are brought down to the level of small shopkeepers' (Valency, 1973: 318). On the contrary, the flower girl called Eliza forms a portrayal of a working-class woman, a girl from a poor family. At her young age of eighteen, she already works in the streets; she does not obtain an education like the rich children. The fact is, at that time, many children like her who were prevented from attending school would have been pushed to find a job in order to survive. They would have sold newspapers or flowers in the streets, or cleaned the streets.

The central discussion of the play, Eliza, as the representative of lower-class women, has an unconventional way of speaking. She speaks with a cockney accent, a nonstandard dialect of the people of the East End of London, particularly used by the lower-classes. This was unacceptable in nineteenth and twentieth-century society for the reason that it was hard for most people to understand. However, despite her unacceptable dialect, she actually shows innocence and possesses a good attitude in her way of speaking. She regards herself as a good and respectable girl as she never utters a vulgar word when speaking to anyone. She speaks respectfully to her father although she knows his trickery and, at the beginning of the story, she offers Mrs. Eynsford a flower with good manners. Crompton (1969: 143) compares Eliza's attitude as a working-class girl with Clara as a middle-class girl:

> Eliza, for all her absurdity, still manages to think and feel naturally behind the veneer. By contrast, Clara is mere bright affectation, a much less vital person. She even outdoes Eliza's parroting when she repeats her slum expletive as the latest thing.

Indeed, Clara usually utters abuses with coarse language, such as in her first meeting with Higgins in which she says: 'Don't dare speak to me' and 'Such bloody nonsense'.

Fortunately, Eliza meets Professor Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering at Covent Garden. From then on, she comes to Higgins' house in order to receive training in how to change her attitude and behaviour to become an upper-class lady. They strictly teach Eliza to communicate properly and to start conversations with other people by asking about the weather and everybody's health, particularly with the high society. Higgins always enforces her to dress like a lady, like his mother, due to dress being one of the indicators of determining social status.

Eliza becomes a lady, with the proper language and attitude, being well-dressed with diamonds, flowers, and many accessories. She 'is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise,' and astonishingly 'speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone' (Crompton, 1969: 322).

Sympathetically, the alteration of Eliza's attitude not only creates an enhancement in her social scale, but also makes an improvement within her level of self-esteem. However, Gibbs (1983: 174) argues that the less interesting aspects can also be seen: 'She is presented as an intensely subjective person, whose outlook is inimical to thought because she tends to reduce all general issues to a personal level.' In the last scene, Eliza undeniably turns out to be temperamental towards her teacher, Higgins. She expresses her arrogance, 'I can do without you: don't think I can't', and individuality: 'I won't care for anybody that doesn't care for me' (p. 346). Eliza can use proper language and behaves as a duchess, but otherwise her attitude becomes less proper, because she now has the quality and capability to be shown. This remind me of several other of Shaw's female characters, namely Blanche and Vivie. They are middle and upper-class women who are also temperamental.

Nonetheless, Shaw's 'female creature', Eliza, is obviously an example of a lower and working-class woman who steps up her social ladder; *Pygmalion* in general reveals the social class distinction as a common subject in the Victorian period. This play is seen to be more engaging because of its well-built and well-developed characters, rather than those shown in Shaw's early dramas: *Widowers' Houses, Mrs. Warren's Profession, and Major Barbara*. Essentially, 'Shaw himself had learned the upper-class English way in somewhat the manner as Eliza' (Valency, 1973: 323).

To sum up, regarding Shaw's image of women and social classes, Blanche is a portrayal of an upper-class woman who inherits her social status from her family. Compared to some of Shaw's other women, she is the most conventional, since her portrayal is in accordance with an upper-class woman of the Victorian period. Meanwhile, Vivie Warren has been brought up by a working-class mother, but she herself becomes a middle-class woman due to her proper education, which she achieves after studying at Cambridge. Her portrayal is in contrast to Barbara, who grows up in an upper-class family, but wonders about her middle-class reputation and even considers herself as a girl who is a part of no class. Most interestingly, Eliza is a working-class flower girl, but transforms into an upper-class woman. Her high social status is achieved by learning the proper language and attitude. The changeable nature of their social hierarchies breaks down the basic belief of the Victorians that an individual is born into only one class; nobody can transform from one class into another.

3. The Virtues of Gender Equality and Economic Independence

The issue of gender inequality emerged in the Enlightenment period, where it was argued that women should have intellectual equality with men. It was significantly developed at the end of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when several intellectuals and critics became concerned not only with social equality, but also with individual freedom. At that time, Shaw, as a member of a socialist group, was of course mindful of this issue. He took part in the move to criticise social inequality and to promote equality, particularly between genders, as he declared in 'Draft of Prepositions' that 'the Fabian Society seeks to establish equality as the universal relation between citizens without distinction of sex, color, occupation, age, talent, character, heredity or what not….' (Holroyd, 1979: 172). He was eager to speak loudly about women rights in public forums, in his critical essays, and also in his literary works. In addition to his political declarations, Holroyd quoted that Shaw emphasised the concept that economic independence is necessary for women in relation to gender equality:

> The Fabian society not only aims at complete political equality as between the sexes, but at their economic independence. It advocates the explicit recognition by legally secured rights or payments of the value of the domestic work of women to their immediate domestic partners and to States as housekeeper, child bearers, nurses and matrons.

Therefore, in his plays, particularly in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, *Major Barbara*, and *Pygmalion*, Shaw presents female characters not only with various occupations and responsibilities that are equal to male occupations, he also deliberately portrays them as having economic independence.

Shaw could freely write his plays rather than entertaining them as being without women; he always insisted on the presence of women in this type of fine art. For Shaw, as he acknowledges in *Mrs Warren's Profession,* the presence

of women on the stage is crucial due to the fact that 'the theatre is frequented by women as well as men.' He wanted to give an equal chance for women not only to enjoy the performance as a member of the audience, but also to participate in performing the art itself as an actor. He admitted that *Mrs Warren's Profession:*

> Is a play for women; that it was written for women; that it has been performed and produced mainly through the determination of women that it should be performed and produced; that the enthusiasm of women made its first performance excitingly successful; and not one of these women had any inducement to support it except their belief in the timeliness and the power of the lesson that play teaches. (1898: 8)

Educational opportunities for women during the middle-Victorian period were only available at two new colleges in London: Queen's College (1848) and Bedford College (1849). Later, in the early twentieth-century, after several feminist movement organisations promoted higher education for women, colleges for women were established in Cambridge and Oxford and the School of Medicine for women in Edinburgh and London. Vivie Warren, according to McDonald (1990: 33), is one of the women who 'benefitted from the increased educational opportunities available to women through the establishment of schools for girls and women's colleges.' Indeed, Vivie's tying with the third wrangler at Cambridge would be a very magnificent achievement for Victorian women, since the third or senior wrangler was the highest mathematics undergraduate at Cambridge at that time. She even could perceive herself in the mathematical Tripos if she did for it seriously, beating the senior wrangler. Unfortunately, she would not do the examination again, since she was required to pay an extra fee that was unaffordable.

Vivie, however, vocalises the dream of Victorian women to gain equality with men in obtaining higher education. For Vivie, formal education is essential for all women; she says that if women only have valour copied out of novels in their life without a real practical learning, that must be a horrible waste of time.

In the late nineteenth-century, the improvement of educational opportunities for women opened up access to new jobs or occupations in which 'women's paid employment was increasingly acceptable' (Gleadle, 2001: 139). Nonetheless, there were still gender differences in workplaces, in which women were treated unequally; they received lower wages to men despite being in the same position. Hence, most women 'continued to engage in "traditional" activities such as domestic management, child care and philanthropy' (Gleadle, 2001: 139). Vivie Warren is an exception; she is not an ordinary Victorian woman. As an educated girl, she does not want to proceed to conventional domestic activities by living with her mother; she rejects all material and social luxury offered by her mother. Rather, she wants to be a practical person by working independently at actuarial calculations and conveyancing.

Economic independence for women was indeed one of the fundamental ideas of feminism in the nineteenth. Many women started to seek paid jobs for two reasons. Firstly, due to family poverty levels, women began working in stores, restaurants, or factories 'to supplement the wages of their fathers or husbands'; working for them is a financial necessity (Crompton, 1969: 7). Secondly, for a few women, they worked not because their families could not support them financially, but because they did not want to rely on their families for their whole lives. In other words, their intentions were to pursue personal economic independence. Vivie demands to seek a job outside the home for the second reason; she chooses her own path as businesswoman because, as a high-spirited young lady, she has no desire to depend on her mother anymore. Vivie's decision is very unconventional according to common Victorian principles. Thus, Berst (1973: 7) argues that 'Vivie is Not Everywoman, but she is probably Every Woman who tries to make her intellectual talents and instinct for independence meaningful and remunerative in a man's world.'

Shaw's portrayal of two different female characters in one family. Vivie Warren is an unconventional woman; she is an unwomanly woman who defies 'the traditional codes of female beauty' but successfully obtains her career independently as an actuary. Mrs. Warren, on the contrary, is a mother who struggles economically to raise her daughter and support her in her education, but she forcefully chooses the prostitution business which is very

taboo. Nonetheless, Shaw as a smart dramatist deliberately made such contradictions to criticise and encourage Victorian women. He knew that,

> The majority of English girls remain so poor, so dependent, so well aware that the drudgeries of such honest work as is within their reach are likely enough to lead them eventually to lung disease, premature death, and domestic desertion or brutality, that they would still see reason to prefer the primrose path to the stony way of virtue, since both, vice at worst and virtue at best, lead to the same end in poverty and overwork. (Shaw, 1898: 5)

In another of Shaw's plays, *Major Barbara*, Shaw presents the subject of gender equality through the portrayal of the main character, Barbara Undershaft. To some extent, it is quite surprising when Shaw portrays Barbara Undershaft as a Major in the Salvation Army. The audience might well wonder how a woman could be a Major due to a fact that, during the nineteenth-century, the role of women in the Salvation Army of England was that of being supporters rather than leaders. Woodbury explains women position at the late-Victorian age that:

> Women at that time played little part in the government and leadership of the nation's affairs. Not only were there no women in Parliament, women did not even have the vote. What was true in English society was also reflected in the life and ministry of the church. Although the Primitive Methodists allowed women to preach, in the mainline churches women clergy were unacceptable.

Shaw's creation, Major Barbara, is extremely unconventional; she is a total contrast to real Victorian women, because woman was not given the chance to be a Major in the Salvation Army at that time. The first woman was elected as a General of the Salvation Army in 1934, twenty-seven years after *Major Barbara* was written. Evangeline Booth was chosen after William Booth, her father, recognised this woman's capability to be a leader and a minister of the church.

Barbara's portrayal as a New Woman is aimed at encouraging Victorian Women to open their minds to the ideas that they are able to occupy many positions in their employment, that they are able to work as equally as men, and that they are capable of being leaders if they are brave enough to take a risk against their society's traditional customs and stereotypes of conventional women. According to Morgan (2002: 492), Shaw 'replaced Christ by the Female Warrior'; this became the symbolic structure of the play, in which 'in the setting aside of the old interpretation of woman's role, […] an ideal of sexual equality is implied.' Shaw, in the preface of *Major Barbara* (1907), addresses his expectation of the play, that is '[he] hope[s], both true and inspired'; true because 'it is a record of an actual occurrence' and inspired because it could arouse Victorian society to become aware of special unusual actions, especially for women. He wanted to urge 'an independent income' since he knew that 'Medieval society […] behaved very badly indeed in organizing itself so stupidly that a good life could be achieved by robbing and pilling.' (p.19)

Barbara possesses an independent income, as does Vivie Warren. Barbara is not economically dependent on her family; rather, she earns her money by working as Major. She has the most brilliant career out of all of her siblings. Nonetheless, she is luckier than Vivie, due to the fact that none of her family members restrain her independence or her desire to dedicate herself to the Salvation Army, while Vivie's independence is restricted by her mother. Purdom, in his *A Guide to the Plays of Bernard Shaw* (1963: 101), compares these two female characters:

> Vivie does not surrender, she arrives at a solution of her problem by claiming independence and rejecting the money, but experiences no sense of victory. Barbara, on the other hand, sees that on the level which the Army works her father millionaire's money can be accepted, but she gives up to the work, and adopts a new kind of life that she is convinced will make such work and the gifts it is dependent upon unnecessary.

As a woman Barbara has the power of controlling men's souls with her spiritual power since she is a Major. Equally, in the same way as the men who used to govern or lead the Salvation Army in the nineteenth-century. She spreads the virtue of morality to the Salvation Army. Nonetheless, in her relationship with Bill, the workman in salvation,

Morgan (2002: 499) examines Barbara's power for 'chivvying and bullying'. This is caused by her self-confidence as a Major and her habit of authority. Indeed, in Act II, Barbara judges Bill's attitude as an unmanly man.
Similarly, but in different manner, the themes of gender equality and independent women are also seen in *Pygmalion*. At a glance, we may assume that they are rather pertaining to the social gap rather than to gender equality. Further than that, as Gainor (2002: 520) argues, 'Shaw creates a parallel between issues of class and sex: discrimination toward the poor and toward women (who are tantamount to children) appear very similar.' Besides, Shaw's concerns about feminism can be perceived in the characters of the play in which he preferred to put a working-class girl, not a man, as a central topic of discussion. Eliza Doolittle looks for her independence. Unlike Vivie Warren who seeks her independence by working in the actuarial business or Barbara Undershaft who has already possessed her independence by occupying the position of Major in the Salvation Army, Eliza is eager to learn the languages and attitudes of the upper-classes in order to achieve her freedom and economic independence.
Eliza is seen as an independent working-class girl from the beginning of the play which portrays the economic independence of lower-class Victorian women; she is selling flowers on the street at a young age to earn money in order to survive. However, this is not what Victorian respectable women want, because Vivie still lives in poverty. The standard of economic independence is being employed with proper wages, or at least as Eliza's dream: to be a lady selling flowers in a shop, not on the street. Eliza wishes to have a job in a shop because, in the era of Victorian, 'one new development was the incursion of upper-class women into business venture. Retail outlets such as fashionable clothes shops and florists became a popular means of income production' (Gleadle, 2001: 152). Fortuitously, Eliza is encountered by Higgins, a professor in linguistics. Accepting language learning from him creates a huge impact on Eliza's life, which does not simply lift her social status from the lower to the middle-class; it also helps her future career for her employment. Hence, she could work in a flower shop and be an independent young woman. There is a resemblance here between Vivie Warren and Eliza. Vivie's honourable education enables her to be economically independent woman; similarly Eliza, after obtaining guidance and training from Higgins, now has the self-confidence which enables her to become independent. She demands her freedom from the control of Higgins. Higgins as a socialist, a picture of Shaw, gives her her freedom even before she asks. He relieves Eliza from his responsibility and says 'Let her go. Let her find out how she can get on without us. She will relapse into the gutter in three weeks without me at her elbow' (p. 343). He says so because he actually will not let her go before he perfectly teaches her.
Initially, Eliza worries about a future where she is no longer dependent on Higgins, later, in the last act when Eliza is arguing with Higgins, she emotionally assures him that she can do everything without him because she believes in her abilities, that she has a finer ear than Higgins so that she can teach language to other people as well. For Crompton (1969: 151), Eliza's emotional expression is 'a sign of growing [her] self-respect' and Higgin's sincere response of 'I know you can. I told you you could' implies that he is 'far from being hurt or disappointed' with Eliza. Indeed, Higgins feels satisfied with the dignity enhancement of his female creature. Crompton further argues that Shaw ended the play by showing a high self-assurance of Eliza to be an independent respectable girl, his point of view that:

> The first published text of the play ended with Higgins giving Eliza a string of items to shop for, including a ham and some ties; when she retorts, "Buy them yourself," he merely jingles his change in his pocket, "highly self-satisfied" at the new independent spirit she is showing. (1970: 151)

Similarly, Berst (1973: 217) argues that 'the emphasis of the closing dialogue thus suggest that Eliza may have found financial freedom' and for Gibbs (1983:170), it is a turning point of her 'new economic plight as a "lady".' Eliza can now show her identity as a respectable lady: eating chocolates, taking rides in taxis, and thinking of gold and diamonds like middle and upper-class Victorian women. There is a possibility for her to obtain economic independence because her status as an educated girl and her understanding of upper-class morality will help her at least to find a job in a shop. However, Valency (1973: 324) thinks that 'when she is artificially freed from the

restrictions of her social class, her economic possibilities are a matter of chance.' Indeed, the lifting of her social status could also create economic challenges for her because, even though she now can behave like a high-class girl, still her learning is just about language and behaviour. This is unlike Vivie, whose education is highly valuable in the formal college.

It is noteworthy that in *Pygmalion*, Shaw points out the socialist principle related to independence, namely that being economically independent does not mean that people ought to be socially independent. Higgins gives language and attitude lessons to Eliza in order to help her in reaching her economic independence without any control of others; he does not do it to make her arrogant or feel that she can stand on her own two feet without accepting help from others or without giving help to others.

> HIGGINS. I care for life, for humanity; and you are a part of it that has come my way and been built into my house. What more can you or anyone ask?
>
> LIZA. I won't care for anybody that doesn't care for me.
>
> HIGGINS. Commercial principles, Eliza…. (Act V, p. 346)

Higgins advises Eliza not to be individualistic, but rather to be socialistic. When Eliza asks to have her independence, Higgins re-insists: 'Independence? That's middle class blasphemy. We are all dependent on one another, every soul of us on earth' (p.349). It is the socialist principle that all human beings are born as social creatures; all individuals always need other individuals or group involvement to support their lives. It is the Fabian goal to promote socialism and reject individualism. Higgins' expressions are also given to criticise Victorian morality, particularly that of the upper-class group who believe that they can stand alone without the help of other people.

Shaw favourably presented the female characters in *Mrs. Warren's Profession, Major Barbara,* and *Pygmalion* with the virtue of independence, although they have diverse manners to define their independences. Contradictorily, the female character in *Widowers' Houses* is still immature. The only female character in the play, Blanche Sartorius, is not independent; rather, she relies entirely on her father in her life, both economically and morally.

4. After Independence

Juliet Gardiner (1993: 2), in *The New Woman: Women's Voices, 1880-1918* asks questions about female liberation, which make connections between the issues of economically independent women and marriage:

> If women could earn their own living and find fulfilment in work and society outside the home, how would they come to view marriage? If they were no longer economically dependent on a husband, would they want to trade terms for new conditions within marriage? Or reject marriage altogether?

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most women still regarded marriage as a very necessary thing, as their nature or destiny. Whilst several others conceived marriage as a not absolutely essential thing, they could not or would not fulfil their nature as women. This phenomenon, of course, can be seen in Shaw's plays in which his female characters have different voices or dreams regarding marriage. Some of them are very keen to get married and some others, oppositely, show their defiance.

Vivie, in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, is indeed an economically independent young woman, yet she ignores marriage and even love. Her higher education obtained outside the family results in the escalation of her self-confidence. She believes that she no longer needs to be looked after by her mother; she is highly able to take care of herself by focusing on developing her business. She assures Praed that she does not like leisure activities, such as holidays, to disturb her time for working; she cares for neither romance nor beauty in her life, only being concerned with her career path.

Vivie rejects two proposals of marriage. The first proposal comes from her mother's business partner, Sir George Crofts, a middle-aged man who is frugal and viciously bourgeois. He proposes marriage to Vivie by offering her a social position and wealth; he thinks such things could buy Vivie's heart. Nonetheless, he is rejected, since Vivie knows that he is a capitalist who is much older than her. Vivie does not care about Crofts' money or properties, since she herself is potentially a successful businesswoman. Secondly, an offer of engagement comes from Frank

Gardener, a young gentleman aged 20, which is also refused at the end. From the beginning, they admire each other; they have a very close relationship until Act III. In the cut scene of the play, which is only written in the text but is not performed on the stage, they have sexual intercourse. Nonetheless, in the last act, Vivie declares her refusal to Frank. It also becomes her declaration to close her heart and her feelings to all men. She wants to be permanently single and permanently unromantic, and she asks to be treated as a businesswoman. If Vivie had married Frank, she would have become a superior wife towards Frank; she would have been a wife who dominated her husband. This is because Vivie is more educated and economically and emotionally more powerful than Frank, who has neither brains nor money. The 'patriarchal authority of wife' was a feature of Victorian life, but according to Gleadle (1993: 176), it 'had never been permitted to shine forth very brightly' during the Victorian era.

Indeed, in the late Victorian age, many women could not marry due to a social phenomenon of what Greg (quoted from Gleadle: 183) calls 'surplus women', in which the number of women in the population is much higher than that of men. However, Vivie remains single not because of that reason, since there are two men who have offered marriage; instead, her decision is due to other reasons: It is her ideal to be permanently unmarried and focused on being a professional careerwoman. Another possibility is that only a few or even no men want to approach her because she becomes more honourable and outstanding in the business world. This makes men feel fearful and less-confident in approaching her. Vivie is emphatically a portrayal of a New Woman with a prominent career, consciously making a decision to be permanently single. Collins (2013: 26) even argues that there is a possibility that she is a lesbian:

> She is earning her living in a business that uses her skill s, and she engages in whatever activities with whomever she wants, including living in what might turn out to be a lesbian relationship with her similarly independent business partner.

Vivie's portrayal appears realistic for her current circumstances due to the fact that several modern women, after successfully achieving their magnificent careers and economic independence, tend to ignore their nature to be a wife and/or a mother.

In contrast to Vivie, other New Women characters in Shaw's plays, such as Barbara and Eliza, are not ignorant about marriage although they are also economically independent like Vivie. They still yearn to experience romance or become engaged and marry a gentleman; they are not denying their nature to be a wife and a mother. Barbara Undershaft in *Major Barbara* is engaged to Cusins, a professor of Greek working as a Salvationist with Barbara. They are in a good romance. In Act II, Barbara introduces Cusins to Bill as her partner and confidently assures him that she will be happy with Cusins. Their love affair is further developed at the end of the play, where Barbara assures her family that '[She] want[s] a house in the village to live in with Dolly' (p.240). Their marriage, according to Crompton (1969: 121), will be 'a religious marriage in sense of dedicating them to something beyond themselves', that is through Salvation Army. Meanwhile, Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion* is not yet engaged, but she has a very close relationship to Frederick Hill who used to send her two or three letters a day. Besides, there is also a possibility of a romantic affiliation between Vivie and Higgins due to the fact that 'some passages in the play's dialogue undeniably tend to encourage the presumption of an eventual marriage between [them].' (Gibbs, 1983: 173)

Blanche Sartorius, regardless of her conventional character, is still economically dependent on her father. She is even more enthusiastic and desires to be married more than Barbara and Eliza. She has a love affair with Harry Trench, a young man whose income derives from a property business. In the beginning scene, Barbara in a thoughtful manner questions Trench, asking 'when shall we be married?' Blanche indeed portrays high-class Victorian women who are keen to be wives and remain at home, rather than obtaining higher education and careers. This is in line with Shaw's principle of the ideal woman in which he has insisted in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1922: 40) that 'unless Woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself.'

5. Married to Enhance Social Status

Getting married for both men or women in the Victorian period was not merely driven by their nature or by sexual reasons. Rather, marriage became a milestone to change their social status into a better class and to help their economic circumstances, particularly for women. Marriage for many women, according to McDonald (1990: 37), was not 'a romantic idyll but a social and economic necessity.' *Pygmalion* is one such example, in which Eliza declares that she will marry Freddy if he is capable of supporting her. The type of support does not mean psychological support; it refers to financial support, because she is a girl from a working-class family who needs a husband with a good fiscal responsibility. Other illustrations, explained by Gibbs (1983) in his 'The Economic of Love', are seen in *Widowers' Houses* and *Mrs Warren's Profession* in which several characters in the plays are keen to get married for economic intentions: both plays are 'held together by money and social influences.'

Since there were also a possibility for women to become poorer and lower their social status after marriage at that time, parents would play an important role in controlling the process. Some parents used to insist on their daughter's choice of future husband; they did not want their daughters to marry improper men. In *Mrs Warren's Profession*, Mrs. Warren insists on the romances of her daughter. She intervenes in Vivie's relationship with Frank from the earliest scenes because she thinks that Frank has no money to guarantee the future life of Vivie, that his love is 'a pretty cheap commodity'. She does not want her only daughter, who has beauty and ability, to marry an impecunious man with a low social position. Rather, she wishes she would marry for money. Mrs. Warren attempts to match Vivie with her business partner, Croft, who possesses an abundance of materials and resources, as such a match would escalate their family (Vivie and Mrs. Warren) in terms of their social and economic positions. Equally, Barbara in *Major Barbara* also deals with interventions from her mother. Lady Britomart interferes in her life when she says, 'Barbara shall marry, not the man they like, but the man I like' (p.213). As a high-class family, she wants her daughter to marry a man who stands at an equal social position with her family.

Eliza, in *Pygmalion*, experiences the same issue. Her choice of future husband is insisted by Higgins. In this case, although Eliza's father once asked Colonel Pickering to marry her daughter, Higgins still has more authority than him in advising Eliza. This is because Higgins plays an equal role as a parent, teacher, and creator; he trains Eliza to talk and behave like a duchess, while Doolittle knows nothing about Eliza's education. Higgins disallows Eliza's relationship with the son of Mrs. Eynsford Hill, Freddy, because he thinks that man is immoral, impudent and has no occupation. He highly recommends Eliza to marry Pickering, who is more honourable than Freddy. He does not want Eliza, who now possesses the morality of a respectable lady, to become engaged to a low common fellow. Instead, she shall marry a gentleman with lots of money or an ambassador, 'the Governor-General of India of the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, or somebody who wants a deputy-queen.' (p.349)

Parents having power over determining their daughter's partner in marriage is also seen in *Widowers' Houses*, in which Sartorius is in control of Blanche's love affair with Trench and their marriage plan. He requires his daughter to marry a high-quality man who has good family background and has proper occupation. This would enable that gentleman to support his (Sartorius's) commercial enterprise. Blanch seems to become 'the sexual manifestation of the corrupting power of greed' of her father (Valency, 1973: 86). In this case, Undershaft may not insist on his daughter's relationship, unlike Mrs. Warren, Lady Britomart, and Higgins, because Blanch herself demands her father's advice as she asks: 'May I do as I like about this marriage; or must I do as you like?' (p.75) Nevertheless, all these parents indicate their intimidations toward their children's choices in marriage. Asking your daughter to marry someone not according to feelings or her heart, but according to money and social position, certainly destroys notions of pure romance. It is an ugly picture of 'what romance amounts to in this naughty world.' (Valency, 1973: 86)

There is dissimilarity, however, between these four main female characters. As the New Women of the Victorian era, Vivie, Barbara, and Eliza are careless with their parents' intimidations. Vivie tremendously does not respond to her mother's advice to marry a rich person like Croft; at the end of the play, she even declares that she does not want to have a husband. Barbara still enjoys her engagement with Cusins, a man she likes but who is not liked by

her mother. Her mother is powerless to interfere in her relationship any further. Eliza confidently choses Freddy as the man she is going to marry. On the contrary, Blanche as a conventional Victorian woman is very attentive to her father's suggestions related to her engagement with Trench. She has a conventional marriage plot as well, where she really cannot take any decision without her father's consideration, and she is highly respectful to him as she will not meet Trench before she is allowed to do so.

It is important to notice that from the portrayal of Blanch, the link between economically independent women and parental interruptions in their marriages is also seen, particularly regarding Blanche's plan of marrying Trench. On the one hand, she still wants to be dependent upon her father by continuing to accept money from him, although Trench has decided not to take any money from her father. She tells Trench that she will accept seven hundred a year from her father at the beginning. Trench asks her not to take the money because, as her husband, he will be fully responsible for her financial requirements. Still, she further argues that her father will give the money to her, not to her husband. On the other hand, Sartorius is a traditionally-minded aristocratic father who does not furnish Blanche's dependence over Trench. Indeed, he allows Blanch to marry Trench, but he will never consent her to being completely dependent on Trench. Sartorius lets his young daughter be continuously dependent on himself, on his money, as he still wants to support her financially after her marriage. Usually, after marriage, women were no longer dependent on their parents; instead, they became dependent on their husbands. According to Gleadle 2001: 174), in the late nineteenth-century, 'most women remained economically dependent upon their husbands' after they married. Blanche is an exception; she could not remove herself from the glamourous life of her family or live on Trench's income of only seven hundred a year.

6. Conclusion

It is true to say that literature is a portrayal or reflection of a social phenomenon of a certain period as presented by George Bernard Shaw. He discusses female characters from different types of social class in his plays, as class distinction was one of the major issues of the Victorian era. Shaw introduces most of these characters as unconventional women. They are unconventional for two reasons. Firstly, their occupations in society or their employment are very uncommon in terms of their gender. Vivie Warren in *Mrs Warren's Profession* is portrayed as a daughter of a lower-class family and as a businesswoman, despite the fact that during the Victorian era most women from such a family background could not access education. It was also rare for women to have their own businesses. Barbara Undershaft in *Major Barbara* is a Major of the Salvation Army, although women could not occupy that position at that time. Eliza Doolittle in *Pygmalion* is a working-class girl who transforms into a respectable lady, in spite of the fact that in the Victorian era, no one could change their social status from their class of birth. Secondly, Shavian women are unconventional due to their attitudes and behaviours, which stand in contrast to Victorian beliefs such as those of Blanche Sartorius, a high-class lady in *Widowers' Houses*. She speaks harshly, although according to high-class principles she is supposed to speak prudishly. Shavian women also act in contrast to their gender identities, such as Vivie who behaves in a manly way, destroying her beauty as a woman. However, Shaw still brings conventional female characters who are in accordance with Victorian customs into his plays to act as comparisons to the unconventional characters. He does so in order to demonstrate their disagreements in terms of attitudes and behaviours, lifestyles, and their ways of thinking.

It is also true that literature is a work of ideology, in which the authors usually insert their political orientation into their writing. Shaw, who stands for the feminism movement, advocates rights for women by presenting women issues and inserting a doctrine of women's liberation into his plays. A woman's right to obtain an education is represented by the characters of Vivie, who successfully gains an education at Cambridge, and by Eliza who successfully learns the proper language despite the fact that she is from a working-class family. A woman's right to become involved in leadership and in government is reflected in the character of Major Barbara, who leads a religious organisation. A woman's right for paid employment is portrayed in these three characters, as they are able to earn money through employment.

These unconventional Shavian women are indeed regarded as examples of the New Woman as they vocalise the voices of most Victorian women advocating for equal rights/social equality and freedom. They insist on their right to be economically independent for different reasons (regarding their classes). Vivie and Barbara expect to have their own individual jobs not because their families cannot support them financially, but rather for personal economic independence. Eliza, on the contrary, seeks a job due to financial necessity, as her father cannot support her financially. In relation to or as a consequence of their economic independence, these female characters have different thoughts regarding marriage. Vivie refuses to accept the idea that it is a woman's nature to have a husband; she prefers to focus on her business without experiencing romance, as she believes in her financial capabilities to control her life. Barbara and Eliza, however, despite the fact that they are also economically independent, are not ignorant about marriage.

Shaw deliberately portrays women from different groups of society as unconventional characters in his plays in order to criticise the social inequality between the classes during the Victorian era and the gender inequality that limited women's roles in society. Likewise, showing the unconventional attitudes of daughters criticises Victorian attitudes, particularly those of parents from upper-class families who were very rigid in controlling their children. Furthermore, the women's portrayal by Shaw is given in order to encourage Victorian women to bravely and confidently insist on their rights in some respects. Presenting a highly-educated girl like Vivie could encourage them to obtain the same level of education, or aim even higher, as well as inspiring them to seek a job in order to be economically independent. By introducing a Major of the Salvation Army, Barbara could increase their awareness regarding women's contributions to public life, showing them that they are potentially capable of being leaders despite their gender. Portraying Eliza as a flower girl who turns into a duchess assures them, particularly working-class women, that they can enhance their social status from poverty towards a stable life by gaining skills and knowledge.

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