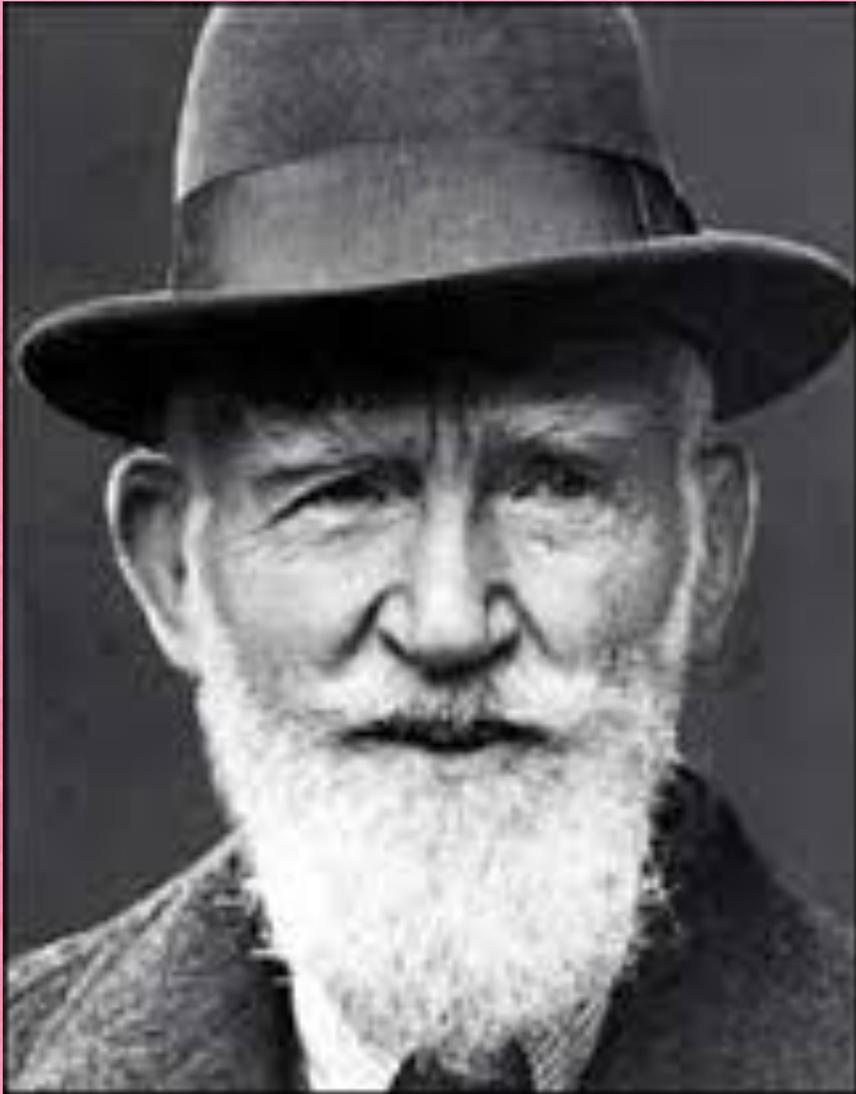


Myth, Class and Femininity: A Critical study of Shaw's “Pygmalion”





“ I must warn my readers that my attacks are directed against themselves, not against my stage figures.”
- Shaw

George Bernard Shaw

- Shaw was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1856.
- He lacked any professional training due to his dislike of it.
- In 1876 he moved to London and became a music and theatre critic and a member of the Fabian Society.
- Shaw used his plays to expose the hypocrisy and complacency of British Society.

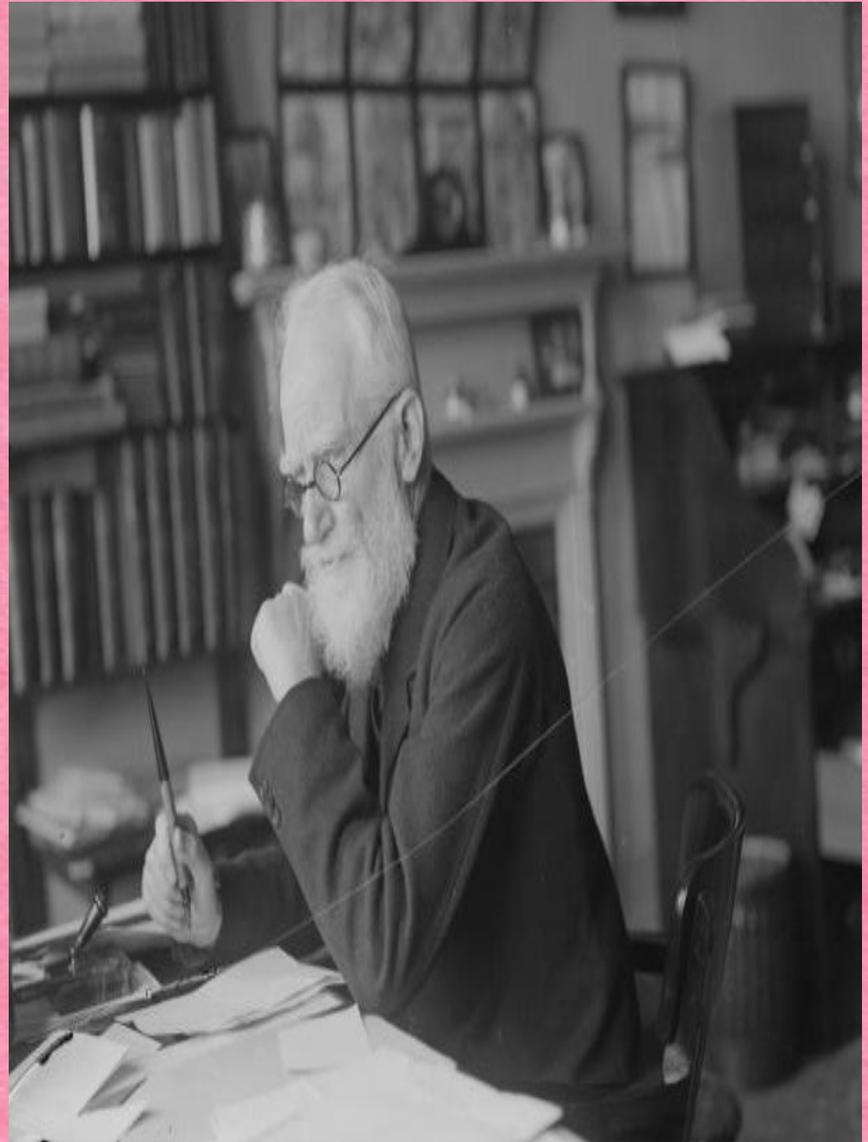
George Bernard Shaw

- Shaw was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925.
- He is much more the propagandist than the artist because he paints in loud colors.
- He continued to write until he was 94.



**“For art’s sake
alone I would not
face the toil of
writing a single
sentence.”**

-Shaw



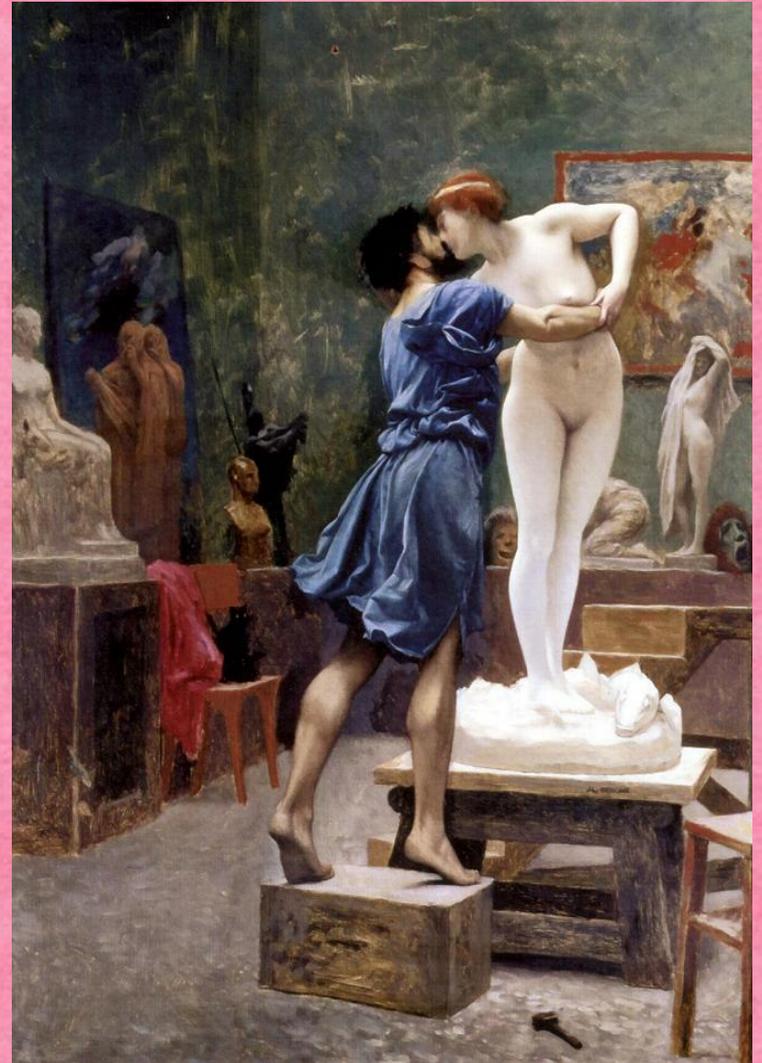
Setting of the play

- London, 1912
- During this era, both in the play and in real life, there were huge differences between the rich and the poor.
- Social classes were clearly defined, and it was hard to move from one class to another.
- Women did not have the same rights as men and were often looked to as inferior.



Myth of Creation

- The tale of “Pygmalion” as written by Ovid is of a gifted young sculptor, Pygmalion who falls in love with his own creation, Galatea and wishes to give his creation life.



- Professor Higgins is also like Pygmalion in his view of woman – cynical and derogatory; Higgins says, “ I find that the moment I let a woman make friends with me, she becomes, exacting, suspicious, and a damned nuisance.”
- Shaw’s “Galatea”, Eliza, develops a soul of her own and a fierce independence from her creator.

Class and Society

- In *Pygmalion*, we observe a society divided, separated by language, education and wealth.



"I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."

— George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*

- Shaw satirizes the British concept of social graces and class as being the measure of a person's worth.
- If you are treated as a member of upper classes, you'll be accepted by them and vice versa.

“Eliza:- The difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated.”

The Feminist Perspective

- Feminism is a very prominent theory throughout the novel.
- Shaw portrays a society in translation, in which progressive notions of feminity clash with more established traditional idea about gender roles.



- As the play ends, we see female dominance over all the males. Eliza has left Higgins and Pickering, finally independent and confident, that she no longer needs them.

“ Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you’re a tower of strength: a consort battleship.”

Pygmalion as a Problem Play

- In *Pygmalion*, Shaw tackles issues about women's rights, language, social class, gender roles and the idea of self-transformation.
- *Pygmalion* explores how social identity is formed not only through the patterns of speech, but through its general appearance.
- The play itself is memorable because of its vigor and fun, notwithstanding Shaw's protestations about its message.

THANK-YOU