

Discourse and Power in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*

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Abstract

George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* addresses the discourse of education (linguistic retraining in particular) and its interrelationship with other discourses, such as class, and the transformation of individual and social self. It also deals with the dynamics of teacher-student power relationship in the context of education discourse. Believing that education should produce humane and responsible citizens instead of docile slaves, Shaw displays the evils of an incompetent education system. This article explores the discourse of education, its effects on other discourses - particularly that of class - and the knowledge and power it produces with emphasis on Foucault's theories about power, knowledge, and discourse. In addition to the Foucauldian conceptualization of discourse, linguistic discourse analysis (conversational analysis) is also applied to examine the link between the language use and the modality of power relations in *Pygmalion*. The aim is to display how education discourse functions through disciplinary productive power and gives rise to a kind of social knowledge. Shaw's play, it is argued, intimates that an education incommensurate with socio-cultural factors could probably empower the marginal social subjects but it would also displace them, rather than truly promote them, socially.

Key words: Bernard Shaw; *Pygmalion*; Education; Michel Foucault; Knowledge; Discourse; Power

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One of the great inventions of bourgeois society, which has been a 'fundamental instrument in the constitution of industrial capitalism and of the type of society that is its accompaniment' has been the incorporation of power relations through discipline, in a web of interconnected strategies designed to produce 'docile bodies' in various institutional settings and cultural habits -armies, factories, hospitals, schools, and salons. (Foucault, as cited in Leps, 2004, p.278)

As a committed socialist and dramatist, Bernard Shaw's primary goal was to reform the existing social conditions and theatrical conventions by his works; he believed that any work of art should have a social function (MacDonald, 2006, p.64). Conscious of the moral rottenness of bourgeoisie and the evils of capitalism and poverty, Shaw devoted himself to the cause of public morality, true progress and justice (Griffith, 1993, pp.25-6). As John Gassner also observes, Shaw rejected the doctrine of art for art's sake and nihilistic tendencies, and regarded art as a means of liberation from materialism (1970, p.298). To enhance the intellectual consciousness of his people and to improve their social condition, Shaw dramatized the relation between sexes, the individual and society, and the problems of conscience, marriage, and religion (Purdom, 1963, p.99). Some of his writings are also a critique of the education system. He believes that the education system should produce perfect humans, but in fact, the education system of his time was an organization which taught useless things by rote, and involved physical punishment (Griffith, 1993, p.146). Shaw's remarks on his own education are revealing:

'It was simply dragging a child's soul through the dirt'. Incompetent teachers teaching an unnatural curriculum, that was the sum of it.... The school system made progress impossible. It destroyed responsibility, producing nothing but a lump of docile wage slaves, without self-respect or any regard for authority, wholly unsuited for citizenship in a modern state... (as cited in

Griffith, 1993, p.146)

Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1913) deals with the theme of education (in general and language retraining in particular) and its influence on the agents' social and individual relationships. In the preface to *Pygmalion*, Shaw points out that the reason for writing this play is that the English neither speak their language properly, nor teach their children to speak properly. They need a phonetician to reform their way of speaking and spelling (1953, p.213). Hence, in this play Shaw probes the discourse of education and the dynamics of teacher-student power relations. He presents the relation between this discourse and other discourses, most importantly class, and the idea of self-fashioning as a complex one. The notion of self-fashioning is of paramount importance, for, as the play also in its own way intimates, "subjects are not found in the world but are invented, that they can take possession of their fabricated lives by becoming their own authors..." (Porter, 2005, p.121). This paper offers a reading of Shaw's play in terms of Michel Foucault's concepts of knowledge, power and discourse which is used in two senses: the Foucauldian and the linguistic one. It is argued that though education can swing the pendulum of power towards the marginalized social subjects through knowledge, when incommensurate with the socio-cultural moorings of the subjects it can dislocate their social self.

In *Pygmalion*'s class-conscious society, major characters are almost discriminated according to their social class and level of education: on the lower side stands the uneducated-ragged flower girl defined in terms of the lower-class standards and on the upper side the professor of phonetics representing the power and ideology of the upper-class. Hence, in the play the social agent's 'self' and his/her individual and social relations are constructed by mainly the discourses of class and education. Drawing on the Foucauldian conception of discourse, it is evident that important dimensions of this society are constructed by discourses which are interdependent and defined in relation to each other. For Foucault discourse "is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined" (1972, p.131). Actually, in Foucault's terms, discourse refers to all statements which have meaning and effect, and the set of rules which make the circulation of certain statements possible (Mills, 2003, pp.53-4). In *Pygmalion* the discourse of class is ordered around the privileged signs of family, clothing, and language. Right from the initial act the difference between Eliza and others is evident. She is the illegitimate child of a broken family thrown out to earn her own living by selling flowers. Her father, Alfred Doolittle, is a common dustman accustomed to drinking, extorting money, and engaged in love affairs. Her family state attaches Eliza to working-class with its culture and way of life which are defined against the upper-class culture negatively

as vulgar and inhuman. Being grown up in a working-class family, Eliza does not have a chance for formal education and her first 'self', presented at the beginning of the play, is the product of her lower-class family culture and the strict disciplines of her father. One of the scenes demonstrating Eliza's different way of life is her commentary on bathing:

...it's easy to clean up here. Hot and cold water on tap... Woolly towels, there is... Soft brushes to scrub yourself, and a wooden bowl of soap smelling like primroses. Now I know why ladies is so clean. Washing's a treat for them. Wish they saw what it is for the like of me. (II., lines. 580-5)

Eliza's comments imply that if the working-class had access to such equipments, they could be as clean as ladies and gentlemen. Eliza is deprived of such free-and-easy life due to the low state of her family. As Shaw demonstrates clothing and cleanliness are two factors which discriminate one class from another in the stratified society of England. Eliza's appearance is a good evidence for this claim:

She wears a little sailor hat of black straw that has long been exposed to the dust and soot of London and has seldom if ever been brushed. Her hair needs washing rather badly... She wears a shoddy black coat... She has a brown skirt with a coarse apron... She is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be; but compared to the ladies she is very dirty. (I., lines.46-52)

Shaw describes Eliza's appearance in length to foreground her character as a flower girl from a class different from that of others. In comparison to the ladies wearing clean evening dress, she is not wearing fashionable clothes and is very dirty.

In terms of pronunciation and speech manner, also, Eliza inherits something from her family and class. In most modern societies, usually, the accent of an elite section of society is used in public contexts as the 'legitimate' language, or Received Pronunciation, and other dialects and their speakers are characterized, negatively in relation to the standard language, as disgraceful (Bonvillain, 2003, p.371). Hence, Eliza's lack of linguistic competence and her ungrammatical sentences are markers of her different class and social status: "Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' deooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f' them?" (I., lines.55-7). Uttering expressions like 'do someone in' and 'bloody' during her first examination at the at-home party, stems from linguistic habits that Eliza has inherited from her family and would keep her in the gutter forever. But Higgins proposes he can fashion a new 'self' for her by teaching her a genteel language, so that she can work as a lady in a florist's shop. Eliza appreciates the idea and her formal education commences. Eliza's second transformed self emerges from the upper-class training she receives from her teachers Higgins and Pickering. This exemplifies the Foucauldian concept of discourse which maintains that discourses, here mainly those of class and education, affect the construction of

social subjects and forms of 'self'. Eliza's lower-class culture has made her vulgar in comparison to cultivated characters like the Higginses and Eynsford Hills.

Moreover, these discourse practices are interdependent. That is, on the one hand, formal education is confined to certain classes and working-class people are mostly deprived of it. Therefore, the level of education of a person depends on his/her social class. On the other hand, education affects a subject's social class and opens the way to other classes. In the rules of the education it is presumed that higher education increases the possibility of gaining a better job and a higher income, two issues which are related to the discourse of class. On entering Higgins's house, Eliza begins to pick up the upper-class's free-and-easy way of life. By taking a bath in Higgins's house, Eliza sloughs off her former vulgarity and her new 'self' starts to emerge gradually as her linguistic retraining starts. Chen Lihua suggests a feminist expression for this self recreation: "the creation of woman-child by man-God" (2006, pp.41-44).

More significantly, as it is patently evident in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, these discourses are produced through the exercise of power. At the outset, the relations of power exercised by Higgins over Eliza figure as class-based. The class discourse determines that Higgins, an educated wealthy male from the upper-class, stands in a higher position in comparison to Eliza, an illiterate flower vendor from the working-class. Higgins exercises his power over Eliza through dominating strategies which are, interestingly, mostly linguistic ones such as using an abusive-authoritative language, interrupting and forcing her to silence repeatedly. This class-based power relation turns into a disciplinary one based on reforming Eliza's behavior when her linguistic retraining starts. And this is through disciplinary power that Eliza's new 'self' emerges. Power in this sense has a close affinity with Foucault's insight about power: that in modern age "power is neither given, nor exchanged, nor recovered, but rather exercised, and that it only exists in action" (1980, p.89). For Foucault power 'individualizes' agents and "certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified" through the exercise of power (1980, p.98). It follows that power is productive and it "does not repress. In particular it invites people to speak: to assess and articulate themselves" (During, 1992, p.131). We will see how, in the end, the 'new Eliza' gains the power to articulate her protest at her teacher's offensive behavior or actually she gains power through this articulation.

The education discourse is an area for the exercise of normalizing rules of disciplinary power. In the realm of education, power is exercised by the teacher over the student through subjecting him/her to constant observation, teaching and examination. Hence, students turn into objects of knowledge about whom records and documentations are produced. Higgins pontificates about the educational schedule designed for Eliza:

you are to live here for the next six months, learning how to speak beautifully, like a lady in a florist's shop. If you're good and do whatever you're told, you shall sleep in a proper bedroom, and have lots to eat, and money to buy chocolates and take rides in taxis. If you're naughty and idle you will sleep in the back kitchen among the black beetles, and be walloped by Mrs. Pearce with a broomstick. At the end of six months you shall go to Buckingham Palace in a carriage, beautifully dressed. (II., lines.274-7)

Higgins's highly positive opinion on his system of education meets others' rejection. For them Higgins is a selfish misogynist feeling no respect for others. To him Eliza is no more than a senseless baggage deserving broomstick and dustbin, and useful only for fetching things and reminding him of his appointments. He finds it interesting "to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul" (III., lines.313-14). He is only interested in the process of fashioning a new identity for Eliza and is ignorant of the fact that his teaching disqualifies Eliza for earning her own living. As Tracy C. Davis remarks, Higgins enslaves and colonizes Eliza by teaching her and taking away her independence as a flower seller (1998, p.225).

One appealing point about Shaw's characters, as Vimala Herman observes, is that they often use turn length to reveal their argumentative dexterities (1995, p.119), and their power relation and dominant-subordination position are reflected in their conversation. Therefore, a linguistic analysis of the characters' conversational interaction would shed more light on the nature of their power relation. Some researchers have been attentive to this point. Zhang Yan, for example, has applied the method of stylistic analysis to explore the conversational discourse in Acts I and V of *Pygmalion* whereby showing the change of power relation between Higgins and Eliza (2007, pp.107-11). Yan explains that in Act I Higgins ill-treats Eliza and addresses her by disgraceful names, but in Act V he calls the flower girl 'Eliza' which means respect. Moreover, Yan analyzes Higgins and Eliza's verbal interaction in Acts I and V statistically by showing the number of turns taken by them on charts. Yan's tables show that, for example, on page 25 (Act I) Eliza has taken one turn and Higgins 4 turns. While on page 121(Act V) Eliza has taken 7 turns and Higgins 2 turns (2007, pp.109-10). In addition, Yan points to the linguistic complexity of their speech and their speech control in these two Acts. This paper tries to make more of this insight, through more examples, to analyze the modality of the operation of discourses (both in the Foucauldian and linguistic senses) in all the five Acts.

From the outset, as Yan has discussed, Higgins evidently establishes himself as a domineering male character and the power relation between Eliza and Higgins is not balanced. Sara Mills points out that according to Foucault "where there are imbalances of

power relations between groups of people or between institutions/state, there will be a production of knowledge” (2005, p.69). During Eliza’s linguistic retraining, Higgins observes Eliza’s habits and verbal manners, jots down notes and records her speech on phonograph disks. As a scientist, Higgins treats others not as human beings but as objects (in the Foucauldian sense) for his experiments in linguistics. He accepts to teach Eliza, neither out of love, nor for money, but rather because she has an interesting accent and provides him with a good case for his studies. Eliza becomes the object of Higgins’s surveillance and study; the knowledge produced here is not a scientific one but, considering Foucault’s assertions about knowledge, we could say that the object of this modern knowledge is ‘man’ (here Eliza) confined to a specific time and space (During, 1992, p.93) and it belongs to the domain of socio-linguistics about different marginal accents. This is the same knowledge that, in the initial act, helps Higgins to *place*, phonetically, everybody by his/her accent; through the exercise of such knowledge subjects are also *placed* socially.

Higgins’s exercise of power is contrasted by Eliza’s resistance and counter-bidding. When Higgins addresses Pickering: “shall we ask this baggage to sit down, or shall we throw her out of the window?” (II., lines.74), though Eliza is not addressed, she grabs a turn to defend herself: “Ah-ah-oh-ow-ow-owo-oo!... I won’t be called a baggage when I’ve offered to pay like any lady” (II., lines.75-6). Eliza is not totally submissive and asks Higgins to speak respectfully to her. She is ready to pay for her lessons and does not ask for any favor: “...Well, you wouldn’t have the face to ask me the same for teaching me my own language as would for French; so I won’t give more than a shilling. Take it or leave it” (II., lines.107-9). In the first turn of this segment Eliza introduces the topic of her offer of money for her lessons and after that whatever she says are reactions to Higgins’s actions. Other turns in the segment, form a round of speech between Higgins and Pickering from which Eliza is excluded. Higgins addresses Pickering and starts to comment patronizingly on Eliza’s offer, that one shilling from Eliza’s income equals sixty or seventy guineas from a millionaire’s. Every now and then Eliza takes a turn, though not addressed, to say that she is not to pay sixty pounds, but Higgins interrupts and forces her into silence. This conversation ends with Higgins’s face-threatening statement that Eliza will be walloped by a broomstick, if she does not stop sniveling. It is evident that at first Eliza’s request for learning a ‘genteel’ language is not taken seriously by Higgins and others. But gradually, it is firmly established and becomes the main topic of their discussion.

Actually, Eliza’s words show that her linguistic competence is not mature enough yet, and she cannot understand Higgins’s witty remarks about her offer. Higgins uses a left-handed compliment to imply that Eliza’s offer is generous but at the same time emphasizes

his superiority in not needing such money. He understands the gap between the poor and the rich but Eliza does not. Eliza does not grasp the witticism of Higgins’ statement about her offer, which contains a hard fact indeed, because she is not conscious of the social structure of her society. The knowledge of linguistic codes gives Higgins a kind of power without which Eliza is the disadvantaged interlocutor during the mixed-sex interaction. Eliza’s attempts to interact with Higgins are frustrated by Higgins’s fluent and complex speech interruptions and blocking strategies which lessen Eliza’s chance for turn-taking, hence, she gains little opportunity for speaking. Her individuality is not acknowledged initially (from the outset of the play she is referred to as the Flower Girl); only when she enters Higgins’s house and he asks her name, she becomes an individual named Eliza Doolittle. This is the first step towards ‘individualization’ of this character.

But the at-home party (the occasion for examining Eliza’s behavior in society after a period of acculturation which, according to Foucault, is a necessary step for the discourse of disciplinary power (1980, pp.105-7)) proves that something has changed. Eliza is ordered to keep to two subjects of weather and everybody’s health and avoid general ideas. At the first step, Higgins rectifies Eliza’s pronunciation, but the big problem is what she pronounces. At the party everything goes smoothly till the introduction of the topic of influenza when Eliza begins to ruin herself by talking about her aunt’s death. Despite her improper speech topic and vulgar behavior, Eliza controls the topic of conversation and directs others’ attention to her speech. In this segment, the turn-taking alternates between Eliza and other persons present at the party. The pattern of turn distribution (Mrs. Higgins, Eliza, Freddy, Eliza, Freddy, Mrs. Eynsford, Eliza, ...) denotes that Eliza is central to the conversation and all turns are addressed to her. Higgins, though present, not only does not interrupt Eliza, but also backs her up by saying that her speech is a new small talk and that to ‘do someone in’ means to kill him. It is the first time, from the outset of the play, that Eliza is the central participant in the conversation without being interrupted or being forced into turn-grabbing, silence or anything else.

The conversation initiates with a question about the weather and Eliza’s response (“The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation” (III., lines.177-200) indicates a drastic change in her speech style. Her utterance is grammatical and linguistically complex in comparison to her former utterances; “Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo” (I., lines.235). Moreover, other interlocutors address Eliza with polite sentences and attend her face. Mrs. Eynsford Hill, for instance, redresses her question with using words like ‘surely’, or using a negative form of question: “You surely *don’t believe* that your aunt was

killed?" (III., lines.197. Italics added), or in another turn, in addition to negative form of question, Mrs. Eynsford Hill mitigates her speech with using modal auxiliaries like 'can't', and 'might', and the word 'spirits' instead of 'gin': "But it *can't* have been right for your father to pour *spirits* down her throat like that. It *might* have killed her" (III., lines.199-200. Italics added). During this party Eliza has her longest turns from the dawn of the play. Act III is the beginning of Eliza's empowerment, which reaches towards extremes in the last two acts. However, according to Mrs. Higgins, Eliza is not presentable at a garden party because she is a fake lady, whose dress and pronunciation are like ladies. Therefore, this examination suggests that Eliza's essence and state of mind are not changed still, and there is the possibility of spoiling herself by every sentence she utters.

As the play proceeds, the interdependent relation between education discourse and other discourses like class and marriage is revealed. It is shown that acculturation and language retraining give Eliza a better chance for marriage. Higgins says "By George, Eliza, the streets will be strewn with the bodies of men shooting themselves for your sake before I've done with you" (II., lines.195-6). He also predicts that Eliza could marry an officer or the son of a marquis, a significant advance on the social ladder for her. Higher education secures a better financial condition, and provides better chances for marriage. Higgins predicts a plenteous life of luxury, chocolates, taxis, gold, and diamonds for Eliza. The question arising here is: Can Eliza enjoy such a life or not?

According to Foucault in all forms of power relations, the two agents are in an unequal stand of intercourse. For example, in the case of surveillance, the observed has no power to observe the observer hence the knowledge is produced by the observer about the observed. In the case of normalizing judgment also only one person can judge the other one (as cited in McHoul and Grace, 2002, pp.70-1). But this is not wholly true in *Pygmalion*. To the surprise of the reader, in addition to Eliza, Higgins is also individualized and his character becomes demystified. As the play continues, it is revealed 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. Mrs. Pearce reminds him not to swear and damn too much in front of Eliza ("You swear a great deal too much. I don't mind your damning and blasting, and what the devil and where the devil and who the devil!" (II., lines.332-3)), a language improper for a garden party. Moreover, he must not go to breakfast in dressing-gown or use it as a napkin. Eliza's second self, also, gradually takes form by linguistic lessons and cultural training. She is taken to Shakespeare exhibition and classical concerts, learns to play the piano and listens to Beethoven and Brahms. Eliza masters the cultural codes of the upper

class which gives her power, but, ironically, disclasses her too.

Act IV is the initiation of Eliza's self-consciousness. The pattern of turn distribution in the interaction between Eliza and Higgins, taking place after the garden party and the end of Higgins's experiment, shows that the turn alternates between Eliza and Higgins and each have their own say. Before the interaction begins, Eliza throws Higgins's slippers at him. They converse about what is to become of Eliza. Eliza claims that Higgins's success depended on her, but he rejects it. In her next turn, Eliza says that she thinks of Higgins as the cause of her present misery. Before this process of acculturation, she could sell flowers on the street, while now she belongs to neither her own class nor to Higgins's; she feels that she is dangling, 'out of place'. At the dawn of the project, she only thought of learning a genteel language, but now she has no place among upper-class people, neither can she return to the gutter. Now she is a good-for-nothing lady and cannot enjoy the life that Higgins predicted; she feels that she needs to find a way out of this dangling condition. This interaction signals that it is the first time that Higgins listens to what Eliza says and that it is Higgins's speech which is a harsh reaction to Eliza's speech acts, not vice versa. Eliza's self-consciousness and linguistic competence are the sources of her power. Despite this, Higgins still tries to dominate Eliza verbally by calling her 'presumptuous insect', 'the creature', 'cat', etc. He also commands her to sit down and to be quiet and explicitly expresses his apparent indifference to Eliza's future by saying "How the devil do I know what's to become of you? What does it matter what becomes of you?" (IV., lines.96-7). Higgins suggests that Eliza might marry or sell flowers in a shop.

Most of the conversation in Act IV occurs between Eliza and Higgins which indicates that Eliza's self formation process is almost completing. For the first time in Act IV Eliza does not attend to Higgins's order and tells him that she is not going to tell Mrs. Pearce about the coffee. Higgins confesses that Eliza has wounded him, and the act ends with Eliza's smile and triumphant feeling. The final Act is the celebration of Eliza's power, when she runs away, and Higgins remarks that he cannot continue without her. Consider the following extract in which Eliza says she owes Pickering too much for her progress:

It's not because you paid for my dresses. I know you are generous to everybody with money. But it was from you that I learnt really nice manners; and that is what makes one a lady, isn't it? You see it was so very difficult for me with the example of Professor Higgins always before me. I was brought up to be just like him, unable to control myself, and using bad language on the slightest provocation. And I should never have known that ladies and gentlemen didn't behave like that if you hadn't been there. (V., lines.235-40)

During this conversation Eliza is the central speaker and Higgins is sidelined. In this last step, Eliza holds the floor more than Higgins does, and her turns are lengthy. Pace

Foucault's claim about the lowers' inability to criticize the uppers in a power relation, Eliza has gained a gift of articulating her critical opinion about Higgins and his education system. Higgins's deficiency from the fact that he teaches only pronunciation to Eliza and is unaware of his awful manners which make Eliza diffident about her worth. During the last conversation with Eliza, Higgins professes that he took Eliza for the fun of it and will not change his behavior even if she returns. Eliza answers back that she is no longer afraid of Higgins's big talk and bullying manner and that he cannot take away Eliza's knowledge and power. She decides to regain her independence by leaving Higgins. In the end, Higgins expresses his happiness about Eliza's strength: "By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this" (V., lines.509-10). When Eliza leaves Higgins alone on the scene, rattling his cash in his pocket, Eliza's process of learning and empowerment is completed.

Pygmalion is a critique of the education system of the time represented by Higgins. Shaw believes that education should create productive and humane citizens instead of "household pets or chattel slaves" (Griffith, 1993, p.149). That is, teaching at schools should not be limited to routine curriculums; students should be educated about noble manners and cultural practices. To use Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* ("a system of durable dispositions" (Ihlen, 2009, p.65)), Higgins, apart from his pride and self-confidence, does not have academic *habitus* and gestures while Pickering does. He torments Eliza by his bitter language and by treating her as a servant (making her fetch things). He does not care about anybody's character and ill-treats all around him. In contrast to him, Pickering is a better teacher, one who teaches Eliza noble manners and gives her a sense of self-respect by treating her like a lady (calling her 'Miss Doolittle', for instance). Eliza likens herself to a child, in the foreign country of upper-class people, who has mastered a new tongue and cultural codes, and has forgotten her own language. The crucial point is that though Eliza gains power, Higgins is still superior because of his sex and class. With this linguistic knowledge Eliza only learns how to play the game of power.

Drawing on discourse theories we tried to shed light on the intersection of linguistic and Foucauldian conceptions of discourse in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Focusing on the modality of power relations in the play, we attempted to show how education and class discourses are mutually related – Eliza has been deprived of going to school because of her working-class family. Higgins's disciplinary power individualizes Eliza and fashions a new self for her. Despite Higgins's attempt to keep Eliza submitted, after experiencing subjection to power, Eliza herself becomes the exerciser of power. This turns her into a new social subject who like other humans welcomes an unpredictable life, now bestowing pleasure, now striking

with sorrow. In the end, as we tried to demonstrate, there is a latent network of discourses and power relations in *Pygmalion* which replenishes it with different layers of meaning, turning it into a work which is far from what Christopher Booker simply calls a 'fairy tale' with Rags to Riches plot in which a humble flower girl meets a phonetician who promises to change her into a princess, accompanied by marriage and everlasting joy and felicity (2004, p.375).

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