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Peep behind the Curtain : a step-by-step analysis of two adaptations of Shaw's Pygmalion

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BLOT Marjolaine. *Peep behind the Curtain : a step-by-step analysis of two adaptations of Shaw's Pygmalion*, sous la direction de Manuel Jobert. - Lyon : Université Jean Moulin (Lyon 3), 2021.
Mémoire soutenu le 30/06/2021.

Master Langues, Littératures et Cultures Étrangères et Régionales :

Études Anglophones 2020-2021

Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3

Peep Behind the Curtain

A Step-by-Step Analysis of Two Adaptations of Shaw's

Pygmalion.

Marjolaine BLOT

Mémoire réalisé sous la direction de Monsieur le Professeur Manuel JOBERT

Abstract

This thesis aims at providing a better understanding of the importance of non-verbal elements in two cinematographic adaptations of *Pygmalion* which was written by playwright George Bernard Shaw in 1912. The first adaptation is entitled *Pygmalion* and was released in 1938. It was directed by Anthony Asquith and Leslie Howard. The second one, *My Fair Lady*, is the screen adaptation of the musical of the same name written by Alan Lerner and Frederick Loewe in 1956. The movie was released in 1964 and was directed by George Cukor. The analysis focuses on three multimodal features: the movements of the actors, which are illustrated by diagrams, the gestures, and proxemics. The differences between the play's stage directions and the adaptations' non-verbal elements show a romanticization of Shaw's work, which undermines his social message, mainly through the characterization of the two protagonists Eliza Doolittle and Henry Higgins, and the dynamics of their relationship.

Résumé

Ce travail vise à proposer une meilleure compréhension de l'importance des éléments non-verbaux dans deux adaptations cinématographiques de *Pygmalion*, écrit par le dramaturge George Bernard Shaw en 1912. La première adaptation est intitulée *Pygmalion* et est sortie en 1938. Elle a été réalisée par Anthony Asquith et Leslie Howard. La deuxième, *My Fair Lady*, est l'adaptation cinématographique de la comédie musicale du même nom écrite par Alan Lerner et Frederick Loewe en 1956. Le film est sorti en 1964 et a été réalisé par George Cukor. L'analyse se concentre sur trois éléments multimodaux : les mouvements des acteurs, qui sont illustrés par des schémas, la gestuelle, et la proxémique. Les différences entre les didascalies de la pièce et les éléments non-verbaux des adaptations montrent que l'œuvre de Shaw a été romantisée ce qui relègue au second plan le message social qu'il voulait faire passer, majoritairement à travers la caractérisation des deux protagonistes Eliza Doolittle et Henry Higgins et les dynamiques de leur relation.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Professor Manuel Jobert for supervising my work. His trust allowed me to find confidence in myself and write this thesis according to my own interests.

I would also like to thank Professor Claire Majola who helped me find the subject of my thesis and for introducing me to stylistics.

I am grateful to Professor Claudine Olivier for teaching me linguistics, the importance of body language and how to take notes from a text, which is basically what research is about.

I would like to thank Aude Lacour for her wonderful drawings which made my thesis lovely to look at.

I am extremely grateful to Marie Lacour without whom this thesis would not be what it is now. She kindly and patiently guided me every step of the way. She has been a real teacher for me. I have learnt to write properly and to better communicate my ideas thanks to her.

I would also like to thank Juliet Heritier-Pingeon who encouraged me, listened to me and proofread me throughout the year.

I am very grateful to Raphaël Laloue for giving me wise advice and for proofreading me.

I would like to thank Johanna Perraudin and Marie Philipe for their loving support throughout the two years of my master's degree. They helped me to always look on the bright side of things.

I would also like to thank my English teacher Isabelle Ducarroz for arousing my interest for the English language and English culture.

And last but not least, I would like to thank my family for their loving support and for nurturing me. Thank you to my father for teaching me how to make the diagrams which give another dimension to my thesis.

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Introduction

Romanticization

Pygmalion is one of the most popular plays by George Bernard Shaw. It was written in 1912. It tells the story of Eliza Doolittle, a cockney flower girl who is taught to speak English like the members of the high society by Henry Higgins, a Professor of Phonetics. The play takes its inspiration from Ovid's myth *Pygmalion*, in which the protagonist is a sculptor who makes a statue of his ideal woman and falls in love with it. It then becomes alive, and they get married. However, in Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Eliza and Higgins do not fall in love, or at least, they do not get married. Eliza takes her independence from her creator and bids him goodbye at the end of the play despite his wishes that she stay at his service. This unromantic ending disappointed a lot of people, especially the actor who created Higgins's role, Herbert Beerbohm Tree. He did not find it to his liking and the night of the première, and before the curtain fall, he "provide[d] by demonstrative affection for Eliza a broad hint that matrimony was in store for the professor and his pupil" (Weintraub, 1984, p. 10). Shaw was furious and he attempted to put an end to this romanticization of the ending by writing a sequel to *Pygmalion* in 1916. He tried to justify his ending and even went as far as to make Eliza marry another character to make sure that there would not be any doubt on the issue anymore. Indeed, Eliza ends up marrying Freddy Eynsford Hill and opening a flower shop. Besides, in the last lines of the sequel, he wrote: "Galatea never does quite like Pygmalion; his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable." (Shaw, 1916, p. 119). Therefore, Shaw took a traditional myth and what looks like the fairy tale of Cinderella only to better undermine them and question them. His subtitle "A Romance in Five Acts" can thus be understood as completely ironical. When asked why he chose this subtitle, he answered: "I call it a romance

because it is a story of a poor girl who meets a gentleman at a church door, and is transformed by him, like Cinderella, into a beautiful lady." (quoted in Henderson, 1956, p. 616). Shaw's goal was to educate the masses and raise awareness on social issues. According to Daniel Leary, Shaw wrote comedies and well-known stories to get his message across easily:

> I approach the Shavian play and its effect on the audience in the belief that a playgoer is willing to consider a new idea if he senses that he has an active part in the invigorating game of argument and counter-argument. This is especially true if he can do some laughing while he is becoming serious over the new idea. (1983, p. 3)

Maybe Shaw's socialism and feminism were too early and were not understood at the time. As a consequence, right from its beginning, *Pygmalion* was never interpreted as Shaw intended it since it was always romanticised. This is often what happens to texts that are written to be interpreted and performed. Stage directors and actors will put their own views of the text in their interpretation of it. As a playwright, Shaw had no control over the interpretation of his play, especially regarding everything that is not the text: gestures, facial expression, stagecraft. All these non-verbal aspects are just as important as the text because they can carry as much meaning. Herbert Beerbohm Tree romanticised the ending "without altering a word [of the text]" (Weintraub, 1984, p. 10). Therefore, the differences between the text and its interpretation reside mainly in the non-verbal aspects.

Two Adaptations

Pygmalion has actually been adapted many times in a variety of media, from operas and ballets to musicals and movies. This is why it is interesting to study the differences between the various interpretations. Unsurprisingly, what is most apparent in all of them is the romanticization of the play. I have chosen to compare two cinematographic adaptations with the text of the play: the 1938 *Pygmalion* movie and *My Fair Lady* which was released in 1964

and is the screen version of the 1956 stage musical. I will try to show how directors and actors convey that the relationship between Higgins and Eliza is of a romantic nature by focusing on the non-verbal aspects of their interpretations.

The 1938 movie was directed by Anthony Asquith and Leslie Howard. The latter also played the leading role of Professor Higgins. He was popular on Broadway and had already played in several movies. Wendy Hiller was chosen by Shaw to play the role of Eliza, as he had liked her portrayal of his character on stage (McGovern, 2011, p. 176). The movie was well received by both the critique and the public (McGovern, 2011, p. 146). As usual, the end was romanticised and very different from the play. Indeed, after Eliza says goodbye to Professor Higgins in the fifth act, we see her and Freddy going away in a car. Leslie Howard runs after her but she is already gone. He then walks back angrily to his place. Once inside, he attempts to break a vinyl and accidentally turns on the first recording he has made of Eliza. He listens to it with his face in his hands. Suddenly, Eliza's real voice is heard as she repeats her words but with a perfect standard accent. He turns around towards her, almost smiling and they look at each other. The last image of the movie is Higgins turning his back to the camera, leaning backward in his chair and asking, "Where the devil are my sleepers, Eliza?" (Asquith & Howard, 1938). Therefore, without significantly modifying the text of the play, everything hints towards the reconciliation and a lovers' relationship between Higgins and Eliza. Ironically, Shaw first agreed on the scenario. However, after seeing a preview of the movie, he realised that none of his recommendations to avoid romanticization had been respected. Derek McGovern describes the movie as follows:

> Although it is generally regarded as the most faithful of the Shavian play-to-film adaptations, the 1938 screen version of Pygmalion occupies a pivotal position in the ultimate metamorphosis of the play from anti-romantic comedy of ideas to Cinderella-like Hollywood musical. (2011, p. 146)

Indeed, the 1938 *Pygmalion* was the steppingstone to the musical adaptation. Regarding the romanticization, it did not have the same difficulties since Shaw died in 1950 and could not fight for his interpretation anymore. All his life, Shaw was strongly opposed to a musical adaptation to his play, thinking that its popularity would supersede the non-singing stage version (McGovern, 2011, p. 248).

Nevertheless, one year after his death, Gabriel Pascal, who was the producer of the 1938 movie, obtained the approval of the Shaw Estate for a musical adaptation (McGovern, 2011, p. 240). The music was composed by Frederick Loewe and the lyrics and libretto were written by Alan J. Lerner. Patrick Niedo (2010, p. 13) defines a musical as a "play in which songs make the story progress. The dialogues between these songs help the sequence of events to unfold as well." Therefore, a musical is simply a play to which songs were added. Indeed, Lerner and Loewe added thirteen songs to the play. For the lyrics, they also took some lines from the play and turned them into a song. The play's narrative arch was respected in the musical, although some scenes were added and others deleted. Even though the musical adaptation was difficult, *My Fair Lady* was a great success on Broadway. It won a Tony Award for Best Musical. I chose to use the movie adaptation of the musical since there is no visual recording of the stage version. It was directed by George Cukor and the two main roles were played by Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn. The former had played the same role in the musical on Broadway and had won a Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical and later on an Oscar for Best Actor for the musical movie. Here again, romanticization pervades the whole movie but to a different extent than in the 1938 version. The musical

genre encourages it by its propension to unrealism[1] and love stories. Indeed, it is very rare for a musical not to have a love story ending by a marriage, just as in a comedy. This is why *My Fair Lady* can be described as a fairy tale musical, which Fanny Beuré defines as follows: "A fairy tale musical happens in a place visited by members of the aristocracy and the order of the imaginary kingdom is restored when the couple comes together." (My translation 2019, p. 18). This partly explains why Lerner chose a happy ending with the reunion of the protagonists accompanied by the musical theme of the song "I Could Have Danced All Night" which symbolizes love. The form is therefore remote from that of Shaw's social comedy. Surprisingly though, it is quite faithful in terms of dialogues. Lerner and Loewe made a real effort to preserve as many of Shaw's lines as possible. As a result, *My Fair Lady* is one of the musicals that contains the most dialogues.

Shaw liked cinema and followed its debut closely. He saw it as an opportunity to bring his teachings and social ideas to a broader audience. This is why he was very much open to a cinematographic adaptation after the advent of talkies (Utell, 2016, p. 62). Besides, Shaw was aware of the possibilities that cinema allowed for the actors' play: "In speaking on the screen you can employ nuances and delicacies of expression which would be no use spoken by an actor on the ordinary stage in the ordinary way" (Shaw quoted in Dukore quoted in Utell, 2016, p. 62). He was in fact very clear sighted as cinema allows for the study of microkinesics, which is impossible in the theatre as the spectators are too far. Microkinesics are used by Fernando Poyatos, who was inspired by the Palo Alto school in his book *Nonverbal Communication*

[1] Musicals tend to represent things in an abstract location where magical or improbable things happen: people sing instead of speaking. Therefore, this genre, because it adds up theatre, dance and singing demands an even stronger suspension of disbelief from the audience than any other art.

Across Disciplines where he applies it to "Narrative Literature, Theatre, Cinema, Translation" in volume three. He defines it as follows:

> By microkinesics […] must be understood those subtle movements normally difficult to perceive, which in reality constitute a good part of the speaker's natural repertoire, especially eye movements, since gaze accompanies and alternates with the other modalities of verbal and nonverbal signs, acting by itself and as a qualifier of other behaviors. (Poyatos, 2002, p. 115)

This is why I decided to focus on microkinesics to study the non-verbal. As Shaw himself wrote: "In speaking on the screen you can employ nuances and delicacies of expression which would be no use spoken by an actor on the ordinary stage in the ordinary way" (quoted in Utell, 2016, p. 62).

Three Different Approaches

In order to study the non-verbal aspects of the play and its adaptations, I will rely on multimodality. Gaëlle Ferré writes about multimodality in those words:

> Lorsque nous parlons, nous mobilisons certes la langue, mais nous construisons également du sens à travers les gestes, la posture, l'expression faciale et autres signifiants corporels tels que la distance physique, l'attitude affichée, etc. (2019, p. 11)

I applied the concept of multimodality to drama and cinema, and I will study three multimodal aspects: performance features, proxemics and movements on stage. I have chosen Mick Short's definition of performance features which he gave in his article "From Dramatic Text to Dramatic Performance" (Culpeper et al., 1998, Chapter 2). According to him, *what is said*, that is the dialogue and the stage directions, indicates thanks to a process of inferences *what is meant*, that is the meaning between the lines. This in turn leads, still via inferences, to performance features such as action, speech and appearance. I will mainly focus on action features which include "what is done on stage (movement, placing of objects and

other ‘business’), gestures, body position and posture changes, facial expression, direction of gaze.” (Culpeper et al., 1998, p. 12).

This approach also led me to study proxemics. This concept was invented by Edward T. Hall, an anthropologist who observed how great of an influence space and its organization had on interpersonal communication. In *The Hidden Dimension*, he defines proxemics as “the interrelated observations and theories of man’s use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture.” (Hall, 1990, p. 2). He studied the distance between individuals in several contexts and established four main distances which are culturally significant and that can help us understand the relationship between two people. These are intimate, personal, social and public distances. Each has a close and far phase. Proxemics will help us to see how the play’s characters actually feel towards each other as they interact thanks to the distance they keep between them. Hall is persuaded that “how people feel toward each other at the time is a decisive factor in the distance used” (Hall, 1990, p. 108). In 1959, in his book *The Silent Language*, he already explained that “Spatial changes give a tone to a communication, accent it, and at times even override the spoken word. The flow and shift of distance between people as they interact with each other is part and parcel of the communication process.” (Hall, 1959, p. 204). This distance is all the more marked for English people as it is a non-contact people according to Hall, meaning that they do not like to touch or to stand too close to each other (1990, p. 112). The minimal distance they like to maintain with strangers is personal distance, which is from one and a half feet to four feet (45 cm to 1m20).

These distances often change when the characters move on the platform or on the set. Their movements can also reveal aspects of their relationships. This is why I also chose to study blocking, that is the movements of the actors on the stage. The Merriam Webster

Dictionary defines blocking as follows: “to work out (the principal positions and movements) for the performers (as of a play) also: to work out the players' positions and movements for (a scene or a play)” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 1999). J. L. Styan wrote *Shakespeare’s stagecraft*, which is a “guide with which to explore Shakespeare’s stage practice” (1967, p. vii). I followed his observations on Shakespeare and transposed them to Shaw. I observed the comings and goings of the characters on stage, how they were grouped together or not, and the dynamics created by these movements. Styan notes that “The changing distance between players can with all immediacy point the distinctions which other details of characterization may refine.” (Styan, 1967, p. 91). As I did not have access to a video recording of the play or of the musical on stage, I adapted those concepts to the cinema screen. Bordwell and Thompson define stagecraft as “those aspects of the film that overlap with the art of the theatre: setting, lighting, costume and the behaviour of the figures.” (1979, p. 156).

Annotation Software

In order to observe and take notes on all of these aspects (performance features, proxemics and movements on stage), I used the software programme ELAN (*ELAN*, 2020) to annotate the cinematographic adaptations. I found this software programme in *Analyse de Discours Multimodale* by Gaëlle Ferré (2019, p. 106), who used ELAN to annotate her corpus. According to her, this software programme is the most used by linguists to annotate gestures and visual content. It allowed me to view the video of the chosen passage and make annotations thanks to tiers. I used nine tiers:

- Talk to transcribe the text,
- Proxemics to indicate the distance between the characters at a given time,

- Blocking to observe the movements on the set and the groupings of characters,
- Higgins's and Eliza's Action (gestures, facial expressions, body postures),
- Direction of Gaze,
- Differences with the play and the other adaptation,
- Shots and Camera Angles,
- Notes on the given passage.

I also made diagrams of the play's blockings and of the two adaptations in order to compare them.

Goal

These annotations allowed me to see the differences in the play's interpretations and thus to notice the elements of romanticization. As Derek McGovern explains, because of Tree's romantic interpretation, "it was not only the final scene that had been changed: romanticism now permeated much, if not all, of the play." (2011, p. 89). In the two adaptations, the play text has been kept mostly intact except for the final scene where Eliza comes back to Higgins's house.

This is why I chose to analyse not the ending but the first three scenes. Indeed, thanks to non-verbal elements we can already observe evidence of romanticization as early as the first scene. It takes place outside, at night after the outing of the opera in Covent Garden. The three main characters meet for the first time—Eliza the Flower Girl, Colonel Pickering the Gentleman and, Professor Higgins the Note Taker. Most of the dynamics of the play are already in place, announcing future plot developments. I chose to start my analysis at the beginning of the play, that is to say when the rain is pouring just before the first line. It ends at Higgins's line "I was going to India to meet you." (Shaw, 1916, p. 19).

The second scene corresponds to Act Two of the play, and I selected the passage from when Eliza comes into the room to when Higgins finishes his speech on “Can I put it more plainly and fairly, Mrs Pearce.” (Shaw, 1916, p. 34). In this scene, Eliza comes to ask lessons to be able to work in a flower shop. However, Higgins and Colonel Pickering have greater ambitions and the latter bets the former that he cannot pass Eliza off as a duchess at an ambassador’s garden party.

The third scene corresponds to Act Three of the play and takes place at Mrs Higgins during her at-home day. It goes from Eliza’s entrance in the room to her line “Not bloody likely. [*Sensation*]. I am going in a taxi. [*She goes out*].” (Shaw, 1916, p. 62). In *My Fair Lady*, it corresponds to “Move your bloomin’ arse!!!” (Cukor, 1964). They modernised it so that the 1964 audience could understand that what she says is genuinely rude.

On the surface, *Pygmalion* looks like a traditional love story. Eliza Doolittle, a poor cockney girl sees her dream realized thanks to the teachings of Professor Higgins which allows her to become a princess in the eyes of society. However, if we look beyond appearances, Shaw did not completely follow traditional patterns. The protagonists have little in common with Cinderella or Prince Charming nor does their relationship equate a romantic one. By undermining traditional patterns, Shaw wants to educate his audience and convey a social message to them. His intentions tend to be challenged by the adaptations to different extents.

1 A Traditional Love Story?

Many critiques have compared *Pygmalion* to the story of Cinderella. Eliza's transformation from a cockney flower girl to a princess at the ambassador ball belongs to the genre of makeover stories which Cinderella most represents. The story of *Pygmalion* also takes its source from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The sculptor Pygmalion carves the ideal woman as he is disappointed by those he knows. He falls in love with his creation and Venus, pitying him, gives life to the statue and they get married. Therefore, Shaw was inspired by love stories for his play and his subtitle "A Romance in Five Acts" implies that it is one. Typical elements of the fairy tale are present throughout the play and both movies. For example, Cinderella's coach is replaced by the cab. The role of the Fairy Godmother who magically transforms Cinderella is taken over by Higgins, with the help of Pickering. The slipper motif remains with Higgins's slippers. Finally, the ball is replaced by the embassy ball. We will see how the characterization of both protagonists also follows traditional patterns, from Eliza's metamorphosis to Higgins's heroic qualities.

1.1 From Rags to Riches

Shaw wrote Eliza's role for Mrs Patrick Campbell, one of his mistresses (Ferguson, 1997, p. 31). However, she was actively part of the romanticization of the play from the beginning. Indeed, she added a final line to her character: "What size" talking about a pair of new gloves Higgins asked her to buy, thus suggesting that she had no real intention to leave him and at the end of the play remains at his service. Shaw tried to reason with her but it was too late: the line was now included in the play by directors (McGovern, 2011, pp. 88–89).

Figure 1- Mrs. Patrick Campbell as Eliza Doolittle in Pygmalion. Poster. First English production Presented by Herbert Beerbohm Tree at His Majesty's Theatre, London, 11 April 1914

Wendy Hiller played Eliza in the 1938 movie. Shaw liked her in the role as she already had some experience playing it on stage. Casting Audrey Hepburn was more problematic. First of all, she replaced the Broadway actress Julie Andrews even though she did not know how to sing. Secondly, she was very beautiful and quite a fashion icon. Therefore, the critique said she would not be credible enough in the role of a dirty flower girl. In the end, she did quite well, thanks to her costume and to the contrast it created between her clothes and the high society coming out of the opera house. However, just like Wendy Hiller, she is not quite dirty enough or dishevelled enough and so their appearance is not genuinely faithful to the play, at least in the first scene. Nevertheless, they both successfully incarnate the metamorphosis from “squashed cabbage leaf” to “Queen of Sheba”.

1.1.1 The Caricature of the Cockney Flower Girl

What is most striking in the actresses' play is their physical transformation. It is all the more striking as their portrayal of the cockney flower girl is exaggerated. Shaw wrote this role as a caricature thus making it a comic character as well. In terms of appearance, her character is first described in those words:

> *She is not at all an attractive person. She is perhaps eighteen, perhaps twenty, hardly older. 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: its mousy color can hardly be natural. She wears a shoddy black coat that reaches nearly to her knees and is shaped to her waist. She has a brown skirt with a coarse apron. Her boots are much the worse for wear. She is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be; but compared to the ladies she is very dirty. Her features are no worse than theirs; but their condition leaves something to be desired; and she needs the services of a dentist.* (Shaw, 1916, p. 11)

In terms of gestures, the stage directions clearly indicate a lively body language, with ample movements, crying and whining. They were carried out by the actresses in both adaptations but to a different extent. Wendy Hiller moves less than Audrey Hepburn in general. Eliza is supposed to spring to her feet "*terrified*" and then "*Hysterically"* deliver her line (Shaw, 1916, p. 13). Audrey Hepburn is more proud than terrified, standing straight and her head held high, whereas Wendy Hiller is indeed terrified, with her eyes wide open. Besides, she keeps her tone rather soft. Audrey Hepburn makes ample gestures with her arms and bust, moving in the crowd, seeking support. She makes a big gesture with her arm toward Colonel Pickering when she sees him, imploring him to help her. Wendy Hiller, on the other hand, is more static, holding her arms close to her body and nervously touching her coat. Furthermore, Eliza is also very loud. She is "*crying wildly*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 13) to plead her case and attract attention. Audrey Hepburn plays out this stage direction quite well, with a high-

pitched voice, imposing herself in the crowd. Wendy Hiller is quieter and more withdrawn into herself. This betrays her terror. Eliza also cries a lot in the first two acts. Each time something upsets her, she uses tears to defend herself and inspire pity. She is "*Much distressed*" and then "*In tears*" in the first act (Shaw, 1916, p. 14). Audrey Hepburn adopts a whining tone from the beginning and breaks into tears just like the stage direction indicates, wiping her face and nose in a very indelicate manner. She does the same in Act Two when she is "*weeping*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 28) because Higgins compared her income to a millionaire's. Wendy Hiller goes further and breaks into tears twice and is whining more at the end of the scene but does not cry in the second act. Therefore, Audrey Hepburn's Eliza is fiercer and more genuinely annoying, which is coherent with Higgins's remonstrance: "Woman: cease this detestable boohooing instantly" (Shaw, 1916, p. 18). Wendy Hiller's Eliza is softer and slightly less exaggerated. They are both presented as women who cry when they are upset in order to get others' attention and provoke empathy. Audrey Hepburn is therefore presented as wilder. George Cukor was not afraid to uglify his star actress in order to better caricature the flower girl. He decided to put the emphasis on the criticism of social classes rather than on the romanticization of Shaw's play. Wendy Hiller is feminine in her interpretation of the cockney girl. This is also linked to the time of release of the movie. Wendy Hiller fights Higgins with less strength and is more submissive because that was how women were viewed at the time.

In the play, and to the same extent in the musical movie, Eliza's comical side is developed thanks to running onomatopoeias and running comic gestures. She screams and shouts a lot more than in the 1938 picture. She cries "Ah—ah—ah—ow—oo—o" six times over the two first scenes in both the musical movie and the play. Audrey Hepburn exaggerates her screams by opening her mouth and eyes very wide and by being very loud. She almost looks like an animal (cf. Fig. 2 & 3).

Figure 2- Audrey Hepburn screaming "Ah—ah—ah—ow—oo—o"

Figure 3- Wendy Hiller screaming "Ah—ah—ah—ow—oo—o"

The audience is first surprised by such a behaviour, and at the same time they empathize with her since she only shouts to show how much Higgins's remarks hurt her. The sound that Audrey Hepburn manages to produce is also quite funny and portrays her social role perfectly at the same time. Marci Rey describes the sounds she makes in those terms: "Hepburn, in her portrayal of Eliza in the film, manipulates her voice so that it cracks, breaks, and sounds hoarse at times. Thus, even her vocal quality sounds rough and unpolished." (Ray, 2014, p. 296). Another comical aspect is Eliza's movements of sitting and rising in the second act. In the play, she sits down and stands up seven times. This is quite theatrical since it is a visible movement on stage that can convey many emotions such as fear or anger and restlessness. In the musical movie, she does it six times. These clear-cut movements give rhythm to the scene. The pattern of sitting down and rising and then sitting down again is also quite visually comic. Therefore, Eliza's character is one of the main sources of comedy in the play and in the musical[2]. These movements give density to her character and allow her to make herself as visible on the stage as in society. Indeed, this interpretation embodies and gives a visibility to the lower social class. It is not often given a voice in the theatre or in the cinema just like in society.

[2] It is not very surprising that the authors kept the comic aspects of the play in the musical since its first goal is to be entertaining.

At the beginning of the play and movies, crying and shouting are the only ways she knows to get attention and to be heard since she does not have the proper looks and manners to make her place in society. Therefore, as we have seen, the musical movie's interpretation of the cockney flower girl is closer to the play. This choice reflects the renewed interest for class issues at the time. At the turn of the 20th century, with the advent of socialism in England class consciousness was an important issue. The 1964 viewer was less shocked by this representation than the 1938 viewer, who was not as sensitive to class distinctions. The caricature is thus not used in the same way and for the same purpose. In the first adaptation, it is mainly used as comedy whereas in the musical movie it is also used to criticize the high society.

1.1.2 Metamorphosis into a Lady

Colonel Pickering and Higgins's first action to change Eliza is a makeover. She must sound like a lady but look like one as well. After changing her clothes, Eliza is unrecognizable. Act Three is the first test she undergoes, which happens at Mrs Higgins at-home day in the play and in the 1938 movie. In *My Fair Lady*, Lerner changed the setting to the opening of the Ascot Racecourse because he thought an outdoor scene was necessary in a musical. The costumes are astonishing, and this scene is probably one of the most expensive ones in the history of cinema. Women are wearing enormous hats and sophisticated black and white dresses supposedly reproducing the fashion of the time. This exaggeration in the dresses and hats is an underlying criticism of the high society and aims at ridiculing it. Eliza is the only one who wears actual flowers on her hat, reminding the audience of the flowers of Covent Garden at the beginning of the movie, and therefore also reminding of Eliza's modest origins, as if they were inescapable.

As a result, her transformation is visually and physically complete. She has actually become beautiful according to the high society's standards. This passage is typical of the fairy tale and therefore very aesthetically agreeable for the viewer. Eliza's entrance is very telling of her metamorphosis. In the play, the stage direction reads:

> *Eliza, who is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise, quite flustered. Guided by Higgins's signals, she comes to Mrs. Higgins with studied grace.* (Shaw, 1916, p. 59)

Both movies use this entrance in a romantic way. Indeed, Eliza's dress and appearance are particularly worked on to emphasize her metamorphosis and beauty but also just for the viewer's pleasure and entertainment. This is another way of romanticizing Shaw's play. The focus of the scene is mainly on Eliza's beauty and visual aesthetic. She is presented as a princess and woman whose main attribute is physical beauty.

In terms of gestures, she then proceeds to advance towards Mrs Higgins. She has a very erect posture and walks slowly, her arm held horizontally, holding her handbag. This contrasts immensely with her posture in Act One and Two. In Act One, she leaned over her basket with her shoulders hunched and in Act Two, she held her bag with her two hands, her elbows in the air. Her movements are graceful since they are fluid and slow. Her bust is so erect that it seems rigid, almost like a statue (a reminder of Galatea). She seems not to dare breathing. Therefore, she has metamorphosed into a lady and has lost her Lisson Grove behaviour. Although she has learnt manners, she is still a caricature. Indeed, she has become the caricature of the high society, imitating their manners and ways. Therefore, this scene is also quite comical since she pushes it to the extreme. What comes out of this scene in this adaptation is thus the comic of gesture. This is a choice of interpretation from the directors Asquith and Howard not to emphasize the social aspect of the caricature but to simply make

their audience laugh. Their reading of Shaw's play keeps on the surface of things and they refuse to use humour to criticize the high society. The comic of gesture is used only to add to the comedy of their movie.

In *My Fair Lady*, Higgins seems impatient for Eliza to arrive. He spots her suddenly and there is a continuity shot on Eliza and Pickering, thus introducing the new beautifully dressed Eliza. Colonel Pickering walks her to Mrs Higgins's tent. She makes quite an entrance, as we discover the new Eliza. She is holding a closed parasol in one hand and uses it as a walking stick, making grand and controlled gestures with it. Her whole body moves when she walks but in a graceful way, especially in contrast with Colonel Pickering who seems almost ungraceful besides her. She stands straight with her shoulders open, but her gestures remain fluid. Her head is held high thus highlighting her hat. Her costume and gestures combined make her very feminine. She now embodies what the perfect lady should look like. Although her entrance is filmed by a long shot, her gait is hypnotizing, and the viewer only sees her. It is as though she were doing a fashion show. This moment clearly emphasizes Audrey Hepburn's model-like body. She was used to wearing great fashion designers' clothes in movies, and it was part of her popularity as an actress. The reason for her casting is quite clear as she embodies the new Eliza perfectly as the fashion icon that she was[3].

When she arrives near Mrs Higgins, she smiles very delicately and strikes a pose, her arm on her parasol and her bust slightly leaning backward, endeavouring to appear as though she belongs to high society. She is striving so hard to be graceful that the lady who shakes her hand seems abrupt in comparison. Here again she appears as a caricature, since every gesture is exaggerated. For example, she holds her bag with her arm stretched in the air, in an

[3] She was cast over Julie Andrews who played Eliza in the stage musical. The studio preferred choosing a star for Eliza's role as it would attract viewers.

unnatural way, like a mannequin in a shop window. As a consequence, she looks like a doll in the hands of Higgins, mechanically reciting what she was taught. This is Shaw's way of undermining society's social categories which are arbitrary and futile. As Nicholas Grene put it, "a lady is only a flower-girl plus six months phonetic training" (quoted in Mugglestone, 1993, p. 373). Shaw believed in social equality (Mugglestone, 1993, p. 374). Audrey Hepburn's acting is less robotic than Wendy Hiller's. She is a real fashion icon. In this adaptation, her status as a star and the aesthetic of the scene are what participate in the romanticization of the play. Moreover, this time, Eliza is the caricature of the lady. By choosing to emphasize the mannerisms and decorum of the high society, George Cukor criticizes it and is therefore closer to the play as he continues Shaw's social critique.

Eliza's manners are also quite different from the first two acts. She does not move around or make ample gestures as before. She stands quite still and sits only when she is invited to do so[4]. In the movie *Pygmalion*, she observes the other guests and imitates their gestures. For example, she tries to understand what she is to do with the plate and cup she was given but is at a loss. She holds both in her hands, her arms held horizontally, not daring to look up and looking puzzled. Freddy then removes the plate from her hand, but she keeps her posture, her hand still clutched around the imaginary plate. She then gives a sidelong stare at Mrs Eynsford Hill, sitting on her left, to see what she is doing and to imitate her. Follows a segue of medium shots on each group, from Eliza's left, starting with Mrs Eynesford Hill and finishing with Freddy, on Eliza's right. They all start stirring their tea with their spoon, one after the other, resulting in a noisy domino effect. This adds to the comic of the scene climaxing when Eliza, who has observed their behaviour, starts stirring her tea as well, but in an exaggerated way.

[4] In Act Two of the play and of the musical movie she tells Higgins "Well, if you was a gentleman, you might ask me to sit down, I think." (Shaw, 1916, p. 119).

She takes her spoon holding just the tip while looking intensely at Higgins, seeking his approbation and begins to stir her tea with her hand almost open and her fingers in the air, her arm held horizontally. Her efforts to behave properly are still very obvious and clumsy. On the other hand, Audrey Hepburn performs this gesture perfectly. She holds her cup with one hand and stirs her tea delicately, like a real lady. Here again, this discrepancy shows the difference of focus of the two adaptations. The 1938 movie focuses more on the comical side of the gestures and caricature, while the 1964 movie exaggerates Eliza's gestures in order to make fun of the high society. Her charms allow the director to direct the comical effect on the expectations which are placed upon her rather than on her person.

Eliza's transformation is incomplete and she still has a long way to go before passing as a princess. The difference of interpretation lies mainly in the effect the actresses' play produces on the viewer. The comic of the scene is taken literally in the first adaptation while the other one proposes a criticism of society thanks to humour, just like in the play.

1.1.3 Incomplete Transformation

The most striking proof of Eliza's failure to pass as a lady in Act Three is the discrepancy between what she says and the way she says it. Indeed, she tries to impersonate a lady and therefore she is very proud in her gestures and posture. On the line "Yes, Lord love you. Why should she die of influenza when she come through diphtheria right enough the year before?" (Asquith & Howard, 1938), she holds her head high and is slightly smiling. Her eyelids are almost closed on the first sentence, and she bats them on the second one. This gives her an important and feminine air. Her posture is very erect as she stands straight on her chair. This rigidity mimics that of a mechanical doll and participates to the comic of gestures. Furthermore, on the line "Do I not? Them she lived with would have killed her for a hat pin,

let alone a hat." (Asquith & Howard, 1938), she is very confident, slightly leaning forward towards Mrs Eynsford Hill as she delivers the gossip. She holds her cup with both hands. She makes two accentuations batting her eyelids and raising her eyebrows on "Do" and "not". This too gives her a superior air. The discrepancy between her proud attitude and her Lisson Grove gossip creates a comic of situation. Eliza is more confident in her gestures which emphasizes the wide gap between her lady-like behaviour and her indecent story. The viewer laughs at Eliza's expense, which is the purpose of the scene in this adaptation. This moment thus works as comic relief.

Finally, when Eliza asks Freddy "Here...What are you snickering at?" (Asquith & Howard, 1938) she straightens herself up, holds her chin high, still holding her cup with both hands. In this way, she appears superior to Freddy as she seems taller. She looks at him down then and up in a condescending way. She has a serious air with her eyelids almost closed. All these postures and gestures are those of a lady, as a lady, according to Shaw, is someone condescending and Eliza, by imitation also reproduces this trait of the high society.

Janine Utell writess about a split in Eliza's self between her inner and outer self (Utell, 2016, pp. 64 & 67). Her voice, which is much deeper and steadier than before, as well as her gestures, do not match her personality anymore. The way she delivers her story does not match its content and social context. Indeed, her story about her aunt's death is not fitting to the context of a tea party. Nevertheless, Eliza seems very confident in her story and its interest. She behaves beautifully, just like a lady. Her perfect pronunciation adds to the discrepancy between the content and the form. She really makes an effort to enunciate every sound properly. This gap produces a comic of situation and of gestures.

In addition to never truly fitting into society, Eliza also has some faults. In the first act, she lies about how much money she possesses. She tries to woo Colonel Pickering so that he gives her money. She knows how to behave in order to get what she wants, and, in this way, she can be qualified as sly. She takes advantage of the spatial proximity between the Colonel and her when he comes under the portico to shelter from the rain. Forgetting that they do not belong to the same social class, she establishes personal distance (from one and a half feet to two and a half feet) and dares to speak to him although he keeps his distance. The stage direction is clear: "*taking advantage of the military gentleman's proximity to establish friendly relations with him*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 12). Thanks to this passage, we understand that Eliza knows how to use physical proximity to get what she wants even if it means that she is crossing social boundaries. Later in the scene, she uses physical proximity again to have Colonel Pickering's protection (cf. Diag. 1). The stage direction reads "*breaking through them to the gentleman, crying wildly*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 13).

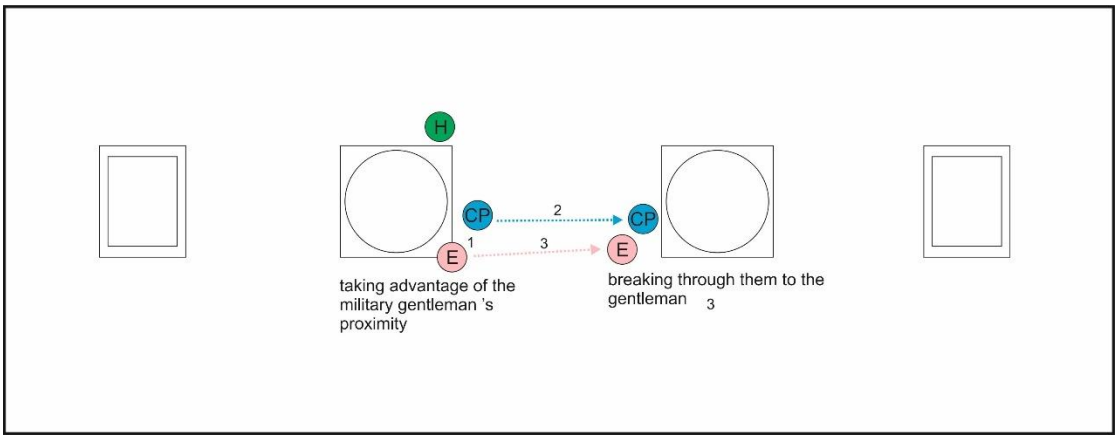

Diagram 1- Eliza taking advantage of Pickering's proximity

Edward T. Hall classifies comforting and protecting in the close phase of intimate distance which is the closest one (from 0 to 18 inches). Therefore, Eliza is trying to establish an intimate distance with Pickering so that he will protect her. In the 1938 movie, there is indeed, intimate

distance between the two characters. It is even emphasized by a medium close up on Pickering and Eliza. She holds him firmly by his coat, imploring him for protection. However, Hall specifies that the "use of this distance in public is not proper" (Hall, 1990, p. 112). English people in general, and particularly at that time, are considered a non-contact people by Edward T. Hall, meaning that they do not like to touch, especially if they do not know the person very well. Therefore, in this situation Eliza is clearly breaking social rules by touching Colonel Pickering. Nevertheless, it is the only way for her to have his pity and get his protection. Besides, in the movie *Pygmalion*, this distance also adds authenticity to Wendy Hiller's acting, as she seems genuinely scared.

In *My Fair Lady*, it is slightly different as they maintain social distance at first. Eliza does not break into the crowd to get to Colonel Pickering but raises her voice and makes a gesture with her hand towards him. She then moves towards the place where Higgins is hidden. It is only afterwards that she establishes personal distance at a far phase (from two and a half to four feet) on "Oh sir, don't let him lay a charge against me for a word like that." (Cukor, 1964). It is Colonel Pickering who achieves the close phase of personal distance (from one and a half to two and a half feet) by touching her hand and comforting her. Therefore, it is Colonel Pickering who establishes intimacy and agrees to comfort her and not Eliza who throws herself at him. She has more dignity and uses her voice rather than physical closeness to protect herself and beg the Colonel. This stands in contrast with the movie *Pygmalion* since Eliza cries on Colonel Pickering's shoulder, leaning on him in a familiar way. Besides, their embrace lasts twenty seconds which is quite long. This is unrealistic since a gentleman like Pickering, even though he is kind, would not touch a "very dirty" flower girl (Shaw, 1916, p. 11). This moment is typical of the damsel in distress sequence of fairy tales. Pickering here plays the role of the protector and Eliza the role of the woman who needs assistance against an opponent.

Therefore, this adaptation romanticizes Eliza's distress by putting her in the role of the princess who is helped by an adjuvant.

In the first two acts, Eliza does not hesitate to cry and shout in order to appeal to people and to the audience. She will do whatever it takes to survive and even to rise in society. This is why she dares to go to Higgins's house and ask for lessons. Besides, she pretends to be offended in the second act and makes several false attempts to leave in order to oblige Higgins to woo her back to him. This scene's tempo is controlled by visual elements. In the play, she actually sits down and stands up ten times and pretends to leave twice. We can therefore talk about a pattern of advance and retreat from Eliza (Styan, 1967, p. 89) (cf. Diag. 2).

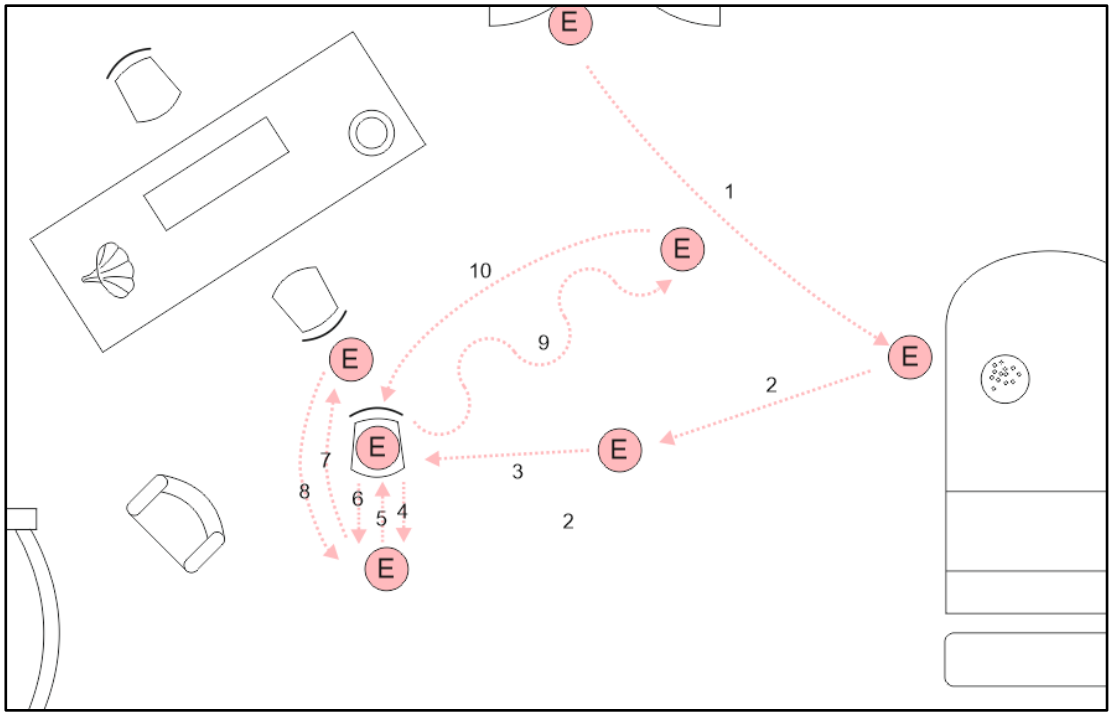

Diagram 2- Eliza's pattern of advance and retreat

1- She enters and retreat in terror to the piano

2- coming back, triumphant

3- Confidentially / sitting down

4- [rising, terrified] Sixty pounds!

5- sitting down [obeying slowly]

6- springing up

7- running between Pickering and Mrs Pearce for protection

8- Liza, reassured steals back to her chair.

9- Standing up / on her reluctant way to the door

10- sitting down

She boldly comes to Higgins's house but at the first insults she retreats to the piano (Shaw, 1916, p. 26). This also participates to the comic of her character. This is faithfully reproduced in the musical movie. Eliza also pretends to be leaving twice and sits down and stands up seven times. In the 1938 *Pygmalion*, these movements are smaller and/or non-existent and they can be interpreted in another way. Indeed, Eliza only attempts to leave once, at the end of the scene after saying, "You've no feelin' heart in you, you haven't. I'm goin' away. I've had enough of this. You oughta be ashamed of yourself!" (Asquith & Howard, 1938). Furthermore, she really wants to leave; she is not pretending in this version. Higgins has to chase her all the way

into the hallway and up the stairs to make her eat the chocolate. In *My Fair Lady*, this passage happens in a very different way. We do not really know if Eliza really intends to leave but as soon as Higgins pronounces “Have some chocolates, Eliza.” (Cukor, 1964) she stops short and comes back into the room following the chocolate. She is really tempted by it and she does not choke on it like in the play or in the 1938 movie. She follows the chunk of chocolate with her eyes, with her mouth half open, almost drooling. Therefore, the musical’s Eliza appears slyer and easily tempted. She first chews the chocolate slowly, hesitatingly but then chews it faster, making big movement of the jaw and cheeks, obviously enjoying it. She almost seems to wake up from a dream when she speaks again, suddenly opening her eyes wider. Her line “I wouldn't have ate it only I'm too ladylike to take it out of my mouth.” (Cukor, 1964) sounds false as she only pretends to be offended. She does not look straight at Higgins but stares at the floor. This is the typical behaviour of someone lying. In the movie *Pygmalion* she seems genuinely embarrassed, and she is forced to eat the chocolate. She is cornered by Higgins in the stairs and is nearly choked by it. The play’s Eliza is situated in the middle since she is tempted as indicated by the stage direction “*halting, tempted*” (Shaw, 1916, p. 33) but is also forced to eat it and chokes. As a consequence, the Eliza of the 1938 movie is less sly and appears to be more honest as she is genuinely scared, really wants to leave and is bullied by Higgins. She is only Higgins’s victim and does not try to make him woo her into staying like in the musical movie. Here again, her position recalls that of a princess, often trapped in a tower by the evil witch.

The difference of acting and characterization of Eliza’s character conveys the different interpretations of the play by the actresses and directors. Audrey Hepburn is extremely self-assured, whether at the beginning or during Mrs Higgins’s at-home. Her rebellious attitude fits Eliza’s desire to rise in society and evolve to get out of poverty. This contrasts with Wendy

Hiller's acting, which is calmer and softer thus making Eliza more submissive. She is also more innocent and honest than Audrey Hepburn, because less sly. This difference is mainly due to the image of the woman in the 1930's, during which women were supposed to be attractive and silent in all circumstances. The 1938 movie's directors' view of women is thus made clear by Eliza's characterization. The fact that she is less rebellious also indicates that she is already a princess from the beginning. Even a flower girl must be feminine and subdued. Audrey Hepburn's wilder interpretation in 1964 marks the beginning of women's emancipation and the departure from the traditional silent and docile image[5].

[5] The second wave of the feminist movement took place during the sixties and seventies (Brunell, n.d.).

1.2 A Teacher of Phonetics

Higgins is a complex character. He is multi-faceted although the teacher and scientist in him prevail. Louis Crompton describes him in this way:

> Higgins is in many ways a paradoxical being. He is at once a tyrannical bully and a charmer, an impish schoolboy and a flamboyant wooer of souls, a scientist with a wildly extravagant imagination and a man so blind to the nature of his own that he thinks of himself as timid, modest and diffident. (1967, p. 78)

He is also quite arrogant and therefore a typical Pygmalion. It is surprising to see that unlike the other characters there is no physical description of him at the beginning of the play. As a consequence, it is only through his actions that we can portray him, which makes his movements, gestures, and facial expressions all the more important. There is a bigger difference between Leslie Howard and Rex Harrison than between Wendy Hiller and Audrey Hepburn. This is due to the fact that his character is the most romanticized of all. As a consequence, it makes his character more human than in the play. If he is capable of loving a woman, then he is not that misogynistic or cruel. This is probably why a happy ending is more acceptable for the audience. Nevertheless, Shaw spent his life rewriting his play, adding scenes and a sequel to make sure that Higgins will remain a confirmed old bachelor. He had important disagreements with the actor who created the role in England, Herbert Beerbohm Tree, because he changed the ending as early on as the première night. Shaw qualified his acting in the final two acts “like nothing human” and “[making] every conceivable and practical mistakes” (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 87). Shaw reproached him with having wooed Eliza in the final act “like a bereaved Romeo” (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 87). Something similar happened with Leslie Howard. Shaw realized right away that he was not fit for the role and that romanticization would necessarily happen. He commented to Pascal, the film producer,

"it is amazing how hopelessly wrong Leslie is. […] However, the public will like him and probably want him to marry Eliza, which is just what I don't want." (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 185). He later added that "The trouble with Leslie Howard is he thinks he's Romeo" (quoted in Shaw & Dukore, 1980, p. 84). Therefore, as interpreted by Howard, Higgins is not the "insensitive bully" depicted in the play (McGovern, 2011, p. 185). Nevertheless, he received an Academy Award nomination for Best Actor. On the other hand, Rex Harrison was renowned for being misogynistic and he was a perfect interpret for the arrogant "great bully" (Shaw, 1916, p. 34). He first played the role on Broadway in the stage musical. As he did not know how to sing, Lerner and Loewe wrote patter songs tailored for him so that he could talk-sing[6]. He admired Shaw's work and insisted that the authors keep the dialogues in the musical. He even had a copy of the play on him during rehearsals just to make sure of the musical's faithfulness (Niedo, 2010, p. 265). He won an Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in the movie. We could therefore say that Rex Harrison fits the role better and would have pleased Shaw more than Leslie Howard.

1.2.1 A Mysterious Character

In the play, Higgins's entrance is quite unusual. He is already present upstage, his back turned to the spectators. Besides, very little information is given about him, even in the stage directions which describe him as follows: "*They are all peering out gloomily at the rain, except one man with his back turned to the rest, who seems wholly preoccupied with a notebook in which he is writing busily.*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 9). Therefore, he is not standing with the crowd

[6] Here is a definition of patter songs by Mark Robinson: "A "patter song" is a musical sequence that is performed at a relatively fast tempo, rhythmic patterns that are staccato in nature, with each syllable of the lyric corresponding to a note. There is often internal rhymes, tongue-twister-style formatting, and the device is often paired with the "list song", another musical theatre device where lists are shared as a humorous assault of information." (Robinson, n.d.).

coming from the opera house and does not seem to care or be bothered by the rain like the others. In the 1938 movie, we see Leslie Howard right from the beginning, walking in the middle of the flower market. Later, we see him take shelter from the rain under the portico and disappear behind a column. The fact that we see him first and follow him rather than any other character establishes that he is the protagonist and star of the movie. On the contrary, in the musical movie, we have to wait until Higgins's first line to see Rex Harrison. As he is also the top of the bill, viewers expect to see him. His delayed entrance creates suspense about when the star of the movie will appear on screen. This choice from the director, George Cukor, also hints at who is the real protagonist of the musical movie. Showing Eliza before Higgins is not a random choice as we will see later.

This peculiar introduction also creates confusion about Higgins's identity. Indeed, he is first mistaken for a policeman. In the play, he is named The Note Taker. Although the spectators know he is not a "copper's nark" (Shaw, 1916, p. 13), the information about his role is delayed. All the other characters are referred to by their place in society or by their job. Pickering is called The Gentleman, Eliza The Flower Girl and Mrs Eynesford Hill The Mother. Suspense is thus built up. It is partly resolved when The Bystander ascribes him a social class by looking at his boots and establishes that he is a gentleman. It is revealed later, through his interaction with the crowd, that he is a phonetician. In this way, he is not referred to only by his social class but mostly by his occupation. Therefore, he stands above social classification as he does not seem to belong to any social class. It is never said how he is dressed. However, both movies suggest that he did not go to the opera like the other members of his social class since he is not in evening dress. As a consequence, he also seems to stand above social preoccupations and society's standards.

1.2.2 A Godlike Figure

As Janine Utell puts it, "[Higgins] is in the crowd but not of it." (Utell, 2016, p. 63). This spatial distinction between him and the crowd also indicates that he is not a common person. In fact, several elements of stagecraft hint that he could be a superior being. The thunder and the rain establish a mysterious atmosphere and remind the viewer of a superior, godlike presence. Higgins also tells Eliza she has "a soul and the divine gift of articulate speech" (Shaw, 1916, p. 18). In the movies, this is also conveyed by several high angle shots on the crowd, hinting that someone is watching over them. This is reinforced by the fact that the scene takes place under the portico of a church. We hear the clock strike at the beginning and at the end of the scene. When it strikes eleven thirty, Higgins hears in it "the voice of god" (Shaw, 1916, p. 19). These elements are also linked to mythology, from which the play was inspired. Instead of carving statues like Pygmalion, Higgins seems to have boundless knowledge of where people come from. He mentions names of various places throughout the scene as if he were omniscient, making The Sarcastic Bystander remark "Bly me! You know everything, you do." (Shaw, 1916, p. 15). The stage directions indicate that he is very sure of himself when he speaks to people. For example, when he asks The Bystander: "And how are all your people down at Selsey?", he "*turn[s] on him genially*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 14), thus having no doubt of his genius. He is also the only one who notices that the rain has stopped. Therefore, he is presented as not completely human but godlike thanks to his superior knowledge. In the musical movie, this is conveyed by an acceleration of action while Rex Harrison walks around in the crowd. Immediately after saying that The Bystander comes from Selsey, he distances himself from Eliza's cries and answers another question. Then, he points out that the rain has stopped to Mrs Eynsford Hill, but in the same sentence, he boasts that he knows where she

comes from as well. Therefore, this acceleration creates an accumulation of short but incisive lines from Higgins, emphasizing his omniscience.

Furthermore, he is not intimidated by the crowd gathering around him. He bravely gets out of his hiding place, faces Eliza and the crowd which follows him. The stage direction indicates: "*The note taker opens his book and holds it steadily under her nose, though the pressure of the mob trying to read it over his shoulders would upset a weaker man.*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 14). We understand with this description that he is not easily impressionable. This is all the more representative of his strength since according to Edward T. Hall, crowding has negative effects on individuals, especially for non-contact people. It can cause stress and even leads to insanity (Hall, 1990, pp. 58 & 121–122). On the contrary, Higgins remains perfectly calm and seems used to crowding as he knows how to deal with it. This passage functions as a probation for Higgins's character. Thanks to his reaction to the crowd, the audience have a better grasp on who he is.

This passage is delt with differently in the two adaptations. There is less crowding around the two protagonists. In the movie *Pygmalion*, Higgins is not hiding behind a pillar but just standing in the back, leaning against a wall. He is standing at some distance from the crowd, keeping social distance (from four to twelve feet) to remain unseen. However, the way the crowd is filmed makes it all the more stifling and intimidating. There are medium close ups with low angle shots on people, making them appear taller and emphasizing their number. When Eliza comes towards Higgins to make him show her what he wrote, the crowd forms an arc around him. He is trapped, cornered. Nevertheless, just as in the play, he does not look afraid. He answers calmly to Eliza's accusations. Later in the scene, he simply waves his hand vertically to break through from the crowd and get away. The crowd immediately opens up

and people let him pass through. This gesture shows his authority. He can free himself from the crowd whenever he wants. The representation of the crowd is significant. In the 1938 version, it is stigmatized. Indeed, it is more a mob than a crowd. They are all members of the lower class and they all stand very close to each other forming a mass. This physical proximity is considered messy and dangerous. They do not respect the social code of distancing. Therefore, they behave like animals, shouting at Higgins. The 1938 viewer must have felt disgusted seeing this passage.

In the musical movie, the crowd maintains social distance at a far phase (from seven to twelve feet) with him and Eliza. They all listen intensively but never dare to come closer. Only two bystanders come closer and establish the close phase of personal distance (from one and a half to two and a half feet) and they are barely noticed by Higgins. Therefore, in this adaptation, Higgins is so intimidating that no one dares to approach him. At this moment, he puts his foot on the pillar, taking the same position as a statue. This can be interpreted as a direct reference to the sculptor Pygmalion. George Cukor probably wanted to create a link with the myth and his movie. Besides, it reinforces Higgins's presence, as he stands in a manly posture, measuring himself to the enormous columns of St Paul's Church, which remind us of a divine presence. In this version the crowd does not have the same image. As they do not stand close to Higgins, they seem more human and do not form a mass. They respect Higgins's privacy and discussion as they listen only from afar. Moreover, the crowd is composed of a diversity of social classes which mingle with each other. This discrepancy tells a lot about the image of the lower classes in the 1930's and its evolution in the 1960's. It is not as stigmatized in the later adaptation.

Paradoxically, what also adds to his character's strength is the fact that he remains silent at the beginning of the scene. In the play, we can see him upstage taking notes. When The Bystander warns Eliza against him, he does not move immediately. Therefore, the spectator cannot forget about his presence since we can see him and because he is talked of later. J. L. Styan remarks that "A player's position on the stage added a dimension of meaning to his performance even when he remained silent." (Styan, 1967, p. 82). Later he adds "When a character was both spatially separated from the group and silent into the bargain, he was granted special strength." (Styan, 1967, p. 105). As a consequence, thanks to spatial distinction and to the fact that he remains silent at first, Higgins's character stands out right away (cf. Diag. 3).

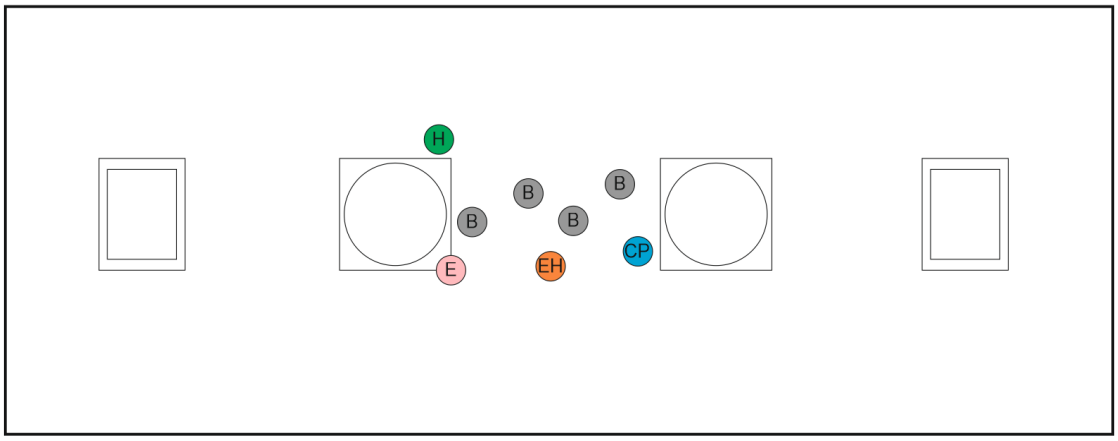

Diagram 3- Shaw's play: Higgins is spatially separated from the group and silent

The spectator immediately understands that he will be important to the story. He is portrayed as a confident, omniscient leader thanks to blocking and proxemics alone. His silence also adds suspense and mystery to his identity. In the 1938 movie, Howard stays silent longer as the first lines have been delayed. Two medium close ups on him taking notes remind us of his presence while he is still unseen. As the viewer cannot see the whole set in cinema, the editing directs our gaze so that we cannot forget this mysterious character. When Eliza

goes toward him, asking to see the notebook, he does not answer and just shows it to her. He does not need to speak to assert his authority and the more he remains silent, the more the crowd and the viewers are getting curious.

However, his spatial distance from the rest also exposes him to criticism. We can compare this to Cordelia's or Hamlet's situation; J. L. Styan explains: "Hamlet or Cordelia is set apart from the court and thereupon compels criticism of the other figures present." (1967, p. 90). Here, Higgins is set apart from the crowd, whether from high or low society, and therefore is antagonised by the other characters. As he is mistaken for a policeman, the bystanders "*demonstrat[e] against police espionage*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 14) and accuse him of injustice. They do not understand which social class he belongs to or what his function is so they are afraid and adopt a defensive attitude towards him. In the 1938 movie, this is filmed by a long high angle shot on the crowd, with Eliza and Pickering standing in the middle. Everybody is standing very close to each other and we barely notice Leslie Howard cornered at the bottom left of the screen. He seems small and lonely against the crowd. Nevertheless, they all keep some distance with him and do not enter in his bubble or protective sphere that non-contact people maintain between each other, thus keeping personal distance at far phase (from two and a half to four feet) (Hall, 1990, p. 112). This indicates that he knows how to impose himself in the crowd and although Leslie Howard seems physically weak, he knows how to be assertive thanks to spatiality. As he mostly stands still his authority is static. It resides mainly in his posture which is straight and regal. He does not need to move to impose himself. He dominates the situation, just like a king sitting on his throne.

In the musical movie, as Higgins stays invisible until he speaks, he is not exposed to criticisms to the same extent. The crowd never comes close to him and stays at social distance,

thus taking the place of spectator and remaining silent. The passage quoted earlier when the bystanders protest against police espionage was deleted. Therefore, the criticism has been reduced to a minimum and Higgins appears all powerful. Besides, Rex Harrison moves around much more than Leslie Howard thus seeming freer and less crowded. He traces a sort of eight around the columns, speaking to everyone on the way (cf. Diag. 4). Therefore, he seems comfortable around people even though they are clearly puzzled and confused by his presence. Moreover, by moving this much, he never lets himself be trapped by the crowd. His constant movements are what gives him freedom and authority. He does not hesitate to mingle with the crowd and interfere with their discussion. Mrs Eynsford Hill is the only one who rejects and dislikes Higgins openly, as she feels superior to him. He establishes personal distance at a close phase with her (from one and a half to two and a half feet) to announce that she can take the bus, but she quickly moves away in disgust of his interfering, which is considered rude, especially when the persons are not acquainted. Therefore, spatiality is also used to show Higgins's authority and charisma but in a different way than in the other adaptation, as it is at the level of the movement on the set. Indeed, his authority is more dynamic as it is conveyed by action. He moves around and therefore is always active and really seems to do something. This choice efficiently communicates his energy. It is by his energy that his power is asserted.

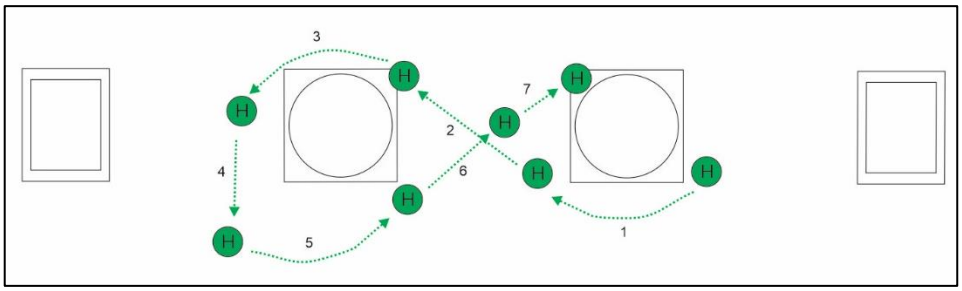

Diagram 4- My Fair Lady*: Higgins's movements in Act One*

The discrepancy between the two actors, Harrison and Howard, shows the difference of representation of masculinity. In the 1930's a man simply had to be there to assert himself as his place in society was higher. In the 1960's a man had to be active to show his worth and assert his authority. More value was given to men who were able to move and take action, and that is why Higgins represents the perfect 1960's hero.

1.2.3 A Scientist

1.2.3.1 In Private and in Public

Besides being rude and mysterious, Higgins is first and foremost presented as a scientist. Indeed, he behaves like the typical phonetician: listens carefully to people's accents, takes notes on people's accents and records them, and corrects people on their accents. The stage directions point to the fact that Higgins has a notebook from the beginning of the play. It is one of the character's rare props and one of the few details we have about him. Its use therefore stands out in the play. This was faithfully reproduced in the musical movie. Rex Harrison writes and peers into it several times. We see him taking it again at the beginning of Act Two to take down Eliza's phonemes. On the other hand, Leslie Howard holds a notebook only during the medium close ups on him in Act One and when he shows it to Eliza. In the following scenes, he wears glasses, which is an attempt at giving him a serious and professor-like look. As a consequence, Rex Harrison is more credible in the role of the scientist than Leslie Howard. This is due to the romanticization of Higgins's character in the movie *Pygmalion*. The directors chose to develop this side of the character less since that character trait is not very attractive and does not fit with the image of the prince charming. Indeed, a know-it-all and grumpy professor was not an interesting character for a romantic relationship at the time. Therefore, in the 1938 adaptation, they had better not foreground this side of Higgins. However, in 1964, the trope of the brilliant professor was more acceptable and had become attractive. As a consequence, Cukor did not hesitate to characterize Higgins as a scientist as it also participated to his romantic side.

In the play, the scientific side of the character is also highlighted by the name given to Higgins: The Note Taker. Therefore, the notebook symbolizes his knowledge and skills as a

phonetician. It gives his character a dimension when he takes it out to note Eliza's cry in it: "[*whipping out his book*] Heavens! What a sound! [*He writes; then holds out the book and reads, reproducing her vowels exactly*] Ah—ah—ah—ow—ow—ow—oo!" (Shaw, 1916, p. 18). His gestures are brisk and his speech quick and sharp, thus giving an overall impression of vitality. Indeed, he is full of a creative force which knows no boundaries. His energy is visible thanks to the numerous movements he makes across the stage. When Shaw finally delivers a description of Higgins at the beginning of the second act, he enhances his scientific energy:

> *He appears in the morning light as a robust, vital, appetizing sort of man of forty or thereabouts, dressed in a professional-looking black frock coat with a white linen collar and black silk tie. He is of the energetic, scientific type, heartily, even violently interested in everything that can be studied as a scientific subject, and careless about himself and other people, including their feelings.* (Shaw, 1916, p. 24)

Rex Harrison moves a lot as early as in the first scene as showed in Diagram 4. Leslie Howard is more static but then in the second scene he moves around the set, going from the door to the piano and to his desk (cf. Diag. 5). Shaw's Higgins cannot stay put and never sits for very long. He does not sit in the second act. Rex Harrison sits down and stands up twice but briefly and circles around his desk and Eliza several times, never standing still (cf. Diag. 6). Leslie Howard also sits down in the second scene, first at the piano and then at his desk but then again, he cannot sit still.

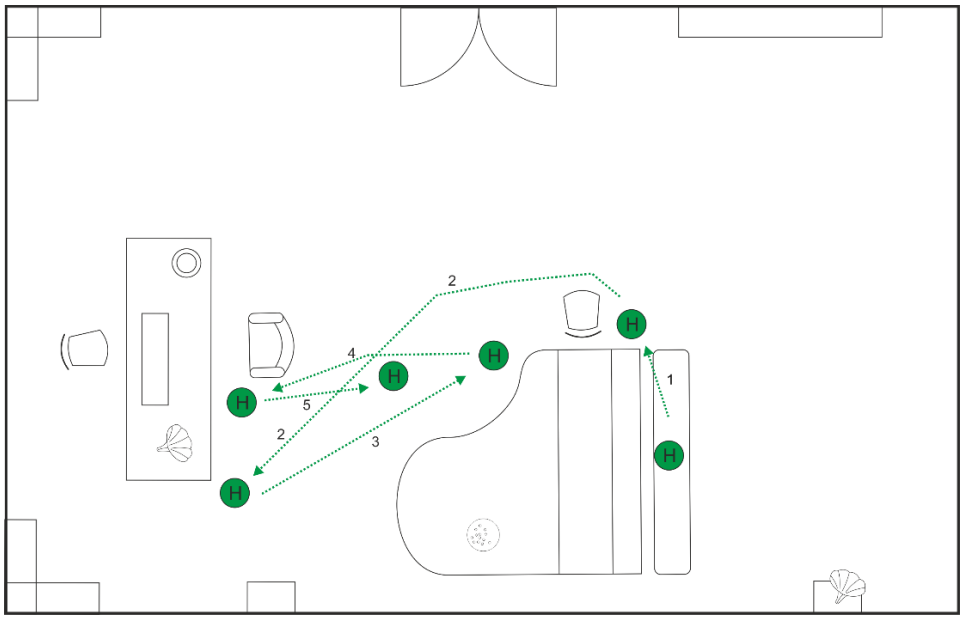

Diagram 5- Leslie Howard's movements in Act Two

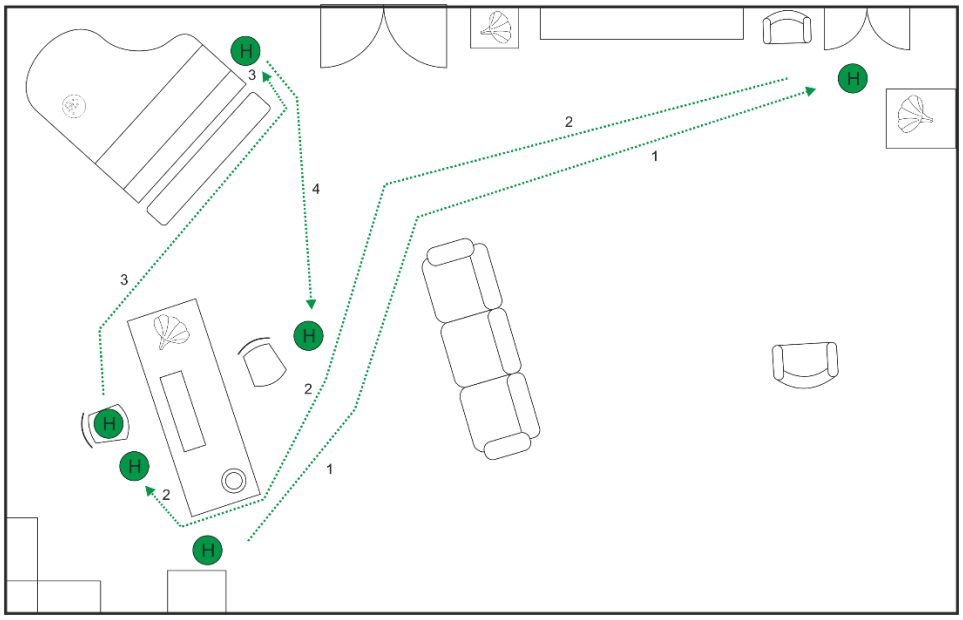

Diagram 6- Rex Harrison's movements in Act Two

Despite the difference of the two sets, it is plain to see that both act out the same pattern of movements. They first move further away from Eliza and then end up turning around her. Both directors probably chose to keep this blocking because it reinforces both his image as the scientist full of ideas and passion and the godlike character with superhuman energy. Furthermore, Leslie Howard keeps fidgeting, turning on himself and manipulating a model to occupy his never resting hands. Therefore, as much by the movements on the set and by his

gestures, he conveys a creative energy which reminds us here again of Pygmalion the sculptor, who created the perfect woman with his hands. Higgins's body seems to be related to his life force as much as to his mind. He is visually present on stage thanks to movements he traces on the stage, like a tearaway that nothing can stop.

This demonstration of passion reaches its peak when he is given challenges, either by the crowd in the first act or by Pickering in the second one. The first one actually announces the second and shows he cannot resist a challenge. The Bystander asks Higgins to guess where Pickering is from. In the adaptations, Higgins's eagerness to rise to the challenge is conveyed by body language. We can read excitement and keen interest in the expressions and gestures of the two actors. This cannot be found in the stage directions of the first act, but as soon as he is asked to guess, Leslie Howard, who was leaning back against the wall, straightens up, his whole body begins to move, and his eyes open wider. It is the first time in the movie that we see him move from where he is standing. He raises his arm on "India" thus emphasizing his words with an ample gesture. Therefore, it is at this point that we understand his passion for phonetics and his immense capacity to guess anyone's origins thanks to their accent. Rex Harrison's rendition of this passage also conveys passion but in a more subtle way. He walks towards the camera, coming closer to Pickering and the spectator, who are put in the same position thanks to the over-the-shoulder shot. He answers very naturally, seeming completely relaxed. This is to show that it is as easy for him as breathing. Besides, he demonstrates his strong involvement with the song "Why Can't the English Learn to Speak" later in the scene. The quick rhythm ideally transcribes his eloquence. The way he sings is mimetic of both the topic of the song and his passion. From then on, the spectator is impressed by Higgins's skills. Besides, his passion is so strong that it is contagious, and it shows another side of his character, more relatable for the audience. We feel closer to this mysterious character and finally

understand his behaviour. Furthermore, the audience is convinced of the honesty of his scientific interest and therefore knows that he is a sympathetic character whom we can trust.

Pickering's and Higgins's expressiveness are even bigger in the second scene when Pickering challenges Higgins to pass Eliza off as a duchess in only six months' training. This time, the stage directions are quite clear. Higgins's emotions go crescendo as he decides to accept the challenge: "*tempted, looking at her*", "*becoming excited as the idea grows on him*" and "*carried away*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 29). This is conveyed by movements in the two adaptations. Leslie Howard takes Eliza by the hand to make her sit down in order to better look at her. We can hear eagerness and excitement in his voice when he says "Come here, sit down" (Asquith & Howard, 1938). Then, he discretely turns on his hidden microphone, meaning he is truly interested by the bet since he wants to record Eliza, contrarily to the beginning of the scene. Next, he puts his hands on his hips, his chin held high which gives him an imposing look. He uses a low and slow tone, which creates a certain solemnity to the declaration, "I shall make a duchess of this draggle-tailed guttersnipe." (Asquith & Howard, 1938). He gives accents of the head on "I'll take her", "anything" and "We'll start" (Asquith & Howard, 1938) to show his enthusiasm and determination. Finally, he makes a vertical gesture of the hand on "now" before going towards Mrs Pearce to order her to clean Eliza, which shows his energy and resoluteness.

Rex Harrison's movements are quite similar. He is the one who moves around Eliza to look at her. However, he smiles much more, holding a pen in his hand and biting it with his lips to accentuate his wondering look while he is thinking about taking up the bet. Then, he pivots, facing the camera and straightens up on "So horribly dirty" (Cukor, 1964). He looks at Eliza, sitting on the chair, like a little boy wanting candy. After Eliza's line, he suddenly points

towards Pickering with his right arm, agreeing to the bet, his head held high. He lowers his head on “duchess”, in a very decisive manner to show his assuredness. On “We’ll start today” (Cukor, 1964) he extends both his arms in front of him, palms facing down, slightly leaning forward. Therefore, Higgins appears to be more than thrilled by this challenge which is “almost irresistible” (Shaw, 1916, p. 29).

Both actors respected the stage directions and the crescendo which represents the reignition of Higgins’s passion. Indeed, that scene is very important to the plot because this challenge takes things to the next level for Higgins as he seems to already know and master his science very well. For him, it also represents testing his abilities as a teacher and phonetician and acquiring the admiration of his colleague Pickering. This moment also marks a turning point in the play. Things are getting more serious as Eliza’s diction lessons turn into a bet and the stakes become higher. It was therefore important for both directors to respect Shaw’s indications, as Higgins’s excitement about the challenge is the complicating factor of the play.

Moreover, Higgins’s home is unmistakably that of a phonetician. His drawing room was transformed into a laboratory. Shaw describes it at length in the stage direction opening Act Two. The room is full of objects linked with the teaching and the study of phonetics:

> *In this corner stands a flat writing-table, on which are a phonograph, a laryngoscope, a row of tiny organ pipes with a bellows, a set of lamp chimneys for singing flames with burners attached to a gas plug in the wall by an indiarubber tube, several tuning-forks of different sizes, a life-size image of half a human head, showing in section the vocal organs, and a box containing a supply of wax cylinders for the phonograph.* (Shaw, 1916, p. 23)

The cinematographic adaptations emphasized this part since it is easier in cinema to recreate settings and find specific props. Both movies took great care to recreate the

atmosphere of Higgins's drawing room but in a very different way. The position of the actors and of the camera plays with the props of the set, so that they become visible on the screen. The 1938 movie exaggerated the size of the phonographs, so that they really stand out in the background of the frame. The walls are covered with mock-ups and drawings of the vocal tract. These curious objects create a scary and strange atmosphere. The science of speech is presented in a peculiar way and seems obscure to the audience. We come to wonder what will really happen to Eliza and we worry for her. Janine Utell explains that in this scene, "the gramophones come signify Eliza's status as an *acousmêtre*, a disunified being." She also views them as an extension of Higgins (2016, p. 64). This aggressive setting conveys Higgins's strong subjectivity and foretells the strict teaching that Eliza will undergo.

On the contrary, the 1964 musical movie is much more subtle in its props and background. They clearly spared no expense, and every object was chosen for its aesthetic value. The set designer, George James Hopkins, won an Academy Award for Set Decoration. The way the phonographs and other phonetic props are displayed is much subtler, which is also due to the fact that they are less numerous. They really seem to belong in the room and therefore are not as scary or aggressive as in the movie *Pygmalion*. Nevertheless, in both movies, Higgins is shown in his element: his house, which perfectly fits the professor of a professor of phonetics image. He remains a phonetician even in private, at home. As a consequence, we understand that his whole life revolves around his passion and that it is his sole occupation.

1.2.3.2 Socially Unfit

Higgins's obsession for his job explains why his social manners are not typical of a member of the upper middle class. He is so focused on phonetics that not only does he forget politeness

and decorum, but most of all the fact that he is dealing with human beings. He seems to think that people are only accents that he can listen to. He forgets about decorum so much that he does not think it odd to mingle with the low society and is not scared of what it could do to his reputation. He does not even care about what they say but only hears their accents and their geographical origins. In the first act, he is antagonised by the crowd and they treat him as an outsider calling him a "blooming busybody." Higgins's answer: "[*turning on him genially*] And how are all your people down at Selsey?" (Shaw, 1916, p. 14) shows that he could not care less about how others perceive him but is only concerned with their accent. In the musical movie, this is emphasized by the fact that Rex Harrison writes The Bystander's words in his notebook. Therefore, Higgins is little concerned with his appearance or what people might think about him. This is also conveyed by the fact that, at this point in the play, there is no physical description of him. He is only described thanks to his actions and to the props he uses. This reinforces the idea that he is only an intellectual and thinking being. His thoughts and his science are what matters and nothing else.

Moreover, in the third act, in which he mingles this time with members of his own social class, he behaves strangely and lacks manners. In fact, he hijacks his mother's at-home day for the sake of his experiment with Eliza, and therefore treats everyone as a scientific object. He welcomes people only because they will serve him scientifically: "[*turning hopefully*] Yes, by George! We want two or three people. You'll do as well as anybody else." (Shaw, 1916, p. 57). He shows enthusiasm only for his experiment. The way he greets Mrs Eynsford Hill is quite uncivil: "[*glumly, making no movement in her direction*] Delighted." He does not make any effort to socialize. He talks "*Drearily*" to Miss Eynsford Hill and rudely orders her to sit down. The stage directions also indicate that he is clumsy and very ill at ease in that environment: "*He backs against the piano and bows brusquely*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 56). Most ironically, he is

the one who almost sabotages the experiment because of his own improper behaviour. Indeed, he sits down so violently that the guests, whose sole purpose for him is to make Eliza talk, go silent for a while:

> *He goes to the divan, stumbling into the fender and over the fire-irons on his way; extricating himself with muttered imprecations; and finishing his disastrous journey by throwing himself so impatiently on the divan that he almost breaks it. Mrs. Higgins looks at him, but controls herself and says nothing. A long and painful pause ensues.* (Shaw, 1916, pp. 59–60)

In the adaptations nothing of the kind happens. Indeed, even though Leslie Howard and Rex Harrison are quite socially awkward, they do not ridicule themselves. The former wears glasses and holds his pipe in his mouth, which is an attempt at giving him a serious and severe look. He looks at Eliza sternly, opening his eyes wide and raising his eyebrows thus watching her every movement like a hawk. He makes precise and small gestures, while looking at her intensely when he gives her the plate and cup, asserting his authority and pressuring her. Contrary to the play, he is being polite with everybody and tries to chat with the Vicar thus interrupting Eliza, which is the opposite of what he is supposed to do. The only odd thing he does is to put his glasses on his forehead, which gives him an eccentric look. He does act strange because of the experiment since he communicates silently with Eliza several times. For example, he tells her to sit down and then to leave by miming the action, but he does so discretely, and he never disturbs the other guests. This interpretation of Higgins's behaviour in this passage is completely extrapolated since in the play Higgins does not intervene the whole time Eliza is present in the room. The only time the play's Higgins speaks is to define "to do a person in" (Shaw, 1916, p. 60). For the first time in the play, he completely steps back to let Eliza hold the floor. Leslie Howard therefore chose to completely overrule Shaw's

decision. This choice of acting in the 1938 movie emphasizes the puppet master/live doll relationship between Higgins and Eliza as we see him give orders and she obeys.

Rex Harrison is quieter in this scene as he does not interrupt Eliza. However, each time Eliza says something, he silently makes faces which are emphasized by medium close ups. For most of the conversation, he stands behind her, and he is therefore as present on the screen as Eliza. The spectator also notices him because of his impolite manners. He leans against the post and puts his hands in his pockets, which is considered rude. When Eliza says hello to the party, he leans slightly forward to better listen to her and nods or bows every time she says something right. In this way, he stands close to her, at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches), which is not proper in public and seems quite peculiar. Immediately after, he stands farther from her when he says hello. Therefore, he does not grasp what is socially acceptable or not and behaves oddly. This translates Higgins's awkwardness in the play. Similarly, he almost throws off the experiment with his odd behaviour. Indeed, when Eliza manages to say "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain" (Cukor, 1964) correctly, he begins to dance, tapping his feet and holding his arms above his head, in a sort of Spanish fashion[7]. This has the effect of making Mrs Eynesford Hill frown as she is puzzled by his behaviour. Luckily, Eliza and the rest of her audience see nothing, and she continues to make small talk. The most awkward reaction he has to Eliza's conversation is when he puts his cup of tea on his hat when she says "He kept ladling gin down her throat." (Cukor, 1964). While she is also inappropriate because of her vocabulary, he is even more so as he has no manners, contrary to her. As a consequence, Higgins's conduct can be compared to a child's, who does

[7] This is a reference to the musical number "The rain in Spain".

not yet know the social conventions and thus how to behave in society. He still seems oblivious of his body and how to control it in public.

Furthermore, Lerner decided to transpose Mrs Higgins's at-home day to Ascot, the royal horse race. This change of scenery was necessary for a musical[8] and it also serves to emphasize Higgins's unsocial behaviour. Cecil Beaton, the costume designer, created magnificent monochrome black and white gowns for women and grey suits for men, hence the beautiful aesthetic of scene. The colours are rather pale and easy on the eyes. However, when Higgins enters the shot, he is still wearing the same brownish tweeds. In this way, he visually stands out from the crowd of aristocrats. He clearly does not belong in this society. His mother remarks to him that he is not dressed for Ascot but he answers inappropriately: "I changed my shirt" (Cukor, 1964), showing that he does not even grasp the importance of a dress code. Similarly to the play's Higgins, he does not seem to fit into the high society. His stage entrance was designed to emphasize this idea. There are no big dancing numbers in *My Fair Lady*, but at the beginning of this scene, the members of the high society do a sort of ballet, miming the decorum and politeness linked with their social class. Each person avoids bumping into or poking each other by a graceful sidestep or by spinning. Everything is timed perfectly. For example, a lady comes forward with her parasol opened while a gentleman steps back in her direction. She closes her parasol just before he would have bumped into it. In the same sequence, a gentleman bows to a lady to kiss her hand. His cane sticks out as he leans forward and is going to touch a lady standing behind him but just before it touches her, she steps forward. Immediately after, they repeat the same movements symmetrically. This choreography was designed to reproduce the social decorum and conventions of the time in

[8] It is required in a musical to change costumes and scenery very often so as to be as entertaining as possible.

a lightly manner. It also serves as a caricature as everything is exaggerated. Higgins's stage entrance disturbs this beautifully oiled routine as he bumps into a lady's parasol. Therefore, his presence is presented as disruptive and unwelcome. When Eliza finally appears, he suddenly shouts loudly while making a big gesture with his arm, pointing at the sky. He steps over the low wall to get closer to Eliza and Pickering, forgetting once and for all about boundaries and decorum. He then proceeds to make ample flailing gestures with both arms, to tell them to come to him. Therefore, he does absolutely everything wrong. As we have seen in the preceding scene which happens at Higgins's house, he does not behave any differently in private. His conduct is exactly the same: ample gestures, cursing, loudness … As a consequence, for Higgins there is no private or public dimension just like there is no class distinction. He talks to a duchess or to a cockney girl in the same way. At the end of the play, Eliza compares Higgins's and Pickering's behaviour. She points out that the latter treats a flower girl as a duchess. Higgins answers: "And I treat a duchess as if she was a flower girl." (Shaw, 1916, p. 99). He then goes on explaining:

> [*Seriously*] The great secret, Eliza, is not having bad manners or good manners or any other particular sort of manners, but having the same manner for all human souls: in short, behaving as if you were in Heaven, where there are no third-class carriages, and one soul is as good as another. (Shaw, 1916, p. 99)

This is the only moment when the stage direction indicates that Higgins is serious. This line can be considered Higgins's mantra and therefore, Shaw's message. He believed in equality and promoted the abolition of classes. He joined the socialists in the early 1880's (Mugglestone, 1993, p. 374) and he joined and actively participated to the Fabian Society in 1884 (Valency, 1973, pp. 12–13). This passage, although adapted to the musical genre,

emphasizes Cukor's desire to respect Shaw's message and convey a critic of society in his own way.

2 Beyond Appearances

Although Shaw's characters are quite stereotypical, they are also full of contradictions and rebel against those stereotypes. They have their own qualities and faults. Those are represented differently in the adaptations, thus significantly changing the characterization of the two protagonists. Above all, their relationship is completely different in each interpretation.

2.1 Independence: A True Heroine

Eliza Doolittle is a proud cockney flower girl who is determined to better herself and rise in society. However, we cannot reduce her to her situation and transformation. This is what she successfully shows Higgins in Act Five. From the beginning of the play, she has qualities that allow her to become an independent person. She is also very modest and does not seek to become a princess but just "a lady in a flower shop" (Shaw, 1916, p. 26) in order to achieve financial security, which is illustrated by the song "Wouldn't It Be Loverly" in the musical: "All I want is a room somewhere / Far away from the cold night air" (Cukor, 1964). After Eliza successfully passes for a princess at the embassy ball, there remain two more acts. This was Shaw's way of showing us what happens after the "happy endings" of fairy tales. Eliza has only truly progressed and changed when she realizes what she is capable of and decides to leave her teacher.

2.1.1 An Extraordinary Individual

It is obvious that Eliza has predispositions for learning another accent or new manners. She is no ordinary individual. Higgins's theory is that he could have taken any cockney flower girl and teach her how to speak and behave properly. However, Eliza achieves this in a mere

six months which is a feat in itself. Derek McGovern writes about her, “Throughout the play Eliza remains, in essence, the same person whom we encounter in Act I.” (McGovern, 2011, p. 57). Lisa Starks notes that “Despite her dirty face, ragged clothes, and loud, child-like behaviour, Eliza does initially have what it takes to pass as a duchess, as both Higgins and the audience know” (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 57). In fact, although she is presented as inferior during the four first acts of the play, she is the other protagonist. Even though the title is *Pygmalion* thus indicating that Higgins is the main protagonist, Shaw had first thought of *Pygmalion: Fair Eliza* as a title for his play. Lerner and Loewe were inspired by this working title and decided to name their musical after Eliza’s character. Their first ideas were *My Fair Eliza*, *Liza* or *Lady Liza* but Lerner thought it would have been peculiar to have “Rex Harrison in *Liza*” written on the poster (Niedo, 2010, p. 262).

Besides, Eliza is not overshadowed by Higgins, and she is capable of standing up to him. She takes as much space on stage and on screen as he does. Her character’s stage entrances are particularly revealing of her strong personality. At the beginning of the play, her first action is to bump into Freddy. Since he was grouped with the two women in evening dress, we understand that he belongs to, and therefore represents, the high society. Therefore, from the first moments of the play, Eliza is mistreated by the high society but also goes against it. The first time we see her face is when she is “*picking up her scattered flowers and replacing them in the basket*” (Shaw, 1916, p. 10). In this way, she is presented in a position of inferiority. This moment is treated differently in the two adaptations. We see Eliza before the collision. Therefore, her first apparition on screen is not in a position of inferiority but as a flower girl walking around. Thanks to the way she is filmed in both movies, the viewer understands that she is an important character. She is singled out from all the other flower girls and her face “is a focal point in the frame” (Utell, 2016, p. 63). Therefore, she is not an ordinary flower girl,

but the one who will rise in society and get out of the streets. However, the camera angle constantly reminds the viewer that Eliza is inferior to Mrs. Eynsford Hill. She is filmed in high angle shots and all the other characters are shot in a low angle, emphasizing their social rank. However, when The Bystander warns her that someone is "taking her down" (Shaw, 1916, p. 13), there is no camera angle to show that they belong to the same social class. The same technique is used for both adaptations since Harry Stradling worked as director of photography on both movies (McGovern, 2011, p. 321). In the 1938 movie, The Bystander is standing very close to her, leaning so that their two faces are at the same level. In this way, the intimate distance at a far phase (from six to eighteen inches) between them and the familiarity that results from it emphasize their equal position in society.

Besides, she is sitting when she talks to Mrs Eynsford Hill and later to Higgins. This visually adds inferiority to her character. However, Eliza does not seem to see things this way. She does not stay at her place and answers back to Mrs Eynsford Hill. Although she has a cockney accent, it does not prevent her from having the gift of retort, just like her father. After the collision with Freddy, she does not assume the place of the victim and clearly voices her displeasure. Furthermore, she does not hesitate to protest against Mrs Eynsford Hill's accusations: "[*protesting*] Who's trying to deceive you?" (Shaw, 1916, p. 11). Therefore, even though she appears and sounds inferior, she asserts herself.

2.1.2 Standing Tall Against All Odds

In Act Two, thanks to her gift of retort, Eliza is capable of answering back to Higgins and she convinces him to give her lessons. She is quick-witted as she answers Higgins "Oh, we are proud! He aint above giving lessons, not him: I heard him say so. Well, I aint come here to ask for any compliment; and if my money's not good enough I can go elsewhere." (Shaw, 1916, p.

26). In the 1938 movie, when saying this line, Eliza advances into the room towards Higgins. He is sitting sideways at the piano and this forces her to come all the way to him downstage. She places herself beside him, but he is still not looking at her, so she puts herself centre stage facing him so that he is obliged to listen to her (cf. Diag. 7).

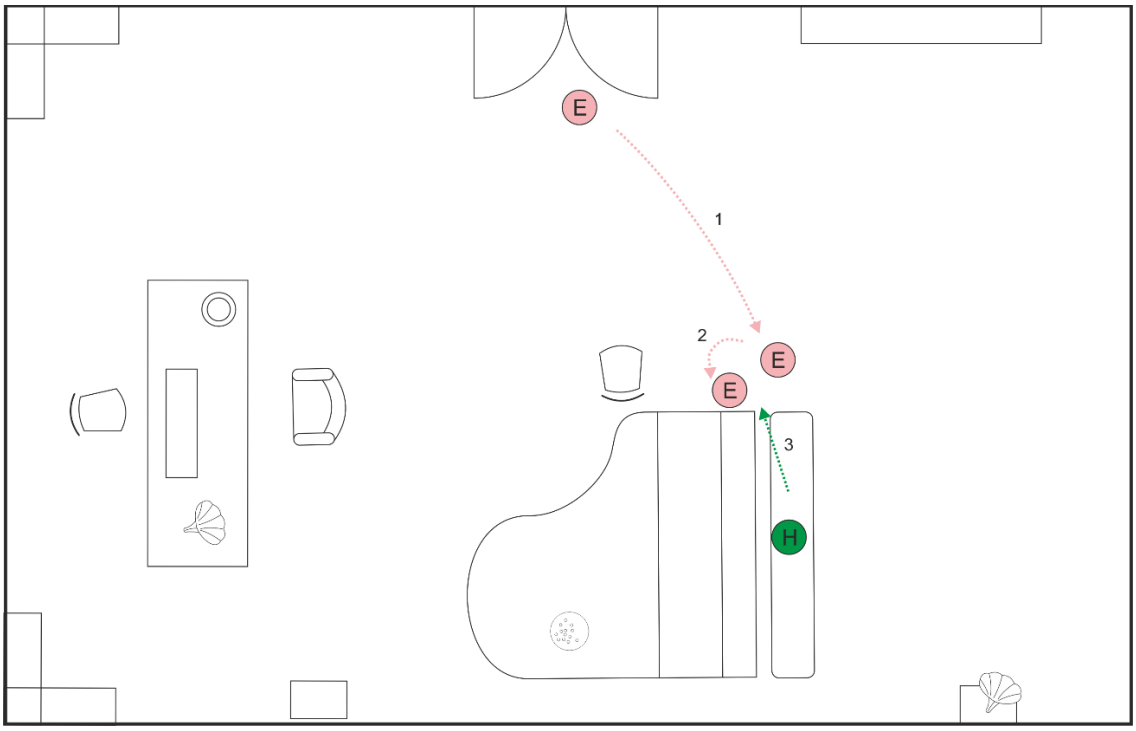

Diagram 7- Pygmalion 1938: Eliza facing Higgins forcing him to listen

According to J. L. Styan, a long down-stage entrance is effective and gives opportunities for the actor to create a mood or establish a character (1967, p. 69). Therefore, her long entrance from upstage to downstage allows her to show Higgins that she is really serious about taking lessons and that she is capable of imposing herself to get what she wants. In this way, she also seeks to establish a proximity with Higgins, a personal distance so that he will listen to her and take her seriously. This movement has the same effect on the viewer. The camera does a panning shot on Eliza when she moves forward ending by a medium shot on her. Therefore, she is closer to the spectator. According to J. L. Styan, when an actor is coming downstage, it also creates a feeling of honesty, familiarity and sympathy with them (1967, p.

94). That is why there are more medium close ups on Eliza and Pickering than on Higgins since they are more sympathetic than him. The spectator is directed to feel sympathy towards characters who are physically closer rather than those who are upstage. In Act Two of the 1938 movie, there is a medium close up on Pickering to highlight his act of kindness when he is being polite to Eliza and asks her “What is it you want my dear?” (Asquith & Howard, 1938). Then, there is a reaction shot on Eliza, a medium close up as well while she pleads for her project of becoming “a lady in a flower shop... instead of selling in Piccadilly Circus.” (Asquith & Howard, 1938). She is almost smiling, and her eyes are wide open, and her eyebrows are raised to show that she is being honest. The spectator feels compassion and even pity for her when she complains about Higgins: “I'm not askin' any favors. And he treats me as if I was dirt. I know what lessons cost, and I'm ready to pay.” (Asquith & Howard, 1938). She looks down on “dirt” and frowns to show that she is really hurt by Higgins’s words. Nevertheless, she raises her chin and looks up on “I know what lessons cost” to show that she is still confident and knows what she wants. She is almost begging Higgins and asks him straight away for lessons. She is presented as honest and pure. Hiller’s Eliza is the typical heroine of the 1930’s.

In the musical movie, Eliza also makes a long entrance but does not come downstage. She enters into the room in a long shot in which we see every character present in the scene. She is stopped by Higgins’s refusal of seeing her. Here again she takes advantage of their physical proximity when he passes near her to follow him (cf. Diag. 8).

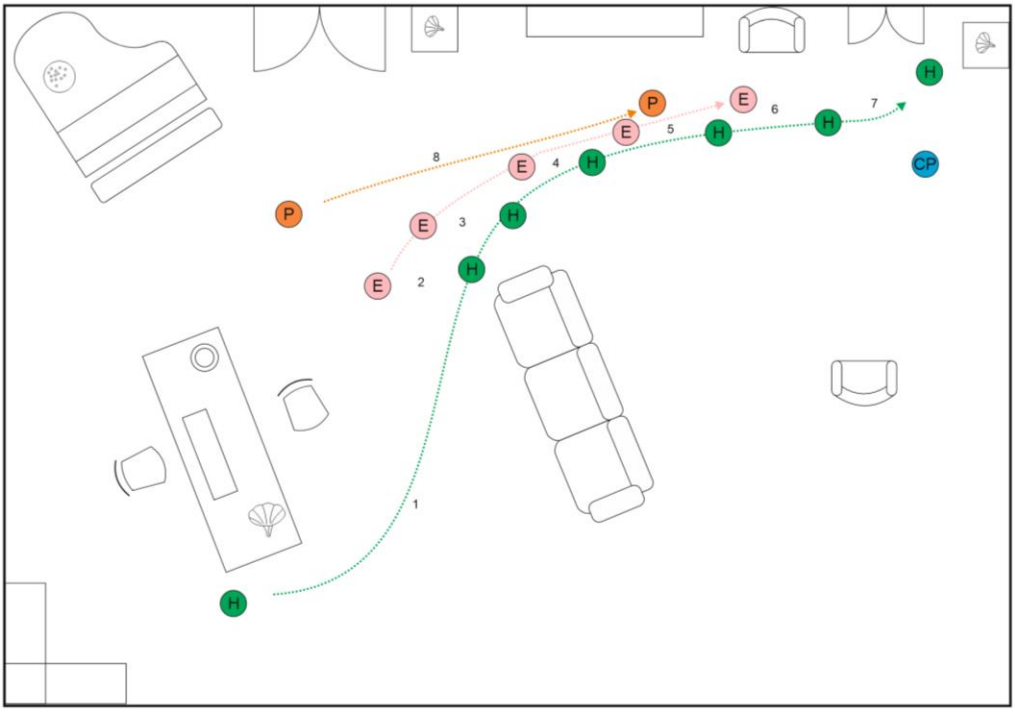

Diagram 8- My Fair Lady*: Eliza takes advantage of Higgins's proximity to follow him*

She tries to establish personal distance so that he will listen to her. She does not dare to come too close to him but she manages to pique his curiosity when she says “Good enough for you!” (Cukor, 1964). Besides, she stands proudly, holding her purse with her two hands. She wears a hat almost like in the play “*with three ostrich feathers, orange, sky-blue, and red.*” (Shaw, 1916, p. 25). As she holds her head high and emphasizes her speech by accents of the head, her hat moves a lot which undermines her seriousness. She incarnates the perfect satire of the poor girl who wants to pass for a lady but simply fails and is just ridiculous. However, she knows what to say so that Higgins will listen to her. She also knows when to keep silent. At the end of her sentences, she does not look him straight in the eyes, expecting to make an impression on him. On “Good enough for you” (Cukor, 1964) she leans forward in his direction, finally revealing the purpose of her visit. She seeks to surprise him. Audrey Hepburn’s Eliza is a lot less innocent. She tries to make Higgins more interested in her offer and is not as honest

and straightforward as Wendy Hiller. She is sly as she tries to convince Higgins. She is thus presented as smart and cunning. The 1960's heroine is no longer a pure and innocent girl.

The same device of medium close ups is used as in the 1938 movie when Pickering asks her what she wants. The only difference is the reaction to Higgins's question, "Pickering: shall we ask this baggage to sit down, or shall we throw her out of the window?" (Shaw, 1916, p. 26). In the 1938 version Eliza only raises her voice when she protests "I won't be called an object when I've offered to pay like any lady." (Asquith & Howard, 1938). Whereas in the play, the stage direction reads: "[*running away in terror to the piano, where she turns at bay*] Ah—ah—ah—ow—ow—ow—oo! [*Wounded and whimpering*] I wont be called a baggage when Ive offered to pay like any lady." (Shaw, 1916, p. 26). Therefore, she has a much stronger reaction and Audrey Hepburn even pushes it as far as to cry while taking a step back against the furniture. As a consequence, she seems genuinely scared of Higgins and hurt while Wendy Hiller seems more passive. She already behaves like a lady whereas Hepburn does not hesitate to showcase her wildness. Eliza breaks the personal distance she had established and prefers social distance which is safer and clearly shows that she will not let him badger her. Therefore, the viewer has sympathy for her, but at the same time is a bit annoyed by her as her reaction is exaggerated since we know Higgins is not truly violent. Nevertheless, her reaction finally captures the attention of the two gentlemen: "*motionless, the two men stare at her from the other side of the room, amazed.*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 26). Whether behaving rudely or as a lady, Eliza has this capacity to draw the attention of everyone in the room.

In the play, she does not come centre stage right away. She first retreats to the piano. It is only when Higgins asks her "How much?" that she is "*coming back to him, triumphant*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 27), thus putting herself centre stage. We can also imagine that she is slightly

downstage since the line after is delivered "*confidentially*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 27) to Higgins (cf. Diag. 9).

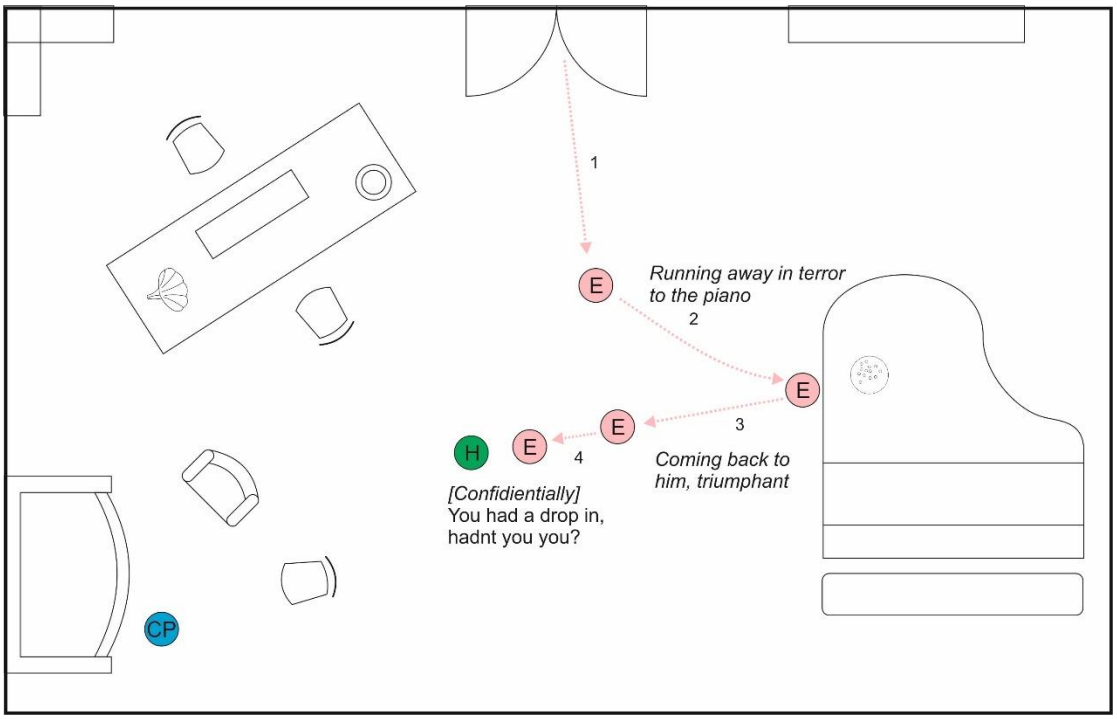

Diagram 9- Shaw's play: Eliza coming centre stage then downstage

In this case, the downstage area is used to be closer to the audience but farther than other characters as it can be considered an aside from them. Therefore, the moment is also comic since it is Eliza who takes the central place and dares to ask Higgins if he had been drinking the night before. Higgins feels threatened and asks her "*peremptorily*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 27) to sit down so that she will take an inferior position again. This little dance shows their struggle to become the protagonist of the story.

Eliza's stage entrance in Act Three is particularly different. As we have seen, it is the moment when her physical transformation is complete. Paradoxically, it is also the first time that we see her being so insecure. She is scared to mingle with the high society, whereas in Act One she did not mind transgressing social rules at all. Now she cannot be herself and one

false step can reveal who she really is. In the 1938 movie, she seems trapped in the room. She turns around to watch the door being closed on her and hesitates to come in. This is filmed in a long shot reinforcing the size of the room, making her look small and inadequate. In the musical movie, Eliza seems nervous as she looks around. Colonel Pickering notices and pats her hand to comfort her. Therefore, her long entrance in this scene serves to create an atmosphere of suspense: will she fulfil Higgins's assignment and pass for a lady? Furthermore, beyond introducing the new Eliza, this long entrance also establishes her nervousness and apprehension to such a challenge. The Eliza that we knew was not afraid to come to Higgins's house and ask for lessons but the new one has less self-confidence because she has more to lose. However, she manages to hide her apprehension perfectly well and regains her ease after speaking in a perfect accent for a while.

Besides, even though what she says discredits her in the eyes of the high society, she is still an excellent storyteller. In fact, everyone seems to be listening avidly to her story about her aunt. She has an excellent command of suspense thanks to her tone and silences. She confidently looks at everyone while telling it, making eye contact and using rhetorical tools. She makes simple, short sentences that provoke quite a sensation amongst her audience:

> LIZA [*darkly*] My aunt died of influenza: so they said.
>
> MRS. EYNSFORD HILL [*clicks her tongue sympathetically*]!!!
>
> LIZA [*in the same tragic tone*] But it's my belief they done the old woman in.
>
> MRS. HIGGINS [*puzzled*] Done her in? (Shaw, 1916, p. 60)

A series of shots and reverse shots show the party's reaction to Eliza's story. They are all absorbed in a story and look at her with interest. The climax of the story is when we learn that the murderers have also stolen a straw hat that Eliza was supposed to inherit. She delivers her

sentences slowly, to build up suspense. While saying “And what become of her new straw hat that should have come to me?” (Asquith & Howard, 1938), she opens her eyes wide to express the seriousness of the problem. Then, she detaches every word of the next sentence “Somebody...pinched it” (Asquith & Howard, 1938), and accentuates “somebody” by raising her eyebrows and slightly leaning forward to convey the importance of the revelation she is making. It is all the funnier as she uses an informal word but in a perfect high standard accent with a very serious and dignified air. A reaction shot ensues on the whole party who are leaning towards Eliza, standing still, listening attentively. She then stands straight on her chair, looking at her cup, very satisfied with herself. Therefore, even though it is obvious she does not belong to the high society, she knows how to capture an audience and deliver gossip. These are two qualities that the high society lacks, and Eliza adds colour to their gathering (quite literally in *My Fair Lady* since she is the only one who does not wear only black and white). Besides, they do not seem that shocked by her discourse as they are perfectly able to listen to her with great interest. Even though this moment is supposed to represent her failure as she does not pass Higgins’s test and reveals her low origins, she wins over the attention of the guests and is the attraction of the party. She has a natural charisma that seduces anybody and makes her a success in any circumstances.

Furthermore, the addition of the Vicar creates comic moments when we see his strong reactions to the story. He seems very taken by Eliza’s story as well. He even utters an exclamation and points his finger when Eliza says “Now... What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza?” (Asquith & Howard, 1938) as if he were really interested and agreed with her. His character therefore functions first as a comic relief. His facial expressions are funny by their exaggeration and convey his consternation. His reactions are what come punctuate Eliza’s story and give the audience a measure of her enormity for a

religious man. It thus adds a moral dimension to the scene. Eliza has not yet become pure enough to fit in the moral standards of the time. The 1938 version therefore shows another side of her transformation by adding a character who highlights the moral dimension of her transformation. She has also to cleanse her soul of the lower-class low morals in order to become a lady.

What is most striking about Eliza, as Berst puts it, is her "individual assertiveness" (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 57). Indeed, she never hesitates to take and defend her place whether it be in society or with Higgins. Right from the beginning, she mingles with everybody and does not hesitate to stand up to Mrs Eynsford Hill. She symbolically defends her place on the plinth of the column as her place in society, which is as important as anyone's. She stands up against Higgins when he tells her "[*explosively*] Woman: cease this detestable boohooing instantly; or else seek the shelter of some other place of worship." (Shaw, 1916, p. 18). She does not lose her countenance and does not move from where she is sitting. She answers back "[*with feeble defiance*] Ive a right to be here if I like, same as you." (Shaw, 1916, p. 18). In the musical movie, Audrey Hepburn accompanies this line by an accent of the head on "Ive a right" and straightens up and readjusts her coat, thus adopting a proud posture and taking on a dignified air. She looks at Higgins straight in the eyes (cf. Fig. 4). This reaction seems all the more courageous as the camera emphasizes the violence of Higgins's yell with a zooming-in medium close up shot on him while he comes closer to her. This is a proof of her self-esteem. Audrey Hepburn and Wendy Hiller deliver this line in a very similar tone. However, the latter's pitch is higher, and her posture is not at all proud. She holds her arms crossed on her bust, in a position of withdrawal thus embodying the feeble more than the defiance of the stage direction (cf. Fig. 5). However, in the two movies, the composition of the shots makes Eliza looks small. In the musical movie, the gigantic size of the column makes Audrey Hepburn look

lonely and weak. In the 1938 movie, Higgins is standing up beside her, while she is sitting down which makes her smaller in comparison. She has to look up whereas he looks down at her.

Figure 4- Audrey Hepburn protesting "same as you"

Figure 5- Wendy Hiller protesting "same as you"

Wendy Hiller is here again more passive in her reactions to Higgins's remark. She is presented as less rebellious than in the play and is thus closer to the traditional image of women at the time. On the other hand, Audrey Hepburn is closer to the play by her strong reactions. The director decided to show her as a strong woman. Although Eliza is almost constantly presented as inferior, small or weak, her behaviour tells otherwise. She is not intimidated by anyone, not even Higgins. She is "relatively secure in her sense of self-worth" (McGovern, 2011, p. 57) even though she does not consider herself good enough to marry in Act Two. Eliza is therefore a stronger character than she appears. Both adaptations reflect that fact, *My Fair Lady* more so than *Pygmalion*.

We will now focus on Higgins and see that he is not just a stock character as well. He is a multifaceted character. His arrogance is legendary. He behaves as if he were always right and reacts like a baby when told otherwise. We have seen that he is not comfortable in social context. However, he seems to need social contact and the recognition and admiration of his

peers. A comparison between Leslie Howard and Rex Harrison will show what image the two actors convey and the significance behind their differences.

2.2 A Confirmed Old Bachelor or A Prince Charming?

As we have seen, Higgins is very far away from the typical prince charming. He is first a phonetician conducting experiments and behaves awkwardly as he has the same attitude in public and in private. He seems to be rather lonely before he meets Colonel Pickering and Eliza. Many critiques have described his character's sexuality as ambiguous because of he is apparently not interested in Eliza as a woman and because of his great friendship with Pickering[9]. He is also overtly misogynistic, especially in the musical adaptation. Lerner and Loewe, inspired by Rex Harrison, wrote two songs for his character which develops this aspect, "An Ordinary Man" and "A Hymn to Him" (Garebian, 2000, p. 53). Marcie Ray explains, "Such songs urge the spectators not to sympathize with the phoneticist and his low esteem for women, but rather to hope for his transformation as well." (Ray, 2014, p. 300). In this way, he is a complex character. Shaw wanted him to remain a confirmed old bachelor but in the two adaptations, his status seems to change as both hint to a romantic ending.

2.2.1 An Arrogant Bully

Higgins's unsympathetic character comes from the fact that he is extremely self-assured and self-indulged. This leads him to consider everyone inferior, even Pickering. In the two interpretations, this is particularly noticeable in Act One, when he explains his job to him. He boasts about his phonetic skills and could not be prouder of himself:

> Simply phonetics. The science of speech. Thats my profession; also my hobby. Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby! You can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshireman by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles. I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets. (Shaw, 1916, p. 17)

[9] Marcie Ray shows that he has an "undefined sexuality" (Ray, 2014, p. 293). Raymond Knapp explains that he is homosexual (2009, p. 286). Stacy Wolf makes a similarly claim (Wolf, 2002, pp. 152–160).

In the 1938 *Pygmalion*, the two men are grouped on the set by a medium close up and they stand at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches). This means that they are very close, more than what is usually required in public for two strangers (Hall, 1990, p. 112). They would not need to speak very loud at this distance but they both still speak with a normal voice level. This a way for Higgins to assert himself and brag about his knowledge. For Pickering, it is a way to show his surprise and interest. Leslie Howard's body language conveys arrogance and pride. Indeed, he stands erect and makes a gesture of the right hand on "the science of speech" (Asquith & Howard, 1938), almost touching Pickering's arm. He opens his eyes wider and points his finger in the air on "That's my profession" (Asquith & Howard, 1938). He slightly smiles on "Yes it is also my hobby" (Asquith & Howard, 1938). He straightens up on "You see you can spot" (Asquith & Howard, 1938), and turns his bust towards Pickering, looking at him in the eyes. He holds his chin up and continues to look him in the eyes on "but I can place any man within six miles" (Asquith & Howard, 1938). He gives an accent of the head just before "I can place him within two miles" (Asquith & Howard, 1938) and opens his eyes wider on "two". All these movements and his steady tone indicate that he has no doubt his performance is exceptional. Most of all, he wants to impress Pickering and is looking to make a strong impression on him, but I will come back to that later. What is most striking is the fact that while giving this proud speech, he pays attention to Eliza's whining. He adds "in the case of this girl" to the text, which includes her in his speech, and he looks at her, losing eye contact with his interlocutor and therefore, the person he wanted to impress. This clearly indicates that a hierarchy is created between the characters' relationships. Higgins and Pickering get along quickly but Higgins does not hesitate to leave Pickering in order to comfort Eliza if necessary. Therefore, Higgins cares as much or even more about Eliza as he does about Pickering. This is contrary to the relationship dynamics of the play, and of the musical movie,

where Pickering is the only one who comforts Eliza. In this version, the relationship between Higgins and Eliza is thus given a special dimension. Furthermore, this moment shows Higgins in a more human way since he is capable of caring about someone else's feelings.

Rex Harrison's performance emphasizes Higgins's self-indulgence and arrogance even more. He is filmed in a medium close up shot, facing the camera and Pickering. They stand at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches), which hints at their future friendship and closeness. In terms of gestures, he first waves with his right hand, which is holding the notebook, on "simple phonetics" (Cukor, 1964). Then, he straightens up and joins his hands, his arms straightened against his body and his head held high. We can deduce that he is very proud of his job and of his knowledge. This comes in contradiction with "simple" which is in fact false modesty. On "science of speech" (Cukor, 1964), which explains what phonetics are, he leans slightly towards Pickering while looking at him steadily, as if he were giving a lesson to a child. He straightens up and smiles on "hobby" (Cukor, 1964), maybe transcribing the "Happy is the man who can make a living by his hobby!" (Shaw, 1916, p. 17) which was cut out in both movies. Lerner probably preferred to emphasize how Higgins likes to boast rather than his happiness. The "Anyone" (Cukor, 1964) here is marked because it tells us that Higgins does not consider himself a nobody. However, it is less harsh than the "you" used in the play and the 1938 movie which places Pickering below Higgins in a tactless way. The difference of characterization between the two movies indicates clearly the difference of interpretation. The directors did not make the same choices regarding Higgins. Asquith and Howard emphasized a softer, more humane side while Cukor emphasized Higgins's domination. Clearly, Asquith and Howard gave a meliorative portrait while Cukor did not try to conceal Higgins's flaws, showing him in all his complexity.

Shaw's Higgins is verbally violent with Eliza, warning her that he will be "worse than two fathers" to her (Shaw, 1916, p. 28) and stays insensitive to her tears. He does not care about her feelings and does not think that she has any. He insults her almost every time he speaks to her. His first words to her are very representative of the way he addresses himself to her: "There, there, there, there! who's hurting you, you silly girl?" (Shaw, 1916, p. 13). The stage directions also hint to some physical violence when he speaks to her. Indeed, "*explosively*", "*brusquely*", "*peremptorily*", "*thundering at her*", "*looking critically at her*" (Shaw, 1916, pp. 18, 25, 27, 32) entail big gestures towards Eliza. The adaptations acted out these movements but in a different way. As we have seen, Leslie Howard has gentler manners than Rex Harrison. Therefore, he bullies Eliza slightly less. He does not make any violent gestures in the first scene. On the other hand, in the second one, he points at her with his screwdriver several times which corresponds to the stage direction "*brusquely*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 25). He stands very close to her, at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches) when he says "Someone's going to touch you with a broomstick if you don't stop snivelling." (Asquith & Howard, 1938) and makes a rotative gesture of the hand, miming the broomstick. He also points to her in a very dismissive manner when he orders Mrs Pearce to burn her clothes. When Eliza defends herself and says: "You're no gentleman, you ain't, to talk of such things. I'm a good girl, and I know what the likes of you are. I do." (Asquith & Howard, 1938) he menacingly takes back his screwdriver and points it at her while coming toward her. Then, he takes her by the arm, forcing her to stand up, and drags her to Mrs Pearce. The most violent moment is when he chases her out of the room and up the stairs and shoves the chocolate in her mouth. However, the list is rather small compared to Rex Harrison's rough gestures. Therefore, Leslie Howard is closer to the prince charming than to the tyrannical bully.

When Rex Harrison comes from behind the pillar in Act One, he brutally shakes his notebook while saying “Shut up, shut up” (Cukor, 1964). He also makes big gestures with his arm when he orders her to sit down, pointing at the chair. Then, he makes quite an evocative gestures when he advises Mrs Pearce to “wallop” (Cukor, 1964) Eliza if she gives her any trouble. He raises his arm above his head and lowers it abruptly, miming the blow, holding his pen in his hand. When Eliza raises from her chair and make the second attempt to leave, he follows her quickly and snatches the handkerchief from her hand. All of these gestures serve to characterize Higgins as a bully, especially with Eliza and to show that he has “no feeling heart” in him and that he “care[s] for nothing” but himself (Shaw, 1916, p. 32). Besides, Rex Harrison’s tone is much harsher than Leslie Howard’s. Therefore, *My Fair Lady*’s Higgins is closer to the play’s in terms of violence and is less romanticized. Leslie Howard, as the prince charming that he is, cannot be too much of a bully to the princess. On the contrary, at this moment of the movie, Rex Harrison is portrayed as the bad guy who has not learnt to be gentle yet.

Paradoxically, Higgins often acts like a baby. He can pout like one when he does not get what he wants. For example, when Mrs Pearce ventures objections to the whole experiment, he reacts as a child with his nurse. He becomes impatient because he is forbidden to play with his toy, and as his mother puts it, him and Pickering are a “pretty pair of babies, playing with [their] live doll.” (Shaw, 1916, p. 65). Shaw himself calls Higgins a baby in the description he gives at the beginning of the second act: “*He is, in fact, but for his years and size, rather like a very impetuous baby “taking notice” eagerly and loudly, and requiring almost as much watching to keep him out of unintended mischief.*” (Shaw, 1916, p. 24). This is conveyed by gestures and expressions by both actors in the two adaptations. Leslie Howard impatiently plays with the vocal tract model and turns his back on his Mrs Pearce, played by Jean Cadell.

He holds his head up proudly and pouts like a little boy who is forbidden from playing when saying: “She's no use to anybody but me.” (Asquith & Howard, 1938). He is foregrounded by a medium shot when he makes big gestures to show his discontentment, coaxing Mrs Pearce. Rex Harrison’s acting is similar. Mrs Pearce, played by Mona Washbourne, advances towards Higgins, placing herself close to him, and thus establishing the close phase of personal distance (from one and a half to two and a half feet). She puts a term to Eliza and Higgins’s fight “Stop, Mr. Higgins, I won't allow it. Go home to your parents.” (Cukor, 1964) taking the place of supreme authority. Higgins and Eliza are grouped, standing side by side, facing Mrs Pearce. In this way, the dynamic between the characters is quite clear visually. Higgins does not understand “what’s all the fuss?” (Cukor, 1964) and impatiently repeats to take Eliza upstairs, accompanying his order by a large gesture of the arm, miming the upward movement. Seeing Higgins does not give in, Mrs Pearce reiterates her worries, stepping forward again, thus establishing intimate distance at a far phase (from six to eighteen inches). This way she really wants to make an impression on him and better assert her authority. She points at him with her finger, in a warning posture on “you must look ahead a little, sir” (Cukor, 1964). Higgins answers back by pointing his finger too and makes big gestures with his hand while explaining his implacable logic “When I'm done, we'll throw her back into the gutter, then it will be her own business again. That will be alright, won't it?” (Cukor, 1964). As a consequence, Higgins’s character is also difficult to handle for the people around him. He cannot bear to be contradicted or constrained, just like a child who has to learn frustration and what is reasonable. Nevertheless, he manages to get whatever he wants by using logic self-interestedly and therefore, no one can never reproach anything to him. Both directors kept this side of Higgins’s character in their adaptation. It was an important aspect that they apparently liked about him. Shaw probably felt the same way. They must have liked the fact

that Higgins never really grew up and that he always gets what he wants. Shaw saw this capricious side as a likeable flaw. He wrote in the stage directions: "*he is so entirely frank and void of malice that he remains likeable even in his least reasonable moments.*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 24). According to him, Higgins's honesty and goodness makes it forgivable.

Even though Higgins lets his passion out by being haughty and capricious, he knows when to be nice. Indeed, there are several passages when he is particularly amiable. However, there again it is quite calculating of him since it is always to get what he wants. He strategically changes his tone when Mrs Pearce accuses him of "walking over everybody" in the second act and does not act like a baby: "*Higgins, thus scolded, subsides. The hurricane is succeeded by a zephyr of amiable surprise.*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 30). He then answers "*with professional exquisiteness of modulation*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 30) to show that it was not his intention to be rude or brutal. In the play and the musical movie, this convinces Eliza to sit back in her chair, thus reassured about his intentions. However, in the 1938 movie, this passage was deleted. As a consequence, we do not see Higgins woo Mrs Pearce or Eliza to gain their trust and being nice. Leslie Howard is presented as more authoritarian and as a person who is not capable of being nice even with the people closest to him or even only to serve his own purpose. Therefore, he appears less smart and cunning than Rex Harrison. The directors decided to focus on Higgins's implacability and domination. He is the head of the house and he is the only one who can make decisions. This is reinforced by the last shot of the scene which is a low angle zoom forward on Higgins stopping on a medium close up. He stands with his arms crossed, looking at Eliza while playing the recording of her voice. This makes him quite scary and impressive. Besides, as it is the last shot of the scene, it comes as a bad omen for Eliza, foretelling Higgins's rough treatment and implacability.

On the other hand, Rex Harrison, for once, is smiling, certainly because he is satisfied with himself. This dichotomy between the two actors can also be seen in the way they offer chocolates to Eliza. Indeed, Leslie Howard has to force her to eat one, cornering her in the stairs and stuffing the chocolate in her mouth. Whereas Rex Harrison simply has to put them under her nose and present them to her. Here again, Leslie Howard appears more violent and less nice than Rex Harrison. Furthermore, he also appears less cunning, when Rex Harrison is deceptive and manipulates people to get what he wants. Therefore, even though Howard seems harsher, he is more honest and in this way is more acceptable as a prince charming. This comparison of the two Higgins shows a different image of men at different times. In 1938, the prototypical man was authoritarian, as a patriarch should be, and was characterized by his inflexibility. Leslie Howard fits this image and therefore inscribes himself as a real and suitable man. Four decades later, the prototypical man was not the same. He was supposed to be smart and cunning to get his way. This image of the manipulator was better perceived at that time and can explain the director's choice to show these traits as qualities in Higgins.

Another discrepancy between the Higgins from *My Fair Lady* and the Higgins from the play and the 1938 movie, is that he evolves. Indeed, there is a clear improvement in Higgins's manners in the musical movie that does not occur in the other two works. Eliza is the one who undergoes a metamorphosis but in *My Fair Lady*, she is not the only one. Higgins has as much to learn as she does in order to become a proper gentleman and thus be worthy of Eliza's love. As Marcie Ray explains, the musical movie keeps up with the fairy-tale reading to solve the question of Higgins's ambiguous sexuality and justify the romantic ending (2014, p. 293). Higgins becomes the perfect Prince Charming because he is capable of change and betterment. There are several moments when Rex Harrison shows signs of improvement. The first one is at Ascot. After greeting Eliza, he looks at her and then at the only vacant chair and

almost sits on it. He makes several attempts to sit down, but when he is about to touch the chair, he straightens up, as if something prevented from doing it. He then silently retreats to the post and leans against it. The second moment is when they are ready to go to the embassy ball. Eliza waits in the hallway for Higgins to give her his arm. At first, he does not notice her and goes to the door, but he suddenly stops short. He turns back slowly towards her, filmed by a medium close up, which emphasizes his movement and shows that he is making an effort. He looks at her, with a wondering look, raising his eyebrows. Then, he walks slowly towards her, and offers her his arm. At this moment, the theme of "I Could Have Danced All Night", which symbolizes love, starts to play and they walk out of the room as a couple. Of course, Higgins changes his manners only for Eliza and on very few occasions. This aspect of his character makes him more human and clearly hints at the romantic ending. Therefore, Higgins from the musical movie is also romanticized but in different manner. As opposed to Leslie Howard who is suitable from the beginning, he must become better for Eliza. He evolves from his old bachelor attitude to a more gentlemanly one.

2.2.2 A Social Being?

Despite the fact that Higgins does not follow social rules, he still manages to interact with others and most surprisingly, he does so thanks to his science and knowledge. Even though it scares people off in the first act, it is also what allows him to mingle with the crowd and interact with the bystanders, Eliza, and Pickering. He only comes to his mother's at-home day to do the experiment with Eliza but at the same time, that also forces him to socialize with her guests. In fact, his whole social life relies on phonetics. Therefore, he is apparently asocial because of his behaviour but in the end, he could not practice phonetics and experiments without people. He is indeed a social being. There is something else that he expects and needs

from people: recognition and admiration. As we have seen, Higgins is particularly arrogant. He proudly displays his knowledge in the first act. However, this might be a way to attract attention and be admired too. By the end of the act, he does win over the crowd and everyone recognizes his talents. There is one person above all that he wants to impress and get acknowledgement from: the Colonel Pickering. Indeed, Act One is also the beginning of the friendship between Higgins and Pickering. The latter is tickled by Higgins's performance and wants to know more about him. In the adaptations, we can see how they are brought closer together. After being grouped with Eliza, Pickering is grouped with Higgins on the stage. Just like proxemics can tell a lot on the relationship between two people, blocking can help understand the dynamics at play. At the end of Act One, everyone has left and only Eliza, Higgins and Pickering remain on stage (Shaw, 1916, p. 17). Eliza is sitting downstage on her plinth and arranges her basket, still complaining about Higgins. Pickering and Higgins are grouped together, centre stage. Therefore, the dynamics of their relationship begin to be put into place. The two gentlemen are forming a team to help poor Eliza. The movies both follow this logic by grouping the two gentlemen in medium shots and showing them at a close distance. In the *Pygmalion* one, they are standing at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches) when Higgins explains his job to Pickering. This is extremely close for two strangers and very odd to be this close in public. Therefore, it is visually clear that they are getting along and are interested in each other. The audience immediately understands that those two will be important to the story and that they will be friends. Even though Higgins also pays attention to Eliza and tries to comfort her in his own way, he comes back to Pickering and they both look at her, their shoulders and arms touching. They are filmed by a medium shot just on the two of them, slightly smiling, while Higgins explains how he could pass Eliza off as a duchess (cf. Fig. 6). This foretells the experiment they will both undertake.

Furthermore, the dynamics of the relationship are put into place as the camera alternatively films the two men and Eliza, who is sitting. Therefore, she is immediately set aside and taken as an object of contemplation, something to be looked at and that can be improved.

Figure 6- Higgins and Pickering at intimate distance looking at Eliza

In the other scenes, the two men stand at the same intimate distance, and they touch each other several times, thus confirming their strong friendship.

In *My Fair Lady*, things are quite similar but with some differences. Pickering and Higgins stand slightly farther from each other. However, that does not change the fact that they are also standing at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches). The most significant difference is in the shots and therefore in how the characters are grouped on the screen. In the 1964 movie, the shots are wider, and we can see all the characters at once instead of just two (cf. Fig. 7).

Figure 7- Grouping of Pickering, Higgins and Eliza in a long shot

Therefore, we have access to the full picture of the scene, and not just what the camera shows us. Throughout the movie, George Cukor wanted the camera to remain discrete in order to let the set and costumes clearly visible to the viewer (McGovern, 2011, p. 323). He thought that his work consisted in just filming in the simplest way possible so that the camera did not add too much to the already charged aesthetics of the film[10]. According to the Film Glossary (n.d.), a long shot is defined as follows: "Includes an amount of picture within the frame which roughly corresponds to the audience's view of the area within the proscenium arch of the legitimate theatre." Therefore, this choice of shot shows the director's desire to reproduce the point of view of the spectator. This choice of neutral filming, which is rare for cinema, is probably a way to honour theatre and Shaw's theatre in particular. The choice of shooting indoors, in studio and not on location also participates to this theatre-like atmosphere. Furthermore, as McGovern explains, because Cukor's way of filming is rather static, every reverse shot or close up is significant and therefore, marked (2011, p. 322). This is why the medium close ups on Pickering and Higgins that follow long shots are marked. They signify that those two characters have a privileged relationship. Besides, Pickering follows

[10] George Cukor said in an interview that, "The audience should not be aware of camera tricks…. As a rule of thumb, unless you have to move the camera, unless it does something for you, be quiet, be quiet. When you cut, you have to do it very delicately, not too adventurously." (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 323).

Higgins every time he moves. This shows that he listens to him carefully. It also has the effect of grouping the three characters together as they therefore all appear in the frame. Eliza is sitting so the hierarchy between class and gender is maintained. However, the audience also understands that those three characters are meant to be together and that they will be reunited later in the play, which will happen no later than in the second act.

Furthermore, when Higgins is talking to The Bystander and asking "How are all your people down at Selsey?" (Cukor, 1964), he does not look at him but at Pickering. This is in direct opposition to the stage direction "*turning on him genially*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 14). It indicates that he chooses Pickering as his audience. Therefore, Higgins tries to impress him more than anybody. Pickering is obviously impressed, as he opens his mouth and slightly straightens up when Higgins makes his guess (cf. Fig. 8).

Figure 8- Higgins trying to impress Pickering by guessing The Bystander's origin

The passage when Higgins guesses where Pickering is from is also representative of their relationship. Indeed, Pickering and Higgins are having fun playing with phonetics. Pickering's eyes are wide open, and he stares at Higgins waiting for his answer with his mouth open. They forget Eliza who has to whine to remind them of her presence. It foreshadows the rest of the play when the two men have fun at the expense of Eliza.

We can also see thanks to the way Higgins behaves during his speech about phonetics that Pickering's reaction is very important to him. He holds his head high on "but I can place a man" (Cukor, 1964) and leans forward again on "six miles" (Cukor, 1964), slightly raising his eyebrows, almost miming the surprise and admiration that he wants Pickering to feel. Then, he stays in that position on "I can place him within two miles" (Cukor, 1964). There is a slight pause before the next sentence which suggests that he is waiting for a reaction from his interlocutor. Seeing no reaction, he straightens up and smiles a little less, his gaze becoming more serious, as if he were disappointed. On "Sometimes within two streets" (Cukor, 1964), he leans backward and slightly tilts his head on the left in order to better look at Pickering's face. This shows his need for recognition. Therefore, we can say that Higgins is, after all, a social being who needs the recognition of his peers. Moreover, in the two following acts, there is a great complicity between them. We can see it through groupings and proxemics, which show their closeness. In Act Two, Pickering's bet binds the three characters together, at least until Act Four.

2.2.3 Leslie Howard vs. Rex Harrison

In the play, Eliza complains about being mistreated and bullied by Higgins. He uses harsh and insulting words with her, which are not very often justified. He seems very cruel when he implies that she has no feelings: "[*looking critically at her*] Oh no, I dont think so. Not any feelings that we need bother about. [*Cheerily*] Have you, Eliza?" (Shaw, 1916, p. 32). Higgins is thus a character that has to be both unlikeable and sympathetic. Shaw describes his temperament as follows: "*His manner varies from genial bullying when he is in a good humor to stormy petulance when anything goes wrong; but he is so entirely frank and void of malice that he remains likeable even in his least reasonable moments.*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 24). This divide

must transpire too in his expressions and body language. Shaw was particularly choosy about the casting. Ann L. Ferguson explains:

> Thus when he cast his plays, Shaw pursued those actors capable of the more natural style of acting required by the new kind of drama that he was writing. Although Shaw looked for actors who could achieve a range of expression, he was not oblivious to the impact of age, physical appearance, and voice on the ability to perform a given role. (1997, p. 12)

If we look at Rex Harrison and Leslie Howard and compare them to the stage directions, we can see that there are necessarily major differences with Shaw's Higgins. On the age difference the actors are rather well chosen. Higgins is supposed to be "*forty or thereabouts*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 24). Leslie Howard was forty-five in 1938 and Rex Harrison was fifty-six in 1964. Therefore, we can say that they were approximatively the right age for the role. However, in terms of physical appearance and voice they could not be more different. Leslie Howard has a rather soft face, and he seems younger than his age thus reducing the age difference between him and Eliza. McGovern qualifies his appearance of "boyish" (McGovern, 2011, p. 186).

Moreover, he was known for his role in the *Scarlet Pimpernel* (Young, 1934) which was tinted with romance. Jeffrey Richards explains that Howard's films "epitomized romantic as opposed to sexual love, the pure, decorous yearning sort of love that characterized the idea of courtly chivalry, a love of what Graham Greene called 'discarnate embraces'" (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 186). As he was also the director of the movie, along with Anthony Asquith, he had more liberties with the interpretation of the screenplay.

The way his identity is revealed in the movie reinforces his romantic persona. After seeing only his back, he turns and faces the camera as the thunder rumbles. Therefore, we see his face earlier than in the play and the synchronization of the clap of thunder with this shot puts

the romanticization on him and not on Eliza and Freddy, as in the play. Besides, this introduction is not characterized by the same violence or suddenness like in the play or the musical movie. Indeed, Higgins's first line is quite loud as he tries to get Eliza to stop talking and talks over her. In the 1938 movie, the medium close up on his face works just like the actor coming downstage. The audience is compelled to feel closer and sympathetic to him right away (Styan, 1967, p. 94).

Furthermore, Howard's stage entrance happens long after the action truly begins. We see him mingle with the flower market people and follow Eliza. This added passage establishes Higgins's character. He seems to be wandering apparently aimlessly amongst the busy crowd. When his face is revealed, we immediately recognize the star of the show and know we have Higgins before our eyes. Therefore, the viewer already knows who he is before he speaks and there is little suspense about his identity contrary to the play. This choice shows that Leslie Howard is the star of show and is therefore present in every shot. Consequently, he has a great screen presence which reinforces his charismatic persona. Besides, there is no doubt as to who the protagonist of the movie is. The viewers are adopting his point of view as he is the focal point. Howard, as one of the directors, obviously thought that Higgins was the most important character of the movie. He took the liberty to change the screenplay to favour his own character and maybe put himself on the foreground of the movie (McGovern, 2011, p. 186).

On the contrary, in the play, Higgins does not appear as a sympathetic character immediately. As we have seen, his stage entrance creates confusion and anger from the crowd and Eliza. Physically Rex Harrison fits the description better. Indeed, he has a less agreeable face, and his voice is rougher. This has the effect of making his acting much more convincing

for certain lines. For example, when Leslie Howard delivers the line, "[*explosively*] Woman: cease this detestable boohooing instantly" (Shaw, 1916, p. 18), he does so with a flat tone and a neutral facial expression contrarily to the stage direction. He even touches Eliza on the shoulder, which seems to be a comforting gesture. That also implies that he is standing at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches) from Eliza, which is inappropriate in public (Hall, 1990, p. 112). This gesture could hint that he is not insensible to Eliza's crying and he wants to comfort her, which is one of the functions of this distance according to Edward T. Hall (1990, p. 110). Therefore, there is a discrepancy between what he says and what he does. This choice of distance necessarily changes how he says his line. He cannot shout as he is close to her. The meaning of the line is completely qualified by his gestures.

In the musical movie, Rex Harrison is standing at the far phase of personal distance (from two and a half to four feet) and comes closer to Eliza while delivering the line. He shouts particularly loudly on "Woman" in a high-pitched voice conveying authority and real annoyance. He does not lower his voice as he gets nearer Eliza. He even leans towards her to better impose himself. He does not make any particular facial expression, but since he has naturally frowned eyebrows he seems genuinely upset. A medium close up followed by a travelling emphasize his physical presence on the screen and makes him intimidating to both Eliza and the viewers. Therefore, Rex Harrison is more imposing physically than Leslie Howard and delivers some lines more vividly and threateningly than him. The fact that he is scarier serves to make him truly despicable as the play text suggests. Therefore, he is closer to the play's Higgins and there is no discrepancy between what he says and what he does. He thus makes a very convincing Higgins.

McGovern remarks, “As portrayed by Howard, Higgins is not the insensitive bully depicted in both the play and Shaw’s screenplay.” (2011, p. 185). If we keep with the image Shaw gave Higgins in the play, Rex Harrison is thus more credible. Leslie Howard does not seem to genuinely mean all his vicious remarks to Eliza as he does not use the tone which would be appropriate for that sort of sentence and the emotions that they entail. That is why he is not as verbally violent and makes a gentler Higgins than Rex Harrison.

Another important point of comparison is also the difference of behaviour and manners between Pickering and Higgins. Eliza feels safe with the former but definitely is on her guard with the latter. When Higgins orders her to sit down in the second act, she hesitates and refuses to do so to show her resistance. However, when Pickering asks her nicely to sit down, she executes herself. This distinction is important to the play as we have seen, since it shows how both gentlemen treat everyone equally, just not in the same way. Pickering behaves as though every woman were a duchess and Higgins behaves as though every woman were a flower girl. On the other hand, Leslie Howard has gentler manners and when he orders Eliza to sit down, he does so in a soft tone, again also due to the fact that he stands at the close phase of intimate distance. He repeats his order but barely louder and adds a gesture of the hand, miming the movement. The camera adds to his authority by zooming out in a medium shot on him and Eliza, thus making him more distant and therefore less sympathetic. It also emphasizes the fact that he is taller than Eliza and looks down at her, his chin held high. The camera work therefore endeavours to make him look more imposing as his tone and physique are not enough. Pickering is filmed by a medium close up when he asks her nicely to sit down, thus adding sympathy and familiarity to his character. However, the two men’s tones are not that different. This lack of discrepancy between the two characters could pose a problem for

the coherence of the story. Pickering must be the only gentleman so that Higgins's behaviour can be seen as insufferable and pass as asocial.

There is a bigger discrepancy between Wilfrid Hyde-White, who plays the Colonel Pickering in *My Fair Lady* and Rex Harrison. The first time Higgins asks Eliza to sit down, they are standing at the close phase of personal distance (from one and a half to two and a half feet) and therefore, he does speak too loudly but points to the chair with his right arm completely stretched. He frowns more than usual and seems deeply annoyed by Eliza's familiarity and innuendoes about his drinking. This is also why he breaks the personal distance by going towards the chair, thus re-establishing social distance (from four to twelve feet) which is more formal. As Eliza answers back, he cuts her short and raises his voice to shush her, reiterating his order. He stops on his way, at the level of the chair, his back to the camera but facing her, making himself very authoritative by pointing at the chair again. As a consequence, he quickly reinstates the patriarchal and social order by brutally asserting his superiority both physically and vocally. In contrast, Pickering first establishes personal distance at a close phase with Eliza, showing her that he can trust him and politely asking for her name. Then, he slowly goes to the chair, showing it gently with his arm and hand barely raised, looking at it and not at Eliza, which in a way is more polite and puts less pressure on her. He then places himself next to the chair, with his hand rested on the back, and turns towards Eliza, waiting for her to sit down, half smiling. His tone is soft and low, as he is standing close to her. He behaves as if he wanted to tame a wild animal and was trying not to make any sudden movement not to scare it. He knows that Eliza responds more to politeness, manners and kindness than to shouting. Therefore, in the musical movie, there is a clear distinction between the behaviours of the two men towards Eliza, which makes her remark to the Colonel in the last scene more credible: "I should never have known how ladies and gentlemen

behaved if it hadn't been for Colonel Pickering. He always showed that he felt and thought about me as if I was something better than a common flower girl." (Cukor, 1964). Therefore, the 1938 version is less coherent and credible on this aspect. It makes Eliza's remark insignificant, as if she were complaining about nothing or exaggerating. As a consequence, Higgins's manners make Eliza's reproaches and complaints not credible.

Another differing aspect between Leslie Howard and Rex Harrison is the way they are presented as a professor of phonetics. As we have seen, Leslie Howard uses the notebook less in the first scene. In the second scene, when Eliza enters, he has to go near her and look at her through his glasses to recognize her. He also has a screwdriver in his hand. Those two props are an attempt to give him a serious and professional look, as a phonetician. However, just before she arrives, we see him eat chocolates twice and although he says he will record her on his machine he does not turn it on right away. On the other hand, Rex Harrison first hears Eliza before seeing her. Indeed, he is facing the camera and thus turning his back to her when she enters the room. Therefore, he recognizes her only by hearing her voice and accent, emphasizing the fact that to Higgins, people are only accents to be studied. Besides, before she enters, he prepares himself to record her by turning on the phonograph and taking his famous notebook. Contrary to the 1938 movie, he lists several techniques to Pickering, following the play text. This line adds to the realism of the scene and shows the spectator insights in Higgins's work. The fact that these details were deleted in the movie *Pygmalion* makes Higgins's character less scientific. His work remains obscure and is not the centre of attention as much. As a consequence, Leslie Howard is presented in another light. The fact that he is a gentleman is foregrounded while his hobby takes a back seat. His characterization is therefore different and makes him more suited to be a lover than Rex Harrison, whose life seems to revolve only around phonetics. It was important for the directors of the 1938 movie

to present Higgins as a potential lover more than as a scientist because it made their ending credible.

Moreover, the movements immediately following this passage are significantly different too. Leslie Howard goes to the piano and begins to play. This is very unprofessional and unscientific of him. In terms of characterization, it conveys a whole different image than the professor or scientific one. He seems to be an artist, occupying his days by playing music and eating chocolates. This also goes with the purpose of making Leslie Howard a suitable lover. The image of the artist is much more romantic than that of the Professor of Phonetics. It is meant to show Higgins in a more humane way and show that he is perhaps capable of love. Rex Harrison behaves differently. Once he has recognized her, he goes to his other phonograph and begins to store away his tools. We can see that he is very organised and careful with them. We could also remark that Leslie Howard never sits behind his desk, but Rex Harrison does twice, which conveys a more professional and professor-like image. There again, the two ways of playing do not convey the same characterization of Higgins. Rex Harrison remains very cold and distant because of his professional behaviour. He is above any other matters and does not seem interested by anything else. It is therefore more difficult to imagine him caring for someone. In this way, he is closer to the Higgins of the play, who seems to be asexual, and only loves his mother.

Shaw participated in writing the screenplay of the 1938 movie, for which he won an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay. He cut a significative amount of his play text to fit the film format of the time (McGovern, 2011, p. 112)[11]. Of course, the most important lines were retained. However, a crucial difference between the play text and the script is that

[11] Shaw cut more than a third of the dialogue from acts two and five, and almost a quarter of Act Three (McGovern, 2011, p. 112).

Higgins agrees to Eliza's proposition. Indeed, when she offers him no "more than a shillin'" (Asquith & Howard, 1938) for pronunciation lessons, he thinks for a second and then immediately answers "I'll take it." (Asquith & Howard, 1938). This agreement between the two can be found nowhere in the play. In the musical movie, Rex Harrison pronounces the same sentence but later as he only agrees to Pickering's bet. We do not see him truly consider Eliza's offer, similarly to the play where Higgins does not agree to anything but just announces he will succeed to "make a duchess of this draggletailed guttersnipe." (Shaw, 1916, p. 29). Besides, when Rex Harrison agrees to rise to the challenge, he looks at Pickering, signifying that it is an agreement between the two gentlemen and not between him and Eliza. He does not talk to her again until she accuses him of being a pervert. Therefore, Leslie Howard's Higgins seems interested in giving lessons for a shilling to a poor flower girl whereas, Rex Harrison's Higgins is only interested in the challenge of transforming her into a princess. It is not only his teaching that matters but also helping a poor damsel in distress. He positions himself as the generous and brave saviour who will rescue her and elevate her from her ignorance. He seems to respect her ambition. It can also entail that he cares a great deal about her in particular, and not any ambitious flower girl. However, he does not talk to her as someone who cares but behaves as though he did. There is a discrepancy between what he says and what he does. Indeed, although he seems to like her as the proxemics indicate, he is insulting and verbally violent with her. Therefore, he is conflicted in his feelings or wants to hide them.

As the two actors are physically different, they do not use their bodies in the same way. Indeed, at the end of the second act, they have opposite techniques to intimidate Eliza. This passage diverges from the play because in the two adaptations they exit the living room and end the scene on the staircase. The choice of setting for this passage is interesting. As cinema

allows for bigger sets and props, both directors decided to make it happen in the large hallway of Higgins's house. In both movies, the staircase is imposing. It could be a metaphor for the social ladder. Eliza is at the bottom of the stairs and Higgins is forcing her to go up. Symbolically, Higgins climbs one more step when he says "At the end of six months, you shall go to Buckingham Palace." (Asquith & Howard, 1938), thus miming Eliza's ascension.

In the 1938 movie, Eliza wants to leave, and Higgins chases her in the hallway and all the way to the stairs. When he begins to explain to her the terms of the experiment, he climbs the stairs higher to better look down at her, thus taking a menacing and authoritative position. Although he maintained personal or even intimate distance with Eliza until then, he now stands at social distance (cf. Diag. 10). Indeed, this is logical since it is the appropriate distance for business discussions. According to Edward T. Hall, "Business and social discourse conducted at the far end of social distance has a more formal character than if it occurs inside the close phase." (1990, p. 115). This distance also allows him to maintain eye contact (Hall, 1990, p. 115), which gives him more authority and a physical link with Eliza even though he is standing far away from her, thus forcing her to look at him and listen to him. Moreover, still according to Edward T. Hall, "To stand and look down at a person at this distance has a domineering effect, as when a man talks to his secretary or receptionist." (1990, p. 115). Therefore, by choosing this distance, Leslie Howard gains power to deliver his speech and has better chances of persuading or even manipulating Eliza into agreeing with his terms.

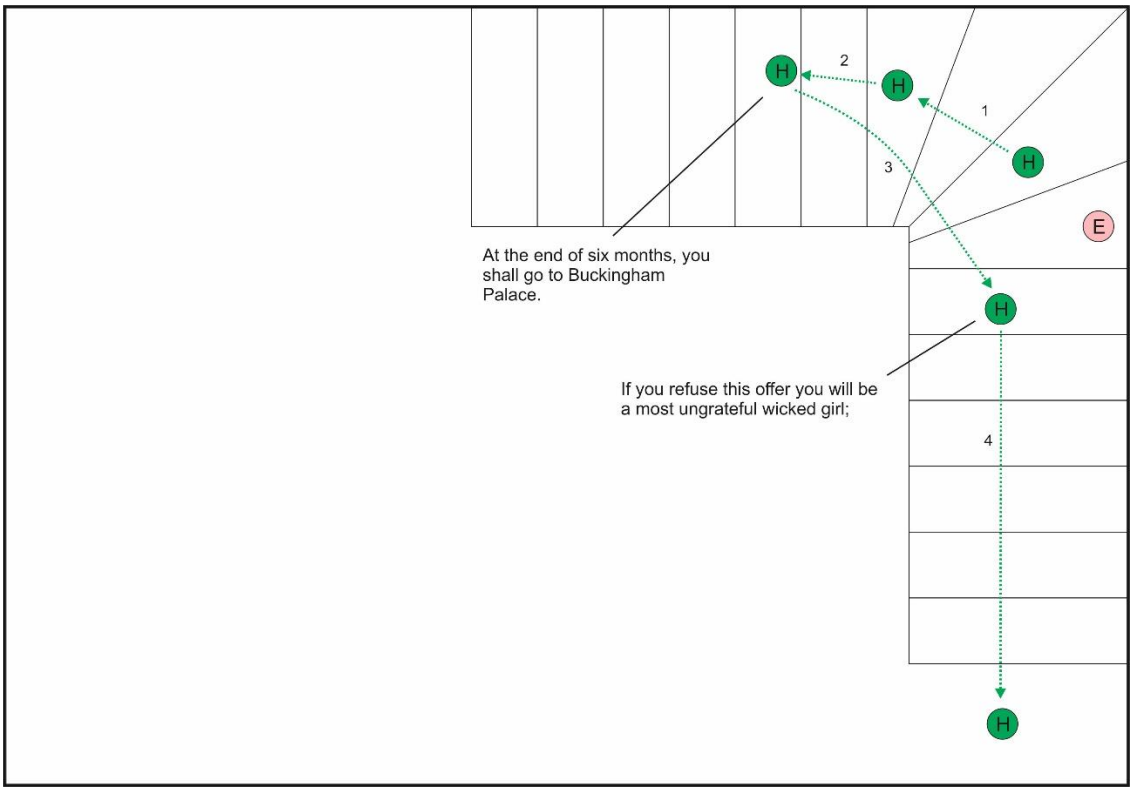

Diagram 10- Leslie Howard's movements on the stairs

Rex Harrison does the opposite. Besides the fact that he is the one dragging Eliza in the hallway and up the stairs, he actually goes down a few steps before explaining the conditions of her stay. He is filmed in a medium close up while Leslie Howard is framed by a medium shot. At the line “but if you are naughty and idle” (Cukor, 1964) the camera zooms in on him. This time Higgins’s proximity with the audience does not make him more sympathetic but on the contrary makes him more menacing. He uses his physical closeness to intimidate Eliza. He knows he can use his body to impose himself. Therefore, he stands at the close phase of personal distance (from one and a half to two and a half feet). When he finishes his speech, he even goes as far as standing at the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches) on “you will be the most ungrateful wicked girl and the angels will weep for you.” (Cukor, 1964). He puts his arm on the wall, just next to Eliza, and slightly leans forward, moving his face nearer hers (cf. Diag. 11). Just like Leslie Howard, these movements are designed to

better manipulate and blackmail Eliza. Rex Harrison seems more frightening and pressures her thanks to his physical closeness.

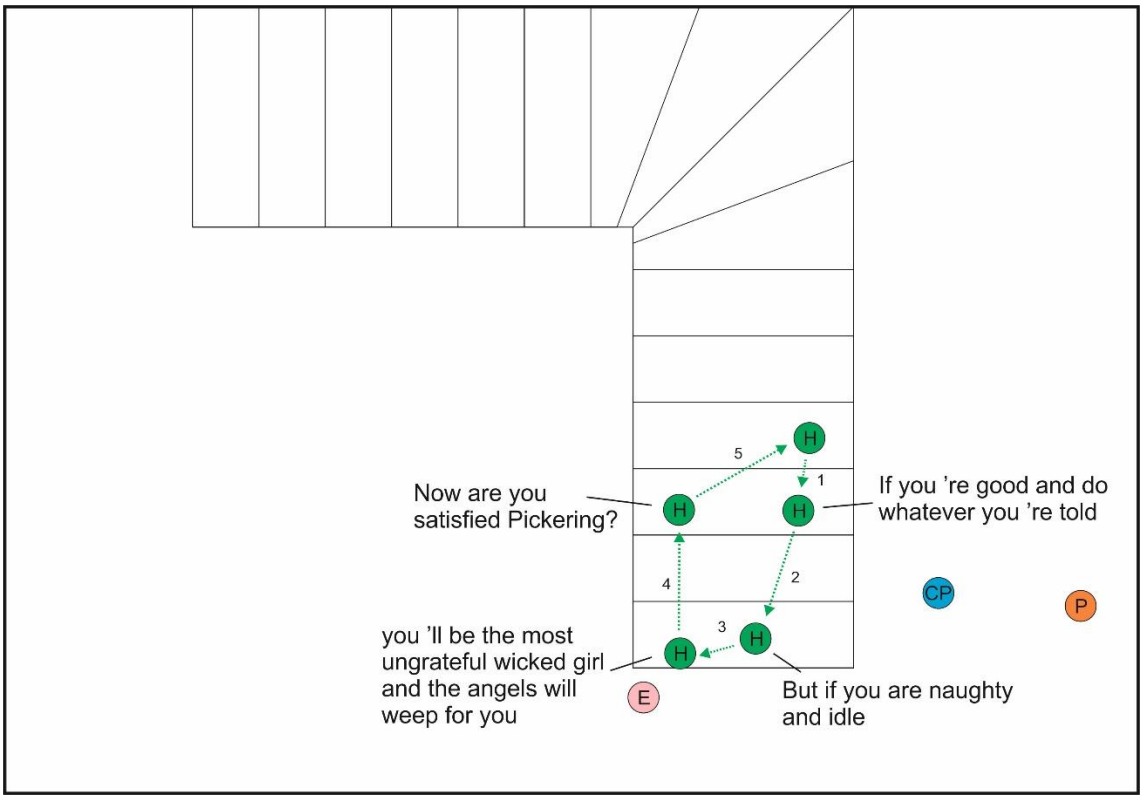

Diagram 11- Rex Harrison's movements on the stairs

Similarly, Leslie Howard comes down the stairs and establishes personal distance at close phase with her on this line. However, he does not stop for long and continues to come down the stairs, passing her by, to signify what it will mean if she refuses the offer: he will ignore her. Therefore, he uses emotional blackmail, as opposed to Rex Harrison who uses fear to make her obey. In the play, they all stay in the living room and Eliza sits down once again. Higgins is thus naturally in a position of authority, as he is standing up. Therefore, even though they do not employ the same technique, the two adaptations respect this dominating/dominated dynamic. Leslie Howard positions himself as the all-powerful boss, talking to his employee and demonstrating his power with his regal posture (cf. Fig. 9). Rex Harrison behaves more a like a father and patriarch with Eliza. He patronizes her and talks to

her as if she were a little girl (cf. Fig. 10). Therefore, the relationship dynamics are not the same in the two adaptations even though both exhibit a power imbalance.

Figure 9- Leslie Howard standing in a regal posture, talking to Eliza

Figure 10- Rex Harrison talking to Eliza as if she were a little girl

Higgins is a deeply complex character with contradictions. He can react as much as a baby than as a great scientist. He gets easily carried away by his passion for phonetics which makes him more relatable and likeable to the audience. He also needs to socialize, even though he does not care for social rules. In the end, he recognizes that Eliza and Pickering are important to him "And I have grown accustomed to your voice and appearance." (Shaw, 1916, p. 100). He is certainly less lonely than before and perhaps is not quite the same old confirmed bachelor at the end of the play and movies. The way he is interpreted by Leslie Howard makes him gentler and his physique also makes more him charming and less impressive. Rex Harrison's interpretation emphasizes his verbal violence and physical assertion. Higgins's tantrums are enacted by both actors. Overall, Leslie Howard's Higgins is more romanticized than Rex Harrison's.

What is most romanticized in the adaptations is the relationship between Higgins and Eliza. As I mentioned in their individual characterization, they are presented as meant to be together. We will see that the proxemics and movements in both adaptations plainly reveal

their feelings for each other. The way they behave towards each other can only mean one thing: love.

2.3 A Romantic Relationship?

A close relationship between a man and a woman is often perceived as necessarily romantic. Shaw's ironic subtitle "A Romance in Five Acts" did not help make his neutral ending legitimate and acceptable for the audience. He did write Eliza's role for his mistress, Miss Patrick Campbell and we can therefore wonder if some of his love did not transpire in the play. What is clear is that both adaptations have massively romanticized Higgins and Eliza's relationship, thus making *Pygmalion* a love story. However, Higgins does not seem inclined to make love to Eliza for her to agree to stay at Wimpole Street and win his bet. He views Eliza as an object that can be disposed of: "Put her in the dustbin" (Shaw, 1916, p. 30). As Mrs Pearce remarks, "Well, the matter is, sir, that you cant take a girl up like that as if you were picking up a pebble on the beach." (Shaw, 1916, p. 30). Therefore, their relationship cannot be viewed as typical. Higgins is her superior in every aspect. This is why Eliza's biggest problem will be to find a way to emancipate from her teacher. Nevertheless, she manages to do so in the fifth act of the play. Indeed, as we have seen, she is not as fragile as we think, and by the end of the play, she considers herself Higgins's equal: "Oh, when I think of myself crawling under your feet and being trampled on and called names, when all the time I had only to lift up my finger to be as good as you, I could just kick myself." (Shaw, 1916, p. 104).

I will try to see what kind of relationship the two protagonists have in the different interpretations thanks to the non-verbal. If their relationship is only platonic, it is therefore a student-professor one. On the other hand, if it is not, they are clearly lovers. Edward T. Hall remarks: "Similarly—as any woman knows—one of the first signs that a man is beginning to feel amorous is his move closer to her. If the woman does not feel similarly disposed she signals this by moving back." (1990, p. 108). Therefore, I will try to see how the different

versions of Eliza react to Higgins's advances and thus establish the nature of their relationship in both adaptations.

2.3.1 Pupil and Master

When Eliza agrees to become Higgins's student, they both behave accordingly from the beginning of the play. As early as the first act, Higgins explains the consequences of her accent on her occupation and on her place in society. She listens attentively and seems very interested when he says that he could "get her a place as lady's maid or shop assistant" (Shaw, 1916, p. 18). Therefore, we can see that Eliza is capable of being a good student and is already hung up on Higgins's every word. Eliza's reaction is emphasized in the two adaptations by a medium close up on her thanks to which we can see the microkinesics of both actresses. In the 1938 movie, Wendy Hiller, who is sitting on the plinth, straightens up and turns her bust towards the two gentlemen. Then, she gets up and starts smiling, her eyes sparkling as she imagines what her life could be if she had a well-paid job. Audrey Hepburn is more sceptical in her reaction. She does not get up but leans towards Higgins, listening very attentively, seeming very interested. When hearing "get her a job" (Cukor, 1964), she opens her eyes wide and slightly opens her mouth in utter astonishment. Then, she leans even more and frowns as she lowers her head, trying to grasp the real meaning of Higgins's words. This moment marks a sort of epiphany for Eliza. Indeed, she understands that her accent alone is holding her back and that it can be corrected. A world of opportunities which can be accessed thanks to the teachings of Higgins thus opens up to her.

In the movie *Pygmalion*, the setting also serves to show Higgins's symbolical influence on Eliza. In Act Two, there are enormous gramophones in his laboratory placed strategically so that they seem to come out of Higgins and be directed at Eliza (cf. Fig. 11). Janine Utell

writes about a loss of voice and identity for Eliza: “The voice ceases to have as its source the body and being of Eliza and comes to have as its source a machine that functions as an extension of Higgins.” (Utell, 2016, p. 64). Eliza’s transformation will be so deep that she will have to first lose her true voice and identity to reconstruct a new one under the intense tutelage of Higgins.

Figure 11- The enormous trumpets of the gramophones coming out of Higgins and pointing at Eliza

Those are the only elements that are neutral and point toward a student-professor relationship. Most of the other moments in which Eliza and Higgins interact in the three scenes I have chosen can be interpreted as romantic.

2.3.2 Lovers

What is most visible in the movies is the physical proximity between the two protagonists. In the first scene of the 1938 movie, Eliza is a dirty cockney flower girl and Higgins an upper middle-class gentleman; they have never met before. Nevertheless, Higgins touches Eliza twice: once on the shoulder, in an attempt to comfort her and later he straightens her hat on her head. This is highly unlikely to happen in real life for several reasons. First of all, Eliza is described as “*very dirty.*” (Shaw, 1916, p. 11). Therefore, a gentleman like Higgins (or Pickering for that matter) would hesitate before touching her. Second of all, according to

Edward T. Hall (1990, p. 112), English people are a non-contact people, and thus they would not be comfortable standing at less than a foot and a half from each other, let alone touching. Besides, those two gestures are done while he is insulting her verbally: “Woman cease this detestable bohooing instantly.” and “You incarnate insult to the English language.” (Asquith & Howard, 1938). Therefore, there is a discrepancy between the verbal and the non-verbal. As body-language is more significant than words because it is more spontaneous, we can say that the gestures are what is most important here. Hall says that sometimes “spatial changes […] even override the spoken words.” (1959, p. 204). The 1938 movie therefore romanticizes the relationship by adding unlikely contact between the two protagonists.

In *My Fair Lady*, the characters seem to keep their distance just like two strangers would, except when Higgins shows his notebook to Eliza. This gesture, at first glance, seems to foretell the dynamic of their master-pupil relationship (cf. Fig. 12). However, they are standing close to each other, at the far phase of the intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches). This is inappropriate in public. Besides, it would be very difficult for someone exterior to the scene to tell that they are strangers when seeing them standing that close. Therefore, this proximity both indicates that Higgins will be Eliza’s teacher but also that they will have an intimate relationship.

Figure 12- Higgins showing Eliza what he wrote on his notebook

It is also interesting to note that Leslie Howard's first words in the movie are Eliza's. Indeed, the screenwriters deleted the first line, which is violent and makes quite an entrance for Higgins: "There, there, there, there! who's hurting you, you silly girl? What do you take me for?" (Shaw, 1916, p. 13). Instead, Leslie Howard repeats the words and sounds he has transcribed in his notebook. I chose to interpret this as a romantic element rather than another element of characterisation of Higgins since this first line is much softer than that of the play. Besides, Leslie Howard stays silent longer than in the play and the fact that he only breaks this silence to repeat her words is quite symbolic. Phonetics is what links their destiny, but their relationship goes beyond accents and social classes. This is made clear by the way Leslie Howard handles Eliza in the second scene. There again, they stand very close to each other, and he touches her several times. Eliza is quite bold by coming into the house of a man she does not know. They first get closer in a medium close up, which accentuates the impression of closeness. Higgins suddenly rises up from the piano and emerges behind her. If we follow Hall's theory about men coming forward and women moving accordingly to their consent, we can say that Eliza responds positively to Higgins's move forward. She even leans

back closer to him, achieving the far phase of intimate distance (from six to eighteen inches) (cf. Fig. 13).

Figure 13- Higgins comes suddenly from behind Eliza and she leans backward to be closer to him

Hall describes this distance as follows:

> At intimate distance, the presence of the other person is unmistakable and may at times be overwhelming because of the greatly stepped-up sensory inputs. Sight (often distorted), olfaction, heat from the other person's body, sound, smell, and feel of the breath all combine to signal unmistakable involvement with another body. (Hall, 1990, p. 110)

Therefore, for the two characters this distance entails a sensual experience as well. They can actually breathe each other in. Furthermore, they both seem to enjoy the position as they stand in that way for quite some time (one minute and twenty five seconds). The sensual experience is correlated with the fact that they look into each other's eyes. This position is typical of two people falling in love. Physical closeness and gaze indicate a strong connection between the two characters.

In terms of gestures, Higgins touches Eliza twice. He takes her by the arm when he wants her to sit down for the second time. He makes her go to the chair and pivot gently, almost as if they were waltzing. He lets go of her hand only when she sits, so that their contact is, again,

quite long. However, the second time he touches her does not happen with the same gentleness. He grabs her by the arm and drags her to Mrs Pearce, while advising her to wallop her. This shows how their relationship can also be uneven and tensed. Indeed, when Eliza was asking for Higgins's attention, everything was going well but as soon as she shows signs of reticence, Higgins gets mad and is offended. Therefore, their connection relies on a delicate balance and hierarchy. It is interesting to notice that in *My Fair Lady* the two protagonists almost never touch, not even to say hello in the third act. The only moment Higgins touches Eliza is only to teach her how to use a handkerchief and not to confuse it with her sleeve (Cukor, 1964). He stands at personal distance from her and only touches her with the tip of his finger. Therefore, this moment is not as romanticized as in the movie *Pygmalion* and can be seen as a teaching moment. However, as we will see, it is not because they do not touch that they do not have deeper feelings for each other.

In the 1938 *Pygmalion*, Higgins and Eliza's relationship seems to blossom in the third act, as they communicate only with gestures and looks. Higgins indicates what to do to Eliza by miming the action or by looking intensely at her and nodding. He first points at his mother to signal to Eliza which lady she is, just as indicated by the stage direction in the play (Shaw, 1916, p. 59). Then, he points at the floor and mimes the action of sitting down by bending his knees and making a downward gesture with his hand. Each time, a reaction shot on Eliza shows us the completion of the action ordered by Higgins. Therefore, Eliza understands this language very well and executes every order immediately. He makes her understand that she ought to leave by clearing his throat to get her attention, and by looking at his watch and then pointing at the door. Eliza complies immediately, putting down the biscuit she was about to eat. Eliza too gazes at Higgins and asks for his approval throughout the scene. She looks at him questioningly, her eyes open wide and she uses question tags to make sure what she is doing

and saying is right. Her eye contact is so intense that she barely looks at what she is doing and seems to speak only to Higgins as she does not look at the other guests at first. He answers with encouragements and nods filmed by reaction shots. This scene shows their complicity as well as the work they have done together. Indeed, this going back and forth seems to have been rehearsed, especially when Eliza recites her drills and he begins the sentence so that she finishes it. It is almost as if they are putting on a show, a sort of duet. They understand each other perfectly. As a consequence, they form a well-oiled couple, Eliza clearly depending on the approval and orders of Higgins. The hierarchy put into place in the first two acts is therefore respected and their relationship seems to be working.

The camera work also emphasizes their connection. For exemple, in the second scene, Higgins agrees to give lessons to Eliza before agreeing to Pickering's bet, thus hinting that he is also interested in Eliza as a person and not only in her accent. This exchange is filmed by a medium close up on Leslie Howard and by a reverse medium close up shot on Wendy Hiller. It has the effect of putting them on the same level, even though Eliza is sitting down, thus emphasizing that they are agreeing with each other. These two shots and the way they immediately follow each other also create proximity between the two characters. Leslie Howard extends his arm on "I'll take it" which is answered by Wendy Hiller's straightening up and smiling. This is extremely different from the play as there is no real agreement between Eliza and Higgins. When he properly enunciates the terms of her stay at Wimpole Street, he does it only for Mrs Pearce and Pickering's sake. Indeed, Eliza does not say a word to show that she agrees or not and Higgins only asks for his housekeeper and his colleague's approval. Therefore, the 1938 *Pygmalion* adds this pact between the two protagonists, which implies that both parties are equal and that they are both attracted to each other. This goes against the principle of the play, which shows how Eliza, who is Higgins's inferior in every regard,

winds up stuck in a bet between two gentlemen, without never really agreeing to it. It implies that she is not simply an object to experiment on but also the object of Higgins's love.

My Fair Lady's Higgins and Eliza agree in a much subtler way. Indeed, in appearance, they seem to disagree and fight constantly. They insult each other, they make big gestures at each other, and they yell at each other. However, the way they move and how their bodies interact tell a different story. We can feel a physical tension between the two characters that can be easily mistaken for anger or hatred, but if we look closer, several elements hint at a deeper connection and softer feelings. Indeed, this tension is certainly the result of an emotional tension. For example, the way they stand next to each other in Act Two is significant. Eliza, after faking leaving a second time, stops at the door and Higgins, going after her, takes his handkerchief back violently, snatching it from her hands. There is extreme tension between the two as Eliza calls Higgins a "balmy" and he answers back by ordering Mrs Pearce to throw her out (Cukor, 1964). However, the position of their bodies indicates otherwise. They are standing side by side, and thus are grouped together on the setting. They are facing Mrs Pearce, and therefore, they seem to be teamed up against her. As a consequence, they seem to be on the same side, agreeing with each other. If we watch this passage without any sound, we could not guess that they are in conflict with each other, but rather that they are in opposition to Mrs Pearce. Their elbows are almost touching, which places them at the close phase of personal distance (from one and a half to two and a half feet). This distance is close for people who just insulted each other. When Eliza talks, Higgins turns his bust towards her and when he talks to Mrs Pearce, Eliza's bust is parallel to his. In the end, we have the impression that they move according to each other, almost in unison. When he moves, she moves and vice versa. This closeness is all the more visible when Higgins says "She'll only drink if you give her money." (Cukor, 1964), which is yet another insult, but Eliza, instead of moving

away from him as would be expected of someone who has been offended, stays put and even comes closer when defending herself. Their arms almost touch, bordering on intimate distance. Therefore, although their relationship is violent and rough on the surface, it is deep and they have a strong connection, which is conveyed by their body language. The positive emotions they feel for each other surface as tensions but their bodies cannot lie. The tension only hides the love and attraction they feel towards each other. Besides, they both seem to enjoy this situation, Higgins as much as Eliza. They resemble two children playing and fighting for fun, surrounded by Pickering and Mrs Pearce, who play the roles of the parents.

The manifestation of love in the 1938 *Pygmalion* is different. There is less conflict between the two characters as they seem to agree on certain points. The insults present in the text seem less harsh since they are delivered with less violence than in the play or in the musical movie. As a consequence, they seem more in phase with their feelings and do not try to hide them to the same extent as in the musical movie. The romanticization is much more accepted and therefore displayed in this adaptation.

It is also interesting to look at the direction of gaze and how the characters react to each other's look and words. Higgins and Eliza listen to each other attentively. In the first act, their interaction is what really starts the action and therefore, the play. Eliza begins to speak louder and to make noise because of Higgins's actions, and vice versa. Higgins is forced to come downstage and speak. From their meeting emerges the vital energy of creation. Their gaze upon each other is what makes them move and answer back. In *My Fair Lady*, Higgins's first glance at Eliza is very judgemental, as he looks her up and down. Eliza answers with accusations while pointing at his notebook with her head, looking at it angrily. The same thing happens in the second scene. Eliza seems hung up on Higgins's words and she looks at him

attentively. As soon as he says something, whether hurtful or not, Eliza's body reacts instantly. Therefore, their interaction seems to be the source of a vital energy that gives life to Eliza. Daniel Leary describes this phenomenon in those words: "The audience sees a vital girl realizing herself, sees her coming alive with the touch of Higgins's silver and gold." (1983, p. 6). As a consequence, the audience is under the impression that something deep and important is happening between the two characters. Their relationship seems almost magical as they transform and create each other.

The most telling evidence of the deep feelings between the two protagonists is the movements they make on stage in Act Two. Indeed, the way they are moving on the setting is revealing of their hidden connection. If we follow the movements they make in relation to each other, we can observe that they are chasing each other. At first, it is Eliza who follows Higgins, as she forces him to listen to her (cf. Diag. 12).

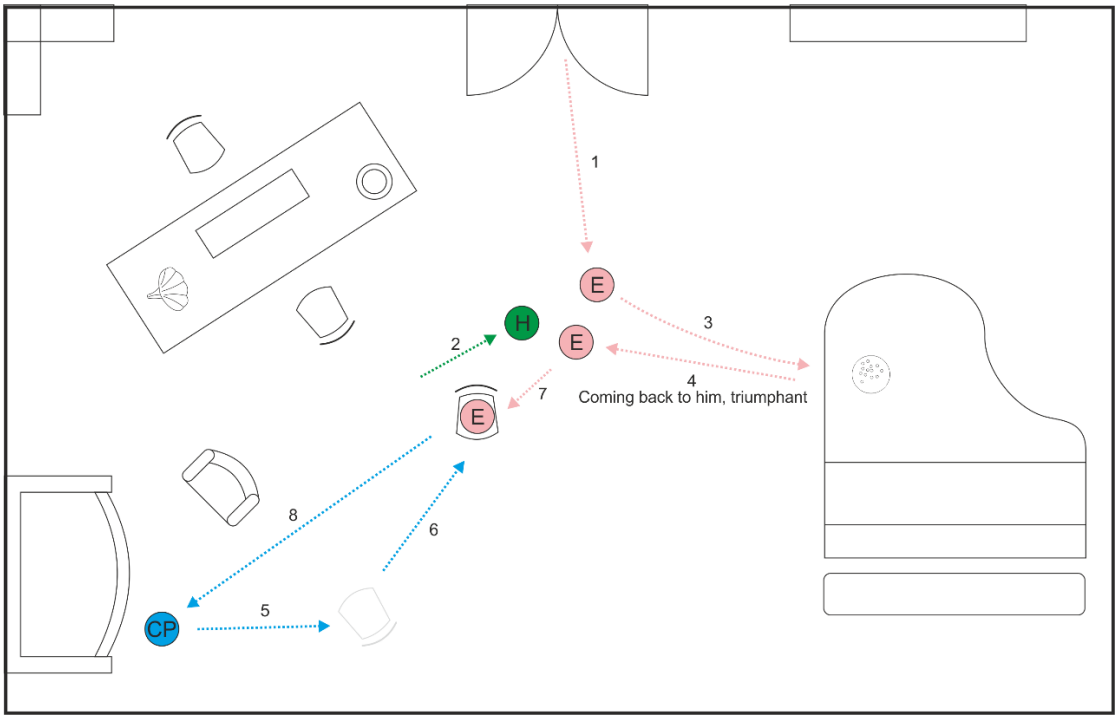

Diagram 12- Shaw's play: Eliza enters proudly but is scared and retreats to the piano

Then, Higgins is interested and begins to get closer to her. However, Eliza, scared by so much enthusiasm, makes several attempts to leave. Higgins intercepts her each time and she sits down again (cf. Diag. 13 & 14). In the end, they form a sort of triangular movement on the stage, from the door to the chair, from the chair to centre stage and from centre stage to the door.

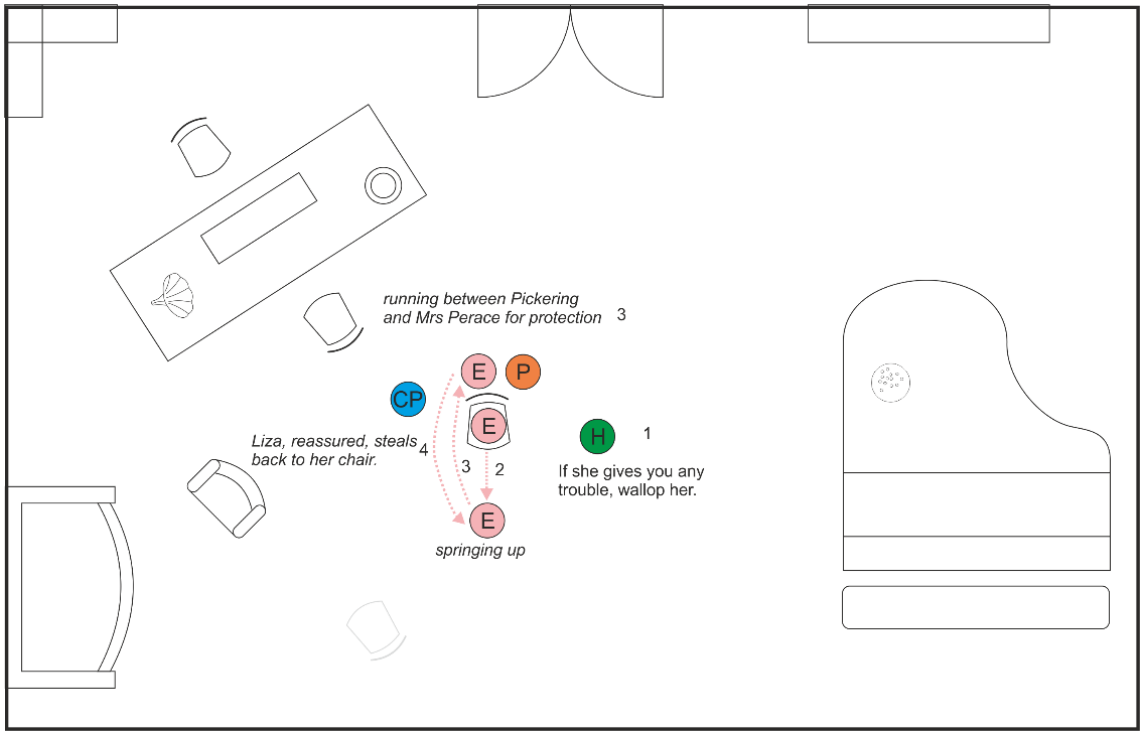

Diagram 13- Shaw's Play: Eliza's hesitations

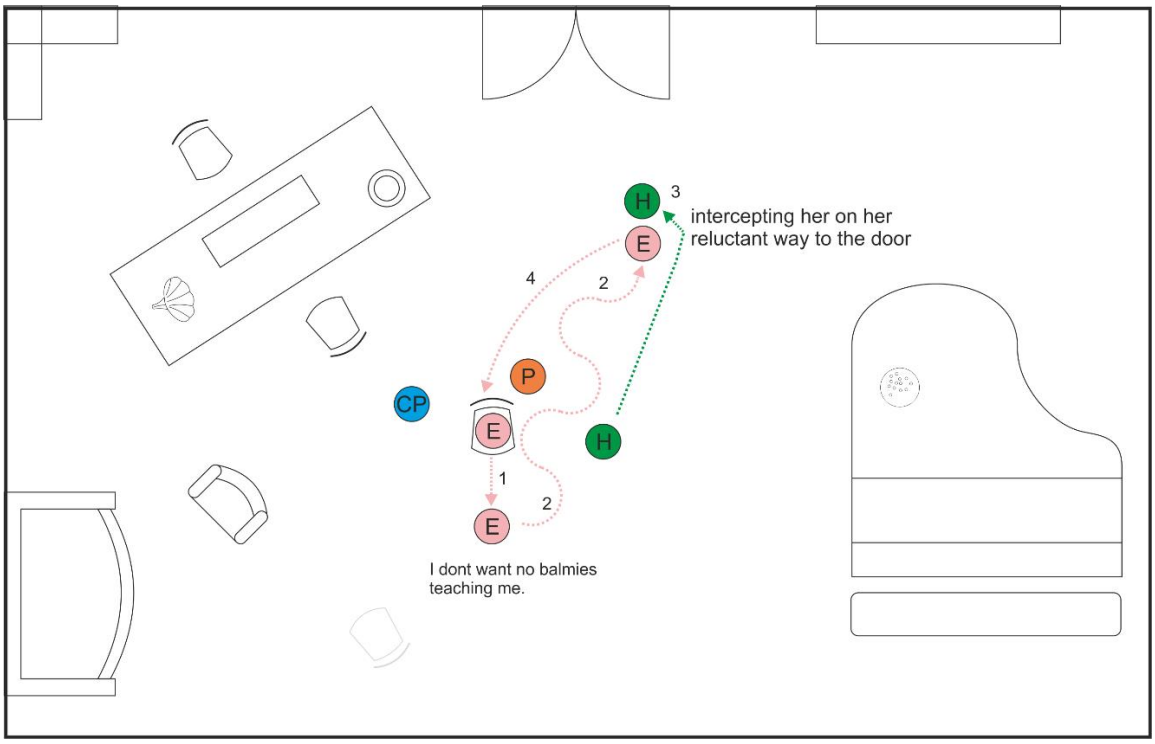

Diagram 14- Shaw's play: Eliza pretends to leave and Higgins intercepts her

J. L. Styan writes about a pattern of chase-and-be-chased on the platform for duologues (1967, p. 88). In *Pygmalion*, the question is who is chasing who? At first, it seems to be Eliza chasing Higgins, coming to his house and asking for lessons. However, once she gets his attention and once the bet is proposed, Higgins is not willing to let Eliza go. In *My Fair Lady*, things seem to be even more complex. Indeed, as we have seen, Eliza pretends to leave three times, just like in the play. Therefore, she is playing with Higgins and wants him to get her to stay. She is the one coming for lessons but now she reverses the situation by making Higgins want her (cf. Diag. 15 & 16).

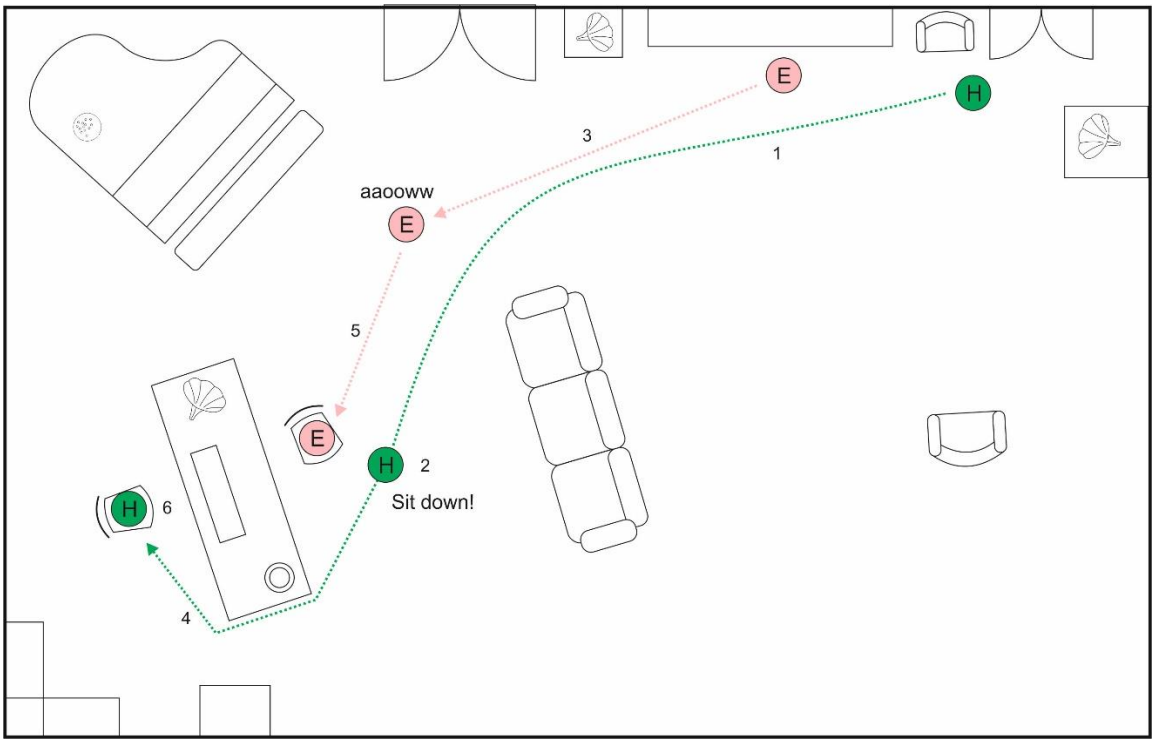

Diagram 15- My Fair Lady*: Higgins orders Eliza to sit down but she hesitates*

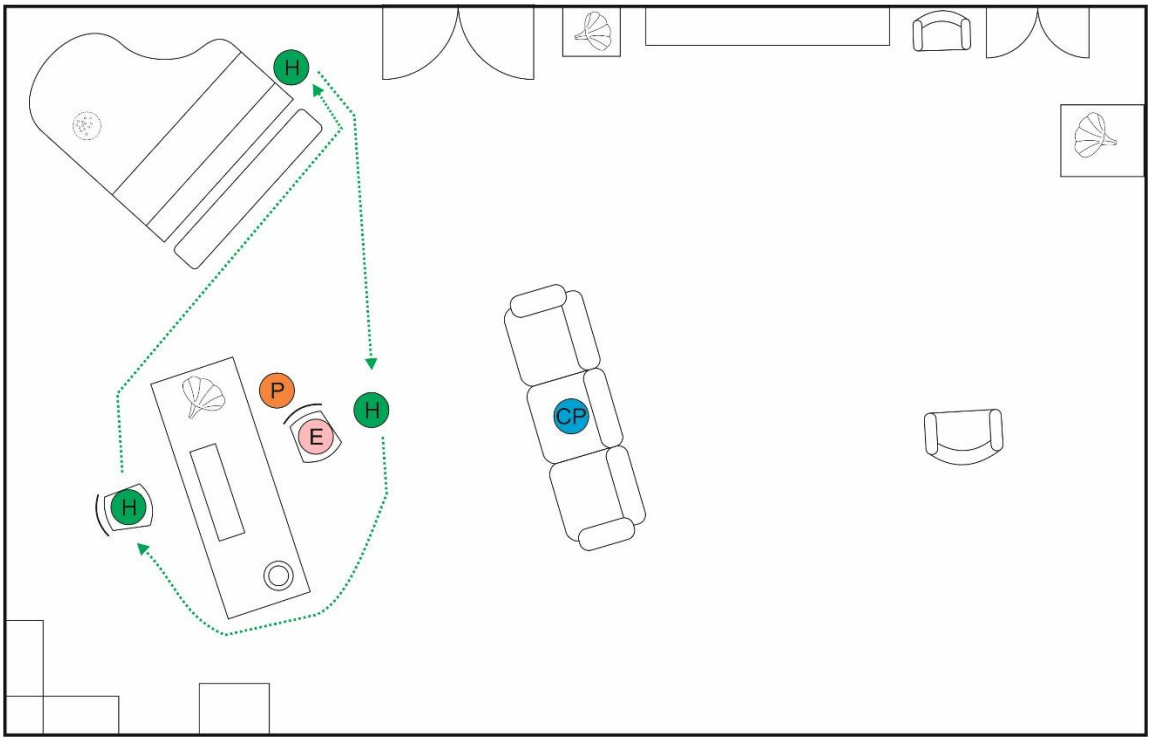

Diagram 16- My Fair Lady*: Higgins begins to circle around Eliza*

As a consequence, two issues are at stake here. First, who has the power? Higgins seems to have it, since he is Eliza's superior, detains the knowledge to teach her and is in his house. However, Eliza reverses the roles and makes herself indispensable for Higgins. For a moment, she has the power of attraction and he seems to be wanting her more when she pretends to be reluctant. However, she gets exactly what she wants. Higgins, by accepting to play her game, also reveals his desire for her. In fact, the second issue at stake in this scene is the desire that the characters feel for each other. This chase is the proof of their hidden feelings and of the physical attraction and tension they feel for each other. In the end, Higgins takes back the power by giving his speech and reasserting his authority. He makes it impossible for her to leave as he emotionally blackmails her[12]. He is perhaps using the challenge raised by Pickering as an excuse to keep Eliza close.

In fact, Eliza too has a challenge in the play: to get Higgins to make love to her, in the archaic sense of the word. She wants him to woo her because he needs her too. However, she has to resort to many stratagems in order to make him want her. She has to fake leaving, to be prude and yell for him to notice her and pay attention. Nevertheless, the only things she gets are insults. Shaw reveals Eliza's desire in his sequel:

> She has even secret mischievous moments in which she wishes she could get him alone, on a desert island, away from all ties and with nobody else in the world to consider, and just drag him off his pedestal and see him making love like any common man. (1916, p. 119)

However, he is not any common man and he will always refuse to treat her differently than any other human being. This renders the dynamic of their relationship complex, as each wants

[12] She would be a "most ungrateful wicked girl" if she did not accept his offer (Asquith & Howard, 1938; Cukor, 1964; Shaw, 1916, p. 34).

the other to change for their own interests, but in the end they both love, value and admire each other. Perhaps this is also the reason why they cannot be together.

It is interesting to note that despite all the discrepancies between the two movies, the pattern of chase-and-be-chased is exactly the same. Both adaptations respect the same movements of desire and rejection between the two protagonists. Therefore, they have the same interpretation of the play at this level. What is certain in both is therefore the complicated attraction between the two characters, who end up together in the end. In both movies, until the end of the scene, they keep disagreeing in appearance, as Eliza, probably wanting to regain some power, goes on protesting: “You’re a great bully, you are! I won’t stay if I don’t like it! If I’d known what I was lettin’ myself in for, I woudn’t have come.” (Asquith & Howard, 1938; Cukor, 1964) and *My Fair Lady*’s Eliza to add “I won’t let nobody wallop me!” (Cukor, 1964) while Mrs Pearce is trying to get her upstairs for her bath. However, here again, thanks to the movements of the actors on the set, we can see through appearances and understand the true nature of their relationship, since Higgins is smiling and Eliza, despite her protestations lets Mrs Pearce take her upstairs.

Therefore, the apparent tension also comes from the fight for power and first place that neither of them seem willing to give up. As we have seen, Eliza is also one of the protagonists and heroes of the play. However, Higgins is not ready to let her become too important and until the very end, he emphasizes his major role in Eliza’s metamorphosis, “You will jolly soon see whether she has an idea that I haven’t put into her head or a word that I haven’t put into her mouth.” (Shaw, 1916, p. 93).

The camera work reveals a great deal about who is the true star of the show in the adaptations. This is particularly important to see who was the protagonist in the eyes of the

director. For Asquith and Howard it was clearly Higgins. He is the first and the last to be shown on screen, which makes him the winner of this fight for first place. He is the character that people remember the most. Besides, as we have seen, he is much more present in the first scene than in the play. In the musical movie, it is the opposite: Audrey Hepburn is filmed first and last. Therefore, she is the one put forward by George Cukor. Furthermore, as this adaptation contains more long shots, we can often see both protagonists in the same frame. In this way, the camera does not choose for the viewer which character to focus on. As a consequence, the protagonist is not the same in the two movies. This is perhaps due to the time of release of the two adaptations. Feminism was starting to gain traction in 1964. In her article, Marcie Ray (basing her analysis on Stacy Wolf's feminist study of the musical genre), explains that in the 1950's, "some musicals employed the single girl character to depict the changing nature of (white) female sexuality." (2014, p. 293). Her essay argues that "The musical's film adaptation, however, poised as it was at the beginning of second-wave feminism, forecasts a much larger metamorphosis for women." (Ray, 2014, p. 293). George Cukor probably wanted to make *My Fair Lady* more about Eliza and her place in society as a woman. Laurent Valière, in his radio show *42e rue* commented on this: "[George Cukor] va aussi arriver à une prouesse avec *My Fair Lady*, celle de transformer la pièce la plus misogyne au monde en un très beau portrait de femme." (2014).

The movements on stage also reveal a lot about who is the conductor of the play and movie. Indeed, the position of an actor on stage helps characterize them. As we have seen with Higgins, he stands apart from the crowd and from the action at the beginning of the play but also acquires strength as the audience cannot forget him. However, while he stands aside, Eliza is standing downstage, close to the audience and therefore takes the first place. Moreover, because of this spatial distinction, she has the support of the crowd with her. As

we can see in the movie *Pygmalion*, Eliza is grouped with the crowd against Higgins (cf. Fig. 14).

Figure 14- Eliza, standing in the middle is grouped with the crowd against Higgins standing on the left

The same organisation can be observed in *My Fair Lady*. Higgins is opposed to the crowd and Eliza (cf. Fig. 15).

Figure 15- Grouping of Eliza and the crowd against Higgins

However, once it is made clear that Higgins is not "*a copper's nark*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 13), everyone is impressed by Higgins's ability to know where people come from, as the stage direction indicates: "*popular interest in the note taker's performance increases*." (Shaw, 1916, p. 15). The use of the word "*performance*" here is ironic and has a metatheatrical connotation. This stage direction is also mimetic of the audience's increase of interest in Higgins. In the cinematographic adaptations, this turning point is conveyed by a change in the position of the actors. Leslie Howard breaks through the crowd, therefore asserting his authority, and Rex Harrison moves around and is shown with the crowd on his back, indicating that it is now on his side.

Higgins finally wins the crowd over as the stage direction indicates: "*Reaction in the note taker's favour."* (Shaw, 1916, p. 15). Eliza is almost forgotten, and Higgins is now the centre of attention and admiration. Although she sits downstage, she is part of the background as the two gentlemen are standing centre stage (cf. Fig. 16).

Figure 16- The two gentlemen centre stage and Eliza put aside

He therefore becomes the protagonist of the play. Pygmalion, whose coming was delayed and expected by the audience, has arrived. In fact, at this moment, Higgins is both the protagonist and the complication action of the plot. Indeed, it is him who will change Eliza's life and allow her to challenge social hierarchy.

In Act Two, a similar dance for the centre of the attention happens. Eliza does not hesitate to literally hold the floor. She takes as much space as she can in Higgins's living room. She boldly follows him into the room after being told she was not wanted (Shaw, 1916, p. 26). At the end of the scene, when she makes her final false exit, the stage direction reads "*She rises and takes the floor resolutely.*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 32). In the movies, this occupation of space is mostly conveyed by medium close ups. Besides, she is often showed at the centre of the frame but at a low angle, sitting, contrary to Higgins, who is showed with no angle and standing up most of the time. Higgins finally takes back the power by giving his long speech at the end of the scene. This is all the more visually striking in the adaptations since it takes place on the stairs. Higgins is standing above Eliza and she does not say a word or move during the whole speech. Moreover, the camera mainly shows him, with only two reaction shots on her. Therefore, here again, they both try to be the star, and, in the end, Higgins is the winner of the fight.

However, in the third act, things start to change. In the play, Higgins does not say a word from the moment Eliza enters the room to the moment she exits, except to give the definition of "doing her in" and he does so "*hastily*" (Shaw, 1916, p. 60). Therefore, Eliza, for once, has the floor all to herself. She can finally speak and be the centre of attention without Higgins preventing her or fighting her. Nevertheless, this needs to be qualified as her speaking without being interrupted is the point of the experiment. However, the way she captures her audience's attention and masters storytelling proves that she is resourceful and capable of holding the floor. In the adaptations, things happen differently. There are numerous reverse shots and reaction shots on Leslie Howard and Rex Harrison. The 1938 movie is the least faithful as Eliza looks at Higgins for his approval and does not do anything without his signal. In the musical movie, Eliza is turning her back to Higgins and therefore cannot see any of his

scandalized faces. This discrepancy changes the viewer's perception of Eliza significantly. This scene is supposed to be a turning point in her learning and self-awareness. Even though she is off topic, she acquires confidence as the stage direction "*Now quite at her ease*" indicates (Shaw, 1916, p. 61). Therefore, to show her still dependent on Higgins in this scene is to undermine her autonomy. She fails even more in the 1938 adaptation. Audrey Hepburn's Eliza does not need Higgins to tell her how to hold a cup or use her teaspoon. Wendy Hiller is therefore shown as less independent. As a consequence, her emancipation at the end of the movie is all the more surprising and perhaps less credible. Furthermore, in this version, Higgins is the centre of the viewer's attention to the same extent as Eliza. Consequently, he is presented as the main protagonist.

Even though they are fighting, the image that is foregrounded throughout the movies is the one of the lovers. Their relationship, although complex, is indeed intimate and loving. Both adaptations have therefore clearly reinvented the supposedly platonic relationship that Shaw intended to write about. The various directors' interpretations coincide with the way the audience has understood the play throughout the decades. That raises the issue of authorship and of the extent of the control playwrights have over their work.

3 Authorship, Interpretation, and Legacy

3.1 Authorship: Shaw as a Pygmalion for his Own Play

When writing about *Pygmalion*, it is almost compulsory to tackle the issue of the ending. Indeed, so much is at stake with Shaw's ending being completely transformed by actors, directors, and screenwriters. Every critic wants to give their opinion about the different interpretations of the ending. Some defend Shaw, while others do not and see why the ending needed to be changed. This led me to study the control of the author over their work, and more specifically their interpretation of the work. The debate about the ending underlines the major role of the directors, actors, and audience in completing the creation and interpretation of a play. In the case of *Pygmalion*, they all participated actively in transforming it from a social comedy into a romantic comedy. Nevertheless, this play is one of Shaw's most famous plays, and it continues to be even today. Shaw is still a renowned playwright in England and abroad, thanks to his well-wrought dialogues and characters.

3.1.1 The Socialist Playwright

Jean-Claude Amalric writes about Shaw in those words: "Réformateur, prophète, dramaturge, il reçoit le prix Nobel en 1925 et ne cesse d'écrire des pièces jusqu'à sa mort." (1998, p. 18). Shaw did not like for anybody to tamper with his work. This is perhaps why he also directed a great number of his plays and threatened to sue anybody who tried to make an operetta of *Pygmalion* (McGovern, 2011, p. 237). According to him, his play-text was the supreme authority, and directors and actors alike must follow it to the letter. A play-text is a paradoxical object as it is both authoritative and inherently open to interpretation. It is full of illocutionary orders present in the stage directions (Ubersfeld, 1996, p. 10). Shaw particularly

detailed them in *Pygmalion*, especially regarding the set and props. We also know that he wrote Eliza's role with Mrs Patrick Campbell in mind. On the other hand, a play-text is made to be interpreted, maybe even more than any other kind of text as there are additional interpreters (mainly the director and the actors). Furthermore, Shaw saw himself as an all-knowing and all-powerful god for the audience and made it his duty to educate the masses. Jean-Claude Amalric talks about Shaw's vision of the artist in those words:

> Shaw souhaite être un poète au sens général de créateur et, à partir de *L'Homme et le Surhomme*, il parlera souvent de l'artiste-philosophe comme de son idéal. L'art et la réflexion sont intimement liés. La pensée a besoin de l'art pour convaincre, pour illustrer. (Amalric, 1998, p. 27)

Although he was born in Dublin in 1856, he never considered himself an Irishman and spent most of his life in Britain. This allowed him to have an exterior point of view on England and society. His social background also made him aware of poverty and of the terrible life conditions of the lower classes. He was really inspired by Marx's *Das Kapital*. In 1884, he was actively part of the creation of the Fabian Society in London. During this period, he wrote several novels but never managed to get published. It is only in the 1890's that he began to write plays, at the age of thirty-six. He thought theatre offered him the best opportunity to teach people and maybe, in the end, change society. Anne Ubersfeld explains this reasoning :

> Ainsi peut-on comprendre certains effets du théâtre qui ne vont pas du tout à l'encontre du concept de dénégation : le spectateur sait très bien que le théâtre n'est pas la vie : mais pourquoi n'emprunterait-il pas à la scène, pour sa propre expérience, certaines solutions ? (Ubersfeld, 1996, pp. 271–272)

The first one, entitled *Widowers' Houses*, written in 1892, talks about housing problems and the exploitation of the poor by the aristocracy. Shaw did not hesitate to present the problem in all its complexity. He viewed theatre as a social action. This is why he called his first plays 'Unpleasant Plays'. Shaw's theatre was not meant to entertain like what was

generally done in theatre at the time, but to raise awareness and perhaps change things. Shaw decided to change techniques a few years later and write comedies, therefore calling them 'Pleasant Plays'[13]. Shaw understood that in order to get through to the audience, he needed to entertain them as well. This perception of theatre corresponds to the definition of comedy, which Aristotle defined in his *Poetics*. The Encyclopedia Britannica gives this definition:

> The classic conception of comedy, which began with Aristotle […] holds that it is primarily concerned with humans as social beings, rather than as private persons, and that its function is frankly corrective. The comic artist's purpose is to hold a mirror up to society to reflect its follies and vices, in the hope that they will, as a result, be mended. (Hoy, n.d.)

Shaw could not write plays that were only didactic and had to add humour and comedy in order to make the lesson less harsh. His plays were very realistic. The setting often represented an actual place in London, like in *Pygmalion* which starts in Covent Garden. As a consequence, the London audience could relate to the location and even visualize the place where the action took place. This sense of realism was meant to "hold a mirror" up to the audience. However, elements from myths and fairy tales come to counterbalance this realism. *Pygmalion* is inspired both from the Greek myth *Pygmalion* from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and by the fairy tale *Cinderella*. This way it is as entertaining as it is didactic.

3.1.2 Writing Didactic Plays

Written in 1912, *Pygmalion* really launched Shaw's career as a playwright. Shaw wanted the audience to learn that class distinction and accents are arbitrary and should be abolished. In order to do that, he created complex characters which are made ridiculous by their behaviours and situations. Paul Ricœur writes about the mechanism of comedy in those terms:

[13] Other examples of Unpleasant Plays are *The Philanderer* (1893), *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893). Amongst Pleasant Plays are: *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida* (1894), *You Never Can Tell* (1896).

> Si la tragédie peut les représenter « meilleurs » et la comédie « pires » que les hommes actuels, c'est que la compréhension pratique que les auteurs partagent avec leur auditoire comporte nécessairement une évaluation des caractères et de leur action en termes de bien et de mal. (1983, p. 94)

Shaw was well aware of that system. The characters' evaluation and judgment allow the audience to take something from the show and join in with the point of view of the author. However, in Shaw's theatre and in *Pygmalion*, all the characters have a bad and good side. He is not Manichean, which is an unrealistic representation of life. He uses paradoxes to get to the truth and reveal what is wrong with the world (Amalric, 1998, p. 28). It is this use of dialectic that made his characters so complex and life-like.

The complexity of Shaw's characters is part of the three elements that make Shaw's theatre a success (Amalric, 1998, pp. 27–31). Firstly, throughout his work he created a gallery of portraits which is remarkably complex. They are a real challenge to play for an actor and a pleasure for the audience, who can relate to multiple characters throughout the show. In *Pygmalion*, there is not only one spokesperson for Shaw but several. He uses Higgins to complain about English accents while simultaneously using Eliza to criticize the high society. Secondly, he uses multiple forms of comic devices, which places him as one of the firsts to master Bergson's theory, "du mécanique plaqué sur du vivant" (Bergson, 2013, p. 28). Thirdly, the dramatic structure of his plays is flexible. He invented a new form of drama by bringing discussion plays up to date. They usually contain four parts: orientation, complication, resolution, and discussion on the consequences. *Pygmalion* almost follows this order. Act One is the orientation, Act Two and Three the complication, but the climax does not appear as it is the Embassy ball which is only told of after the facts. Acts Four and Five do not represent the resolution and discussion. They are already a discussion about the consequences of the former acts and there is no real resolution. This alteration in the unfolding of events puzzled the

audience who were disappointed not to see Eliza and Higgins's great triumph at the ball. Act Four therefore comes as an anti-climax. The main action is over, but the play is not. Furthermore, Act Five causes even more perplexity as it does not resolve anything. This peculiar structure is what makes it a great play and the most adapted of Shaw's works. Everybody felt frustrated by this ending and wanted it changed. However, for Shaw this particular form constituted the means of passing his message across. Cinderella does not marry her prince in real life, and Galatea does not end up with Pygmalion. Eliza takes her independence from her creator but still has many things to figure out to gain financial independence. As Harold Bloom puts it:

> The situation is clear. Eliza's fate is settled as far as Higgins is concerned. The story of the experiment is over. Otherwise her fate is as unsettled as yours or mine. This is a true naturalistic ending – not an arbitrary break, but a conclusion which is also a beginning. (Bloom, 1987, p. 62)

Shaw wanted his audience to reflect on what they had seen and thus designed the unresolved ending just to this effect. He wanted the spectator to imagine the end and the solutions for Eliza themselves so that they realize that society was not fit for people who were transformed like her. Shaw wanted to provoke a frustration in the spectator for them to change society and make it more open and tolerant. Perhaps a cockney flower girl is worth as much as any other person in society if she has the means to educate herself. Shaw the reformer is very present in *Pygmalion*.

This is why it is crucial for him that his message gets across to the audience. However, in order to do this, his plays must be performed exactly as he intended them to, so that the mechanisms he put into place may work on the audience. If the Embassy ball is shown, and therefore presented as the climax of the play, the focus is stirred from Eliza's condition to her successful transformation and keeps with the Cinderella story, which is the opposite of Shaw's

intention. If Eliza's future is settled in Act Five, and therefore the end becomes a real resolution to her story and Higgins's, there is no frustration for the audience. The happy ending effectively changes the message of the play and Shaw's lesson. Without frustration the spectator will not endeavour to change things in the world as they will be satisfied with what they saw.

3.1.3 Using Fairy Tales and Myths

We could therefore say that Shaw's fault was to choose the myths of *Pygmalion* and *Cinderella* to make his point. At first glance, it was a rather peculiar choice to select two love stories to talk about class distinction. However, if we dig a little deeper, Shaw had his reasons. He thought it would be a good starting point. The audience could easily relate to familiar elements and get into the story quickly. It was an anchorage, a reference point for the audience. Besides, it allowed Shaw to better deconstruct those very myths. Once the audience was hooked, he could show them how in real life, nothing happens like in the fairy tales. He could not keep the fairy tale and the myth as they were since "il faut surprendre ou choquer pour faire réfléchir et pour convaincre." (Amalric, 1998, p. 28). However, it failed. Those myths were too strong to be taken apart and the fairy tale ending came back running. Shaw could not control his work beyond the words. Actors, directors, and audiences bring as much meaning to the text as the author, who can only have an 'imagined audience' when writing. Shaw's strong points are also his weaknesses. Just like the open ending was designed to implicate the audience, it backfired as they preferred the happy ending. Anne Ubersfeld writes about the myth in the theatre as a help to imagine the play's fictitious world (1996, p. 271). However, it also implies a rigid organisation of this world. The world of Cinderella and *Pygmalion* are coded. They imply a happy ending; they imply a love story, and above all, a class

distinction. Therefore, Shaw's enterprise was doomed from the beginning, as myths cannot be tampered with. They are set too deeply into the collective imagination to be deconstructed and proven wrong. This shows how hard it is to change people's minds.

3.2 From Social Comedy to Romantic Comedy

3.2.1 Directors and Actors

For the same reason Shaw wrote theatre, he was very interested by the advent of cinema. He felt that it would be an excellent medium to touch and inform a large audience. He said it will "form the mind of England. The national conscience, the national ideals, and tests of conduct will be those of the film." (quoted in Everding, 1998, p. 314). He himself said that he preferred it to theatre (quoted in McGovern, 2011, p. 97). He agreed to adapt his plays to this medium only when talkies appeared, as he thought that his plays could not be appreciated without their dialogues being faithfully reproduced (Everding, 1998, p. 315; Utell, 2016, p. 62). The first screen adaptation of *Pygmalion* was a German production which defied Shaw's recommendations and romanticized the ending. Shaw also turned down Italian and French propositions because of the very same problem. From then on, he decided that he must be part of the writing of the screenplay and demanded a contract that clearly stated that no deviation from it was allowed (McGovern, 2011, p. 100). Shaw was therefore very opposed to any sort of interpretation of his play. He wanted to control his creation all the way and did not accept any other vision of his work. He was, in a way, a Pygmalion for his own work. He refused to let it be independent from him. He did not trust the directors, whether it be the directors of his plays or the directors of the cinematographic adaptations.

The directors of the 1938 movie are the final deciders and they all double-crossed Shaw to present a romanticized version to the audience[14]. They did it either because of the conviction that it was a better ending or because they thought it would be more appreciated

[14] Gabriel Pascal, the 1938 *Pygmalion*'s producer, lied by omission to Shaw who discovered that they had changed the ending only two days before the release (McGovern, 2011, p. 196).

of the public and therefore be more successful[15]. Shaw was not only naïve in trusting these people, but he was also blind to the fact that a play is inherently bound to be distorted by the interpretation of directors, actors and audience alike. A play-text is full of holes for the director and actor to fill. It does not matter how many stage directions there are; many things, such as facial expressions, gestures, intonations, and blocking are left to the discretion of the director and actor. Anne Ubersfeld defines a director as follows: "nous le verrons à présent comme le maître-d'œuvre, inventeur des signes de la représentation et coordinateur des signes produits par d'autres. " (1996, p. 235). Indeed, the director must make choices regarding the play-text and its meaning. Nothing is insignificant or random in a representation; it will always bear the subjectivity of the director. Furthermore, this is even truer for cinema. Each sequence, each image seen by the spectator, down to the inch has been chosen by the director. Therefore, we can say that it is more subjective than theatre since the spectator cannot choose what they look at. Anne Ubersfeld remarks that in theatre there is not: "cette trituration de l'image perçue d'un seul coup d'œil, de cadrage et de ce découpage des plans qui, au cinéma, conduisent le spectateur par la main." (1996, p. 253). In *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady*, the directors' subjectivity can be seen in the different strategies used to romanticize the play. Anthony Asquith and Leslie Howard did not have the same reading of the play as George Cukor. Texts have different levels of readings and interpretations. Shaw was quite subtle as he used irony to make certain points in his play. For example, the subtitle "A Romance in Five Acts" is an ironic statement, just like his use of the Cinderella tale. However, Asquith and

[15] Derek McGovern explains: "In a letter to Shaw, the theatre's managing director, George Tyler, sought to justify the use of Campbell's ending on the grounds of its "enormous commercial value with sentimental America", and admitted that, "Frankly, I was *afraid* to omit the line"" (2011, p. 89).

Howard did not perceive it that way. Their reading of the play stayed at the level of the myth and fairy tale, as the caption at the beginning of the movie indicates:

> Pygmalion was a mythological character who dabbled in sculpture. He made a statue of his ideal woman – Galatea. It was so beautiful that he prayed the Gods to give it life. His wish was granted. Mr. Shaw in his famous play gives a modern interpretation of this theme. (Asquith & Howard, 1938)

It is as though they did not understand that Shaw only took this theme to criticize it and put it in perspective with the society of his time. For them, Shaw apparently only transposed the exact same story in the 20th century. Perhaps this means that Shaw was too subtle in his criticism and that his characters were maybe too prototypical and not enough caricatured.

George Cukor's reading of Shaw was a little deeper as there is a critique of society and its arbitrariness in *My Fair Lady*. The high society is definitely represented as excessive. Besides, Cukor used a majority of long shots, which are similar to the audience's vision of the platform and are therefore more neutral. We can feel his love for theatre and his desire to honour Shaw. He also was careful to the characterization. His characters are just as complex as Shaw's. Eliza can be as wild as graceful, and Higgins can be just as arrogant as charming. He seemed to have paid attention to the details that make Shaw one of the greatest playwrights. This is why *My Fair Lady* is closer to Shaw's *Pygmalion* than the 1938 movie. Derek McGovern explains that the musical movie's ending:

> is more ambiguous with respect to Eliza's and Higgins's future relationship than Asquith's adaptation; despite his revelation of feelings for Eliza, Higgins remains an emotionally stunted individual unlike the sensual, romantic figure depicted by Howard throughout the 1938 film, and it does not rule out the possibility that Eliza and Freddy will become lovers. (McGovern, 2011, p. 331)

Indeed, *My Fair Lady*'s ending is still open and thus comes closer to Shaw's as the viewer is free to imagine whatever they want. However, this must be qualified as Shaw would never have approved of this ending nor the whole movie. Eric Bentley perfectly sums up the issue:

> Mr. Shaw's play, like all Mr. Shaw's plays, begins in parody of romance and melodrama. The people who make films and musical shows out of Mr. Shaw's plays go back to a point before the beginning. They return to that very romance and melodrama which Mr. Shaw spent all his energies getting away from. (Bentley, 1958, p. 135)

Furthermore, Shaw would have been most appalled by the musical movie as he was certain that a musical production would supplant his play and therefore make it disappear. Sadly, he was right.

It is the author's curse, and even more so the playwright's curse to have their work transformed by the interpretation of others. Shaw always despised and bad mouthed the comedians who distorted his plays. However, as Anne Ubersfeld explains, this is inherent to the theatrical message:

> Chaque comédien ayant cette même autonomie de producteur de signes, on conçoit que le message théâtral garde perpétuellement un caractère de combinaison aléatoire, d'« œuvre ouverte ». Le même trait, s'il répugne aux traditionalistes qui croient voir dans l'œuvre d'art le fruit volontaire d'une conscience créatrice et ordonnatrice, est fait pour plaire aux modernes plus soucieux de polysémie dans l'œuvre d'art et d'ouverture, la tâche étant laissé au récepteur de coordonner, d'unifier, d'achever ce qui est polycentrique et incomplet. (Ubersfeld, 1996, pp. 19–20)

Therefore, Shaw was a traditionalist in his vision of theatre. He could not let go of his work. However, as Anne Ubersfeld says, in the end, it is up to the receiver to decide on the final meaning and message of a work of art.

3.2.2 “The Power of the Popular Will” (Everding, 1998, p. 331)

After these two layers of interpretations (directors and actors) comes that of the spectator. In the end, Shaw’s best enemy is also the audience. According to Anne Ubersfeld, they are the ones who in the end, decide the real meaning of what they saw:

> D’autre part le spectateur est producteur aussi parce que c’est en lui, et en lui seul que le sens se fait ; ce sens, c’est lui qui le fabrique. Tous les autres font des propositions de sens, le spectateur seul a la tâche de clore l’évènement sur un sens : cette responsabilité lui incombe. (Ubersfeld, 1996, p. 255)

Without the public there is no play and no movie. They are the last piece of the puzzle. Paul Ricœur writes:

> C'est enfin le lecteur qui achève l'œuvre dans la mesure où, […] l'œuvre écrite est une esquisse pour la lecture ; le texte, en effet, comporte des trous, des lacunes, des zones d'indétermination. Le texte ne devient œuvre que dans l'interaction entre texte et récepteur. (Ricœur, 1991, p. 117)

Shaw mainly wrote plays to educate the receiver and therefore, had a precise purpose in mind when writing. However, the interaction between the text and the receiver can be difficult. Shaw did not manage to get his message across completely. The spectator only sees what they already know and recognize. They see Cinderella in Eliza because they know the reference. From then on, they expect to see her duly rewarded at the end by a happy ending. They do not want to see beyond the fairy tale. Paul Ricœur explains:

> Une esthétique de la réception ne peut engager le problème de la communication sans engager aussi celui de la référence. Ce qui est communiqué, en dernière instance, c'est, par-delà le sens d'une œuvre, le monde qu'elle projette et qui en constitue l'horizon. En ce sens, l'auditeur ou le lecteur le reçoivent selon leur propre capacité d'accueil qui, elle aussi, se définit par une situation à la fois limitée et ouverte sur un horizon de monde. (Ricœur, 1983, pp. 117–118)

The audience did not seem to be able to see beyond the word 'Romance' in the subtitle They did not search for a deeper meaning and expected to see unrealistic events just like in myths and fairy tales. Shaw overestimated his audience's capacity to detect his irony and critique, despite all the devices of mimesis and caricature he deployed. The first act invites the audience to project themselves into the real world, as it stages the high society exiting the opera house, which is exactly what will happen after the play ends. Shaw is saying to his audience that the events that will unfold on stage could happen in real life, when in turn the spectators come out of the theatre. However, they felt that what Shaw was proposing was too unfamiliar and new to agree with his vision of *Pygmalion*'s myth. They were probably too confused by the ending, and this came spoiling the pleasure they felt during the representation. Why would such a lovely and funny play end in such a puzzling way? The notion of pleasure won over the didactic side of the play. Directors, actors, and spectators decided to keep what they had enjoyed in it and quickly discarded the lessons Shaw had tried to teach them. All his life, he strived to find a balance between entertainment and seriousness to soften the blow, but in the end failed to pass his message to the audience. Anne Ubersfeld writes about "Le triomphe du *principe du plaisir* sur le *principe de réalité*." (Ubersfeld, 1996, p. 283). Shaw tried to imagine a realistic ending and to tell the story of what happens after the happily ever after, but the directors and audience preferred to keep the happy ending and thus the pleasure of a rewarding, fair ending.

Furthermore, because of the later adaptations in a variety of media, Shaw's audience became more and more diverse. The 1914 English audience was not the same as the 1938 and 1964 ones. Therefore, the "capacité d'accueil" which Paul Ricœur writes about is not the same either. The different audiences do not have the same world of reference. Surely, it was more peculiar to have a woman as a protagonist who took her independence from her master in

1914 and 1938 than it was in 1964. By this time, the viewers had experienced this situation and could relate better to Shaw's story. This is probably why *My Fair Lady* is closer to Shaw's play than the movie *Pygmalion*.

After all, the viewers were bound to interpret *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* as love stories. The heavy romanticization they were subject to made it impossible for the viewers to understand these movies in any other way. As Paul Ricœur explains, the way a receiver understands a story is not random: "Comprendre l'histoire, c'est comprendre comment et pourquoi les épisodes successifs ont conduit à cette conclusion, laquelle, loin d'être prévisible, doit être finalement acceptable, comme congruente avec les épisodes rassemblés." (Ricœur, 1983, p. 104). The movies' happy ending does not come out of nothing. The non-verbal elements lead to that conclusion all along and guide the viewers in their interpretation. Therefore, in the case of the adaptations, the directors play a more important role in the romanticization than the audience. This is probably due to the type of medium, cinema, which as we have seen is more subjective than theatre. These two adaptations are nevertheless what made *Pygmalion* one of Shaw's best known and appreciated plays.

Moreover, the audience also appreciates seeing the violent passions of humanity while remaining on the other side of the room, in their seats but feeling concerned (Ubersfeld, 1996, p. 284). Shaw exploited this aspect of theatre perfectly. Pygmalion is supposed to have a cathartic effect on the audience as they understand that class distinction is arbitrary and unfair. They also learn about the difficulty of climbing up the social ladder and integrating a new social class. However, since the adaptations have clouded these aspects, the catharsis does not occur. The happy ending does not create any kind of frustration as Eliza's fate seems to be resolved by her coming back to Higgins. She is finally safe, financially and emotionally.

Climbing the social ladder for a woman would therefore amount to change accents and marry a wealthy and intelligent man and fetch his slippers for the rest of her life. This last image of Eliza's fetching Higgins's slippers is what will remain in the collective memory of the viewers. Her struggle to acquire a new accent and become independent is undermined by this last gesture of submission. The two adaptations make Shaw's remark in the sequel untrue: "Eliza has no use for the foolish romantic tradition that all women love to be mastered, if not actually bullied and beaten." (1916, p. 110). The cathartic process is thus not the same and Shaw's social message gets lost in the different rewritings and interpretations.

3.3 Legacy

Shaw's plays are still popular today,to a certain extent. After one hundred and nine years, *Pygmalion* seems still relevant today. The reflection it brings on social class is still very much up to date. Besides, caricatures and comic of gestures and of situations do not get old. Recently, there has been a new wave of interest for Shaw's plays in Britain and abroad. He is a must in festivals and even had his own one, the Houston Shaw Festival, which lasted from 1979 to 1992. There is another one that is still happening once a year since 1962, the Shaw Festival, situated in Niagara-on-the-lake in Ontario[16]. This proves that his work is still relevant today and maybe even more, since today's audience is more open to certain causes than in the 1910's, like socialism, feminism, poverty, and the exploitation of the rich by the poor. Moreover, these are still hot topics today. In the 1930's, talk about class distinction was getting old and is clearly not the focus in the 1938 version of *Pygmalion*, as it does not go beyond the Cinderella motif. Today, however, the divide between the poor and the rich has never been wider.

Furthermore, Shaw's plays are a rite of passage for actors and directors. His characters are so complex that it is a real challenge and pleasure for an actor to embody any of them. Robert Everding argues that this is why Shaw is still popular today: "actors found in Shaw energetic, articulate characters attractive vehicles by which to showcase their talents, vehicles for potential bravura performances." (1998, p. 309). In 1951, five of Shaw's plays were revived on Broadway, all with renowned actors starring in it: Laurence Olivier, Vivien Leigh, John Clements, Kay Hammond, Yvonne Mitchell, and Uta Hagen (Everding, 1998, p. 309). Lately, Higgins was played by Tim Pigott-Smith, Jefferson Mays, Rupert Everett, all rewarded actors.

[16] For more information, see the website: https://www.shawfest.com/.

Eliza's role was played by Michelle Dockery, Claire Danes, Cush Jumbo, and Kara Tointon. This would particularly please Shaw as he wrote in a letter:

> If you want to flatter me… tell me that, like Shakespeare, Molière, Scott, Dumas and Dickens, I have provided a gallery of characters which are realler [sic] to you than your own relatives, and which successive generation of actors and actresses will keep alive for centuries as their *chevaux de bataille*. (quoted in Langton, 1952, p. 6)

Both according to critics and Shaw himself, in the theatre world, he is only second to Shakespeare.

Besides, playing Shaw today as he intended it one hundred and nine years ago would not make much sense, apart from the fact that it is a one hundred- and nine-years old representation. Anne Ubersfeld explains this as follows:

> La représentation ne serait être comprise comme la servante du texte. La notion de fidélité est extrêmement sujette à caution : être fidèle à la lettre du texte, cela peut signifier une infidélité à tel sens que le metteur en scène devra dégager pour le public auquel il s'adresse. Peut-être une représentation qui reproduirait fidèlement une représentation, disons d'il y a trente ans, ne délivrerait-elle plus qu'un seul message : « Je suis une représentation d'il y a trente ans », et laisserait-elle tomber le ou les sens actuels du texte. (Ubersfeld, 1996, p. 12)

Shaw also needs to be reinvented in order to be up to date, not in its content but in its representation and perspective. His plays need to be adapted to our social context. Perhaps in the case of *Pygmalion*, a re-staging could actually be closer to the original text and could finally honour Shaw's social activism. It was done four times since the fifties. Robert Everding explains: "This continuous textual reexamination saves Shaw's plays from being relegated to amusing period pieces and permits provocative new staging approaches that allow Shaw's ideas to continue to address and influence the modern world." (1998, p. 324).

However, we still have to be careful about the level of reading we make of Shaw and the choices that it entails for a representation. Directors adapt the play-text and necessarily present their own version of Shaw. As Robert Everding says, each director and actor must find the true meaning behind the words for themselves, before trying to pass it on to the audience:

> As the fate of Pygmalion suggests, though, the power of the popular will can be overwhelming. Today the tension between the complete Shaw and the popular version continues, for each new production begins with a decision about its *raison d'être*. Some ventures simply celebrate the icon of the witty and entertaining old man; other productions discover that the icon has penetrating eyes and a knowing smile. It is at these moments that Shaw again uses the popular context for his purposes and thereby continues to enrich our culture and influence our lives. (1998, p. 331)

Shaw's seriousness and wisdom still remain unknown to the large public. The pleasure he managed to give the audience almost completely took over on his teachings. Ironically, this is also why his plays are still popular. We know we will have a good time when seeing one of Shaw's plays. In the case of *Pygmalion*, the happy ending secures a hopeful and pleasurable moment for the audience and viewers. When we think of Shaw, we think about optimism since Eliza comes through at the end. However, there is a darker and more realistic side to him which is half the message he wanted to pass on. A didactic play cannot rely entirely on pleasure and must scare, frustrate, and ridicule in order to teach something to the audience.

Conclusion

Antoine Vitez wrote about theatre in those words:

> Le théâtre est un champ de forces, très petit, mais où se joue toujours l'histoire de la société, et qui, malgré son exiguïté, sert de modèle à la vie des gens, spectateurs ou pas. Laboratoire des conduites humaines, conservatoire des gestes et des voix, lieu d'expérience pour de nouveaux gestes, de nouvelles façons de dire, […] pour que change l'homme ordinaire, qui sait ? (quoted in Garbit, 2018)

This quote sums up Shaw's theatre very well. Shaw made it his life's mission to educate the masses and make people aware of their society's faults and injustice. To do that, he chose theatre, which he managed to renew with his modern vision of the world. Although his message was sometimes harsh, he never forgot to add humour and irony alongside it, using them as tools against the absurdity of life and human stupidity. However, the theatrical message can be tricky to master and often slips out of the hands of the playwright. The interpretation of a work of art is not something anybody can control. Its meaning relies on the coming together of the author's words and the receiver's ability to understand them, according to their own vision of the world. Presenting something new is not always easy and is seldom accepted by the audience. Shaw failed to impose his new version of the *Pygmalion* and Cinderella myth to the public. As the different adaptations show, myths, and especially love stories, cannot be tampered with. However, both adaptations retained most of Shaw's dialogue and the structure of the play. Lerner, the musical's librettist, said when adapting the play: "you can't tamper with Shaw" (Lerner, 1956, p. 4). The only major change was the ending and even then, no lines were added to the screenplay. Therefore, as far as the text is concerned, *Pygmalion* stayed intact. The way a text is then interpreted is however another matter. In the theatre and cinema, a layer of meaning is added by the non-verbal elements

that are chosen by the director and actor. Body language is as important as words. That is why I chose to study the meaning behind the gestures in the two adaptations as they delivered as much information on the characters and their relationship as on the directors and actors' interpretation of the play.

Although *My Fair Lady* seems farther from the play in genre and in time, it is closer to Shaw's *Pygmalion* than the 1938 movie. Indeed, the ambiguous ending and the tone of the musical movie resemble the play more. Nevertheless, romanticization seems to have become compulsory when interpreting Shaw's story. Ever since the play's premiere, the spectator's pleasure has triumphed over Shaw's realistic ending.

Shaw was perhaps too ahead of his time. That is why it would be interesting to re-stage *Pygmalion* and keep the same unresolved ending to see whether the public has changed. For example, the cockney accent is less stigmatized today than it was in the 1910's. Besides, the apparition of a more neutral accent, Estuary English, might indicate that things are changing, just like Shaw wished them to. Today's audience might also be more open to a realistic and feminist ending. However, it must be kept in mind that pleasure, in art in general but mostly in theatre, is a crucial element that must not be overlooked. A cinematographic remake of *My Fair Lady* was written by Emma Thompson, but the project never succeeded. One of the problems encountered was the casting. The roles of Eliza Doolittle and Henry Higgins are so complex and mythical that they cannot not be pulled off by any actress or actor.

Shaw explores many paradoxes. He believed in the life force in each of us, in something bigger that moves us to change and transform. He needed the paradox between the divine and realism. He found the desire and the energy to change in this paradox, and the

imagination required to invent a new world. In the end, it is left to the spectator to resolve these tensions and find their own balance.

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