

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Pygmalion is considered to be one of George Bernard Shaw's masterpieces. In 1938, the film adaptation of the play, *My Fair Lady*, received an Academy Award for the Best Adapted Screenplay ("George Bernard Shaw – Author, Playwright"). In *The Telegraph*, *Pygmalion* is described as a play that "suggests all sorts of problems, problems of our social state, of ethics, of human nature, even of scholarship, and, having suggested them, drops them and goes gaily on" ("Pygmalion, His Majesty's Theatre, 1914, Review").

I have chosen Shaw's work because he is renowned for his satirical works. In *Pygmalion*, he wrote the story which becomes "a fine satiric thrust at the basic artificiality of social ranking" of its time (Mills). Sir Winston Churchill, who served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in Shaw's era, once called Shaw as "the greatest master of letters in the English language ("A Very Short Biography of George Bernard Shaw"). It is said that in his will, Shaw left some money for the establishment of a new phonetic alphabet ("A Very Short

Biography of George Bernard Shaw”). This alone shows that Shaw was passionate when it comes to English phonetics, just like his character, Professor Henry Higgins.

In analyzing *Pygmalion*, I choose to discuss the portrayal of the major character. I argue that the major character, Professor Henry Higgins, is created to criticize the Victorian people’s social class hierarchy. A major character is a person who exists inside a story, which “the plot and resolution of conflict revolves around them” (“Types of Characters in Fiction”). They are fundamentally different from a protagonist, who is a character with central conflict to solve by themselves at the end of a story (“Types of Characters in Fiction”). The term “Pygmalion” itself refers to a Greek mythology about a man named Pygmalion, who fell in love with his own sculpture and through goddess Aphrodite’s blessings, the statue turned into a beautiful woman, Galatea (“Myth of Pygmalion and Galatea”). It is important to note that both of these Pygmalion stories have an element of “an artist who creates a person”, with Higgins as the artist in Shaw’s play. But unlike the original story of Pygmalion, Shaw’s *Pygmalion* dismissed the idea where the artist falls in love with his creation, which is a unique conclusion to its own. In my analysis for this thesis, I would like to analyze how Professor Henry Higgins is portrayed, and why he is portrayed in such a way.

I would like to analyze this play using formalism approach. Formalism approach is an approach where a reader analyzes all the elements related to their analysis of a work from the work itself, without referring to other outside sources

(“Critical Approaches to Literature”). Following the definition, I do not use outside references to reveal how and why Professor Henry Higgins is portrayed.

Statement of the Problem

1. How is the major character portrayed in the play?
2. What is the purpose of the author in portraying such a major character?

Purpose of the Study

1. To discover the way the major character is portrayed in the play.
2. To understand the purpose of the author in portraying such a major character.

Method of Research

The method of research used in the study is library research. I began the study by reading the primary text, George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. After reading the primary text, I analyzed the play's script. After analyzing the script, I drew a conclusion from my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters, preceded by Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, and Abstract. Chapter One consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains Discussion on the Portrayal of the Major Character in Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Chapter Three contains Conclusion.

I also have included Bibliography and Appendices, containing Synopsis of the Play and Biography of George Bernard Shaw.

