

pygmalion and my fair lady

****Pygmalion and My Fair Lady: Exploring the Transformation of Language and Identity****

pygmalion and my fair lady are two cultural landmarks deeply intertwined in the world of theater, literature, and film. While "Pygmalion" is a play written by George Bernard Shaw in 1913, "My Fair Lady" is a celebrated musical adaptation that premiered on Broadway in 1956. Both works explore themes of social class, language, transformation, and identity, yet they do so with distinct tones and storytelling methods. If you've ever wondered how a simple change in speech can alter a person's fate, or how art reflects society's views on class and education, diving into these two works offers fascinating insights.

The Origins: George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion

At its core, **Pygmalion** is a social critique wrapped in a witty and clever narrative. Shaw named his play after the Greek myth of Pygmalion, a sculptor who fell in love with a statue he carved, which then came to life. Shaw's modern "Pygmalion" centers on Professor Henry Higgins, an expert in phonetics, who makes a bet that he can transform Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl, into a lady who can pass as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party by teaching her proper speech and manners.

The Power of Language and Class in Pygmalion

One of the most compelling aspects of **Pygmalion** is its exploration of how language shapes identity and social mobility. In the early 20th century Britain, accent and dialect were strong indicators of one's social status. Eliza's Cockney accent immediately places her in the working class, limiting her opportunities. Higgins's experiment demonstrates how mastering "proper" English can open doors to higher social circles.

However, Shaw's play also critiques the superficiality of such class divisions. The transformation is not just about Eliza's speech but questions whether she truly belongs to the upper class or if she's merely wearing a mask. This ambiguity invites the audience to reflect on societal values and the nature of true identity versus performance.

From Stage to Screen: The Birth of My Fair Lady

Fast forward to the mid-20th century: **My Fair Lady** emerges as a musical adaptation of Shaw's play, with music by Frederick Loewe and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner. It premiered on Broadway in 1956 and quickly became a massive hit, later adapted into a 1964 film starring Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison. While it retains the essential storyline of **Pygmalion**, **My Fair Lady** introduces songs, romance, and a more sentimental tone, making it accessible to a broader audience.

Musical Magic: How My Fair Lady Transforms Pygmalion

The musical numbers in **My Fair Lady** add a new dimension to the story. Songs like “I Could Have Danced All Night” and “The Rain in Spain” creatively highlight Eliza’s transformation and emotional journey. The music softens some of Shaw’s sharp social commentary, emphasizing personal growth and romantic tension.

Interestingly, **My Fair Lady** places more emphasis on the relationship between Higgins and Eliza, often portraying a romantic undertone that Shaw’s original play deliberately avoids. This shift aligns with the conventions of musicals and Hollywood storytelling at the time but also sparked debates among purists about the integrity of Shaw’s message.

Comparing Themes: Social Mobility, Identity, and Gender Roles

Both **Pygmalion** and **My Fair Lady** delve into the complexities of social mobility and the performative aspects of identity, but they approach these themes differently.

Social Mobility and the Illusion of Transformation

In **Pygmalion**, the transformation is a social experiment, and Shaw is skeptical about the permanence of Eliza’s new identity. He challenges the notion that adopting the manners and speech of the upper class automatically grants acceptance or happiness. The play ends ambiguously, with Eliza asserting her independence, refusing to be simply a project or a trophy.

In contrast, **My Fair Lady** tends to celebrate the transformation more straightforwardly, ending on a hopeful note with an implied reconciliation between Eliza and Higgins. This reflects the musical’s intent to entertain and appeal to a wider audience, focusing on personal triumph.

Gender Dynamics and Female Empowerment

Shaw’s **Pygmalion** is notable for its progressive portrayal of Eliza as a strong-willed woman who challenges the patriarchal control represented by Higgins. By the end of the play, she demands respect and autonomy, making a statement about female empowerment in an era when women’s roles were heavily restricted.

Though **My Fair Lady** retains much of this empowerment, the romantic framing somewhat softens Eliza’s independence. The musical’s portrayal of gender roles is more conventional, reflecting the social norms of the 1950s and 1960s when it was produced.

The Cultural Impact of Pygmalion and My Fair Lady

Both *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* have had lasting influences far beyond their original productions. They've inspired countless adaptations, parodies, and references in pop culture, often invoked when discussing language, class, and transformation in society.

Language Learning and Linguistics

Because Professor Higgins is a phonetics expert, *Pygmalion* has been influential in the fields of linguistics and language education. The play highlights the importance of pronunciation, dialect, and language as markers of identity. Many speech coaches and teachers still refer to *Pygmalion* when discussing accent modification and sociolinguistics.

Class and Social Commentary in Modern Times

The themes of class distinction and the performative nature of social roles remain relevant today. Whether in conversations about accents, education, or cultural assimilation, the story of Eliza Doolittle resonates with contemporary audiences. It invites ongoing reflection about how society judges individuals based on speech and appearance, and how those judgments affect opportunities.

Why Pygmalion and My Fair Lady Still Matter

The enduring popularity of both *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* lies in their universal themes and relatable characters. They remind us that identity is complex and multifaceted, shaped by both internal qualities and external perceptions. They also challenge us to think critically about societal structures and question whether true change comes from outward transformations or deeper self-awareness.

For anyone interested in theater, literature, or social history, exploring these works offers a rich experience that combines humor, drama, music, and insightful social critique. Whether you prefer Shaw's sharp wit or the musical charm of *My Fair Lady*, both works continue to captivate and provoke thought more than a century after their creation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main plot of George Bernard Shaw's play 'Pygmalion'?

'Pygmalion' is about a phonetics professor, Henry Higgins, who makes a bet that he can transform Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl, into a refined lady by teaching her proper speech and manners.

How does 'My Fair Lady' differ from the original play 'Pygmalion'?

'My Fair Lady' is a musical adaptation of Shaw's 'Pygmalion' with added songs and a more romantic tone, while the original play focuses more on social class and identity without a traditional romantic ending.

Who were the original creators of 'My Fair Lady'?

'My Fair Lady' was created by Frederick Loewe (music) and Alan Jay Lerner (lyrics and book), adapting Shaw's play into a Broadway musical.

What themes are explored in both 'Pygmalion' and 'My Fair Lady'?

Both works explore themes of social class, transformation, identity, and the power of language in shaping people's lives and social mobility.

What role does Eliza Doolittle play in the story of 'Pygmalion' and 'My Fair Lady'?

Eliza Doolittle is the protagonist who undergoes a transformation from a poor flower girl with a strong accent to a polished lady, challenging social norms and expectations.

How was 'My Fair Lady' received by audiences and critics upon its release?

'My Fair Lady' was highly acclaimed, becoming one of the most successful and beloved Broadway musicals, praised for its music, performances, and adaptation of Shaw's work.

What is the significance of the title 'Pygmalion' in relation to the story?

The title 'Pygmalion' references the Greek myth of a sculptor who falls in love with a statue he created, symbolizing Higgins' attempt to 'sculpt' Eliza into a refined lady, highlighting themes of creation and transformation.

Additional Resources

****Pygmalion and My Fair Lady: A Comparative Exploration of Two Iconic Works****

pygmalion and my fair lady are intrinsically linked in the world of theatre and film, representing two distinct yet deeply connected narratives that have influenced popular culture for decades. Both works explore themes of transformation, social mobility, and identity through the lens of language and manners, albeit in different formats and with unique stylistic choices. Analyzing "Pygmalion," George Bernard Shaw's seminal play, alongside "My Fair Lady," the celebrated musical adaptation,

provides rich insight into how storytelling evolves across mediums and eras while maintaining core thematic concerns.

Origins and Contexts: Shaw's Pygmalion

George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, first performed in 1913, is a sharp social commentary wrapped in a romantic comedy. The play's title alludes to the Greek myth of Pygmalion, a sculptor who falls in love with a statue he carved, symbolizing the act of transformation and creation. Shaw's narrative reimagines this myth through the story of Professor Henry Higgins, a phonetics expert who undertakes to transform Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower girl with a strong accent, into a refined lady capable of passing in high society.

Shaw's work is notable for its critique of the British class system and the superficial markers of social distinction such as speech and manners. The play challenges the audience to consider whether identity is truly intrinsic or merely a performance shaped by external factors. Shaw's sharp wit and socio-political undertones distinguish *Pygmalion* as both an entertaining and thought-provoking piece of theatre.

Thematic Depth and Character Dynamics

At its core, *Pygmalion* probes questions of power, autonomy, and transformation. Higgins embodies the intellectual elite who believes he can mold Eliza at will, while Eliza's journey reflects a struggle for self-definition amidst imposed change. Unlike typical romantic narratives, Shaw deliberately avoids a conventional happy ending, emphasizing instead Eliza's independence and ambiguity about her future. This nuanced portrayal invites audiences to reflect on gender roles and societal expectations.

My Fair Lady: From Stage to Screen

My Fair Lady, premiering in 1956 as a Broadway musical with music by Frederick Loewe and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner, is a direct adaptation of Shaw's *Pygmalion*, though it introduces significant modifications. The musical incorporates songs that enhance emotional expression and narrative progression, transforming the story into a more accessible and commercially appealing format.

The 1964 film adaptation of *My Fair Lady*, starring Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison, further popularized the story worldwide. The film's lavish production, memorable score, and charismatic performances brought new life to Shaw's narrative but also softened some of its social critiques in favor of romance and spectacle.

Musical Elements and Popular Appeal

The addition of iconic songs such as "I Could Have Danced All Night" and "The Rain in Spain" serves multiple functions: they provide insight into Eliza's inner transformation, underscore key plot developments, and offer moments of levity and charm. This musical dimension appeals to a broader

audience and frames the story within the conventions of mid-20th-century musical theatre.

However, while **My Fair Lady** retains the essential plotline of **Pygmalion**, it places greater emphasis on the romantic tension between Higgins and Eliza, offering a more optimistic resolution. This shift aligns with audience preferences for feel-good endings and highlights how adaptations often reflect contemporary cultural values.

Comparative Analysis: Themes, Characters, and Social Commentary

When comparing **pygmalion and my fair lady**, several key distinctions emerge, particularly in thematic focus and character portrayal.

Social Critique vs. Romanticization

Shaw's **Pygmalion** is unapologetically critical of the rigid British class structure. The play exposes how social mobility is often superficial, based on outward appearances rather than genuine change. Eliza's transformation questions whether societal acceptance is contingent on conformity, and Shaw's ending deliberately avoids romantic closure to emphasize Eliza's newfound autonomy.

Conversely, **My Fair Lady** romanticizes the relationship between Eliza and Higgins, culminating in a more traditionally satisfying conclusion. Though elements of social critique remain, the musical leans towards celebrating individual transformation and personal relationships, making it more palatable for mass audiences.

Characterization and Development

In Shaw's original, Eliza is a strong-willed, independent character who asserts her agency by the play's conclusion. Higgins is depicted as brilliant but socially inept, often insensitive to Eliza's feelings. The dynamic between them is complex, marked by power imbalance and mutual challenge.

My Fair Lady softens Higgins' character, presenting him as more charming and less abrasive, while Eliza's vulnerability and romantic feelings are foregrounded. This shift affects the story's tone and the audience's emotional engagement, highlighting the different storytelling priorities between the play and the musical.

Language and Speech as Tools of Transformation

Both works hinge on the power of language to alter identity and social standing. Shaw's expertise in phonetics is evident in detailed dialogue and accent distinctions, emphasizing how speech shapes societal perception.

The musical capitalizes on this theme through catchy, memorable songs that dramatize Eliza's linguistic progress. "The Rain in Spain" serves as a pivotal moment symbolizing her successful phonetic training, a device that effectively conveys transformation in a musical context.

Enduring Legacy and Cultural Impact

Pygmalion and **My Fair Lady** have left indelible marks on theatre and popular culture. Shaw's play continues to be studied for its incisive social commentary and innovative character work, influencing modern drama and discussions about class and identity.

My Fair Lady remains a beloved classic of musical theatre, frequently revived on stage and celebrated in cinematic history. It has introduced new generations to Shaw's narrative while adapting its themes to contemporary tastes.

The relationship between these two works exemplifies how adaptations can preserve core ideas while reshaping narratives to suit different audiences and artistic forms. Their ongoing relevance speaks to universal themes of transformation, identity, and the social constructions that define human experience.

Exploring **pygmalion** and **my fair lady** side by side reveals not only the evolution of a story but also the cultural shifts that influence how stories are told and received. Both stand as testaments to the power of theatre and film to reflect and challenge societal norms, inviting audiences to reconsider the true nature of personal and social change.

Pygmalion And My Fair Lady

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pygmalion and my fair lady: Pygmalion alias My Fair Lady Bernard Shaw, 2021-01-04 Oscar- und Literaturnobelpreisträger Bernard Shaw erklärte unmissverständlich, warum er für *Pygmalion* – die Literaturvorlage für den Film und das Musical *My Fair Lady* – Wien, Berlin und München vor London bevorzugte: „Es ist zu einer Tradition der englischen Presse geworden, nach der Uraufführung meines neuen Theaterstücks in die ganze Welt hinauszuposaunen, dass es kein gutes Bühnenstück sei – dass es langweilig, blasphemisch, unpopulär und finanziell erfolglos sei. Diese Nachrichten werden postwendend nach Berlin und Wien telegraphiert, mit dem Ergebnis, dass Intendanten dort gezwungen sind, Aufführungen zu verschieben. Deshalb haben mich die Intendanten gebeten, meine Stücke zuerst von ihnen aufführen zu lassen. Ich bin dieser Bitte schließlich nachgekommen.“ *Pygmalion* ist das berühmteste Theaterstück von George Bernard Shaw (26. Juli 1856 – 2. November 1950), das 1913 uraufgeführt wurde. Die Idee für diese Komödie entnahm der Dramatiker der griechischen Mythologie. Der Bildhauer *Pygmalion* von Zypern erschuf eine weibliche Elfenbeinstatue, in die er sich schließlich verliebte. Die Göttin der Liebe *Venus*

beseelte das Elfenbein und erweckte die Statue zum Leben; später wurde sie Galatea (aus dem Griechischen „Milchweiße“) genannt. In Shaws Version sind Pygmalion und Henry Higgins identisch, während Galatea in der Figur der Eliza Doolittle wiederzufinden ist. Mit Pygmalion gelang Shaw ein wahrer Geniestreich, der sich als Kassenschlager erwies. „Pygmalion ist meine beständige Einnahmequelle: Das Stück hat mich vor dem Ruin während des Krieges bewahrt und bringt weiterhin jede Woche eine beträchtliche Summe ein“, schrieb Shaw bereits 1921. Doch worum geht es in diesem Theaterstück, und was wissen wir über die Haupthelden? Wir erzählen die wahre Geschichte über Henry Higgins (Pygmalion) und Eliza Doolittle (Galatea). Henry Higgins – der Pygmalion Henry Higgins war ein vierzigjähriger Professor für Phonetik und Autor eines bekannten Buches, Higgins’ Universalalphabet. Der ausgewiesene Dialektexperte konnte „den Geburtsort jedes Mannes oder jeder Frau innerhalb eines Radius von weniger als sechs Meilen erkennen, in London sogar innerhalb von nur zwei Meilen – manchmal sogar innerhalb von zwei Straßen.“ Higgins verdiente sein Geld, indem er neureichen englischen Unternehmern und amerikanischen Millionärinnen beibrachte, wie man richtig Englisch spricht. Der gute Mann war also beruflich sehr erfolgreich und gut vernetzt, was ihm einen guten Ruf einbrachte.

pygmalion and my fair lady: *Pygmalion and My Fair Lady* George Bernard Shaw, 2009-07-01 Pygmalion is the tale of Professor Henry Higgins and an untutored flower girl he transforms into a duchess. My Fair Lady is taken one step further, when Higgins and Eliza are reunited .

pygmalion and my fair lady: *Pygmalion and My Fair Lady (50th Anniversary Edition)* George Bernard Shaw, Alan Jay Lerner, 2006-03-07 The ancient Greeks tell the legend of the sculptor Pygmalion, who created a statue of a woman of such surpassing beauty that he fell in love with his own creation. Then, Aphrodite, taking pity on this man whose love could not reach beyond the barrier of stone, brought the statue to life and gave her to Pygmalion as his bride. Centuries later, George Bernard Shaw captured the magic of this legend in his celebrated romantic play, Pygmalion. Pygmalion became Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics, his statue an untutored flower girl from the streets of London, and the barrier between them the difference in their stations in life. In My Fair Lady, Alan Jay Lerner takes the legend one step further—the barrier is swept away and Higgins and Eliza are reunited as the curtain falls on one of the loveliest musical plays of our time—winning seven Tonys® for its original Broadway production, and seven Oscars® for its film adaptation.

pygmalion and my fair lady: Pygmalion & My Fair Lady George Bernard Shaw, Alan Jay Lerner, 2006-03-07 To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Broadway premiere of Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Lowe's My Fair Lady, this special edition contains Shaw's original play and the script and lyrics for the Tony(- and Academy Award(-winning musical. Revised reissue.

pygmalion and my fair lady: *My fair lady* Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, 1963

pygmalion and my fair lady: *Pygmalion alias My Fair Lady* Bernard Shaw, 2020-11-17 Oscar- und Literaturnobelpreisträger Bernard Shaw erklärte unmissverständlich, warum er für Pygmalion - Literaturvorlage für den Film und das Musical My Fair Lady - Wien, Berlin und München vor London bevorzugte: Es ist zu einer Tradition der englischen Presse geworden, nach einer Uraufführung meines neuen Theaterstücks in die ganze Welt hinauszuposaunen, dass es kein Bühnenstück sei - dass es langweilig, blasphemisch, unpopulär und finanziell erfolglos sei. Die Nachrichten werden postwendend nach Berlin und Wien telegraphiert, mit dem Ergebnis, dass Intendanten dort gezwungen waren, Aufführungen zu verschieben. Deswegen haben die Intendanten mich gebeten, dass ich meine Bühnenstücke zuerst von ihnen aufführen lassen sollte. Ich bin dieser Bitte schließlich nachgekommen. Die Idee für diese Komödie entlieh der Dramatiker der griechischen Mythologie. Der Bildhauer Pygmalion von Zypern erschuf eine weibliche Elfenbeinstatue, schließlich verliebte er sich in sie. Die Göttin der Liebe Venus beseelte Elfenbein und erweckt die Statue zum Leben, später wurde sie Galatea genannt. Pygmalion ist in der Shaw's Version der Sprachprofessor Henry Higgins, milchweiße Galatea ist Eliza Doolittle. In Pygmalion geht es um eine Wette. Higgins traf Eliza und Hauptmann a. D. Pickering zufällig auf der Covent Garden Piazza und wettete mit Pickering aus Spaß, dass er Eliza's Cockney-Dialekt in makellostes Englisch verwandelt und als Herzogin ausgibt. Das Stichwort aus Spaß ist entscheidend, denn Higgins' Vita zeigt, dass er keine

Bestätigung seiner Professionalität von einem zufälligen Bekannten Pickering brauchte, sondern gegenteilig die Verwandlung eines Blumenmädchens in eine Herzogin diskret halten wollte. Higgins und Pickering übernahmen alle Ausgaben im Wert von umgerechnet mehrere Tausend Euro für Eliza: Sie wurde ins Higgins' Haus einquartiert, bekam ein Zimmer mit Vollpension, modische Klamotten, Taschengeld und wurde von Higgins nach seiner patentierten Methode phonetisch unterrichtet. Higgins erfüllte sein Versprechen. Auf dem Empfang eines Botschafters wurde Eliza wie eine salonfähige Prinzessin gefeiert. Aber er hatte nicht vor, sich in seine herrliche Schöpfung zu verlieben, geschweige zu heiraten. Er war kein Schürzenjäger: Für mich sind meine weiblichen Unterrichtenden wie Holzklötze und ich bin selbst kalt wie ein Fisch ihnen gegenüber. Und er verliebte sich niemals in jemanden unter fünfundvierzig. Ich stehe nicht auf jungen Frauen. Ich habe ein ganz festes Ideal von meiner Traumfrau: Sie muss dir [Mutter] möglichst ähnlich sein. Doch, doch. Er muss!, mehrten sich die Stimmen der Medien und beanspruchten für sich die Deutungshoheit über das Stück. Es wäre sehr spannend gewesen, nach meinem Tod über meine musikalischen Vorlieben und Abneigungen zu erfahren, scherzte russischer Komponist Tschaikowsky. Nach der Uraufführung des Stücks erntete Bernard Shaw Shitstorm. Zahlreiche wichtigtuende Journalisten, Rezensenten und Literaturexperten entrüsteten sich routinemäßig über Bernard Shaw. Alle Sünden in Eine münden: Sein angeblicher Charmeur und Schikaneur Higgins sei gefühllos, selbstherrlich, egozentrisch, versnobt, grobschlächtig und geltungssüchtig. Er triebe eine Bildung durch Dressur ohne die menschliche Achtung, betrachtete Eliza nicht als gleichwertig an, weigerte sich, sie als fühlendes Wesen zu behandeln, nahm Eliza als Person nicht wahr, ignorierte ihre menschlichen Bedürfnisse, indem er ihre Liebe nicht erwiderte. Tathandlungen, die zu einer schwerwiegenden Beeinträchtigung der Lebensgestaltung des Opfers führten, wurden prompt aufgelistet: Der Professor hat Eliza sozial entwurzelt und gedankenlos ihre Zukunft zerstört. In Wahrheit profitierte Eliza stark von Higgins' Einmischung: Sie hat sich als Persönlichkeit weiterentwickelt, einen netten Mann geheiratet und ist eine Besitzerin eines Blumenladens im Zentrum von London geworden. Fazit: Im

pygmalion and my fair lady: Pygmalion and My Fair Lady George Bernard Shaw, Alan Lerner, 1975 This Greek legend is presented in two different formats--the original by Shaw and the musical play by Lerner.

pygmalion and my fair lady: Pygmalion/My Fair Lady George Bernard Shaw, 1980

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pygmalion and my fair lady: **Pygmalion** George Bernard Shaw, 2021

pygmalion and my fair lady: Pygmalien von George Bernard Shaw - My Fair Lady von Alan Jay Lerner: ein Vergleich Eva Maria Mauter, 2008 Studienarbeit aus dem Jahr 1996 im Fachbereich Medien / Kommunikation - Sonstiges, Note: keine Benotung, Universität Paderborn, Veranstaltung: Musicals und Musicalverfilmungen, 8 Quellen im Literaturverzeichnis, Sprache: Deutsch, Abstract: In dieser Hausarbeit wird das Libretto des amerikanischen Musicals My Fair Lady von Alan Jay Lerner mit seiner literarischen Vorlage, George Bernard Shaws Theaterstück Pygmalion, A Romance in Five Acts verglichen. Dabei werden solche Abwandlungen und Veränderungen der literarischen Vorlage betont, die durch ihre musicalspezifische Besonderheit aus dem Theaterstück Pygmalion das Musical My Fair Lady entstehen ließen. Hierbei werden insbesondere die Bühnengestaltung, die Songs und die Anzahl der mitwirkenden Charaktere berücksichtigt. Zu den größten Verschiebungen in My Fair Lady führt jedoch die veränderte Darstellung einiger Charaktere, worauf im punktuellen Vergleich besonderes Gewicht gelegt wird. Auf die geringfügigen Änderungen, die für das Verständnis eines amerikanischen Publikums vorgenommen werden mußten, wird hingewiesen werden. Einleitend wird die Figur des Pygmalion beschrieben, wie sie sich in der Literatur von der griechischen Antike bis in die Moderne darstellt, wobei berücksichtigt wird, wie sich die verschiedenen Werke sowohl auf Shaws Pygmalion, wie auch auf Lerner's My Fair Lady auswirken.

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pygmalion and my fair lady: Historische Interpretationen Marlis Weinmann-Walser, 1995

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pygmalion and my fair lady: *Changing Gender Roles and the Pygmalion Motif - Shaw's "Pygmalion" and the Musical "My Fair Lady" in their contexts* Catharina Kern, 2009-12-21 Bachelor Thesis from the year 2007 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 2,0, University of Bayreuth, language: English, abstract: Pygmalion is one of the most famous comedies of all times. Its mythological background is fascinating as the topic is still up to date. This is why it has influenced many artists to use the story for their works. Besides Ovid's version in his *Metamorphoses* that very closely sticks to the original of Greek mythology and G. B. Shaw's one that, although he changes the frame and the plot of Pygmalion, he still holds on to the idea of the original story, there is for example Jean-Jacques Rousseau's melodrama *Pygmalion* (1770), Johann Wolfgang Goethe's poem *Pygmalion* (1767) and Franz von Suppé's operetta *Die Schöne Galathee* (1865). The mythological background, though, is not the only reason why the story of Pygmalion has attracted that many artists and is that popular. It is the diversity of its themes and actions. There is for example a love story, a criticism of society, many different characters that are interesting in each way, changes in individual personalities and so on. . . . In a way he also forms a woman after his ideas and taste. This point of shaping a woman is present in both, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and G. B. Shaw's *Pygmalion*. However, the most important difference between them is the woman's behaviour. While in mythology Galatea is only a passive character, in Shaw's *Pygmalion* Eliza is active from the beginning on and influences the play's stream and action. She takes her destiny into her own hands and one could speak of an emancipated woman. As emancipation was a major topic and drastically developed during the Victorian era, one could argue whether the description of women in literature actually reflects society's attitude towards them in the era in which this literature was written. For this reason I will elaborate the role of women in Victorian society in general and in *Pygmalion* in specific. Furthermore I would like to compare the play *Pygmalion*, which was staged for the first time in 1913, to the musical *My fair lady* which was released in 1956. The difference in time promises a difference in the reception of the story and it is probable that the changes in society between 1913 and 1956 are reflected in those two versions. Especially the role of women changed in those years. Therefore the focus of my thesis will be these transforming ideas concerning women in the Victorian age and the 1950's by means of *Pygmalion* and *My fair lady*.

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pygmalion and my fair lady: My Fair Lady Robert Gilbert, Terrance Ho Sin Hang, Helga Wolf, Ludwig Pflanz, Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, Bühnen (Lübeck), Ernst-Deutsch-Theater (Hamburg), 1992

pygmalion and my fair lady: My fair lady , 2007

pygmalion and my fair lady: Pygmalion George Bernard Shaw, 2020-11-13 *Pygmalion* is a play by George Bernard Shaw that tells the story of a poor, young flower girl who has been disrespected and overlooked because of her appearance and the dialect she speaks. In Shaw's clever adaptation, Professor Henry Higgins, a linguistic expert, takes on a bet that he can transform an awkward cockney flower seller into a refined young lady simply by polishing her manners and changing the way she speaks. In the process of convincing society that his creation is a mysterious royal figure, the Professor also falls in love with his elegant handiwork. The irresistible theme of the emerging butterfly, together with Shaw's brilliant dialogue and splendid skills as a playwright, have made *Pygmalion* one of the most popular comedies in the English language.

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