

In fire at first, and then in frost, until
The fine, protesting fibre snaps?

Oh, who

- 25 Foreknowing, ever chose a fate like this?
What woman out of all the breathing world
Would be a woman, could her heart select,
Or love her lover, could her life prevent?
Then let me be that only, only one;
- 30 Thus let me make that sacrifice supreme,
No other ever made, or can, or shall.
Behold, the future shall stand still to ask,
What man was worth a price so isolate?
And rate thee at its value for all time.
- 35 For I am driven by an awful Law.
See! while I hesitate, it mouldeth me,
And carves me like a chisel at my heart.
'Tis stronger than the woman or the man;
'Tis stronger than all torment or delight;
- 40 'Tis stronger than the marble or the flesh.
Obedient be the sculptor and the stone!
Thine am I, thine at all the cost of all
The pangs that woman ever bore for man;
Thine I elect to be, denying them;
- 45 Thine I elect to be, defying them;
Thine, thine I dare to be, in scorn of them;
And being thine forever, bless I them!
Pygmalion! Take me from my pedestal,
And set me lower – lower, Love! – that I
- 50 May be a woman, and look up to thee;
And looking, longing, loving, give and take
The human kisses worth the worst that thou
By thine own nature shalt inflict on me.

P24 Bernard Shaw, from *Pygmalion*, 1912^o

(George) Bernard Shaw, 1856–1950, Irish-born playwright, novelist, critic, social and political thinker and controversialist. Over his sixty-year writing career his

^o from *Pygmalion*, in *The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw Collected Plays with their Prefaces*, vol. iv, London, 1972, pp. 680, 691, 694–5, 727–38, 776–81. Reprinted by permission of The Society of Authors on behalf of the Bernard Shaw Estate. Shaw's distinctive spelling is here retained, in particular his omission of the apostrophe from words like *dont* and *yourre*.

witty and provocative plays tackled such large subjects as war (*Arms and the Man*, 1894), sex and gender (*Man and Superman*, 1903), medicine (*The Doctor's Dilemma*, 1906), religion (*Major Barbara*, 1905; *Saint Joan*, 1924), government (*The Apple Cart*, 1929), and the ultimate destiny of the human race (*Back to Methuselah*, 1921).

Shaw's *Pygmalion* is Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics, and Galatea is Eliza Doolittle, a Cockney flower-seller whom he 'metamorphoses' into a lady. They first meet on a rainy night at Covent Garden (Act 1), where Higgins uses Eliza as a demonstration model for a lecture to his friend Colonel Pickering on the importance of pronunciation, boasting:

You see this creature with her kerbstone English: the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass her off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as a lady's maid or shop assistant, which requires better English.

The next day (Act 2), Eliza goes to Higgins's laboratory in Wimpole Street to ask for speech lessons so she can 'become a lady in a flower shop', and Pickering takes Higgins up on his boast:

PICKERING: Higgins: I'm interested. What about the ambassador's garden party? I'll say you're the greatest teacher alive if you make that good. I'll bet you all the expenses of the experiment you can't do it. And I'll pay for the lessons.

LIZA: Oh, you are real good. Thank you, Captain.

HIGGINS: [*tempted, looking at her*] It's almost irresistible. She's so deliciously low – so horribly dirty –

LIZA: [*protesting extremely*] Ah-ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo-oo!!! I aint dirty: I washed my face and hands afore I come, I did.

PICKERING: You're certainly not going to turn her head with flattery, Higgins.

MRS PEARCE: [*uneasy*] Oh, don't say that, sir: there's more ways than one of turning a girl's head; and nobody can do it better than Mr Higgins, though he may not always mean it. I do hope, sir, you won't encourage him to do anything foolish.

HIGGINS: [*becoming excited as the idea grows on him*] What is life but a series of inspired follies? The difficulty is to find them to do. Never lose a chance: it doesn't come every day. I shall make a duchess of this draggletailed guttersnipe.

LIZA: [*strongly deprecating this view of her*] Ah-ah-ah-ow-ow-oo!

HIGGINS: [*carried away*] Yes: in six months – in three if she has a good ear and a quick tongue – I'll take her anywhere and pass her off as anything. We'll start

today: now! this moment! Take her away and clean her, Mrs Pearce. Monkey Brand,^o if it wont come off any other way . . .

Mrs Pearce, the housekeeper, raises practical objections:

MRS PEARCE: But whats to become of her? Is she to be paid anything? Do be sensible, sir.

HIGGINS: Oh, pay her whatever is necessary: put it down in the housekeeping book. [*Impatiently*] What on earth will she want with money? She'll have her food and her clothes. She'll only drink if you give her money.

LIZA: [*turning on him*] Oh you are a brute. It's a lie: nobody ever saw the sign of liquor on me. [*To Pickering*] Oh, sir: youre a gentleman: dont let him speak to me like that.

PICKERING: [*in good-humored remonstrance*] Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?

HIGGINS: [*looking critically at her*] Oh no, I dont think so. Not any feelings that we need bother about. [*Cheerily*] Have you, Eliza?

LIZA: I got my feelings same as anyone else.

HIGGINS: [*to Pickering, reflectively*] You see the difficulty?

PICKERING: Eh? What difficulty?

HIGGINS: To get her to talk grammar. The mere pronunciation is easy enough.

LIZA: I dont want to talk grammar. I want to talk like a lady in a flower-shop.

MRS PEARCE: Will you please keep to the point, Mr Higgins. I want to know on what terms the girl is to be here. Is she to have any wages? And what is to become of her when youve finished your teaching? You must look ahead a little.

HIGGINS: [*impatiently*] Whats to become of her if I leave her in the gutter? Tell me that, Mrs Pearce.

MRS PEARCE: Thats her own business, not yours, Mr Higgins.

HIGGINS: Well, when Ive done with her, we can throw her back into the gutter; and then it will be her own business again; so thats all right.

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Act 3: after several months of phonetic training, Higgins takes Eliza for her first public test, at his mother's 'at home'.

THE PARLOR MAID: [*opening the door*] Miss Doolittle. [*She withdraws.*]

HIGGINS: [*rising hastily and running to Mrs Higgins*] Here she is, mother. [*He stands on tiptoe and makes signs over his mother's head to Eliza to indicate to her which lady is her hostess.*]

^o **Monkey Brand:** a product for cleaning pots and pans.

Eliza, who is exquisitely dressed, produces an impression of such remarkable distinction and beauty as she enters that they all rise, quite fluttered. Guided by Higgins's signals, she comes to Mrs Higgins with studied grace.

LIZA: [*speaking with pedantic correctness of pronunciation and great beauty of tone*] How do you do, Mrs Higgins? [*She gasps slightly in making sure of the H in Higgins, but is quite successful.*] Mr Higgins told me I might come.

MRS HIGGINS: [*cordially*] Quite right: I'm very glad indeed to see you.

PICKERING: How do you do, Miss Doolittle?

LIZA: [*shaking hands with him*] Colonel Pickering, is it not?

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: I feel sure we have met before, Miss Doolittle. I remember your eyes.

LIZA: How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman gracefully in the place just left vacant by Higgins.*]

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*introducing*] My daughter Clara.

LIZA: How do you do?

CLARA: [*impulsively*] How do you do? [*She sits down on the ottoman beside Eliza, devouring her with her eyes.*]

FREDDY: [*coming to their side of the ottoman*] I've certainly had the pleasure.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*introducing*] My son Freddy.

LIZA: How do you do?

Freddy bows and sits down in the Elizabethan chair, infatuated.

HIGGINS: [*suddenly*] By George, yes: it all comes back to me! [*They stare at him.*] Covent Garden! [*Lamentably*] What a damned thing!^o

MRS HIGGINS: Henry, please! [*He is about to sit on the edge of the table.*] Don't sit on my writing-table: you'll break it.

HIGGINS: [*sulkily*] Sorry.

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.

MRS HIGGINS: [*at last, conversationally*] Will it rain, do you think?

LIZA: The shallow depression in the west of these islands is likely to move slowly in an easterly direction. There are no indications of any great change in the barometrical situation.

FREDDY: Ha! ha! how awfully funny!

LIZA: What is wrong with that, young man? I bet I got it right.

FREDDY: Killing!

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: I'm sure I hope it won't turn cold. There's so

^o **What a damned thing!** Higgins has just remembered where he and Eliza encountered the Eynsford Hills before—at Covent Garden in Act 1, where Eliza was selling violets.

much influenza about. It runs right through our whole family regularly every spring.

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?

LIZA: Y-e-e-e-es, Lord love you! Why should she die of influenza? She come through diphtheria right enough the year before. I saw her with my own eyes. Fairly blue with it, she was. They all thought she was dead; but my father he kept ladling gin down her throat til she came to so sudden that she bit the bowl off the spoon.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*startled*] Dear me!

LIZA: [*piling up the indictment*] What call would a woman with that strength in her have to die of influenza? What become of her new straw hat that should have come to me? Somebody pinched it; and what I say is, them as pinched it done her in.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: What does doing her in mean?

HIGGINS: [*hastily*] Oh, thats the new small talk. To do a person in means to kill them.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: [*to Eliza, horrified*] You surely dont believe that your aunt was killed?

LIZA: Do I not! Them she lived with would have killed her for a hat-pin, let alone a hat.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: But it cant have been right for your father to pour spirits down her throat like that. It might have killed her.

LIZA: Not her. Gin was mother's milk to her. Besides, he'd poured so much down his own throat that he knew the good of it.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: Do you mean that he drank?

LIZA: Drank! My word! Something chronic.

MRS EYNSFORD HILL: How dreadful for you!

LIZA: Not a bit. It never did him no harm what I could see. But then he did not keep it up regular. [*Cheerfully*] On the burst, as you might say, from time to time. And always more agreeable when he had a drop in. When he was out of work, my mother used to give him fourpenmce and tell him to go out and not come back until he'd drunk himself cheerful and loving-like. Theres lots of women has to make their husbands drunk to make them fit to live with. [*Now quite at her ease*] You see, it's like this. If a man has a bit of a conscience, it always takes him when he's sober; and then it makes him low-spirited. A drop of booze just takes that off and makes him happy. [*To Freddy, who is in convulsions of suppressed laughter*] Here! what are you sniggering at?

FREDDY: The new small talk. You do it so awfully well.

LIZA: If I was doing it proper, what was you laughing at? [*To Higgins*] Have I said anything I oughtnt?

MRS HIGGINS: [*interposing*] Not at all, Miss Doolittle.

LIZA: Well, thats a mercy, anyhow. [*Expansively*] What I always say is –

HIGGINS: [*rising and looking at his watch*] Ahem!

LIZA: [*looking round at him; taking the hint; and rising*] Well: I must go. [*They all rise. Freddy goes to the door.*] So pleased to have met you. Goodbye. [*She shakes hands with Mrs Higgins.*]

MRS HIGGINS: Goodbye.

LIZA: Goodbye, Colonel Pickering.

PICKERING: Goodbye, Miss Doolittle. [*They shake hands.*]

LIZA: [*nodding to the others*] Goodbye, all.

FREDDY: [*opening the door for her*] Are you walking across the Park, Miss Doolittle?
If so –

LIZA: [*with perfectly elegant diction*] Walk! Not bloody likely.^o [*Sensation.*] I am going in a taxi. [*She goes out.*]

After the other guests have departed, somewhat shaken, Higgins questions his mother about how the experiment has gone:

HIGGINS: [*eagerly*] Well? Is Eliza presentable? [*He swoops on his mother and drags her to the ottoman, where she sits down in Eliza's place with her son on her left. Pickering returns to his chair on her right.*]

MRS HIGGINS: You silly boy, of course she's not presentable. She's a triumph of your art and of her dressmaker's; but if you suppose for a moment that she doesnt give herself away in every sentence she utters, you must be perfectly cracked about her.

PICKERING: But dont you think something might be done? I mean something to eliminate the sanguinary element from her conversation.

MRS HIGGINS: Not as long as she is in Henry's hands.

HIGGINS: [*aggrieved*] Do you mean that my language is improper?

MRS HIGGINS: No, dearest: it would be quite proper – say on a canal barge; but it would not be proper for her at a garden party.

HIGGINS: [*deeply injured*] Well I must say –

PICKERING: [*interrupting him*] Come, Higgins: you must learn to know yourself. I havnt heard such language as yours since we used to review the volunteers in Hyde Park twenty years ago.

HIGGINS: [*sulkily*] Oh, well, if you say so, I suppose I dont always talk like a bishop.

MRS HIGGINS: [*quieting Henry with a touch*] Colonel Pickering: will you tell me what is the exact state of things in Wimpole Street?

PICKERING: [*cheerfully: as if this completely changed the subject*] Well, I have come to

^o **Not bloody likely**: the phrase caused a theatrical sensation in 1912, when **bloody** was still a taboo word. In 1957 *My Fair Lady* had to substitute 'move your bloomin' arse!' to get a similar effect.

live there with Henry. We work together at my Indian Dialects; and we think it more convenient –

MRS HIGGINS: Quite so. I know all about that: it's an excellent arrangement.

But where does this girl live?

HIGGINS: With us, of course. Where *should* she live?

MRS HIGGINS: But on what terms? Is she a servant? If not, what is she?

PICKERING: [*slowly*] I think I know what you mean, Mrs Higgins.

HIGGINS: Well, dash me if *I* do! I've had to work at the girl every day for months to get her to her present pitch. Besides, she's useful. She knows where my things are, and remembers my appointments and so forth.

MRS HIGGINS: How does your housekeeper get on with her?

HIGGINS: Mrs Pearce? Oh, she's jolly glad to get so much taken off her hands; for before Eliza came, she used to have to find things and remind me of my appointments. But she's got some silly bee in her bonnet about Eliza. She keeps saying 'You dont think, sir': doesnt she, Pick?

PICKERING: Yes: thats the formula. 'You dont think, sir.' Thats the end of every conversation about Eliza.

HIGGINS: As if I ever stop thinking about the girl and her confounded vowels and consonants. I'm worn out, thinking about her, and watching her lips and her teeth and her tongue, not to mention her soul, which is the quaintest of the lot.

MRS HIGGINS: You certainly are a pretty pair of babies, playing with your live doll.

HIGGINS: Playing! The hardest job I ever tackled: make no mistake about that, mother. But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul.

PICKERING: [*drawing his chair closer to Mrs Higgins and bending over to her eagerly*] Yes: it's enormously interesting. I assure you, Mrs Higgins, we take Eliza very seriously. Every week every day almost – there is some new change. [*Closer again*] We keep records of every stage – dozens of gramophone disks and photographs –

HIGGINS: [*assailing her at the other ear*] Yes, by George: it's the most absorbing experiment I ever tackled. She regularly fills our lives up: doesnt she, Pick?

PICKERING: We're always talking Eliza.

HIGGINS: Teaching Eliza.

PICKERING: Dressing Eliza.

MRS HIGGINS: What!

HIGGINS: Inventing new Elizas . . .

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MRS HIGGINS: . . . Colonel Pickering: dont you realise that when Eliza walked into Wimpole Street, something walked in with her?

PICKERING: Her father did. But Henry soon got rid of him.

MRS HIGGINS: It would have been more to the point if her mother had. But as her mother didnt something else did.

PICKERING: But what?

MRS HIGGINS: [*unconsciously dating herself by the word*] A problem.

PICKERING: Oh I see. The problem of how to pass her off as a lady.

HIGGINS: I'll solve that problem. Ive half solved it already.

MRS HIGGINS: No, you two infinitely stupid male creatures: the problem of what is to be done with her afterwards.

HIGGINS: I dont see anything in that. She can go her own way, with all the advantages I have given her.

MRS HIGGINS: The advantages of that poor woman who was here just now!^o The manners and habits that disqualify a fine lady from earning her own living without giving her a fine lady's income! Is that what you mean?

PICKERING: [*indulgently, being rather bored*] Oh, that will be all right, Mrs Higgins. [*He rises to go.*]

HIGGINS: [*rising also*] We'll find her some light employment.

PICKERING: She's happy enough. Dont you worry about her. Goodbye. [*He shakes hands as if he were consoling a frightened child, and makes for the door.*]

HIGGINS: Anyhow, theres no good bothering now. The thing's done. Goodbye, mother. [*He kisses her, and follows Pickering.*]

PICKERING: [*turning for a final consolation*] There are plenty of openings. We'll do whats right. Goodbye.

HIGGINS: [*to Pickering as they go out together*] Lets take her to the Shakespeare exhibition at Earls Court.

PICKERING: Yes: lets. Her remarks will be delicious.

HIGGINS: She'll mimic all the people for us when we get home.

PICKERING: Ripping. [*Both are heard laughing as they go downstairs.*]

MRS HIGGINS: [*rises with an impatient bounce, and returns to her work at the writing-table. She sweeps a litter of disarranged papers out of the way; snatches a sheet of paper from her stationery case; and tries resolutely to write. At the third time she gives it up; flings down her pen; grips the table angrily and exclaims*] Oh, men! men!! men!!!

The experiment is finally a triumphant success: at the ambassador's garden party Eliza is passed off, not just as a duchess, but as a princess – a Hungarian princess, since she speaks English too perfectly to be English-born. But after the ball Higgins, having won his bet, treats her with complacent indifference, and she, infuriated by his attitude and in despair over her future, throws his slippers at him and walks out. The next day (Act 5) they confront each other at his mother's house.

^o **that poor woman . . . just now:** i.e. Mrs Eynsford Hill, a 'gentlewoman' in pathetically reduced circumstances.

HIGGINS: [*jumping up and walking about intolerantly*] Eliza: you're an idiot. I waste the treasures of my Miltonic mind by spreading them before you. Once for all, understand that I go my way and do my work without caring twopence what happens to either of us. I am not intimidated, like your father and your stepmother.^o So you can come back or go to the devil: which you please.

LIZA: What am I to come back for?

HIGGINS: [*bouncing up on his knees on the ottoman and leaning over it to her*] For the fun of it. That's why I took you on.

LIZA: [*with averted face*] And you may throw me out tomorrow if I don't do everything you want me to?

HIGGINS: Yes; and you may walk out tomorrow if I don't do everything you want me to.

LIZA: And live with my stepmother?

HIGGINS: Yes, or sell flowers.

LIZA: Oh! if I only could go back to my flower basket! I should be independent of both you and father and all the world! Why did you take my independence from me? Why did I give it up? I'm a slave now, for all my fine clothes.

HIGGINS: Not a bit. I'll adopt you as my daughter and settle money on you if you like. Or would you rather marry Pickering?

LIZA: [*looking fiercely round at him*] I wouldn't marry you if you asked me; and you're nearer my age than what he is.

HIGGINS: [*gently*] Than he is: not 'than what he is.'

LIZA: [*losing her temper and rising*] I'll talk as I like. You're not my teacher now.

HIGGINS: [*reflectively*] I don't suppose Pickering would, though. He's as confirmed an old bachelor as I am.

LIZA: That's not what I want; and don't you think it. I've always had chaps enough wanting me that way. Freddy Hill writes to me twice and three times a day, sheets and sheets.

HIGGINS: [*disagreeably surprised*] Damn his impudence! [*He recoils and finds himself sitting on his heels.*]

LIZA: He has a right to if he likes, poor lad. And he does love me.

HIGGINS: [*getting off the ottoman*] You have no right to encourage him.

LIZA: Every girl has a right to be loved.

HIGGINS: What! By fools like that?

LIZA: Freddy's not a fool. And if he's weak and poor and wants me, may be he'd make me happier than my betters that bully me and don't want me.

HIGGINS: Can he make anything of you? That's the point.

^o **your father and your stepmother:** the story of Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle, is a comic subplot which mirrors Eliza's. Doolittle is a cheerfully amoral, drunken dustman who called himself one of the 'undeserving poor'; but, having inherited a fortune, he is gloomily forced to behave according to the dictates of 'middle class morality', including marrying his mistress (Eliza's 'stepmother').

LIZA: Perhaps I could make something of him. But I never thought of us making anything of one another; and you never think of anything else. I only want to be natural.

HIGGINS: In short, you want me to be as infatuated about you as Freddy? Is that it?

LIZA: No I dont. Thats not the sort of feeling I want from you. And dont you be too sure of yourself or of me. I could have been a bad girl if I'd liked. Ive seen more of some things than you, for all your learning. Girls like me can drag gentlemen down to make love to them easy enough. And they wish each other dead the next minute.

HIGGINS: Of course they do. Then what in thunder are we quarrelling about?

LIZA: [*much troubled*] I want a little kindness. I know I'm a common ignorant girl, and you a book-learned gentleman; but I'm not dirt under your feet. What I done [*correcting herself*] what I did was not for the dresses and the taxis: I did it because we were pleasant together and I come – came – to care for you; not to want you to make love to me, and not forgetting the difference between us, but more friendly like.

HIGGINS: Well, of course. Thats just how I feel. And how Pickering feels. Eliza: youre a fool.

LIZA: Thats not a proper answer to give me [*she sinks on the chair at the writing-table in tears*].

HIGGINS: It's all youll get until you stop being a common idiot. If youre going to be a lady, youll have to give up feeling neglected if the men you know dont spend half their time snivelling over you and the other half giving you black eyes. If you cant stand the coldness of my sort of life, and the strain of it, go back to the gutter. Work til youre more a brute than a human being; and then cuddle and squabble and drink til you fall asleep. Oh, it's a fine life, the life of the gutter. It's real: it's warm: it's violent: you can feel it through the thickest skin: you can taste it and smell it without any training or any work. Not like Science and Literature and Classical Music and Philosophy and Art. You find me cold, unfeeling, selfish, dont you? Very well: be off with you to the sort of people you like. Marry some sentimental hog or other with lots of money, and a thick pair of lips to kiss you with and a thick pair of boots to kick you with. If you cant appreciate what youve got, youd better get what you can appreciate.

LIZA: [*desperate*] Oh, you are a cruel tyrant. I cant talk to you: you turn everything against me: I'm always in the wrong. But you know very well all the time that youre nothing but a bully. You know I cant go back to the gutter, as you call it, and that I have no real friends in the world but you and the Colonel. You know well I couldnt bear to live with a low common man after you two; and it's wicked and cruel of you to insult me by pretending I could. You think I must go back to Wimpole Street because I have nowhere else to go but father's. But dont you be too sure that you have me under your feet to be

trampled on and talked down. I'll marry Freddy, I will, as soon as I'm able to support him.

HIGGINS: [*thunderstruck*] Freddy!!! that young fool! That poor devil who couldnt get a job as an errand boy even if he had the guts to try for it! Woman: do you not understand that I have made you a consort for a king?

LIZA: Freddy loves me: that makes him king enough for me. I dont want him to work: he wasnt brought up to it as I was. I'll go and be a teacher.

HIGGINS: Whatll you teach, in heaven's name?

LIZA: What you taught me. I'll teach phonetics.

HIGGINS: Ha! ha! ha!

LIZA: I'll offer myself as an assistant to that hairyfaced Hungarian.^o

HIGGINS: [*rising in fury*] What! That impostor! that humbug! that toadying ignoramus! Teach him my methods! my discoveries! You take one step in his direction and I'll wring your neck. [*He lays hands on her.*] Do you hear?

LIZA: [*defiantly non-resistant*] Wring away. What do I care? I knew you'd strike me some day. [*He lets her go, stamping with rage at having forgotten himself, and recoils so hastily that he stumbles back into his seat on the ottoman.*] Aha! Now I know how to deal with you. What a fool I was not to think of it before! You cant take away the knowledge you gave me. You said I had a finer ear than you. And I can be civil and kind to people, which is more than you can. Aha! [*Purposely dropping her aitches to annoy him*] Thats done you, Enry Iggins, it az. Now I dont care that [*snapping her fingers*] for your bullying and your big talk. I'll advertize it in the papers that your duchess is only a flower girl that you taught, and that she'll teach anybody to be a duchess just the same in six months for a thousand guineas. 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.

HIGGINS: [*wondering at her*] You damned impudent slut, you! But it's better than snivelling; better than fetching slippers and finding spectacles, isnt it? [*Rising*] By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this.

LIZA: Yes: you turn round and make up to me now that I'm not afraid of you, and can do without you.

HIGGINS: Of course I do, you little fool. Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now youre a tower of strength: a consort battleship. You and I and Pickering will be three old bachelors instead of only two men and a silly girl.

Despite Higgins's arguments, Eliza leaves, and the play ends as Higgins 'roars with laughter' at the prospect of her marrying Freddy. Shaw adds a prose epilogue to explain what happens next.

^o **that hairyfaced hungarian:** Nepommuck, a former pupil of Higgins, who uses his methods to detect (and blackmail) social imposters.

The rest of the story need not be shewn^o in action, and indeed, would hardly need telling if our imaginations were not so enfeebled by their lazy dependence on the ready-mades and reach-me-downs of the ragshop in which Romance keeps its stock of 'happy endings' to misfit all stories. Now, the history of Eliza Doolittle, though called a romance because the transfiguration it records seems exceedingly improbable, is common enough. Such transfigurations have been achieved by hundreds of resolutely ambitious young women since Nell Gwynne^o set them the example by playing queens and fascinating kings in the theatre in which she began by selling oranges. Nevertheless, people in all directions have assumed, for no other reason than that she became the heroine of a romance, that she must have married the hero of it. This is unbearable, not only because her little drama, if acted on such a thoughtless assumption, must be spoiled, but because the true sequel is patent to anyone with a sense of human nature in general, and of feminine instinct in particular.

Shaw argues that strong people are naturally attracted to those weaker than themselves, not stronger.

Eliza has no use for the foolish romantic tradition that all women love to be mastered, if not actually bullied and beaten . . . This being the state of human affairs, what is Eliza fairly sure to do when she is placed between Freddy and Higgins? Will she look forward to a lifetime of fetching Higgins's slippers or to a lifetime of Freddy fetching hers? There can be no doubt about the answer. Unless Freddy is biologically repulsive to her, and Higgins biologically attractive to a degree that overwhelms all her other instincts, she will, if she marries either of them, marry Freddy.

And that is just what Eliza did.

Shaw goes on to describe the fairly successful marriage between Eliza and Freddy, and how, with financial aid from Higgins and Pickering, they eventually make a precarious success of their florist's business. He concludes:

[Eliza] is immensely interested in [Higgins]. She even has 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. We all have private imaginations of that sort. But when it comes to business, to the life that she really leads as distinguished from the life of dreams and fancies, she likes Freddy and she likes the Colonel; and she does not like Higgins and Mr Doolittle. Galatea

^o **shewn**: shown (Shaw's old-fashioned spelling).

^o **Nell Gwynne**: a Restoration actress who started out selling oranges in the theatre, and became Charles II's mistress.

never does quite like Pygmalion: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable.

P25 H.D., 'Pygmalion', 1917^o

On H.D., see headnote to **O39**.

1

Shall I let myself be caught
in my own light?
shall I let myself be broken
in my own heat?

5 or shall I cleft the rock as of old
and break my own fire
with its surface?

does this fire thwart me
and my craft,

10 or does my work cloud this light?
which is the god,
which is the stone
the god takes for his use?

2

Which am I,
15 the stone or the power
that lifts the rock from the earth?
am I the master of this fire,
is this fire my own strength?

am I master of this
20 swirl upon swirl of light?
have I made it as in old times
I made the gods from the rock?

have I made this fire from myself?
or is this arrogance?

25 is this fire a god
that seeks me in the dark?

^o from *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, ed. Louis L. Martz, New York: New Directions, 1983, pp. 48-50. © 1982 The Estate of Hilda Doolittle. Reprinted by permission of Carcanet Press Ltd and New Directions Publishing Corporation.