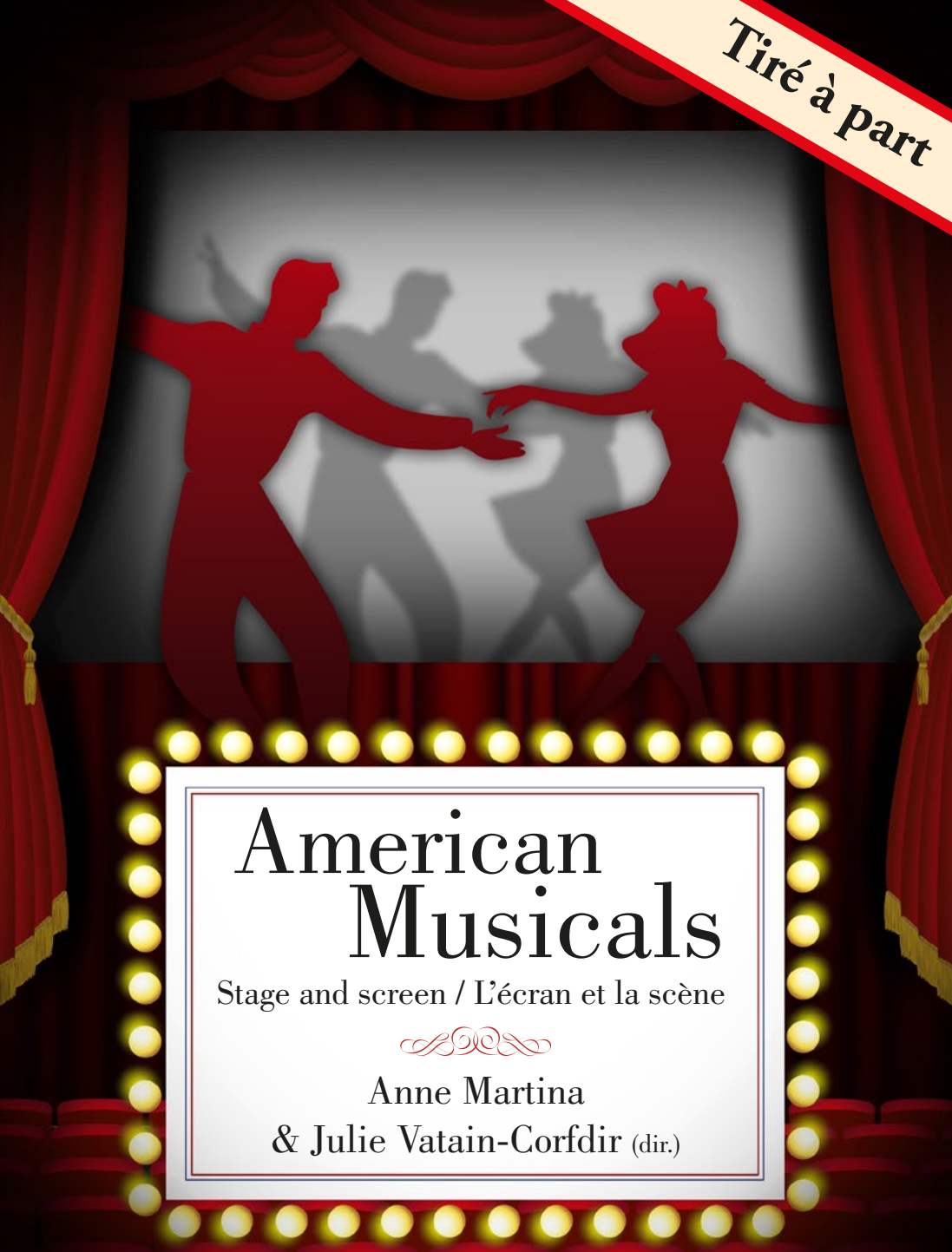

American Musicals

Stage and screen / L'écran et la scène

Anne Martina
& Julie Vatain-Corfdir (dir.)

SUP

What happens when American musicals travel from Broadway to Hollywood, from Hollywood to Broadway – or indeed to Paris? Taking its cue from the current partiality towards cross-media interaction, this collective volume aims at reassessing the role and impact of stage/screen transfers on the genre, by blending together academic and creative voices, both French and American. The bilingual chapters of the book carefully explore the musical, dramatic and choreographic repercussions of transposition techniques, evidencing the cinematographic rewriting of theatrical processes from Lubitsch's screen operettas to Fosse's *Cabaret*, or tracking movie-inspired effects on stage from *Hello, Dolly!* to *Hamilton.*

The focus being at once aesthetic and practical, equal attention has been paid to placing performances in a critical framework and to setting off their creative genesis. Musicals are approached from the varied angles of dance, theater, film and music scholarship, as well as from the artist's viewpoint, when Chita Rivera or Christopher Wheeldon share details about their craft. Taking full advantage of the multimedia opportunities afforded by this digital series, the chapters use an array of visual and sound illustrations as they investigate the workings of subversion, celebration or self-reflexivity, the adjustments required to "sound Broadway" in Paris, or the sheer possibility of re-inventing icons.

Que se passe-t-il quand une comédie musicale américaine voyage de Broadway à Hollywood, d'Hollywood à Broadway… ou à Paris ? Le penchant ambiant pour l'intermédialité et le succès grandissant du *musical* en France ont inspiré ce volume collectif qui, en croisant les voix universitaires et artistiques, françaises et américaines, entreprend de réévaluer l'impact des transferts scène-écran sur le genre. Les chapitres bilingues de cet ouvrage sondent les répercussions musicales, dramatiques et chorégraphiques des techniques de transposition, mettant au jour la réécriture filmique de procédés théâtraux depuis les opérettes cinématographiques de Lubitsch jusqu'au *Cabaret* de Fosse, ou pistant les effets de cinéma sur scène, de *Hello, Dolly!* à *Hamilton*. Dans une visée à la fois esthétique et pratique, la genèse créative des œuvres est envisagée aussi bien que leur cadre critique. Les *musicals* sont ici abordés sous l'angle de disciplines variées : danse, théâtre, cinéma, musique ; ainsi que du point de vue de la pratique, lorsque Chita Rivera ou Christopher Wheeldon témoignent de leur art. Au fil de chapitres enrichis d'un éventail d'illustrations visuelles et sonores grâce aux ressources de l'édition numérique, les auteurs interrogent les mécanismes de la subversion, de l'hommage et de l'auto-réflexivité, les ajustements nécessaires pour « chanter Broadway » à Paris, ou encore la possibilité de réinventer les icônes.

Anne Martina & Julie Vatain-Corfdir (dir.)

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Stage and screen / L'écran et la scène

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FOREWORD

Anne Martina & Julie Vatain-Corfdir

The history of American musicals is that of constant, complex, and fruitful media interaction. And yet, media crossovers long escaped enquiry. Artists themselves were often to blame for a biased perception of their work, particularly in film. In the many interviews they gave, Busby Berkeley or Gene Kelly were keen to present their work, and the history of film musicals in general, as a growing emancipation from stage models. Following their lead, early film critics showed a tendency to analyze Hollywood musicals produced in the 1930s, '40s, and early '50s as *cinematographic* achievements, characterized by a refined use of the codes of classical Hollywood cinema. When increasing economic difficulties arose in the mid-fifties – due to the collapse of the old studio system, the rise of television, and gradual shifts in public tastes – Hollywood was compelled to devise a set of strategic responses, leading to the evolution of the film musical (some would say its decline). The first, and most conspicuous reaction was to limit financial risk by increasingly foregoing original works in favor of adapting successful Broadway shows as faithfully as possible. A second response was to use rock 'n' roll music, and later pop music, to cater to younger generations, thereby often altering the classical syntax of the genre through increased subservience to the record industry (examples abound from *Jailhouse Rock* to *Woodstock* and *Moulin Rouge*). A third, more creative reaction was to scatter the script with elements of *auto-critique*, at the risk of undermining the mythologizing process at the heart of the genre and alienating its traditional audiences (from *A Star is Born* and *It's Always Fair Weather* to *All That Jazz*, *Pennies from Heaven* or *La La Land*).[1] From these combined factors stemmed the common belief that artistic achievement in Hollywood musicals was synonymous with aesthetic autonomy and narrative originality, while decline was entailed by a growing subjection to other media forms.

Conspicuously enough, reciprocal trends have been pointed out – and found fault with – on and off-Broadway, where musical versions, sequels or prequels of profitable films and Disney movies are a staple cause for complaint or irony among critics and audiences alike. Scholars of the stage musical have in fact shown the recent evolution of the genre to respond to economic pressure in ways that mirror the choices made

1 See Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical*, Bloomington, Indiana UP, 1987, pp. 120-121.

earlier by the film industry – some, like Mark Grant and Ethan Mordden, explicitly lamenting the supposed collapse of musical shows. Grant's catchy (albeit reductive) book title, *The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical*, encapsulates a Spenglerian model, according to which the demise of the genre has been entailed, since the late 1960s, by radical economic and aesthetic shifts – the rise of entertainment conglomerates functioning as theatre producers, the popularity of spectacle-oriented "megamusicals," and the proliferation of adaptations. All of which testify to Broadway's increased dependence on mass media, in particular music videos and film.

Yet laments about the end of a so-called "Golden Age"[2] characterized by artistic integrity do not resist critical investigation. Not only are they imbued with nostalgic overtones, implying that musical works produced before and after the "Golden Age" have less artistic value and cultural depth than those from the pivotal period, but

they also ignore the complex, ceaseless interaction between Broadway and Hollywood *throughout* the history of the genre, which more recent research has brought to light. The rise of cultural and intermedial studies in the 1990s was critical in this respect. Opening new avenues for research on the American musical, it has led to a fruitful reassessment of the influence of Broadway stage forms and aesthetics on iconic Hollywood films. This has been exemplified by Martin Rubin's illuminating investigation of the way Busby Berkeley's art is indebted to 1910s and 1920s Broadway shows[3] or, more recently, by Todd Decker's insightful study of the many rewritings of *Show Boat*.[4]

However notable and influential such analyses have proven to be, much remains to be investigated. This reliance on recycling other media to spur creativity prompts enquiry into the nature, shape and influence of Broadway-to-Hollywood or Hollywood-to-Broadway transfers, as well as into the interactions and cross-fertilizing processes they generate. Current research indicates that such sustained investigation is under way. Theater-driven reference works on the American musical[5] have shown a growing interest in film, though chapters that truly focus on cross-media transaction are still rare. In France, a 2015 international conference – from which five of the essays in this

2 For a critical assessment of the term "Golden Age" in the field of musical comedy, see Jessica Sternfeld and Elizabeth L. Wollman, "After the 'Golden Age'", in Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, Stacy Wolf (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2011, p. 111.

3 Martin Rubin, *Showstoppers: Busby Berkeley and the Tradition of Spectacle*, New York, Columbia UP, 1993.

4 Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2013.

5 See Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris, and Stacy Wolf, *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2011; William Everett and Paul L. Laird, *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, 3rd ed., Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2017.

volume proceed – directly addressed those issues, while the three-year "Musical MC²" research project headed by Marguerite Chabrol and Pierre-Olivier Toulza has been comprehensively exploring the influence of cultural and media contexts over classical Hollywood musicals. Simultaneously, on the Paris stage, a reciprocal interest in the reinvention of classics has been displayed, for instance, in the Théâtre du Châtelet's widely-acclaimed productions of *An American in Paris* (2014), *Singin' in the Rain* (2015) and *42nd Street* (2016), all of which have been hailed as fully creative rather than derivative.

Such contemporary partiality – and curiosity – towards intermediality provided the inspiration for the present volume, which aims at reassessing the role and impact of stage/screen transfers (in both directions) on American musicals, by blending together academic and creative voices, both French and American. The essays and interviews collected here carefully explore the musical, dramatic and choreographic repercussions of transposition processes, evidencing the wide range of rewriting and recoding practices encompassed in what is commonly referred to as "adaptation." How does re-creation for another medium affect the shape and impact of a musical, both aesthetically and practically? How can the "adapted" version assert its status and value with regards to the "original," striking a balance between due homage and legitimate creative claims? These questions are tied to issues of authorship and authority, as well as to the notion of self-reflexivity, which can prove equally conducive to celebration or to subversion. They also call into question the audience's reception of the work, in particular when it comes to iconic scenes, or to characters illustriously embodied by a famous performer. In fact, any study of the relations between Broadway and Hollywood would be incomplete without reflecting upon the impact of *human* transfers – not only in terms of stars, but also in terms of directors, composers and lyricists, choreographers or costume designers.

The chapters of this volume fall into three sections, the first of which focuses on formal innovation and re-invention. It opens with an investigation into Ernst Lubitsch's endeavors to invent a cinematographic equivalent to the operetta around 1930, when the norms and form of the musical picture were yet to be established, ultimately showing how music, in such early examples, becomes a way to create a fictional world on screen (Katalin Pór). While this study offers a chronological foundation stone to analyze subsequent transfers and influences, the second essay provides a more theoretical perspective on the question, by comparing directorial choices in adaptation over a wide range of periods and production types (Dan Blim). From *Damn Yankees!* to *Hamilton*, the chapter explores the ways in which stage and screen

media deal differently with breaks and "sutures" in a musical's narrative continuity, thereby shedding light on the specificities of each medium. These insightful inaugural essays then make way for the in-depth study of such canonical examples as the screen-to-stage transfers of *42nd Street* and *An American in Paris*. The two shows are carefully compared in terms of their "conservative," "innovative" or "reflective" approach to adaptation, and placed in the context of constantly refashioned Hollywood and Broadway motifs (Anne Martina). This is given further resonance by the following roundtable with the creators of *An American in Paris*, which provides a mirrored point of view on reinvention from the artists' and producers' perspective. The precision and generosity with which they discuss the show's genesis, musical construction and color palette offer a unique insight into the vision behind this contemporary (re-)creation (Brad Haak, Van Kaplan, Craig Lucas, Stuart Oken, Christopher Wheeldon).[6]

The second section delves into the political and cultural implications of adaptation, using several case studies of major musicals which have been rewritten, reinterpreted, and sometimes transferred back to their original medium. The first of these analyses offers a refreshing outlook on *My Fair Lady*, by suggesting that the musical's romanticized ending may not be as out of line with George Bernard Shaw's original feminist vision as is commonly assumed. This leads to a detailed exploration of romantic and feminist ramifications in the crafting and filming of the musical (Aloysia Rousseau), and is followed by a performer's perspective on the same work – and others – from the point of view of a professional singer of musicals in France today (Julien Neyer). The next two essays then continue with the study of famous adaptations from the 1960s, by focusing on shifts in the political and racial significance of *Finian's Rainbow* (James O'Leary) or the consequences of tone and scale alterations in *Hello, Dolly!* (Julie Vatain-Corfdir & Émilie Rault). Francis Ford Coppola's screen version of *Finian's Rainbow* is thus shown to revise the stage show's politically-oriented innovations in order to align the script with New Left conventions, while Gene Kelly's adaptation of *Hello, Dolly!* is analyzed as the somewhat maladroit aesthetic product of contrasting tendencies towards amplification on the one hand, and sentimentalization on the other. Moving on from the last of the optimistic "supermusicals" to one of the finest examples of a darker and more cynical trend, the last essay in this section focuses on the successive rewritings of *Cabaret* for the stage, screen – and stage again. Amid this circular pattern, Bob Fosse's version of the iconic musical emerges as a re-defining moment not only for the show, but also for the evolution of the genre itself (Anouk Bottero).

6 All of our interviews are transcribed and published with kind permission from the speakers.

The third section of the volume takes a closer look at the challenges facing the performers of musicals on stage and screen, in particular when it comes to singing and dancing – live or in a studio. A shrewd analysis of Gene Kelly's career – short-lived on Broadway but stellar in Hollywood – shows how his choreographic bent towards perfectionism evolved, from *Cover Girl* to *Singin' in the Rain*, and how his apparent doubts about his acting talents came to be expressed and answered through his screen dances (Jacqueline Nacache). This is followed by the direct testimony of a legendary dancer and Broadway performer, who talks at length about the expressivity of "character dancing," the different lessons in focus learned on stage or in front of the camera, or the joys of working with Leonard Berstein, Jerome Robbins or Bob Fosse (Chita Rivera). Building on this dancer's experience, the following chapter asks the question of how to re-choreograph a cult scene and dance it anew, using examples from Robbins' choregraphy for *West Side Story* (Patricia Dolambi). Finally, shifting from dance to song, the last interview of the volume turns to the evolution of singing practices and spectators' tastes, from opera to "Golden Age" musicals and on to contemporary musicals. Voice placement and voice recording are discussed, along with specific techniques such as "vocal twang" or "belting," by a singing coach with experience both in the US and in France (Mark Marian). This comparative perspective re-emphasizes the fundamental dynamic of the volume, which is that of transgressing borders – between media, disciplines or, occasionally, reception cultures – bringing together the voices of music, dance, film and theater scholars as well as performers and producers, in order to shed light on creative phenomena which, though they are as old as the advent of the talking picture, still prove multifaceted and prolific today.

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DEUXIÈME PARTIE

From subversion to self-reflexivity

"WHERE THE DEVIL ARE MY SLIPPERS?": *MY FAIR LADY*'S SUBVERSION OF *PYGMALION*'S FEMINIST ENDING?

Aloysia Rousseau

In 1916, George Bernard Shaw added a sequel to his 1912 play *Pygmalion* so as to clarify his play's ending, or rather how he wanted the ending to be interpreted. The playwright was indeed weary of the constant romanticizing of his protagonists' relationship. While he defined his play as the story of a young woman's emancipation from her "Pygmalion," it seemed that readers, members of the audience and even the actors themselves, had decided otherwise: the self-professed confirmed bachelor Henry Higgins and his creature Eliza Doolittle were obviously very much in love and had no other choice but to live happily ever after. Shaw opens his postscript, entitled "What Happened Afterwards," with an unequivocal indictment of the romantic happy ending, underlining that "the rest of the story need not be shown in action, and indeed, would hardly need telling if our imaginations were not so enfeebled by their lazy dependence on the ready-makes and reach-me-downs of the ragshop in which Romance keeps its stock of 'happy endings' to misfit all stories."[1] Through this sartorial metaphor, Shaw laments over our conditioned expectations of a happy ending, having all of us who have at some point wished for Higgins and Eliza to end up together bow our heads in shame. Should we then consider that Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe sabotaged Shaw's original intentions in their 1956 musical adaptation of the play? Although *My Fair Lady* offers no explicit happy ending, the modifications brought to the play as well as the two scenes added by Lerner at the end – or rather borrowed from the 1938 film version produced by Gabriel Pascal – strongly point to a romantic union between the phonetician and his pupil, as does Lerner's screenplay for George Cukor's 1964 film adaptation.[2] This article will focus on the changes

1 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* (1912), New York, Garden City, 2015, p. 67.

2 A reminder of the chronology of the filmic and musical adaptations of *Pygmalion* might be useful here:
- 1935: German film version (director: Erich Engel).
- 1937: Dutch film version (director: Ludwig Berger).
- 1938: British *Pygmalion* (producer: Gabriel Pascal / directors: Antony Asquith and Leslie Howard).
- 1956: Alan Jay Lerner's musical *My Fair Lady*.
- 1964: George Cukor's *My Fair Lady* (with a screenplay by Alan Jay Lerner).

brought in Pascal's film[3] and Lerner's libretto as Cukor's film is, as indicated in the film's opening credits, "based on the musical play as produced on the stage by Herman Levin. Book and Lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner. Music by Frederick Loewe." In other words, Cukor's *My Fair Lady* is an extremely faithful – not to say rigid – adaptation of the stage version (the filmmaker in fact going so far as to keep the intermission before the ball scene…).

My aim here will be to try to qualify the common assumption according to which Lerner subverted Shaw's original intentions for commercial and cultural reasons. It is indeed often inferred that *My Fair Lady*, as a 1950s Hollywood musical, inevitably transformed the British play *Pygmalion* into an escapist, crowd-pleasing romance.[4] I would like to offer three counter-arguments, suggesting first of all that Lerner does not have a monopoly on the play's romanticizing but that he is in fact in the tradition of constant subversion of Shaw's original feminist ending. I will then shed light on the romantic subtext which is to be found in *Pygmalion*, casting doubt not only on Shaw's abhorrence of romance but also on Lerner's revisionist stance. A study of the 1938 film's added ending that Lerner retained for the musical and its film adaptation will finally lead me to question Lerner's supposed patriarchal revising of the play.

"THE DEATH OF THE AUTHOR"

When George Bernard Shaw chose *Pygmalion* as a title for his play, what he intended was to subvert the myth: he would tell the story of Galatea shaking off her shackles, thus perceiving Eliza Doolittle as a successor to Henrik Ibsen's Nora. Eliza's "disdainful" last words (telling Higgins that he can "buy [his gloves himself]") as well as her "sweep[ing] out"[5] of the apartment indeed retain some of Nora's intrepid slamming of the door in Ibsen's 1897 *A Doll's House*. Shaw wanted his play to end with his female protagonist's emancipation from patriarchal oppression thus asking Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the actress playing the part in the 1914 production at His Majesty's Theatre (as well as Shaw's love interest), to look neither "obedient" nor "affectionate." That he does so in the patronizing tone which he precisely condemns might be worth noticing:

3 I will from now on refer to the 1938 film version as Pascal's film since he – rather than Asquith or Howard – is the instigator of this adaptation.

4 See, among many other examples, Eric Bentley's disapproval of the musical: "One is drama; the other, musical comedy. That is to say, one is human reality in its richness; the other a facile daydream. Mr. Shaw presented the dynamics of real human conflict. Mr. Lerner cheats and presents pleasing illusions according to a well-established formula" ("*My Fair Lady*," *Modern Drama*, volume 1, number 2, September 1958, p. 135).

5 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion, op. cit.*, p. 66.

> At the end, when Higgins says 'oh, by the way, Eliza,' bridle your fatal propensity to run like Georgina to anyone who calls you, and to forget everything in an affectionate tête à tête with him. Imagine that he is the author, and be scornful. All that is necessary is to stop on the threshold. If you find it impossible not to come back, at least don't look obedient and affectionate.[6]

Shaw thus tried very hard to suppress any ambiguity concerning a possible romance between his two protagonists, be it in his instructions to his actors or in his 1916 sequel in which, as already mentioned, the playwright felt the need to remind his readers and audience that Eliza could not marry Higgins but was deemed to marry the younger and gentler Freddy. So resolute was Shaw to impose his interpretation of the relationship between Higgins and Eliza that he in fact kept trying to find a satisfying ending, constantly amending his 1912 text. Shaw's suggestion to Mrs Patrick Campbell that Higgins' last word be "Galatea" as an acknowledgment of his creature's emancipation does not appear in any published version of the play,[7] while Higgins' "*roar[ing] with laughter*" when learning that Eliza will marry Freddy which appears in the 1941 version of the play does not seem to be a favourite with stage directors.[8] Shaw's constant revising of the play as well as his need to write what looks very much like an explanatory note betrays – rather than a widespread misunderstanding on behalf of the audience – conflicting views between the playwright on the one hand… and the rest of humanity on the other hand. It indeed seems that the romantic revision of the play is a temptation almost no one has been able to resist, starting with the actors playing the parts in the first English production at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1914.

As such, *Pygmalion* could be said to epitomize Barthes' notion of the Author's death. Despite the playwright's desperate (and rather coercive) attempts at imposing a univocal meaning to his play's ending, generations of readers (among them audience members, critics or theatre practitioners) have offered their own versions of the

6 *Id.*, *Collected Letters, Volume III, 1911-1925*, ed. Dan H. Laurence, London/Sydney/Toronto, M. Reinhardt, 1985, p. 224.

7 George Bernard Shaw in a February letter to Mrs Patrick Campbell, quoted in *Bernard Shaw: Theatrics*, ed. Dan H. Laurence, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1995, p. 155: "He will go out on the balcony to watch your departure; come back triumphantly into the room; exclaim 'Galatea!' (meaning that the statue has come to life at last); and – curtain. Thus he gets the last word; and you get it too."

8 I am indebted to Leonard Conolly for coming up with a very useful appendix listing the various endings of *Pygmalion* in his Methuen edition.

denouement.[9] Refusing Shaw's user instructions, they have become the multiple playwrights of *Pygmalion*. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree is the first of a long series of alternative authors whose interpretation of the ending differed from the playwright's. The actor and theatre manager indeed decided to overlook the final stage direction according to which Higgins "*left alone, rattles his cash in his pocket; chuckles; and disports himself in a highly self-satisfied manner*."[10] Rather than seeing Tree embody a proud and confident Higgins who has little doubt as to Eliza's compliantly ordering his ham and cheese, Shaw watched in dismay as Tree "shov[ed] his mother rudely out of his way and woo[ed] Eliza with appeals to buy a ham for his lonely home like a bereaved Romeo",[11] then throwing flowers at her as the curtain fell. As played by Beerbohm Tree, Higgins became the epitome of the suffering male lover fighting for the loved one's consideration, clearly not what Shaw had intended for his character.

Not only did producer George Tyler keep Tree's romantic ending when the play was performed at New York's Park Theatre that same year, but subsequent stage directors and film makers furthered the romanticizing of the play. In their 1938 film adaptation, the producer Gabriel Pascal and co-directors Anthony Asquith and Leslie Howard (who also played Higgins) took the romantic revising of the play to extremes when clandestinely adding a new ending to Shaw's screenplay.[12] Not only had the penniless Hungarian filmmaker succeeded in obtaining the playwright's permission to adapt his play into a movie through a mixture of personal charisma and flattery (Pascal considered himself as Shaw's disciple, addressing him as "Maestro" in all his letters), but he had also apparently convinced Shaw that commercial criteria were to be taken into account.[13] Shaw thus surprisingly decided that this new romantic ending was "too inconclusive to be worth making a fuss about."[14] Shaw had indeed adapted his own play with the help of the scenarist Cecil Lewis, ending the film with "a vision of the

9 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, New York, Hill and Wang, 1977, p. 148: "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author."

10 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

11 *Id.*, *Collected Letters, op. cit.*, p. 228.

12 Shaw ironically won an Academy Award for this screenplay even though the (very popular) ending was not his.

13 Gabriel Pascal to George Bernard Shaw, 17th September 1937, in *Bernard Shaw and Gabriel Pascal*, ed. Bernard F. Dukore, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1996, p. 13: "If I could make the picture only in your spirit, which I will do in any case, not thinking of this stupid box-office question which the distributors ask, I could have cast this picture a long time ago in a way which would please you, and would be worthy of the highest artistic expectations, and also please the genuine cinema audiences of the world. But the mentality of exhibitors and distributors is the mentality of necktie-sellers."

14 Interview given in the *Reynold News*, 22 January 1939, quoted in *Bernard Shaw on Cinema*, ed. Bernard F. Dukore, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois UP, 1997, p. 142.

future" in which Eliza and Freddy are seen in their florist's shop in South Kensington. Shaw's ending was substituted for another unshavian ending in which Eliza returns to Higgins whose famous last words – "Eliza? Where the devil are my slippers?" – have been retained by Lerner and Cukor in their ensuing adaptations. Not only has Eliza returned to Higgins after a failed attempt from Freddy to whisk her away but it would seem that Higgins' words confirm his patronizing of Eliza (something that I will in fact qualify at the end of this paper). In other words, the 1938 film version offered the audience the supposedly patriarchal romantic ending that Lerner would keep eighteen years later. It would therefore be reductive to interpret *My Fair Lady*'s denouement as typical of the 1950s Hollywood musical. If the musical and its film adaptation do conform to "Hollywood's most reliable formula: boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl,"[15] so does the 1938 film adaptation as well as, to a certain extent, the first productions of the play and, as I will now try to demonstrate, perhaps even Shaw's text.

PYGMALION'S ROMANTIC SUBTEXT

I would like to point out a contradiction between Shaw's primary narrative and his paratext. Despite his recurring indictment of the romantic happy ending, the playwright sends rather ambiguous messages to his audience, starting with the very title of his play. Shaw has often insisted on his choosing *Pygmalion* as a title in order to throw light on his subverting of the myth and how he perceives Galatea as escaping her creator's clutches. But this subversion is never made clear to the members of the audience who, as underlined by Leonard Conolly in his introduction to the play, interpret *Pygmalion* as complying with, rather than destabilizing the myth:

> While Shaw wanted readers and audiences to make the obvious connection with the myth, his aim was then to *subvert* rather than to *fulfil* their expectations. What he discovered, however, is that they preferred fulfilment to subversion and interpreted the play accordingly – i.e., Higgins (Pygmalion) wins Galatea (Eliza).[16]

Shaw in fact only furthered the readers' romantic expectations by choosing the word "romance" as a subtitle for his play, a word that 20th and 21st century audiences readily associate with a romantic relationship, despite the playwright's wish that the word be understood as a literary genre in which sensational events are related. Shaw

15 Virginia Wright Wexman, *Creating the Couple. Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1993, pp. 3-4.

16 Leonard Conolly, ed., George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion: a Romance in Five Acts*, London, Methuen Drama, 2008, p. xxxiii.

indeed justifies the use of the word in his sequel by describing Eliza's "transfiguration" as "exceedingly improbable,"[17] offering an interpretation of the word that is, in all likelihood, not shared by a majority of readers. The very fact that Shaw feels the need to justify the use of this subtitle hints at the playwright's acknowledgment of the ambiguous signals he sends his readers. We might even contend that there is a certain amount of bad faith in Shaw's *post-factum* definition of romance as an improbable story when having a look at a 1914 *Telegraph* interview in which Shaw summarizes the play as follows: "the romance of a flower girl changed into a lady by a gentleman whom she meets by accident on a wet night when they are both sheltering from the rain under the portico of St. Paul's Church, in Covent Garden."[18] Even though the so-called "transfiguration" is present in this quote ("a flower girl changed into a lady"), Shaw also depicts a setting obviously conducive to a romantic encounter: the "lady" and the "gentleman" "sheltering" from the rain in front of a church do not evidently appear to the reader of *The Telegraph* as a phonetician and his pupil.

In other words, rather than being deterred from expecting a love story, readers and members of the audience are in fact encouraged to do so. Once we've entered the world of the play, the intertextual references only confirm our romantic expectations. The play is indeed, as analyzed by J. Ellen Gainor, laden with references to the fairy-tale genre, prompting us to identify Higgins and Eliza as the prince charming and his princess.[19] Yet I would like to suggest that another essential intertext has been overlooked, an intertext that rather points to Higgins as anti-prince charming. This does not, however, preclude a romantic ending. *Pygmalion* has often been considered as strongly influenced by *The Taming of the Shrew* while another Shakespearean romantic comedy, *Much Ado About Nothing*, remains unnoticed as a possible source of inspiration. Despite Shaw's description of "Much Adoodle-do" as "a shockingly bad play,"[20] I would like to throw light on this romantic comedy if not as a direct influence for Shaw's play, at least as a means for us to understand the character of Higgins as a successor to Benedick, the witty bachelor who succeeds in wooing his Beatrice/Eliza. In other words, Higgins' anti-romantic stance could be interpreted, as Gabriel Pascal and Alan Jay Lerner did, as a façade hiding a romantic hero.

17 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

18 "George Bernard Shaw: Theatre-goers should not laugh out loud," *The Telegraph*, 8 April 1914.

19 J. Ellen Gainor, *Shaw's Daughters; Dramatic and Narrative Constructions of Gender*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan press, 1991. Apart from the obvious reference to the Cinderella rags-to-riches story, Gainor also identifies elements from *Snow White* such as the looking-glass over which the humble Eliza throws a towel rather than considering herself as the "fairest in the land."

20 *Shaw on Shakespeare*, ed. Edwin Wilson, New York, Applause, 1961, p. 139.

Both Benedick and Higgins proclaim their distaste for women – mothers aside of course[21] – early on in the plays. Benedick indeed tells his comrades that he will "live a bachelor" in act I scene 1 of *Much Ado About Nothing* while Higgins claims he is "a confirmed old bachelor, and likely to remain so" in the second act of *Pygmalion*. Both characters therefore make it very clear that they are satisfied with their celibacy, something that Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe have not erased in their adaptation but, rather, chosen to emphasize. They indeed throw light on Higgins' obstinate defense of celibacy and male comradeship in the songs of the musical. Among the four solos given to Higgins, two songs focus on the latter's rejection of a female partner. In the song "I'm an Ordinary Man," Higgins emphatically refuses to "let a woman in [his] life," listing a series of misogynist clichés so as to support his argument, among which women's domesticity and vanity:

> But let a woman in your life
> And your serenity is through!
> She'll redecorate your home
> From the cellar to the dome;
> […]
> You want to talk of Keats or Milton;
> She only wants to talk of love.
> You go to see a play or ballet,
> And spend it searching for her glove.[22]

Lerner however underscores Higgins' bad faith through the use of hyperbole and irony, making it clear that the phonetician's excessive indictment of women should be interpreted as disingenuous. Higgins' depiction of marriage as akin to torture ("I'd be equally as willing / For a dentist to be drilling"[23] or "I'd prefer a new edition / Of the Spanish Inquisition"[24]) as well as his self-portrait as a "very gentle man; / Even-tempered and good-natured,"[25] when we have in fact just witnessed his acting as a

21 William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), Oxford, Oxford UP, 1993, I.1.230-235: "That a woman conceived me, I thank her. That she brought me up, I likewise give her most humble thanks. But that I will have a recheat winded in my forehead, or hang my bugle in an invisible baldric, all women shall pardon me. Because I will not do them the wrong to mistrust any, I will do myself the right to trust none" / George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, *op. cit.*, p. 34: "I can't be bothered with young women. My idea of a loveable woman is something as like you as possible."

22 Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, *My Fair Lady*, London, Penguin Books, 1956, p. 38.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

tyrannical ruler, have a double effect. Not only does Higgins' song arouse laughter but it evidently leads us to question his reliability as regards his self-professed anti-romanticism. In other words, Lerner does not mitigate Higgins' misogynist tendencies so as to transform him into a more suitable prince charming but rather furthers these tendencies so as to foreground them as excessive and unreliable, as evidenced by the phonetician's third solo. Higgins' hyperbolic indictment of womankind now comes with an unbounded celebration of men. The homophonic title "A Hymn to Him," sang in the second act of the musical, leaves little doubt as to the content of the song. After Eliza's escape from Wimpole Street, Higgins wonders "why can't a woman be more like a man?" since "Men are so pleasant, so easy to please".[26] Yet the fact that the whole scene verges on slapstick comedy with Pickering's and Higgins' shouting and slamming of doors ("*bellowing from his room*," "*knocks violently*," "*charges into his room*," "*yelling from his room*," "*bounding from his room*," etc.[27]) arouses laughter rather than outrage and invites us to identify Higgins' true preoccupation with Eliza's departure hiding under a veneer of male chauvinism. In the same way that we wait for Benedick's anti-romantic façade to crumble in *Much Ado About Nothing*, we want Higgins' self-assurance to be shattered. Rather than interpreting Higgins' "formidable powers of resistance to [Eliza's] charm" as proof that she will "never obtain a complete grip of him,"[28] as Shaw does in his sequel, we might suggest that this in fact heightens the audience's expectations of a reversal. Readers and audience members expect these powers of resistance to abate, simply because this is a typical romantic ingredient which consists in emphasizing the couple's reluctance to fall in love precisely to make their union at the end of the play even more rewarding.[29]

Lerner in fact adopts this strategy throughout the musical, offering for example a series of anti-romantic songs in the first act as evidenced not only by Higgins' "I'm An Ordinary Man" but also by Doolittle's "With a Little Bit of Luck" in which he claims that "With a little bit of luck, / You can have it all and not get hooked"[30] or with Eliza's wish to see Higgins executed by the King's men in "Just you Wait".[31] Rather than making Eliza's nascent love for Higgins explicit, Lerner requires the audience to

26 *Ibid*., p. 108.
27 *Ibid*., pp. 105-106.
28 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
29 This strategy has apparently not gone out of fashion as evidenced by Damien Chazelle's 2016 musical *La la land*. In their first duet entitled "A Lovely Night", the main protagonists, Sebastian and Mia, deplore this "waste of a lovely night:" "We've stumbled on a view / That's tailor-made for two / What a shame those two are you and me / Some other girl and guy / Would love this swirling sky / But there's only you and I / And we've got no shot."
30 Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
31 *Ibid*., pp. 49-50.

identify the intermingling of Eros and Thanatos, Eliza's desire hidden beneath her call for murder. The audience has to wait for Eliza's "I Could Have Danced All Night" for her love to be conveyed, yet again in an implicit manner since Higgins' name is not uttered, replaced by the use of the third person: "I only know when he / Began to dance with me, / I could have danced, danced, danced all night!".[32] George Cukor, rather than Lerner, is the one who succumbs to soppy romanticism in this scene by having Eliza embrace her pillow – obviously a makeshift Higgins – as she sings and dances. The filmmaker also makes Higgins' attraction to Eliza much more explicit than Lerner does when having Mrs Higgins suggest that her son is "potty about her" at the end of the Ascot race scene.

Our expecting a romantic ending does not however mean that we will obtain satisfaction. Neither does it preclude the possibility of a feminist ending. My last part will throw light on Pascal's and Lerner's strategies to offer an ambiguous ending which both departs from and pays homage to Shaw's original intentions.

GABRIEL PASCAL'S *PYGMALION* AND ALAN JAY LERNER'S *MY FAIR LADY*: FOREGROUNDING THE PLAY'S ROMANTICISM AND FEMINISM

My aim here will be to argue that Shaw's wish of a feminist ending is not sabotaged in Pascal's and Lerner's adaptations but that it is in fact foregrounded. In order to do so, I will focus on the play's ending and on the added scenes that are to be found in the 1938 film version of the play as well as in the musical and its film adaptation (keeping in mind that Lerner was largely inspired by the 1938 film script for his libretto). Act II, scene five of *My Fair Lady* (which is a modified version of *Pygmalion*'s ending), as well as scenes six and seven (which have been added to the play) will be subjected to scrutiny.

The balance of power is unstable in the final act of *Pygmalion*. Eliza utters a highly defiant speech in which she claims her independence ("I'll let you see whether I'm dependent on you")[33] but Higgins, although acknowledging her strength, also appropriates her victory so as to make it his, therefore still objectifying Eliza: "I said I'd made a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this. […] Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you're a tower of strength: a consort battleship."[34] Eliza however gains final ascendency by "sweep[ing] out," after addressing her last

32 *Ibid*., pp. 58-61.
33 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
34 *Ibid*., pp. 65-66.

disdainful words to Higgins.[35] Her departure is, according to Shaw, the only possible ending since the suggestion of a romance between these two characters would be at odds with a feminist vision of the play. What Pascal and Lerner have perceived is that a romantic subtext does not preclude the portrayal of a powerful and independent Eliza. In other words romance and feminism can be perceived as complementary rather than antagonistic. The producer, filmmakers and librettist have found other devices – be it through the use of stage directions, camera angle, characterization or dialogue – to highlight Eliza's rebellious stance and her transition from submission to empowerment.

In one of her last speeches in the play, Eliza defiantly claims her independence, leaving Higgins "*wondering at her*."[36] Eliza's ascendancy over Higgins is visually highlighted in both film versions through Eliza's physical superiority meant to convey her intellectual and moral superiority during her speech. Eliza (played by Wendy Hiller in the 1938 film and by Audrey Hepburn in Cukor's film) indeed literally towers

35 *Ibid*., p. 66.
36 *Ibid*., p. 65.

over Higgins, standing up while he is sitting down. In the *Pygmalion* film, a low-angle shot is used to highlight Eliza's advantage over Higgins.

In Cukor's film, the phonetician in fact disappears behind the armchair, drawing the viewer's attention to Eliza, the true heroine of the scene.

Lerner moreover foregrounds Eliza's speech by turning it into a song, aptly entitled "Without You," laden with witty allusions to Eliza's former self and Higgins' prejudiced vision of women.

Higgins' reaction to Eliza's departure moreover evolves from a sense of superiority in Shaw's text to vulnerability in the film and musical. While he "*chuckles; and disports himself in a highly self-satisfied manner*"[37] in Shaw's play, Higgins appears as panic-stricken in the 1938 film and the musical. The adverb "*sunnily*" confirms his confidence in *Pygmalion*, contrary to Leslie Howard's running after Eliza in the film and Lerner's stage directions which betray his grief and denial in the musical: "*Higgins is thunderstruck. He walks falteringly across the room and looks after her.*"[38] Lerner's intertextual references also point to a broken-hearted Higgins since the librettist used Shaw's own words to Mrs Patrick Campbell to express Higgins' amorous humiliation. "If the Higgins oxygen burns up her little lungs, let her seek some stuffiness that suits her. She's an owl sickened by a few days of my sunshine!"[39] clearly mirrors Shaw's August 1913 letter to his platonic paramour:

> You are an owl, sickened by two days of my sunshine: I have treated you far too well, idolized, thrown my heart and mind to you (as I throw them to all the world) to make

37 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
38 Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
39 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

> what you could of; and what you make is you run away. Go then: the Shavian oxygen burns up your little lungs: seek some stuffiness that suits you. […] You have wounded my vanity: an inconceivable audacity, an unpardonable crime. Farewell, wretch that I loved.[40]

The Shavian intertext not only throws light on Higgins' "wounded vanity" but also on his possibly "throw[ing his] heart and mind at" Eliza. Lerner in fact erases any possible ambiguity as regards our interpretation of Higgins' last act of bravado (or rather mock bravado as his diatribe against Eliza is delivered *in absentia*) through Mrs Higgins' applause directed not to her son, but to Eliza: "MRS HIGGINS [*applauding*]: Bravo, Eliza! [*She smiles*]." These are the last words of the scene, confirming Eliza's victory despite Higgins' claims that he "can do without her."[41]

Scenes six and seven of the musical have been added to the play and are largely inspired by the 1938 script. The filmmakers and librettist deviate from Shaw's original intentions, and yet could also be said to respect them. Higgins is not in any way what Shaw refers to in his letters (when describing Tree's acting) as a "bereaved Romeo". He does not artificially transform into a prince charming making passionate declarations of love to his beloved. That would be the conventional romantic ending commonly associated to the musical.[42] But Henry Higgins is no Don Lockwood or Jerry Mulligan. Both the 1938 film and *My Fair Lady*'s endings can be considered as atypical since they do not end on a passionate final embrace nor do they stage, contrary to common assumption, Eliza's final submission.

Scene six stages Higgins returning to his home alone, walking the streets of London and slowly acknowledging his love for Eliza. Yet the musical's final song is not in any case an overt declaration of love but relies on Higgins' customary use of euphemism. The readers and viewers now familiar with Higgins' character understand his "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face" as the closest they will get to a passionate declaration of love in the same way that his "not bad at all"[43] when appraising Eliza's ball gown in act one should be considered as the "Higginsian" translation for "you look stunning." Higgins' solo alternates between highly romantic declarations ("Her joys, her woes, /

40 George Bernard Shaw, *Collected Letters*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

41 Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

42 Stacy Wolf, *Changed for Good. A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2011, p.31: "Two principals, one male and one female, are introduced early in the show by solos that convey through music how they are opposites who will eventually unite. Their divergent personalities, overdetermined by their differences in gender, symbolize larger cultural and social divisions […] which are resolved by the end of the show."

43 Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

Her highs, her lows / Are second nature to me now") and his usual chauvinist rhetoric ("I'm very grateful she's a woman / And so easy to forget") thus debunking the conventional final male solo.[44] A romantic male solo is in fact to be found earlier on in the musical when another man errs in Wimpole Street. Freddy, rather than Higgins, is the typical besotted young man praising his loved one in "On the Street Where You Live" (act I, scene 8). Lerner thus plays with the audience's expectations and the rules of the musical through a double transfer: not only does he move the male protagonist's romantic solo from the last act to the first one but he also surprises us as to the identity of the singer: the romantic lover is the one whose love will remain unrequited.

The last scene of the musical, once again borrowed from the 1938 film version, stages Eliza's infamous return to Higgins as supposed "slipper-carrier," often interpreted as the victory of domesticity over independence, as evidenced in the following excerpt from the *Telegraph*:

> This is a crowd-pleasing travesty of the original, which defies the story's own internal logic. Higgins has produced a woman with a soul to call her own. Initially, he deprived Eliza of her independence as a flower seller, and in effect enslaved her. But by the end, Eliza has the power to exist without Higgins. Why should we wish her to stay with him, as his perpetual slipper-carrier? Eliza, as Shaw never ceased trying to explain, should be well shot of him.[45]

I would like to argue that this ending rather celebrates Eliza's empowerment in her making her own choices. Eliza is indeed the one who decides to return to Higgins, having rejected Freddy, the younger and more eligible suitor. In fact, contrary to what Shaw asserts in his sequel, wouldn't Eliza marrying Freddy be the perfect fairy-tale ending which Shaw precisely abhors? Her choosing Higgins, the anti-prince charming, should then be perceived as a mark of independence rather than submission. Both film versions (Pascal's and Cukor's) in fact hint at Eliza's superiority over Higgins in this final scene through subtle yet identifiable cinematic devices.

Not only does Eliza once again tower over Higgins in Cukor's film but the viewer also has an ascendency over the phonetician, being made aware of Eliza's return even though the latter is off-camera and Higgins is supposedly alone in his apartment. An attentive viewer can indeed catch a fleeting glimpse of Eliza's shadow cast on the carpet near Higgins' chair before she enters the room, therefore informing us of her arrival before Higgins himself acknowledges her presence.

44 *Ibid*., p. 121.
45 Mark Bostridge, "Why *My Fair Lady* betrays *Pygmalion*," *The Telegraph*, 11 April 2014,

This also means our acknowledging Eliza's awareness of Higgins' despair. Thinking that he is alone, Higgins allows his vulnerable self to surface, something he would of course not have done had he been aware of being observed. He in fact quickly corrects his posture when hearing Eliza's voice. In both versions, the filmmakers once again rely on the viewers' close attention, requiring an active, rather than passive stance on their behalf. It is indeed our task to identify Higgins' flitting smile as the equivalent of the explicit declaration of love in the traditional musical.

In the same way that Benedick pretends to love Beatrice "no more than reason" in the final scene of *Much Ado About Nothing*, Higgins feigns indifference to Eliza's return, yet his turning away from her in the 1938 film or his hiding his face underneath his hat in Lerner's libretto do not fool the viewer. Higgins' nonchalance is unconvincing, as underlined by the use of anaphora in Lerner's stage direction: "HIGGINS *straightens up. If he could but let himself, his face would radiate unmistakable relief and joy. If he could but let himself, he would run to her. Instead, he leans back with a contented sigh pushing his hat forward till it almost covers his face*."[46]

Higgins' much commented on and deplored last words end both the 1938 film and the musical:

> HIGGINS (*softly*) – Eliza? Where the devil are my slippers?
> (*There are tears in* ELIZA*'s eyes. She understands.*)
> *The curtain falls slowly.*[47]

Rather than interpreting this ending as staging the victory of the chauvinist male, I would like to suggest that it stages the victory of the female character. Higgins does not break character. His suddenly transforming into a submissive spouse would lack credibility and offer the audience an artificial romantic denouement. This is probably what Eliza "*understands*." The latter does not acknowledge her fetching Higgins' slippers until death do them part but rather that this is Higgins' (subverted) declaration of love, which is not in any case "bark[ed] at her," as suggested by Stacy Wolf,[48] but spoken "*softly*," as though to underline the self-mockery in Higgins' words.

46 Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
47 *Ibid.*, p. 122.
48 Stacy Wolf, *Changed for Good*, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

The musical moreover ends with Higgins' question, not with Eliza's answer, leaving it to the audience to decide what her reaction will be. Why not, therefore, consider that she might once again fling Higgins' slippers in his face, as she has done before? Shaw himself hints at this possible denouement when having Higgins voice his admiration for a defiant Eliza in a passage that Lerner has surprisingly erased from the musical: "I think a woman fetching a man's slippers is a disgusting sight: did I ever fetch YOUR slippers? I think a good deal more of you for throwing them in my face."[49] The playwright even goes so far as to suggest that Eliza might be able to "tame" Higgins, as evidenced by Pickering asking Eliza to "be kinder to Higgins" in the sequel, so "ruthlessly" does she stand up to him.[50] What Shaw offers his readers in this postscript is a vision of a married Eliza, living happily (ever after…) with Freddy, but who "still manages to meddle in the housekeeping at Wimpole Street."[51] Shaw thus suggests that Eliza's domesticity is acceptable because she has not married Higgins. How this is a more satisfying denouement than Eliza indeed being Higgins' wife (or, why not, even "partner") and not meddling in the housekeeping, remains a mystery to the present author.

This paper mostly results from my being racked by guilt at the thought of lacking "feminine instinct." No matter what we think of Shaw's sequel, one has to credit him with a talent for putting his readers to shame. How can we not be mortified when reading that "the true sequel," that is to say Eliza leaving Higgins, "is patent to anyone with a sense of human nature in general, and of feminine instinct in particular?"[52]

As I have tried to demonstrate in this paper, Gabriel Pascal and Alan Jay Lerner have succeeded in offering an ending which can be perceived as both romantic and feminist. In other words, our desperately wanting Eliza and Higgins to end up together does not make us closet misogynists. But to be perfectly honest here would be to admit that it is much easier to perceive Eliza's return as a token of her independence today than it was in the 1950s, at a time when women's realm was the domestic one and when they were indeed often perceived as "slipper-carriers." Having underlined the flaws of Shaw's rigid indictment of the romantic ending, my purpose here is certainly not to impose yet another authoritarian reading of the text by saying that Pascal's and Lerner's interpretation is the only valid one. I am probably influenced by Leslie Howard and Rex Harrison's charisma and I have not seen the various stage productions

49 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.
50 *Ibid*., p. 74.
51 *Ibid*., p. 74.
52 George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion, op. cit.*, p. 67.

of *Pygmalion* (among which Howard Davies' 1992 National Theatre production or Peter Hall's 2007 Old Vic production[53]) which apparently pay tribute to Shaw's original intentions by refusing any possible romantic subtext. This paper's aim is not to demonstrate that the romantic ending is the only possible denouement, but rather that romance is not synonymous with patriarchy.

Alan Jay Lerner's foreword to the libretto reads as follows: "I have omitted the sequel because in it Shaw explains how Eliza ends not with Higgins but with Freddy and – Shaw and Heaven forgive me! – I am not certain he is right." While George Cukor adopts a reverential and conservative approach to Lerner's libretto, Pascal's and Lerner's approach can be deemed post-structuralist, reminding us that "the birth of the reader," and we would like to add of the viewer, "must be at the cost of the death of the Author."[54]

53 This article was moreover written before Bartlett Sher's 2018 revival at the Lincoln Center Theater in New York which reasserts the possibility of a feminist reading of *My Fair Lady* and would warrant extensive discussion elsewhere.

54 Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author", *op. cit.*, p. 148.

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NOTICE

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ABSTRACT

Despite the play being misleadingly subtitled "A Romance in Five Acts," George Bernard Shaw has always been adamant that *Pygmalion*'s denouement should not be interpreted as romantic. Yet from the first London production of the play in 1914 to producer Gabriel Pascal's 1938 film, Alan Jay Lerner's 1956 libretto and George Cukor's 1964 adaptation, it seems that no one has been able to resist the urge to romanticize the relationship between Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle. This paper focuses on what such romanticizing entails in terms of aesthetics and politics. I will qualify the common assumption according to which Alan Jay Lerner subverted Shaw's original intentions by trying to demonstrate that the revised ending foregrounds rather than subverts Shaw's feminist vision.

Keywords

George Cukor; Alan Jay Lerner; Gabriel Pascal; George Bernard Shaw; *My Fair Lady*; *Pygmalion*; adaptation; death of the Author; feminism; romantic denouement.

RÉSUMÉ

George Bernard Shaw a toujours refusé catégoriquement toute lecture romantique du dénouement de sa pièce *Pygmalion*. Or, depuis les premières représentations à Londres en 1914 jusqu'au film de George Cukor en 1964 en passant par le film du producteur Gabriel Pascal en 1938 et la comédie musicale écrite par Alan Jay Lerner en 1956… tous s'accordent à sentimentaliser la relation entre Henry Higgins et Eliza Doolittle. Cet article s'intéresse aux enjeux esthétiques et politiques de cette réécriture romantique et revient sur l'hypothèse selon laquelle Alan Jay Lerner aurait malmené les intentions premières de Shaw. Il s'agira de démontrer que les modifications apportées au dénouement consacrent plus qu'elles n'annulent la vision féministe du dramaturge.

Mots-clés

George Cukor ; Alan Jay Lerner ; Gabriel Pascal ; George Bernard Shaw ; *My Fair Lady* ; *Pygmalion* ; adaptation ; dénouement romantique ; féminisme ; mort de l'Auteur.

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