Introduction

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) is an Irish playwright and critic. He was the third child and first son of George Carr Shaw and Lucinda Elizabeth Curly Shaw. His alcoholic father had no desire to provide his son with a complete university education and only wanted to push him to work at the age of fifteen. Erik H. Erikson described Shaw's father as **"**not convivial, nor quarrelsome, nor boastful, but miserable, racked with shame and remorse" (Erikson 21). As for his mother, Shaw himself described his mother as "the worst mother conceivable, always, however, within the limits of the fact that she was incapable of unkindness to any child, animal, or flower, or indeed to any person or thing whatsoever..." (Erikson 21-22). His mother left him alone for her own music career at his early age. "My mother," according to Shaw, "in her righteous reaction against…the constraints and tyrannies, the scoldings and brow beatings and punishments she had suffered" (Erikson 22). Shaw's mother rebelled against traditional roles and this attitude was important in Shaw's sympathy with the plight of independent minded women in his writing. His mother clings to female power and her disobedience of the given female role concerning sexuality, respectability, and career achievement affected Shaw.

During his childhood Shaw loved his mother but he also had a passion for social justice, for he was always looking for a new order in society. He was "seriously optimistic" and "declined to abandon high hopes for man" (Colbourne 314). His loveless family may have had influenced his psychic development enormously. However, his experience at a young age deeply influenced the understructure of his character and the structure of his plays.

At the beginning of his career as a dramatist, Shaw's plays were divided into two

types: Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant.[1] His "Unpleasant" plays**,** including *Widowers' Houses*, *The Philanderer*, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession***,** focus on some unspoken social issues in the late nineteenth century about individual values and attitude, and the issues of prostitution under capitalism. He wants to search for the hidden economic facts under the social surfaces of capitalism. In his "Pleasant" plays, such as *Arms and the Man*, *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny*, and *You Never Can Tell*, Shaw's aim is to make his audience face and laugh at their illusions. In *A Critical View*, Nicholas Grene points out: "his aim throughout *Plays*: *Pleasant* and *Unpleasant*: in the Unpleasant volume 'to force the spectator to face unpleasant facts'; in the Pleasant plays, is to laugh his audience good-humouredly out of their romantic illusions. In both cases reality is where we are to come out" (Grene a: 15).

Major Barbara is among his most famous "Unpleasant" plays. Facing much difficulty when Shaw was forty-nine, he wrote this play between March and September in 1905. According to his friend, Beatrice Webb, a political sociologist, Shaw was trying to put his ideas and emotions in this play as a means to express his "ideological conflicts of his time" (Kaufmann 7). Nevertheless, when approaching the age of fifty-seven, Shaw wrote the play *Pygmalion*, which is the most "Pleasant" of all his plays. In *A Critical View*, Grene points out:

> Although the subject matter of the Unpleasant plays is about the crimes of society and that of the Pleasant plays 'is about romantic follies', corresponding to the neo-classical dictum that comedy should 'sport with human follies not with crimes'. However, both categories have a common purpose cutting across the generic division. (Grene a: 14)

In *Pygmalion*, Shaw describes a flower girl who fights to change herself into a

[1] Quoted from Nicholas Grene, 14. With the publication of Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant in 1898, Shaw staked his claim to be regarded as a significant dramatist

completely different person with new expectations. Shaw took his title “Pygmalion” from the Greek mythology. Pygmalion, king of Cyprus, has made an ivory statue of a girl, and no sooner has he finished carving it he falls in love with her. At the same time, he prays to Aphrodite to give the statue life. At last, his hope comes true and he marries her. When Shaw wrote the play he intended to have the famous actress, Mrs. Patrick Campbell, play Eliza Doolittle. Shaw combined the romantic sources with direct observation about social issues to make the play “a Pleasant play”.

Concentrating upon Shaw’s outlook about society, his book *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* provides one of the best statements of Shaw’s distaste for abstractions and big principles in his political thinking and also examines how he realized his career as a social reformer. In this book, Shaw talks about the ethical conception of Ibsen’s plays. Ibsen was very important to Shaw not only because Ibsen himself was a Socialist or a social thinker, but also because the latter’s ideas expresses a wide variety of other things. In many cases, we find out that Shaw’s themes and characters are similar to Ibsen’s. In fact, Shaw is not only himself a socialist but also a preacher of socialism and moralism. And he confidently evinced his belief in such an idealistic concept. The characters of his plays strongly argue for the view that the society should look at such a thing as prostitution in *Mrs. Warren Profession* and the munitions manufacturer in *Major Barbara*. His aim is to “expose the fatuity of our position and to articulate his own” (Kaufmann 10). Unlike most playwrights, Shaw did a great job of seeing through people outside as well as inside the theater.

David Ian Rabey regards Shaw as the beginner of the political theater: “In the early 1980’s I wrote a study … which intended to pay tribute to an emergent tradition of radical drama and its subversive potential. In the intervening years, history and experience have taught me that the drama was neither radical nor subversive enough”

(Rabey 151). Most of Shaw's political thoughts are published in his two longest treatises, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism* (1928) and *Everybody's Political What's What?* (1944) respectively. Being very sensitive to social and political issues, Shaw felt no awe toward the authority, for he seemed to have been "born free from many of the venerations and inhibitions which restrain the tongues of most people," about which he talked to Hesketh Pearson in *G.B.S.; A Full Length Portrait* (Pearson 21). When Shaw grew up, he devoted himself to socialism, along with Fabianism, Marxism, and Christian Socialism. Sally Peters points out regarding Fabianism as follows:

> Fabian Society was derived from the Roman general Fabius Cunctator, for the Fabians were attracted to what was believed to be his battle strategy against invading Carthaginian general Hannibal. The Fabian credo declared: "For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently, when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays, but when the time comes, you must strike hard, as Fabius did, or your waiting will be in vain, and fruitless." (Peters 405-06)

From this point of view, Shaw's development as a playwright cannot easily be set apart from his Fabian evolutionary socialism. Shaw was concerned more about political issues rather than in personal and dramatic things. His *Major Barbara* was more imbued with his knowledge of contemporary politics. This play shows that money governs England, and Undershaft is one of the people who govern the country. He told Barbara that "all religious organizations exist by selling themselves to the rich," and he also wanted Cusins to understand that "you must first acquire money enough for a decent life, and power enough to be your own master" (98, 94). Undershaft believes that only money can control everything and that money means

freedom, and gunpowder power. The following passage demonstrates Undershaft's powerful speech against the crime of poverty:

> Not by words and dreams; but by thirty-eight shillings a week, a sound house in a handsome street, and a permanent job. In three weeks he will have a fancy waistcoat; in three months a tall hat and a chapel sitting; before the end of the year he will shake hands with a duchess at the Primrose League meeting, and join the Conservative Party. (142)

The Fabian Society aims to reform. Shaw quickly became a leader in the group. In *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism*, Shaw set out his political faith and his advice on the society. He was trying to shock everyone; in fact, he was seeking to convey that morality was not a question of right and wrong. Throughout his life Shaw wrote as an adversary; this point of view differs from the rooted Victorian smugness which occupies his boyhood and his first quarter-century in London.

Shaw made himself as the outsider of the society; while he joined the Fabian Society in 1884. In *Everybody's Political What's What?*, Shaw illustrates his disagreements toward the contemporary society:

> At the end of his life he describes the Shavian crusade against error. *Everybody's Political What's What?* is only an attempt by a very ignorant old man to communicate to people still more ignorant than himself, such elementary social statistics as he has managed to pick up in the course of a life…spent largely in discovering and correcting the mistakes into which his social antecedents and surroundings led him. (Shaw a: 366)

Hence, his dramas, *Major Barbara* (1905), *Pygmalion* (1912), (later a musical named *My Fair Lady*), and *Saint Joan* (1923), talk about the current morals and manners, and the heresy of challenging beliefs he wished to transform. Shaw challenged

established societal values whose concern in his plays tends to be public in order to deal with public issues of his time. In his plays, individual conflicts are representative of social, evolutionary, and cosmic ones. He always takes a pragmatic view of women's search for self-identity. To meet the demands of the contemporary society, the "Shavian society" characters in Shaw's plays need to maintain control and to reverse it. Shaw believed that he has a magic power to save the people in order to eliminate all their ills. Shaw has created many characters (the Shavian persons) in his plays: Mrs. Warren, Undershaft, Eliza Doolittle, and Saint Joan, and the others. Like these characters, Shaw's invented public self is neither a simple magnification of his inner self nor an autocratically disagreeable with it. His thought reversals in Shavian dramas; women are masculine and all superior men are feminine. In his comedies, most often, the woman is active and the man passive.

In accordance with the Shavian situation, in *Pygmalion* the romantic comedy, Eliza Doolittle, a new Shavian woman, and an educated woman, is able to earn her own living in a male-dominated society. A romantic play in a Shavian sense: the heroine searches for economic independence by her will of power and marries a man who loves her. In the third act Mrs. Higgins points out her question to Higgins, "Well, you never fall in love with anyone under forty-five" (57). It is clear that Higgins treats Eliza just like his family member not between the lovers. "I shall never get into the way of seriously liking young women: some habits lie too deep to be changed," he tells Colonel Pickering (58). Higgins also tells his reason to his mother: "My idea of a lovable woman is somebody as like you as possible…some habits lie too deep to be changed" (58). Although Eliza has totally changed herself from outside to inside, Higgins admits he cannot do anything. Shaw's thought is affected by many of Ibsen's plays. In *A Critical View*, Nicholas Grene points out

that “The appropriateness to Ibsen play was an open-ended questioning rather than confident enlightenment” (Grene a: 8). Shaw’s plays not just want to entertain his audience but to let them understand his true intention.

In *Saint Joan*, the figure of Joan, is in a reverse role. In the opening scene, Shaw pointed out that Joan is a Shavian superwoman, unconventional and antiromantic. There is a voice clearly appearing in the preface; for Shaw, it is a problem:

> I cannot believe, nor, if I could, could I expect all my readers to believe, as Joan did, that three ocularly visible well dressed persons, named respectively Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret, and Saint Michael, came down from heaven and gave her certain instructions. Not that such a belief would be more improbable or fantastic than some modern beliefs which we all swallow; but there are fashions and family habits in belief, and it happens that, my fashion being Victorian and my family habit Protestant, I find myself unable to attach any such objective validity to the form of Joan’s visions. (11)

Nicholas Grene describes the voices of the three saints as “the dramatisation by Joan’s imagination of that pressure upon her of the driving force that is behind evolution” (Grene 119). Meanwhile, Joan in the first scene knows that the voice is the message from God:

> Joan: I hear voices telling me what to do. They come from God.
>
> Robert: They come from your imagination.
>
> Joan: Of course. That is how the messages of God come to us. (65-66)

However, the heroine first appears to be a crazy female, different from a conventional woman:

JOAN: 〔impatient, but friendly〕They all say I am mad until I talk to them, squire. But you see that it is the will of God that you are to do what He has put into my mind.

ROBERT: It is the will of God that I shall send you back to your father with orders to put you under lock and key and thrash the madness out of you. What have you to say to that?

JOAN: You think you will, squire; but you will find it all coming quite different. You said you would not see me; but here I am. (61)

These female protagonists in Shaw's plays often express their other characters to face the people, as in *A Shavian Guide to the Intelligent Woman*:

> Shaw's women do not speak like real people, being infinitely more articulate, more expressive, and more elegant. They do not live like real people, their lives having the logic of fulfilled principles which we are denied. But they do give expression to states of mind which we recognize as our own and our opponents'. This realism about the states of mind is accounted for by Shaw's pseudo-mystical talk about 'Woman, projecting herself dramatically by my hands (a process over which I assure you I have no more control than I have over my wife)'. (Watson 21)

From Shaw's plays we could find that he believes in the "Life-Force" claiming an optimistic attitude toward human history. This force is strong in some women, such as Barbara, Eliza and Joan, who are trying to search for what they want. In the end of Act 2 of *Major Barbara*, the Salvation Army heroine finds that in her work for the poor she is forced to accept many assistance, from her father, a wealthy munitions business man. Barbara says to Cusins, who asks her: "Then the way of life lies

through the factory of death?" (152) She replies: "Yes, through the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow" (152). At this point, Shaw has the idea of a Life Force reflecting a certain discouragement on his part in Life Force. The Life Force is a concept with theological significance for Shaw, but "it is conceived as working through human will and it is directed primarily at reforming the ethics of gentility" (Crawford 116). Shaw's aim, like that of a Salvationist, fosters an awareness of sin in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*:

> When he 〔the playwright〕 can stab people to the heart by showing them the meanness or cruelty of something they did yesterday and intend to do tomorrow, all the old tricks to catch and hold their 〔an audience's〕 attention become the silliest of superfluities…. Ibsen substituted a terrible art of sharpshooting at the audience, trapping them, aiming always at the sorest spot in their consciences. Never mislead an audience, was the old rule. But the new school 〔of drama〕 will trick the spectator into forming a meanly false judgement, and then convict him of it in the next act, often to his grievous mortification…. The dramatist knows that as long as he is teaching and saving his audience, he is a sure of their strained attention as a dentist is, or the Angel of the Annunciation. (Shaw b: 182-83)

Such powers we must respect, expanding the evil into good. Shaw believed in the Life Force, and "Life Force corresponds to the Living God of the Bible" (Knight 120). Saint Joan with her life force is described, by herself and others, as a woman, endowed with certain "female" characters and certain "male" sensitivities and she is to serve the will of God.

Shaw often imposes on his protagonists a mission to reform the conventional doctrines. In a traditional society, the situation of women was often oppressed by males. Today there are still many women controlled by patriarchal thoughts. Hence here, in using feminist theory as my reading and analyzing strategy, I will apply the notion of feminism from Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* of gender, subject and power from Michael Foucault's *History of Sexuality* to analyze how the women protagonists in the three dramas shape their identities and fulfill their self-realization. De Beauvoir has radically altered the idea of the status quo of women, and regarded some women as the representative of the twentieth century. According to her feminist theory, the difference between men and women lies in the culture instead of sex. At the same time, Foucault's discourses of sex/sexuality are framed within the customary cultural binary matrix: male/female and masculine/feminine. His canon is important for rounding out the inadequate or unsuitable feminist notions of gender and sexuality for making a comprehensive feminist discourse to resist and transform the unacceptable male-dominated social structure. I will also apply Foucault's "power theory" about power/knowledge to help feminists move from a state of subordination to a more understanding of the role of power in women's lives. It is significant because the analysis of power relations is not limited to the social, political, and cultural domains, but can extend over the private horizons of all of women.

This thesis is to reveal how women feel oppressed under the patriarchy from the public sphere of male authority through its political, social, economic, and religion in Shaw's *Saint Joan*, *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara*. In the following paragraphs, I will introduce Foucault's important notions, and how to use them in *Saint Joan*, *Pygmalion* and *Major Barbara*.

Michael Foucault (1926-1984) is a French structuralist philosopher and historian. His many major theories have reversed many traditional philosophical canons. Foucault's power theory is marked by his historical analyses of the development of different forms of power, and focuses them on the public sphere, such as school, government and religion. His aim is to erase the traditional binary notions, such as female vs. male, politics vs. morality or religion. Foucault uses this analysis of power in the western canons and his interpretations of sexuality and power in order to challenge the conventional notions of knowledge, truth, and power. Women in oppression have found Foucault's works useful to dismantle those canons by men; hence, I shall explain briefly about Foucault's major theories concerning power as follows:

I. Power Relations

Foucault points out that "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" and it is "mobile" (Foucault a: 93). On the other hand, power is not "an institution, nor a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with" (Foucault a: 93) also it is not a certain thing "that is acquired, seized, or shared" (Foucault a: 94). From this point, it is not a commodity, a position or a gift. The purpose, for Foucault, "is to move less toward a theory of power than toward an analytics of power: that is, toward a definition of a specific domain formed by power relations and toward a determination of the instruments that will make possible its analysis" (Foucault a: 82).

Foucault's intension is to separate and analyze the web of uneven relationships in a society. Power, just like the net, is scattered all over the society, not a system of domination, "operating from the top down and also from the bottom up" (Dreyfus and Rabinow: 185). Hence, to compare the word "power" with the relations of "power"

or “power relations” is adequate for what Foucault wants to express. Power relations are not “in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations)” (Foucault a: 94). Power exists in a different type of force relations, because they can “operate and constitute their own organization” (Foucault a: 92); namely, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault a: 95). On the other hand, power is not dominated by any individual or group of institutions, so no one can be responsible for any relations of it.

In short, the relations of power can link military, family, sexuality and educator, with the social body; on the other hand, power relations operate in a very sophisticated field:

> These relations of power do not take the sole form of prohibition and punishment, but are of multiple forms… One should not assume a massive and primal condition of domination, binary structure with “dominators” on one side and “dominated” on the other, but rather a multiform production of relations of domination which are partially susceptible of integration into overall strategies. (Foucault b: 142)

In Foucault’s view, the more sophisticated relations of power are made by the myriad factors of society. He resists the relations of power from the binary separations such as the power and the powerless, the oppressor and oppressed; Nevertheless, Foucault’s analysis of the power relations can not deal with the special relations happening between two persons. The exercise of power in a complex social net remodels our thought to avoid original modeled place such as oppressor and oppressed. The complex changing power relationships can be seen between Joan, Barbara and Eliza with their society.

II. Power/Knowledge

Foucault's work on power, and the relationship between power and knowledge, have been widely discussed and applied. In this way, Foucault's thinking of knowledge-production crossed with sophisticated relations of power in western culture and his aim to remodel our notion of thinking, especially in the issues related to sexism, class oppression and power, challenged the western philosophy. Actually, the knowledge-and-power relationship establishes the central focus of his cultural and historically critical stance. Foucault himself says, "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge, and conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault b: 52). Consequently, he argues, especially in *Discipline and Punish* and the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, that these reconstructions of knowledge also established new types of power and domination. The power and knowledge relationships can also be analyzed and demonstrated with the three female protagonists.