

**University of Pardubice
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

Women characters in G. B. Shaw's plays

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Bachelor Paper
2011

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V Pardubicích dne 5.9.2011

Kristýna Mišovcová

Ráda bych poděkovala všem, kteří mají podíl na vzniku této práce. Děkuji především Mgr. Ladislavu Vítovi, vedoucí mé bakalářské práce, za cenné rady a komentáře během psaní této práce.

Annotation

This paper deals with Victorian women in George Bernard Shaw's plays. The first part describes Victorian England in working-class, middle-class and upper-class. Furthermore it focuses on the property rights of women and feminist life in Victorian period. It also introduces the problem of prostitution. The second part of the thesis describes three plays of G. B. Shaw and focuses on the characterization and behaviour of women.

Key words:

Victorian England; working class; middle class; upper class; feminism; prostitution, plays

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá Viktoriánskou ženou ve hrách George Bernarda Shawa. První část práce popisuje Viktoriánskou Anglii v dělnické třídě, střední třídě a vyšší třídě. Dále se zaměřuje na majetková práva žen a život feministek ve Viktoriánské době. Také představuje problém prostituce. Ve druhé části práce jsou popsány tři hry od G. B. Shawa, kde je hlavní zaměření na charakteristiku a chování žen

Klíčová slova:

Viktoriánská Anglie; dělnická třída; střední třída; vyšší třída; feminismus; prostituce; hry

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Univerzita Pardubice
Fakulta filozofická
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky
Akademický rok: 2008/2009

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Kristýna MIŠOVCOVÁ**
Studijní program: **B7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro hospodářskou praxi**

Název tématu: **Ženské postavy v dílech G.B.Shawa**

Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Předmětem práce budou vybrané hry G.B. Shawa (Mrs. Warren's Profession, Widower's House, Candida). Na základě relevantní sekundární literatury se autorka v dílech zaměří na ženské postavy a provede analýzu jejich společných a rozdílných rysů. V této části bude klást důraz na zachycení hodnot, které ženské postavy zastupují. Dalším cílem bude srovnat tyto postavy se společenskými stereotypy žen a jejich postavením ve viktoriánské Británii. Práci uzavře kapitola shrnující výsledky předchozích úvah a zjištění.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: tištěná/elektronická

Seznam odborné literatury:

Primární zdroje: SHAW, George Bernard. Plays Unpleasant: Widowers' Houses; The Philanderer, and, Mrs Warren's Profession. London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1970. SHAW, George Bernard. Plays Pleasant: Arms and the Man; Candida; the Man of Destiny; You Never Can Tell. London: Penguin Classics, 2003. **Sekundární zdroje:** GORDON, Eleanor, NAIR, Gwyneth. Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003. MARSDEN, Gordon. Victorian Values: Personalities and Perspectives in Nineteenth Century Society. London: Longman; 2 edition, 1998. SINGH, D.K. Idea of Superman in the Plays of G.B.Shaw. Delhi: Atlantic Publishing, 1999. ROCKMAN, Robert. The plays of G.B. Shaw;[a critical guide] (Monarch notes and study guides. London: Monarch Press, 1967.

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Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

30. dubna 2009

Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

31. března 2010


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V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

Victorian women's lives were widely dependent on their class, occupation and marital status. According to Eleonor Gordon's book, *Public Lives*, it is a woman's association with the home and family that is crucial to her image as the "angel in the house". It was this role in the home that took them away from the corrupt practices of the public world. During the reign of Queen Victoria, a woman's role was that of a housewife and mother. The persistence of these roles and their social acceptance alienated women from the very society in which they lived in. Without a way to actively contribute to society, women felt inadequate, inferior and consumed with feelings of helplessness "because of a terrible negativity, a lack of purpose in their lives, a lack of environment to develop personality." (Calder, 1977, p. 136)

George Bernard Shaw was a dramatist who for more than a half a century was widely revered for the originality and realness of the characters he scripted in his plays. "My method is to take the utmost trouble to find the right things to say, and then to say it with the utmost levity." Shaw said (Granner, 1985, p. 740) A freethinker and supporter of women's rights, G.B. Shaw was a member of The Fabian society - a middle-class socialist group in England that believed in the transformation of society not through revolution, but through invasion of the country's intellectual and political life.

I have divided my thesis into two main chapters. Initially, I would like to speak about Victorian England and paint a historical family portrait from that era. I will focus primarily on the status of women in this period, and then go into greater depth to cover the subchapters of working class women and the occupational hardships they endured and contrast that with the lifestyle their middle and upper class counterparts enjoyed. Furthermore, I would like to also point out the major differences between married and single women in Victorian society, their property rights and the benefits of being single or widowed versus being a married woman in this point in time.

Thereafter I will introduce the feminist movement in England and prominent feminist leader Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, who fought for the emancipation of women in Victorian society. The feminist movement helped to usher in important changes in legislation which gave women basic rights that they never had before. Women were now able to work, receive a proper education and have a chance to teach others. These newfound freedoms restructured the landscape for women in Victorian society, redefined their image and gave them a sense of personal pride and confidence.

After setting this historical stage for women in Victorian England, I would like to introduce three plays by G.B. Shaw to provide an emotional and psychological perspective of what it felt like to be a woman during this difficult period in time. The first play is called "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and due to its controversial subject matter at the time, it received the licence for public performance only in the mid-1920 (Sanders, 2004, p. 487) where I want to show the situation of the two main female characters. It is Vivie, who is a young liberated intelligent woman from Surrey and her unashamed mother who sees "the only way for a woman to provide for herself is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her." (Shaw, Act II) It deals with two issues: the independent educated women and the oldest female profession - prostitution. Prostitution was a major social problem in Victorian England and it will be the last issue that I will be touching upon in the first part of my thesis.

The second play is "Candida" which speaks about women's independence in Victorian society. The main character is Candida, she is the perfect wife of the Reverend James Mavor Morell and she is responsible for most of his success. A young poet by the name of Marchbanks falls in love with Candida and she has to decide whether to leave with him or stay with her husband. The main theme of this play is Victorian love and marriage and what woman truly needs from her life.

The last play is about slum landlords and is titled "Widower's Houses". The main female character, Blanche Sartorius, is an upper-class woman that does not want to lose her father's financial support. She is supposed to marry a doctor who wants them

to live on his modest earnings only. I also want to show the importance of money and how financial situations change people and relationships between them. I will analyze these plays and compare them to the everyday situations that women experienced in Victorian times. I will also make a comparison of women characters from these three plays I mentioned. I want to get closer to their thinking and I will try to understand their position in society.

2. VICTORIAN WOMEN

2.1 Victorian England and Her Women

The position of women in Victorian England cannot be that easily defined. The ideal woman was supposed to make her husband “the center of her life and be the Light of the Home [...] She was supposed to be his helper and servant.” The usual picture of Victorian family life is “a private enclave, cloistered from the public gaze and the disorder of the public world.” (Gordon, 2003, p. 107) Families were usually large in size and considered an integral part of everyday life during this period.

Jenni Calder speaks about the main problems that Victorian women had to deal with in her book *The Victorian Home*. In her book, she draws attention to lack of women’s rights:

The structure of the Victorian family was solidly patriarchal. A man’s wife had minimal status or rights, and her only identity lay in the man whose wife she was and in her domestic role. Whatever she did could only be done in his name. A married woman’s property and earnings, if she had any, belonged to her husband until 1873 when there were modifications in the law. Thus, legally and economically, she had no basis on which any kind of authority could be established. The home and everything in it belonged to her husband. (41)

Once women got married their property rights automatically belonged to their husbands who could treat them however they wanted. The only property women could own in Victorian England was inherited from their fathers (qtd. in Brinjikji). Women were not legal guardians of their own children and were not allowed to vote. A Victorian woman “would be stoical, motherly, submissive and chaste.” (Paxman, 1998, p. 228)

As negative as it seemed, Victorian women considered marriage as their primary life goal because it was the only acceptable occupation in society. “Women don’t

consider themselves as human beings at all. There is absolutely no God, no country, no duty to them at all except family.” (Herstein, 1985, p. 27)

2.2 Working-class Women

According to Calder there were “around 75 percent of people in the working class.” (70) The semi-skilled and unskilled man in the work force had very low and uncertain wages. Not being able to support his whole family, the additional help from women and children earnings was necessary. The census of 1841 shows that the majority of women had 5 main working professions: needlewomen, domestic servants and factory, agricultural and domestic industry workers (Herstein, 1985, p. 33). While it led to the economic independence of women, their wages were still low and considered as supplementary.

In mid-Victorian period, most of the working women were employed in a domestic capacity and “its steady rise was a clear reflection of the increase in the middle-class which supported it.”(Herstein, 1985, p. 35) In Victorian England women were expected to stay at home and give all of their time and energy to looking after their children and keeping the home clean. “One working class wife in 1915 saw ten years of marriage, childrearing and chilbreeding as reducing her to “almost a mental and physical wreck.” (Purvis, 1997, p. 52) For many of these women family life consumed them and lack of literacy prevented women from choosing their occupations. They had to take whatever work was offered to them. The situation for married working-class women varied slightly from their single female counterparts. Married women usually worked as their husband’s personal assistants so they were not compensated and if they were, it was negligible. “Not until the home ceased to be the center of activity did the married woman worker become an object of concern.” (Herstein1985, p. 36)

Women fortunate enough to work outside the home had to deal with yet another challenging issue; how to care for their children. Children were “no longer in the care of mothers, but were farmed out, often badly fed and dosed with laudanum to keep them

quiet.”(Herstein, 1985, p. 36) When women were absent from the household, the whole family struggled because women were not there to cook and take proper care of the house.

With the minimal wages that married working women earned, they still did not have any legal right to it. Only up until 1859, after several cases were brought into public light were women looking for some legal protection for their earnings. “Publicity led people to question the dual system of law, which left married factory women without protection for their wages.”(Hewitt, 1958,p. 3–5) Marriage also brought about some other problems like legal rights. “Outside the family married women had the same legal status as children and lunatics; within it they were their husbands’ inferiors.” (Herstein, 1985, p. 37)

According to Common Law, “a wife’s property, earnings, liberty, and even her children all belonged to her husband.”(Herstein, 1985, p. 38) A married woman could not sue or be sued, could not make wills or own any property without their husband’s permission, she could not leave her husband and she did not have any rights to her children. Her husband had the right to treat her any way he wanted. But that still did not persuade women to leave their husbands. “Marital separation, whether initiated by the husband or wife, usually left the women economically destitute, as the law offered them no rights to marital property.”(qtd.Brinjikji)

As stated in G. B. Shaw’s *Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, if women wanted to find industrial employment they could only do it for less pay than men. “This was possible, because even when the man’s wage was a starvation wage it was the starvation wage of a family, not of a single person.”(Shaw, 1937, p. 52)

Even though men’s earnings were not high, it was adequate enough to provide for children and wives. Single women could earn less money than men and they would still be in a better situation than married women because they had the opportunity to work second jobs.

The most important job that a woman had was raising her children and maintaining the household. Work at home was necessary for the existence of society “while millions of men were engaged in wasteful or positively mischievous work, the only excuse for which was that it enabled them to support their useful and necessary wives.”(Shaw, 1937, p. 53)

If women worked outside the home they were never paid directly. The earnings were always given to their husbands. Men from the working class had to work very long hours for very little pay, which could be equated to slave labor and “by paying the woman through him, made her his slave, she became the slave of a slave, which is the worst sort of slavery.” (Shaw, 1937, p. 53) Huge factories were employing hundreds of girls “from four-and-sixpence to seven-and-sixpence a week.”(Shaw, 1937, p. 53) Younger women were much healthier and better fed than older women who had to support the whole family. Factories preferred to employ these younger women because it was more profitable and since these women did not have any children to take care of they were available to work.

Due to this the Labour market was flooded with childless women and young girls who were willing to work. “The effect is to make marriage compulsory as a woman’s profession: she has to take anything she can get in the way of a husband rather than face penury as a single woman.”(Shaw, 1937, p. 54)

Because marriage was a societal obligation and living necessity, a lot of pressure was put on women to find themselves a husband. As marriage turned into a fierce competition, it was the attractive, outgoing women who were better equipped at finding a suitor as opposed to less-attractive, shy women.

2.3 Property Rights of Women

The property rights of women in Victorian England depended on marital status. If a woman was married, her husband had all the rights to her property and earnings. “A man and wife are one person in law; the wife loses all her rights as a single woman, and her existence is entirely absorbed in that of her husband.” (Bodichon, 1985, p. 2) Female property rights “were governed by English common law, which required that

the property women took into a marriage, or acquired subsequently, be legally absorbed by their husbands.”(qtd. Brinjikji)

The economic and social benefits of marriage became the most important factors in selecting a life partner. Love and happiness were not in the equation. “The rhetoric and the ideal of romantic love and companionate union are often affirmed to have taken hold over economic and social considerations in the selection of marriage partner.”(Gordon, 2003, p. 71) After marriage women gained a household to take care of and they were also more respected in the Victorian society.

On the other hand, women who never got married, legally defined as *feme sole*, could maintain all property rights and inheritance. These women were considered as socially problematic because it was inappropriate to be single. “At worst, they could be seen as presenting a sexual threat to the married: at best, they were viewed as “incomplete” and probably embittered if they were unable to fulfill their biological destiny as wives and mothers.”(Gordon, 2003, p. 168)

The only property married women owned in this period was what they inherited from their fathers. Fathers generally included daughters in their wills to protect them, but there was a difference between daughters and sons in a father’s will. “Fathers normally gave their daughters shares comparable in value with those of their brothers, although girls usually inherited personal property and boys more often inherited real property.”(Erikson, 1993, p. 19)

So there were an actual benefits of staying single for women in Victorian England. “Unmarried women had a right to maintain their property as long as they stayed unmarried and they more likely gave the prerogative in dividing possession in their wills to the female relatives.”(Erickson, 1993, p. 19)

According to marital laws at the time, women had minimum legal rights. When it comes to property and divorce, the courts almost always tended to rule in favour of the husband. Barbara Smith, prominent feminist leader, pointed out that a man had the legal rights to the property of a woman even if he was only engaged to. She could not dispose of her property without his agreement because she gave him a promise to marry

him. Once woman got married, the law suddenly changed her life because she lost her own single existence and connected it with her husband. “A woman is courted and wedded as an angel, and yet denied the dignity of a rational and moral being ever after.”(Bodichon, 1853, p. 9)

Cases of divorce required an act of Parliament which was very expensive and woman’s chances for being granted a divorce were slim. Women could neither sue nor defend themselves during the act even though the main reasons for divorce were “aggravated adultery” by the husband.”(Herstein, 1985, p. 72)

The only chance for married woman to gain the control of her property was after the husband’s death. “Once widowed, women were entitled to a dower, which was usually equivalent to one third of the husband’s estate.”(qtd. Brinjkji) The property rights of married women did not change until the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 when females could maintain “separate rights over their inheritance, earnings and property.” (qtd. Brinjkji) and they became independent from the husband.

2.4 Middle-class Women

The middle-class dominated the working-class economically, politically and culturally. (Gordon, 2003, p. 13) According to Davidoff and Hall’s book *Family Fortunes*, middle-class formation was a phenomenon and women perceived class differently than men. Eleonor Gordon is stating in her book, *Public Lives*, that the usefulness of the term middle-class can be also questioned, which was more likely to be experienced as “middle opinion” as a description of a particular socio-economic formation.(14).

In Victorian society the middle-class woman was a symbol of respectability, “the figure around whom the most important of Victorian institutions, the family, was built.”(Herstein, 1985, p. 26) The Industrial Revolution helped build the middle-class ideal of the non-working woman. According to Margaret Greg’s diary, in 1853 “A lady to be such, must be a lady and nothing else [...] She must not work for profit, or engage

in any occupation that money can command, lest she invade the rights of the working classes, who live by their labour.”(Butler, 1869, p. 326) The goal of the middle-class woman was just like that of a man “to work for profit was to soil one’s hands, figuratively if not literally, and gentleman or gentlewoman never worked for a living.”(Herstein, 1985, p. 26) This was a difficult ideal to adhere to since most middle-class women could not afford enough servants to allow them to not work at home.

Idle women were completely under the protection of their husbands and they were grateful for their financial support. Practice of non-working females extended through the middle-class until work for women became disgrace and misfortune. “The ideal middle-class woman was a standardized product, whose only suitable objective was courtship, marriage and motherhood.”(Neff, 1929, p. 186) Women were seen as almost childlike creatures needing the protection and assistance of men. Men, on the other hand, were considered as the natural governors, superior, intelligent hero of the period. “Physiology dictated woman’s maternal role and excluded her from legislative or philosophic pursuits.”(Walker, 1840, p. 129)

Motherhood was an adequate emotional fulfilment for women and “many middle-class women regarded motherhood and domestic life as a “sweet vocation”, a substitute for women’s productive role.”(qtd. Abrams) Middle-class women dedicated more time to their children than their ancestors, educating them at home. Motherhood was expected and it reaffirmed woman’s identity. Women without children were pitied by society. “For women not to become a mother meant she was liable to be labelled inadequate, a failure or in some way abnormal.”(qtd. Abrams) Childless women often worked as nursery maids so they could at least be in contact with children.

Due to deteriorating working conditions, it was becoming increasingly difficult for women to find suitable work outside the home. The only socially acceptable occupation for middle-class women was marriage and in that time the marriage market was very competitive. It was not important to be clever for girls, but rather to be entertaining and to know how to sing and dance. According to Dr. Gregory who wrote *Legacy of a Father to His Daughter*, if women had any learning, it was advised and

essential to keep it a profound secret from men. Weakness was considered as attraction and independence was not welcome. “They had been assigned a subordinate role by nature and were advised to accept the inevitable in order to insure domestic tranquility.”(Herstein, 1985, p. 28). But middle-class women did leave the house. They ventured out primarily to socialize but also to visit homes of those less fortunate. “These women used their position of privilege to export expertise in domestic affairs to those regarded as in need of advice, so they might attain the same high standards of household management.”(qtd. Abrams) They gained the power to help the others in lower class which were seen as: “poverty, drink, vice and ignorance.”(qtd. Abrams)

Philanthropic women provided support and help for mothers, baby homes and kindergartens. They also were involved in campaigns for health and hygiene reform which really improved infant and maternal mortality rates. But paradoxically, middle-class women “could lecture working-class women on cleanliness in homes resembling slums, while they relied on servants to keep their own homes up to the required standard.”(qtd. Abrams) Women believed that charity work needed a personal touch and they strongly connected with religion. As Davidoff and Hall have demonstrated, “religion was central to middle-class identity in the early nineteenth century and continued to be so throughout the century.”(Gordon, 2003, p. 28) Church membership and attendance was essential for middle-class society.

2.5 Upper-class Women

According to Jane Purvis‘ in her book *Women’s History: Britain 1850 - 1945*, women of upper-class were assigned the roles of angels in the house - overseeing to the management of the household, supervising servants, socializing with young children, establishing a ganteel and advantageous social position and maintaining a moral and respectable tone within the home.(54) This role caused women to be economically and socially dependent on their husbands, but it gave them more power on the domestic field.

Some upper-class women from rich and noble families were highly educated. They were usually taught languages, music and dancing by private teachers at home. These skills were essential for women with proper manners and etiquette. Some housewife duties like preserving fruits and household management was also learned.

Like middle-class women, Victorian women from the upper-class had little control over their daily lives. And just like middle-class women, their main occupation was that of a wife. Upper-class women were also occupied in charity work “caring for the sick and helpless, assisting with local schooling and donating money for local cause.”(Calder, 1977, p. 46) They were expected to represent their husbands with grace and dignity.

Another major role for upper-class women was managing all their household servants. For housekeepers who were employed in an upper-class home the job was fairly easy and their role was that of a social element in the family. An important part of life for the upper-class was accepting visitors and visiting. There were very exact hours when these visits could be accepted and it was a formal occasion which had to have its own rules. “Visiting which had to be done at the proper hours in the proper way. Morning visits were fairly informal and required less dressing up than afternoon visits. [...]”(Calder, 1977, p. 31)

Other duties that kept upper-class women busy were the organising of parties and dinners for their husbands and friends and visiting dressmakers and tailors to prepare the attire for these functions and gatherings. Because of the importance of social life for the upper-class, maintaining all these activities was considered an important, full-time job for upper-class women.

2.6 Single Women and Widows in Society

In the late nineteenth century, single women posed a threat to men because they were able to support themselves. Because of these women who chose to be single there was a “crisis in masculinity”. “By this period too, female celibacy was frowned upon in a context of falling birth rates and eugenicist concerns about the duality of the race and the future of the Empire.”(Gordon, 2003, p. 167) Despite some attempts to show

singledom in a less unfavourable way, marriage and motherhood were still viewed as women's true destiny.

Bourgeois society required women be economically and socially dependent on men: "those who could not achieve this by acquiring a husband needed the protection of another male relative so that they could be contained within the safe haven of a family unit."(Gordon, 2003, p. 167) Widows who did not live under the protection of another male relative were susceptible to falling into poverty and sexual impropriety.

The fact that women missed motherhood was "generally agreed to be the hardest part."(Gordon, 2003, p. 174) and it was a missing piece in their single lives. Less attention is dedicated to the widows in Victorian England because they were "not seen as exuding the aura of social, moral and psychological dubiety that clung to unmarried women."(Gordon, 2003, p. 187)

There were many women who did not live the expected role of dependent and graceful wife, which caused another problem in society. Victorian widows, although enjoying the same property rights as men, "have generally been viewed as economically vulnerable and lacking the legal rights enjoyed by her seventeenth-century counterpart."(Davidoff, Hall, 1987, p. 276) The middle-class widow was left with no money, unable to work and she was forced to seek help of her relatives. Husband's death made it very difficult for widows to stay in the family home. It was the "period with no state pensions and little use of insurance"(Curran, 1993, p. 218) and usually no money to live from.

Davidoff and Hall also refer to the fact that widows were forced to move in with a male relative after the death of their husbands so they could gain social and economic support (Davidoff, Hall 1987, p. 285). But in real life it was relatively rare for widows to live like this"[...]middle-class widows of the second half of the nineteenth century were in a position to retain more financial and social independence than a conventional picture would allow."(Gordon, 2003, p. 188) The number of widows in Victorian England was high, mainly because of the average age difference of seven years between married couples.

2.7 Feminists in Victorian England

The lives and activities of English feminists in the 19th century were very fascinating. Feminists were responsible for improvements in the education of middle-class women through campaigns and books.

As a result of “a journalistic creation of “a new woman” in 1890, and the whole transformation of political campaigning which the women’s movement wrought.”(Caine, 1993, p. 2) there have been some dramatic changes in the understanding of the Victorian feminism. Where “once feminism was defined as a belief in the need for equal rights between women and men, there is now a widespread recognition of the importance Victorian feminists attached to establishing and maintaining sexual differences between men and women.”(Banks, 1964, p. 5)

A mid-Victorian feminist named Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon pointed out that “women may face long years before marriage with no productive activity to occupy them.” (8) For those women who will never get married, without work they will exist “in pointless idleness, whether comfortable or impoverished”. Bodichon proposed to solve this issue with job training. Single girls in the middle-class could now learn how to work in many professional roles such as accountants, nurses, teachers or operators of electric machinery. According to Bodichon, middle-class glorification of the frivolous, weak, ignorant, and sickly woman has resulted in the waste of enormous female potential. Women could now be trained for occupations which required their intellect and, in turn, rose their spirits. “Work – not drudgery, but work – is the great beautifier.”(Bodichon, 1854, p. 9). She also explains that work gives single women, as well as married women, dignity and sustenance. Many married women wanted to work because they needed to take care of and support their children and marriage did not have to be the only goal in their lives. Even wealthier women in middle-class should work “if they can make a societal contribution.”(Herstein 1985, p. 127)

Bodichon’s opinion on classic Victorian society which consisted of worshipping family and motherhood can be seen as blasphemy: “To bring a family of 12 children into the world is not in itself a noble vocation, or always a certain benefit to humanity.

To be a noble woman is better than being mother to a noble man.”(Bodichon, 1985, p. 14) She also states that if women fulfill their responsibilities, children and family will not suffer, which is proven by Queen Victoria herself, who is fulfilling her duties and also manages to take care of a large family.

Women who remained in the home and devoted themselves to the family were working just as hard as their husbands. “Women who act as housekeepers, nurses, and instructors of their children, often do as much for the support of the household as their husbands; and it is very unfair for men to speak of supporting a wife and children when such is the case.”(Bodichon, 1854, p. 12)

2.8 Prostitution

Prostitution was a major social problem in Victorian England and it was not manageable. Some estimates mention that there were about 80 000 prostitutes in London and the respected medical journal, *The Lancet*, estimated that in 1857 that “one of the sixty houses in London was a brothel and one of every sixteen women was a prostitute.” There were certainly many arguments connected with the prostitution and how to eliminate this problem from society. Victorian attitudes about sex differed according to social class and sexual norms of the working class often differed from those of the middle-class. For a majority of Victorian social reformers, who were mainly of middle to upper-class, prostitution was a moral issue. Because of the fact, that prostitutes came mainly from working-class, these lower classes were more tolerant of sexual behaviour in society. Even though there were ongoing reforms at the time to go away with prostitution as a female occupation, prostitution “was, and still is, a transitional occupation for primarily working-class woman in their early 20's.”(qtd. Bell)

Most of the prostitutes were lower-class women. “They were primarily young, single women, between the ages of 18 and 22.”(qtd. Bell) The only exception was with mistresses which were kept by upper-class men. “According to standards, respectable women did not consider sexual intercourse pleasurable.”(qtd. Greene) They felt it was

only their duty, so for men, it was probably one of the main reasons to get involved with prostitutes. “Victorian femininity was not defined by sexual pleasure, while Victorian masculinity was defined by sexual pleasure and conquest.”(qtd. Greene)

This problem was mainly considered as the punishment. “For Shaw, however, punishment, succour, and legal intervention were ineffective ways of dealing with prostitution. It was necessary, he argued, to identify and respond to the root causes of prostitution, causes that had much more to do with economics than with morality” (Conolly 30)

There were many types of brothels where prostitutes provided their services for men from all social classes. “Streetwalker lived in Accommodation houses, which is one type of brothel”(Wells, 1982, p. 56). These females did not have to give money to a “Madame” for the room and board and they were responsible for themselves. Other prostitutes lived under the control of their procuresses. “These women lived in Introduction houses, a second type of brothel, where the procuress would “introduce” her women to clients she communicated with.”(Wells, 1982, p. 58). The third and “the worst type of brothel operating in Victorian times...was the Dress house, where women lived under constant debt to the owner.”(Wells, 1982, p. 58)

Even though there were these really negative aspects of prostitution like poverty, alcohol, sexual abuse, and moral disgracefulness, it was still better than most other professions for women at the time. For Shaw “fundamental condition of the existence of this traffic is that society must be so organized that a large class of women are more highly paid and better treated as prostitutes than they would be as respectable women.”(Conolly 31) According to Shaw the problem of prostitution was not caused by a particular segment of society or by prostitutes but mainly by society as a whole. It was supported by clergymen, bishops, judges, Members of Parliament and this connection profited from “industrial enterprises which employ women and girls... [on] wages which are insufficient to support them.”(Conolly 31)

Not all of the young girls from the working-class were “saved from the streets” by future husbands. There were always many orphans and widows who ended up alone without a place to live. In some regards, prostitution was a means to a better life.

Working-class women were in difficult situation and many of these women lacked of literacy. Their duty was to take a job which was offered. So they could either go and work in the factory for long hours and practically no money or they could join this business which would provide them good money and better life. It was quite an issue how this profession should be presented.

3. THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SELECTED G. B. SHAW'S PLAYS

The plays Shaw wrote contained sharp-tongued humor which was exceptional among playwrights of the Victorian era. He had an important role in revolutionizing British drama because of his wittiness and comedic prowess. The London scene in the Victorian Era was a place of sentimental entertainment, which Shaw turned into a forum for discussing moral, political and economic issues. His work left a lasting impression in dramatic art. (Suleiman, 2010, p.)

Class distinction was very important in Victorian England and G. B. Shaw incorporated it into his plays. Shaw claimed that “each social class strove to serve its own ends, and the upper and middle-classes won in the struggle while the working-class lost.” (Shaw, 1906, p. 269) He wanted to open up the eyes of society to these imbalances and said “workers, ruthlessly exploited by greedy employers, lived in abject poverty and were too ignorant and apathetic to vote intelligently.” (p. 269)

Shaw was a great supporter of women's rights and advised: “If I were a woman, I'd simply refuse to speak to any man or do anything for men until I'd got the vote. I'd make my husband's life a burden, and everybody miserable generally. Women should have a revolution - they should shoot, kill, maim, destroy—until they are given a vote.”(Wingerden, 1999, p. 70) He viewed women as equals and he came to the conclusion that “the nature of a human being was neither masculine nor feminine exclusively, but the mixture of two.”(Jain, 2006, p. 30) Shaw insisted that women were ordinary creatures, not angels and they should be treated equally. Women in Shaw's plays were winners, they followed their morals and not necessarily the rules of Victorian society. These strong female characters had a lot in common with the women in G.B. Shaw's personal life.

3.1 Middle-class Women in “Mrs. Warren Profession”

Women in twentieth century were not only strong for themselves, they were also strong for their families and their society. Shaw favoured strong women and he illustrated that in his work. According to Shaw, motherhood is the area which showcased a women’s power. It gave the control over other human beings (Jain, 2006, p. 109).

The first play which deals with life in middle-class society is *Mrs. Warren Profession*, where there are visible contrasts between a woman’s choices and their strong will to succeed. The play shows the relationship between Mrs. Kitty Warren, a pretty, well-dressed mother and her daughter Vivie. Vivie is “high educated, strong, self-possessed and confident, middle-class Englishwoman of 22.”(Shaw, 1893, Act I) Mrs Warren is a middle-aged woman and her Cambridge educated daughter discovers that her mother is earning money from managing high-class brothels. It is no doubt that a brothel is a miserable business, and a brothel-keeper a miserable woman.

You think that the way you were taught at school to think right and proper is the way things really are. But it’s not. It’s all only a pretense, to keep the cowardly, slavish, common run of people quiet. The big people, the managing people, all know it. They do as I do, and think as I think. (“Morality” means being) a mere drudge, toiling and moiling early and later for your bare living and two cheap dresses a year. (Act IV)

Vivie must decide whether she should forgive and accept her mother or to never talk to her again. The play was written in 1893 but this scene and the play itself was so shocking that it was initially forbidden and privately performed in 1902. Vivie is considered a modern, educated and independent lady who vehemently declares:

VIVIE. People are always blaming their circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they cant find them, make them. (Act II)

Vivie and her mother hardly know each other. They live separate lives and Vivie is expressing it in the play. “Has it really never occurred to you, mother, that I have a way of life like other people? Everybody knows my reputation, my social standing, and the profession I intend to pursue. I know nothing about you.[...]” (Act II)

Vivie does not care about romance and she is very independent. Shaw describes her as a strong and enthusiastic girl. She “shuts the gate with a vigorous slam” (Act I) and “brings the chair forward with one swing.”(Act I) Her relaxing manners are mannish: “[...] When I’m tired of working, I like a comfortable chair, a cigar, a little whisky, and a novel with a good detective story in it.” (Act I)

Mrs. Warren is a “society made courtesan not a self-made whore”.She represents all those victimized women of society who had no other alternatives but prostitution. She is forced into this profession since there is no other option for her to survive.

She was one of those women who were created to love and to be loved. From the lowest of origins, she had risen through love, making it a profession almost without knowing it; acting on instinct, with an inborn talent, she accepted money as she did kisses, naturally, indiscriminately, using her remarkable instinct in a simple an unreasoning manner as do beasts, made clever by the exigencies of their existence. (Baker, 2002, p. 97)

Mrs. Warren does not treat Vivie with much respect, maybe because she still thinks her daughter is a little girl. There is a conflict between two generations of women in the play. Both of them have their own opinions on how to best live their lives. They have different circumstances which they were born into and that is why it is not easy for them to understand each other. Mrs. Warren explained that it was her poor youth that led her into prostitution. It was the the cruel working conditions in the factories that her family experience which influenced her future career. She wants Vivie to understand that she was not raised like her. She did not have a proper education and easy life.

Her sisters had to work very hard “one of them worked in a whitelead factory twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week until she dies of lead poisoning. She only expected to get her hands a little paralyzed, but she died.” (Act II)

Mrs. Warren is defending herself because she did not want to have a life like her sisters. Vivie does not agree with her and claims that everybody has a chance to succeed and they should not use their circumstances as an excuse for failure. Mrs. Warren is “one of Shaw's career women.” (Jain, 2006, p. 100) She is protective and also exerts authority over her daughter in place of a father that she never had.

Mrs. Warren is not ashamed when Vivie learns how she made a living. She explains that it is not a question of sexual morality but of simple economics. Society left her with a choice between starvation and slow death working in the factory, or prostitution. That was the only profession which paid enough money to maintain one's self-respect.

She justifies that she did not want to be poor because poverty “induces a person to do anything in order to get money.” (Jain, 2006, p. 101) She chose to be independent and work for herself in order to provide her daughter with a better life. Her philosophy in life being “The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her.”(Act II) whether by marriage or prostitution.

Vivie understands her mother's point of view and her reasons for doing the work that she does but does not agree with it. At the end of the play Vivie finds out that the highly profitable business which paid her schooling and supports her is still running. She cannot accept the fact that her mother denies to abandon her profession forever and as a result stops talking to her. Vivie begins working as an accountant, which was a career that her schooling prepared her for and ironically financed by her mother's brothel business. Bernard F. Dukore in his book “ *Shaw's Theater*” is commenting on Mrs. Warren's wish to continue her profession despite the fact she is rich. He writes that whatever profession an individual chooses is a reflection of the personality of the individual. The reasons behind Mrs. Warren's decisions are psychological and social. Her last words show the mental agony and trauma:

I always wanted to be a good woman. I tried honest work; and I was slave driven until I cursed the day I ever heard of honest work. I was a good mother; and because I made my daughter a good woman she turns me out as if I was a leper.

Oh, If I only had my life to live over again!...I'd do wrong and nothing but wond and I'll prosper on it. (Act III)

Shaw's women in profession are involved in their work only for two reasons: to be successful and prosper. "His successful women have strong "will" which strengthens their soul to get what they want." (Jain, 105)

Victorian women were expected to support their husbands and to be submissive to their requests. The character of Vivie does not connect with these expectations. She never was sentimental and fashionable like most girls. She is very smart and fully self-sufficient and her ambition is to be a real career women. Shavian career woman can be portrayed as: "incarnation of criticism of societal norms and assumptions about protective mother, virgin, womanly woman." (Jain, 2006, p. 85) With her business oriented mind, Vivie has no interest in the wonderful world of being a housewife. In the play she resists two marriage proposals, one of sir George Crofts and the other of a young boy named Frank Gardner. But her approach to life is different and she never wants to get married.

The boundary between proposals and desires is blurred - Frank flirts with Vivie as well as with Mrs. Warren and Sir Crofts proposes to Vivie despite the fact he has a relationship with her mother. Vivie's refusal symbolises the "denial of the capitalist society." (Jain, 2006, p. 88) Shaw represents Vivie as being the product of a type of "gender reformation". This reformation results in a character who is asexual and permanently unromantic. Although it seems that Vivie and her mother do not have anything in common "both of the women are independent, energetic, determined and in possession of an excellent head for business. The very same qualities that made Mrs. Warren a "bad" woman make Vivie a "good" one."(Powell, 2004, p. 229)

Their relationship has different phases. First Vivie is an innocent schoolchild, ignorant of her mother's profession. She lives her own life in a hostel. In the beginning of the play she has a favourable impression of her mother as the play continues Vivie starts to see the reality. At the end of the play she leaves her mother once and for all giving the freedom to both of them. The tension between them is obvious, mother wants to protect her child and child wants to be independent. Vivie's decision of deserting her mother can be explained in many ways. She lacks an emotional attachment to her

mother because she was not brought up by her but “as a woman of conscience and business she takes the right step. ” (Jain, 2006, p. 89) Vivie leaves her mother because their professions cannot be combined.

VIVIE [...] I am like my mother's daughter. I am like you: I must have work, and must make more money than I spend. But my work is not your work, my way not your way. We must part. It will not make much difference to us: instead of meeting one another for perhaps a few months in twenty years, we shall never meet, that's all. (Act IV)

Shaw did not want society to panic about the main subject of the play which deals with prostitution. “Every man and woman present will know that as long as poverty makes virtue hideous and the spare pocket-money of rich bachelordom makes vice dazzling, their daily hand-to-hand fight against prostitution with prayer and persuasion, shelters and scanty alms, will be a losing one.” (Shaw, 1892, preface) He wrote the play “to draw attention to the truth that prostitution is caused, not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing and overworking women so shamefully that the poorest of them are forced to resort to prostitution to keep body and soul together.”(Powell, 2004, p. 229) Shaw focuses on the working conditions and wage levels of women in society. “Vivie washes her hands of the mother but does nothing to alleviate the plight of the other women not privileged with her education.”(Powell, 2004, p. 230) Vivie Warren, with her behaviour and habits, was considered as a new type of woman in society. “The New Woman presented a direct challenge to the traditional limitation of women's sphere, venturing beyond the confines of the home to seek access to higher education, suffrage and male professions.”(Powell, 2004, p. 230) The New Woman of middle-class society was looking for a position neither by the fireplace nor on the street.

Shaw's name was connected with the propaganda on behalf of the “New Woman”. These women were thinking somehow manly and had this approach toward others. New women fought to be recognised as human beings and began hunting for careers outside their homes. Thanks to them “there was a sudden change in the outlook of women towards themselves and society.” (Jain, 2006, p. 21) Comparing to the typical

Victorian woman, the New Woman could choose her career and enjoy a fulfilled and independent life. She was equal to her counterpart and she could stay single if she wanted to. “She was well-educated and an omnivorous reader, much interested in business and politics.”(Jain, 2006, p. 22) Shaw was the first to introduce the New Woman on the stage as the woman who got what she wanted.

Mrs Warren’s Profession is Shaw’s only complete or nearly complete tragedy. Chesterton is commenting that there is no gentle ethics in the play: “ [...]Here is no lighting up by laughter, astonishment, and happy coincidence [...] The play is a pure tragedy about a permanent and quite plain human problem, the problem is as plain and permanent, the tragedy is as proud as in Oedipus or Macbeth.” (2008, p. 50)

3.2 Middle-class Woman in “Candida”

The second play that we are introducing is *Candida*, a strong and confident mother created by Shaw. It was first performed in London in 1900 and focused on presenting the behaviour of independent middle-class Victorian women. The play deals with a love triangle between Candida, her husband Reverend James Morell and a young poet Eugene Marchbanks. James Morell is a Christian Socialist clergyman of the Church of England

[...] popular man of forty, robust and goodlooking, full of energy, with pleasant, hearty, considerate manners, and a sound, unaffected voice, which he uses with the clean, athletic articulation of a practised orator, and with a wide range and perfect command of expression”(Shaw, 1894, Act 1).

Candida brings home a young idealistic poet (Marchbanks) who is a very sensitive and shy 18-year-old man. He complicates everything by expressing his feelings to her. Marchbanks claims that she is mystically “his” because he, not Morell can understand her and that Morell is “afraid” of him. That puts all of the three people in a flux because Candida has to choose whether to stay with Morell or break off her

marriage and run away with her young lover. Both men love her in a different way and for different reasons and she is attracted to their different personalities.

Candida has a double charm of youth and motherhood. She mothers two grown-ups, Morell and Marchbanks with the “love of her heart and labour of her hands.” (Jain, 2006, p. 109) She always addresses Marchbanks and Morell as “poor boy,” “dear boy,” “great baby” and “bad boy.” Shaw uses these nicknames to emphasize the maternal aspect of Candida in the play even though her two real children never appear on stage. Gail Finney writes: “By keeping her two actual children off in the country throughout the play, however, Shaw foregrounds her mothering of adults.” (p. 187) Almost every woman in Shaw's play calls her husband, fiancé or lover as baby and shows a motherly-caring attitude. Candida can be compared to the Virgin Mary - the embodiment of ideal motherhood. Shaw describes her as “the poetry of the wife and mother - the virgin mother in the true sense.”(Finney, 1989, p. 189)

Candida can be called Shaw's representation of the ideal woman, “a woman of 33, well built, well nourished, likely, one guesses, to become matronly later on, but now quite at her best, with the double charm of youth and motherhood,” (Act I) but she is not all of these things. Her sensitivity is limited and her kindness is not that deep, she mainly cares about the people who are immediately important to her. She is in a successful marriage and content with her lifestyle, which like most middle-class women consists of taking care of her husband and raising children. She does the housework and homeschools her children. Candida is pragmatic and practical. She understands men and knows how to manipulate them. She controls the two male characters throughout the whole play. Candida knows that Morell is completely under her control and that is the reason she chooses to stay with him over Marchbanks. She picks her husband because even though he is the so-called master of the house, she made him so and is responsible for most of his success. Candida makes Morell realize that in fact, he is the weaker one from those two and she loves him. At the end of the play she explains her decision:

You know how strong he is (I hope he didn't hurt you)--how clever he is--how happy! (With deepening gravity.) Ask James's mother and his three sisters what it cost to save James the trouble of doing anything but be

strong and clever and happy. Ask ME what it costs to be James's mother and three sisters and wife and mother to his children all in one. (Act III)

Candida behaves according to middle-class rules. She makes Morell feel like the master of the house and she never lets him feel inferior. "I make him master here, though he does not know it, and could not tell you a moment ago how it came to be so"(Act III) He is the centre of her life.

On the other hand, Candida is independent and "she makes children of her men: such is the power of these virgin mothers."(Jain, 2006, p. 111) The Shavian picture of her is that she is easy to access but difficult to please. "She is touched by the helplessness in Marchbanks, but is bored by his poetry. Candida is equally bored with Morell's ideas on social reform."(Sodhi, 1995, p. 44)

She takes good care of her husband and he listens to her. He mentions that she made him who he is now and he has perfect confidence in her. That makes Candida feel like he is taking her for granted and the presence of Marchbanks is exciting to her. "It seems unfair that all the love should go to you, and none to him; although he needs it so much more than you do."(Act II) She is also annoyed that Morell gets all the attention from women inside and outside the house and that is why she thinks it is unfair that Marchbanks is without love. Maurice Valency is commenting on this:

One might conclude at this point that she plans to use Marchbanks in order to teach Morell a lesson in domestic relations. But it would be wrong to jump to such conclusion. In these scenes Shaw evidently meant to indicate that, unlike Morell, Candida is above ordinary mortality, and that the conventional ideas of marital fidelity mean nothing to her in comparison with the demands of that higher morality which is the source of compassion for the unfortunate young man (qtd. The Cart and the Trumpet)

Candida is a mother too and she is not committed to any man or any law. She admits that Morell helped her to become an independent and strong woman. She is expressing herself during the argument with Morell: "I never hold back out of fear of

what other people think of me. It works beautifully as long as I think the same things he does. But now! Because I have just thought something different! Look at him!" (Act II)

Candida thinks that a woman can never be fully independent from her husband and at times she has to listen and do what he tells her. The husband is the "the master" of the house and he controls everything. "In a play like *Candida* Shaw creates a woman who makes her husband realise his weakness and his folly in having thought himself to be a strong man."(Sodhi, 1995, p. 49) She does not pay attention to the typical Victorian values like "purity" or "goodness". She breaks all the norms set for women in Victorian England. Candida is Morell's worst critic in his work but he keeps loving her. The independent spirit that embodies the character of Candida is deliberate in Shaw's writing because he was a great supporter of women's independence. C. B. Purdom says that Shaw "honoured women, showing in his plays that they were not only to be loved, but respected, even feared. Life with women was as large subject to him as religion."(208)

In the final act of the play where Candida has to choose who "she belongs to" she clearly expresses that she belongs to no one but herself. "Oh! I am to choose, am I? I suppose it is quite settled that I must belong to one or the other."(Act III) That quote exemplifies the stereotypical man of middle-class Victorian society that did not care about his wife's feelings and treated her like a possession rather than a human being. This attitude was most likely attributed to the fact that men had to provide for the whole family and since women usually did not work outside the house, it left them lonely and unhappy. But Morell realises how important Candida is to him. It is obvious that he loves her and cares a lot about her when he shows concern about her future life without him.

I have nothing to offer you but my strength for your defence, my honesty of purpose for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood, and my authority and position for your dignity. That is all it becomes a man to offer to a woman. (Act III)

She chooses her husband because he needs her and he is weak without her. She can be his wife, mother and sisters. Chesterton is commenting on the decision of Candida in Shaw's play:

The writer touches certain realities commonly outside his scope; especially the reality of the normal wife's attitude to the normal husband, an attitude which is not romantic but in which is yet quite quixotic; which is insanelly unselfish and yet quite cynically clear sighted. It involves human sacrifice without in the least involving idolatory. (Sodhi , 1995, p. 51)

It is logical that it is usually a woman who takes initiative in Shavian drama, not only in love but in everything else. Candida is a clever woman, a mother and she knows that it would be better for her to stay with the husband who provides her with comfort and certainty in life than to risk it with the young poet who is insecure. And she knows that her husband would not be able to live without her. As mentioned above he is the "master" of the house only because she has made him so.

The behaviour in the family is connected with the general picture of a Victorian family which is "a private enclave, cloistered from the public gaze and the disorder of the public world" (Gordon, 2003, p. 107). They maintain a picture-perfect family image for the public and settle all their problems at home behind closed doors. The enemies accused Shaw of being anti-domestic in his play but Chesterton thinks that he is "almost madly domestic. He wishes each private problem to be settled in private, without reference to sociological ethics."(Sodhi, 1995, p. 51) Shaw showed Candida's behaviour to people in various ways. He wanted to portray her as someone who is unconventional and not the classic Victorian ideal:

[...] No law will bind her. She is faithful not for conventional reasons but for rational ones [...] It is just this freedom from conventional slop, this unerring wisdom on the domestic place, that makes her so completely mistress of the situation. (Sodhi, 1995, p. 55)

The reason why she does not run away with Marchbanks is not because she wants to stay faithful but because it is the right thing to do. “Ah James show little you understand me, to talk your confidence in my goodness and purity.”(Act III) Candida makes her decision based on the feeling of being needed. She knows her husband needs her more than Marchbanks. Candida makes Morell realise that he is not as strong as Marchbanks and it is unclear if he will be able to forgive Candida for having doubts about their relationship. According to Sodhi, Morell is more of a pet to his wife than a husband.

Although Marchbanks is the stronger of the two, his independence is very risky for a married woman with children. Candida loves Morell because “he is strong in the society but weak before Candida. She loves Eugene because he is emotionally strong but weak before Candida.” (Jain, 2006, p. 114) Both men are weak before her but she depends on Morell and he depends on her. “Love in Shaw is presented in very austere fashion and is considered to be the cause of ruin.”(Sodhi, 1995, p. 69). Marriages were very important facets of Victorian society and thus the relationship of Candida and Morell survived. It can be inferred that Candida married Morell mainly for the social and economic benefits of marriage. As mentioned in the chapter 2.4., a women's role was that of wife and mother and even though Candida was not a typical middle-class woman she followed this rule.

The relationship between Candida and Morell is quite similar to the relationship between Shaw and his wife Charlotte. Michael Holroyd observed this similarity and wrote: “Charlotte treated her husband [Shaw] partly as an employer, partly as her child. It was the employer whose correspondence she dealt with, whose manuscripts she revised and took to the typist. She also arranged lunches with people he should meet and protected him from other people who would worry him needlessly[...].” (Jain, 2006)

3.3 Upper-class Woman in “Widower’s Houses”

The behaviour and issues of upper-class life are outlined in the third play called *Widower’s Houses* (1892). This was the first play of Shaw's to be staged and it tells a story about a slum landlord named Sartorius, who is a gentleman of 50, tall, well

preserved, “a self-made man, formidable to servants, not easily accessible to any one.”(Shaw, 1892, Act I) and the relationship he has with his daughter Blanche, a “well-dressed, well-fed, good-looking, strong-minded young woman.”(Act I)

The play begins with a romance that develops between Blanche and a young doctor named Harry Trench. Harry comes from an aristocratic background but he is not incredibly wealthy. Blanche and Harry want to get married and Blanche is supposed to bring money into their marriage. Before Blanche marries Harry, Sartorius wants him to write a letter to let his family know about the marriage. This is so Sartorius will be sure they do not have any objections. Besides his desire to be rich, Sartorius wants his daughter to be “accepted into higher societal level, and his efforts have been designed to create a young lady who will be at home [...], even though he appears, through his determined insistence insecure about her capability.”(Gounaridou, 2010, p. 38) He wants her to be like a typical upper-class lady and that is why she should get married and fulfil her life goal. Women in upper-class had a pleasant life. They did not have to worry about many things because they had a husband or in this case, a father who would provide for them. These women were supposed to spend their time reading, writing letters, receiving guests and visiting them. They were representatives of their husbands in society.

When the marriage is set, Harry learns about the root of Sartorius’s money and refuses to accept financial help from her father and instead, wants Blanche to live off his modest income. Blanche, who is ignorant to how her father earns his wealth, does not understand Harry’s reasoning and they break off the engagement. The couple reunites at the end of the play after discussing how to deal with this financial conflict. Harry starts to work for Blanche’s father and he becomes a perfect husband for Sartorius’s pretty daughter.

Shaw’s dramas usually have well structured characterization and the plot was secondary. (Berst, 1973, p. 395) Shaw characterizes Blanche as the perfect lady, a person of the highest breeding and education. Her and Sartorius are travelling together, he wants her to see interesting places but Blanche is bored by that:

BLANCHE. Don't let us bother about any more churches, papa. They're all the same; and I'm tired to death from them.

SARTORIUS. My dear: I should like you to see everything. It is part of your education.(Act I)

Blanche loves her father very much and after marrying, she does not want to be dependent on Harry. Her father always supported her financially and spoiled her:

BLANCHE. Harry: there's no use in our fencing in this way. Papa will never consent to my being absolutely dependent on you; and I don't like the idea of it myself. (Act II)

Blanche does not have a mother so that makes her even more dependent on her father. After her feelings are hurt by Harry who does not want to marry her with her father's money as a dowry she does not want to leave Sartorius:
BLANCHE. Papa, I don't want to marry: I only want to stay with you and be happy as we have always been. I hate the thought of being married: I don't care for him: I don't want to leave you.(Act II)

The character of Blanche is the main point for discussion. "Her undisciplined ill temper was not the product of ineptitude in an inexperienced dramatist; Shaw clearly intended to make her what she is." (Baker, 2002, p. 94)

The explanation of the characters in this play lies in the phrase „the people do not...sincerely face their own position." (Baker, 2002, p. 95) The female character of the play, Blanche, is avoiding reality. Even though she finds out about her father's income, she is not strong enough to reject his money. "Blanche, brought up to be a "lady" reacts with ladylike revulsion to the filth of poverty and explodes with anger at any suggestion that it might have anything to do with her."(Baker, 2002, p. 95) Blanche is very demanding and loves money.

HARRY. Blanche, are you fond of money?

BLANCHE. [gaily] Yes. Are you going to give me any?(Act II)

She is a noble rich girl who hates poor people. Money means more than love to her and the only person that she apparently loves is her father. The fact that she does not accept Harry's offer to live from his earnings shows that she would rather have money

and live with her father than to marry Harry and live in more modest conditions. She is a young woman with certain standards and is, as well as her father, not accessible to anyone.

At the end of the play Blanche realizes that she is in love with Harry and she misses him, but her stubbornness and pride prevent her from showing it. Her father understands her daughter's situation.

SARTORIUS. Come, my child: you must not trifle with me as if I were a stranger. You are fretting because ---

BLANCHE. [violently twisting herself free and speaking as she rises] If you say it, papa, I will kill myself. It's not true. If he were on his knees tonight, I would walk out of the house sooner than endure it.(Act III)

In the final scene of the play where Blanche catches Harry admiring her portrait she mocks him and wants him to leave. Harry does not respond and she tries harder to get his attention by calling him by his first name. "She suddenly kneels down beside him with her breast against his shoulder."(Act III) That was the reaction he hoped for and he ironically replies: "How dare you touch anything belonging to me?" (Act III) Their sexual domination of each other is genuine and mutual. "What is unmistakable is that, ultimately, both get what they really want, which is each other"(Dukore, 1983, p. 163)

Shaw wanted to show intolerable life situations and wanted the audience to genuinely connect with his characters. "He did not want to tint his characters with an artificial stage glamour, nor did he wish to vilify them. He wanted to show them accepting the unacceptable, yet he wished members of the public to see themselves on the stage and identify with these ordinary people."(Baker, 2002, p. 96) Above all he wanted people to know that disgrace is not acceptable.

3.4 Comparison of Women Characters

It is difficult to compare Candida, Vivie and Blanche. Each of them were in different life situations and held different positions in society. Candida and Vivie were middle-class women. Both took initiative and were independent. Vivie's independence was more radical and I would say she was the happier of the two. She did not have an easy life, not knowing who her father was and having a troubled relationship with her mother. This highly educated woman did was disconnected from Victorian values and had a strong will to succeed. Her different approach to life made her into a "new type" of Victorian woman in society. The fact she chose education and career over marriage and home-life demonstrates that she was nothing like typical Victorian women. Candida, like Vivie, was an independent woman but she was aware of the fact that her husband was responsible for giving her strength and confidence. According to Shaw, she is more of an ideal woman than Vivie. Candida is clever and her reasons for marriage were mainly for its social and economic benefits just like most women in this period. Candida has a chance to change her life and run away with a new flame, but she decides to stay with her husband. Candida makes this decision not because she wants to be faithful but because it involves less risk for her and her family. Vivie is undoubtedly closer to today's women because at the end of the play she is willing to be dependent only on herself and no one else. She makes herself happy doing what makes her happy.

The character of Blanche sharply contrasted with Vivie and Candida. Blanche was an upper-class woman financially dependent on her father and characterized as an insecure young woman of the highest breeding and education. Blanche, like her father, is hard to access but once she falls in love she is willing to open up emotionally and get married. Her main flaw is that she loves money and does not want to live off her future husband's modest earnings when she could live more comfortably with her father.

Shaw explained his ideal of equality between men and women and mentions that egoism differs them. According to Sangeeta Jain, Shavian women are described as being extremely "selfish". The explanation of being selfish is the "expression of self" which may be termed as "self-interest." This selfishness was the greatest virtue these women had and it helped them live their own lives. He recommended women to be honest to themselves and to their self-respect.

Shaw “by providing equality and freedom to woman in personal, professional and political spheres, projected her as the saviour of men’s soul and the society.”(Watson, 1964, p. 204)

CONCLUSION

To conclude this paper, the main aim was to observe the life of women in Victorian Britain and to introduce the female characters in plays of George Bernard Shaw. This thesis was supported by the study of these plays and other books which described the life of women in Victorian period.

During the reign of Queen Victoria, a woman's role was that of a housewife and mother. Victorian women considered marriage as their primary life goal because it was simply the only acceptable occupation in the society. This work is describing the individual classes in Victorian society with the focus on women.

Women in the working-class usually had to take any kind of job which was offered because they mostly lacked the literacy and they had no other option. Married women in working-class worked mostly as their husband's assistants for a very small wage. Women working outside the house had more money but made the whole family struggle. The best situation in working-class was to be a single woman because these women had more rights and they could earn more money. They were able to support themselves and could maintain all the property rights and inheritance as long as they stayed unmarried. The problem was that society saw them problematic.

Middle-class society considered women as the sign of respectability. These women were completely under the protection of their husbands and were thankful for the support. The adequate fulfilment for middle-class women was a motherhood, so childless women were considered as abnormal. The only socially acceptable occupation was being a wife. Married women were one person in law with their husbands and had no rights of their property and earnings.

The main role of wives in upper-class was to take care of the children, supervise servants and maintain a moral and respectable home. To be an upper-class woman was a full time job and again, the most important was to get married. Visits, organising of parties and dinners were important activities in their lives.

One of my chapters is dedicated to feminism in Victorian society. The opinions are mostly supported by known Victorian feminist, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon.

Feminists were responsible for improvements in the education of middle-class women, mainly through the campaigns and books. Feminists in Victorian England supported women who worked. They stated that it was important for women's intellect and good spirit. According to them even wealthier middle-class women should work to make a societal contribution.

The second part of my thesis is introducing the three plays by G. B. Shaw. His comedies generally showed a woman in more active role than man. For Shaw the class distinction was an important issue and he wanted people to see the differences in classes by means of his plays. Firstly I am describing the play "*Mrs. Warren's Profession*" which showed the contrasts between woman's limited choices and her strong will to succeed. The main character Vivie did not have an easy relationship with her mother, who was making her living from brothels she owned. Vivie was highly educated, independent young woman and she did not follow the the typical Victorian values. For her it was more important to be happy and do what she really wants to do, so that is why she chose the education and work over marriage and home. This play also deals with the oldest female profession - prostitution. Prostitution was a major social problem in Victorian England and there was an effort to eliminate this problem from society. Prostitutes came mainly from the working classes and they were usually young single women.

The play "*Candida*" speaks about women's independence in Victorian society. The perfect wife Candida is responsible for most of her husband's success because she is very respectful to him. She behaves according to the Victorian rules. Candida is a good wife, she takes care of her family and home. The main theme of this play is Victorian love and marriage and what woman truly needs from her life. What Candida needs is someone who needs her. Except the children, her husband is the one who makes her stronger and confident and even thought she has a chance to leave him, she cannot do it because she knows he is not himself without her.

The last play to mention is "*Widower's Houses*" with the main female character Blanche. She is a young upper-class woman dependent on her father who makes money in illegal way. Blanche is highly educated woman and she is ready to fulfill her life by marrying the doctor. The problem is, that she is very fond of money and she does not

like the idea of living just on the modest earnings of her future husband. It is obvious that financial situation changes people and the position in the society is important in Victorian England.

The very last chapter of my thesis is a brief comparison of these three female characters. Even though Vivie and Candida are both from middle-class, they have only few things in common. Comparing to Candida, Vivie is much stronger and successful in her life. That can be also due to the fact, that Vivie is a single woman and she does not want to get married. As stated in the chapter of property rights of women, Vivie, as a single woman, has also all the rights on her earnings and properties

So to summarize this paper it was definitely not an easy role for women to live in Victorian Britain especially for those in working-class. The feminist move which improved the education was an important act in 19th century. It made women to realize they they do not have to sit home and take care of their husbands and children only. Women could work and educate themselves so they could use their intellects and rise their spirits.

All of these three women in G. B. Shaw's plays were somehow strong women. Candida was strong because she knew how she is important to her husband and how she made him who he is, so she stayed in the marriage. Vivie was probably the strongest, because she was able to go against the determined rules of Victorian society and her different approach to life was very admiring. The strength of Blanche can be explained in the way she acted in the end of the play. She is going to get married and leave behind life which she had with her father.

RESUMÉ

Tato práce se zabývá tématem viktoriánských žen v dílech Georgie Bernarda Shawa. V první polovině práce je kladen důraz na obecný život žen ve Viktoriánské Anglii. V Anglii byl mezi vdanými a svobodnými ženami velký rozdíl, stejně tak záleželo na třídě ve které žily. Za vlády královny Viktorie bylo jedinou rolí ženy být dobrou matkou a hospodyní.

George Bernard Shaw byl dramatikem, který ve svých hrách ztvárňoval velmi realistické a originální postavy. Byl volnomyšlenkářem a podporoval ženská práva.

Ideální žena ve Viktoriánské Anglii měla být pomocníkem a jakýmsi „otrokem“ svého manžela. Rodiny byly většinou velké, patriarchální a žena měla minimální práva. Jakmile se vdala, její práva a majetek automaticky připadl na manžela. Jediný majetek, který mohla vdaná žena vlastnit byl ten, který zdědila po otci. Ženy nebyly ani zákonnými zástupci svých dětí a nemohly volit. Přesto všechno sňatek byl hlavním životní rolí a cílem žen.

V dělnické třídě bylo zhruba 75 procent lidí a ženy s dětmi byli nuceni pracovat a pomáhat tak rodinnému rozpočtu. Mnoho žen bylo negramotných, a tak musely vykonávat jakoukoliv nabízenou práci. Ženy neměly žádná práva ani na minimum svých vydělaných peněz. Vše patřilo jejich manželům, kteří se k nim mohli chovat jakkoliv. Svobodné ženy měly mnohem výhodnější pozici, mohly vlastnit majetek i dědit. Byly však společností považovány za problematické. Sňatek byl považován za společenskou povinnost a na ženy byl kladen velký nátlak se vdát. Jakmile se žena vdala, zákon jí okamžitě změnil život tím, že ztratila svou svobodu a musela vše sdílet s manželem. Rozvod, který vyžadoval zásah parlamentu byl velmi drahý a pokud se ženě podařilo rozvést, zůstala většinou bez jakýchkoliv prostředků.

Ženy střední třídy byly ve společnosti respektovány, nemusely pracovat a byly pod ochranou manžela. Jedinou prací těchto žen bylo starat se o děti. Bezdětné ženy byly společností litovány. Náplní každodenního života žen ve střední třídě byla také charita, u které věřily, že je potřeba se na ní osobně podílet.

Ženy ve vyšší třídě byly považovány za anděly a byly ekonomicky i společensky závislé na svých manželech. Většinou měly kvalitní vzdělání, ale jejich hlavním zaměstnáním bylo být dobrou manželkou. Stejně jako ve střední třídě, ženy ve Vyšší třídě zaměstnávala charita. Mimo charitu přijímaly hosty a navštěvovaly je. Společenský život byl nedílnou součástí života v této třídě a pro ženy to byla práce na plný úvazek.

Buržoazní společnost nutila ženy být závislé at' ekonomicky, tak společensky na svých manželech. Tím pádem svobodné ženy představovaly pro společnost hrozbu, protože byly schopné se o sebe postarat samy.

Bylo zde hodně žen, které neplnily očekávanou roli půvabné manželky. Ačkoliv měly vdovy v Anglii stejná práva na majetek jako muži, obecně byly považovány za ekonomicky slabší. Většinou zůstaly bez peněz a byly nuceny hledat pomoc u příbuzných.

Feministky byly velmi důležité pro ženy ve střední třídě. Díky nim se zlepšilo vzdělání a pracovní trh. Pomohly ženám pochopit že práce jim dodá důstojnost a také zdroj obživy a že rodina tím neutrpí, protože byly stále schopné plnit si své povinnosti.

Prostituce byla vážným problémem ve společnosti a s tím bylo spojeno mnoho sporů a debat jak tuto profesi vymýtit. Pro většinu lidí to byl hlavně morální problém. Tyto ženy byly většinou svobodné a mladé z nižších tříd. Ačkoliv kolem prostituce bylo plno negativních aspektů (jako alkohol, chudoba), pořád to byl pro ženy lepší zdroj obživy, než jiné zaměstnání. Ženy mohly buď pracovat dlouhé hodiny ve strašných podmínkách v továrnách za velmi málo peněz, nebo jako prostitutky vydělávat mnohem víc peněz za lepších podmínek.

V druhé části této práce jsou podrobně popsány tři hry a povahové vlastnosti jejich ženských hrdinek. George Bernard Shaw obecně psal hry, kde byla aktivnější žena než muž. Také pro něj bylo velmi důležité rozdělení tříd ve společnosti, které chtěl ukázat ve svých hrách.

První hra s názvem *Živnost paní Warrenové* je o vztahu matky s dcerou a vnějším vlivu prostituce na jejich život. Hlavní hrdinka Vivie nemá jednoduchý vztah se svojí matkou Kitty, která vlastní luxusní veřejné domy po celé Evropě. Nemají spolu dobrý vztah, vídaly se jen zřídkakdy a v podstatě nic o sobě neví. Vivie je mladou,

vzdělanou a sebevědomou ženou, která se vůbec nechová podle pravidel společnosti. Má své zásady a názory, které si nenechá vymluvit. Pro Vivii bylo mnohem důležitější vzdělání a spokojený život, než svatba a péče o domácnost. Když se Vivie ke konci hry dozví, že její matka nevěstince stále vede, i když je velmi zámožná, nechce s ní mít nic společného. Odmítne od ní nadále brát peníze a odchází pracovat do advokátní kanceláře. G.B. Shaw obdivoval silné ženy a tou Vivie jistě byla. Svým způsobem jí byla i její matka, který odmítla žít v chudobě dělnické třídy. Ve hře dochází ke konfliktům, protože obě ženy mají jiné názory na život. Obě měly jiné životní okolnosti, a proto je pro ně těžké si navzájem porozumět. Ve skutečnosti ale mají mnoho společného. Obě jsou nezávislé, rázné ženy odhodlané úspěšně pracovat.

Druhou hrou v této práci je *Candida*, kde se rozebírá nezávislost žen ve Viktoriánské Anglii. Candida je vdaná žena a vychovává se svým manželem dvě děti. Ve hře se ocitne v milostném trojúhelníku kdy si musí vybrat mezi svým manželem Jamesem Morellem a mladým básníkem Marchbanksem.. Ve hře v podstatě vychovává oba muže, velmi často je oslovuje „chlapečku“. Shaw použil tuto přezdívku, aby zdůraznil Candidinu roli matky, která byla také často srovnávána se Svatou Marií. Candida je podle Shawa ideální ženou své doby, je pragmatická a praktická. Ví, že její manžel ji potřebuje, stejně tak jako ona jeho. Chová se podle pravidel společnosti střední třídy, kdy manžel je pánem domu a hlavou rodiny a žena ho podporuje. Je si vědoma, že Morell je na ní závislý, a tak si vybere jeho. Rozhodne se tak ne proto, že nechce být nevěrná, ale protože to je správná věc. Candida Morella miluje, protože je silný ve společnosti, ale slabý před ní. Je to spíš než manžel jakýsi „domácí mazlíček“, kterého může nenápadně ovlivňovat. Vztah mezi Morellem a Candidou je docela podobný vztahu samotného Shawa a jeho manželky Charlotty.

Poslední zmíněnou hrou v mé práci je *Domy pana Sartoria*. Hlavní ženskou postavou je vzdělaná dívka z vyšší třídy Blanche, která je velmi závislá na svém otci, ať už finančně, tak i psychicky. Blanche si má brát mladého doktora Trenche, který když zjistí, že jmění jeho snoubenky pochází z nekalých zisků jejího ovdovělého otce, je pohoršen. Trench chce, aby žili jen z jeho skromného platu a jelikož Blanche má peníze ráda, nedokáže si to představit. Je samozřejmé, že finanční situace a pozice lidí ve společnosti je ve Viktoriánské Anglii velmi důležitá. Blanche se trochu vyhýbá realitě když zjistí, jakým způsobem její otec vydělává (vybírá přemrštěné nájemné v sešlých

domech), přesto se stále nechává otcem podporovat. Peníze pro ni znamenají hodně a chudé lidi nemá ráda. Na konci hry si však uvědomí, že Trenche miluje a udobří se. Shaw chtěl tímto dílem ukázat nevyhnutelné životní situace a spojit tak životy svých postav s diváky.

Každá z těchto hlavních ženských postav je jiná. Candida a Vivie jsou ze střední třídy, obě svým způsobem silné ženy. Vivie proto, že byla schopná postavit se na vlastní nohy a dělat to, co ji baví a co chce, aniž by k tomu potřebovala finanční pomoc své matky. To se neslučovalo s typickou Viktoriánskou výchovou. Vivie je svými názory a chováním bližší dnešní ženě. Candida se oproti Vivii přibližuje Viktoriánským ideálům více. Vzhledem k tomu, že je i matkou její rozhodnutí pramení také z praktických a ekonomických důvodů. Není ale pochyb, že svého manžela miluje, ví že jsou na sobě navzájem závislí. Postava Blanche je kontrastem předchozích dvou žen. Blanche může být považována za silnou ženu v tom, že nakonec najde své štěstí v náručí Trenche a aspoň částečně se tak odpoutá od bezstarostného života po boku svého otce.

Shaw vyjadřuje svůj názor na sobectví, kdy tvrdí, že ženy by měly být poctivé samy k sobě a také sebe víc myslet, být trochu sobecké. To jim pomůže žít jejich vlastní životy, ne životy jiných.

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