

Yasemen KİRİŞ YATAĞAN*

A Struggle for an Independent Identity for Two: Mrs. Warren's Profession**

İki Kişinin Bağımsız Kimlik Mücadelesi: Bayan Warren'ın Mesleği

ABSTRACT

This article deals with a particular way of reading *Mrs. Warren's Profession* from an ignored point of view. It aims to exhibit the enormous challenges and struggles of a mother to protect herself and her only child from the social and economic constraints of the society. It might be regarded as a common duty for a mother to do so; however, what if she sacrifices herself for her daughter by selling her body in the time of Victorian Era when the social constraints were on the rise in terms of moral codes and when the principle of "prudery" was adopted? During the Victorian Era, a great majority of the plays dealt extensively with the issue of prostitution that there appeared a new form of theatre named *Brothel Drama*. As a social critic, George Bernard Shaw, to attract especially women's attention to their inured subordinate and captived position, wrote *Mrs. Warren's Profession* for the determination of women in more than a hundred and twenty years ago at the time when such issues were even forbidden to mention. Today, also, "prostitution" not only as an occupation but as a word is also a taboo for the majority of the society. But under those unpleasant conditions of mentioned occupation, Shaw drew a mother character representing holy maternal instinct, who struggles to gain a place within society for both herself and her daughter.

Keywords: Bernard Shaw, Mrs. Warren's Profession, Motherhood, Prostitution, Independent Identity.

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Geore Bernard Shaw'un *Bayan Warren'ın Mesleği* adlı oyununa, gözardı edilen bir açıdan bakıp bir annenin kendini ve daha önemlisi kızını, toplumun yapısal ve ekonomik zorluklarından korurken ve hem kendisi hem de kızı için bağımsız bir kimlik yaratmaya çalışırken ne kadar sınırsız olabileceğini ortaya koyan bir okumayı amaçlamaktadır. Buraya kadar sıradan bir anne koruması gibi gelmesine rağmen eserin konu aldığı anne, ahlâki kodların benimsenmesine önem veren toplumsal baskıların yükselişte olduğu Viktorya Döneminde, kendi vücudunu kullanarak toplum içinde varolmak ve kızını kendi yaşadığı zorluklardan korumak için fedakarlıkta bulunuyor. On Dokuzuncu Yüzyıl Viktorya Döneminde, hayat kadınlığı konusunu kapsayan çok eser yazıldığı için, yeni bir tiyatroya

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türü ortaya çıkmıştır: *Genelev Tiyatrosu*.*** Kadınların dikkatini onların ikinsil ve esir alınmış pozisyonuna çekmek için, toplumsal eleştirmen olan George Bernard Shaw, kadınların azmini sağlayabilmek üzere *Bayan Warren'in Mesleği* oyununu, bu tür konulardan bahsedilmesinin bile hemen hemen yasaklandığı bundan yaklaşık yüz yirmi sene öncesinde yazdı. Günümüzde dahi, "hayat kadınlığı" sadece bir meslek olarak değil, aynı zamanda kelime olarak da, toplumun çoğunluğu için bir tabudur. Fakat Bernard Shaw, adı geçen mesleğin nahoş şartlarında kutsal anne içgüdülerini kaybetmeyen, kendisine ve kızına toplumda bir yer edinmeye çalışan bir annenin hayatını gözler önüne seriyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bernard Shaw, Bayan Warren'in Mesleği, Annelik, Hayat Kadınlığı, Bağımsız Bir Kimlik.

Introduction

It is a known fact that during the Victorian Era, women had no legal or social rights nor were they free; their sole option was to marry and bear children while taking care of the household, their children and their husbands under the command of their husbands as Mary Poovay (1988) states, which was engraved in women's genetic constitution as the noblest mission as crowned by Coventry Patmore's poem, "The Angel in the House" (1854): "Man must be pleased; but him to please / Is woman's pleasure."¹ The ideal woman was an angel which is selfless, pleasing, easygoing, voiceless, peaceful, good-humored, charming and most importantly self-sacrificing otherwise she would be a monster to be demolished. In every minute of their lives, they belonged to a man, a father, brother, husband or a male employer². When she was single, she was subjected to disapproval of the society. However, later in that century not many but effective voices appeared just like the voice of Virginia Woolf:

It was she [the Angel in the House] who used to come between me and my pen when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her...³

Britain was the leader power of industry and technology in terms of textile, coal, iron and machine manufacturing in the XIX. Century; however, this industrial revolution had some political, economic and social results that the consumption increased as well as production⁴. To meet the demand woman and child workers were made to work long hours under harsh conditions, so much so that, in Victorian Era, women had limited opportunities to work and earn their lives. Apart from marriage, women had the alternatives of becoming a factory worker, a governess or a servant in domestic services, and labor at agriculture sector⁵. All these occupations had harsh conditions just like prostitution, however unlike prostitution, which is known as the "oldest profession" in the world⁶, they were badly paid occupations. In 1870s sixty percent of women were

*** There exists no corresponding term for brothel drama in Turkish. Thus, we suggest *Genelev Tiyatrosu* as an equivalent to it.

¹ Mary Poovay, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988, p.133.

² Aihong Ren, "A Fantasy Subverting the Woman's Image as "The Angel in the House"", *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Vol. IV, No. 10, 2014, p. 2061-2065.

³ Paul Willams-Glen D. Gabbard, *Key Papers in Literature and Psychoanalysis*, KARNAC Books, London, 2007, p. 160.

⁴ Ayferi Göze, *Siyasal Düşünceler ve Yönetimler*, Beta Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 262.

⁵ Lawrence Goldman, *Science, Reform and Politics in Victorian Britain*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 210.

⁶ Roger Matthews, *Prostitution, Politics and Policy*, Routledge, New York, 2008, p. 22.

working in domestic services, however, in 1920s, the women in domestic service declined to eighteen percent⁷. Some women had to head their ways towards prostitution as a profession to survive because of low wages, sexual abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, and harsh working conditions as well as lack of education, troubles at home, unscrupulous seducers, and easy money making⁸.

Moreover, poverty is, as Shaw suggests in the preface to *Major Barbara*, “the greatest of evils and the worst of crimes”, and there is no such thing as “poor but the honest” or “the respectable poor”.⁹ Thus, it would not be wrong to claim that it was mostly the sin of the conditions the society created which led especially working class women into this repellent occupation to live on their own as revealed in an investigation of prostitution during the period between 1900-1918 by Edlund and Korn: “... I am struck again and again by most prostitutes’ views of their work as ‘easier’ and less oppressive than other survival strategies they might have chosen.”¹⁰

Many prostitutes joined in this industry to support themselves financially, to provide their children a better life and a warmer house than they had, and a better education than they received. However, they took the risk of watching their children grown up by other people from a distance. Emotional needs of their children were at the bottom of the list since effective mothering is only possible when mothers experience emotional, psychological and physical well-being. Although self-care is a prerequisite of being an efficacious mother, they accept their children being better cared for by others, as they need work to support them¹¹.

*If the single person set the course of British drama
over the last hundred years, it was Shaw.*

--- Christopher Innes, *Modern British Drama 1890-1990*

It was the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century that many writers dealt so much with streetwalkers, courtesans and other fallen women within their works that the books on these topics were ranked in best seller lists; moreover, they were the subjects of fashion as well as vice commission reports¹². Besides, these fallen women were also so popular in theatre that they triggered the emergence of a new type of drama, *brothel drama*¹³. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

⁷ Simone Weil Davis, *Living Up to the Ads: Gender Fictions of the 1920s*, Duke University Press, London, 2000, p. 18.

⁸ Kristen Antonia Harris Aspevig, “Fact and Fiction: Representations of Prostitution in contemporary British news media and novels”, Ryerson University, Unpublished PhD Thesis, 2011, p. 4.

⁹ George Bernard Shaw, *Major Barbara*, General Books LLC, 2010, p. 7.

¹⁰ Lena Edlund-Evelyn Korn, “A Theory of Prostitution”, *The Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. CX, Feb. 2002, p. 181-214.

¹¹ Percy Gamble Kammerer, “The Unmarried Mother: A Study of Five Hundred Cases”, *Criminal Science Monographs*, No. 3, January 1918, p. 1-337.

¹² Katie N. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in America, 1900-1920*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p. 200.

¹³ Brothel Drama was coined and became popular from the second decade of the twentieth century on. It was so shocking that not only fallen women and prostitutes appeared on the stages as white

was not an exception to this rule. Shaw, in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1894), filled his works with economic, social, and moral problems such as women's rights, poverty, laboring class education, marriage, religion, political issues, health care and class privilege in a controversial and realistic way to rise the awareness, and to find solutions for these real problems faced by common people at every step of life. He promoted his realistic socialism to enable people to have equal share in the wealth and welfare of the nation, direct taxation, and liberal education for everybody and equal rights for both sexes¹⁴. Regarded as one of the unpleasant plays by Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was subjected to the harsh criticism and even at times, it came up against the threat of ban. Shaw used dramatic power of his unpleasant plays:

to force the spectator to face unpleasant facts... [especially] those social horrors which arise from the fact that the average homebred Englishman, however honorable and good natured he may be in his private capacity, is, as a citizen, a wretched creature, who, whilst clamoring for a gratuitous millennium, will shut his eyes to the most villainous abuses...¹⁵

Although Mrs. Warren is not the only fallen woman depicted in a literary work, she was unique in that Mrs. Warren's Profession was the one which staged the harsh realities explicitly in the Victorian Era. The play attracted the attention of the critics as Kitty Warren was "making money in a capitalist and sexist economy"¹⁶ as a prostitute. However, there was one point that the critics and spectators ignored; she was a mother earning not just her own living but her daughter's living as well, and it was the conditions of that time which led her astray. A close look at the fallen women reveal a deeper understanding of the social standing of the genders, showing up the social injustice, its causes and affects. As Ruth Rosen utters, close analysis of prostitution

can function as a kind of microscopic lens through which we gain detailed magnification of society's organization of class and gender: the power arrangements between men and women; women's economic and social status; [and] the prevailing sexual ideology¹⁷.

By indicating the reasons of the corruption, it also offers many alternatives to make a remarkable recovery of the present defects and determine some reformation policies for the present gender roles drawn by the society¹⁸. To Kate Millet, "a female is born

slaves as central characters but mistresses, courtesans and every women that are seduced by the opposite sex were chosen as central characters in Brothel Drama. The setting was brothels and opium dens but more than that, as setting, more dignified places such as drawing rooms, country estates and department stores were preferred to call attention to the corruption of society in all levels. See. Katie N. Johnson, *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in America, 1900-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.

¹⁴ Gareth Griffith, *Socialism and Superior Brains: The Political Thought of Bernard Shaw*, Routledge Press, London, 1993, p. 24-30.

¹⁵ Sheila Stowell, "Rehabilitating Realism", *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Vol. VI, No. 2, Spring 1992, p. 81-88.

¹⁶ Christopher Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 78.

¹⁷ Johnson, *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁸ Johnson, *ibid.*, p. 3.

and a woman is created"¹⁹ and it is the society and the culture they are in which creates women and shapes the gender roles and forming their characteristics. Furthermore, these social norms are encoded and decoded and disseminated from birth till death via literature, newspapers, theatrical plays, movies, songs, games, and gender discourses²⁰. Thus, the first and vital step for the reformation is to change the mind, way of thought and to save women from "the Other"²¹ position and make them as autonomous as men.

Sangeeta Jain puts Shaw's depiction of women characters as perceived with both good and bad reactions and divided the scholars into two that while some scholars found fault with those women personalizations with the reason of setting a bad example before many women; other scholars appreciated the aforementioned female characterization as they would set good examples for women to break their chain and count them in the previously banned parts of life and to gain the rights to become independent individuals just like the opposite sex, men²². Clearly, protesting about the women's occupying subordinate position in gender system -in other words disapproving men's, or/and society's subordination of women- Shaw, who inscribed well drawn, strong and talented women to support them in going beyond their determined borders, was the "patron saint of the women's movement"²³ by the utterances of Barbara Bellow Watson.

Discussion

*The sexes wear different boots and bonnets, not different souls*²⁴.

It is well known that the status of women in society is among the main issues for Shaw in his works. On one side he depicts traditional obedient woman, while on the other introduces new woman with more liberal mind and intellectual property. New woman was often depicted with manly characteristics, smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, wearing manly clothes or pursuing a career or business rather than bringing up children²⁵. She was much freer to act regardless of the judgement of the society. Just like a revolution, this new woman rewrote the gender roles. Furthermore, this new woman was met with consternation and panic because "in discourse or in 'real' life" she caused

¹⁹ Charles E. Bressler, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1999, p. 183.

²⁰ Lagretta Tallent Lenker, *Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare and Shaw*, Greenwood Press, London, 2001, p. 114.

²¹ *The Other* is a term coined by Simone de Beavoir to draw attention to the subordinate position of women in a patriarchal world. Beavoir put emphasis on the definition of women that "the female is not male [...] she becomes "the Other", an object whose existence is defined and interpreted by the male, who is the dominant being in society." See. Charles E. Bressler, *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 1999.

²² Sangeeta Jain, *Women in the Plays of George Bernard Shaw*, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi, 2006, p. 1-2.

²³ Griffith, *ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁴ Lenker, *ibid.*, p. 111.

²⁵ Innes, *ibid.*, p. 77.

reappearance of the polemics on “what it meant to be a man or woman”²⁶. Various female characters drawn by Shaw can be regarded as New Woman.

The New Women demand economic, social and political independence as well as equality in and outside home²⁷. Stating that a woman is just like himself²⁸, in fact Shaw's female characterization is so androgynous²⁹ that many women can identify themselves with Shaw's female characters and their ideas as they are so vividly depicted by Shaw, who remarks “I could not do this if I had not a first-hand knowledge of both, being my mother's son as much as my father's”³⁰.

In the XIX. Century, teaching was the primary function of art for the Victorians but it was moral teaching. In other words, the primary function of art was to socialize the individual readers and spectators into moral values of their culture as well as to delight people hiding the repellent realities of the time³¹. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the Victorian Era which was surrounded by the strict moral codes and linguistic taboos -it was forbidden to use some words like *leg* and *breast* besides the censure on sexuality and sexual topics³²- *Mrs. Warren's Profession* could not get a licence for public performance, with the reason that it inheld incest and repellent³³ themes besides prostitution that it was “immoral and otherwise improper for the stage” by Lord Chamberlain's words³⁴. Moreover, Hyperion Theatre in New Heaven was closed because of the “indecenty” of the play at its first performance in the United States in 1905³⁵ and the actors were arrested by the police³⁶. And the play was banned from the stage in 1905 by the Lord Chamberlain as it laid the decay of the era bare, which otherwise “would

²⁶ Innes, *ibid.*, p. 77.

²⁷ Stefanie Ollevier, “Ambivalence towards the New Woman in the Plays of George Bernard Shaw”, Unpublished MA Thesis, Ghent University, 2012, p. 12.

²⁸ George Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1984, p. 52.

²⁹ Stuard Eddie Baker, *Bernard Shaw's Remarkable religion: a Faith That Fits the Facts*, University Press of Florida, Florida, 2002, p. 108.

³⁰ Lenker, *ibid.*, p. 111.

³¹ Josephine M. Guy, *The Victorian Age-An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 314.

³² George Kao, “Euphemism: Its Interpretation and Translation”, *Literary Studies East and West: Translation and Interpreting: Bridging East and West, Selected Conference Papers*, University of Hawaii Press, 2004, p.171-179.

³³ John D. Irving. *Mary Shaw, Actress, Suffragist, Activist (1854-1929)*, Arno Press Inc. New York, 1978, p. 97.

³⁴ George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, A Penn State Electronic Classics Series Publication, 2004, p. 10.

³⁵ Gabrielle H. Cody-Evert Sprinchorn, *The Columbia Encyclopedia of Modern Drama*, Vol. II, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, p. 935.

³⁶ Colin Chambers, *Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre*, Continuum Collections, London, 2002, p. 144.

have pleased some New Women³⁷ with its straightforward linkage of prostitution and marriage.”³⁸

*She was everywhere. Not just in the shadows of a doorway, or the shady side of the underworld. On the contrary, she was center stage*³⁹.

Our experience of *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is now more than a hundred and fifteen years old but still it seems to display one of the most unique taboos of not only Victorian Era but today's world as well⁴⁰. What we observe in the play is Shaw harshly attacks capitalism for the decay of the society. Thanks to the power of his writings, for a better world, he promotes socialism⁴¹, which he describes as “the religion in which he found his life's calling”⁴², within his works. In *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Shaw depicts a battle field among a mother, her daughter for an independent identity the society. Although prostitution is a more central theme, there are other conspicuous themes such as motherhood, women rights, class discrimination and corruption of society.⁴³

Shaw figures out the root of the problem as the subordination of women and the degradation and desecration of them which becomes an ordinary part of the culture.⁴⁴ Instead, if women were valued as an individual sharing the same opportunities with men and gained the same respectable position in life and before law, prostitution would not be at this rate and a preferable occupation for women.⁴⁵ For this reason, Shaw stresses that it is social deprivation what leads women to choose prostitution as they do not have

³⁷ The last decade of the 19th century, masculine control fell from power with the influence of some *insurgent* women along with some male female-defenders, was the *annus mirabilis* for the New Woman. During this period, the definitions of the gender borders were shaken and brought into question. However New Woman was dealt with *contempt or fear* that New Woman enjoyed some characteristics peculiar to man as strong but in a way exaggerated and cartoonized. For instance, New Woman has female beauty but in man's dressing style and holding cigarettes in their hands besides her nose above feminine beauty showing, nevertheless, the intelligence. Moreover New Woman had various job opportunities other than taking after children and taking care of household. Consequently, New Woman, independent from any kind of possessor, was free from daily constraints of her former life and surroundings and from traditional gender roles. Noticing this caricatured version of New Woman, the theatrical newspaper of the period, Era, to arouse the strength, determination and ability of the female gender, posed a question “Why hasn't the New Woman a word to say for herself on the stage?”. See. Christopher Innes, *The Cambridge Companion to George Bernard Shaw*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 76-79.

³⁸ Innes, *ibid.*, p. 78.

³⁹ Johnson, *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Billy Long, “Freedom for Women in the Sex Work Occupation: Twenty-Three Reasons Why Prostitution Should Be Legalized in America”, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. II(16), 2012, p. 24-33.

⁴¹ Harold Bloom, *Comprehensive Research and Study Guide Bloom's Major Dramatists George Bernard Shaw*, Chelsea House Publishers, PA, 2000, p. 13.

⁴² Laurie Morrow, “The Playwright in Spite of Himself: George Bernard Shaw: Man, Superman, and Socialism”, *The World & I*, Vol. XVIII:5, 2003, p. 242-253.

⁴³ Ollevier, *ibid.*, p.12.

⁴⁴ Ollevier, *ibid.*, p. 13-14.

⁴⁵ Petra Dierkes-Thrun, “Incest and the Trafficking of Women in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*: “It Runs in the Family””, *ELT*, 49: 3, 2006, p. 293-310.

an innate tendency to this repellent occupation⁴⁶. Thus, he declares his aim as making people aware of the fact that

prostitution is caused not by female depravity and male licentiousness, but simply by underpaying, undervaluing, and overworking women so shamefully that poorest of them are forced to resort prostitution to keep body and soul together⁴⁷.

In the play Shaw criticizes “the hypocrisy that allows society to condemn prostitution while conditioning the discrimination against women that makes prostitution inevitable”⁴⁸ Shaw regards women’s position “as a product of male, middle-class society”⁴⁹ and he believes that at the time when women gain self-respect and respect in the so called male world, the individuality of women and the institution of family and thus the society as a whole will be improved morally, economically and intellectually⁵⁰. Therefore, Shaw does not deal with Kitty Warren’s motherhood and her duties as a mother to look after her child, do the housework and keep up their lives; instead, he depicts a prostitute mother’s struggles for her daughter not only to create a better atmosphere than she has had, not to allow circumstances lead her into a dead end just like her’s but also to prepare more favourable conditions to help her daughter avoid the society’s pressure and present social norms for most of the women who have limited opportunities to earn their lives under harsh conditions which leads them to head towards ill treatment of their flesh and spirits⁵¹. As Martin Luther King remarks on it in his Nobel Lecture (1964), there is a great difference between wealthy and poor people that while poor people are in a struggle between what is good and what is necessary, rich people, quite often do not even have to realize it. Furthermore, for the poor people in this struggle, *what is necessary* surpasses *what is good*⁵². Within this context, Shaw interprets the way to prostitution under the shadow of capitalism, and depicts Mrs. Warren and her sisters as poor women who are to do what is necessary, not what is good and appreciated.

As in line with King’s lecture, Shaw stresses that something does not have to be evil when not affirmed by the society so long as it is good for the individual⁵³. Kitty Warren, for instance, struggled under poor conditions which the life served for her and her three sisters two of which were half sisters. They all, the respectable ones and the unrespectable ones, *enjoyed* limited conditions and opportunities. Kitty’s two half sisters were “... undersized, ugly, starved looking, hard working, honest poor creatures” that

⁴⁶ However, unlike Shaw who dwells upon the economic dimension of prostitution, there are some critics emphasizing individual reasons besides economic ones that they assert that the corruption is a more moving factor for the tendency of some women for prostitution. See. Charles A. Berst, “Propoganda and Art in Mrs. Warren’s Profession”, *ELH*, Vol. XXXIII, September, 1996, p. 390-404.

⁴⁷ Bernard Shaw, Dan H. Laurence, *Plays Unpleasant*, Penguin Classics, New York, 2005, p. 181.

⁴⁸ *Connections Shaw Festival Study Guide*, Shaw Festival 2008, p. 12.

⁴⁹ Griffith, *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁵⁰ Lenker, *ibid.*, p. 111.

⁵¹ Niraja Saraswat, “Shaw’s Career Heroine: An Analysis of Mrs. Warren’s Profession and “Major Barbara””, *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, 12, 2013, p. 1-10.

⁵² Martin Luther King, *The Quest for Peace and Justice*, <http://nobelprize.org> (05.04.2010).

⁵³ Innes, *ibid.*, p. 24.

Kitty and her full sister Liz did not appreciate their respectable sisters, nor did they follow their path. Kitty and Liz always questioned the respectability under poor conditions and repeatedly in the play asked “What did they get by their respectability?”⁵⁴

Shaw does not leave their question unanswered that both of the half sisters could not escape their doom that one of them died of poisoning as she was working “twelve hours a day for nine shillings a week”⁵⁵ under unhealthy conditions in a whitelead factory. However, Liz and Kitty at first took their other half-sister as a role model because she married to a Government laborer who afforded a room and kept the three children neat and tidy with his eighteen shillings a week. However, later he became alcoholic, and Kitty’s and Liz’s dream of a respectable life game failed⁵⁶. Kitty and Liz, together, went to a Catholic school to abstain from their doom and gloom and remained there till Liz disappeared leaving Kitty all alone in her battle against life. The school was also a breakdown for Kitty that upon Clergyman’s warning that with Liz, Kitty’s end would end in Waterloo Bridge, Kitty uncovers the fact that both ways offered to her was fearsome, painful, wicked and atrocious: “I was more afraid of the whitelead factory than I was of the river.”⁵⁷

In the preface to *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*, Shaw clearly detects the limits that Mrs. Warren enjoys in her youth and utters the two, in a way identical, way out; one is to face harsh poverty conditions which are extremely hard to bear and the other is to face *grim* luxurious conditions of a wealthy comfortable life:

Though it is quite natural and *right* for Mrs. Warren to choose what is, according to her lights, the least immoral alternative, it is none the less infamous of society to offer such alternatives. For the alternatives offered are not morality and immorality, but two sorts of immorality⁵⁸.

Kitty Warren took her chance in many places as maid, and waitress that at first she chose to live her life on respectable terms until she came across her sister. Liz who shined with all her brightness, elegant and stylish clothes and sovereigns and awakened Kitty to the fact that she was doing nothing for her own sake but just “wearing out [her] health and [her] appearance for other people’s profit!”⁵⁹ Liz has chosen a reputation on different conditions when compared to her half sisters, and beyond any doubt her end would not be the same with their miserable but respectable sisters as she was leading her own brothels. As Shaw states both sisters choose kinds of immoral way of lives half intentionally and half unintentionally.

While Shaw justifies Kitty and sympathizes her blowing the lid off the conditions dragging her to her fallen doom, he also encourages them to fight for and gain her own *sine qua non* of respectability and self-respect because she is not alone in her life⁶⁰. Kitty

⁵⁴ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 57

⁵⁵ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 57

⁵⁶ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁵⁷ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵⁸ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵⁹ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶⁰ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 29.

Warren has a daughter, Vivie Warren whom she struggles to keep safe from her social circle and thus Vivie Warren has studied at Cambridge, away from her mother. As stage directions explain she is “attractive specimen of the sensible, able, highly-educated young middle-class Englishwoman” (29). Kitty Warren has never let her daughter know much about her mother and her social sphere. Nevertheless, during her visit of her mother at her home, she hears about her mother’s notorious occupation and finds out the money she has been funded is ill-gotten, at first, she accuses her mother of making up excuses:

Everybody has some choice, mother. The poorest girl ... can choose between rag picking and flower selling, according to her taste. People are always blaming circumstances for what they are. I don’t believe in 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 can’t find them, make them⁶¹.

With these utterances, Shaw intentionally draws Mrs. Warren to prepare a substructure for women to gain their respectabilities, freedom and personalities in male dominated culture. As her mother explains her choices and life standards, she comes to understand how severe conditions her mother has been offered, and emphasizing how powerful she has behaved to life, Vivie justifies and respects her mother: “My dear mother: you are a wonderful woman: you are stronger than all England”⁶² Vivie begins to notice that no matter what her mother’s occupation is, Kitty Warren wages war to protect both herself and her daughter against all kinds of dangers posed by the society hiding all the harassing background of her life style and the money she has given to her.

Kitty Warren was keeping her background secret as she knew her occupation is quite immoral. Likewise, Kitty questions that marrying a wealthy man for the benefit of his money is as immoral as her profession and even worse that “they’ve no character”⁶³. It is surely a fact that Shaw glorifies and justifies new woman who tries her best to contribute to women’s gaining a place in the society to become autonomous individuals gaining their economic and social power. Meanwhile, he also helps the reader and the audience to become aware of how a victim of society should feel that when Vivie questions her mother’s feelings, Kitty verbalizes her sense of shame which is “expected from a woman”⁶⁴. Once more, Shaw criticizes the stereotyped gender roles the certain limits of which are drawn by the society and lays bare how a woman or fallen woman is to feel what the society wants her to feel even if she does not feel it.

While Vivie exculpates her mother because of the social conditions that direct her, she argues with Sir George Crofts about his keeping benefit from this immoral profession despite his wealth. Shaw makes Crofts verbalize the low-down reality of the society that regardless of their class, standing or economic condition, all the people are, in a way, related to and involved in this fallen profession either getting economic benefit from it or leading women into it: “If you’re going to pick and choose your acquaintances on moral principles, you’d better clear out of this country, unless you want to cut yourself

⁶¹ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶² Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁶³ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 59.

⁶⁴ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 60.

out of all decent society.”⁶⁵. Thus, as the corruption goes hand in hand with the society, Shaw signalizes the impossibility of purification, redemption and evasion.

It is quite possible to notice Shaw’s voice in Vivie’s utterances and actions that at first Vivie feels angry to her mother; later an empathetic justification invades her soul but at the time when she learns that although Mrs. Warren is no more in need of earning her life in such immoral ways, she maintains her occupation, Vivie, also Shaw, speaks out Kitty’s unacceptable greed and this time, once more, Vivie flies into a rage. However, for Mrs. Warren, her profession means “a new dress very day; ... theatres and balls every night; ... the choices of eating and drinking; ... everything you like, everything you want, everything you can think of”⁶⁶. She keeps up and never even thinks of quitting her job for the sake of Vivie and a new acceptable as well as moral life standards because she “never sell[s] power.”⁶⁷. Moreover, she defends herself stating she has to work and no other work suits her: “I must have work and excitement, or I should go melancholy mad. And what else is there for me to do? The life suits me: I’m fit for it and not for anything else. If I didn’t do it somebody else would; so I don’t do any real harm by it.”⁶⁸.

Mrs. Warren, in fact reveals that there will always be someone earning money from there kinds of fallen occupations; she or any other women and asks why somebody else, not her! Furthermore she knows the job more than any other occupation and indicates that just like she does not have great facility in other kinds of jobs, the society do not accepts her in any other position. Thus as she stuck into what she calls respectability but what is in fact visible unrespectability for the rest of the society, she regards holding her position in her profession is only way out which she and the society approve and consider appropriate for her.

Vivie blames her mother for being engrossed in the capitalist sytem. To become free from all her mother’s sins and flee from the corrupted surrounding around her mother, Vivie leaves her mother in desolation ignoring all the financial help from her. Even though Vivie rejects her mother’s life choices, it is quite clear that Vivie and Kitty try very hard for the same aim; respectability and independence⁶⁹. While Mrs. Warren gain the respectability and independence through running brothels, Vivie, thanks to her mother and her financial support, enjoyed education at Cambridge to have a voice in the male dominated business world and again thanks to her mother she can enjoy many opportunities: “I shall set up chambers in the City, and work at actuarial calculations and conveyancing. Under cover of that I shall do some law, with one eye on the Stock Exchange all the time.”⁷⁰.

The two women characters that appear in the play are of the same mind about their obligation to work and share the same aim of earning much money to livetheir lives

⁶⁵ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 72.

⁶⁶ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 87.

⁶⁷ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶⁸ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 89.

⁶⁹ Saraswat, *ibid.*, p. 1-10.

⁷⁰ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 32.

guaranteeing their freedom. However they do differ in their thoughts about business ethics: "I am 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, and my way not your way."⁷¹ It is a fact that Vivie is more independent woman than her mother as she is not stuck into either men or a definite business that she, from beginning to the end, was able to reject the wealth, a romantic love and more precisely her mother not to profit from the corrupt cycle of that surrounding.

Sarah Aderinto reveals in one of her articles that if wicked environment surrounds houses, children, especially girls tend to perpetrate a crime, prostitute⁷². It is not only because of the society but the negative role modelling in a family as well. Being aware of the effect of society and her own standing in her child's future sneakily, Mrs. Warren has kept Vivie away from her territory occupying all her secrets regarding her profession and surrounding, camouflaging herself as a business woman and visiting Vivie in England no more than three days. By doing so, Kitty has challenged the existing models of prostitutes⁷³ proving that a prostitute can be a good mother to a degree that, instead of weighing down on Vivie's shoulders, she let her make a good life for herself.

What Kitty has desired for Vivie is to have control and respect over her own life that once Vivie asks her mother if she would advice her to marry a laborer or work in a factory or Waterloo bar, supposing they were both poor, Kitty answers suggesting the harsh life realities that a woman must know how to respect and control herself; once she knows them she would understand the value of life and being a woman. Kitty reminds how she has moved heaven and earth for her daughter and questions how a woman can keep her "self respect in such starvation and slavery"⁷⁴ Kitty Warren emphasizes a woman's value as well as life's significancy but most importantly she underscores self-respect sharing some parts of her own life without details:

Why am I independent and able to give my daughter a first-rate education, when other women that had just as good opportunities are in the gutter? Because I always knew how to respect myself and control myself. [...] Where would we be now if we'd minded the clergyman's foolishness? Scrubbing floors for one and sixpence a day and nothing to look forward to but the workhouse infirmary⁷⁵.

Kitty mentions about other women enjoying good opportunities but "*in a gutter*"⁷⁶ just because they are worthless as they do not have self respect or control over life. And "the only way for a woman to provide herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can *afford* to be good to her"⁷⁷; furthermore a woman can only marry a man of the

⁷¹ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 91.

⁷² Saheed Aderinto, "The Girls in Moral Danger: Child Prostitution and Sexuality in Colonial Lagos 1930s to 1950", *Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. I, 2007, p. 1-22.

⁷³ Johnson, *ibid.*, p. 102.

⁷⁴ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷⁵ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷⁶ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷⁷ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 60.

same class thus Vivie has had “plenty of money to make things smooth”⁷⁸, which will help her marry a man from an upper circle. It is the reason why Kitty keeps Vivie away from her; to give her a chance to marry an upper class gentleman who will guarantee her daughter’s life treating her as an individual and keeping her away from the doom Kitty is *enjoying*.. She, even, compares herself and her duties as a mother to other *normal* mothers that any mother in London society would tell the same except she (Kitty) “tell[s] (her) straight and she’ll tell you crooked. That’s all the difference.”⁷⁹ Nevertheless, once Sir George Crafts asks Vivie’s hand in marriage, Mrs. Warren sharply declines stating how precious her daughter is to her and argues against him as she knows who he is: “I’d put you out and pack you back to London pretty soon if I saw any of your nonsense. My girl’s little finger is more to me than your whole body and soul.”⁸⁰.

Vivie interrogates her mother to learn about her relatives, especially her father. However, Mrs. Warren leaves her questions unanswered, and because of this uncertainty Vivie gets cross with her mother, which causes Mrs. Warren to guard against Vivie’s indictment both returning to traditional mother pose and questioning the circumstances: “What right have you to set yourself up above me like this? ... [I] who gave you a chance of being what you are. What chance had I?”⁸¹

Vivie insists that each and every person creates his/her own circumstances which may vary according to certain classes that “The poorest girl alive may not be able to choose between being Queen of England or Principal of Newnham; but she can choose between ragpicking and flowerselling, according to her taste.”⁸². However Mrs. Warren’s defence shows why Shaw insists on socialism and equality of life standards:

My own Opinions and my own way of life! ... Do you think I was brought up like you? Able to pick and choose my own way of life? Do you think I did what I did because I liked it, or thought it right, or wouldn’t rather have gone to college and been a lady if I’d had the chance?⁸³

Shaw closes the play with a separation scene and he does not let Kitty Warren lose her power but he lets Vivie go without even shaking hands with her mother, maybe and most probably, not to lose Vivie’s chance of a respectable future, and makes Kitty endure Vivie’s abandoning her⁸⁴. At the end, Vivie desolates all her mother’s money along with her mother and sets sail to create her own circumstances with all her Cambridge background and elite equipment she has had thanks to her mother’s sacrifices.

Vivie. Wont you shake hands?

Mrs. Warren. No, thank you. Goodbye.

⁷⁸ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷⁹ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁸⁰ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 51.

⁸¹ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁸² Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁸³ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 57.

⁸⁴ Saraswat, *ibid.*, p. 1-10.

Vivie. Goodbye⁸⁵.

Conclusion

Mrs. Warren's Profession was one of the first works which explicitly was written only for womanly woman and their determination of shaping their own fates. The characterization of these two independent-minded women is Shaw's novelty. Both mother and daughter are for their careers. They seem never to dream of marriage or a more traditional lifestyle. But they both have opposite characters: while Vivie is represented as a "New Woman" seeking a masculine-style life, Mrs. Warren is portrated as an old-fashioned woman whose profession makes use of her femininity.

The unspeakable conditions and challenges Mrs. Warren has had to bear to support herself and provide a better education and future for her daughter are so remarkable. The causes and effects of the heartbreaking sufferings women had to face have also been demonstrated from Shaw's critical eye of his period. The struggle for having an independent identity for herself and her daughter was a fearless fight against humiliating and degrading moral perceptions of the Victorians. Mrs. Warren's working hard to create her own identity by sacrificing her soul makes her a unique character as well as a New Woman which was a focal point of Shaw's philosophy.

To Shaw, every people is, in a way, related with the corruptedness of the society either causing it or capitalizing on it; and in such a world both is a way of immorality. In such an immoral world both women characters are struggling for the same aim: independence. However, both women characters in the play gain their independence in immoral ways.

All in all, we could claim that Shaw's realistic socialism is a key to provide equal share of wealth and equal right for both sexes for the sake of a welfare state.

What we have tried to demonstrate here is Shaw, as a socialist playwright and philosopher, dedicated his life and his works to eliminate the injustices, poverty, loathsome circumstances of prostitution and fallen women of the Victorian Period in 19th century. In this play, Shaw aims to attract the attention of the people to how poverty makes those fallen women choose the profession which they have had to. As Shaw puts it, the strive for the fallen women will be no more than a vain effort "as long as poverty makes virtue hideous and the spare pocket-money of rich bachelordom makes vice dazzling."⁸⁶

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⁸⁵ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸⁶ Shaw (2004), *ibid.*, p. 4.

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