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Modern Women in Dilemma: A Study of Sham Marriages in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* and Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Candida*

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Abstract:
This article entitled "Sham Marriages in Henrik Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' and 'Ghosts' and Bernard Shaw's 'Mrs. Warren's Profession' and Candida'" examines the hypocritical marriages in the authors' plays investigates the failure or collapse of 19th-century marriages in Europe. The article assumes that Ibsen's "A Doll's House" and "Ghosts" and Shaw's "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and "Candida" are pulpits for the exposition of fake marriages in the Norwegian and Victorian societies. Seen from the perspective of Marxist feminism, this article postulates that the plays of Ibsen and Shaw are profound social commentaries designed to expose the faults in the family and marriage in the nineteenth century. In the plays of both authors, one of the most difficult conflicts in the average family revolves around the issue of finance. The authors use this common source of domestic dispute as a major theme in portraying the imperfections of the typical home. The paper argues that, unlike many studies that have read Nora, Mrs. Alving, Candida, and Vivie as different characters, they can be considered as the same New Woman represented only from different perspectives in how they react to their marital dilemmas in the four plays. While the present study considers Candida and Mrs. Alving as philistines who choose to stay at home to protect marriage conventions, Nora is seen as a rebel who chooses to abandon the conventional matrimonial life to find her true identity. Be it Candida and Mrs. Alving who stay or Nora who leaves. This work holds that the decisions of all female characters, although in different forms, thwart Victorian standards and make their husbands and societies reflect deeply on the institution of marriage. Instead of seeing Candida as one who conspires against her gender and Nora as one who conspires against patriarchy in favour of her gender, the article concludes that the different decisions of the two heroines are all geared towards achieving meaningful change for their gender.

Keywords: *Marriages, collapse, hypocritical, 19thcentury, marxist, family, patriarchy*

1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the most deep-seated social institutions and is considered an obvious milestone in every civilization, although society has started to question its inevitability. Marriage began to organise people's lives economically and politically throughout the world. At the same time, the desires of the individuals participating in the institution took a backseat, as rightfully stated by Stephanie Coontz in *Marriage, A History*. The former quotes a historian, Margaret Hunt, who said marriage was 'the main means of transferring property, occupational status, personal contacts, money, tools, livestock, and women across generations, and kin groups.' Coontz adds, 'For the propertied classes, marriage was the main way of consolidating wealth, transferring property, laying claim to political power, even concluding peace treaties. When upper-class men and women were married, dowry and bride wealth changed hands, making the match a major economic investment by the parents and other kin of the couple.' Coontz further notes that in addition to wealth, another resource changed hands: the woman's reproductive ability, with the likelihood of divorce increasing if the couple remained childless for long.

It is, therefore, evident that love was never a prerequisite for marriage. On the contrary, marriage was practised as a transaction that solidified gender roles and determined a strict division of labour within the home. While women cared for childcare and housework, men earned the bread and butter for the household. This situation is still common in Africa and many parts of the world today, where women are transferred from their parents' homes to their husbands' and often expected to drop their father's middle name for their husbands'. In brief, women belong to their fathers or husbands and never to themselves. In marriage, the situation gets even appalling with how gender roles are entrenched and fortified and how women are abused sexually, politically, and culturally. Therefore, women were subjected to stereotypical family roles and were commonly seen as property belonging to their father before marriage and to their husband during marriage.

While this situation is being improved in several parts of the world, the gender roles fortified in marriage have not progressed significantly. The legal system is still struggling with little determination to accord women the dignity and respect they deserve as human beings. Despite the multifarious abuses, especially in marriage, considering divorce for women is perceived strangely by society as a stigmatised choice and shameful decision. This has raised much controversy

over the institution of marriage worldwide, and discussions regarding the raison-d'être and necessity of marriage continue to be at the forefront of academic, political, and socio-cultural circles. Referring to this, George Bernard Shaw posits in the preface to *Getting Married* that 'There is no subject on which more dangerous nonsense is talked and thought than marriage'. Reacting to Shaw in an article entitled 'Marriage is an Inherently Unfeminist Institution with Marriage Rates Declining', Rajvi Desai notes that 'with divorce rates soaring and same-sex partners seeking civil and theological sanctions, who knows what he might have to say about the current status of marriage in our society' (1).

The philosophy of Ibsen and Shaw concerning love and marriage amidst the derogatory image reserved for women in Victorian society is at the centre of this article. Considered one of the most researched themes in the history of English literature because of its power and vitality, marriage and its sincerity is a key subject of interest for Ibsen and Shaw. They are considered by many as iconoclasts in the fight for female liberation in Europe. Although marriage is considered a consecrated union that brings happiness to those involved, its sacred and sacrosanct nature was desecrated and defiled during the Victorian age. This phenomenon attracted Ibsen and Shaw, who condemned all patriarchal institutions and societies that used marriage to denigrate the woman despite their recognition of the essence of marriage.

As this article demonstrates, Ibsen and Shaw explore marriage as a tool for female subjugation and, simultaneously, as a weapon of financial emancipation. While the two authors do not suggest a world without the institution of marriage, they question its validity and sincerity in a growing feminists' world that continues to register an alarming rate of divorces and abuses in the family unit. The inevitable conflicts, clashes, and uncertainties in the marriages in *A Doll's House, Ghosts, Mrs. Warren's Profession*, and *Candida* all lead to dilemmas that undermine and weaken the institution of marriage.

The authors' view of marriage is evident in their plays and indicates that, for them, marriage is greatly based on their positive view of human creative evolution. They strongly support marriage as an institution and its significant role in protecting society but condemn marriage as a mere means of sexual pleasure and female victimisation.

2. Theoretical Considerations

As earlier indicated, the falsity and hypocrisy of the marriages in the plays of Ibsen and Shaw under study will be read from a Marxist feminist perspective. Marxist feminism understands gender inequality as the primary axis of oppression in patriarchic societies like those in question in this work. The goal of the Marxist feminist framework is to liberate women by transforming the conditions of their oppression and exploitation.

Given that throughout history, women have been collectively denied essential rights, it was almost inevitable that Marxist feminism would emerge that saw women as constituting a seriously underprivileged class. Marxist feminism explores how gender ideologies of femininity and masculinity structure production in capitalism. It challenges the primacy of capitalist value to determine social values, both the exchange value in wages and the surplus value of profit, by making the use value of reproductive labour visible. Today, Marxist feminism grapples with two central questions: how is the political economy gendered in late capitalism? Furthermore, how does the social reproduction of people and communities renew capitalism, rather than support anti-capitalist praxis? The first question addresses imperialism today, what Lenin famously called the highest stage of capitalism. As a system based on profit over people's needs, capitalism constantly seeks new markets for its goods, what Marx calls commodities, due to the crisis of overproduction – making more things than people can buy. Imperialism refers to the aggressive solution to this crisis that creates new markets and new pools of waged workers to increase the profitability for the owning classes of capitalism. Marxist feminists argue that imperialism in the twentieth and twenty-first century relies not simply on women to solve the crisis of overproduction (as workers, consumers, or both) but also on oppressive ideologies of gender. Imperialism captures new markets by mobilising extant ideologies of gender oppression to force new workers into waged work, decrease wages and working conditions and exploit previously untapped resources.

Friedrich Engels discusses the main ideas of Marxist Feminism in his analysis of gender oppression in *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Here, he outlines that a woman's subordination is not a result of her biological disposition but social relations. The institution of family is a complex system of oppression in which men command women's services. According to Engels, it can be stated that:

> *The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles and sex struggles because the existence of classes presupposes private ownership of the means of production, monogamy, and, therefore, sexism. The presence of sexism throughout history accounts for the ease with which it has been taken for granted as a universal feature of all societies or as the product of innate differences between the sexes. (146)*

Without denying the reality of sex differentiation and stratification, Marxist feminists argue that they should be explained in terms of historically specific capitalist structures, which are part of the social reality made visible in these relations. These structures have been defined by Marx in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* as follows:

> *In the reproduction of their physical and social life, men and women enter into definite relations which are independent of their will, namely, relations of reproduction appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of reproduction. The totality of these relations of reproduction constitutes the family structure of society, the real foundation on which a legal and political superstructure arises and to which definite forms of consciousness correspond. (138)*

According to Marxist feminism, contemporary gender inequality is ultimately determined by the capitalist modes of production. The theory posits that gender oppression is class oppression, and the relationship between man and woman in society is similar to the relations between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the subordination of women is

seen as a form of class oppression, which is maintained like racism. This is because it serves the interests of capitalism and the ruling class. Marxist feminists have extended traditional Marxist analysis by looking at domestic labour and wage work.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels describe the misperception of workers' relations to reproduction thus: 'The production of life, both of one's own in labor and fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship' (Marx and Engels, 41). Reproductive labour had social forms that organised it, such as marriage and the family, but the labor was seen as biological. Women who performed this labour were also naturalised as biological beings unable to effect changes in these social orders.

3. Money and Marriage

The relationship between money and marriage is very controversial because of the family stress and marital conflict that arise due to the lack or presence of money in marriage. The situation is even more serious in patriarchal societies, which give legal rights, economic power, and proper education only to men so that women are financially dependent on men for a living. The Victorian society was a victim of such patriarchal sentiments, and its consequences on family economics and social identity for the woman were of particular interest to Ibsen and Shaw. According to Olive Schreiner in *Women and Labour in the Victorian Society*, girls received narrow education pursuing the purpose of marriage. Adopting the role of a wife and mother, women's education only included fulfilling their responsibilities for family and home. It provided skills for domestic crafts, prudence, productivity, care, and good governance (Barker, 19). Consequently, women's primary duties were to give birth and do daily chores in the traditional structure (Doğramacı, 38).

In the nineteenth century, women had to represent good morality and raise their children as virtuous individuals (Comte, 53). In the social hierarchy, there are separate spheres for men and women; a public sphere stands for rationality and men, whereas a private sphere represents sensuality, morality, and women (İmançer, 70). Therefore, women were assumed to be the 'angel at home' (qtd.in Peterson, 84). A woman who was imprisoned in the private sphere was expected to improve spiritually and emotionally so that she could relieve her husband's stress in the public sphere. In terms of traditional conception, young girls were convinced that marriage was the unquestionable purpose of their lives (Reed, 75). For this reason, the patriarchal society claimed men's superiority over women as a natural right, and therefore, women were only given duties such as housework and childcare (Millett, 97).

Convinced that marriage was the only way to maintain their social position and have a comfortable life; women accepted their faith without contradiction (James, 18). Unfortunately, after marriage, women become the property of their husbands. A woman who commits adultery was unquestioningly labelled as a fallen woman (Palmer, 10). The patriarchal Victorian society enforced double standards on women in marriage because men wandered in the public sphere while women were kept in the private sphere (Asena, 20). Therefore, sexual ignorance for women and sexual privilege for men must end (Caine, 19). Since women were financially dependent on men for a living, their sexual intercourse turned into an economic relationship, so marriage prevented women's freedom and equality (Gilman, 19). Traits such as submissiveness and sexual passivity were imposed on and embraced by women (Greer, 19). Such cultural norms of male authority within marriage and their financial influence of authority over women represent one of the main subjects of interest for Ibsen and Shaw.

In Ibsen's *A Doll's House,* the protagonist, Nora Helmer, seems to be controlled by money. In almost every dialogue, she appears to introduce the issue of money. Not only does her husband Torvald continually criticise the wasteful ways he perceives she uses his money, but she constantly mentions Torvald's recent promotion as if that is most important to her and her happiness. When talking to Mrs. Linde, both characters speak in detail about their financial situations, as if money management can be the only true test of a person's integrity and value. Although Ibsen sympathises with Nora later in the play, his criticism of Nora's attachment to money at the beginning of the play is clear. Ibsen is, therefore, sceptical of all marriages that focus a lot on Money. For him, like for Shaw, such marriages are based on lies and are doomed to collapse.

Also, in the play, Mrs. Linde's marriage was solely based on financial gain. When Nora asks the lady's motive for choosing her husband, Mrs. Linde replies, 'I had...Mother...and my two younger brothers to look after. I didn't think I had the right to turn him down' (27). Nora's reaction to this is actually a hint into her character.

It is hardly surprising that feminists celebrate Ibsen and Shaw. For one thing, Ibsen's three often-performed plays repeatedly suggest that marriage is but formalised and legalised prostitution. For example, in *A Doll's House,* Mrs. Linde, a childhood friend whom Nora has just encountered after an absence of many years, tells Nora that her marriage has been an unhappy one.

"Nora: Tell me, is it really true that you didn't love your husband? …
Mrs. Linde: Well, my mother was still alive; and she was helpless and bedridden. And I had my two little brothers to take care of. I didn't feel I could say no.
Nora: . . . He was rich then, was he?" (94)

Linde's confession here is a betrayal that she gets married for money and not for love. Linde accepts to get married to a man she does not love because she hopes that the man's money will help her to take care of her mother's poor health and her two brothers. She relegates the whole idea of love to the background and projects her materialistic nature. Marriage for money is, therefore, an ill of the Victorian society that Ibsen seeks to castigate. Ibsen's intention here is to destroy such hypocritical attitudes that have eaten deep into the Norwegian and Victorian societies and are still persistent in our society today.

Apparently, 'Nora's incredulity that Mrs. Linde was left with 'only a grief to live on' indicates to Mrs. Linde that Nora has not known hardship in her life. This realisation suggests to the reader that the character development of Nora in

the play is apt to include some sort of hardship or life lessons. Nora, however, attempts to prove her worth when she details how she saved her husband's life through financial means. Along with Nora's incessant references to money are the many efforts she makes to pay back her loan from Krogstad. She uses all her extra money to make payments, causing Torvald to believe she is a spend-thrift. Her deceptions worsen with every action as she tries to cover up the illegal and covert acts of the past. This would even break down a typical marriage. However, because of Torvald's condescending and parental behaviour toward Nora, the problem is escalated.

By critically exposing Nora's recalcitrant actions, Ibsen seems to suggest that if Nora is treated on equal terms with her husband and given the same rights and privileges, she will exercise less deceit. She would feel secure in sharing the financial burdens with her husband and be free to make money decisions without pressure from Torvald. By frequently resorting to money issues, Nora violates the pious image she is supposed to maintain as a woman in her society. She has used for money, and the fact that she borrows money to save her husband's life is seen as seceding from the rules that govern the Victorian woman. Caged by strict patriarchal restrictions, Nora is forced to lie and to make her marriage a lie, whereas, as Ibsen intimates, this could be avoided if Nora's society offered her different circumstances.

Another issue regarding money surrounds Krogstad's character. Slowly revealed throughout the drama, Krogstad's financial failures are brought to the limelight. His reputation has been ruined by past illegal actions and his loss of integrity as a lawyer. When Torvald speaks of him, he says disgustedly, '...when a man lives inside a circle of stinking lies; he brings infection into his own home and contaminates his whole family. With every breath of air, his children inhale the germs of something ugly' (31). This comment is ironic because it was unbeknown to him. His wife has done the very same act, forging signatures, to save his life. Torvald is so dogmatic about the fact that people such as Krogstad are not fit to raise children, which practically mirrors his condemnation of Nora at the end when she reveals her horrible secret. In a fit of panic, Torvald says, 'But I won't let you bring up the children: I dare not trust you with them' (60). Again, the measure of a person's worth and morality is dictated by that person's capacity to manage money properly, negatively affecting the institution of marriage.

Mrs. Linde is also a person who struggles financially. With her loveless marriage meant for monetary gain, she experiences sadness when she cannot marry her true love, Krogstad, because of his financial difficulties and shady past. She admits her selfish motives when Nora announces her husband's new position at the bank. Clearly, for Mrs. Linde, money is a great priority, and this is illustrated when she says, 'Do you know when you told me about your husband's new position, I was delighted not so much for your sake but for my own' (58)? Mrs. Linde's mind immediately sees her gain in a friend's opportunity. Mrs. Linde is, therefore, a clear example of a woman who commercialises her emotions and gets involved in a marriage void of love.

Also, one of the reasons for Nora's dilemma in the play has to do with Gender roles. Torvald believes that women have specific responsibilities, and only women should do these duties. He thinks that Nora has to take care of the children. As soon as the children enter the home, Torvald tells her that '...the place will only be bearable for a mother now' (Ibsen 265). Torvald implies that only a mother should mainly spend time with her children and raise them. Torvald believe that raising children has to do with mothers results in him having very little interaction, almost none, with the children. The audience does not see one instance in which Torvald shows love to his children, primarily for the same reason. On the other hand, the audience also sees how Nora spends time with her children, playing hide and seek with them. The stereotypical idea of how a mother has to take care of the children and make sure they grow up properly is depicted by Ibsen.

Also, because of her gender, Nora cannot borrow money herself. She has to get the signature of her husband or her father to borrow money. However, Torvald can easily borrow money if he wants to. Society sets different standards for women and men when it comes to borrowing. Ibsen portrays these double standards that society sets based on genders.

Nora also has restrictions on how to spend money and what to eat. Torvald instructs Nora not to waste money by buying macaroons and sweets from the confectioners. He gets Nora's word that she will not go to the bakery. He complains to Nora about her spend-thrift nature. He tells her, 'It's a sweet little spend-thrift, but she uses up a deal of money' (Ibsen 32). However, at the same time, he also gives her money and finds pleasure in making Nora plead for the money. He asks Nora, 'Come, come, my little skylark must not droop her wings. What is this! Is my little squirrel out of temper?' (Ibsen 15). When Torvald plays around with Nora or instructs her to give him a sense of authority over her, Nora becomes more dependent on Torvald. Once again, this fits the society's general structure of masculine control and feminine dependence, especially in marriage.

Nora's inability to deal with the world of economics openly because of her gender frustrates her marriage, and she contemplates departure and divorce. Torvald tries to stop her from leaving home and informs her that 'It's shocking. This is how you would neglect your most sacred duties [being at home and serving husband and children]' (Ibsen 438). Torvald believes that it is a woman's responsibility to look after her husband and serve the family. Unlike Nora, Torvald still thinks in the society's conventional method in which women and men have specific duties assigned based on their gender. Hence, he cannot comprehend Nora's decision to leave him and the kids. As is the case in *Ghosts*, Ibsen castigates such marriages and considers them hypocritical and fragile.

In *Ghosts,* marriage for money is also a prominent theme. The carpenter, Engstrand, suggests to Regina, who at this point thinks she is his daughter that she should marry for that reason. After all, he married Regina's mother for money. Like Regina, she had been a servant in the Alving household until Lieutenant Alving got her pregnant. Mrs. Alving discharges her, giving her some money before she leaves, and then Engstrand marries her. Pastor Manders discusses the matter with Lieutenant Alving's widow in the following excerpt:

Manders: How much was it you gave the girl?

Mrs. Alving: Fifty pounds.

Manders: Just imagine! To go and marry a fallen woman for a paltry fifty pounds! (117)

The implication is that the transaction would have been reasonable, in the eyes of the respectable pastor, if the sum had been larger: as large as the sum that had 'bought' Mrs. Alving. At the play's outset, when she is making arrangements for the opening of an orphanage named in memory of her husband, she explains something to Pastor Manders:

Mrs. Alving: The annual donations that I have made to this Orphanage add up to the sum which made Lieutenant Alving, in his day, 'a good match.'

Manders: I understand—

Mrs. Alving: It was the sum with which he bought me. (117)

It is ridiculous here that a pastor endorses marriages for money. Normally, one will expect a religious leader to reject all materialistic marriages and encourage marriages based on true love. However, the Pastor Manders we find in Ibsen's play encourages hypocritical marriages and would even want to propose the right amount of money as a prerequisite for marriage. Ibsen condemns such false pastors and practices and intends to overthrow all the 'Pastor Mandases' of his society.

By no means, then, is Ibsen exaggerating. When he says that his fellow countrymen are a nation of serfs living in a free country, he means that their fear of shame and notions of respectability enslave and oppress them in a land without political oppression. Pastor Manders cautions Mrs. Alving against reading books that contain intellectual ideas. This is because of the fear that such readings may alter the woman's understanding of family life and prevent her from dedicating all her services to the welfare of the family as society demands. Equally, Manders forces Mrs. Alving back to her marital home when she attempts to run away after her first year of marriage. He tells Mrs. Alving that her attempt to run away constitutes a betrayal of her duties as a wife and mother. He passes the following judgment on her:

'A wilful, rebellious spirit has possessed all your life. Your natural inclination always led you towards indiscipline and lawlessness. You could never tolerate the slightest restrain; you consistently disregard your responsibility carelessly and unscrupulously as though it were a burden you had to cast aside. It no longer suited you to be a wife, so you left your husband. The cares of motherhood were too much for you, so you sent your child away to be brought up by strangers. (76)

It is because of the fidelity to society than to one's self that Pastor Manders considers Mrs. Alving's attempt at running away as 'rebellious and undisciplined'. In fact, Mrs. Alving, like Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*, attempts to run away from home because her matrimonial life proved to be unbearable for her. Pastor Manders remains aloof to Mrs. Alving's pains and considers only the societal implications of such a lawless departure. Ibsen stands against such conventional beliefs on marriage that destroy the woman. As this study seeks to demonstrate, Ibsen's goal is to overthrow such dogmatic practices and give women a better identity. This situation is reminiscent of Vivie's case in Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession.*

The issue of money and its influences during the Victorian period is also the major concern of Shaw in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. In the play, Sir George Crofts offers Vivie a more tangible, generally far more popular temptation than religion. He offers her an exalted social position backed up by money. The price is also the reward for becoming Lady Crofts. In a parody of Victorian marriage transactions, he seeks virtually to buy Vivie from Mrs. Warren, flaunting not only money but his death and a wealthy widowhood as bait. As Gardner represents the emptiness, pompousness, and hypocrisy of a Church incapacitated by its worldly representatives, Crofts represents the immorality, avariciousness, and hypocrisy of a society that gilds its licentiousness, greed, and corruption with money and social prestige.

In the play, Mrs. Warren, Vivie's mother, recognises that the transition from an irresponsible, promiscuous young spark to a lecherous, dirty old man is merely one of age. Vivie, with more clarity, sees that to sell her soul to conventional Victorian prestige and monetary respectability in the name of marriage would be to sell it far too cheaply. It would be to sell oneself to the fundamental corruption of an entire social system. As the protagonist in a morality play then, Vivie starts out in comparative ignorance of the world and progresses through a series of temptations that educate her, clarifying and purifying her vision, leaving her at the end in a state of self-knowledge, purgation, and peace with herself, constituting salvation.

As an exemplary Shavian heroine, Vivie rejects crofts' offer and is not influenced by money. Such materialistic tendencies in the plays of Ibsen and Shaw symbolise the collapsing nature of marriage institutions and the failure of the church in the 20th century to redress the shameful situation.

According to Shaw, marriage is a financial bargain and a pretty poor one for women. For Ibsen and Shaw, money is the root cause of the social evils present in the marriages in their societies. This allowed the authors to explore many areas of human weaknesses, including deception, untrustworthiness, and condescension. Although their plays are not exclusively for women's rights, both authors use this controversial topic to express their ideas about human rights in general and marriage in particular. The theme of money transcends both genders in all times and places, making it an ideal source of conflict in patriarchal marriages. They seem to intimate that the barriers society places on the right to money regarding gender issues could lead to deceit and conflict. If society did not restrict a woman's rights, Nora would not make an effort to save her husband's life a secret to him, and consequently, her marriage would be saved.

It must be made clear that the attitude towards women has not changed much in the history of mankind. Both playwrights must have seen this fact and reflected it in their works. What was experienced by women towards the end of the nineteenth century was almost the same towards the end of the twentieth century. It seems that men do not want to lose their traditional power as husbands. In short, Ibsen and Shaw draw attention to the traditional order in the world that men want to keep women under their control, that women are tired of being regarded as the minor sex, and want to feel

that they are equal parts of a whole. Their plays included in this analysis reveal in plain terms the perception on the part of men that, in mutual relations, love is protection and marriage is domination.

4. Marriage: Institution or Contract?

The point has already been made that Ibsen's *A Doll's House* criticises the traditional roles of men and women in 19th-century marriages. To many 19th-century Europeans, this was scandalous. Nothing was considered more holy than the marriage covenant, and to portray it in such a way was completely unacceptable. However, a few more open-minded critics, such as Shaw, found Ibsen's willingness to examine society without prejudice exhilarating.

Marriage is, therefore, a significant theme in the plays of both authors. Most of these plays revolve around marriage as told from the female main character's point of view. These plays were written during the same general period and seemed to reflect marriage similarly. Ibsen and Shaw treat marriage as a social institution limiting women's freedom and rights, not as a mutually desired contract of love entered into by choice. This contrasts highly with the typical portrayal of marriage.

In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen tells us what seems to be a loving and happy marriage, although a secretive one. He begins his play with a scene written to show us the love that Nora and Torvald share. Even in this scene, however, we see that Torvald does not think highly of his wife. Clela Allphin, in her *"Women in the Plays of Henrik Ibsen*", states that 'Torvald considers his wife foolish and childish, and apparently views her as a plaything' (18). This opinion is reinforced throughout the play.

Torvald is representative of the male state of mind of this period. He is derisive of Nora and women in general. He does not think Nora is capable of complex thoughts or actions and does not consider her responsible. He considers her ideas and activities trivial and meaningless. He seems to think of her as a pet and even refers to her as a squirrel and a songbird. Nevertheless, he feels that his word is the law and that Nora should agree with his opinions.

Nora thinks she loves her husband and has even risked her future to save him. She has kept a secret from him for years, one that comes out in time and threatens the stability of their marriage. This secret was for Torvald's benefit but could cause irreparable financial damage to Nora and Torvald and could destroy their family. Nora fights to protect her family and herself, as well as the reputation of her husband. However, when Torvald learns of her actions, he only cares for the impact it will have on himself and reveals how little he truly cares for Nora. He uses their children against her, although, in reality, he has little use for them either.

However, Nora undergoes a dramatic change during the play, changing from weak and clingy to a strong, independent woman. She realises that she has always been sheltered and treated as a doll. She questions her life and beliefs and decides that she must learn to be herself before being any good to anyone else, including her children. She blames her father and husband for her inexperience and ignorance and feels that her only chance for a happy future depends on her leaving this stifling environment.

Ibsen uses Nora to state his opinion of marriage clearly. He says that women are sent straight from their father's home to their husbands and are taught never to question the state of things. They are expected to follow the direction of the men in their lives blindly and to do as they are expected by society. They are given few rights and must rely on others for spiritual, moral, and financial support. A woman's place is in the home, caring for her children and fulfilling her husband's desires.

In Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession,* Shaw's satire of marriage is achieved from a different perspective as compared to Ibsen's, but the intention is the same in both plays. Vivie is tempted to get married to Sir George Crofts for his money and stands the chance of becoming a wealthy widow upon Croft's death. Therefore, the institution is measured in monetary terms with no regard for feelings and love for one another. Unlike Ibsen's Nora and Mrs. Alving in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, Shaw's heroine, Vivie, refuses to conform to what had become the spirit of the time. She is a true Shavian Heroine who chooses not to get married for money and demonstrates the qualities of a morally conscious lady in a morally decadent society.

Ibsen and Shaw seem to regard marriage as an institution designed to further a man's place in society. It is beneficial for a man to have a family, but most of the work is left to the women. Men receive all the rights in a marriage, and while they shoulder the financial burden, women are expected to take care of all the mundane tasks in the home and the family. Women are given little or no choice in whom they marry or what will be done with their lives. They are possessions to be picked up or discarded at will and cannot accomplish anything of significance on their own.

Marriage is the only way a woman can secure financial stability, as Ibsen demonstrates through Kristine Linde's character, and this is unfortunate for Ibsen. Marriage seems a bleak and dreary future, as told in all of these plays. Love and happiness seem of little consequence to the society of this period. For the women in these stories, marriage appears more of a prison than a life. They seem to be trapped in a world within which they have little control. They are of little importance in this world and must live up to society's expectations. Marriage is the only option given to these women, and it does not seem to be a fulfilling or promising future. Only with the end of a marriage by whatever means do these characters seem to feel alive, even though they will possibly endure additional hardships.

As already highlighted, Ibsen and Shaw apparently hold similar views on marriage. Both authors seem to regard marriage as a social institution with little benefit or appeal to women. They do not feel it is a mutually desired love contract between man and wife. To both authors, marriage limits a woman's place in the world, offering her little benefits or joy. These plays offer a unique insight into the period in which they were written and illustrate the oppression of women throughout history. They show marriage through a woman's eyes and portray the sexist ideals held by society.

What Ibsen and Shaw have accomplished in both plays is realism at its best. As previously mentioned, realism merely depicts life without looking through rose-coloured glasses. About feminism, Tanya Thresher, in *The Relationship between Women, Language, and Power in Ibsen's Hedda Gabler*, writes that realism 'reproduces what we already know. Realism is a continuous reinstatement of order, a system of power that renews itself by authorising some representations and censoring others' (405). Feminism is very real, so are suicide, motherhood, divorce, independence, and the other topics covered in all the plays.

There is no denying that the plays are primary examples of realism but also examples of feminism. However, that does not deny anyone the right to form their interpretation of the plays. Rather than labelling the plays as one thing, we should look into the characters and learn from their choices. We are all different, and the play's meaning will affect us differently. As Nora Helmer states in *A Doll's House*, 'I believe that first and foremost, I am an individual, just as much as you are or, at least, I'm going to try to be. I know most people agree with you, Torvald, and that's also what it says in books. So I have to think things out for myself and get things clear' (Ibsen 81).

Ibsen and Shaw defied the dramatic conventions of the 1800s with their creation of *A Doll's House, Ghosts, "Mrs. Warren's Profession*", and *Candida* and offered an insightful and long-overdue commentary on the social conventions of marriage. They show the reader that, even though there exists a strict social sentiment that a woman should be a loyal wife and mother, the women of the 1800s were not simply slaves to their families. Instead, they demonstrate that there can be women who dare to defy this limiting role and venture off to discover a world without duty, where they would be free to seek knowledge, independence, and a sense of self.

In *Candida*, Shaw criticises marriage and family because these institutions are based on false economics and biology. Although Candida, the protagonist, does not abandon her marriage with Morell as Nora does in *A Doll's House*, she faces the same dilemma as Nora. Trapped in a marriage of convenience with her husband Morrel, Candida finds herself in a fix when Eugene Marchbanks steps in and offers her the opportunity of abandoning her false marriage for one that is inspired by mutual love.

In the play, Morell's devotion and dedication to his wife make him an ideal husband, but contrary to what one would expect, he unintentionally treats his wife like a slave. Although Morell adores his wife, Marchbanks finds out that there is no real love between Morell and Candida and states that the conventional, pig-headed Morell cannot match up with the idealistic, noble Candida. His view and, of course, Shaw's, is that if a man loves his wife, he would wish to keep her happy, useful, and free from all conventional strings. To rescue Candida from her empty marriage and the chores, Marchbanks asks Morell to give up his wife. He condemns Morell, 'Your wife's beautiful fingers are dabbling in paraffin oil while you sit here comfortably preaching about it: everlasting preaching! Preaching! Words! Words! Words!' (44). Marchbanks offers an alternative to what Morell provides and poetically states that:

> *A tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun; where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets. Or a chariot! To carry us into the sky, where the lamps are stars and don't need to be filled with paraffin oil every day. (Shaw 46)*

Marchbanks has the intellectual competence to judge others correctly, and he finds the incompatible combination of the couple Morell and Candida. In contrast, they seem to be an ideal couple for others. Shaw introduces Morell as a respectable, popular, first-rate clergyman of forty with an unaffected voice and perfect articulation of a practiced orator. Although the people highly regard him, Marchbanks sees him as a religious windbag. He opines Morell to the typist Proserpine, 'I can see nothing in him but words, pious resolutions, what people call goodness' (Shaw 39). He degrades Morell's oration as merely excites people and rouses their fervour but makes no change in their conduct. He even compares Morell to King David, who danced before people to make them enthusiastic and despised by his wife for that.

Candida's dilemma in the play is as challenging as Nora's in *A Doll's House*. Loved by Marchbanks, whom she equally admires and adored by her husband, Morell, Candida has to choose between freedom from Victorian family mores represented by Marchbanks or imprisonment in such traditional marital norms represented by Morell. While the outcome in both plays is almost the direct opposite of the other, the fact that both heroines depart from strict societal ideals of marriage to impose a strong personality is clear and relevant. The heroines come across at the end of the plays as « New Women » who no longer accept the limitation of honour to men but implicitly yearn for equality between both genders. It is mainly for this reason that Nora finally decides to leave Helmer. Shaw was right when he said, 'It is clear that Helmer is brought to his senses and that Nora's departure is no claptrap 'farewell forever,' but a journey in search of self-respect and apprenticeship to life. […] The slam of the door behind her is more momentous. [...] There is an end of the old order' (Egan 376).

The end of the old order highlighted above is also confirmed in Shaw's *Candida*. When Candida decides that her husband is weak and that she is stronger and should protect him, she is shattering Victorian family standards and announcing the dawn of a new era. Candida's decision to offer her husband protection, security, and care is both visionary and prophetic. It can also be considered a sign of independence and self-assurance that the conventional woman lacked.

Candida is, therefore, a play that criticises middle-class family conventions in Victorian society, postulating that patriarchal societies make marriages look like contracts. The marriage in the play is no different as it looks more like a marriage for convenience than one based entirely on love. Candida's decision to choose her husband over Marchbanks can also be seen as materialistic, although she claims that it is because her husband is weaker than Marchbanks. Although Candida admires the alternative choices offered by the young poet, she knows that her husband is rich and can offer enough financial support for her.

The image of Morell and Candida's seemingly happy marriage shatters when Eugene Marchbanks, a young poet brought home by Morell out of compassion, enters into their relationship and declares his love for Candida. Nevertheless,

his love is not pure either. As Margery Morgan says, 'It is a blend of erotic with religious emotion' (Luckhurst 72). In the last part of the play, Candida is offered a choice between the two men, and she chooses 'the weaker' who comes out to be her husband too. Morell is a typical man of Helmer type who believes in a sacred concept of marriage in which the man is the owner and giver while the woman is merely a follower who needs 'care'. When Morell is teased by Eugene, who claims that Candida will prefer him at last, he cries out: 'If she is mad enough to leave me for you, who will protect her? Who will help her? Who will work for her? Who will be the father of her children?' (Shaw 1308) Morell's vision of marriage is conventional and derives from his theology. To him, marriage is a 'foretaste of what will be best in the kingdom of Heaven we are trying to establish on earth' (Shaw 1272).

In contrast, Candida's understanding of marriage is humanitarian. This clash of perspectives leads to Candida's dissatisfaction with her matrimonial life, as she says: 'Ah, James, how little you understand me. […] You understand nothing' (Ibid). She craves co-understanding, as Nora did, and her decision at the end of the play proves that she has attained a higher level of understanding hitherto an exclusive preserve of the masculine world in her society. This visionary development which makes Candida a 'New Woman' is confirmed at the end of the play because she:

> *Is independent in spirit, has confidence, is courageous, and has emotional stability. She is guided more by common sense and does not allow men to quarrel over her; on the contrary, she imposes her will on them. The auction scene at the end of the play is a determined declaration of independence quite as definite as the slamming of the door in Ibsen's A Doll's House. (Sodhi 69)*

Candida's decisive moment of change comes when she finds herself in what she calls an auction. This moving recognition brings about her ironic reaction: 'Pray, my lords and masters, what have you to offer for my choice? I am up for auction, it seems. What do you bid, James?' (Shaw 1314) Morell, however, offers her the conventional items a man offered at that time: 'I have nothing to offer but my strength for your defense, my honesty 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 a woman' (Shaw 1315).

It is important to note that one of the key reasons for Shaw's satire on conventional Victorian marriages lies in what Morell's husband offers her to convince her to jilt Marchbanks in favour of their marriage. Marchbanks offers everything except love, and with a typical Victorian mindset, he insinuates that Candida cannot provide protection and security for herself because she is a woman. As Morell suggests, any form of dignity and livelihood for a woman can only be provided by a man. Like Ibsen in *A Doll's House*, Shaw is very critical of marriages that are not based on love and considers them mere contracts or businesses. Indeed, what Marchbanks offers is opposed to what Morell offers but what is easily noticeable is the fact that none of the contendants offers love. This suggests that love was completely relegated to the background when considering marital decisions in Victorian society. Candida attacks such conventional views and proves in the play that, unlike the traditional woman, she has new perspectives and insights that can enable her to provide for and protect herself and her husband and marriage. By thinking so, Candida attacks the core of the Victorian notion of the family signals a new world order. She has what Morell and the patriarchal society believe she lacks, and the tables must turn. By claiming to have what Morell offers to convince her, Candida implicitly suggests that what she needs is a lover in her marriage and not a protector or a producer. Rather than stay indoors and perform trivial duties like Nora at the beginning of *A Doll's House*, Candida thinks that she can contemplate more serious issues about her security, safety, and personality and that of her family and society.

It is worth noting that, unlike Candida, who decides to stay in her marriage and turn the tables from inside, Nora in *A Doll's House*, basically abandons Helmer to find out what Morell is offering Candida: defense, surety, livelihood, and dignity. Whether in or out of matrimony, what is significant is the renaissance and reawakening that both heroines are witnessing. Unlike Nora, Candida can use her charm in order to have Morell understand that it is, in fact, he who needs care. Finally, Morell acknowledges it, too: 'It's all true, every word. What I am, you have made me with the labour of your hands and the love of your heart! You are my wife, mother, and sisters: you are the sum of all loving care to me'. She blames her own sex, as she blames the opposite for bringing about the existing condition: 'I build a castle of comfort and indulgence for him […] I make him master here' (Shaw 1316).

Referring to this, H.C. Duffin, in *The Quintessence of Bernard Shaw*, states that Candida is, however, considered 'a Shavian intellectual woman, full-fledged, not an Ibsenite womanly woman on the point of being reborn' (Nethercot 2). Moreover, Nethercot, in his article, 'The Truth about Candida', calls Candida a philistine, Morell an idealist, and Marchbanks, a realist, alluding to Shaw's differentiation of the terms in his *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*:

> *Philistines are those who 'find the British family arrangement quite good enough for them'; they 'comfortably accept marriage as a matter of course,' never dreaming of calling it an 'institution,' either 'holy' or otherwise, and thrive happily within it. The idealists realize that marriage, for plenty of those involved in it, is a failure but do not dare to face that fact, and therefore go to all sorts of excessive extremes to defend what Shaw calls the 'ideal', which for them masks the face of the truth. The lonesome realist is the individual 'strong enough to face the truth the idealists are shirking'-the man who insists on tearing off the masks and revealing the illusions beneath. (4)*

5. Conclusion

Therefore, the authors' satire of marriages in Victorian society is evident in the plays under study. For Ibsen and Shaw, all marriages inspired by patriarchal mindsets and not mutual love are doomed to fail. While the failure in the marriages in Shaw's plays does not necessarily lead to divorce like in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, both authors condemn marriages based on materialistic, hypocritical, and patriarchal considerations. It is clear from the analysis above that Nora

and Candida are Victorian women who desire emancipation from the traditional bonds of marriage. Whereas Nora begins her journey with the famous slamming of the house door, Candida begins hers by staying at home. The actions of the two heroines deviate from Victorian family standards and represent the vision of marriage for the two authors. The failures and difficulties in the marriages in the plays of the authors suggest that for them, the institution of marriage in Victorian society is in peril and jeopardy. Although neither Ibsen nor Shaw makes any clear-cut prescriptions, the events in the plays suggest that eliminating traditional gendered roles, hypocrisy, and materialism is a prerequisite for the survival of the institution of marriage. The woman's personality must be well established in society and her marriage for peace and harmony to reign. Without this, the authors postulate, marriage is only a sexual contract between a man and a woman. For them, a woman's economic dependence on a man enslaves her in the house, which hinders the free movement of what Shaw calls the 'Life Force'. Referring to this, G.K. Chesterton in *Bernard Shaw* notes that:

> *Bernard Shaw expresses something that is not appropriately expressed anywhere else, i.e., the idea of marriage. Marriage is not a mere chain upon love. Marriage is a fact and actual human relation like that of motherhood, which has certain human habits and loyalties. A marriage is not slavery.* (96)

The last words in the quotation above seem to summarise the marriage philosophy of Shaw and Ibsen. For the two authors, all marriages that enslave the woman and those inspired by selfish economic considerations like those of the 19th century are platforms for conflicts and dilemmas. *A Doll's House* illustrates this well by presenting the image of the inadequate scope allowed to the woman in the middle-class 19th-century family. Whether in *A Doll's House* or *Ghosts* or in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* or *Candida*, Ibsen and Shaw expose the hypocrisy and nullity of 19th-century family life. Although the authors raise serious matrimonial problems without proposing solutions, they incite people to think about the issues they raise and see them as a matter of intellect and not emotions. The identical philosophies of both authors concerning marriage can easily be discerned, but the methods in their plays are quite different. Ibsen reaches his satirical goal through either broken or failed marriages in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*.

In contrast, Shaw preserves the sanctity of married life in his satire of Victorian marriages and extramarital relationships in *Candida* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. The two authors emphasise the necessity for freedom and respect for women in marriages. The auction scene at the end of Shaw's *Candida* can be seen as a determined declaration of independence, quite as definite as the slamming of the door in Ibsen's *A Doll's House.*

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