

**Among Fallen Women, New Women and New Men:**

An Exploration of Changing Gender Stereotypes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Word count: 10,782

Camille van Pottelsberghe de la Potterie

Student number: 01912528

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Amann

A dissertation submitted to Ghent University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature, English and French.

Academic year: 2022 – 2023

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who have supported and guided me throughout the process of completing this bachelor paper. First and foremost, I am immensely grateful to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Amann, for her valuable guidance and insightful feedback.

I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Andrew Bricker, who not only imparted the necessary knowledge and skills for writing this paper but also infused his knowledge with a dose of humour, making this journey all the more enjoyable.

Additionally, my gratitude goes out to my parents for giving me the opportunity to go to university to study what interested me most. Without their moral support and that of my friends, I would not have made it this far.

## **Table of Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Historical Context
4. Investigation
  - 4.1. Among Fallen Women
  - 4.2. Among New Women
  - 4.3. Breaking the Chains of Dependency
  - 4.4. Among New Men
5. Conclusion
6. Works cited

## **1. Introduction**

Two views on the relationship of literature and society are that literature reflects society and culture, and that it influences attitudes and behaviour.<sup>1</sup> This paper will establish that both assumptions are true in terms of changing gender stereotypes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represent a pivotal era characterized by profound transformations in societal norms and expectations. During this period, a prevailing ideology took hold, promoting the virtues of piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness among women. Women were primarily expected to prioritize their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers, while men were regarded as the primary breadwinners and heads of the household. Simultaneously, this era witnessed a surge in women's activism, triggering a shift in societal perspectives regarding education, domesticity, and professional opportunities. By the 19th century, women in Britain started to actively advocate for suffrage, marking a significant turning point in their quest for gender equality. By the close of the 19th century, the suffrage movement had gained considerable momentum, setting the stage for subsequent advancements in the ongoing fight for women's rights in the centuries that followed. These developments were instrumental in reshaping societal structures and challenging the prevailing gender roles, opening new avenues for women's participation in social, political, and professional spheres. The rise of women's activism during this period was a response to the constraints imposed by the prevailing ideology, as women began to recognize their inherent capabilities and aspirations beyond the domestic sphere. The growing emphasis on education for women, along with their increased involvement in

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<sup>1</sup> Albrecht, M. C. "The Relationship of Literature and Society." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59, no. 5, 1954, pp. 425–36. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2772244>.

public life and professional endeavours, contributed to the gradual erosion of gendered boundaries and the expansion of opportunities available to women.

This essay will argue that leading up to that moment, significant shifts occurred in traditional gender roles in British literature, challenging and reversing both female and male stereotypes, particularly in terms of their interdependence. The selected works, George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, an eighteenth-century play, and Daniel Defoe's novel *Roxana*, a nineteenth-century novel, will serve as the foundation for this argument. Daniel Defoe's novel *Roxana* and George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* are two notable works that offer insightful portrayals of gender dynamics and the challenges to traditional gender roles during their respective time periods. *Roxana* follows the story of a woman who enters into prostitution in order to improve her social standing, highlighting the complexities and struggles faced by women in society. On the other hand, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* explores the life of a woman who becomes a wealthy brothel owner, questioning societal norms and presenting a provocative critique of the double standards imposed on women. Both works delve into the themes of female agency, societal expectations, and the interplay of power between genders, making them compelling sources for examining the shifting gender roles and stereotypes of their times.

While one work is a play and the other a novel, their different formats do not hinder the focus of this essay, as it primarily examines the gender stereotypes portrayed within the characters. However, the similarity between the characters in both works is crucial for the analyses conducted. In both works, two women strive to improve their living conditions by engaging in prostitution and subsequently climbing the social ladder.

Additionally, these women are mothers. The male characters in both works are connected to the prostitutes through either (past) sexual or financial relationships. By exploring these works, the essay aims to shed light on the shifting gender dynamics and the complex interplay between the characters. It will investigate how these narratives challenge traditional notions of gender roles, emphasizing the interdependence between male and female characters. Through the examination of these works, the essay will illustrate how the characters blur the boundaries of gender expectations, challenging the assumption of women's dependence on men and presenting a more nuanced and multifaceted representation of gender dynamics in British literature. To demonstrate the subversion and reversal of gender stereotypes, it will explore how the female characters' agency, resilience, and pursuit of independence challenge societal norms and expectations of their time, while also examining to what extent the male characters are portrayed as dependent on the prostitutes. By delving into the nuances of these works and their respective characters, this essay seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the shifting gender dynamics in British literature during the periods represented by Shaw's play and Defoe's novel. Ultimately, it aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender representation and the evolving societal perceptions of gender roles in the chosen literary works.

It is noteworthy to mention that the research conducted thus far has primarily focused on women's roles and their dependence, leaving a limited amount of scholarship exploring the potential for changes in men's societal roles during this period. Therefore, this essay will also explore the portrayal of men as the ones upon whom women are dependent, examining any potential shifts or challenges to this traditional depiction. By

addressing these research gaps, this essay seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving gender dynamics and interdependencies depicted in literature during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology employed in this essay involves several interconnected approaches to comprehensively explore the transitions between gender stereotypes within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Firstly, the essay will provide a historical context that is relevant to understanding the evolving gender dynamics of the period. By examining the historical context, this research seeks to illuminate the evolving roles and opportunities that were available to women during both centuries. A specific focus will be placed on assessing the degree of dependence on men experienced by women. This investigation will encompass an analysis of shifting gender roles, the emergence of social and economic opportunities for women, as well as the persistent constraints and limitations they faced. Furthermore, this chapter will delve into the societal position of single mothers and prostitutes, as their experiences will provide a pertinent representation of the circumstances faced by the characters in the selected literary works. This contextualization will enable readers to position the subsequent analyses within a broader narrative of history, connecting the findings to the larger framework of social change, development, and evolution. Secondly, the essay will establish a link between the female protagonists in both works and the concepts of the 'fallen woman' and/or 'new woman.' The concepts of the 'fallen woman' and the 'new woman' are important constructs within the discourse of gender and societal expectations. The fallen

woman refers to a moral and social archetype that emerged during the Victorian era, embodying a woman who had transgressed societal norms, particularly in relation to sexuality or morality. Often associated with prostitution or extramarital affairs, the fallen woman represented a deviant figure, considered morally compromised and subjected to social exclusion. In contrast, the 'new woman' represented a progressive and evolving female identity that emerged in response to changing social and cultural contexts. The new woman challenged traditional gender roles and expectations, advocating for women's rights, education, and professional opportunities. She sought to redefine notions of femininity, asserting her independence, agency, and autonomy in various spheres of life. The concept of the new woman reflected the evolving aspirations and aspirations of women as they sought to navigate the changing landscapes of the nineteenth century onwards. Despite their distinct connotations, these concepts both serve as lenses through which to examine the tensions and anxieties surrounding women's changing roles and the challenges posed to traditional gender stereotypes during this transformative era. Additionally, the essay will conduct an analysis of contrasts between the characters in both plays. This analysis will be twofold: firstly, it will explore how the female and male characters of each play are portrayed in terms of their interdependence, examining the extent to which they rely on one another within their respective social and relational contexts. Secondly, the essay will assess the degree to which a shift in changing stereotypes can be observed between the two centuries under examination. Lastly, the essay will synthesize the findings obtained from the previous analyses and draw conclusions based on these findings. The conclusions will provide insights into the transformative nature of gender stereotypes during the eighteenth and nineteenth



centuries, highlighting the shifting dynamics and the challenges to traditional gender roles presented in the selected works. By employing this methodology, the essay aims to offer a comprehensive exploration of the changing gender stereotypes within a historical context, connecting the analyses to the broader narrative of history. The examination of the 'fallen woman' and 'new woman' concepts, as well as the analysis of contrasts between the characters and the shifts in stereotypes, will provide a nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics of gender representation. The conclusion will consolidate the findings and contribute to a deeper comprehension of the transformative power of these literary works in challenging traditional gender roles during the specified centuries.

### **3. Historical Context**

This chapter will be devoted to the exploration of the historical context of women's position in British society during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that is relevant to changing gender stereotypes during that period. To easily distinguish the differences associated with the two centuries, one chapter covers the eighteenth century, while the succeeding chapter focuses on the nineteenth century. This historical background will serve as an essential context in which the characters of *Roxana*, of which the publication year is 1724, and *Mrs Warren's Profession*, written in 1893, found themselves. The foundation for this chapter consists of multiple secondary sources. By analysing the historical context of women's position in British society leading up to, and including, the Victorian era, our understanding of the factors that shaped gender stereotypes in this period will be deepened, and light will be shed on the evolving roles and opportunities

available to women. A special focus will be put on the extent to which, and in what ways, men and women were interdependent. Changes in the conception of gender and sexuality, gender roles and the emergence of new social and economic opportunities for women will be examined, as well as the constraints and limitations that persisted. In addition, the options available to a single mother and prostitute in the British society of both centuries will be examined thereby providing the most relevant and accurate representation of the circumstances in which the characters of both literary works found themselves. Such factual representation could indeed change or amplify the overall meaning of the challenged and reversed stereotypes which will be presented later in this paper.

From the day she was born, the purpose of life for a woman in the 18th century was predominantly designated by men. In the 18th century, a woman's identity was solely defined by her marriage to a wealthy man. Women were commonly categorized and identified primarily in relation to their marital status as wives or widows, rather than being recognized and acknowledged as individuals in their own right.<sup>2</sup> Her main purpose in life was to find a husband, serve him dutifully, and bear children. This was considered the only way for a woman to have a respectable and secure life. Due to the irrevocable nature of marriage and the limited economic independence women had, considerations of economic and social factors carried more weight than romance and sexual attraction when it came to selecting a spouse.<sup>2</sup> As Gowing argues, marriage was for this reason often seen as a form of prostitution, where women traded their bodies for wealth and

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<sup>2</sup> Mack, P. "Women and Gender in Early Modern England." *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 73, no. 2, 2001, pp. 379–92. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.1086/321030>.

status.<sup>3</sup> The degree to which women were able to make decisions for themselves varied to some extent. While some women had more autonomy and freedom to make choices, many were constrained by social norms and legal restrictions. Women were mostly excluded from participating in the public sphere, and societal norms and laws ensured that they remained subordinate to men in their private lives. Marriage was the most common and socially acceptable way for women to gain independence and decision-making power. However, even in marriage, women's rights were limited as their husbands had legal control over their wives and could make decisions for them, such as where they lived, how they spent their money, and who they associated with. In the early 18th century, novels like Daniel Defoe's *Roxana* emerged, placing a significant emphasis on self-expression, free will, and personal feelings. However, this literary movement received criticism for its perceived negative effects on societal norms. Specifically, it was accused of undermining the longstanding concept of arranged marriages and intensifying expectations surrounding romantic love. The prominence of these themes in novels of the time raised concerns about the potential disruption of traditional social structures and the cultivation of unrealistic romantic ideals.<sup>4</sup> The subordinate position of women was not only defined by economic and political dependency. Their subordinate status was intricately woven into the fabric of their daily lives through a complex network of unwritten norms and practices dictated by the polite social code they were expected to adhere to. As Judith Bennett states, patriarchy was a 'familial-social, ideological, political system in which men' - not only by force or direct pressure but 'through ritual, tradition, law and

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<sup>3</sup> Ylivuori, S. *Women and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England: Bodies, Identities, and Power*. United Kingdom, Taylor & Francis, 2018, pp. 40-62.

<sup>4</sup> Moore, W. "Love and Marriage in 18th-Century Britain." *Historically Speaking*, vol. 10 no. 3, 2009, p. 8-10. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/hsp.0.0038

language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play'.<sup>3</sup> Women were expected to be obedient and submissive to their husbands, and those who defied this norm risked social ostracism or even legal punishment. Wife beating was commonplace and considered a regular occurrence.<sup>2</sup> According to English common law of the time, women had very little economic freedom, as any property they owned before marriage automatically became their husband's, ultimately making women from wealthy families vulnerable to exploitation. Furthermore, married women had no legal identity under common law.

The eighteenth century has been put forward as the century that witnessed profound transformations in the understanding of human bodies and the construction of sexuality.<sup>5,6</sup> Sexual pleasure of women was considered redundant to conception and therefore completely unnecessary in the eighteenth century. As Ruth Perry explains, 'by the eighteenth century they were increasingly reimagined as belonging to another order of being: loving but without sexual needs.' Before the seventeenth century, sex was considered primarily as a sociological construct rather than an ontological one. However, the modern concept of sex emerged in the eighteenth century, and by the nineteenth century, differences in sex were believed to be rooted in the intricacies of nerves, flesh, and bone. To prevent women from grabbing political power, she had to be presented qualitatively different from men as political theorists increasingly appealed to a potentially egalitarian language. As a result, scientists revealed inextricable differences between the

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<sup>5</sup> Harvey, K. "The Century of Sex? Gender, Bodies, and Sexuality in the Long Eighteenth Century." *The Historical Journal*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2002, pp. 900–905. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3133533>.

<sup>6</sup> Perry, R. "Colonizing the Breast: Sexuality and Maternity in Eighteenth-Century England." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1991, pp. 219–34. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3704034>.

two genders that justified unequal access to power. A new ideology emerged, emphasizing the concept of separate spheres and perceiving of human beings as to be divided into two different and unequal sexes, of which the male is biologically superior. Since women were thought to have inferior minds, they were educated less formally than men.<sup>4</sup> This division was considered inherent and inescapable.<sup>6</sup>

Single women, widows, prostitutes, and others who did not conform to traditional gender roles faced even greater challenges in making decisions for themselves. Without the protection and support of a husband, these women were often marginalized and excluded from society. However, despite these limitations, some women were able to assert their independence and make decisions for themselves. For example, women who owned property and had sufficient financial resources, such as widows, had a degree of autonomy that allowed them to make decisions about their own lives.<sup>4</sup> Before women married, they were supposed to stay at home and may or may not help their mothers. Women such as housekeepers, nurses, governesses and artists generally had no steady work and were not entitled to keep their wages for themselves if they were married. Although women could work, they by no means enjoyed all the luxuries and rights that men had and remained dependent.<sup>7</sup>

Equally exceptional yet groundbreaking, and thus worth mentioning in this historical context, Mary Wollstonecraft challenged traditional gender roles and advocated for women's rights to education and self-determination in a way that had never been seen before. By arguing that women were not naturally inferior to men, but rather were made so by societal norms and a lack of educational and professional opportunities,

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<sup>7</sup> Baudino, I., and Carré, J. "Invisible Woman: Aspects of Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Britain". Routledge, 2017.

Wollstonecraft stated that women should have access to the same educational opportunities as men, and that education was the key to women's personal and intellectual development. In her seminal work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, she also criticized the societal norms that confined women to the domestic sphere and prevented them from engaging in public life. Wollstonecraft's work was distinctive in its emphasis on the importance of education for women and its recognition of the interconnectedness of women's rights and social justice. She argued that gender inequality was linked to other forms of oppression, such as class and race, and that social justice could only be achieved through the recognition of women's rights and the dismantling of gender-based discrimination and oppression. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was a groundbreaking work of feminist literature that provided a powerful critique of gender inequality and laid the groundwork for future feminist movements and activism.<sup>8</sup>

Women were thus subjected to oppression and were victims of the patriarchal system during the 18th century. The boundaries between man and woman were well-defined. Man was made superior, partly through fear that women would consider themselves equal and reach for power. Due to such unfavourable environment, women received little respect and had to depend on men for their welfare throughout their life. Their roles were limited to being homemakers and child-bearers, and their education was restricted to skills related to managing households, cooking, needlework, piano, and laundry. Once a woman had signed the marriage contract, her father passed on his decision-making role over her to her husband. She resigned thus all legal, economic, and

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<sup>8</sup> Wollstonecraft, M. "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects". Cambridge University Press, 2010.

physical independence and had no choice but to submit her choices to his will. Women were not allowed to leave the house without their husbands' permission, and even unmarried women had limited rights to own property or make contracts. As a result, women of all marital statuses had no distinct identity or independence. In conclusion, even though some exceptions are noteworthy, the 18th century British woman had limited agency and was not widely considered capable of making decisions for herself. The ability of women to exercise their autonomy was largely dependent on their social and economic status, and many women were subject to the decisions of their male counterparts. In the words of Ylivuori: "The imbalance of power led women to a situation where they were wholly dependent on their financial weight to have any impact, but, at the same time, had no means of acquiring financial assets—aside from marriage".<sup>4</sup>

Many historians argue that the period from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century, known as the Victorian era, was one of the most progressive eras in British history. The Victorian era saw significant social, political, and economic reforms that transformed British society and paved the way for a more modern society. In half a century, Britain's population doubled.<sup>9</sup> During this era, significant progress was made in the areas of public health, education, labor rights, and women's rights.<sup>10</sup> The Public Health Act of 1875, for instance, was a landmark piece of legislation that helped to improve living conditions in Britain's urban areas, which had been ravaged by disease and overcrowding. The Education Act of 1870 made education compulsory for children

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<sup>9</sup> Banks, J. A. "Population Change and the Victorian City." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 1968, pp. 277–89. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3825147>.

<sup>10</sup> Pedersen, J. S. "The Reform of Women's Secondary and Higher Education: Institutional Change and Social Values in Mid and Late Victorian England." *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1979, pp. 61–91. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/367810>.

aged 5-10, paving the way for a more literate and educated population. In addition, the Victorian era saw the emergence of the labor movement, which fought for better working conditions and higher wages for workers. The Trade Union Act of 1871 legalized trade unions, giving workers a legal avenue to collectively bargain for better wages and working conditions.<sup>11</sup>

The Victorian era saw significant progress in the area of women's rights. Significant strides were made in women's education, employment opportunities, legal rights, and political representation. The late 19th century saw the emergence of the women's suffrage movement, which campaigned for women's rights and gender equality. The Married Women's Property Act of 1882 gave married women the right to own and control their own property, while women's rights activists, such as the Suffragettes, worked tirelessly to secure voting rights for women, eventually leading to the Representation of the People Act in 1918, which granted the vote for women over 30 who met a property qualification.<sup>11</sup>

Women's access to education also increased during this period. Grammar schools for girls were founded and women started being admitted to university by the second half the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, female students were admitted to university on an equal footing with men.<sup>12</sup>

Women had greater opportunities to become economically independent than in the eighteenth century, which reduced their overall dependence on men. The emergence of new industries and technologies during the nineteenth century created new job

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<sup>11</sup> Bloy, M. "Victorian Legislation: a Timeline." Victorian Web, last modified 28 July 2014, [victorianweb.org/victorian/history/legistl.html](http://victorianweb.org/victorian/history/legistl.html).

<sup>12</sup> Prentice, A. "The Education of 19th Century British Women." *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1982, pp. 215–19. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/367750>.



opportunities for women outside the home. This allowed many women to earn wages and become financially independent, which reduced their overall dependence on men for financial support. While these changes allowed some women to become less dependent on men, women's overall economic opportunities remained limited as they were paid significantly less than men for similar work, and many jobs were closed to women based on gender discrimination.<sup>13</sup>

The late nineteenth century also saw the rise of women's labor unions and the development of women's professions. Women began to enter previously male-dominated professions such as medicine, law, and academia. In addition, women played an increasingly important role in philanthropy and social reform movements, which gave them a greater sense of purpose and agency outside of the traditional domestic sphere. Women's involvement in these movements, such as the suffrage movement, allowed them to advocate for their own rights and shape the direction of social and political change.<sup>14</sup> However, marriage continued to be a major goal for women, and the ideal of separate spheres reinforced the notion that women's primary role was in the domestic sphere, which limited their opportunities outside of the home. The idea that the right place for a woman is at home was still prevalent. The same goes for her financial dependence.<sup>13</sup>

Due to the prevailing social norms and moral attitudes, the options and circumstances for single mothers were challenging and limited. As their status was seen as a violation of societal expectations and traditional family structures, they often faced

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<sup>13</sup> Scott, J. W., and Louise A. Tilly. "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Europe." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 17, no. 1, 1975, pp. 36–39. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/178370>.

<sup>14</sup> Neale, R. S. "Working-Class Women and Women's Suffrage." *Labour History*, no. 12, 1967, pp. 16–34. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27507859>.

the risk of social ostracism. In terms of financial support, unmarried mothers were often left to bear the burden alone, as there was limited assistance available. The concept of welfare and state support as we know it today was non-existent in the nineteenth century. Many single mothers struggled to provide for themselves and their children, often relying on menial jobs with low wages or turning to workhouses or charitable institutions for assistance. In some cases, women resorted to giving up their children for adoption, placing them in orphanages or even taking their lives due to the challenges they faced in providing a stable and secure environment.<sup>15</sup>

Equally stigmatised, Victorian women who resorted to prostitution were generally left vulnerable to exploitation and abuse as they were not legally protected in any way. Oftentimes, they risked suffering sexually transmitted diseases which had long-term consequences and limited medical treatments. The Contagious Disease Acts, mainly targeting prostitutes rather than addressing the underlying societal problems, subjected them to mandatory medical examinations and confinement in closed hospitals.<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, the comparison between the position of women in the Victorian era and the eighteenth century reveals significant advancements and challenges to women's dependency on men. The Victorian era witnessed remarkable progress in social, political, and economic reforms, leading to improved living conditions, educational opportunities, and legal rights for women. The rise of the women's suffrage movement and the Married Women's Property Act were notable milestones in advocating for women's rights and

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<sup>15</sup> Higginbotham, A. R. "Sin of the Age': Infanticide and Illegitimacy in Victorian London." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, 1989, pp. 319–37. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3828495>.

<sup>16</sup> Walkowitz, J. R. "Notes on the History of Victorian Prostitution." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1972, pp. 105–14. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3180108>.

autonomy. Moreover, women gained access to education and began entering previously male-dominated professions, expanding their opportunities for economic independence. However, despite these advancements, women's economic opportunities remained limited, with persistent gender pay gaps and discriminatory practices hindering their progress. The prevailing ideology of separate spheres and the idealization of marriage continued to reinforce the notion of women's primary role within the domestic sphere, limiting their prospects outside of the home. Single mothers faced significant challenges and social stigma, with limited support systems in place. Additionally, women engaged in prostitution were left vulnerable to exploitation and lacked legal protections. While the Victorian era marked substantial progress for women's rights, it also highlights the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the complexities surrounding women's dependence on men.

#### **4. Investigation**

By establishing a link between the female protagonists in both works and the concepts of the 'fallen woman' and/or 'new woman', one will be able to examine to what degree the characters embody or challenge the ideals and gender stereotypes associated with women of their time, and gain insights into changing roles and aspirations. Based on these findings, the extent to which the female characters of both works conform to a shift in changing gender stereotypes from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century will be determined. Moreover, by discerning in how interdependent the male and female characters of both works are portrayed, it will be revealed whether shifts can be observed in the gender stereotypes attributed to men of the same era.

#### **4.1. Among Fallen Women**

The 'fallen woman', a concept whose origins can be traced back to the Biblical fall, embodies the moral and social implications of a woman who strays from the path of virtuous behaviour<sup>17</sup>. Although the concept itself was not explicitly labelled until the nineteenth century, and the fallen woman is thus more current to Victorian literature<sup>18</sup>, this chapter will examine Roxana, the female protagonist of Daniel Defoe's equally named novel, as an early example of a fallen woman. An analysis of this concept will prove that the fallen woman construct is deeply intertwined with patriarchal structures and values. By contrasting the character of Roxana with the concept of the fallen woman and assessing the degree to which she fits the mould of a fallen woman, a better understanding will be created of the extent to which Roxana moves away from the societal norms for women of her time.

Throughout literature, the fallen woman symbolizes the consequences and stigma faced by women who engage in illicit affairs, challenge traditional gender roles, or succumb to the pressures of a patriarchal society.<sup>18</sup> Eve, who is seduced into sinning against the patriarchal order, represents the primal archetype of the fallen woman.<sup>17</sup> As mentioned before, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were characterised by strict gender roles and moral codes. During this period, women were expected to adhere to a narrow set of ideals that emphasized chastity, modesty, and subordination to male

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<sup>17</sup> Clifton, K. M. "Saving Adam, Saving Eve: Construction of the Fallen Woman in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century English Novels" (2013), p. 1. California State University.  
<https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/downloads/707959326>

<sup>18</sup> Auerbach, N. "The Rise of the Fallen Woman." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 35, no. 1, 1980, pp. 29–52. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2933478>.

authority. Any deviation from these expectations was met with severe social censure and condemnation. A woman who had sexual intercourse out of wedlock, regardless of consent, was regarded as being on a trajectory towards moral decline and lacked the possibility of redemption due to her loss of chastity and compromised sexual conduct. If British society discovered that a woman had indeed fallen, whether she had (been) seduced or forcefully raped, she would not only lose her dignity, but oftentimes her only source to financial stability, that is, marriage. When examining the concept of the fallen woman, one should be aware that there is no such thing as a male counterpart, 'fallen man' [sic]. Indeed, the concept solely focuses on women's, not men's, sexual behaviour. However, the 'fall of women' usually happens out of necessity, often resulting in the abuse of power by a man with superior, physical and/or material, dominance over a materially powerless woman. Social class plays thus a fundamental role in the conceptualization of the fallen woman, as economic factors frequently serve as a significant aspect in the process of seduction. The woman, beyond her physical and emotional vulnerability, primarily suffers from economic disadvantages, underlining the importance of financial circumstances as a cause of the fall. Furthermore, these transgressions were seen as a threat to the social order and the sanctity of the family unit. The construction of fallen women as morally tainted allowed society to assign blame and responsibility solely to women, while absolving men of any accountability for their own actions. As Auerbach explains, the conceptualization of the fallen woman was merely created as a punishment by a society that feared female sexuality and aggression. This

unequal treatment intensified the marginalization and ostracization experienced by women who were deemed fallen, often leading to their exclusion from mainstream society.<sup>19</sup>

Initially depicted as a faithful wife and mother of five children, Roxana's circumstances compel her to engage in a series of morally compromising actions for the times in which she lives. After eight years of marriage, her husband abandons their family without leaving behind any financial resources. Claiming she had no other choice but succumb to male dependency to avoid financial ruin, she departs from societal norms and starts her journey into immorality to ensure financial stability. "he had made me what I was, and put me into a Way to be even more than I ever was, namely, to live happy and pleas'd, and on his Bounty I depended" <sup>20</sup> perfectly reflects how she is convinced that becoming her landlord's mistress to pay the rent after her husband deserts her is her only hope for economic stability and thus happiness. These arguments indeed go in line with the concept of the fallen woman. As the narrative unfolds, her choices and actions lead her further away from the moral standards upheld by society, reflecting a profound transformation and moral decline and complexities associated with straying from accepted moral boundaries.

In this analysis, it is important to note that it is not the outside world that characterises her as a fallen woman, but that she is the one characterising herself as indecent and feeling "horribly unlawful, scandalous, and abominable" <sup>21</sup> when she has sexual intercourse out of wedlock. Considering Auerbach's previously mentioned statement that the concept of the fallen woman was created as a punishment by a society that feared female sexuality and

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<sup>19</sup> Birky, B. M. "Penitents Or Prostitutes ? : The Narratives of Fallen Women in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding" (1998). *Dissertations*. 3724. [https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_diss/3724](https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_diss/3724)

<sup>20</sup> Defoe, D. "Roxana" (2008), p. 35. Oxford University Press Inc.

<sup>21</sup> Defoe, D. "Roxana" (2008), p. 39. Oxford University Press Inc.

aggression, one can conclude that it is not society, but that she is the one punishing herself for her actions. Even though Roxana claims “I had nothing before me, but to fall back into the Misery that I had been before” <sup>21</sup>, the historical context preceding this analysis proves that during the eighteenth century, however, women did have options to earn income in a way that would have been accepted by society. On top of that, she had a maid who remained loyal to her despite not being able to afford her. One may therefore wonder to what extent Roxana considered other options for earning money and in how far she regrets the choice she made to put herself in such a situation. Moreover, when stating that “I was Rich, as I have said, very Rich, and what to do with it, I knew not” <sup>22</sup>, she was at a point where it could be said she had acquired enough financial stability to live a life conforming to social norms. However, since she does not change her lifestyle, one can once again question the extent to which she effectively regrets stepping away from what society expects from an eighteenth-century woman. When she proclaims that “Poverty made me a Whore at the beginning; so excess of Avarice for getting Money, and excess of Vanity, continued me in the Crime” <sup>23</sup> it is clear she values the pleasures her lifestyle instils in her more than how she feels about her lifestyle and the consequences it entails.

Even if we cannot explain with certainty for what reason the character of Roxana chose a life that did not meet the standards an eighteenth-century woman was expected to follow, it can be assumed that her choices did, in some sense, afford her more freedom than the average eighteenth-century woman who found herself as a single mother in the lowest social class. Apart from the financial freedom she enjoyed, she

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<sup>22</sup> Defoe, D. "Roxana" (2008), p. 100. Oxford University Press Inc.

<sup>23</sup> Defoe, D. "Roxana" (2008), p. 202. Oxford University Press Inc.

decided not to marry again during the period of her life when she could bear children. Comparing her situation with what was expected of an eighteenth-century woman, namely marrying, bearing children and looking after the welfare of her family, she freely distanced herself from all the norms and expectations of a woman of her time, even though they lead to serious consequences. One could argue that the character of Roxana can be seen as a reflection of the tensions and anxieties surrounding women's aspirations to break free from, and thus challenge the traditional gender norms of the patriarchal eighteenth century. Considering the arguments just mentioned, it may therefore be argued that Roxana does not merely conform to the concept of the fallen woman, but that she chooses this way of life of her own free will, showing an alternative way out of the oppression by a male dominated society.

#### **4.2. Among New Women**

The nineteenth century, as mentioned earlier, was characterised by a growth in employment opportunities for women. However, societal expectations for women were still rigidly defined, often limiting their roles to domestic duties and the confines of their class. There were exceptional women who refused to conform to these expectations and ventured outside the prescribed boundaries, challenging the existing norms. Mrs. Warren, the central character in George Bernard Shaw's play "Mrs. Warren's Profession", exemplifies such defiance. This chapter explores the extent to which Mrs. Warren fits into the mold of the predetermined rules, expectations and gender norms of her time, considering her deliberate rejection of gender stereotypes, her alternative choices for financial freedom, her pride in her independence, and her challenging of traditional



gender roles. By examining to what degree she fits within the construct of the fallen woman, one will be able to assess the extent to which she conforms to the social norms and expectations of her time.

Rather than getting married, bearing children and taking care of her family, or working in factories, shops or catering like the majority of individuals from low-class backgrounds, who faced dire living conditions and/or low wages, she deliberately sought an alternative path. "I tried honest work; and I was slave-driven until I cursed the day I ever heard of honest work" <sup>24</sup> proves that by rejecting such societal expectations, Mrs. Warren demonstrated her refusal to be confined to a predetermined role or poor working conditions, by venturing into a profession typically associated with moral ambiguity. Contrasting with Roxana, Mrs. Warren did try and pursue a job that met what was morally and socially acceptable. Moreover, which was not the case for Roxana, she does not pretend having no other options to gain financial independence but stresses that one must make the most of the circumstances in which one finds themselves. She openly acknowledges that she chose her profession because she knew it would provide her with greater financial security and living conditions than the minimum wages and circumstances offered by other avenues, namely a poorly paid job or marriage. In addition, by stating that "The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good for her (...) why should she? It wouldnt be for her own happiness" <sup>25</sup> she consciously chose not to marry as it would not contribute to her happiness. Mrs. Warren's agency in selecting her profession

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<sup>24</sup> Shaw, G.B. "Mrs Warren's Profession." Reclam, 2005, p. 175.

<sup>25</sup> Shaw, G.B. "Mrs Warren's Profession." Reclam, 2005, p. 121.

demonstrates her awareness of the options available to her and her willingness to pursue what she believed would yield the best outcome for herself, even if that was not accepted by the society she lives in. Although Mrs. Warren's choices lead to disapproval from her closest environment, including her daughter, she remains proud of the fact that she gained independence and financial freedom by choosing an alternative path. "If people arrange the world that way for women, there's no good pretending it's arranged the other way. No: I never was a bit ashamed really" <sup>26</sup> substantiates the argument just mentioned by her own words. While she may not wish the same path for her daughter, her pride in her own achievements highlights her defiance of societal norms. The fallen woman, typically characterized by shame and societal condemnation, differs from Mrs. Warren, who takes pride in her self-sufficiency and the control she gains over her own life through her profession. One may therefore consider that this self-assuredness sets her apart from the traditional fallen woman archetype.

The concept of the fallen woman traditionally includes individuals who engage in sex outside of marriage and often face social ostracism. Mrs. Warren can be categorized as a fallen woman in this respect, as she challenges traditional gender roles by engaging in extramarital relationships and, moreover, profiting from them. Her profession as a madam, though morally controversial, signifies her defiance against societal expectations of women's sexual behaviour. Mrs. Warren's willingness to challenge these norms showcases her agency in shaping her own destiny, even if it means operating outside the accepted boundaries of propriety. In assessing the extent to which Mrs. Warren fits into the mold of the fallen woman, it becomes apparent that while she shares certain

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<sup>26</sup> Shaw, G.B. "Mrs Warren's Profession." Reclam, 2005, p. 122.

characteristics with the archetype, she also defies and challenges it. Her deliberate refusal to adhere to gender stereotypes, her alternative choices for financial freedom, her pride in her independence, and her defiance of traditional gender roles differentiate her from the fallen women of the nineteenth century and thus challenge the audience to question societal expectations and exploring the multifaceted nature of women's roles in a changing world.

Looking at what Sarah Grand first saw as a 'New Woman' in 1894, this concept could serve as a means of demonstrating the ways in which Mrs. Warren challenges traditional gender roles while embodying elements of both the fallen woman and the new woman. By examining Mrs. Warren through the lens of both concepts, a deeper understanding of the complexity of her character can be obtained as it shows the fluidity between archetypes and the limitations of categorization. The concept of the 'New Woman' emerged in the late nineteenth century as a term to describe independent women who sought achievement and self-fulfilment beyond the traditional roles of marriage and family. According to Grand, the new woman "proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman's-Sphere, and proscribed the remedy"<sup>27</sup> This chapter explores the extent to which Mrs. Warren, the central character in George Bernard Shaw's play "Mrs. Warren's Profession," fits into the mold of the New Woman archetype, considering her independence and her deliberate choice to seek achievement and self-fulfilment beyond traditional roles of marriage and family. Mrs. Warren embodies

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<sup>27</sup> Grand, S. "The New Aspect of the Woman Question", North American Review, vol. 158 (March, 1894), pp. 270-276.

the spirit of the New Woman as she is an independent woman who actively seeks achievement and self-fulfillment outside the confines of traditional gender roles. As a successful brothel owner, she controls her own business and enjoys financial independence. By choosing a profession that grants her agency and economic stability, Mrs. Warren aligns herself with the New Woman archetype, who seeks personal and professional fulfillment beyond the conventional expectations of society. Another characteristic of the New Woman is her deliberate choice to remain unmarried, prioritizing personal autonomy over conforming to societal expectations. Mrs. Warren, too, embraces this aspect of the New Woman archetype. Despite the social pressure to marry and adhere to traditional gender roles, she consciously remains single. This choice enables her to maintain control over her own life, avoiding the restrictions and dependencies associated with marriage. By rejecting marriage, Mrs. Warren asserts her independence and aligns herself with the New Woman's pursuit of self-determination. Her connection to the New Woman archetype is further solidified by her critique of the conventional woman's sphere. For example, in expressing her disdain for her sister's adherence to the traditional model of marriage and domesticity, she challenges the notion that a woman's worth should be solely measured by her ability to maintain a respectable household. Mrs. Warren questions the societal expectation that women should find fulfillment and validation solely within the confines of the home. Her criticism of the narrow definition of respectability reflects the New Woman's proclamation against the limitations imposed by the prevailing gender norms.<sup>28</sup> Through her independence, deliberate choice to remain unmarried, and critique of the conventional woman's sphere, Mrs. Warren indeed aligns

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<sup>28</sup> Shaw, G.B. "Mrs Warren's Profession." Reclam, 2005, p. 116.

herself with the New Woman archetype. Her pursuit of achievement and self-fulfilment beyond traditional roles challenges societal expectations and embodies the spirit of the New Woman. As a successful brothel owner who rejects marriage and questions the conventional ideals of respectability, Mrs. Warren's character pushes the boundaries of traditional gender roles and embraces the ideals of the New Woman.

As mentioned previously, the concept of the new woman, as defined by Sarah Grand, was initially introduced as an independent woman seeking achievement and self-fulfilment beyond the traditional roles of marriage and family. However, it is important to note that the definition of the new woman was not universally fixed and had varying interpretations by different individuals and scholars. One aspect of the ambiguity surrounding the definition of the new woman can be observed in how others, besides Sarah Grand, perceived her. According to Ledger, the new woman was often portrayed as an educated young middle-class woman who possessed certain 'props' representing her freedom and adoption of masculine pursuits. For example, the use of bicycles was seen as a symbol of mobility and freedom, as it allowed women to travel independently. Similarly, the adoption of cigars, traditionally associated with masculinity, was viewed as a sign of the new woman's defiance against societal expectations and her desire to embrace traditionally male activities.<sup>29</sup> This ambiguity in the definition of the new woman reflects the diverse interpretations and representations of this emerging archetype. While Sarah Grand's definition focused on the broader idea of independence and self-fulfilment, other observers emphasized specific symbols and behaviours that epitomized the new woman's assertion of autonomy and challenge to traditional gender roles. One can argue

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<sup>29</sup> Ledger, S. "The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle". Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1997.

that the varying interpretations of the new woman demonstrate the complexity and fluidity of societal perceptions and expectations during that time. Moreover, it can reflect the evolving nature of the feminist movement and the diverse ways in which women sought to express their desires for equality and independence. The new woman archetype, therefore, encompasses a range of interpretations and representations, highlighting the multidimensional nature of women's experiences and aspirations during this period of social transformation.

Using this description as a means of comparing Vivie Warren, Mrs Warren's daughter, to the concept of the new woman as defined by Ledger, one can come to the following observation. A defining characteristic of the new woman is her access to education, which empowers her intellectually and enhances her opportunities for personal and professional growth. Vivie Warren exemplifies this aspect of the new woman concept through her education at Cambridge University. Her educational background provides her with a strong intellectual foundation and equips her with critical thinking skills. Vivie's education allows her to challenge societal norms and expectations, paving the way for her pursuit of a career and self-determination. Moreover, Vivie Warren embodies the characteristic of a desire to pursue a career, seeking fulfilment and independence beyond the traditional roles of marriage and motherhood through her aspirations to establish herself as a professional and earn her own living. She rejects the idea of relying on her husband or a husband and being confined to domestic responsibilities. Vivie's ambition and determination to build a career align with the new woman's pursuit of self-fulfilment and autonomy through meaningful work. The new woman, as defined by Ledger, is known for challenging societal expectations and defying

conventional gender roles. Vivie Warren's character exhibits this defiance in her rejection of societal norms and expectations placed upon women. She refuses to conform to the traditional expectations of marriage and domesticity, instead prioritizing her own ambitions and independence. Vivie's refusal to conform and her determination to shape her own destiny embody the spirit of the new woman, who seeks to break free from societal constraints. As a 22-year-old graduate from Cambridge who has a wealthy mother and likes cigars, drinking whisky and other masculine props, she indeed matches Ledger's description of a new woman. In the portrayal of Vivie Warren in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," Ledger's conception of the new woman finds resonance. Vivie embodies the characteristics of an educated young middle-class woman who challenges traditional gender roles, pursues a career, and defies societal expectations. However, without her mother's financial support, she would not have been able to pursue her studies at university nor acquire masculine props, which are two key elements of what the new woman entails. This makes her a woman who cannot yet be characterised as independent.

Interestingly enough, when individually assessed, Mrs. Warren and her daughter do not fit neatly into the broad definition of the new woman archetype. However, their combined portrayal in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* offers a unique dynamic that embodies the essence of the new woman concept. Mrs. Warren, as a character, does not possess the attributes typically associated with the new woman as she did not have access to education, nor uses masculine props as a symbol of her freedom and adoption of masculine pursuits. Instead, she represents an unconventional route to independence through her profession as a brothel owner. Her journey towards financial independence is

rooted in her own resourcefulness and determination, rather than conforming to the ideals of the new woman. On the other hand, Vivie Warren, as an educated woman, as is the case with her mother, demonstrates some traits aligned with the new woman archetype. Her education at Cambridge University signifies her intellectual development and challenges societal expectations of women's limited educational opportunities. Vivie's ambition to pursue a career reflects the new woman's desire for independence and self-fulfilment beyond traditional roles. However, Vivie's dependence on her mother for financial support creates a significant departure from the image of the independent new woman. Despite her education and career aspirations, she remains financially dependent to her mother. This reliance on her mother's income implies that Vivie's personal independence is limited and compromises her position within the new woman framework. However, when considering Mrs. Warren and Vivie Warren together as complementary characters, a deeper understanding of the new woman concept emerges. Their relationship symbolizes the complexities and contradictions inherent in the pursuit of independence and self-fulfilment by women during that time period. Mrs. Warren's unconventional path to financial independence, while not adhering to the traditional new woman mould, challenges societal norms and underscores the limitations imposed upon women. Vivie's education and career aspirations, although compromised by her reliance on her mother's income, demonstrate her determination to break free from societal expectations and forge her own path. By examining Mrs. Warren and Vivie Warren together, we witness a nuanced portrayal that transcends the individual limitations of each character. Their combined narrative can be seen as a depiction of the multifaceted nature of women's experiences and aspirations during the era of the new woman as



together, they embody the spirit of challenging conventions and seeking independence, ultimately contributing to a broader understanding of the complexities of the new woman concept, and showing two possible ways out of the oppression by a male dominated society.

#### **4.3. Breaking the Chains of Dependency**

By establishing a link between the female protagonists in both works and the concepts of the fallen woman and the new woman, the changing roles and aspirations of women throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could be noticed. Roxana, despite the consequences she faces, represents a fallen woman who claims she has no option but to live a life outside the expected norms of an eighteenth-century woman. Her journey to financial independence, and rejection of traditional gender roles reflect her defiance against the patriarchal society. Her character thus serves as a reflection of the tensions and anxieties surrounding women's aspirations for liberation from societal constraints that were typical of the eighteenth century. Mrs. Warren, characterized as a fallen woman, challenges traditional gender roles by engaging in extramarital relationships and profiting from them, as did Roxana. She shares certain characteristics with the fallen woman archetype, and her portrayal questions societal expectations and explores the multifaceted nature of women's options in a changing world. Examining the combined portrayal of Mrs. Warren and Vivie Warren in *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, one finds a dynamic that embodies the essence of the ambiguous new woman concept. While Mrs. Warren's independence aligns with Grand's definition of a new woman, the fact that she does make use of masculine props makes that her character does not align with Ledger's

definition. Vivie's character aligns with Ledger's definition in that she is an educated woman with career aspirations and masculine props, but her dependence on her mother makes her deviate from Grand's definition of the new woman. One can argue that together, their relationship symbolizes the complexities and contradictions inherent in women's pursuit of independence during that era, while offering a nuanced understanding of the fallen woman and new woman concepts. The three female characters challenge societal norms, defy expectations, and contribute to a broader understanding of women's experiences and aspirations in their own ways. Moreover, their stories provide alternative ways out of the oppression imposed by a male-dominated society, highlighting the complexities of women's roles and the ongoing struggle for autonomy and self-fulfilment.

By comparing her situation with what was expected of an eighteenth-century woman, Roxana indeed defies the gender stereotypes imposed upon women in the eighteenth century after her husband deserted her, by making choices that deviate from societal expectations. Rather than succumbing to marriage and childbearing during her childbearing age, she consciously refuses to follow this predetermined path, thereby challenging the conventional norms placed upon women. Moreover, Roxana seeks financial independence through unconventional means that do not align with what was expected of her. However, despite her attempts to break free from traditional gender roles, it is apparent that Roxana's pursuit of financial freedom is still intertwined with her sexual relationships with men. In other words, she is still financially dependent on the men in her life. While she manages to acquire a degree of independence, her reliance on

these relationships highlights the complexity of her situation and the limitations imposed upon women in her time.

While Roxana challenges the gender stereotypes of the eighteenth century by refusing to marry during her childbearing age, and acquiring a certain level of financial freedom, Mrs. Warren takes this defiance even further in the nineteenth century. By completely rejecting the notion of marriage, she refuses to conform to the societal expectations placed upon women of her time. In doing so, she boldly defies the gender norms that dictate a woman's role in society. Additionally, unlike Roxana, Mrs. Warren demonstrates a remarkable independence that is not reliant on financial or sexual relationships with men to sustain her financial freedom. She carves out her own path, shattering the traditional mold and showcasing a significant departure from the limitations imposed upon women in the nineteenth century.

In conclusion, the comparison of Roxana and Mrs. Warren reveals a shift in the extent to which female characters challenge gender stereotypes and assert their independence from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. While Roxana represents a fallen woman who resists societal expectations and seeks financial freedom, her journey still intertwines with her reliance on relationships with men. On the other hand, Mrs. Warren's character exemplifies a more radical departure from the norms of her time. By rejecting marriage altogether and independently pursuing financial freedom, she may be seen as a symbol of defiance against the gender norms and limitations imposed upon women in the nineteenth century.

#### **4.4. Among New Men**

In Daniel Defoe's *Roxana*, the male characters are portrayed as independent figures as their actions and relationships with Roxana highlight their self-sufficiency and ability to navigate their own paths, further accentuating the complexities of power dynamics and gender roles within the novel.

Roxana's first husband serves as an example of a male character on whom she initially depends. As his wife, she relies on him for financial security. Roxana's downfall begins after her husband leaves their family, which shows that her dependency on him was not reciprocated. This contrast accentuates the independence of the male character, as he is able to detach himself from familial responsibilities without suffering severe consequences.

Roxana's landlord represents another instance of male independence. When Roxana is abandoned by her husband and unable to pay the rent, she becomes dependent on her landlord. To secure her shelter, she engages in a sexual relationship with him as a form of payment. Although the Landlord benefits from this arrangement, it is clear that he maintains his power and autonomy throughout the transaction. This depiction too reinforces the notion of male independence, as he dictates the terms of their agreement.

The prince, another male character in the novel, supports Roxana financially during their affair. His assistance provides her with a degree of stability and further highlights his independent nature. He willingly provides financial support without appearing dependent on Roxana, thereby reinforcing his self-sufficiency and control over their relationship.

Similarly, Roxana becomes dependent on a Dutch merchant as he helps her escape from the Jewish jewel merchant who realised Roxana was trying to sell him a stolen piece of jewellery.

In summary, the male characters in *Roxana* are consistently depicted as independent individuals, showcasing their ability to navigate their own paths and make choices that align with their self-interests. Roxana's initial dependence on her first husband highlights the power dynamics between genders, as she suffers the consequences of his abandonment. The landlord, the prince, and the Dutch merchant further exemplify male autonomy through their actions and relationships with Roxana.

However, throughout *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, several male characters are depicted as dependent on the female characters of the play, showcasing their reliance on women for various reasons. These portrayals shed light on the complex dynamics between genders and challenge traditional notions of male independence and autonomy. Sir George Crofts and Frank Gardner exemplify this dependence on women for financial stability and social status. Sir George, aware of the potential financial benefits of marrying Vivie, seeks to "keep the whole thing in the family",<sup>30</sup> indicating his desire to preserve his wealth and influence through a strategic marriage. Similarly, Frank, who shares Sir George's opportunistic nature, hopes to gain access to Vivie's mother's wealth by marrying her. As both individuals view marriage as a means to secure their financial futures and maintain their social standing, these characters demonstrate how men in the play see marriage as a transactional arrangement, relying on women for financial security and social advancement.

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<sup>30</sup> Defoe, D. "Roxana". Oxford University Press Inc., 2008, p. 139.

Frank Gardner, in particular, presents a clear illustration of dependency on women. His sole aspiration revolves around finding a wife who can support his lavish lifestyle. He lacks personal ambition and a desire for self-improvement, instead relying on a woman's financial resources to sustain his extravagant way of living. This portrayal challenges traditional gender roles by highlighting a male character who is financially reliant on women, reversing the stereotypical gender role of male breadwinners.<sup>31</sup>

Reverend Samuel Gardner also displays a form of dependence on a woman. It is revealed that he had a past relationship with a woman, and in order to protect his reputation, he offers her 50 pounds to keep it a secret. This act of relying on financial transactions to conceal his indiscretions emphasizes his vulnerability and the potential consequences that could arise from his actions. It showcases a different form of dependency, where Reverend Samuel depends on the woman to maintain his social standing and preserve his reputation.<sup>32</sup>

These depictions of dependent male characters challenge traditional notions of male dominance and independence. They offer a nuanced portrayal of the complex power dynamics between genders and shed light on the ways in which men, like women, can be reliant on others for financial stability, social status, and reputation preservation. Through these characterizations, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* highlights the intricacies of human relationships and encourages a deeper exploration of gender roles and societal expectations.

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<sup>31</sup> Defoe, D. "Roxana". Oxford University Press Inc., 2008, pp. 86-87.

<sup>32</sup> Defoe, D. "Roxana". Oxford University Press Inc., 2008. pp. 87-89.

In conclusion, the portrayal of interdependence between male and female characters in both Daniel Defoe's *Roxana* and George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* reveals a significant shift in the gender stereotypes attributed to men during the nineteenth century. While *Roxana* presents male characters as independent figures, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* explores the dependence of male characters on women for financial stability, social status, and reputation preservation. In *Roxana*, the male characters are depicted as self-sufficient and able to navigate their own paths. On the other hand, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* challenges traditional notions of male independence by portraying several male characters as dependent on women. Sir George Crofts and Frank Gardner seek marriage as a means to secure their financial futures and maintain their social standing, relying on women for financial security and social advancement. Frank's lack of personal ambition and dependence on a woman's financial resources reverses the stereotypical gender role of male breadwinners. Furthermore, Reverend Samuel Gardner's dependence on a woman from his past to preserve his reputation highlights a different form of male dependency. By relying on financial transactions to conceal his indiscretions, he showcases vulnerability and the potential consequences of his actions. These depictions of dependent male characters in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* challenge traditional notions of male dominance and independence. They provide a nuanced understanding of the complex power dynamics between genders and emphasize that men, like women, can rely on others for financial stability, social status, and reputation preservation. Both *Roxana* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* reveal the intricacies of human relationships and invite a deeper exploration of gender roles and societal expectations. By highlighting the interdependence of male and

female characters, these works contribute to the ongoing transformation of gender stereotypes, revealing a shift in the portrayal of men in the nineteenth century and providing a groundbreaking perspective on gender dynamics of the Victorian era.

## **5. Conclusion**

In conclusion, when reflecting upon the relationship of literature and society <sup>33</sup>, namely that literature serves as a reflection of society and culture, but also wields the power to shape attitudes and behaviours, it becomes evident that both assumptions are true in terms of changing gender stereotypes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, literature can reflect an historical framework's timeline. Examining the character of Roxana, one can see as a reflection of the tensions and anxieties surrounding women's aspirations to break free from, and thus challenge the traditional gender norms of the patriarchal eighteenth century. Similarly, the complexities and contradictions of women's pursuit of independence and self-fulfilment in the nineteenth century are reflected by Mrs. Warren and Vivie. Mrs. Warren's unconventional path to financial independence challenges societal norms and underscores the limitations imposed upon women. Vivie's education and career aspirations, although compromised by her reliance on her mother's income, demonstrate her determination to break free from societal expectations and forge her own path. While Roxana only partially succeeds in breaking free from the stereotypes laid upon her as an eighteenth-century woman, Mrs. Warren and Vivie are both examples of nineteenth-century women who aspire leading lives that are not centred

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<sup>33</sup> As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, p. 4:  
Albrecht, Milton C. "The Relationship of Literature and Society." *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 59, no. 5, 1954, pp. 425–36. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2772244>.



solely around marriage and (financial) dependency on men. When looking at the changing gender stereotypes leading up to the end of the nineteenth century, with *Roxana* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession* as a base, both works do reflect how women were less inclined to be dependent on men, and that marriage was not seen as the prime goal for women who wished to lead a more independent lifestyle. On the other hand, as we look at what Moore stated about a possible changing perception about marriage due to literature such as *Roxana*, one could indeed argue that literature influences the way one looked marriage, as *Roxana* had been blamed for propagating the idea of romantic love over marriage<sup>34</sup>. However, the latter should be perceived with caution. While literature, such as *Roxana*, may have influenced the idea of romantic love over marriage, we cannot definitively state that it single-handedly shaped societal views. Moore herself acknowledges the uncertainty of literature's influence and its reflection of society. Similarly, generalizing societal views or aspirations based on literature is a complex task, as one could never generalise the view on a subject such as marriage or financial freedom, or an aspired lifestyle, for an entire society. Moreover, it is intriguing to observe that historical papers exploring male dependency on women during the nineteenth century are notably scarce, read non-existent, even though that shift is noticeable throughout the literary works that have been consulted for this paper ... This observation highlights the need for further investigation into this shift and its representation in literary works. Nevertheless, one can take away from this with certainty that all societies, their perceptions, and aspirations are in constant flux, much like literature itself. They

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<sup>34</sup> As mentioned in the historical context of this paper, p. 13.

Moore, W. "Love and Marriage in 18th-Century Britain." *Historically Speaking*, vol. 10 no. 3, 2009, p. 8-10. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/hsp.0.0038

continuously evolve, guided by various influences, and pave the way for new directions and possibilities.

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