

The Dialectic of the Victorian Woman

English

PowerPoint

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Textual

Abstract

This paper examines female types in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and analyzes them through the lens of Hegelian Dialecticism. The dialectic approach is attributed to George Hegel, who created the Abstract-Negative-Concrete theory. The keywords of the dialectic method—thesis, antithesis, synthesis—were coined by Johann Fichte. The thesis is the state of activity that currently exists; it is opposed by conflict-driven activity, the antithesis. Out of the friction between the two, the third way, the synthesis, is born. *Mrs. Warren's Profession* depicts the evolution of the modern woman in a way that captures the dialectic process. The ideal Victorian Woman is described in Coventry Patmore's poem, "Angel of the House." Kind and gentle, self-sacrificing and pure of heart, belonging to the private sphere of home and hearth. This model of woman is the thesis. Mrs. Warren is the "fallen woman." Licentious, business-minded, and scoffing, she is the antithesis to the ideal Victorian woman. Mrs. Warren chooses prostitution as the way to a better life, thus capitalizing on the systematic exploitation of impoverished Victorian women in the same way that she was exploited. Mrs. Warren's daughter, Vivie, is born from the conflict between the paradigmatic Victorian woman and the Fallen Woman. Vivie pushes back against aspects of both the Victorian Woman and the Fallen Woman, however, she ultimately synthesizes parts of the two.