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Dissertation

ACADEMIC MASTER

Domain: Letters and Foreign Languages

Field: English Language, Literature and Civilization

Specialty: Anglo-Saxon Literature

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Title:

The Quest for Female Identity in
Ibsen's A Doll's House

Publically defended
on: 14/06/2020

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Academic year: 2019/2020

Dedication:

This research paper is dedicated to my beloved mother and my soul mate sister, who for months past, have encouraged me attentively with their fullest and truest attention to accomplish my work with truthful self confidence.

To my dear Father, who has nicely supported me.

To my tenderhearted brother, Elhachmi.

Acknowledgment:

I Thank Allah for giving me the perseverance and determination to continue
doing this project.

I would like also to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr.
Tedjani Hanafi Hind for the continuous support, patience, motivation and
immense knowledge.

I am most grateful to Dr. Osama Hassan for his help, guidance, and patience.
Without Dr. Hassan's thoughtful comments, advice, and encouragement, this
work would have never been completed.

My deepest gratitude goes to my family for supporting me in every
possible way throughout this journey.

I would like also to thank my friends and soul mate Nacira and Ahlem for
offering help whenever needed.

THANK YOU ALL.

Abstract

Over the last few decades, English literature has grown enormously. Some of them crossed the lines in traditional representations of women. However, it is still detached from the universal literary movements. More recently, English works have been excluded from feminism as a movement despite that the latter has agitated every part of this world. This research paper examines the existence of feminist entities in the work of the Norwegian playwright. This work is consciously chosen because it seems to celebrate the same subject not only for women but also for men. So it is probably that an author can be contrary against the idea of feminism or support it. The major objective behind this study is to investigate the real image of women in *A Doll's House*. It also aims to shed the light on Victorian era and to introduce the patriarchal world where the play sets out its social evils. It seeks to know how the opinion of the author, Henrik Ibsen on the feminism. In order to accomplish the previously listed points, this research paper will be divided into three chapters. The first one is a theoretical base about feminism in general. The second one explores the common traits of Henrik Ibsen's female characters with those of Shakespeare and the analysis of the intrinsic elements of drama, such as characterization, plot setting and theme. The final part will throw light on the analysis of the feminism in *A Doll's House* by applying the feminist literary criticism in an attempt to denote the results of such tight relevance. This work has shown that Nora is a private and domesticated woman, presented as a weak, stupid, and dependent woman. Her decision to abandon Torvald, however, is a sign of women's rebellion against men's oppression by the patriarchy. Henrik Ibsen, through this drama, wanted to tell readers and audiences that women are free. The rule that shackled women in the patriarchy must be eliminated.

Keywords: Feminism, patriarchy, dependent, free

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General Introduction

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General Introduction

The role of women has been a major part of literature and usually a representation of how the role of women in real life has evolved. Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is considered by many to be a representation of issues women faced in the 19th century. During the 1800's, woman began to slowly become more independent. More and more women began to enter the work force and take on more responsibilities. However, this change was a gradual process. Just because it was becoming more acceptable to work does not mean a woman could merely decide to get a job working alongside a man .It depends on class and social status. As *A Doll s House* shows middle class women were still expected to have less prominent roles in the household. While this was OK for some there were always others that wanted more from life. They felt they were being told they had more freedom, but in actuality they still were limited in what they could actually do .Evidence of this began to appear in the literature of the time especially in works written by women "Most popular fiction produced by women in the mid-nineteenth century was directed towards advocating social change"(Cruea 200). Women used literature as a way to speak their minds about the changes they wished to see.

This dissertation is merely a study of *A Doll's House* play which not only one of most famous plays of Henrik Ibsen but a great contribution to feminist literature as well. Despite Ibsen's denial of being feminist his speeches acquaintances and letters proved that he was always by women's side.

Motivation

In his notes about *A Doll's House*; Henrik Ibsen stated that, "A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society, it is an exclusively male society with laws drafted by men, and with counsel and judges who judge feminine conduct from a male point of view. While it was clear that Henrik Ibsen supported the women freedom and ones identity it's completely controversial in his second speech given on May 26, 1898, to the Women's Rights League: "I thank you for the toast, but must disclaim the honor of having consciously worked for the women's rights movement." I am not even quite clear as to just what this women's rights movement really is. To me it has seemed a problem of humanity in general." (Ledger, Henrik Ibsen, 33-34). Therefore this modest work will read between the lines and get deeper to explore the real feminist Norwegian playwright and his feminist perspective in the play.

Aims of the study:

Given the above mentioned problem and rationale this study aims to:

- i. To investigate the real image of women in *A Doll's House*
- ii. Shed light on Victorian era and introduce the Patriarchal world where the realistic contemporary play sets out to expose its social evils.
- iii. Dig deeper to know how the views of the author, Henrik Ibsen on the feminism.

Statement of the problem:

In the most performed play; *A Doll's House*, The Norwegian playwright had put much thought into gender and norms. His ideas reflected the growing formation of women's organizations dedicated to suffrage and equal economic and social rights. Thus in this humble work we will attempt to describe and analyze the play from feminist angle how a life without any individuality or choice is unfulfilling and even empty of the 19th century women and how did they challenge to break the norms and look for their own identities.

Research Questions:

So as to conduct this study, it is attempted to answer the questions below:

- 1/ Why did Ibsen portray women as dolls?
- 2/ To what extent was Ibsen involved in women's cause?
- 3/ Why did he challenge the stereotypical representation of women?

Research Hypothesis:

In this research it is hypothesized that:

- Women are victims of false belief requiring them to find identity in their lives through husband and children; this causes women to lose their identities in that of their family.

- *A Doll's House* is merely a feminist play which implicitly deals with the desire of a woman to establish her identity and dignity in the society governed by men which implies a feminist playwright.

Methodology:

To realize the stated hypotheses, a descriptive analytical approach will be adopted. Therefore; the qualitative design intended to be used through which some instances will be extracted to explore female identity.

Structure of the dissertation:

This thesis is composed of three chapters; chapter one is a theoretical base about feminism in general, the historical background of the feminist literary criticism theory and its manifestation on the ground. The second chapter is an attempt of *A Doll's House* first reading dealing with male and female characters and the events. The last chapter seeks for the implementation of feminist literary criticism theory in the play to prove the stated hypotheses and to have a clear vision on the corpus.

Part I: Theoretical Part

Chapter One:

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1.1. Introduction:

Literary language represents a fertile ground for varied academic and social affiliations for both students and researchers. This chapter is a deep overview about feminism movement which occupies a crucial status in world literature due to the invaluable literary works that had played an axial role in reforming the social, literary atmospheres of that era and its impact on the literary sphere far too long, from its real construction (its emergence, waves and theories) to its concrete results. As we will analyze and illustrate the literary works of Henrik Ibsen and shed a light on a modest comparison to his peer playwright Shakespeare, then trying to dive deeply in the nature of female characters of Ibsen's literary works in general. Additionally, interpreting one of the Ibsen's masterpiece and most performed play; *A Doll's House*, its themes and key characters.

1.2. Gender Role:

Almost all of the English language literature, gender and sex are correlated with unique human characteristics. Power is male. Weakness is female. Men are strong, women are capricious. The logic is masculine, the imagination is feminine. Sometimes, a literary character may be defined as being male or female simply on the basis of the actions of the character or the manner in which other characters react to the character in question. Paraker argues “One of the most obvious issues that Ibsen brings to his audience is that of late nineteenth-century gender roles” (Para 1). In his characterization of Nora and Torvald, Ibsen uses stereotypic gender attributes throughout the body of *A Doll House*, and then abruptly reverses the stereotyping in the final moments of the play to show that inner strength and weakness are human functions, not gender functions.

Sukhoterina argues “The play is set in the 19th century, and it explores the unequal gender roles of the time. Men are men, running businesses and commanding households; women are women, yielding to their male relatives, tending to the homes, and raising the children” (Sukhoterina Para 3).

Three main characters are women, and three main characters are men. The female characters are Nora, Mrs. Linde and Anne-Marie, and the male characters are Torvald, Dr. Rank and Krogstad. This gender balance is intentional, and the role of each character in the story contributes to the final disclosure that women can be strong, that men can be weak, and that strength and weakness are human traits. Features associated with women in Victorian society include physical, mental and moral weakness; mental and emotional instability; and a tendency to be fanciful, imaginative, or illogical. These are parts of the ideals of women, which are considered to be undesirable outside the home. As Ibsen’s leading female role, Nora embodies all of these traits until the final minute of the play. As Otten argues “Ibsen conceived of Nora

as a woman trapped in a patriarchal society” (Otten 512). As Parker describes, as is common in Victorian society, Nora’s husband does not view her as an equal but rather an “amusement” or “possession” (Para 2). In the opening scene, Torvald defines his ownership of Nora as a pet to the audience when he says, “Is that my squirrel rummaging around? ... When did my squirrel get in?” (Ibsen 106). Torvald uses several similar, diminutive nicknames for Nora in the opening scene, also calling her a “lark” and a “spendthrift” (Ibsen 106).

A significant, feminine deficiency in the Victorian era is the desire of society for men to be responsible for women's legal and financial relations. As Parker argues “Nora could not borrow any money without her husband’s consent. On the other hand, a husband could do whatever he pleased with property that was his wife’s before the marriage” (Para 6). The inability to enter into a contract forces Nora 's artificial weakness; the usual weakness of this nature may lead a woman to believe that her weakness stems from the nature of her gender, and may cause her to forget that her weakness is imposed on society. Victorian society believes that women are physically and emotionally ill, and that their behavior is erratic or reckless. When Nora comes home with her Christmas shopping and gives a generous tip to the delivery boy, she reveals the impulsivity of her race. (Ibsen 106).

Ibsen shifts the subject of gender discourse and politics in the nineteenth century from biology to society, from being to behaving. In a society where a woman is socially, morally and politically inferior because she is a woman, Ibsen reveals the consequences of this structure, and at the same time shows how gender works at the level of spoken and executed actions. This expression must be understood as a symbol of the modernity of Ibsen’s play, as well as the inherent nature of the dramatic form, as the prevailing way of thought in the nineteenth century was to view it as a gift from god. Agerholt argues that, in order to tie man and woman together with the strongest ribbon and make them fill out each other’s shortcomings, they are from the Creator’s side equipped with different qualities of soul and body, and have in their life together

different tasks to solve. A man who is stronger and more independent is the head of the family provides for his support and, through his work, takes on a prominent position in the wider human society. The woman is finer and gentler by nature and particularly suited to domestic occupation and family internal management.

1.3. What is Feminism?

Feminism has always been a point of intense discussion. Scholars question the terminology, the nature of the movement, the period and the characteristics of the movement. The confusion surrounding the word leaves no space for the presence of a simple consensus on a specific meaning. In fact, nothing about feminism is absolute, and the movement does not have a clear frame cut.

The flow of feminism touches each corner of the society in the twentieth century. Feminism is an umbrella term which not only works for the rights of women but also discussed the social, economic and political issues of the society. It appeared much maligned and someone like Margaret waltersin her book “*Feminism, A Very Short Introduction*” devotes the whole chapter to trace the long history of opposition to the term feminism and What is important is that this criticism comes not only from those who reject the concept of equality between sexes, but also from those like Virginia Woolf, whose work is perceived to be fundamental to contemporary feminist theory (“Chattopadhyay” 00:0052-01:22).

A good definition of feminism is provided by Chris Weedon, at the very beginning of her book entitled “*Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. “ She claims that, “Feminism is a politics. It is a politics directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we become” (1). This definition explains feminism in terms of

resistance to patriarchy, it reveals feminism in its full scope so just patriarchy is everywhere and it structures all areas of life (“Chattopadhyay”00:02:25-03:40).

Feminism, as it is widely understood, is a series of women's right-wing movements that can be traced back to the 18th century. These movements have taken place in the context of post-Enlightenment in the West and have been largely restricted to Western Europe and America. Since then, at least until the 1980's and 1990's, according to that definition and the note attached to it. Feminist movements have become more comprehensive of race and class, and have consequently spread beyond the bourgeois white woman.

According to the Oxford English dictionary “feminism is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim” (Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com). In addition, Rajesh James argues “Feminism, ‘the longest revolution’ as Juliet Mitchell called, is both a political stance and a theory that focuses on gender as a subject of analysis and as a platform for women to demand equality, rights and justice” (1).

The term feminism which has appeared mainly in eighteenth century has been enormously used in variety of disciplines. It would have been easier to claim that feminism is social, economic and political belief of sex equality. It is largely manifested and symbolized by various institutions committed to work on the women’s right behalf all (Brunell 1).

The above concept deals with a lot of uses with debatable meanings. For instance, Beasley defines as feminism as:

A perspective that seeks to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities, and injustice women suffer from because of their sex. This perspective can be called as women's struggle. This means that women's struggle has appeared as the reaction toward women's injustice in all aspects of their lives. This struggle removes all forms of discrimination such as subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustice toward women. (27)

The other scholar promoting the same idea is Delmar who states:

It is certainly possible to construct a base line definition of feminism... many would agree that at the very least a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change... in the social, economic and political order. (Beasley 27-28)

The later quotation clearly clarifies that women suffer from distinctiveness because of their sex, an illusion between both terms sex and gender that has been held for a long time and brings women into a wrong position, which places women as the subordinate of men.

Feminism deals with the marginalization of all women. Most feminists claim that the society in which many people live is a patriarchal culture, which means that the social structure is structured in favor of the needs of men .This statement is supported by Grimshaw who states that:

Any view point to count as feminist must believe that women have been oppressed and unjustly treated and that something needs to be done about this, but it does not follow from this that any consensus is available as to the precise forms this oppression or injustice takes, or as to how they should be remedied. (Beasley 27)

The explanation given above for feminism implies that women have faced discrimination and therefore need to try to make a better life possible. From time to time, women have realized that they have been discriminated against by a false perception of being inferior, weak, and incapable. Feminism is also a way of increasing women's consciousness, as the main focus of Feminism is concerned with class discrimination and social inequality.

Some writers link the term 'feminism' to a historically specific political movement in the US and Europe; hence, some others refer to it as a belief where injustices against women have

existed, though there is no total agreement on how these injustices would be (Brunell 1). As

Laura Brunell claims:

Some feminists trace the origins of the term "feminism" in English as rooted in the movement in Europe and the US beginning with the mobilization for suffrage during the late 19th and early 20th century and refer to this movement as "First Wave" feminism. Those who employ this history often depict feminist as waning between the two world wars, to be "revived" in the late 1960's and early 1970's as what they label "Second Wave" feminism. More recently, transformations of feminism in the past decade have been referred to as "Third Wave" feminism. (1)

1.4. Feminism and its waves:

As stated by Gamble, there are three waves of feminism: the First Wave, Second Wave, and Third Wave or Post feminism. Each movement is defined by reference to the events and the movement which became the key of history (xii).

The first impulse wave feminism can be found in the enlightenment project of the 18th century. **The first wave** (1820_1920) is mainly called for women's political rights and stands against society's unfair treatment of women. The feminists of that wave characterized by their struggle against three major provoking key injustices: First, the absence of legal protection against sexual violence towards women, second; the deliberate segregation of women in working places. Thirdly, women's limitation in terms of the ownership of property (Rajash 6). According to Dr Rajash James " The key texts of the First Wave includes: Mary Wollstonecraft's *a Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), John Stuart Mill's *The subjection of women* (1869)" (6).

In most western civilizations men have dominated politics, society and the economy of their worlds they have suppressed the women's voices so that they mold it the way they want it. second major characteristic of feminism (1960-80) is **The Second Wave** which shares the common demands of the first one in its ongoing political struggle. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine*

mystique (1963) is a good example which summarizes that political fight. In addition, in her book “*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*», Mary Wollstonecraft argues that Women are simply victims of a silly and deceitful belief and they had better be farsighted from their homemade roles. Though the proceeding enfranchisement requested by women, many opponents believed that the female subordination is an assumptive end which shouldn't be denied by them.

Despite of the fact that creating an egalitarian future and transforming male domination was the even moral behind of the feminist movement, **The Third Wave** feminism (1980-) was at the heart of the problems within it. Colored Feminist scholars, particularly those from the Third World, claim that feminism doesn't spare much interest to race and class. Mainly both crucial elements have differentiated the Third Wave feminism from the prior ones. Other feminist scholars were annoyed to that restricted feminism identification with these specific period of time of political activism, since it didn't form the whole reality where there has been male domination resistance which ought to be recognized as a "feminist" across cultures as well as history(Rajash 7). In other words, the women's movement is not limited to only a few white feminists in the western part of the world, but even the historical opposition by working-class women and colored women to male dominance between the 1920s and the 1960s can be important.

To cut a long story short, one should bear in mind that through the ages, women have been treated differently. The treatment has caused discrimination toward them. However, women's awareness seems to occur, starting from equality in domestic world to the social and economic world. Thus, feminism or women movement has sought to disturb an acceptance of such a patriarchal culture, to declare a belief in sexual equality, and to eliminate sexist's domination in society.

In brief, the pursuit to understand how “femaleness” is contrasted by society; one must know that Feminism has been kept shifting the world for approximately more than a century and the new viewpoints, it has brought; give a new insight into different domains.

1.5. Feminist Literary Criticism: A response to patriarchy

For more than a hundred years, the majority of literary works in one way or another have indicated their impending to the feminist movement. Thus, plenty of feminist literary works have been floated to the world surface. Feminist literary criticism suggests that women in literature were historically presented as objects seen from a male perspective. That would be obvious by reading the first work of feminist literature by *Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, one of the first ways to recognize that women are objectified or seen as objects rather than human beings is the fact that the woman character, the narrator of the story is never given a name. It is concerned with the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women. These are sort of the four Horsemen of feminist criticism looking at the economic dynamics between men and women, political dynamics between men and women in patriarchy social oppression of women their freedoms and their power and the psychological oppression of women. The feminist writer Bell Hooks quotes “The significance of feminist movement is that it offers a new ideological meeting ground for sexes. A space for criticism, struggle and transformation” (goodreads.com). Feminism movement is not only about women, it’s certainly important to recognize that feminism is about making sure that women’s rights are promoted in political sphere. However, it is more about the ideological meeting ground for the sexes as Bell Hooks refers to it by saying that it can be a space for criticism for struggle and for transformation of the relationship between the sexes.

According to Toril Moi “Feminist criticism is a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism”. It analyses prevalent gender roles as they are represented in cultural forms like literature, cinema, and advertisement. Feminism has four principal concerns, which are to elucidate the origins and causes of gender inequality, explain the operation and persistence of this state of affairs, delineate effective strategies to either bring about full equality between sexes or at least ameliorate the effects of ongoing inequality and imagine a world in which sexual inequality no longer exists” (1).

According to Tyson Feminist criticism or Critical Theory Today, as it is well-known, is concerned with "The ways in which literature reinforce or undermine the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women"(83). It seeks to find out how aspects of our culture are inherently patriarchal (male dominated) as well as, it aims to expose misogyny in writing about women, which can take explicit and implicit forms. This misogyny, Tyson can extend into diverse areas of our culture: "Perhaps the most chilling example...is found in the world of modern medicine, where drugs prescribed for both sexes often have been tested on male subjects only" (85).

Feminist criticism is also concerned with less obvious forms of marginalization such as the exclusion of women writers from the traditional literary canon: "...unless the critical or historical point of view is feminist, there is a tendency to under represent the contribution of women writers" (Tyson 84).According to Abrams, there are two centuries of struggle for the recognition of women’s cultural roles and achievements and for women’s social and political rights. It was marked in some books such as Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* (1869), and the American Margaret Fuller’s *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845). This means that from the very long time there has been a process of women’s movement. This process can be called as women’s

struggle in order to fight against all forms of discrimination toward them. As a human being a woman who endures many forms of distinctiveness is not a useless person. Women try to move forward and think about their fate in the future. Their will to give up with the condition which limits their movements is completely none subjugated. Despite their limited movements, they obtain successive ideologies. People are able to restrict their stirrings but not their thoughts. Though this could take a long process, a lot of women have profound critics in their mind that enable them to produce various forms of writing with the purpose of influencing the thought of the other women in order to move forward. In fact, some male writers too, share similar interest as women (88). Furthermore, Abrams says:

There is an important precursor in feminist literary criticism who was Virginia Woolf. She later wrote *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and other numerous essays on women authors and on the cultural, economic, and educational disabilities within what she called a “patriarchal” society that has hindered or prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities. (88)

The patriarchal system, including society, encourages the avoidance of women, and authors, in particular, hold an eye on it in order to be successful and innovative in the creation of other literary works. Patriarchal society believes that literary works are capable of prejudicing people's own thinking. It then uses the patriarchal system to bind the thinking that is stored in the minds of women. The key goal of this system is to change people's thought. They brainwash people with ideas that benefit them, with ideas that deny reality.

Feminist literary criticism has been anxious from the very beginning to find its own roots, trying to create norms of women's literature and early feminist theory to combat the unquestionable recognition of men as a standard. In conclusion, the main goal of feminist literary criticism is to raise consciousness of the role of women in all aspects of literary output as authors, characters and readers and to reveal the extent of male domination in all aspects.

1.6. Asking New Questions...

Feminist literary criticism involves asking new questions of old texts .Lisa Tuttle is an American-born science fiction, fantasy and horror author. In1986, she literally wrote the book on feminism, Encyclopedia Of Feminism.

Tuttle cites the goals of feminist criticism as:

- To develop and uncover a female tradition of writing
- To interpret symbolism of women ‘s writing so that it will not be lost or ignored by the male point of view,

- To rediscover old text,

- To analyze women writers and their writings from a female perspective

- To resist sexism in literature. (“Wiley” 00:32:18- 36:00)

To conclude, feminism examines the tension between male and female imagery within the piece of literature. Feminist writers tend to explore how both those symbols are treated, the female symbols being diminished, pushed down and suppressed and how the male symbols are being the championed. In some few occasions, women might burst free and come loose and in some others they might not. Bearing in mind, One doesn’t have to be a woman to be a feminist.

1.7. Patriarchy and Women in 19th Century :

Coming across the definition of the term patriarchy; it’s a general well understood term.

In terms of clarifying the concept, Chris Weedon argues that, the term “patriarchal “refers:

To power relations in which women’s interest are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take many forms, from the sexual division of labor and

the social organization of procreation to the internalized norms of femininity by which we live(...). In patriarchal discourse, the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to norm which is male".(157)

It refers to the power relationship in which the interests of women are considered inferior to men. This relationship has many forms, ranging from the classification of jobs according to gender and empowerment in social organization, to the norms of femininity which are internalized in our lives. The strength of patriarchal system focuses on the social meanings based on gender.

Patriarchy is a social system in which the role of the male as the primary authority figure is central to social organization, and where fathers hold authority over women, children, and property (Lambert par2). This system makes women have no authority to run their own lives. Along with human history, patriarchy has manifested itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organization of a range of different cultures, and also influences modern civilization. The patriarchal system has constructed women to be the ideal role model of good homemakers who only take care of their husbands, children and houses. Historically, patriarchal culture started to be popular during the Victorian Era in the 19th century when there was a significant change from agricultural to industrial aspect (Lambert par 5). Victorian Era was the golden age to bridge the modernization through the industrial revolution in England. In this era, people were triggered to change their fate also by having better economic condition. Men worked outside the house as the bread maker of the family, while their women were only busy with their daily activities in household. People of the Victorian Era were handed with the principal that women should get married and have children because they were born, raised, and educated as a good wife, not anything else. As the result of the lack of education, a woman of the Victorian Era was expected to marry a man in order to support her, since she did not have knowledge to do any jobs. This reason brings economical roles for men and familial roles for

women as the main arrangers of the household. Therefore, there is a notion that men's role is to be the bread makers and the leaders of the family. The patriarchal cultures become the influential aspect in forming the social rules of the Victorian society. As a result, all rules including women's roles are organized by patriarchal power. Automatically, marriage, duties, and women's career become a part of patriarchal production. Based on these aspects of patriarchal culture, women's position and roles in social and marriage lives were established strictly. Women ought to be inferior; pushed down male domination. In a society where the good wife is identified by obeying the husband orders and upbringing the children, rights to negotiate with the financial matters were prohibited since the husband is the only leader of the family. Nothing can be done by women just advocating for male's positions and be forced into subjugated and exploited roles.

1.8. Marriage in 19th Century in Europe:

It takes a huge leap of faith for a woman of the 21st century to know what her life would have been like had she been born 150 years ago. Today, we take for granted that virtually every woman can have a job if she applies herself. We take it for granted that women can choose whether or not to marry, whether or not to have children, and how many.

According to Helena Wojtczak, "Women of the mid-19th century had no such choices. Most lived in a state little better than slavery". Helena Wojtczak believes that a man has the right to push his wife into sex and childbirth. He could take her children for no reason and send them to be raised elsewhere. He could spend his wife's inheritance on a mistress or a prostitute. Sometimes, somewhere, all these things – and a lot more – happened (Wojtczak201).

1.9. Conclusion:

To conclude, the historical background of the feminist movement, its waves and its literary theories can be seen in this chapter. One can perceive the important contribution of Henrik Ibsen's literary work. Considering that, in this first chapter, the question emerges as to whether women developed their gender identity on the basis of past circumstances. In order to make it systematic and credible, our study was designed, essentially, to explore the feminist movement during that period, in parallel with literature (theories, literary texts). All of this has been properly discussed in this chapter, for the sake of absorbing the idea of the quest for female identity in Ibsen's work in general and in *A Doll's House* in particular.

Practical Part

Chapter Two:

Shakespeare and Ibsen:

Comparative Study

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2.1. Introduction:

For a long time ago, a husband had a very clever and narrow definition of ladies' part. Men believed that it is devoted obligation of women to be great mother and wife; in addition they told their wives that women were responsible for the good morality of the children. There was no implication that it was simply the answer to every woman in whom marital self-realization as an individual is smothered. The tragedy of being born as a bourgeoisie female in a society ruled by a patriarchal law while feminism is the dominant theme was investigated by the father of "modern" drama Henrik Ibsen. This chapter will shed light on two great masterpieces of world literature, William Shakespeare and Henrik Ibsen, addressing their female protagonists as an integral part of the patriarchy and clarifying the views of both playwrights towards the feminist movement. The chapter would also draw attention to the most famous play, *A Doll's House*; focus on its settings in general and the moral backbone that is lagging behind the story in particular.

2.2 Shakespeare and Ibsen : A Comparative Study of Female Characters

There cannot be any argument against the fact that a playwright's environment has a significant influence on his writing. With both Ibsen and Shakespeare it is very evident with their works, notably the way they present their female characters in their works. They both had unhappy childhood memories which had involved their parents. Ibsen had felt a lot of compassion for his mother due to the fact that his father's lifestyle and habits were a definite cause for his unhappiness. He had to change his occupation due to the family's financial difficulties which began when Ibsen was fifteen years old. He had dipped into various occupations like journalism, apothecary, theatre administrations and practitioner. Shakespeare on the other hand had suffered from strict childhood household upbringing discipline of the middle Ages. Shakespeare's father was a leatherworker who specialized in the soft white leather used for gloves and similar items. A prosperous businessman, he married Mary Arden, of the

prominent Arden family. However, one change from his parent's childhood to those of their kids was education. His parents wanted to provide an educational background for their children because they were never given the opportunity to advance their own knowledge and education (goodreads.com).

Shakespeare's greatness and supremacy as a dramatist are universally recognized. Every element of his drama might, in isolation, be matched by the best of his contempt. What makes him special is his combination of all gifts which were scattered in the works of other playwrights of his time. He is superior to others by his many sided curiosity and extreme diversity of his talent. His genius is flexible to a marvelous degree. He adapted himself to the most diverse material and seemed to use it all with equal skill and enthusiasm. His great tragedy, *Macbeth* is distinguished by such astonishing variety of kind, presentation, and dramatic movement that hardly any one formula fits them all. He shows equal aptitude for the tragic and the comic, the sentimental and the comical, lyrical fantasy and character-study, portraits of female and of male (JESR 30-31).

Shakespeare's portraying of women, and the ways in which his female roles are interpreted and enacted, have become topics of scholarly interest. His heroines encompass a wide range of characterizations and types. Within the gallery of female characters, Shakespeare's women characters display great intelligence, vitality, and a strong sense of personal independence. These qualities have led some critics to consider Shakespeare a champion of womankind and an innovator who departed sharply from flat, stereotyped characterizations of women common to his contemporaries and earlier dramatists. In a different manner, other critics note that even Shakespeare's most favorably portrayed women possess characters that are tempered by negative qualities. They suggest that Shakespeare was not free of misogynistic tendencies that were deeply seated in the culture of his country and era. William Shakespeare lived during the Elizabethan era and wrote all his works based on the society of that time. The Elizabethan era

was a time when women were portrayed to be weaker than men. During that time, it was said that “women are to be seen, and not heard.” In this few lines, an attempt has been taken to explore Shakespeare’s presentation of woman, Lady Macbeth in his tragedy, *Macbeth* demonstrating his philosophical viewpoints concerning woman and domineering roles in the male dominated society of the Elizabethan England (JESR 31).

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20th, 1828. He was a major 19th-century Norwegian playwright, theatre director, and poet. He is often referred as the father of modern theatre and is one of the founders of Modernism in the theatre. His plays were considered scandalous to many of his era, when European theatre was required to model strict of family life and propriety. Ibsen’s work examined the realities that lay behind many facades, revealing much that was disquieting to many contemporaries. It utilized a critical eye and free inquiry into the conditions of life and issues of morality. Ibsen is often ranked as one of the truly great playwrights in the European tradition (*JESR 33*). Many consider him the greatest playwright since Shakespeare. Charles Lyons describes him as “The realist, the iconoclast, the successful or failed idealist, the poet, the psychologist, the romantic, the anti-romantic” (4). Today he is considered the greatest Norwegian author and is celebrated as a national hero by the Norwegians.

Among his popular plays are *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, *Emperor and the Galilean*, *Wild Duck*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Hedda Gabbler*, *Ghosts*, *The Pillars of Society*, *A Doll’s House* and *The Master Builder*. Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* was published two years after he moved from Dresden to Munich Germany in 1875. The play is a scathing criticism of the marital roles accepted by men and women as norms which characterize Ibsen's society. It was the first of Ibsen’s plays lifting up women’s problems as its central theme which was followed by similar plays such as *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabbler*. By these three plays which have similar women quality within them, many consider Ibsen as a feminist writer. The play was Ibsen’s first play to create a sensation and is now perhaps his most famous play, and required reading in many

secondary schools and universities. The play was controversial when first published, as it is a sharp critic of 19th century marriage norms. It follows the formula of well-made play up until the final act, when it breaks convention by ending with a discussion, not an unraveling. It is often called the first true feminist play. The play is also an important work of the realist movement, in which real events and situations are depicted on stage in a departure from previous forms such as romanticism. The influence of the play was recognized by UNESCO in 2001 when Henrik Ibsen's autographed manuscripts of *A Doll's House* were inscribed on the Memory of the World Register in recognition of their historical value (Balaky 35).

The play made its American premiere on Broadway at the Palmer's Theatre on 21 December 1889. Other productions in the United States include one in 1902 which received four Tony Awards and the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Revival of a Play. The first British production was opened on 7 June 1889 a new translation by Zinnie Harris at the Donmar Warehouse was opened in May 2009 (Balaky 36).

Due to its fame, *A Doll's House* has also been adapted in several film releases including two in 1973 and in 1993. Dariush Mehrjui's 1993 film *Sara* is based on *A Doll's House*, where the character of Sara is Nora in Ibsen's play. A version for American television was made in 1959 and a US radio production version was produced in 1938. Finally a later US radio version by the Theatre Guild was produced in 1947 (Balaky37).

Through a number of plays Shakespeare's ideas about human beings and on the relationship between individuals and his community, Ibsen seems to be a very common feature. Ibsen was known as the Shakespeare of the 19th century, his plays some cause inspiration, some cause rage, some cause confusion, and some give a new perspective to the world, such as *A Doll's House*. The central theme of Ibsen's plays is a trail of suffering women echoing from his mother as his sympathy for women stemmed from his deep understanding of the feminine character

and powerlessness. For all great playwrights, democracy, liberty and brotherhood are no longer the same as they were in the days of the guillotine.

A researchentitled, *Shakespeare and Ibsen: A Comparative Study of Macbeth and Hedda Gabler* from 21st Century Radical Feminism Perspective; is made by a group of PhD teachers working at Macedonia university, they claim:

Our purpose is to depict the feminist message as articulated in *Shakespeare's Macbeth* and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* by portraying Lady *Macbeth* and *Hedda Gabler* who are representatives of *Elizabethan* England and the 19th century Scandinavian Bourgeois society and culture respectively. Through these female protagonists, both dramatists wanted to expose their contemporary situation of the female community. Both Hedda and Lady Macbeth have raised a fiery voice or initiated a dreadful revolution against the patriarchal rule, power, and domination with a view to attaining self-pelf, self-power, and self-domination. In these two plays, both Shakespeare and Ibsen have prioritized the female identity, revolt, an dominance more than the male order and custom. (30)

While Shakespeare's writings were almost inspired by the society he lived in ; his female characters of his plays were shocking to their stereotypical society of that era. In that sense it is stated in the above mentioned research that Shakespeare's portrayal of women and the manner in which his gender roles are presented and enacted have been topics of scholarly concern. His heroines have a wide range of characterizations and types. In the gallery of female characters, Shakespeare's female characters show great intelligence, vitality, and a strong sense of personal independence. These qualities have led some critics to regard Shakespeare as a champion of womanhood and an innovator who has departed sharply from the flat, stereotypical characterizations of women common to his contemporaries and former dramatists (JESR 31). William Shakespeare lived in the Elizabethan age and composed all his plays on the basis of the culture of the period. The Elisabeth age was a period when women were perceived as being inferior than men. At that time, it was said, "Women are to be seen and not heard." Shakespeare's portrayal of the woman, Lady Macbeth in his tragedy, *Macbeth's* portrayal of his metaphysical opinions on the sex and the body(33).

On the other hand, Ibsen and his plays are described by saying that his plays can be seen as a gallery of portraits of different kinds of males and females, trapped in social realism and trapped in the triviality of human life while struggling to find truth and freedom. Among the dramatic roles of Ibsen, the extraordinary Scandinavian women of strong character are marked with great devotion to their ideals and enormous resolve in the pursuit of individual freedom and existence. In reality, they are brazen, defiant, and progressive woman warriors with independent and intellectual personality and striving to spiritual emancipation (31). Additionally, they argue women, with their powerful personalities, are usually destined to be stuck in a male-centered society where they are robbed of the inherent right of human beings in the fullest sense. Ibsen has vividly described a range of rebellious characters and unveiled a spiritual pilgrimage; they have gone through their persistent pursuit of emancipation, freedom, and their bitter struggle to regain their identity as a human being. It was Ibsen who gave women a strong and fair voice by developing strong female characters, including Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House* (1879), Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* (1881), Rebecca West in *Rosmersholm* (1886) and Hedda Gabler in *Hedda Gabler* (1890), with a view to overcoming social traditions and orthodoxy and reflecting on how women lagged behind males (31).

For both playwrights the position of women over men was not just a domestic and unconscious inclusion but it was for political as well as social transformation. Shakespeare and Ibsen frequently tend to deliver the message that some women in their societies do not just get the roles they really want. They overshadowed the female image living within society where they are pushed down, inferior and disadvantaged and totally subjected to male politically socially and economically. In their works, both dramatists raise gender issues trying in one way or another to suggest solutions to the hidden wedlock problems as well as women concerns in totally male dominating environment.

2.2. Female Characters In Ibsen 's Works : Conventional Vs Modernist

Most of Ibsen's plays reveal what society kept hidden for a long time and considered it as a norm. He believed that it's about time women liberated themselves from the ties they are bound with and go to a new direction where they are treated as human beings not as men's property. The females that Ibsen created were an eye – opener to the weak and subservient women who sink in the male domination sea .He has a great sympathy towards women encouraged them to combat and get their humanity free, he believed in women's purity that shouldn't be contaminated by the male dominating mindset. He constantly emphasized the idea of equality between men and women as well.

According to an article entitled *Ibsen's Treatment of women* published on Feb 25, 2016 Md Amir Hossain argues:

Ibsen's plays can be viewed as a gallery of portraits of various kinds of men and women through social reality and psychological trauma while they are determined to struggle for seeking truth and freedom. His women characters outshine their male counterparts by winning the hearts of both readers and audiences, by demonstrating great courage in times of crisis, and in face of adversity. (1)

This means that if we dig closely into Ibsen's work and the manner in which he depicted both men and women, we might very much find that women have made a great effort to preserve existing relationships with their peers at the same time as they keep fighting for their rights, dignity and goals. This matter does not hurt men, nor does it hurt their dignity; thus, it holds the wedlock in peace.

In describing Ibsen's female characters, Md Amir Houssain adds that Ibsen's strong female characters are marked by great devotion to their ideals and enormous resolve in the pursuit of individual freedom and existence. In reality, they are brave, progressive woman warriors with an autonomous and intellectual mind and striving to spiritual emancipation. They are suffering great pains in defending human dignity and rights rather than subservient to a male-dominated

society. An Ibsen heroine, like Nora Helmer, Mrs. Alving, and a interesting one, Hedda Gabler, is first and foremost a human being, not only a lady. In fact, the word "woman" implies the "role" intended for her by a society or a man who sets the norm for her. She should be frail, delicate, compassionate, loving, tame and compliant, while for those unorthodox women she should have a strong, articulate, aggressive, driven and irreconcilable personality. From the modern age of Ibsen to the present, they are supposed to be a source of inspiration for women today, socially, economically, politically and psychologically (1). That is, women, in order to restore their femininity and show their role as human beings, had to suffer a great deal to prove that in a patriarchal society. Seeing the marriage as a sacred contract, being an angel of the house and a crisp part of the relationship was no longer a despotic thought for women, in the meantime, seeking their unique female identity, gaining a strong, ambitious image were the infancy.

Customarily, Ibsen's female characters were of two categories, a pair of opposing women, the strong category which is distinguished by being an independent, a deviated, a foregrounded part while the weak category is symbolized by being the subservient ,the demon part set in the background. Md Amir Hossain claims:

Ibsen was a fore runner in exploring the notion of self, especially female self, in gendered relationship in his plays. He created an array of interesting women characters drawn by their romantic quest and struggle for existence in a predominantly male society. It is a quest for a coherent identity on women's part and their incessant search for self-expression, that have caught fancy and imagination of many young writers in the early 20th century. (5)

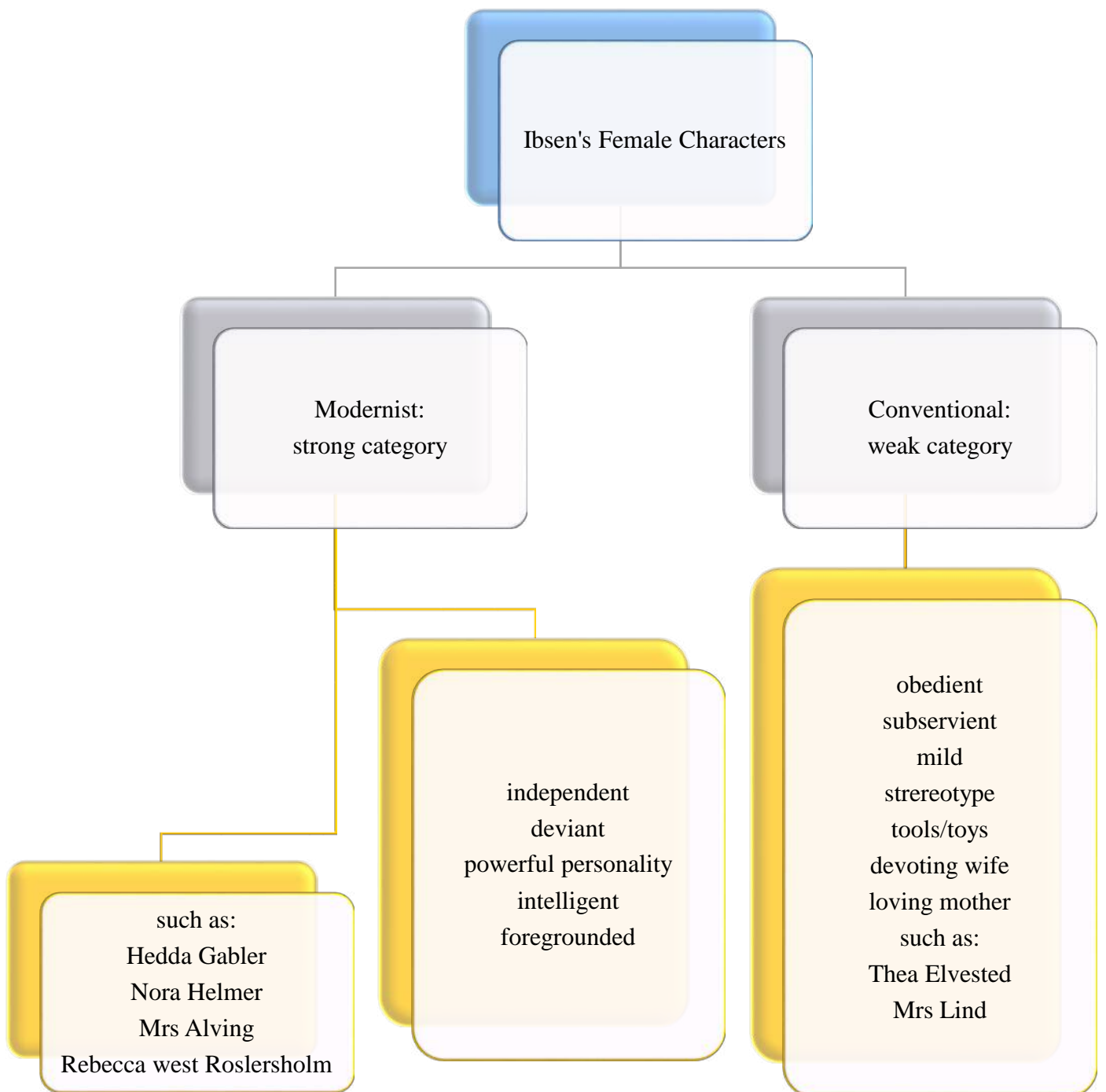
The previous block quote is a strong evidence of Ibsen's belief in women's emancipation and freedom, his plays were a true eye opener and they achieve an international identity and popularity not only in Norway but all over the European continent. As Most of Ibsen's female characters were distinguished by their rebellious attitudes towards the stereotypical life and against male domination such as the great roles of protagonists of his plays: Hedda in *Hedda Gabler*, Mrs Alving in *Ghosts* and Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*. Ibsen knows that women can be something else than our narrow-minded upbringing has thought us to be.

It is important to know Ibsen's uniqueness as a dramatist who triggered off the social debate on many important issues. Society changes quickly but minds are hardly change it is that which makes his work permanent .It is his rare portrayal of human relationships with all its distinctions that made him the father of modern drama. The novelists contemporary to Ibsen were attempting to escape from the conventional norms and create characters in their complex form. Ibsen was new in this and he created some of the most memorable women characters that none of the great novelists could create. His memorable women include Agnes, Nora, Helen Alving, Rebecca West, Ellida Wangel, Rita Allmers, and Ella Rontheim. These characters are so largely portrayed that they ignore both shallow acting and easy interpretation. But if they are properly acted out and worthily interpreted, they offer as rewarding experiences as it is possible to receive in a theatre. Ibsen's understanding of human relationships was so delicate that a mean actor can only partially succeed in these roles (21).

In Ibsen's treatment of women article Md Amir Hossain argues that Ibsen dealt with a variety of topics of topical significance, but the most important was his view of women, his concern for the plight of women, and his representation of modern women. The researcher

selected this subject with the conviction that Ibsen was successful in creating a woman of lasting importance. He developed women's characters that basically embodied female consciousness. He presented women with their suffering, with the pressure of stereotypic stereotypes (21). That means most of Ibsen's female characters come up with the approval of modern women and disapproval of the conventional .The following graph may give a clear vision:

2.3. Ibsen's Female Characters Categories: Graphical presentation



2.4. Ibsen's *A Doll's House*:

To eradicate the women's subservience, inequality and injustice due to their sex, Feminism movement seeks many ways. The impact of feminism in literature was traced in literary texts which highly provide a clear image of the ways how society works to push women down. The strong emotional impact of imaginative writing may be brought into play to increase resentment at gender discrimination and hence help to end it. The great dramatist playwright Ibsen gives as a sample of that literary work in his most popular and read play *A Doll's House*.

The play *A Doll's House* was written and published in 1879 by Henrik Ibsen and is set in 19th century Norway. Since Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was written for the cause of women, it had a huge influence on progression of feminism into the 20th century by raising awareness on contradicting Norway's patriarchal society norms. Subsequently, Ibsen's life was important to the discussion of the culture and context of the play since its plot and premise was based on a real-life event, whereby Nora was based on a friend of Ibsen's, Laura, whose husband sent her to an asylum following her fall into debt on his behalf.

2.4.1. The Plot Summary of The Play:

In the introduction of the play's *A Doll's House*, Nora Helmer is a young happy wife and a mother of three children, enters her home followed by a porter toting a Christmas tree. Her husband Torvald calls out to her from his office. He believes his wife is a wasteful with money and teases her for spending too much. In the rising action, Nora shows Torvald her presence and requests money for her own Christmas, Torvald gives it but has no idea that Nora needs money for a loan she borrowed without his consent that she's been working in secret to pay back her lender. Christine, a childhood friend of Nora, drops by and the two women discuss how their lives have changed since they left side each other. Nora brags about Torvald's new position at the bank and offers to convince him to hire Christine. Nora then describes how she saved Torvald's life early in the marriage by providing the money they need to spend a year

in Italy. Hence, the loan's lender Krogstad sooner arrives to meet with Torvald. Dr Rank, a close friend of Torvald and Nora comes in and gossips about Krogstad's bad reputation for being caught up in a scandal years ago. Torvald meets Mrs Linde and says he is willing to give her a position at the bank where he is a manager. Krogstad slips back into the house; he thinks Torvald will replace him at the bank where he works with Christine whom he is known from the past. Krogstad blackmails Nora wanting her to influence Torvald to let him keep his job. When Nora refuses, he reminds her that she has committed a fraud by forging her father's signature for the loan. Nora tries to persuade Torvald not to fire Krogstad but Torvald does so immediately instead of waiting until the New Year. Nora considers asking Dr Rank for help but changes her mind when the Dr confesses his love for her. Krogstad decides to expose Nora and drops a letter about the loan and forgery into a locked letter box outside of Torvald's office. Nora tells Christine that Krogstad is her money lender, Christine rushes out to convince Krogstad to recall the letter and expresses a desire to begin a new relationship with him, even though she chose another man when they were young. Krogstad offers to recall his letter to Torvald but Christine tells him not to, believing honesty will bring understanding in Nora and Torvald marriage. In the play's climax, Torvald reads Krogstad's letter revealing the loan and forgery. In the following action, Torvald calls Nora immoral showing his self-centredness and chastises her viciously but a new letter from Krogstad arrives saying he's forgiven the loan ecstatic that his reputation will not be damaged. Torvald instantly forgives Nora but she finally sees that her husband does not truly love her or understand her and she will always be nothing more than his doll. She decides to leave her family educate herself and make her own way in the world. In the resolution, Torvald sinks into a chair and despair his face buried in his hands. The play famously closes with the slamming of the door.

2.5.2. Main Characters of The Play :

Five key characters take the stage in *A Doll's House* and bring the powerful drama to life.

- **Nora:** The play's protagonist and the wife of Torvald Helmer, Nora has never lived alone, going immediately from the care of her father to that of her husband. Inexperienced in the ways of the world as a result of this sheltering, Nora is impulsive and materialistic. But the play questions the extent to which these attributes are mere masks that Nora uses to negotiate the patriarchal oppression she faces every day. The audience learns in the first act that Nora is independent enough to negotiate the loan to make Krogstad 's holiday possible, and over the course of the play, Nora emerges as a fully independent woman who rejects both the false union of her marriage and the burden of motherhood (sparknotes.com).

- **Torvald:** Nora's husband of eight years, Torvald Helmer, at the beginning of the play, has been promoted to manager of the bank. Torvald has built his middle-class living through his own work and not from family money. Focused on business, Torvald spends a great deal of his time at home in his study, avoiding general visitors and interacting very little with his children. In fact, he sees himself primarily as responsible for the financial welfare of his family and as a guardian for his wife. Torvald is particularly concerned with morality. He also can come across as stiff and unsympathetic. Still, the last act of the play makes very clear that he dearly loves his wife (sparknotes.com).

- **Dr Rank:** Friend of the family and Torvald's physician, Dr. Rank embodies and subverts the theatrical role of the male moral force that had been traditional in the plays of the time. Rather than providing moral guidance and example for the rest of the characters, Dr. Rank is a corrupting force, both physically and morally. Sick from consumption of the spine as a result of his father's sexual exploits, the Doctor confesses his desire for Nora in the second act

and goes off to die in the third act, leaving a visiting card with a black cross to signify that--for him--the end has come(sparknotes.com).

- **Mrs. Linde:** Sometimes given as Mrs. Linden (for example, in the 1890 translation by Henrietta Frances Lord). An old schoolmate of Nora's, Mrs. Christine Linde comes back into Nora's life after losing her husband and mother. She worked hard to support her helpless mother and two younger brothers since the death of her husband. Now, with her mother dead and her brothers being adults, she is a free agent. Pressed for money, Mrs. Linde successfully asks Nora to help her secure a job at Torvald's bank. Ultimately, Mrs. Linde decides that she will only be happy if she goes off with Krogstad. Her older, weary viewpoint provides a foil to Nora's youthful impetuosity. She perhaps also symbolizes hollowness in the patriarchal role. Her relationship with Krogstad also provides a point of comparison with that of Nora and Torvald (sparknotes.com).

- **Krogstad :** Nils Krogstad is a man from whom Nora borrows money to pay for trip to Italy, an acquaintance of Torvald's and an employee at the bank which Torvald has just taken over. Krogstad was involved in a work scandal many years previously; as a result, his name has been sullied and his career stunted. When his job at the bank is jeopardized by Torvald's refusal to work with a man he sees as hopelessly corrupt, Krogstad blackmails Nora to ensure that he does not lose his job (sparknotes.com).

2.5.3. Main Themes :

Key themes like sexism, the individual versus society, self-awareness and honesty contribute to the lasting resonance of the incredible play *A Doll's House*.

- Sexism: It flows beneath Nora and Torvald relationship one based on stereotypes. their roles in the marriage are defined by what men and women are supposed to do rather what might work for the couple as individuals .Torvald represents the belief that women should accept a lesser status and value than men. Nora represents the masses of women who have given up their unique identities in order to conform to societal stereotypes. These roles are just as false ,unfulfilling and unsustainable as the limiting men beliefs that created them .Near the end of the play Torvald reveals the low regard he has for women, incapable of seeing Nora as her own person with her own thoughts, wants ,needs. Nora knows that she has no choice except to leave Torvald and her sexist marriage in order to find herself .("Russell" 00 :00 :26 -01 :16)

- Individual Vs Society :This theme comes up often especially when Krogstad brings up the central question of whether a person can truly be a an individual within the boundaries of the society .To be an individual means to reject or ignore social norms .However, characters surrounding Nora suggest that complete exclusion from society is impossible .Krogstad has committed the same crime as Nora .Christine has achieved the independence Nora longs for in the beginning of the play but both have paid a heavy price .Parallels between Nora and these characters who have lived outside of society's expectations and anchors Nora's defiance of society itself.("Russell" 00 :01 :16 -01 :58)

- Self -awareness: The theme of self awareness unfolds throughout Nora's journey. At the beginning of the play Nora is unaware that she lacks self awareness

but as the play unfolds she gains a sense of this as she matches her intellectual moral and emotional viewpoints to those of her husband and father .The horror of the thought of herself as being unworthy, harmful to her children forces Nora to see the consequences of her actions at the end of act two and she withdraws incrementally from her children throughout the rest of the play. Dr Rank also represents this theme, both in his ability to see that his death is nigh and to admit to Nora that he's in love with her .He stands in stark contrast to his friend Torvald who exposes himself as a hypocrite and unaware man.("Russell" 00 :02 :00 -02 :46)

- Honesty:** Honesty is another theme of the play as you cannot know yourself nor have a healthy relationship without it. The more Nora lies and hides from the truth, the more confused she becomes. But Christine serves to unravel the lies told them Torvald and the deeper lives of Nora's self-deception. Christine 's telling Krogstad to leave the letter that Torvald must read it makes the truth inescapable for Nora with the exposure comes the opportunity to take her flight to freedom the old adage the truth shall set you free rings particularly true by the end of the play .("Russell" 00 :02 :56 -03 :26)

2.6. Conclusion:

To conclude, Ibsen's strong woman characters seek respect from writers, historians, academics, reviewers, dramatic performers, fans, creators, translators, actors, actresses, and so on in many countries around the world from the era of Ibsen to the present. Despite contradictory remarks, some influential women have been able to achieve attention either through stage performance, or through study, or through translation, or transition, and so on. For several works, Ibsen portrayed his women as confident, innovative, strong, unconventional and unfeminine characters. They are committed to the achievement of their identities,

independence, self-existence, equality, rights and suffragettes. Via the female characters, Ibsen takes an attempt to concentrate on the socioeconomic issues of the Scandinavian patriarchal society of the 19th century. In *A Doll's House*, Nora Helmer was depicted as the challenging, stereotypical character against male dominated world who trying to regain her female identity and trigger the way to self insurgency.

Practical part

Chapter Three :

Feminist Critical Reading

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3.1. Introduction:

Identity is a social phenomenon created by society. The word "Identity" plays an important role in defining the human beings and events that happen in the universe. Somehow Identity is synonymous with success when an individual or something in the world, such as a writer, country, region, etc., is famous, then they immediately establish their own identity.

Likewise, the identity of the human sex that is usually known as 'male and female' or even the third generation as 'transgender.' Evidently, Male is considered a strong and breadwinner of society. Although female is evaluated as low, it has no doubt other attributes as well as those by which she can play her role in society. The point here is how society gives human beings an identity.

In the same way Ibsen's protagonist, 'Nora,' in his play, '*A Doll's House*,' leaves her family for her own identity in society. *A Doll's House* was written during the feminist movement, which was a common reflection of society. Ibsen acknowledges that, in the 19th century, the role of a woman was to stay at home, raise children, and take care of her husband. This chapter will focus on analyzing the play from a feminist perspective and have a critical reading for its prominent segments.

3.2. Stepping Aside the Box Society:

When one considers these factors, it is not surprising that women viewed the character Nora Helmer as empowering. More and more things were being geared towards women, and women saw the characters as people they could relate to. Although accomplished in different ways, the main female character of *A Doll's House* play decide to take her life choice in her own hands and step outside of the box society has made for her. Her choice and the timing of the 19th century feminist movement caused the play and Ibsen to become associated with being

supportive of feminism. The character could be seen as a victim in situations caused by the men around her. As a result, many began to argue that the character was Ibsen's way of advocating feminism. Ibsen never confirmed or denied this, but many critics feel that others focus too much on the gender of the main character and the play is actually representation of realism. They feel if one looks past the gender labels applied to each character they will realize that there is more to each character's story than being a woman that is "stuck" in a situation. However, if both sides would stop trying to label the play as just one or the other, they would realize that it actually applies. The audience's interpretation of the women was affected by the prominent issues of the time, and the story does reflect the thoughts of some middle class women at that time. Feminism in literature is a form of realism; therefore, *A Doll's House* is an example of feminism and realism.

3.3. Ibsen's women: Feminism or Realism

What Ibsen has accomplished in *A Doll's House* play is realism at its best. As previously mentioned, realism is merely a depiction of life without looking through rose colored glasses. Is feminism not real? In relation to feminism, Tanya Thresher writes that realism reproduces what we already know, realism is a function of continual reinstatement of order, a system of power that renews itself by authorizing some representations and censoring others". Feminism is very real as is motherhood divorce, independence and the other topics covered in the play. The constant discussions regarding whether the play is an example of feminism or realism leaves us with the question, "Why did Ibsen write this play as he did?" Ibsen was a writer of drama and realism. Realism by definition is a manner of treating subject matter that presents a careful description of everyday life, usually of the lower and middle classes" (Realism).

Feminism was an issue among all classes during the 19th century. Based on the definition of realism, a piece of literature that depicts the everyday inequalities that exists between men and women would qualify as realism. Ibsen did not set out to write a piece on feminism; nor did he

specifically set out to write the play to empower women. He was only trying to capture life's situations. Ibsen wrote the following in his personal notes when preparing to write "A Doll's House". *A women cannot be herself in modern society. It is an exclusively male society, with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who asses feminine conduct from a masculine standpoint* "(Meyer 446).

3.4. Inequalities between Men and Women in Society:

This becomes more evident if you look at the characters and story lines from the play. Susan Torrey Barstow best summarized Ibsen's characters in her article "Hedda is all of us: Late-Victorian women at the Matinee ".She writes the contemporary, middle-class heroines of Ibsen and his followers seemed to live not a fantasy realm. But in the spectators's own world. Ibsen's heroines do not face starvation, shipwreck, or attack by wild animals; instead they struggle against the thralls of domesticity and the confines of traditional femininity. Their trials are the ordinary, familiar trials of pregnancy, childbirth, the double standard, sexual frustration, and, perhaps above all, boredom. When strong men appear, they tend to threaten the Ibsen heroine rather than offering her rescue and security .Ibsen was not trying to create tales with happy endings. This is clearly obvious as neither play ends happily in the traditional sense. Some may consider the fact that Nora frees herself from those around her a type of "happy ending ".It is not done in a glamorous fashion and is real. According to William Archer; Ibsen's primary concern is the projection character, and its development by aid of an interesting, moving, absorbing, action " (Archer 145).This is evident if you really look at the character of Nora. The character is deep and goes through life changing experiences .The journey each character embarks on represents a timeless" life "Lesson that can be applied to various situations.

3.5. Ibsen's Central Victim: Nora Helmer

In "*A Doll's House*", Nora Helmer is treated like a caged bird. In her husband's eyes, she exists to be beautiful and there when he needs to be entertained. He even often refers to her as his little songbird. She does not do much around the house with the exception of shopping and playing with the children. She lives in a fantasy world and does not really care about the misfortune of others unless it directly affects her. This is evident when her widowed friend comes to visit her and asks for help finding a job.

Nora cannot stop thinking about her "wonderful" her life and proceeds to share these details with her friend. It is almost as if life is just a game. In her mind, bad things happen but will not last forever. Until the events that occurred in the play; Nora was never required to deal with true misfortune on her own. Nora is not taken seriously, but this is understandable because she has never had the opportunity to think for herself. Nora even realized this herself. She states:

What I mean: is I passed out of daddy's hands into yours. You arranged everything to your tastes, and I acquire the same tastes. Or I pretended to ... I don't really know ... I think it was a bit of both, sometimes one thing and sometimes the other. When I look back, it seems to me I have been living here like a beggar, hand to mouth. I lived by doing tricks for you, Torvald. But that's the way you wanted it. You and daddy did me a great wrong. It's your fault that I've never made anything of my life. (Ibsen 80)

One argues that Nora is trying to push the blame off on others and not take ownership of the way her life is. However, due to the time period, she is correct. Women did not have the freedom they have now to find themselves. Both Torvald and her father likely did not mean to do harm when they sheltered Nora. It was what they were accustomed to. Men were to handle everything. There are still people today that firmly believe this. Nora even felt things were supposed to be. It is when she realizes that she does not have her own identity that her view changes. "...In the first part of the drama, she exploits the whole register of femininity as the feminine traditionally has been perceived and in the last part of the drama emerges as highly articulate and moreover willing to leave her husband and three children" (Rekdal 89).

The fact that she was able to realize this and want to do something about it shows tremendous character growth. If you look at Nora's situation for what it really is, you will realize she is a person that is trying to form her own opinions. This does apply to feminism due to the fact that the movement became a way to empower women to think on their own. However, it also applies to many people regardless of sex, race, age, nationality, etc. There are many people today that are stuck in situations where others have made choices for them. It could be family members or a group of peers. An example is choice of religion. Usually a person will choose a religion based on what their parents chose. While there is nothing wrong with this, there are people that would prefer to explore different types of religion, but they do not because of the backlash they would receive from family members. Nora touches on this when Torvald questions her religious values after she announces she is leaving her family. She states: "All I know is what Pastor Hansen said when I was confirmed. He said religion was this, that and the other. When I'm away from all this and on my own, I'll go into that, too. I want to find out whether what Pastor Hansen told me was right or at least whether it's right for me". (Ibsen 82)

3.6. 19th. Century Women and consumerism:

Often with plays, the reader forgets that they are written to be performed. During the 19th century " ...theatricals depended for its very existence on women spectators..." (Barstow 37).

"...Women have always been recognized as central to the development of consumerism, the " new woman" of the 1890's can in fact be seen as the embodiment of anxieties about consumerism as well as feminism" (Prasch 197). Ibsen needed a way to keep women interested. Since feminism was an issue, it is understandable that Ibsen chose to write about situations related to women. If *A Doll's House* had featured a male that left his family to find his own way, he would not have made a connection with this primary audience. What better way to do

so than to tap into the thoughts that crossed the minds of many middle class housewives during that time. He wanted to connect with his audience through his words and through performance. This allowed Ibsen to make a connection with the housewives that wanted to do more than be just stay at home wives.

3.7. Ibsen 's *A Doll's House* : Pro-feminism

Ibsen likely felt that he accomplished his goals with this play. Even though it has been labeled as a profeminism, the play has always made audience members think. This accomplished through the play whether by reading it or seeing it performed. Many have seen themselves or someone they know in Nora. For those they don't, they have at least felt a connection to the character. Even today; people are still shocked by Nora, they can understand her decision to leave her family and find her own way in life.

There is no denying that the play is primarily example of realism but also of feminism .However, that does not deny anyone that the right to form her own interpretation of the play. Ibsen would want it .Rather than focusing on labeling the play as one thing, we should look into the characters and learn from the choices they made. We are all different and the meaning behind the play will affect us in different ways .As Nora Helmer stated 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. I have to think things out for myself, and get things clear" (Ibsen 81)

3.8. The Husband –Wife relationship in *A Doll's House*:

Much has been written about the protagonist of A Doll's House play, Nora Helmer, many scholars have seen the unique and awkward demeanors of looking her own identity apart from her family and outside the house as an antagonistic behavior not only towards her husband, Torvald, but also towards herself. The constant inner conflicts the couple have, Nora and Torvald, detect the truth that they are opposite to each other, and that both of them represent an invisible opposition in the plot. While Nora tries to find her identity, to be independent and to live like any woman who has the rights and freedom; her husband, Torvald treats her as a doll whom he admires to possess as his own property, he considered her as pilloried family member. Nora is apparently a realistic character who suffered from unfair societal norms which were common in her time.

The urge and yearning for freedom which is an essential element in woman's life, made the protagonist Nora who lives under patriarchal societal norms; a special character in the play. In a complete male dominated society where Nora struggles to obtain her own female identity, the man wills to reign upon every single object of his surrounding and unwillingly to accept any women's support. Women consolidate the prestige of their husbands against everything, they are able to keep their husbands' lives safe, they even can do malicious deeds and sacrifice their own lives but they can't dare not tolerating and disobeying their husbands.

As it is stated in IJELS article (International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences) "Nora who had firm faith and profound love for her husband wanted to stay with her husband by all means. During the sickness of Torvald, Nora was pregnant and was waiting for the birth of Ivar. Her physical and mental restlessness was at the peak because of the extreme economic crisis on that time. Although she was in crisis, she wanted to arrange better treatment for Torvald. She gave priority to her love, wanted to take risk even on that time when she was pregnant. She was ready to receive punishment for the sake of saving the life of her husband as she believed from heart that to protect the life of her love would be the best religion in life. But,

it is a matter of great regret that Torvald didn't show any gratitude to Nora for whom he is now alive, let alone the matter of giving love, respect or protection to her."(355). In this respect, Ibsen shows his resentment towards the manners how women were treated by men. P. Kalaiyani (25), expressing Ibsen feminist perspective; states that, "Ibsen paints a bleak picture of the sacrificial role held by women of all economic classes in his society. Ibsen believed that women had a right to develop their own individuality, but in reality, their role was often self-sacrificial. Male superiority caused women to make many sacrifices by not being able to pursue their own ambitions, careers and identity. In the play —*A Doll's House*, the marriage of Torvald and Nora was unstable because of the gender inequality. Being controlled by her father and handed over to the husband's authority Nora was not able to pursue her desires "Nora shows how women in the Victorian society were expected to act. Women were expected to defer to men's wishes and do whatever they want. On one hand, the quote said by Torvald while calling Nora; "where's my little skylark?" 'Here she is!'" (Ibsen50). A notable point can be hold is that the explicit anti-feminist language used by Helmer. He uses animal terms to refer to Nora, his wife, such as 'skylark', 'squirrel' and 'singing bird', which suggests that Helmer does not love Nora as an equal, and treats her like a pet. Even more, he calls her a 'possession', as if she were a thing and not an individual with a separate identity. while on the other, Nora's reaction shows her conforming to that expectation when she puts a smile on her face and comes to Torvald despite the fact that the way Torvald called for her is belittling, that uncovers the unseen truth about the offended treatment of middle class husband upon his wife, as well it highlights the society's norm of treating women as inferior.

Though it's sometimes hard to know the exact feelings of Nora towards the males surrounding her but in act three she cannot afford and reveal them to Dr Rank by saying that, ".There are some people one loves best and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions."(39).By this quote, she confirms that she likes Dr Rank and that their

relationship doesn't go beyond the friend zone. In addition, the quote foreshadows her relationship with her father as well as with Torvald. Ultimately, the audience took the lead and come to realize that Nora's marriage is not as happy as it appears.

Meanwhile women were fighting their economic and social equal rights to men. Nearly, most of them were confined to stereotypical norms such as not going outside home, child bearing as their main role in wedlock and acting passively towards society .There are many freedom restrictions practiced upon women in all life aspects. In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, two examples of freedom limitations towards women are affordable. The former is that the deprive of women not having their own decision as economically independent member and the later is that confining women's freedom and adhere it to the limits of domestic life. A strong evidence of the former limitation can be seen in the following dialogue between Nora and her husband, Helmer:

Helmer. When did my squirrel come home?

Nora. Just now. (Puts the bag of macaroons into her pocket and wipes her mouth.) Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

Helmer. Don't disturb me. (A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.) Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

Nora. Yes but, Torvald, this year we really can let ourselves go a little. This is the first Christmas that we have not needed to economize.

Helmer. Still, you know, we can't spend money recklessly.

Nora. Yes, Torvald, we may be a wee bit more reckless now, mayn't we? Just a tiny wee bit! You are going to have a big salary and earn lots and lots of money.

Helmer. Yes, after the New Year; but then it will be a whole quarter before

the salary is due.

Nora. Pooh! We can borrow until then.

Helmer. Nora! (Goes up to her and takes her playfully by the ear.) The same little featherhead! Suppose, now, that I borrowed fifty

pounds today, and you spent it all in the Christmas week, and then on New Year's Eve a slate fell on my head and killed me, and—

Nora (putting her hands over his mouth). Oh! Don't say such horrid things.

Helmer. That is like a woman! But seriously, Nora, you know what I think about that. No debt, no borrowing. There can be no freedom or beauty about a home life that depends on borrowing and debt. We two have kept bravely on the straight road so far, and we will go on the same way for the short time longer that there need be any struggle (Act I 4- 5).

From a feminist point of view, the aspect of economic dependency of women is clear in the above mentioned dialogue. Women were not allowed to work even if they have the tendency to do so since earning money was only allocated to men .Besides the considerable hidden problems between the couple, Nora and Torvald , one of them is that belittling Nora by calling her using demeaning terms and pet names such as "my little lark," "my squirrel," "my spendthrift. "they are symbols of a flighty bird or a secretive animals and certainly demeaning expressions as well. Nora shows no response towards that she tamped her mouth with macaroons and go ahead to Torvald to lie about eating sweet treats. Frankly speaking, the couple relationship seems to be master and servant but also seems to be happy. In other words, Torvald does not give her any credit for any amount of intelligence at all. He also shows his strength and confirms Nora's weakness. In this respect, the theme of money and finance throughout the act one of play is clear in the above dialogue. To ask for loan from other people is considered as a shame and a sign of great humiliation in Helmer' s view, for him no awaited

happy family if they take a loan out on their own. Hence, this is a strong evidence of a patriarchal dominated world represented by Helmer where Nora has no right to decide and can do nothing without Helmer's permission. Another sign of freedom straitening toward her is reinforced by her old friend, Mrs. Linde. It is mentioned in the following dialogue:

Nora. Come here. (Pulls her down on the sofa beside her.) Now I will show you that I too have something to be proud and glad of. It was I who saved Torvald's life.

Mrs. Linde. "Saved"? How?

Nora. I told you about our trip to Italy. Torvald would never have recovered if he had not gone there—

Mrs. Linde. Yes, but your father gave you the necessary funds.

Nora (smiling). Yes, that is what Torvald and all the others think, but—

Mrs. Linde. But—

Nora. Papa didn't give us a shilling. It was I who procured the money.

Mrs. Linde. You? That entire large sum?

Nora. Two hundred and fifty pounds. What do you think of that?

Mrs. Linde. But, Nora, how could you possibly do it? Did you win a prize in the Lottery?

Nora (contemptuously). In the Lottery? There would have been no credit in that.

Mrs. Linde. But where did you get it from, then?

Nora (humming and smiling with an air of mystery). Hm, hm! Aha!

Mrs. Linde. Because you couldn't have borrowed it.

Nora. Couldn't I? Why not?

Mrs. Linde. No, a wife cannot borrow without her husband's consent (Act I 14).

It is clearly mentioned in the dialogue above that a woman cannot borrow anything without her husband's approval. Nora misdeed and took a loan out without telling Torvald.

Nora needed a great deal of money to pay for a trip to Italy, trying to find a way to help to heal her husband's illness due to the advice of the doctor. When recovering in the south Saves Torvald 's life, Nora has given a lot of money to the actual source of the funds. Anxious Nora decides to trust a friend of hers. She used to take a loan of the dishonest character named Krogstad, without her husband's Acceptance, illegal and bold action. It displays a mature side, however, to Nora that was not seen until now. Then she tells Kristine She did it.

The second example of the restriction of independence against Nora is the Limitation to do whatever she wants to do. She has virtually no opportunity to do something she wants Even when it's only a small thing like Helmer's Favorite candy, macaroon. He forbids her to eat it. The following dialogue indicates that:

Helmer. And I would not wish you to be anything but just what you are, my sweet little skylark. But, do you know, it strikes me that you are looking Rather—what shall I say— rather uneasy today?

Nora.Do I?

Helmer. You do, really. Look straight at me.

Nora (looks at him). Well?

Helmer (wagging his finger at her). Hasn't Miss Sweet Tooth been breaking rules in town today?

Nora. No; what makes you think that?

Helmer.Hasn't she paid a visit to the confectioner's?

Nora. No, I assure you, Torvald—

Helmer. Not been nibbling sweets?

Nora. No, certainly not.

Helmer.Not even taken a bite at a macaroon or two?

Nora. No, Torvald, I assure you really— (Act I 7).

There, Nora tells Helmer that she does not eat macaroon since He forbids her to do so, in his opinion, it's going to ruin Nora's teeth. This is obviously visible that the all is under the husband influence as the head of the household. He Controls Nora's interest in doing it all. This clearly indicates the dominant male force at that time and the couple relation is a master-servant relationship.

This transgression, Nora's continued eating of macaroons throughout, despite being discouraged by her husband, is described in the first Act, the stage direction of which says 'Nora hurriedly stuffs them (the macaroons) into her purse.' Such an overtaking disclaims the societal constraints of the 19th century on the female component of marriage as expected to behave in a subservient way in order to conform to the enforced laws of their spouse. By explaining Nora's inability to conform to these laws, Ibsen may have practiced his own quasi-feminist values, the likes of which have evolved in society; the connection between Nora's transgression and the sweet, enticing macaroon implies that the transgression is a positive thing, while the patriarchal forbidding is not. Consequently, the macaroons are condemned. From this feminist point of view, Ibsen might, in fact, imply that prohibited fruits taste the sweetest (Toby Standford 1).

3.9. Hidden Love and Forgery :

The main character developed by the playwright to represent an opposition against the protagonist Nora is Krogstad. He is an evil character who was known in drama as an antagonist. Due to playing a central character in the literary product, his essential conflict is

represented against the protagonist Nora Helmer. He caused a threatening point in Nora's life.

The following dialogue is an evidence of Nora's forgery and villainy of Krogstad:

Krogstad. Your father died on the 29th of September. But, look here; your father has dated his signature the 2nd of October. It is a discrepancy, isn't it? (NORA is silent.) Can you explain it to me? (NORA is still silent.) It is a remarkable thing, too, that the words "2nd of October," as well as the year, are not written in your father's handwriting but in one that I think I know. Well, of course it can be explained; your father may have forgotten to date his signature, and someone else may have dated it haphazard before they knew of his death. There is no harm in that. It all depends on the signature of the name; and that is genuine, I suppose, Mrs. Helmer? It was your father himself who signed his name here?

Nora (after a short pause, throws her head up and looks defiantly at him).

No, it was not. It was I that wrote papa's name.

Krogstad. Are you aware that is a dangerous confession?

Nora. In what way? You shall have your money soon.

Krogstad. Let me ask you a question; why did you not send the paper to your father?

Nora. It was impossible; papa was so ill. If I had asked him for his signature, I should have had to tell him what the money was to be used for; and when he was so ill himself I couldn't tell him that my husband's life was in danger— it was impossible.

Krogstad. It would have been better for you if you had given up your trip abroad.

Nora. No, that was impossible. That trip was to save my husband's life; I

Couldn't give that up.

Krogstad. But did it never occur to you that you were committing a fraud on me?

Nora. I couldn't take that into account; I didn't trouble myself about you at all. I couldn't bear you, because you put so many heartless difficulties in my way, although you knew what a dangerous condition my husband was in. (Act I.28).

Krogstad serves as a reference to the past by providing further details about Nora's past. As a result, the viewer is acquainted with all the details about Nora's forgery. The dialogue above takes place as Krogstad reveals Nora's covert forging the signature of her poor father to be able to borrow money from him. When Krogstad wonders why she doesn't just submit the document to be authentically signed by her Dad, Nora claims it's difficult to do so because of his illness, she doesn't want to have a problem with her sick father while she finds the money to heal her husband. He also tells her why she's not giving up efforts to rescue her life. Nora has to assess in this tough situation everything that is significant is forging the signature of her father in order to get the surety of the bond protection, and then she will get the loan. Krogstad induces the apprehension of Nora that motivates her to take more action in the Play when he tries to reveal the secret of Nora, he initiates a series of events that lead to Nora the biggest disaster in Helmer's home.

Another sign of Krogstad's villainy and that he is a morally corrupt character in the play and he shall be represented as a model for how society treats people who are morally corrupt. Since Nora is initially taking a negative mentality towards him as spiritually and socially inferior, he is driven to do so. He becomes motivated to blackmailing her. He worries that he will risk the reputation he has earned if he loses his place at the bank. It is the following conversation which he had with Nora Helmer that reveals some facts:

Nora. I don't believe it. Is a daughter not to be allowed to spare her dying?

Father anxiety and care? Is a wife not to be allowed to save her husband's?

Life? I don't know much about law; but I am certain that there must be laws

Permitting such things as that. Have you no knowledge of such laws— you

who are a lawyer? You must be a very poor lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

Krogstad. Maybe. But matters of business—such business as you and I

have had together—do you think I don't understand that? Very well. Do as

you please. But let me tell you this—if I lose my position a second time,

you shall lose yours with me. (He bows, and goes out through the hall.)

(Act I 28- 29).

On the other hand, in his confession, Dr Rank revealed his love towards Nora. Dr Rank told Nora that " I have loved you as deeply as anyone else has? Was that horrid of me?"(Act II 68) .When talking to Nora, Dr. Rank confesses his love for her, noting that Torvald is not the only one who can make sacrifices for her. By the end of the day, though, we discover that Torvald would not even consider compromising himself for Nora. Throughout his revelation, Dr. Rank admits that his love for Nora is more genuine and true, as sentiment matured when he genuinely spent time with her. Nora's reply was extremely outspoken ". There are some people one loves best and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions" (Act II 69).Nora says there are people you love a lot, including your dad, but You don't really like them, and there are plenty where you love their companionship. A lot still don't enjoy them the most. She's basically saying this to Dr. Rank, he's a friend and he enjoys his friendship, but he doesn't love him. Just by saying this, the audience is beginning to see the further cracks in her relationship with her Father and Torvald. This quotation foreshadows what happens to Nora in the third act of the play leaves Torvald. This quote indicates that the marriage of Nora is not as secure as it seems. (MarkedbyTeacher.com)

3.10. Confession and Denial:

Torvald invests much of his time in his demesne: in the public domain. He's normally working in his study even though he's at school. It seems like he never spends time with his wife and children; at least there is no contact between him and the children during play. In fact, when the children come back from a walk with their nurse, he says, «the place will only be bearable for a mother now” (ActI 23). (Salah Hassan, Abdul Mosawir Sulaiman 38)

When Nora asks Torvald to come and see what she has ordered, his response is simply: "Don't bother me" (Act I 2) and he comes out just after a while (apparently after completing his job). It shows that his main role as a man is making money. As Nora mentions why she has wanted Torvald to take the blame for her crime, he also makes it clear why his integrity is more valuable than his lover when he says that “no man would sacrifice his honor for the one he loves” (Act III94).Torvald is depicted as rational, necessary, and, to some degree, sometimes emotionally cold. He advises Nora to save money and forbids her to eat candy in order not to damage her teeth. He seems to see his wife or women in general, as intellectually inferior. As he explains to her that he doesn't like investing and wasting so much money, he uses himself as an excuse and ask her how to return the borrowed money to the people who lent it, if he had an accident and died.Nora doesn't seem to notice, so she claims she wouldn't think about them because she wouldn't know who they were.Torvald’s response to the short-sighted answer is: “That is like a woman!” (Act I 3). He previously called her a “featherhead” (Act I 2) as well. (Salah Hassan, Sulaiman 39)

Nora is depicted as immature, (at least superficially) submissive, naïve and childish. She is even referred to as a child by Mrs. Linde in Act 1(13) and Torvald calls her several times during the play; he even mentions that she has “become both wife and child to him” (Act III 88).Nora is ignorant of the law and, as Torvald points out, she does not “understand the conditions of the world in which she lives” (Act III 93); It defends the illegal act of forgery by claiming that it

was “sparing her dying father anxiety and care” and “saving her husband’s life” (Act I 32). (Salah Hassan, Sulaiman 39-40)

It is worth mentioning that not all female characters in the play are given an immature and submissive personality; the world-wise Mrs. Christine Linde gives a stark contrast to the gullible, impetuous character of Nora. Christine is older than Nora and has a more “dejected and timid” (Act I 7) manner; Torvald even describes her as a “frightful bore” (Act III 77). “Life, and hard, bitter necessity have taught” (Act III 71) her to be prudent. She does not seem to approve of Nora’s keeping secrets from her husband and prevents Krogstad from recalling his letter in Act III. She says that “this unhappy secret must be enclosed; they must have a complete understanding between them, which is impossible with all this concealment and falsehood going on” (Act III 74). Another difference between her and Nora is Mrs. Linde’s relationship with her true love, Krogstad. They are capable of honestly and openly talking to each other even after being separated for many years, while Nora and Torvald only have a serious conversation at the end of Act III after eight years of marriage. Furthermore, they seem to be equals; both are widowed and described by Christine as “two shipwrecked people” that “could join forces” (Act III 71). (Salah Hassan, Suleiman 40)

Nora’s isolation from the public domain leaves her economy completely dependent on her husband, and even the private sector does not belong to her alone. As a man, Torvald regulates not only public relations, but also private affairs. He blames her for having wasted so much money on Christmas presents, so when he gives her two pounds, he points out that it will suffice for the housekeeping of Christmas as Code states that, «women’s disproportionate confinement in the private sphere that correlates with women’s subordinate status”. (342). He is running the home, not Nora. But Nora is not only financially dependent on her husband alone; once Torvald fell sick and had to fly to Italy to get him back, Nora became forced to borrow the requisite money from Krogstad. In order to pay him off, she had to quietly save some of the money that

Torvald had given her, so she took some of the regular positions for the women engaged in needlework and the embroidery or she began to copy the documents. It seems she loved being able to make her own money, she tells Mrs. Linde that “it was a tremendous pleasure to sit there working and earning money. It was like being a man” (Act I 17). (Salah Hassan, Suleiman 41)

Farrell suggests that the separation of society into public / private domains has provided both husband and wife "distinct, but complementary functions to perform" (Farrell 1996). It is often noted that women did more than just take care of the house and the children; women often functioned as religious and moral guidance for their husbands. The public domain was called amoral, and the only manner in which the husbands could purify themselves from that evil position was by their spouses who kept their home clean (Salah Hassan, Sulaiman 40). Women who struggle to keep themselves and their children untainted are to blame should their offspring turn out to be poor (Salah Hassan & Sulaiman 41). Torvald even remarks that “almost everyone who has gone to the bad early in life has had a deceitful mother” (Act I 36). In fact, Torvald, after finding out about Nora 's crime, is threatening “to not allow her to bring up the children” for he does not dare to “trust them to her” (Act III 86). This division “puts women on a pedestal but also in a cage” (Guerin, et al 255), or in this play’s case *A Doll’s House*. Towards and Nora fully understand that their “home has been nothing but a playroom”; she was only her husband’s “doll-wife” , Originally, she was her father's “doll-child” (Act III 90). She had “merely existed to perform tricks” for her husband (Salah Hassan, Sulaiman 41-42).

The female characters of *A Doll’s House* are between the two pictures monster or angel. Mrs. Christine Linde in *A Doll 's House* tends to be much more confident and rational than Nora; nevertheless, she is the sense of despair of the role of wife and mother. She was left homeless and unhappy by an uncompassionate marriage and deprived of a happy childhood. Her entrance to the play brings Nora to her self-discovery. According to some reviewers, she is a mirror to Nora's belief in the importance of motherhood and family. It seems obvious that like

the lucky Nora, the recipient of many indulgences in the home of her father and her husband, Christine has struggled to survive. After her husband died, she had to work in the public sphere to support her family. She points out that she "could not endure life without work," but after her mother had died and her two young brothers had grown up, she felt "quite alone in the world" and recognized that there was "not the least pleasure in working for one's self" (Act III 72). She wants "to be a mother for someone" (Salah Hassan & Suleiman 42); In spite of her individuality, she thirsts for a family and for the conventional position of «the angel of the home». She is selfless and eager to put aside her own pleasure for the benefit of those she loves. This is proven by her marriage to a wealthy man simply for the sake of being able to care for her sick mother and two younger brothers; she did not marry him because she is a materialist. On the contrary, she cannot understand Nora's excitement at Torvald's significant support and claims that it "would be delightful to have what one needs" (Act I 9); apparently, she is not interested in "heaps and heaps of money". Nora, on the other hand, is a different case and is somewhat undergoing a transition from an imperfect angel to a monster or a mad woman. Outwardly, she appears to be the cheerful, innocent "angel of the home," but even before the final act, she proves that she is not an angel. Proof for this ranges from her little fib about not eating a macaroon to keeping the secret of her forgery from her husband. The remorse that Krogstad has made her feel by his threats almost drives her to madness. This can all be highlighted by the wild dance she performs in Act II, in order to keep Torvald away from the letter box. Her deep distress, as well as her love for her husband, is proven by the fact that she even attempted suicide in order to save Torvald's name. It is the awareness that Torvald will not reciprocate her intense feelings that lead her to adjust. Torvald's "little squirrel" and "singing skylark", as he has called her multiple times in the play, she becomes cold and silent after seeing the true nature of her husband. She begins to question her life together, her life with her father and her religion. The answers to her questions will only be sought from her herself, and this is

when she chooses to abandon her responsibilities as a mother and a wife in order to perform the obligations she has for herself.

3.11. Conclusion:

To sum up, *A Doll's House* can be regarded as a feminist play about a woman liberating herself from a marriage that, from her point of view, has been a lie. The women's issues that arise in the play are because of the heavy male influence and weak representations of women, creating restrictions on their rights to carry out their activities, and even to make certain negative assumptions about their ability in domestic and social life. As a female character, Nora Helmer's trying to fight to fix the issues of her struggles. The final decision to leave her family is the result of her profound disappointment at the negative response of her husband. It's bringing her out the desire to be a woman of her own without the existence of anyone who is superior to her and it can only be done by abandoning her family.

Ibsen believes that women should be liberated to find their own voices. Ibsen did not speak of himself as a member of the women's movement. This was expressed when he was invited to speak at a ceremonial dinner in honor of the Northern Women's Association, saying that, "women were best when active as mother's and wives 'perpetuators and educators of the human race'. This however did not mean that they should be uneducated or subordinate to men, to educate one's knowledge" (Downs 140). Once the play was first released in 1879, Michael Meyer claimed that the subject of the play was not women's rights, but rather "the need of every individual to find out the kind of person he or she really is and to strive to become that person" (478). Though it 's clear that Ibsen treats his protagonist of the play with sympathy and understanding, Nora jumps and acts childishly in the first act, behaves separately in the second and pull herself together during the final act of the play. At last the audience gets to see the real personality of Nora and the other side of her character.

What makes the whole play unique is the way Nora frees herself from her oppressor. Nora makes her decision to break out of the final chains of captivity and leave Torvald. She realizes that her marriage to Torvald was just a big lie. If the play had been a romantic modern comedy, all of it would have worked out for the best. It's not, however, that Nora's illusions about her husband are shattered; he doesn't love her enough to understand that she has forged a document to save his life. His only thought was the crime she had done and the repercussions that should have had an effect on him. Virginia Woolf cited in *A Doll's House: The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen*, "this leads Nora feeling that Torvald is attempting to encourage, 'the slow waterlogged sinking of her will into this'" (Heinemann 82).

It's the realization that she's less important to Torvald than his profession and image that shatters Nora's heart. She can't even share the rest of the night with him under the same roof. But this is not an unreasonable decision; it is not a woman rushing out of the house after an altercation while in her evening dress. Nora becomes a rational self-possessed woman as she walks away from her family, responsibilities; a woman fulfilling her own responsibility. After all *The Doll's House* is still important as some women still need to get out of unjust and suppressing relationships.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

At first sight, *A Doll 's House* didn't seem particularly feministic, but as the plot progresses and moves towards its end, the play questions contemporary stereotypes about women and the protagonist Nora transforms from a doll, a possession, whose sole intention is to entertain her husband, into an actual human being.

The corpus of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was analyzed to explore the true image of women in the 19th century and to explore the social evils of the patriarchal world. The aim of this research paper was therefore not only to analyze but also to dig deeper into Ibsen's views on feminism, so as to reveal the hidden message of *A Doll's House* play.

In order to clarify the theoretical framework work followed in this work, the first chapter was devoted to presenting a literature review on the subject, discussing historical terms related to feminism and highlighting its prominent features. As a result, the second chapter focused on analyzing the author's tendencies and views on feminism, shedding the light particularly on author's treatment of his female characters to recognize the link between *A Doll's House* and the corpus. My modest work ended with a feminist critical analysis of the corpus. This work focuses on an analytical descriptive approach through the collection and analysis of key feminist elements. We have therefore followed the qualitative design.

Through his play, Ibsen did not include his female characters in typical stock roles that identify them with supernatural creatures, being angels or demons. Perhaps he wanted to show that it was not appropriate to portray women as supernatural; as angels or demons. Women, no matter how good or bad they may be, are neither one nor the other; they are human beings with virtues and faults. It is the perception that Nora is not a doll with the duties of a wife and a mother "but, before all else, [...] a reasonable human being" (Act III 92) with such a duty to herself that causes her to risk her life and her home.

Ibsen may have used the role of Mrs. Linde to criticize the conventional public / private separation of society. In comparison to the popular assumption, Mrs. Linde was not deprived of her dignity by entering the male-dominated public domain. Nora, on the other hand, has relatively more shortcomings, but she's largely limited to private quarters, which is meant to hold her safe and pure. She does not, however, refrain from keeping her husband's secrets and every now and then telling him white lies. Earning her own money and being independent has not harmed Mrs. Linde. She enjoys her job, but also aspires for the role of a loving mother and wife. She's going to prove that a woman who loves her financial freedom doesn't have to give up her family life.

Last but not least, Ibsen used two separate couples in his play to illustrate how the destiny of marriage based on the inclusion of the two spouses varies from that based on the supremacy of the husband and the oppression of the woman. After a fair share of hardships, Krogstad and Christine enjoy a happy ending as two equals decide to unite and form a family. At the other hand, the union of Torvald and Nora, in which Nora was misunderstood and treated as inferior by her husband, fails after eight long years due to a lack of interaction and appreciation.

To cut the long story short, Nora, the main female character of the play, proved that woman could be capable and independent in general. She should fix her problems by showing her struggle .Nora has been successful in showing her ability and winning her own female identity as well as her own independence by breaking the rules that limits her movement at home and that's of social life. It can be said, therefore, that Ibsen, rather than writing solely for women's rights, writing to free both men and women who have been trapped in their gender roles during this period of time. He saw the need for a revolution against traditions and social problems Society, and he called for justice and freedom for every human being and every human being. It aimed to encourage society towards individualism and equality.

To conclude, the author has shown gender-specific roles in the form of Nora Torvald and Kristine-Krogstad relationships and glued them to his advantage in order to illustrate the difference between conditional and absolute love. The play deals with the challenge of sustaining an independent identity – the feminine type – within the boundaries of a traditional social role. Thus, the play can be called a feminist one as it articulates the female voice in the play and it aims at a woman's struggle for assertion and identity.

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Résumé :

Au cours des dernières décennies, la littérature anglaise s'est considérablement développée. Certains d'entre eux ont franchi les lignes dans les représentations traditionnelles des femmes. Cependant, il est toujours détaché des mouvements littéraires universels. Plus récemment, les œuvres anglaises ont été exclues du féminisme en tant que mouvement malgré le fait que ce dernier ait agité toutes les parties de ce monde. Ce document de recherche examine l'existence d'entités féministes dans le travail de la dramaturge norvégienne. Ce travail est consciemment choisi parce qu'il semble célébrer le même sujet non seulement pour les femmes mais aussi pour les hommes. L'objectif principal de cette étude est d'étudier l'image réelle des femmes dans *A Doll's House*. Il vise également à faire la lumière sur l'ère victorienne et à introduire le monde patriarcal où la pièce expose ses maux sociaux. Il cherche à savoir comment l'opinion de l'auteur, Henrik Ibsen sur le féminisme. Ce document de recherche sera divisé en trois chapitres. Le premier est une base théorique sur le féminisme en général. La seconde explore les traits communs des personnages féminins d'Henrik Ibsen avec ceux de Shakespeare et les analyses des éléments intrinsèques du drame, tels que la caractérisation, la mise en scène et le thème. La dernière partie jettera la lumière sur l'analyse du féminisme dans *A Doll's House* en appliquant la critique littéraire féministe pour tenter de dénoter les résultats d'une telle pertinence. Ce travail a montré que Nora est une femme privée et domestique, présentée comme une femme faible, stupide et dépendante. Sa décision d'abandonner Torvald, cependant, est un signe de rébellion des femmes contre l'oppression des hommes par le patriarcat. Henrik Ibsen, à travers ce drame, a voulu dire aux lecteurs et au public que les femmes sont libres.

Mots-clés: féminisme, patriarcat, dépendant, libre