صورة المرأة في "بيت الدمية" لهنريك إبسن

م.م. علاء عبد الرضا عودة السعدي
مدرس مساعد – وزارة التربية – المديرية العامة لديالى– العراق
alaaalsaady@gmail.com

الخلاصة

شهدت الفترة المضطربة للقرن التاسع عشر أحداث وتغييرات عظيمة على المستوى العالمي. كما ان النظريات الحديثة والاختراعات العلمية العصرية جنبا الى جنب مع الثورة الصناعية قد القت بظلالها على حياة الناس في ذلك الوقت. أن العصر الفكتوري خلال الفترة من 1837 – 1901 يرتبط بحكم الملكة فكتوريا للمملكة المتحدة لكل من بريطانيا العظمى وأيرلندة. علاوة على ذلك, فأن تأثير ذلك يمكن ان نراه على الطبقات المجتمعية في اوربا والولايات المتحدة الامريكية. أن التيارات الثقافية الجديدة التي كانت سائدة أنذاك كان لها صدى وقبولا كبيرين في الساحة الادبية. لذلك سعى هنريك أبسن (1828– 1906) بكل جهده الى ان يعكس صورة حقيقية للمرأة العصرية في الحياة الاوروبية خلال الفترة الحديثة.

يعتبر هنريك أبسن كاتب ومخرج مسرحي نرويجي مشهور. كما يعتبرأحد مؤسسي الحركة المسرحية الحديثة. وغالبا ما يشار الى هنريك أبسن على انه أب المسرحية الواقعية وهو من اكثر الكتاب المسرحيين تأثيرا خلال القرن التاسع عشر في المسرحية الحديثة. بطبيعة الحال, ان شخصيات هنريك أبسن هي شخصيات من الحياة اليومية بكل ما فيها من محاسن ومساوىء. لذلك رسم لنا هنريك أبسن شخصيات حقيقية بدون تعديلات. وقد يجد القراء في مسرحياته شخصيات يعرفونها او رأوها بشكل مسبق.نعنبر مسرحية بيت الدمى 1879 للكاتب هنريك أبسن مسرحية واقعية عن صورة المرأة العصرية في اوروبا بصورة عامة اكثر من كونها عن صورة المرأة في النرويج على وجه التحديد.

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية من خلال نظرية النهج النسوي الى تناول صورة المرأة العصرية في المسرحية. كما تسلط الضوء على دور المرأة في المسرحية مع تحليل نقدي للشخصيات مع ردود افعالهم الانسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صورة المرأة، بيت الدمى، الحقبة الحديثة، هنريك أبسن

Image of Woman in Henrik Ibsen's "*A Doll's House*"

Alaa Abdul Rida Oda ALSAADY
Assistant Instructor- Ministry of Education- Diyala General Directorate - Iraq.
alaaalsaady@gmail.com

Abstract

The clashing era of the nineteenth century witnessed various drastic events and changes on the whole Globe. The new scientific theories and inventions alongside with the industrial revolution placed their on hand impact on the life of people at that time. The Victorian Age covers the period from 1837- 1901; as it is linked with the reign of Queen Victoria for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. However, its influence can be seen within the classes of modern communities in Europe and United States of America. The newly cultural trends that were spreading at that time had a great echo and acceptance on the literary arena. Thus, Henrik Ibsen (1828- 1906) tried hard to reflect a genuine image for modern women in European life during the modern era. Henrik Ibsen was a famous Norwegian playwright and theatre director. He was one of the founders of modernism in theatre. Ibsen was usually referred to as "the father of realism" and the most influential playwright of the 19th century period on modern literature, His characters are alive persons of everyday life with true ups and downs. That is why; he portrayed his characters without modulation. Readers could find in his dramas people they knew earlier and seen before. *A Doll's House* was written by Ibsen in 1879 to show modern women image in Europe in general more than in Norway in particular. This research paper and based on the Feminism Criticism Theory addresses the image of women in the play. The paper also sheds light on the role of women in the play with critical analysis for the characters of the play alongside their human reactions.

Keywords: Image of Woman, A Doll's House, Modern Era, Henrik Ibsen.

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1.1 Introduction

Dhia., A.H. Aljubouri, etal. (1983) In their book **"Victorian Poetry: An Anthology Complied with An Introduction and Notes** "argue that the Victorian Age was a period of significant change in Europe, impacting all aspects of life. The emergence of scientific theories, particularly Charles Darwin's Origin of Species (1859), led many to experience doubt and uncertainty. Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), in his poem entitled as "Dover Beach," explores the conflict between science and religion. He recognized that Victorians were increasingly distancing themselves from faith in God and traditional social norms. The rise of industrialism and materialism contributed to this spiritual decline, leaving many without a sense of faith. Arnold likened the state of faith in people during this era to the ebb and flow of the sea (Aljubouri et al., 1983).

James McFarlane (1994) in his "The **Cambridge Companion to**

Ibsen”, highlights that Henrik Ibsen and his contemporaries explored various ways to dramatize human struggles by highlighting different aspects of these issues. Ibsen addressed emerging dilemmas such as women's roles, ethical standards, and the male-dominated society. In his plays, he presented problems and potential solutions that were relevant to human life from a contemporary perspective. Ibsen specifically emphasized the issues of identity and gender roles faced by women, suggesting that women encountered a unique set of challenges. These social problems were interconnected, arising from both individual and community factors. (McFarlane, 1994).

James McFarlane (1994) argues that in “A Doll's House”, Ibsen illustrates how Nora Helmer struggles to prove herself as a valuable member of her family, despite the contradictory limitations imposed by her husband and society. He portrays her as a devoted wife and mother, emphasizing the authority of marriage while also reflecting her aspiration for a higher sense of belonging within that institution. However, she remains trapped and subservient to societal labels. Ibsen highlights Nora's experience of social entrapment, which is represented by marriage and the male-dominated perspective of society. Women were dependent on men, confined to their "doll's house." Consequently, the challenges of identity and gender roles faced by women are part of a broader social issue. In Ibsen's works, the quest for identity is closely linked to the individual's effort to break free from social expectations and instinctual drives in order to explore a more expansive sense of self. Ibsen's primary focus is on human development and the continuous process of shaping and reshaping the individual through time, actions, and reactions. (McFarlane, 1994).

1.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, in Skien, a town in southern Norway, to a family with a history of sea captains and businessmen. His family was involved in the timber and merchandise trade. As the eldest son, Ibsen had three brothers and a sister. Although he showed artistic talent from a young age, his family could not afford to send him to art school due to significant business losses, prompting them to move to a rural home. At the age of fifteen, Ibsen was sent by his father to Grimstad, south of Skien, where he became a pharmacist's assistant—a new experience for him. Working in the pharmacy allowed him to read extensively in literature, and he developed interests in poetry and theology. During this time, he formed

close friendships with a small group of young men and began writing poetry.

Keith M. May (1993) in her book **"Ibsen and Shaw"**, comments that Ibsen learned Latin to prepare for the university entrance exam. He read Cicero and was particularly influenced by the character of Catiline, whose revolutionary ideas resonated with him. In 1849, Ibsen wrote his first historical drama, titled Catiline, in verse to reflect Cicero's influence, though the play did not achieve much success. After spending six challenging years in Grimstad, Ibsen moved to Oslo, where he attended a public school to prepare for the university entrance exam. There, he met his lifelong rival, Björnstjerne Björnson, who would later be recognized as Norway's national poet. Unfortunately, Ibsen failed the entrance exam. His Catiline was rejected by the Christiania Theater in Oslo, but his later work, The Warrior's Barrow (also known as The Burial Mound), was accepted and performed three times at the Christiania Theater in 1850. (May, 1993).

Michael, Egan (2003) in his book **"**Henrik **Ibsen: The Critical Heritage"** comments that at the age of twenty-two, Ibsen witnessed Norway's nationalist awakening, which gave rise to a new literary movement aimed at reviving the nation's historical and medieval literary heritage. This movement sought to liberate Norwegian culture from four centuries of Danish rule (1397–1818). The new generation in Norway celebrated the Middle Ages and was significantly influenced by the Romantic Movement spreading across Europe. In 1850, Ole Bull, a prominent national musician, established the Norse Theater in Bergen. The theater garnered considerable acclaim from young activists and writers eager to break away from Danish cultural dominance. During the 1850s, Ibsen was appointed as Bergen's theater poet and manager. This role was instrumental in developing his dramatic career, allowing him to stage over 150 plays, including adaptations of works by William Shakespeare and the French dramatist Scribe. During this period, Ibsen gained extensive experience in stagecraft and had the opportunity to produce an original play each year, including Lady Inger of Östraat (1855) and The Feast at Solhaug (1856). (Egan, 2003).

Michael Egan (2003) discusses that when Ibsen was thirty, he married Susannah Thoresen, a woman of strong and independent character. Their only son, Sigurd Ibsen, was born in 1859. Following the success of the Norse Theater in Bergen, Ibsen's close friends and supporters of nationalist poetry in Oslo opened a new theater and invited him to become its manager, offering a better salary. This new theater was more radical in its productions compared to

the Christiania Theater in Bergen. Ibsen accepted this new position, where he wrote and produced a number of impressive plays. (Egan, 2003).

However, Ibsen's prominent dramas included Brand 1865, Peer Gynt 1867, A Doll's House 1879, Ghosts 1881, An Enemy of the People 1882, The Wild Duck 1884, Rosmersholm 1886, Hedda Gabler 1890. His literary works were characterized by realistic images for people of everyday life. He asserted the women's rights plights in his works besides on-going community problems. His themes were of various subjects such as search for identity, women status in a male – dominating society, family relationships, martial dilemmas, economic issues and even political subjects including personal freedom, the rights to vote and deep love for homeland. Ibsen suffered his first stroke in 1900; he stopped any further writing; then he suffered a second stroke in 1901. He died on the 23rd. of May 1906 in Oslo and was buried in Oslo, Norway. His tombstone was inscribed with a hammer, which stands for the miner's symbol, it refers to a poem written by Ibsen in his young hood. The inscription ended with "Break me the way, you heavy hammer, / To the deepest bottom of my heart," the verse is a vivid reflection for Ibsen's life vision and art. (Egan, 2003).

1.3 Henrik Ibsen's *"A Doll's House"* (1879)

Destarina, Intan Pravitasari (2013) in her **"Nora's Struggle for Life Independence in Ibsen's "A Doll's House": A Feminist Study"** discusses that Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879) is a three-act play. The first act opens on Christmas Eve, set in the Helmers' beautifully decorated living room. The play begins with a conversation between Nora Helmer and her husband, Torvald Helmer, regarding Nora's spending habits. The family faces the need to pay off several loans, forcing them to be more cautious about their finances. Torvald has recently been promoted to bank manager, which promises a more comfortable lifestyle for the family. Dr. Rank, the Helmers' dear friend, visits them as he regularly does, followed by Mrs. Kristine Linde, a close friend of Nora since their school days. Mrs. Linde shares that after her husband's death, she has no one to support her and asks Nora for help in finding a job at the bank. Nora approaches Torvald about this, and he promises to help Mrs. Linde secure a position with him. During their conversation, Nora talks with Mrs. Linde about her marriage to Torvald, his health issues, and their trip to Italy. She also reveals her secret loan from a money lender. (Pravitasari, 2013).

David Galens, and Lynn M. Spampinato (1998) in their **"Drama for Students: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Dramas" comment** that Nils Krogstad is a minor employee at Torvald's bank who seeks Torvald's help rather than asking to be released from his position. Krogstad is the one who loaned money to Nora when Torvald was ill, which gives him confidence in approaching her. He believes that even if Torvald rejects him, Nora will support him.

However, Torvald refuses to keep Krogstad at the bank in front of Dr. Rank, revealing that Krogstad has forged a signature on a document. As a result, Torvald decides to fire him. Consequently, all others depart, Nora is left at home playing with her children and their nanny, Anne-Marie. She soon becomes aware of Krogstad's presence in the room. Krogstad begins to threaten Nora, stating that he will reveal her secret loan if he is dismissed from the bank. Initially, Nora resists his threats, but Krogstad asserts that he has a contract proving her forgery of her father's signature. (Galens & Spampinato, 1998).

Act Two opens on the second day of Christmas, with Nora arranging her living room while feeling anxious and unstable. Mrs. Linde arrives and helps Nora get dressed for an evening party at her neighbor's house. Nora discusses with Mrs. Linde about Dr. Rank's terminal illness, which he inherited from his father. When Torvald arrives, Nora pleads with him to keep Krogstad at the bank, but Torvald refuses, citing Krogstad's
immoral behavior. He instructs the maid to deliver Krogstad's dismissal letter. After Torvald leaves, Dr. Rank arrives and informs Nora about his impending death. She attempts to comfort him and begins to flirt with him. During their conversation, Dr. Rank confesses that he is in love with her. Nora is taken aback by this revelation and resolves not to ask Dr. Rank for any further assistance. (Pravitasari, 2013).

After Dr. Rank leaves, Krogstad arrives and seeks clarification about his dismissal. He insists that he must be reinstated at the bank with a higher position and leaves a letter in the Helmers' mailbox, detailing Nora's loan and exposing her forgery. In a rush, Nora goes to Mrs. Linde and reveals everything. Mrs. Linde discloses that she and Krogstad were once lovers, but she did not marry him because he was poor. She plans to convince him to retrieve the letter from the mailbox and asks Nora to delay Torvald from opening it. When Torvald arrives, Nora begins to practice the tarantella dance she will perform at the evening's party. She successfully persuades Torvald to

promise not to open the mailbox until after she finishes the dance. Shortly afterward, Mrs. Linde returns and informs Nora that she did not meet Krogstad but left him a letter explaining her request. (Galens & Spampinato, 1998).

Act three opens the following day during the costume party upstairs. In the Helmers' living room, Mrs. Linde meets with Krogstad, and they discuss their past relationship. She explains that she left him to marry a wealthy man who could support her and her family. Now that she is free of those obligations, she is ready to be with Krogstad and care for his children. Krogstad is excited by this news and promises to retract his letter before Torvald can read it and uncover Nora's secret. However, Mrs. Linde advises him to leave the letter, believing that Torvald and Nora will be able to confront their issues once the truth is revealed. After Krogstad departs, Nora and Torvald return from the costume party. Torvald compliments Nora on her beauty and dance, flirting with her romantically. Their moment is interrupted by Dr. Rank, who comes in to bid them goodnight. Once Dr. Rank leaves, Torvald opens the mailbox and discovers Dr. Rank's cards along with Krogstad's letter. He finds two of Dr. Rank's visiting cards, each marked with a black cross. Nora realizes that the crossed cards signify Dr. Rank's impending death and informs Torvald of their meaning. Then, she urges Torvald to read Krogstad's letter. (Pravitasari, 2013).

When Torvald reads Krogstad's letter, he becomes furious and accuses Nora of lying. He tells her that she has disgraced his reputation and ruined his happiness, labeling her a hypocrite and insisting that she should be kept away from raising their children. The maid, Helene, then brings another letter from Krogstad, which contains Nora's contract with the forged signature. Upon reading this letter, Torvald's demeanor shifts to one of calmness and cheerfulness as he begins to engage with Nora again, completely forgetting his previous insults and humiliation. However, his harsh words have already damaged her dignity and shattered her idealized image of him as a husband. Nora declares that she will no longer be his "doll." After eight years of marriage and sacrifice, she realizes the illusion of her domestic life and recognizes that she has been living with an egoist husband rather than a reliable partner in difficult times. Consequently, she decides to leave him, slamming the door behind her with a sense of deep sorrow. (Galens & Spampinato, 1998).

1.4 The Feminist Criticism Theory

Charles E., Bressler (1994) in his book **"Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice"** comments that the Feminist Criticism Theory is a

modern literary theory that emerges during the ninetieth century era and flourished in the twentieth century. It asserts the ways in which literature undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. Feminism as a literary theory is established in response to patriarchy in modern society where men have recognition of power, and women are systematically neglected. Further, the Feminist theory has its origins in the intellectual and political feminist movement. It criticizes the male dominated language and performs as a resisting factor via readings of literary texts and histories. The leading figures of Feminist theory are Toni Morison (1931- 2019), Alice Walker (1944-), Virginia Woolf (1882- 1941), Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and others. (Bressler, 1994).

Virginia Woolf (1977) in her **"A Room of One's Own 1929",** asserts that women have proved themselves as vital dynamics in the life of men, without them men were unable to cope with the harsh nature of life. As clarified herewith:

Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle. The glories of all our wars would be unknown. (Woolf, 1977, p. 42).

Simone de Beauvoir (2011) in her **"The Second Sex 1949"** states that:

At the moment when man asserts himself as subject and freedom, the idea of the Other becomes mediatory. From this day on, the relationship with the Other is a drama; the existence of the Other is a threat and a danger. (Beauvoir, 2011, p. 113). De Beauvoir point out that man is always tries to put himself on the lead, while woman is always kept aside. Even her existence which is linked to that of man is sometimes looked as danger for man's dominance and superiority in life.

1.5 Image of Woman in Henrik Ibsen's "A Doll's House"

In her "Ibsen and the Irish Revival", Irina Ruppo Malone (2010) asserts Nora's image and attitudes along the whole play course of actions:

She was the thorough doll at first; and her irresponsible babbling and her cajoling graces gave full point to the section. Later she was the doll-child in trouble, pettish, willful and hysterical when she found herself at the mercy of currents she could not control by mere pretty graces. Then at last she found her womanhood. (Malone, 2010, p. 110).

Irina Ruppo Malone (2010) argues that Ibsen, through the character of Nora Helmer, depicts women as subordinate figures in society, controlled by their husbands and existing solely to fulfill their desires. Nora embodies an angelic role within the household, confined to traditional domestic duties in the play. However, Ibsen gradually reveals the true nature of the modern woman, exposing the genuine impulses and motivations that drive her life. Torvald Helmer is portrayed as a typical representation of a male-dominated society, using his wife to address the shortcomings in his own life. At the beginning of the play, he treats her with gentleness, but his lofty language reinforces his dominance over her. This dynamic highlight the limited freedom that Torvald allows Nora. For instance, when Nora purchases extra gifts for Christmas, Torvald criticizes her, suggesting that she should seek his approval before making any household purchases. In this context, Torvald appears more as a controlling figure than a supportive partner. (Malone, 2010).

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 economise.

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**. (Ibsen,2004. Act I, p. 4-5).**

Kristen E. Shepherd Barr (1994), in her book **"Theatre and Evolution from Ibsen to Beckett",** highlights the language addressed to Nora and the pet names used by Torvald:

The theme of wildness versus domestication underpins many of Ibsen's plays and has usually been looked at as a metaphor for human behavior. Torvald's "pet names" for Nora (his little lark and his squirrel) refer to animals that share their environments with humans and whose

wildness is constantly threatened by human intervention. (Barr, 1994, p. 83).

Kristen E. Shepherd Barr (1994) comments that Nora is initially depicted as a carefree wife, likened to a "doll"—a charming and decorative figure meant to embody the expectations of a submissive and obedient spouse. Her nickname, "the little lark," further emphasizes her portrayal as a cheerful and innocent being, oblivious to the complexities of the world around her. Torvald views Nora as a naïve woman incapable of handling the family's financial affairs. (Barr, 1994).

Helmer. You can't deny it, my dear little Nora. (Puts his arm round her waist.) It's a sweet little spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such little persons are!

Nora. It's a shame to say that. I do really save all I can.

Helmer (laughing). That's very true, — all you can. But you can't save anything!

Nora (smiling quietly and happily). You haven't any idea how many expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Torvald.

Helmer. You are an odd little soul. Very like your father. You always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, and, as soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is in the blood; for indeed it is true that you can inherit these things, Nora. **(Ibsen, 2004. Act I, p. 6-7)**

Destarina Intan Pravitasari (2013) believes that Torvald criticizes Nora's spending habits, claiming she is skilled at extracting money from him. In reality, Nora does this intentionally to conceal the fact that she uses half of the money she receives from Torvald to repay her past debt to Krogstad. By doing so, she compromises her own identity, allowing Torvald to define her through the words and images he deems appropriate to mask her secret loan and her current extravagance. Nora fears that if Torvald discovers her hidden debt, their marriage and family life will be jeopardized. She represents the contradictions of a woman ensnared by the social expectations of her era. Furthermore, her journey of self-discovery challenges the fundamental views of marriage and gender roles in the Nineteenth Century Period. Ibsen criticizes traditional ideas of love and marriage, revealing the complexities of these relationships and the often unrealistic expectations placed upon them. He examines the dynamics of power, control, and communication within marriage, emphasizing the potential for both love and conflict. (Pravitasari, 2013).

Julie Holledge et al. (2016), describe in their book **"A Global Doll's House Ibsen and Distant Visions",** the turmoil conflict inside Nora due to clashing thoughts and reactions she undergoes:

According to the eminent scholar John Northam, 'the play is a deep study of the tormented yet consistent development of an individual mind under the pressure of forces at once inevitable and adequately symbolic of the forces we experience in ordinary life'. (Holledge et al., 2016, p. 23).

Ibsen heightens the tension in the play as stated hereby:

Nora. What is it you want of me?

Krogstad. Only to see how you were, Mrs. Helmer. I have been thinking about you all day long. A mere cashier, a quilldriver, a—well, a man like me—even he has a little of what is called feeling, you know.

Nora. Show it, then; think of my little children.

Krogstad. Have you and your husband thought of mine? But never mind about that. I only wanted to tell you that you need not take this matter too seriously. In the first place there will be no accusation made on my part.

Nora. No, of course not; I was sure of that. **(Ibsen,2004. Act I, p. 49)**

Julie Holledge et al. (2016)، argue that Krogstad gradually escalates his threats against Nora, informing her that he will reveal the truth to her husband unless she persuades Torvald to keep him employed at the bank. Krogstad exploits the belief that, as a woman, Nora is inherently weak and will ultimately submit to his demands. Beneath this pressure, Nora harbors a radical desire for self-assertion, struggling to reconcile her aspirations with the constraints imposed by society. Her secret actions, such as forging her father's signature to obtain a loan, demonstrate her urgent need for self-recognition. Moreover, she shows a willingness to defy traditional norms to assert her identity. This morally ambiguous act underscores her courage and her determination to protect her family, even if it means transgressing social expectations. Consequently, Noratalks with her friend Mrs. Linde about her secret loan because Krogstad has threatened to expose the truth to Torvald if he is dismissed from the bank to seek support and advice. That is why Mrs. Linde promises to help her by talking with Krogstad to give up his threats from Nora. Mrs. Linde reveals for Nora about her past love with Krogstad. (Holledge et al., 2016).

Destarina Intan Pravitasari (2013), states that:

There are some limitations of freedom that happen in the social and in the domestic life that bind women's rights. In the domestic life there are limitations to women's freedom to decide to do something and to express feelings over men's domination. In the social life there is a limitation to women's freedom to decide an important thing without men's consent. (Pravitasari, 2013).

Destarina Intan Pravitasari (2013) argues that in Ibsen's dramas, the past significantly influences the present and shapes the characters' choices. Ibsen often examines how past traumas, secrets, and family legacies affect individuals and their relationships. Further, he illustrates how the burdens of the past can impede progress and create profound internal conflict within the human psyche. Consequently, Mrs. Linde advises Nora to confront Torvald and disclose the entire situation herself, rather than remain under Krogstad's threat. (Pravitasari, 2013).

Mrs. Linde (throwing the dress down on the sofa). What is the matter with you? You look so agitated!

Nora. Come here. Do you see that letter? There, look—you can see it through the glass in the letter-box.

Mrs. Linde. Yes, I see it.

Nora. That letter is from Krogstad.

Mrs. Linde. Nora—it was Krogstad who lent you the money!

Nora. Yes, and now Torvald will know all about it.

Mrs. Linde. Believe me, Nora, that's the best thing for both of you.

Nora. You don't know all. I forged a name.

Mrs. Linde. Good heavens—! **(Ibsen,2004. Act II, p. 52)**

Keith M. May (1993) highlights Dr. Rank's vision about the negative aspect of society:

But what of Dr. Rank? He is not irrelevant to the plot and how much the play would lose without his resignation and clear, harsh view of society. Knowing himself to be physically sick (tuberculosis of the spine), he says of Kristine Linde's belief that the morally sick need to be protected, 'It's that attitude that's turning society into a clinic' (Act One). (May, 1993, p. 50).

Keith M. May (1993) comments that Dr. Rank is a close friend of the Helmers, particularly to Nora. He has known them for many years, and his relationship with Nora is characterized by mutual affection and recognition. His presence highlights the limitations of Nora's world and her need for genuine connection. Dr. Rank offers comfort and understanding, serving as a confidant to

whom she can turn for support and advice. He harbors deep, unrequited love for her. Moreover, Dr. Rank's candidness about his feelings and his impending death compel Nora to confront the superficiality of her marriage and her need for personal fulfillment. His illness and eventual death serve as a poignant reminder of the life's fragility, prompting both the characters and the audience to acknowledge the inevitability of death and the importance of living authentically. (May, 1993).

Rank. The only one who would gladly give his life for your sake.

Nora (sadly). Is that it?

Rank. I was determined you should know it before I went away, and there will never be a better opportunity than this. Now you know it, Nora. And now you know, too, that you can trust me as you would trust no one else.

Nora (rises, deliberately and quietly). Let me pass.

Rank (makes room for her to pass him, but sits still). Nora!

Nora (at the hall door). Helen, bring in the lamp. (Goes over to the stove.) Dear Doctor Rank, that was really horrid of you.

Rank. To have loved you as much as anyone else does?

Was that horrid? **(Ibsen,2004. Act II, p. 40)**

James McFarlane (1994), sheds light on Nora's clashing feelings in a rigid society as stated herewith:-

Nora's situation illustrates the pattern central to Ibsen's realistic problem dramas: the individual in opposition to a hostile society. The structure of the conflict is simple — and nobody can be in any doubt as to where the author's sympathies lie. Collective aberration about which ideals or values are true and which are false means that Ibsen sets in motion a process whereby concepts which are central to the bourgeois world are subject to re-definition. (McFarlane, 1994, p. 73).

James McFarlane (1994) observes that Nora consistently attempts to express her motherly affection for her children. She goes out of her way to provide for them, as evidenced by her purchases of clothes and toys for Christmas. Nora's concern extends beyond her own desires, as she continually thinks of her children. She refers to them as "my little darlings" and "my sweet babies," which underscores their status as objects of her affection and adoration. This language reinforces the notion that they are tender possessions rather than independent individuals with their own needs and desires. (McFarlane, 1994).

The NURSE comes forward with the children; **NORA** shuts the hall door.)

Nora. How fresh and well you look! Such red cheeks like apples and roses. (The children all talk at once while she speaks to them.) Have you had great fun? That's splendid! What,

you pulled both Emmy and Bob along on the sledge? —both at once?—that was good. You are a clever boy, Ivar. Let me take her for a little, Anne. My sweet little baby doll! (Takes

the baby from the MAID and dances it up and down.) Yes, yes, mother will dance with Bob too. What! Have you been snowballing? I wish I had been there too! No, no, I will take

their things off, Anne; please let me do it, it is such fun. Go in now, you look half frozen. There is some hot coffee for you on the stove. **(Ibsen, 2004. Act I, p. 30)**

Children are expected to fulfill specific roles within the family structure, with boys encouraged to be brave and strong, while girls are raised to be "little ladies." They are all subject to social expectations regarding gender roles, reinforcing the concept of children as "dolls" being shaped into particular forms. This dynamic contributes to the carefully constructed illusion of a happy and perfect family that Nora and Torvald project to the outside world. (Pravitasari, 2013).

David Galens and Lynn M. Spampinato (1998) discuss that Nora successfully persuades Torvald not to open the mailbox until the end of the costume
party. During the party, she performs the Tarantella dance with great intensity, which serves as an expression of her anxiety and the worries stemming from Krogstad's letter. This dance is a desperate attempt to convey her inner turmoil and further highlights her feelings of entrapment. The Tarantella symbolizes her struggle to escape the constraints of her role as a "doll," allowing her to express her true self. (Galens & Spampinato, 1998).

Nora (as she dances). Such fun, Christine!

Helmer. My dear darling Nora, you are dancing as if your life depended on it.

Nora. So it does.

Nora. You must not think of anything but me, either today or tomorrow; you mustn't open a single letter—not even open the letter-box—

Helmer. Ah, you are still afraid of that fellow—

Nora. Yes, indeed I am.

Helmer. Nora, I can tell from your looks that there is a letter from him lying there.

Nora. I don't know; I think there is; but you must not read anything of that kind now. Nothing horrid must come between us until this is all over.

(Ibsen, 2004. Act II, p. 46)

Destarina Intan Pravitasari (2013), tries to assert the catastrophic expectations which fill Nora's mind due to Krogstad's threatening letter placed into the Helmer's Mailbox. Moreover, Nora is not even given a key to the mailbox, which underscores the gender disparity between her and Torvald. Her sense of entrapment stems from her sacrificial actions, leading her to contemplate suicide as a means to protect her husband's reputation and shield the family from disgrace before Torvald has the chance to read the letter (Pravitasari, 2013). As stated herewith:

Helmer tries to check his mail before he and Nora go to a costume party, but Nora distracts him by showing him the dance she has been rehearsing for the party. Helmer declares that he will postpone reading his mail until the evening. Alone, Nora contemplates suicide to save her husband from the shame of the disclosure of her crime, and more important to pre-empt any courageous gesture on his part to save her. (Pravitasari, 2013, p. 94).

Joan Templeton (2018) in his **"Shaw's Ibsen: A Re-Appraisal",** clearly asserts the humiliating reaction of Torvald on Nora after reading Krogstad's letter:

he learns the truth, and his reaction, demonstrating the folly of her idealist sacrifice, brings the "final disillusion" about her marriage. The strong, chivalrous husband, instead of assuring his wife that he will take the blame on himself, "flies into a vulgar rage and heaps invective on her for disgracing him. (Templeton, 2018, p. 100).

Ibsen projects the final scene with awe and unexpected feelings as hereby stated:

Helmer. It is so incredible that I can't take it in. But we must come to some understanding. Take off that shawl. Take it off, I tell you. I must try and appease him some way or another. The matter must be hushed up at any cost. And as for you and me, it must appear as if everything between us were just as before— but naturally only in the eyes of the world. You will still remain in my house that is a matter of course. But I shall not allow you to bring up the children; I dare not trust them to you. To think that I should be obliged to say so to one whom I have loved so dearly and whom I still—. No, that is all over. From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance. **(Ibsen, 2004. Act III, p. 71)**

Joan Templeton (2018) points out that after reading Krogstad's letter, Torvald reveals himself to be a self-centered husband. He insults Nora, accusing her of being immoral and unfit to raise their children. Furthermore, he declares that he will keep her at home, stripping her of all her rights. Torvald's primary concern is his own reputation and social status. However, when Krogstad changes his approach and sends a new letter containing the original loan contract along with an apology, Torvald's attitude shifts dramatically. He acts as if he never insulted or betrayed the woman who sacrificed her reputation for him. Unbeknownst to Torvald, Nora has even contemplated suicide rather than risk endangering his reputation and bringing disgrace to their family. (Templeton, 2018).

Ibsen shows that the play's central conflict arises from Nora's discovery of Torvald's hypocrisy. The below dialogue asserts the deceptive nature of Torvald as a husband and a man:

Helmer. And can you tell me what I have done to forfeit your love?

Nora. Yes, indeed I can. It was tonight, when the wonderful thing did not happen; then I saw you were not the man I had thought you were.

Helmer. I would gladly work night and day for you, Nora—bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves.

Nora. It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done**. ……**As I am now, I am no wife for you. **(Ibsen, 2004. Act III, p. 115)**

Destarina Intan Pravitasari (2013) asserts the famous closing scene of the play in which Nora decides to leave her husband and children to seek her own identity. It is a powerful act of feminist defiance against the constraints of Nineteenth Century traditional marriage and suppressed gender roles. Nora's departure symbolizes her rejection of her doll-like existence and her determination to become a free individual. As a character, she is central to Ibsen's exploration of women's roles in modern society, asserting the necessity for women to have individuality and personal integrity, even at significant personal cost. Nora's transformation from a sheltered housewife to a self-aware, assertive woman makes her one of the most iconic female characters in world literature. The play raises important questions about forgiveness, the impact of social judgment, and the need for compassion. It highlights a critical issue in human life: that even those who have erred deserve a chance for redemption and self-recognition. Ultimately, the play asserts that true love and

understanding can transcend social expectations. (Pravitasari, 2013).

Conclusion

Henrik Ibsen in his “Doll's House" addresses critical issues about women's status and rights in modern society. First performed in 1879, the play remains a powerful exploration of human struggles, gender roles, and the complexities of marriage. Through the character of Nora Helmer, Ibsen reveals the illusion of domestic life often depicted in Nineteenth Century society, highlighting the suffocating constraints placed on women and the consequences of suppressing their true selves. Nora is bound by rigid gender norms and domestic limitations, denied basic rights and forced to navigate a narrow domestic sphere as a wife and mother. This patriarchal structure victimizes her by stripping away her identity and self-determination. Furthermore, Nora's influence transcends the play itself; her decision to leave her family has become a significant reference point regarding women's roles in modern society. Her story continues to resonate with audiences and readers, serving as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for gender equality and the emancipation of women from patriarchal oppression

In this context, Nora's character emerges as a powerful symbol of the feminist movement, foreshadowing the more overt and organized efforts for women's rights that would develop in the decades to follow. Her journey marks a radical departure from the passive, submissive female characters that had long dominated the stage, paving the way for a more empowered representation of women in literature. Moreover, Nora's plight serves as a metaphor for the broader struggle for female emancipation. Her awakening and rejection of her doll-like existence reflect the growing desire among women to assert their individuality and right to self-determination. Nora’s decision to leave Torvald is portrayed as an act of self-recognition, contrasting sharply with her husband’s self-denial regarding her sacrifice. In many ways, the play emphasizes women's status and underscores their human identity as crucial components in shaping modern life and establishing a stable domestic environment. It calls for greater awareness and concern regarding women's rights in a male-dominated society. The play can be seen as a catalyst for the more overt feminist movements that would emerge in the Twentieth Century. Through the character of Nora, Ibsen illuminates the evolution of gender roles and female identity in modern literature, demonstrating his profound understanding of the complexities and challenges women face in contemporary life.

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