

THE EMERGENCE OF “NEW WOMAN” WITHIN MARRIAGES IN THE PLAY

***A DOLL’S HOUSE* BY HENRIK IBSEN**



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DECLARATION

I state that this dissertation entitled “The Emergence of “New Woman” within marriage in the play *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen” my own work under the guidance of Dr. Zothanchhingi Khiangte.

I hereby certify that no portion of this dissertation has ever been submitted for consideration for a degree or certificate at this or any other education, nor does it contain any works by someone else.

Signature of the candidate

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines and unravels the intricacies of the difficulties that some women have to be acceptable in every way and have to put their lines in concern just to fulfill the urge of their husband, family and mainly society. It will explore the complex relationship within the context of contemporary society between marriage, social participation, and reputation in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*(1879). An analysis is conducted on the intricate dynamics of marital relationships and the significant role of reputation in shaping individual identities. The play portrayed marriage as a façade, dominated by surface-level interactions and societal pressures rather than genuine emotional bonds. This work highlights the reality of marriage through women's perspective within the society where they are manipulated by the society and their husbands and how they grapple with the complexities of identity formation amidst the societal expectations. The experiences of women differ according to the culture and societies in which they live. This research contributes to the literature on the evolution of selfhood and realization of women inquired into the study reflecting the play's characters with 19th century. The purpose of this study is an attempt to identify the commitment as depicted in the play and pervades through the character Nora and other characters, this work desires the reader to understand and reflect on their own selfhood, identity, privileges and responsibilities in combating societal expectations and patriarchal system.

Keywords: Social Norms, Marriage, Patriarchal system, Gender equality, self-discovery.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis intends to thoroughly investigate the multifaceted representation of marriage in the play *A Doll's House*, analyzing its impact on the characters' sense of self and their interpersonal connections, while also evaluating its broader importance in the historical and cultural context of the era. The primary goal here is to present the reality of marriage within society while contributing to the body of knowledge concerning self-development and deception within marital relationships. By examining Nora and Torvald Helmer's marriage, this work dissects the complexities of the institution, revealing conflicts arising from societal norms and gender-based power structures. Gender roles, identity, and autonomy intersect and interact within the marriage, providing insights into the human condition's pursuit of self-actualization and striving for personal growth. This work highlights the 19th-century marriage laws through the character within the play and Henrik Ibsen's famous works regarding women. It seeks to look at how the playwright presents the intricate relationships within marriages and the positions of women within the marriage in the play *A Doll's House*. It will explore how women are primarily restricted to the confines of the domestic sphere, expected to embody ideals of purity and submission to their husbands. This investigation sheds light on the themes of deception, secrecy, and social hypocrisy within the context of marital relationships, highlighting the struggles faced by women due to crushing expectations placed upon them. Women are restricted by the tight bounds of her gender, struggles with the crushing expectations imposed on her as a wife and as a mother. Marriages as stability and a prison for countless women trapped within its confines. This investigation illuminates how these interrelated components impact social dynamics and personal experiences by drawing in sociological viewpoints. This exploration aims to illustrate how these

interconnected components impact social dynamics and personal experiences by drawing upon sociological viewpoints. The reality of marriage within society while contributing to the body of knowledge concerning self-development and deception within marital relationships. This paper also emphasizes women's identities, aspirations, and individuality, all of which are suppressed by women due to social conventions and traditional expectations. The main purpose of this paper is to portray the reality of marriage people within the society. This dissertation also adds to the body of knowledge regarding the development of self and deception of a single person in marriages to meet expectations.

Similarly, women faced many problems in their marriage due to lack of agency, they often faces limited decision-making power and autonomy. Their opinions and desires may be disregarded or dismissed.

1.1: A Brief Sketch about the Author

Henrik Ibsen, a prominent playwright, theatre director, and poet in 19th-century Norway, is recognized as "the father of realism" and a key figure in the emergence of Modernism in the theatrical realm. His renowned works encompass *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Wild Duck*, and *Hedda Gabler*.

Born in 1828 in Skien, Norway, Ibsen hailed from a merchant family. At the age of 15, he opted to pursue an apprenticeship in pharmacy in Grimstad, where he commenced his journey in

playwriting and had a romantic involvement with a maid that led to the birth of an illegitimate child. Upon relocating to Christiania (now Oslo) in 1850 with intentions of furthering his education at the university, Ibsen redirected his focus towards crafting plays. His initial play, *Catiline*, surfaced under a pseudonym in 1850, succeeded by *The Burial Mound*, which marked his maiden staged production.

Securing a position at the Det Norske Theatre in Bergen in 1851, Ibsen embarked on a yearly cycle of playwriting and production. The breakthrough moment arrived with *The Feast at Solhoug* in 1855. In 1858, he wedded Suzannah Thoreson, with whom he had a son named Sigurd in 1859, who would later ascend to the position of Prime Minister in Norway.

For 27 years, Ibsen dwelt in Italy and Germany, with scant visits to Norway during his most prolific era. Notwithstanding, his later works, spanning from 1877 to 1899, defied traditional norms in structure and content, attaining a global stature and recognition previously monopolized by English, French, and German playwrights. Debatable has been Ibsen's connection to feminism, particularly after his speech on May 26, 1898, to the Norwegian Women's Rights League at Christiania. Ibsen, *Speeches and New Letters* 65) states that he declined to become a member of the association and declared himself to be "more poet rather than social theorist than people generally seem to believe." He also stated that he "must disclaim the honor of having consciously worked for the women's rights movement." Rather than having concerns with the movement's target gender, Ibsen joined it for the benefit of humanity in order as a whole. "True enough, it has failed the whole purpose to solve the problem of women's rights, along with the others," he said in ending.

Ibsen's theatrical pieces provoked controversy in his era by challenging prevailing moral codes. Notable plays such as *A Doll's House* (1879) and *Ghosts* (1881) faced severe criticism initially but are now esteemed as timeless masterpieces. Through a critical lens, his works delved into existential themes and moral dilemmas. Ibsen is frequently hailed as one of the preeminent dramatists in the European heritage, rivaled only by Shakespeare.

Among Ibsen's iconic creations are works like *A Doll's House* (1879), which subverted conventional marital gender roles, sparking a scandal at its premiere, and *Ghosts* (1881), which confronted Victorian ethics and encountered a ban in Britain for a period. *An Enemy of the People* (1882) scrutinized the clash between majority sentiment and inconvenient truths, while *The Wild Duck* (1884) is widely regarded as his most intricate and challenging piece. Additionally, *Hedda Gabler* (1890) centered on the intellectually astute yet ethically ambiguous titular character.

Composing his plays in Dano-Norwegian, Ibsen saw them published by the Danish imprint Gyldendal. Despite being set in Norway, his narratives bore the imprint of his familial backdrop and the financial disgrace his father endured during Ibsen's youth.

Acknowledged as a pioneer of Modernism in theatre and a pivotal figure in 19th-century dramatic literature, Ibsen's plays persist in being staged and analyzed extensively even beyond a century following his demise.

By skillfully crafting his characters, Ibsen adeptly depicts the harsh realities of marital unions, shedding light on societal conventions, gender constructs, and the challenges individuals encounter within the realm of marriage.

1.2 Literature Review:

The intricacies of human consciousness are explored in *A Doll's House*, with an emphasis on challenging problems, inner turmoil, and emotional disorders.

1). Joan Templeton argues in her article "The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen" that critics have been firm in their opposition to Henrik Ibsen's well-known play *A Doll's House*, which is frequently regarded as a seminal work in the field of modern feminism. These critics dispute the play's depiction of gender dynamics and contest Nora Helmer's status as a feminist icon.

According to Templeton, critics claim that Nora's representation is too unpredictable, trivial dishonest, abnormal, or out of character to represent the principles of feminism. When one considers the play's strong feminist undertones, the idea that Nora represents a universal figure rather than a female one becomes less persuasive due to its gender-centric nature. According to Templeton, critics' ambiguous grasp of feminism and how it relates to artistic expression drives them towards it and their critiques of Nora are similar to those made by her husband Torvald, which causes them to fundamentally misunderstand the play's conceptual unity and significance.

Despite arguments to the contrary, Templeton contends that a close reading of Ibsen's biography demonstrates that his fundamental inspiration for writing *A Doll's House* was a strong feminist belief.

2). In the article “THE ROLES AS WOMAN IN HENDRIK IBSEN'S A DOLL HOUSE”, Ahmed Saeed Ahmen Mocabil, examines women characters deep into their portrayals, shedding light on the gaps between them and the feminist woven throughout the narrative. It lays bare the lopsidedness in marriage dynamics, the shackles holding back women's autonomy, and their relentless struggle for freedom. Women boxed in by societal norms fighting tooth and nail to break free. The study uncovers how Nora Helmer, Mrs. Linde, and Anne Marie march towards independence through resilience and growth amidst life's curveballs. Each character is the human race of her with a distinctive journey full of hurdles unique to a male-dominated world. He delves into Ibsen’s influential role, especially in *A Doll's House*, challenging norms head-on while championing women's empowerment and rights.

3). Throughout the play, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Albee skillful use of vocabulary is on full show, with witty, humorous, and poignant dialogue that zings with wit. As they navigate the hazardous conditions of their relationship with a blend of violence and fragility, the characters' conversations are brutal and vulnerable. Albee reveals via their interactions how marriage can turn into a battlefield for self-preservation, validation, and control.

The narrative "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" is notable for its candid depiction of the discrepancy between illusion and reality in marriage. Falsehoods and fabrications abound in the lives of George and Martha, who cling to their individual delusions in a last-ditch effort to avoid the crushing pressure of disappointment and anguish.

4). Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Williams also looks at gender roles in marriage

and societal expectations. Stanley commands and dominates Stella in a way that epitomizes traditional masculinity. The patriarchal standards of the era are reflected in their relationship as Stella frequently submits to Stanley. He provides a complex picture of marriage, underlining the conflicts between passion and brutality, reality and imagination, and individual aspirations and societal ideals. Williams explores the intricacies and difficulties of romantic relationships via the lived experiences of the protagonists, especially in light of the evolving social climate in mid-20th-century America.

Williams also looks at gender roles in marriage and societal expectations. Stanley commands and dominates Stella in a way that epitomizes traditional masculinity. The patriarchal standards of the era are reflected in their relationship, as Stella frequently submits to Stanley's authority.

5). In the article "FEMINISM AND MARRIAGE IN THE NOVELS OF ANITA DESAI" Dr.S.Udhayakumar discussed "Arrangements" and "negotiations" regarding marriage are matters of caste and clan. "Love marriages," or unions between a man and a woman chosen without consulting their families, are thought to be unconventional and potentially harmful. A married couple's union is one of lineages rather than of persons. Since every marriage is a public declaration of a family's and a lineage's societal and ceremonial standing, every marriage needs to be planned around the very rigid standards of exogamy and endogamy. To put it briefly, every marriage is a public act that establishes the formal relationships between a family and other lineages.

1.3 Research Methodology:

The current research endeavor is centered on the analysis of the original literary contributions of Henrik Ibsen, a distinguished writer, with a focus on scrutinizing his depiction of women and their awareness. The study will primarily depend on original sources, specifically Ibsen's literary works, which will be subject to meticulous reading, examination, and interpretation. The descriptive approach will be employed to investigate the diverse perspectives through which Ibsen conveys his opinions on the representation of women and their consciousness.

To lay the groundwork for this investigation, socio-psychological elements will be employed as a theoretical framework. These elements will function as a tool to enhance the understanding of Ibsen's literary works and their examination of the societal position of women. The research will utilize an analytical, interpretative research methodology to delve into the themes and portrayals that are evident in Ibsen's writings. Through an exploration of the experiences of characters such as Nora, the study aims to elucidate the societal constraints and obstacles confronted by women within a patriarchal framework as portrayed in the literary works of Henrik Ibsen. Through a meticulous analysis of Ibsen's original texts, this investigation endeavors to provide valuable perspectives on the portrayal of women and their self-awareness, thereby enriching the comprehension of gender dynamics within patriarchal societies.

The research incorporated two main categories of sources: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources encompassed the play themselves, while secondary sources comprised data sourced from online platforms, critiques, and evaluations by various analysts. The secondary sources played a pivotal role in corroborating the assertions articulated in this research paper.

In this particular study, a qualitative research approach was adopted owing to the type of sources procured from digital platforms. These resources were scrutinized by multiple analysts to underpin the study. Through the utilization of qualitative research techniques, the investigator managed to delve into the subjective analyses and perspectives provided by critics, thereby enriching the comprehensiveness and credibility of the research.

1.4 Aims and Objectives:

Aims:

To dive into the ever-changing world of women and marriage, exploring how modern ladies navigate through their roles and challenges as partners.

To examine the stereotypical beliefs and ideals that society has for women when it comes to marriage.

To look into how gender, race, class, and culture play in shaping women's marital experiences.

To overcome issues in marriage, a woman's journey of self-discovery and personal growth is crucial, influencing her interactions with her partner.

To present richly developed characters that challenge conventional narratives, to break free from biased views on women's roles in marriage, by exploring some intriguing character dynamics.

To take a feminist perspective to unravel the intricate layers of modern marriages and to uncover the hidden complexities often overlooked by societal norms.

To investigate how women view and experience marriage in light of cultural shifts such as changing gender expectations and economic independence.

To push for the inclusion and affirmation of women's varied stories and experiences in the conversation about relationship and married life.

Objectives:

Provide out how women and marriage play out in fiction today, that shine a light on empowerment and self-discovery.

To look at books, short stories, and movies to uncover recurring motifs, character archetypes, and storytelling methods that shape the female marital experience.

Using feminist theories like interconnectedness and postcolonial perspectives to dissect and study representations of women in married relationships.

To learn more about women of diverse backgrounds regards marriage, autonomy, and finding themselves and their stories about breaking free from tradition and defining their paths.

Examine those rebels who challenged societal norms during their marriage from their journeys to carve out their identities and claim their power.

Arrange courses or focus groups to encourage discussion and idea sharing on the subject of female autonomy and self-discovery in marriage among academics, activists, and community members.

Using psychological theories of empowering and growth of identity foster a conceptual framework for comprehending the main character's journey towards enlightenment within the framework of their marriage.

1.5 Structure of the paper:

This paper consists of 4 chapters. The first chapter titled as Introduction gives a brief overview of the issue discussed in the paper.

The second chapter named as “The Subject of Marriage in the play” and discusses about women roles in the journey of marital lives.

The third chapter named “The emergence of “New Woman” studies the issues and self-discovery of the characters within the play *A Doll's House*

The fourth chapter marks the conclusion of this paper.

Chapter 2: The Subject of Marriage in the Play

2.1: Critique of marriage

The institution of marriages interacts with social involvement which includes following cultural customs, taking part in community events and interacting with other social institutions. Women specially are restricted by the tight bounds of her gender, struggles with the crushing expectations imposed on her as a wife and mother. The roles and obligations in marriage have long been determined by patriarchy, which is ingrained in many cultures and communities and frequently favors men in positions of authority and control while relegating women to inferior

status. But as societies change and ideas of justice and equality gain traction, the patriarchal structure of marriage must also change to align with these shifting ideals. The patriarchal system has the potential to improve marriage in society by encouraging partners to respect and understand one another. This change would entail encouraging an atmosphere where candid communication and teamwork are valued, as well as acknowledging and appreciating the efforts of all partners equally, regardless of gender. Furthermore, the patriarchal system could contribute to marriage within society by promoting shared decision-making and equal collaboration.

All over tale, patriarchal standards have traditionally held rigorous sex roles, requiring males to take on the part of primary dough caterers and decision-makers, while relegating females to domestic and caregiving obligations. Nevertheless, a more forward-looking view on patriarchy should consist of dismantling these stiff sex prospectives and permitting beings to genuinely express themselves within matrimonial collaborations. This might mean providing backing for males who choose caregiving responsibilities or females who chase professional professions outside the abode, free from bias or societal reprimand. Furthermore, by redefining patriarchy as a structure that esteems fairness and equality, it could aid in boosting matrimonial dynamics by dealing with power disproportions and encouraging egalitarianism within connections. In countless patriarchal communities, matrimonial power dynamics are frequently twisted, with males exerting undue command and prevalence over their companions.

Problems faced by women in troubled marriage: 1). Communication distribution: Women in miserable marriages life frequently find it difficult to properly communicate their want and anxiety, which can result in misinterpretation and feeling of loneliness. 2). Inequalities power dynamics: When partners disrespect their thoughts and decisions, partner feel left out and helpless in their marriages, which worsens emotions of impatience. 3). Financial turbulence:

Women who are financially dependent on their husbands are particularly vulnerable and find it difficult to escape unhealthy relationships or ask for assistance for fear of becoming bankrupt or losing control of their kids. 4). Emotional neglect: Women who experience a lack of respect, support, or empathy from their husbands may feel emotionally ignored or invalidated, which can result in emotional isolation and loneliness.

2.2: Gender equality manifest in marriages of Nora and Helmer

In 19th century, patriarchal morals and religious beliefs greatly shaped within marriage. Set in the late 19th century Norway, *A Doll's House* takes place in a society dominated by patriarchal values and strict gender places. The play portrays marriage as a representation of the traditional morals of that period, where women are confined to amenable positions and are anticipated to exemplify rates of househusband and selflessness. This is a notice of the 1879 play predicated on the societal mores that dock women's freedom of tone-determination in nuptial connections. Nora Helmer characterizes Ibsen's description of a woman who, despite adhering to social prospects firstly, she does not allow her marriage to limit her individuality and independence. Nora's return home from Christmas shopping with gaiety launches the story; still, Torvald's tyrannous behavior suddenly sets the pace for what is going to be. Torvald, portrayed as an insincere person obsessed with his character and social standing beyond his woman, continually humiliates Nora treating her like a baby. This can be seen when he refers to her as "little spendthrift" or "my squirrel" thereby reducing her to dependence. Torvald and Nora's inequality in spending money is clear when,

“Nora: Just now. Come in here, Torvald and see what I have bought. (Ibsen, pg-10)

“Helmer: Don’t disturb me. Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again? (Ibsen, pg-10)

In the play, Torvald seems to be cheaper in spending money and tells Nora to spend less and also call her a spendthrift. Evenly divided marital expenses can promote equality and fairness. It makes both spouses feel more financially committed to their common objectives and duties. For there to be agreement on how money is spent, there must be open communication regarding finances between the parties. Together, you can prioritize spending and avoid financial disputes by creating a budget. Financial management in marriage can be streamlined with joint accounts or a specific procedure for splitting expenses.

Nora’s posterior declaration,

“It is perfectly true, Torvald. When I was at home with papa, he told me his opinion about everything, and so I had the same opinions; and if I differed from him I concealed the fact, because he would not have liked it. He called me his doll-child, and he played with me just as I used to play with my dolls. And when I came to live with you...”(Ibsen, Pg-118)

Underscores her adding recognition of the limitations assessed on her and her aspiration to liberate her from these societal constraint. The play’s climax occurs when Nora, realizing she can no longer abide living a life not her own, opts to depart from her nuptial and maternal arrears. She acknowledges in this statement that she has become an object rather than an equal mate in her marriage. By labeling herself a “doll woman”, she emphasizes the superficial nature of her

relationship with Torvald, pressing her actuality as one devoid of particular agency. Progressing through the play, Nora's disgruntlement with her nuptial situation intensifies.

The play's climax occurs when Nora, realizing she can no longer abide living a life not her own, opts to depart from her marital and maternal responsibilities. This choice stands as a resolute assertion of the necessity for women to define their own identities and pursue equality within marriage.

Equality should be upheld in marriage granting women the opportunity to engage in a variety of work alongside men, rather than confining them to traditional roles within a patriarchal system. It is crucial that post-marriage, women have the right to education and are treated with the same respect as they were in their own family. Submissive nature of Nora, her behavior and nature are totally manipulated by her husband throughout the play. She does not attempt to do or say anything but rather gets oppressed and subjugated by her husband making it look like a normal to her.

“Nora: I should not think of going against your wishes”, (Ibsen, pg-15).

She recognizes that, as his spouse, she believes she ought to conform and yield to Torvald's preferences. This exemplifies the male-dominated structure of their marital union and the societal norms of that era. Nora experiences a profound epiphany. She comprehends that her matrimony is a facade, founded on deceit, inequity, and the suppression of her authentic self.

“Helmer: Of course you couldn't, poor little girl. You had the best of intentions to please us all, and that's the main thing. But it is a good thing our hard times are over.” (Ibsen, pg-16)

Nora's submissive position can be seen. Ibsen has shown a perfect wife in Nora. In this quote from Act 3 of *A Doll's House*, Helmer is responding to Nora's confession that she forged her father's signature in order to secure a loan to save his life. His words reveal a condescending and dismissive attitude towards Nora's actions, as well as a fundamental misunderstanding of the gravity of her situation.

Helmer's utilization of the condescending term "poor little girl" promptly establishes an air of paternalism and superiority, portraying Nora as an immature individual incapable of grasping the repercussions of her deeds. This mirrors a consistent theme in their marital dynamic, wherein Helmer consistently perceives Nora as a delicate, reliant being in need of his safeguarding and counsel. Nevertheless, Nora's behaviors showcase a degree of bravery, ingenuity, and ethical steadfastness that contradict Helmer's disparaging portrayal. She endangered her own welfare and reputation to rescue her husband's life, a selfless act that Helmer fails to entirely recognize. Instead, he diminishes her motives to a mere wish "to please us all", disregarding the immense personal sacrifice and hazard involved.

Helmer's claim that "it is a good thing our hard times are over" further belittles Nora's ordeal. He presumes that now that the financial crisis has subsided, the issue can be effortlessly disregarded and pardoned. However, Nora has been enduring the perpetual dread of exposure and downfall for eight years, a burden that has inflicted a notable emotional toll on her.

Furthermore, Helmer's statements unveil a profound absence of empathy and comprehension for the obstacles Nora has encountered as a woman within a patriarchal community. He overlooks the institutional obstacles and dual standards that necessitated her actions in the first place.

Nora's act of forgery was not merely a capricious endeavor to satisfy her spouse, but a desperate measure to salvage her family from ruin in a society that provided scarce options for women.

This excerpt epitomizes the fundamental disparity between Nora and Helmer's perspectives. While Nora has undergone a significant personal evolution and has come to regard herself as an independent individual with basic value, Helmer remains ensnared in a patriarchal mentality incapable of accommodating her newfound self-awareness. His dismissive and condescending stance towards her actions only accentuates the ingrained misogyny and lack of empathy that have defined their relationship.

“Nora: We have been married now eight years. Does it not occur to you that this is the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, have had a serious conversations?”

Helmer: What do you mean by serious?

Nora: In all these eight years longer than that from the very beginning of our acquaintance, we have never exchanged a word on any serious subject. (Ibsen, Pg-117,118)

A strong partnership depends on a number of equalities, including commitment, love, and respect. These factors all have an impact on how couples behave in their marriages. The following are some crucial areas of marital behavior for couples:

1. Commitment: Marriage requires a commitment to choose a lifelong partner and to promise to go through life's ups and downs together. This devotion helps partners stay faithful to one another in the face of adversity.

2. Love: A successful marriage is built on love. Work, sacrifice, and generosity are required of both partners. True love is characterized by putting one another first, accepting one another's flaws, and forgiving one another when needed. Partners need to trust and convey an honest feeling towards their partner.

4. Communication: Effective interaction is crucial in a married relationship.

5. Compassion and forgiveness: By accepting that everyone makes errors and that no one is flawless, couples can cultivate an environment of understanding and forgiveness. This maintains a positive and supportive environment within the collaboration.

6. Avoiding problematic habits: Couples should be aware of typical bad habits that might undermine their marriage, like ignoring emotional connection or not communicating well, and 3.

Respect: The respect of others is essential to lasting relationship since it means acknowledging and honoring each other's differences. Mutual respect facilitates the ability of partners to hear each other out and work through issues and disagreements. Couples can create solid, wholesome relationships that are kinder to the challenges of marriage by concentrating on these elements.

Chapter 3: The emergence of the 'New woman'

3.1: The Study of "New Woman"

The term "New Woman" gained popularity in the late 19th century because to the work of writer Sarah Grand, who used it to identify independent women who were fighting for radical change and emphasized their control over their own lives. The New Woman concept was employed in an

effort to challenge gender norms and inspire women to take charge of their lives in society, particularly in areas like work, education, leisure, and leadership. The New Woman promoted ideas of equality and women's independence, representing a modern understanding of femininity that deviated from Victorian norms. Throughout history, the development of new female characters in literature and culture has been a prominent topic of discussion.

The concept of the "New Woman" first emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, signifying a departure from traditional gender roles and obligations at home. By actively challenging conventional norms, these developing women aimed to achieve greater autonomy, self-governance, and participation in community affairs. Their pursuit of personal fulfillment, their escape from Victorian constraints, and their acceptance of modern choices set them apart. The New Woman program, which sprang from the first wave of feminism, advocated for equality in access to education, rights in the workplace, and personal freedoms as a step toward gender equality. The New Woman was a fictional character that represented women's aspirations to participate fully in society and enjoy the same rights as men in literary works.

The New Woman represented a complex group of women from a range of backgrounds, including writers, competitors, employed individuals, and reformists, all of whom aimed to reinterpret their social positions and assert their individuality. Throughout history, women's participation in the general population sphere has undergone significant changes. Women's engagement in public life has often been restricted to the private sphere due to the traditional division across the public and private realms, which limits their involvement exclusively in domestic matters. In the past, men dominated the public spheres of politics, business, and social activities, leaving women mostly in charge of providing for their families within the home.

However, this paradigm has changed in the last several years as women have gradually moved from the home to the public sphere, gaining more autonomy, rights, and opportunities to participate in different aspects of public life. Though progress has been achieved by women in education, raising awareness, and establishing legal rights, gender differences still exist, especially when it comes to things like employment, pay, and chances, especially in STEM professions. Redefining empowerment of culture has also been crucial in ensuring equal opportunities for women in the public domain and in changing societal norms. Women have historically been subjugated due to the public-private divide, yet the need to empower women is becoming increasingly apparent.

The late 19th century saw the rise of first-wave feminism, which was a pivotal historical moment that laid the groundwork for later substantial social changes and the pursuit of gender equality. This movement was the first significant mobilization for politics in the Western world, even if it did not introduce feminist ideals. The Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, where women fought for equality and legal rights, served as a symbol of the first wave of American nationalism. Though the movement began with a focus on equal rights for property and the elimination of spousal dominion, it ultimately shifted its focus to women's suffrage. This culminated in the authorization in 1920 of the 19th amendment, which gave women the right to vote.

The primary objective of first-wave feminism was to contest the societal conventions that confined women to a domestic sphere where they were wholly subjugated by men. Advocates of this era endeavored to establish legislations that broadened women's entitlements, pushing for equal freedoms to those of men, including the right to vote and possess property. Prominent figures like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton played pivotal roles in propelling

forward these entitlements. Furthermore, the movement tackled issues such as domestic violence through involvement in the temperance movement.

Despite its pioneering endeavors, first-wave feminism encountered disapproval for its emphasis on the rights of white women, disregarding women of color and overlooking racial inequalities within gender impartiality. The exclusionary tactics of the movement would remain a subject of dispute in subsequent waves of feminism. However, first-wave feminism's successes—such as granting women the right to vote and initiating public discussions regarding women's rights—paved the ground for future developments in equality between men and women.

First-wave feminism represented a trailblazing mobilization that contested societal norms, advocated for legal entitlements, and paved the way for subsequent phases of feminism. Its enduring influence continues to shape the persisting endeavor for gender equality and women's rights in contemporary society. A period characterized by a notable surge in feminist literary works, encompassing novels, poetry, fiction, and essays, emerged. This particular wave of feminism was primarily centered on the achievement of women's suffrage and property rights, with authors utilizing their literary skills to advocate for these causes.

Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," which was published in 1792 was the most notable work. Within this seminal piece, Wollstonecraft made a case for the political, social, and educational parity of women. She scrutinized the prevalent belief in women's intellectual inferiority to men and called for reforms in women's education. Wollstonecraft's contribution laid the groundwork for subsequent feminist intellectuals and writers. Another significant publication during this era was Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "The Woman's Bible," released in 1895. Comprising a series of essays and commentaries on the Bible,

this work contested the male-dominated interpretations of religious texts and aimed to empower women through a feminist lens on scripture. Stanton and her collaborators reevaluated biblical passages that had been employed to rationalize the subjugation of women, providing alternative, empowering perspectives.

In the domain of fiction, Kate Chopin's novel "The Awakening," published in 1899, is revered as a quintessential piece of first wave feminist literature. The narrative centers on Edna Pontellier, a woman who defies the societal expectations imposed on her as a spouse and mother. Chopin's portrayal of Edna's odyssey of self-discovery and her eventual choice to end her life instead of adhering to societal conventions constituted a daring and contentious declaration during that period.

Further significant works of first wave feminist fiction encompass Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), delving into the theme of female mental health issues and oppression, and Virginia Woolf's essay "A Room of One's Own" (1929), advocating for the significance of financial autonomy and creative liberty for female authors.

Moreover, numerous female writers of the time employed poetry as a means to articulate their feminist convictions. Poets like Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Ina Coolbrith penned verses that lauded the resilience of women and contested traditional gender norms. In France, Olympe de Gouges published her "Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen" in 1791, urging for the expansion of rights granted to men during the French Revolution to also include women. In Germany, Hedwig Dohm crafted essays advocating for women's suffrage and the eradication of gender-based bias in education and employment. The influence of first wave feminist literature cannot be overstated. These works not only mirrored the burgeoning

awareness of women's rights but also played a pivotal role in shaping the dialogue surrounding gender parity. By challenging the established norms and presenting alternative depictions of womanhood, these writers paved the way for forthcoming generations of feminists and facilitated tangible social and political transformations.

The emergence of second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s symbolized a significant turning point in the history of feminist movements. Growing out of the achievements of its predecessor, this generation of lobbying addressed a wider range of issues, including sexual orientation, family relationships, workplace dynamics, reproductive rights and legal inconsistencies. The second wave of feminism was characterized by a more radical and diverse approach, and drew inspiration from anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and the Civil Rights movement. Addressing the institutional and social supporting that allowed women to contribute to be exploited was given a higher priority. During this period, women were given more access to education, employment prospects, and reproductive rights because to notable legislative achievements including the Equal Pay of 1963 and the Roe v. Wade ruling in 1973.

In spite of its advancements, the second wave was criticized for its inherent barriers and exclusions, especially by black and working-class women who believed their issues were not adequately focused on within the movement. There were also criticisms regarding the movement's overwhelming majority of issues influencing middle-class white women, which neglected the wide range of female struggles and their identities. That being said, the wave that followed was crucial in shaping the contemporary feminist terrain by instituting academic fields such as women's studies, support organizations like rape crisis centers, and advocacy groups that

continue to advocate for the rights and empowerment of women. Additionally, it set the stage for the third wave of feminism to emerge in the 1990s.

In the second wave of feminism, Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" which was published in 1963, stands out as one of the most influential piece of literature. In this seminal publication, Friedan challenged the prevalent belief that women's primary role revolved around being homemakers and mothers. She contended that women were being confined to domestic duties and mundane chores by the advertising industry and educational system, leading to a loss of self-identity and uniqueness.

Another noteworthy contribution during this period was Kate Millett's "Sexual Politics," which was released in 1969. Millett delved into how patriarchy had infiltrated discussions on sexuality, resulting in gender-based oppression. She proposed that personal experiences held political significance and that the subjugation of women extended beyond the public realm, permeating all facets of their lives.

Within the domain of poetry, Adrienne Rich emerged as a significant figure of the second wave, with her anthology "Diving into the Wreck," published in 1973, delving into themes of gender, sexuality, and power. Rich's poems contested conventional notions of femininity and advocated for a more revolutionary and all-encompassing feminism.

Other prominent works of feminist literature from the second wave include Shulamith Firestone's "The Dialectic of Sex," advocating for a Marxist-driven revolution to dismantle patriarchy, and Audre Lorde's "Sister Outsider," exploring the interconnectedness of race, gender, and sexuality.

The term "intersectionality," introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, emerged as a response to this critique, emphasizing the necessity of considering the intersections of race, class, and gender in feminist ideologies and actions.

The 1990s featured the growth of third-wave feminism, which was driven by feminists from Generation X who sought to reclaim feminism by prioritizing inclusivity, diversity, and liberty. Third-wave feminism sought to further social, racial, economic, and gender justice while reconciling the lingering issues of earlier feminist movements and traditional gender standards. This movement sought to highlight the diversity of women's lives, fight racism, sexism, and classism, and enable women to express their true natures. Along with focusing on intersectional—how various oppressions interact—third-wave feminists also aimed at encompassing marginalized communities that had been neglected by mainstream feminism.

The movement addressed gender norms in society, embraced sexual autonomy, and empowered women to make decisions that were consistent with their ideals. The overall goal of third-wave feminism was to deal with the multifaceted nature of gender, race, and class in society by developing a more varied, inclusive, and stronger feminist movement. The appearance of novels portraying the "New Woman" in literature is interconnected with the feminist movement. The depiction of the New Woman symbolized a woman actively engaged in society, advocating for equal rights, and questioning societal conventions. Figures such as Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, and George Egerton played a role in this representation within Victorian literature. These writers, frequently belonging to the emerging middle-class, utilized fiction as a means to express dissatisfaction with the constraints of Victorian society. The New Woman sought sexual autonomy, education, equal opportunities, and professional pursuits, showcasing diverse

perspectives based on the author. The movement was characterized by its diversity, as each author offered a distinct viewpoint on the New Woman.

Another remarkable feature of third wave feminist novels was their emphasis on intersectionality, acknowledging how gender, race, class, and sexuality intersect to mold women's encounters. Books like *Beloved* (1987) by Toni Morrison and *Kindred* (1979) by Octavia Butler delved into the distinct obstacles encountered by Black women while also celebrating their endurance and fortitude.

3.2: Emerge of “New Woman” within Ibsen’s play *A Doll’s House*.

The significant social and political concerns prevalent in the latter part of the 19th century that impacted Henrik Ibsen's work *A Doll's House* encompass various aspects. *A Doll's House* was shaped by the significant social and political issues of the late 19th century, including women's rights, marriage dynamics, legal constraints, feminism, and social injustices, all of which influenced the narrative and themes of the play.

The protagonist of Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House*, Nora Helmer, goes through a significant transformation from a simple, dependent person to a self-aware being that rejects the limitations of her status as a "doll" in her marriage. Nora represents the idea of the "New Woman"—a term used to describe the increasing social and intellectual independence of women in the late

1800s—during her travels. Commencing the drama, Nora is depicted as a reliant, pure, and juvenile persona, embodying the archetype of the perfect homemaker. She responds warmly to her spouse Torvald's jests and appears satisfied with her doll-like life, being nurtured, indulged, and condescended to. Nonetheless, as the narrative unfolds, Nora displays intellect and capabilities extending beyond mere wife duties. Her account of years spent in covert to settle a debt incurred to preserve Torvald's well-being illustrates her resolute determination and aspirations.

Her readiness to defy the law to safeguard Torvald's health showcases her bravery and capacity to make tough choices. She challenges Torvald in minor yet significant manners, like consuming macaroons and deceiving him about it, as well as using profanity for the delight of slight defiance against societal norms. As the plot progresses and Nora's comprehension of her reality deepens, her urge for rebellion intensifies, culminating in her departure from her spouse and offspring in pursuit of independence.

Nora's metamorphosis is further accentuated through her exchanges with other characters within the drama. Her connection with Mrs. Linde, a lifelong companion, offers an emotional and physical counterpoint to Nora's demeanor. Mrs. Linde's personal encounters of an affectionless marriage grounded in financial stability underscore Nora's escalating yearning for self-actualization and autonomy. Similarly, Nora's interactions with Krogstad, the adversary who extorts her, unveil her valor and resolve. Krogstad's deeds compel Nora to face the truth of her circumstances and the repercussions of her choices, eventually triggering her enlightenment and resolve to depart from her family.

Ibsen purposefully portrayed Nora as a woman attuned to the sentiments and musings of others to elicit a genuine and sympathetic reaction from a pragmatically-minded audience capable of identifying the human facets of her character. Through her engagements with minor personages like Dr. Rank and the nursemaid, Nora's persona is further fleshed out, underscoring her intricacy and conflicting attributes. Nora has evolved from a superficial, oblivious individual into a multi-faceted and profound personality.

The character development of Nora Helmer in the play serves as a poignant representation of the emergence of the "New Woman". Her evolution from a reliant, childlike persona to a self-aware individual who defies the constraints of her marital relationship and societal norms marks a significant departure in the depiction of women in literary works. Nora's progression towards self-reliance and self-realization conveys a compelling message regarding the significance of personal autonomy and the necessity for societal reforms in the treatment of women.

Nora's character challenges the expectations of her time in terms of individualism through her journey of self-discovery, rebellion against societal norms, and pursuit of independence. Nora's character challenges the expectations of her time by rebelling against societal norms that confine women to passive roles. Nora's journey towards self-realization and independence symbolizes her defiance of societal expectations that limit women to domestic roles. As Nora becomes aware of her unfulfilled potential and the facade she has maintained in her marriage, she rejects the notion of being a mere "doll" controlled by her husband and society. Despite initially adhering to the stereotype of a submissive wife and mother, Nora's defiant actions, such as falsifying her father's signature to save her husband's life, demonstrate her resistance to societal norms and her assertion of autonomy. Nora's conduct reveals a desire for independence and self-determination that challenges the gender conventions of her time. Her decision to leave Torvald at the end of

the play signifies her determination to forge her own identity and seek independence outside the confines of societal norms.

Her decision to leave her family and seek independence represents a bold assertion of her individuality and a rejection of the societal norms that confine women to predefined roles.

Nora defies the social norms of her day by becoming a woman who strives for freedom and self-discovery instead of being a submissive wife and mother. This change highlights the limitations placed on women in the 19th century and questions established gender standards. While women were expected to put their roles as mothers and wives first, Nora defied social norms and embraced her uniqueness during this time.

She adopts the persona of a proud housewife, maintaining the stereotype of the ordinary woman who cherishes her husband's status and keeps things hidden to preserve his feeling of importance. Nora's actions are consistent with the social norms of the time, which demanded that women be obedient and put their families' needs ahead of their own. However, as the story progresses, Nora's character dramatically changes and defies these expectations. According to the submissive role that women in her community are expected to play, Nora's decision to forge her father's signature to preserve her husband's life demonstrates her inventiveness and willingness to go to great lengths for the benefit of her family. Nora's realization of her potential and ambitions outside of her marriage is initiated by this act of deception.

Her recognition of her untapped potential and her role as an actress in her marriage signifies her increasing understanding of the societal expectations imposed upon her. She admits to

pretending to embody a persona not truly her own in order to fulfill the anticipated roles defined by Torvald, her father, and society as a whole.

A poignant moment illustrating Nora's resistance against societal standards is her resolution to abandon her spouse and children in the play's final act. Nora's exit from the Helmer household embodies a bold act of self-discovery and independence that challenges the prevalent gender roles and societal expectations of the period. Her readinesses to face the truth and renounce a marriage grounded in deceit and subjugation showcases her resilience and resolve to carve out her individual identity beyond the confines of societal norms.

“NORA: I must stand quite alone, if am to get to understand myself and everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer.
(Ibsen, Pg-120)

“HELMER: It’s shocking. This is how you would neglect your most sacred duties.

NORA: What do you consider in my most sacred duty?

HELMER: Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and children?

NORA: I have other duties just as sacred.

HELMER: That you have not. What duties could those be?

Nora: Duties to myself.”

(Ibsen, Pg-121)

However, throughout the story, Nora has undergone a significant transformation. Rather than being her father and spouse's puppet, she has realized her inherent worth as a human being. According to Nora, she has "other duties just as sacred"—duties related to her growth and satisfaction. This realization marks the end of her journey towards self-awareness and freedom.

Nora and Helmer partake in a fervent dialogue that exposes the fundamental disparities in their perspectives on matrimony, gender roles, and individual identity. The interaction epitomizes the primary conflict of the drama - Nora's increasing awareness of herself as an individual with distinct needs and ambitions, beyond her roles as a spouse and mother. This declaration encapsulates Nora's odyssey towards self-exploration and her renunciation of the traditional roles imposed on women in her milieu. Ibsen's depiction of Nora as the "New Woman" challenges the male-dominated frameworks of 19th-century society and presents a fresh prospect for women's autonomy and self-fulfillment. Through the character of Nora, Ibsen exposes the societal limitations imposed by stereotypical gender roles and argues against the confinement of women to traditional roles such as wife and mother.

Helmer is taken aback and dismayed by Nora's contemplation of forsaking her familial obligations. From his viewpoint, a woman's most esteemed responsibilities lie with her spouse and offspring. He is incapable of comprehending Nora's inclination to prioritize anything else. Helmer's mindset is deeply entrenched in the patriarchal conventions of the 19th century, where women were anticipated to be submissive to their husbands and wholly dedicated to household affairs.

Nora's declaration obviously defies Helmer's rigid view of gender roles. She refuses to be restricted to the culturally established boundaries of the house and family. Helmer was shocked by Nora's decision to leave her family, but it was a courageous and self-assured move. It represents her refusal to sacrifice who she is and what she stands for in order to maintain appearances and conform to social conventions.

The dialogue between Nora and Helmer exposes the inherent incongruity in their worldviews. Helmer is ensnared in a patriarchal outlook that cannot accommodate Nora's newfound self-awareness. He fails to regard her as an equal participant in their marital union, and his frantic efforts to sustain dominance only serve to distance Nora further.

“Nora: Listen, Torvald. I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband’s house, as I am doing now, he is legally freed from all obligations towards her. In any case, I set you free from all your obligations. You are not to feel yourself bound in the slightest way, any more than I shall. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. See, here is your ring back. Give me mine.” (Ibsen, Pg-126)

Ultimately, Nora's resolve to depart from her family constitutes a distressing yet imperative step in her voyage towards self-actualization. It signifies a rejection of the superficial existence she has long inhabited within the "doll's house," and a bold affirmation of her entitlement to live genuinely as a human being. The denouement of the play prompts the audience to contemplate the repercussions of Nora's decision and contemplate the broader concept of leading a truly gratifying life.

Nora Helmer's portrayal in *A Doll's House* contests the expectations of her era by challenging traditional gender roles, prioritizing her own self-fulfillment over societal conventions, and

ultimately pursuing independence and self-governance beyond the limitations of her marriage and societal expectations. Nora's journey stands as a potent testament to the significance of personal freedom and the imperative for societal reform in the treatment of women in the 19th century. She rejects this mentality and seizes command of her own existence. The statement epitomizes the ingrained patriarchal beliefs Nora has internalized, while also hinting at her forthcoming defiance against them. Ibsen employs Nora's voyage to scrutinize the constraining gender standards of 19th-century bourgeois matrimony and society, advocating for a woman's prerogative to individual liberty and self-realization.

In contrast to Nora Helmer, Mrs. Linde's portrayal of the new lady is useful. In contrast to Nora, who symbolizes the new woman emerging on her path of self-realization and emancipation, Mrs. Linde is a representation of independence and self-reliance from the beginning.

Mrs. Linde is shown from the start of the play as a rational, mature woman who has formerly met difficulties in life head-on. In contrast with Nora, who at first follows society's expectations of femininity and dependency, Mrs. Linde has personally dealt with the difficult reality of widowhood and unstable finances. Her independence and willpower are demonstrated by her determination to look for work and take charge of her own life.

Furthermore, Mrs. Linde's desire to hunt for a straightforward union with Krogstad illustrates her practical approach to life. In her personal life, she values security and economic security highly. The values of the contemporary woman align with her capacity to make pragmatic judgments as she strives to demonstrate her independence and accountability in a culture that is controlled by males.

In addition, Mrs. Linde acts as a steady mentor and confidante, providing support and encouragement to Nora as she transforms from a wife who submits to an independent person. Similarly, Anne Marie represents elements of the New Woman movement, a late 19th-century feminist movement that emphasized women's autonomy, freedom, and rights. Despite not showing the same overt defiance as Nora Helmer, Anne Marie embodies aspects of the New Woman through her practicality, perseverance, and the complex connections she has inside the patriarchal society the drama depicts. Anne Marie's resilience in the face of adversity is one way that she represents the New Woman. Despite the challenges faced by women in patriarchal societies, Anne Marie demonstrates remarkable resilience and willpower in navigating her situation.

Henrik Ibsen's dramatic works explore marriage and offer deep insights into the complexities of relationships and the social structures that shape them. Ibsen uses characters like Nora and Mrs. Alving to explain the difficulties, sacrifices, and realizations that come with marriage. This causes viewers to reflect on the complexities of interpersonal relationships and the search for one's own identity while in marriage.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

According to the research, Nora starts off as a young heroine who plays with imagination and displays qualities that are stereotypically associated with women. The woman in question, who defied her abusive husband to follow his demands, adhered to the gender norms of that unique era. She bowed to his demands as a lady. The first person there was Linde, a widow and single

mother who had lost her husband in a sad tragedy and had no family left. She feels alone and unsatisfied with her job in the banking sector.

It's important to keep in mind that the women in question were involved in the fight for autonomy and used a variety of destructive coping mechanisms to get by. Experimental data shows that female characters' strategies for overcoming obstacles in a patriarchal environment differ significantly. These women perform parallel motions, yet they travel in different directions. Nora left the home of her husband and went out on her own to confront her fear and seek her autonomy and self-determination.

A Doll's House offers a timeless analysis of the quest for individuality and fulfillment in the face of social confines. Henrik Ibsen uses the characters of Nora and Mrs. Linde to effectively depict the complicated nature of female identity and the liberation struggle. After focusing on marriage, injustice, and the emergence of the New Woman, we are led to think about the ongoing pursuit of gender equality and the play's lasting relevance in the modern era. The theatrical production depicts marriage as more than just a symbol of love; it develops into a legally binding agreement filled with power struggles and demands. The old patriarchal system is most exemplified by Nora's marriage to Torvald, in which she is reduced to the role of a puppet and exists only to please her husband and maintain her social standing. The power imbalance in their relationship is made clear by Torvald's belittling behavior and infantilization of Nora, which robs her of her agency and authority. The play's stretched notion of the New Woman addresses a broader cultural transition in addition to Nora and Mrs. Linde's personal stories. It challenges conventional ideas of femininity and home duties and is a step towards greater gender equity and female empowerment. A new period of growth and possibility, where women refuse to be constrained by societal norms, is marked by

the birth of the New Woman. The emergence of the New Woman challenges prevailing cultural norms and traditional gender constructs, constituting a significant thematic element. Through the portrayal of Nora and Mrs. Linde, Ibsen delves into the complexities of matrimony, disparities within relationships, and the evolving position of women within societal frameworks. This discourse has delved into the socio-historical backdrop of Ibsen's life and literary contributions, shedding light on the constraining structures that marginalized women during the 19th century.

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