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Title: A Doll’s House by Henrik Ibsen

Marriage as an institute was considered sacred at the time when Henrik Ibsen wrote the play, *A Doll’s House* which was first played in 1879. Women did not have the option to leave their husbands and their role in marriage was very sharply defined. The play questions these traditions of the time and, therefore it is highly criticized (Ibsen).

The play is about a middle-class woman Nora Helmer who took an illegal loan in order to save her husband’s life. She tries to hide her financial issues from her husband Torvald but her husband gets to know about her deceit and he loses his temper. As she violates the gender role of a Victorian woman and she wants to be independent. She dismantled the illusions that outbreak her marriage. After considering herself independent and supporting her husband financially she considered herself as no more anyone’s Doll wife (Ibsen).

The Different Aspects of Nora’s Character

She is the “doll “wife of her husband Torvald. As a person, she is shown very sensitive in the play and she is not aware of her worth till the end of the play. She is portrayed as very excited and capricious and she is shown busy in charming her husband. The play shows that Nora as a person was very different in the start and transformed into a different person in the end (Ibsen).

Nora as a conventional wife:

Nora was a happy wife she cared for his husband and respected him. She followed every order of her husband without any doubt. Her husband used to call Nora his “little singing bird” and a “darling little wife”. She did not mind anything her husband does to her and was ready to do anything to make Torvald happy. In fact, she borrowed money without telling Torvald but her intentions were to save her husband life. Torvald was not happy about this act and he outburst at Nora. After this incident, Nora felt that she is being treated like a doll by her husband as well as by her father. In the play, she says that “father and you have done immense wrong to me and my life has come to nothing due to you” (Ibsen, p.164).

Nora as a mother and as a woman:

Nora loves her children and is a very affectionate mother. The pay shows a domestic setup and the children are very happy playing. The children are shown enjoying their mother's company and Nora looks concerned about her children. But she was going to leave her children to search a purpose for her life other than taking care of the Dollhouse. She asked the old nurse in the play to take care of her children and it is surprising for her as well that a mother is leaving her children behind (Ibsen).

However, a character called Dr.Rank secretly loves Nora but Nora respects him a lot. He offered Nora all of his property in order to get her but Nora kept a distance from him in order to maintain the purity in the relationship of hers. Thus she proved herself a woman of dignity (Ibsen).

Nora as an independent woman:

Nora is more practical than her husband and she became more independent from any Victorian women after she realized that her husband’s love as artificial for her. She tried to rediscover herself and left children and Torvald to voice a protest against male-domination. She was portrayed as a doll in the play and her intellect was never appreciated neither by her husband nor by her father. Nora was ready to face the world on her own and she had a painful choice to leave her children just to end the doll game. Thus she eventually lefts her doll’s house and struggles to become a woman thus this play becomes a masterpiece (Ibsen).

Criticism on the character of Nora

The article “*Portal to Forgiveness*” by Vicki Mahaffey’s says that forgiveness is a way to neutralize conflicts and it also helps to create a better person. Forgiveness is not the response to someone else’s action but it is done for the inner satisfaction of one’s self and to let go grudges despite having a wound in the heart. In the play, Nora and Torvald had different rules for forgiveness. Nora hurt her husband by lying to him and she turned to be a perpetrator so her husband must forgive her to move on. Torvald thinks that his wife has threatened his reputation. Torvald is concerned with her behavior and she is the one who needs forgiveness. But the lady is not even asking for forgiveness in the play because according to her she had not done anything wrong. Nora has no concern about the superficial life the two had together and she wanted to release herself from the bondage of the marriage (Mahaffey).

Another Critic of the play, *Paul Rosefeldt* says that Nora’s act was an offence against motherhood and it shocked the audience. He says that “the pay question the accurate definition of motherhood”. He further says that the play directly attacks patriarchy by the help of the character of Nora and it disavowed the causes of feminism. The play hides the struggle of every father and blames them for not doing anything right for their wives and children as is shown in the case of Nora (Rosefeldt).

Another author *Michael Feingold* defines Nora as a character and says that she is a symbol of a woman struggling for independence and Nora is the one who identifies disappointments in marriage. The writer has described some critics who were against the viewpoint of Nora in the play. Emmy who replied to Nora’s understanding of married life by saying that “Because you left your marriage and it does not mean that marriage will always look like this but I know that what the absence of marriage looks like. “ (Michael, p.1).

Thus most of the Victorian women considered marriage as an ultimate thing for women and want to tie notes. Nora was up against every accusation and she was portrayed as a woman who wants to be an independent married woman and that was not possible for any Victorian women. Nora was shown as a poster girl who is struggling for equality and she had set intellectuals goals for herself (Michael).

The author Choi says about the play, “A Dollhouse” that it was the reason of global sensation in the nineteenth century when it was first played. The author view about Nora is that her character became an icon for the women worldwide and the writer had tried to relate the character of Nora with the Korean gender politics (Choi).

The writer examines the perception that developed about this character and the Korean called women like that in the country as “Korea’s Nora”. Choi explained in his article that how this play shows western modernity and that is not yet to be localized. The writer says that Nora is an architect of a new woman who was a reason for debates among the intellectuals. In the article, Choi is historicizing the character of Nora as an agent of social transformation (Choi).

In a nutshell for some intellectual, the character of Nora was portrayed a new woman who is going to bring social transformation by standing against male dominance and for some she is merely distorting the role of a father and considering marriage as a burden.

Annotated Bibliography

Choi, Hyaeweol. “Debating the Korean New Woman: Imagining Henrik Ibsen’s ‘Nora’ in Colonial Era Korea.” *Asian Studies Review*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 59–77.

The article discusses the livelihood of a women and the struggle she goes through. Nora is considered as a women of intellect and she is compared with the women of Korean colonial era. Thus the article historicizes the character of Nora.

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll’s House*. 1879.

A Doll's house is a play that describes the behavior of Victorian Women and it has portrayed a character called Nora who is going to transform this society by standing against the Victorian norms of being dependent on man.

Mahaffey, Vicki. “Portal to Forgiveness: A Tribute to Ibsen’s Nora.” *South Central Review*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2010, pp. 54–73.

The central idea of this article is forgiveness and the writer says that both Nora and his husband have different rules for forgiveness. Nora should be forgiven and should set free in order to minimize conflict.

Michael, Feingold. *NORA (A DOLL’S HOUSE)*. Nov. 2004.

The article explains Nora as a character in a way that she is considered as a symbol of woman struggling for independence and Nora is the one who identifies disappointments in marriage.

Rosefeldt, Paul. “Ibsen’s a Doll’s House.” *The Explicator*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2003, pp. 84–85.

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