



وزارة التعليم العالي  
والبحث العلمي  
الجامعة المستنصرية

# مجلة الفلسفة

العدد ٣٠ كانون الأول ٢٠٢٤

مجلة أكاديمية محكمة تصدر عن كلية الآداب في الجامعة المستنصرية  
تعنى بنشر البحوث في مجالات الفلسفة المختلفة  
وما له صلة بها في العلوم الإنسانية الأخرى

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الفكر الليبرالي التقدمي في الفلسفة السياسية الأمريكية المعاصرة

تكوين الطبيعة الإنسانية من منظور التربية الإسلامية

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## مجلة الفلسفة

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## PHILOSOPHY JOURNAL

### مجلة الفلسفة

مجلة محكمة نصف سنوية تصدر عن كلية الآداب  
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في : العقائد والعرفان والحضارة والمنهجيات -  
المعرفية والبحثية .. ) ، وأي موضوع ثقافي أو فكري  
يتضمن بعداً تنظيرياً حول الإنسان والهوية والزمان  
والحدث .

والنشر في المجلة باللغة العربية أو الانجليزية أو  
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## شروط النشر في مجلة الفلسفة التي تصدر عن كلية الاداب / الجامعة المستنصرية / العراق

وهي مجلة علمية محكمة نصف سنوية ، تحمل الرقم الدولي (ISSN) ١١٩٢-١١٣٦. وحاصلة على المعرف الدولي (Doi) تحت رقم ٣٥٢٤٨-١٠. وتضم في هيئة تحريرها وعضويتها كبار المتخصصين بالفلسفة من العراق والعالم العربي ، ممن يحمل لقب الأستاذية .

١. يجب ان يكون البحث المرسل للمجلة مكتوب بخط (simple fide Arabic) بحجم (١٤) للمتن

و(١٢) للمهامش ، ومنضدة على (CD) خاص.

٢. يرفق مع البحث المفاتيح الخاصة به .

٣. يرفق مع البحث ملخص باللغتين العربية والانجليزية لا يزيد عدد كلماته عن ( ١٥٠ ) كلمة ، ويوضع في بداية البحث بعد العنوان .

٤. يكون توثيق الهامش في داخل متن البحث بعد اخذ النص من المصدر أو المرجع ، وعلى وفق الآتي : ( اسم المؤلف ، السنة ، الصفحة) ولا يكون التوثيق في آخر البحث .

٥. يكون التوثيق للمصدر أو المرجع في نهاية البحث وبخط مائل ، وعلى وفق الآتي : المؤلف (سنة النشر ( ، اسم الكتاب ، مكان النشر : الناشر .

نموذج تطبيقي : الجابري ، محمد عابد(٢٠٠٣) ، نقدالعقل العربي ، بيروت: مركز دراسات الوحدة العربية .

٦. يشترط في البحث ان لا يكون قد نشر من قبل ، أو قبل للنشر في أي مجلة داخل العراق أو خارجه .

٧. يخضع البحث للتقويم السري والاستلال الالكتروني من قبل خبراء مختصين .

٨. البحوث المنشورة في المجلة تعبر عن آراء اصحابها ولا تعبر بالضرورة عن وجهة نظر هيئة تحرير المجلة .

٩. يدفع الباحث العراقي الذي يروم نشر بحثه في المجلة مبلغا قدره (١٠٠٠٠٠) مائة الف دينار عراقي ، ويدفع الباحث العربي او الاجنبي مبلغا قدره (\$١٠٠) مائة دولار امريكي .

١٠. ترسل المجلة بعد صدور العدد نسخة بمثابة هدية للباحث ، وان طلب المزيد يدفع

(١٠) آلاف عراقي عن كل نسخة .

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تستقبل مجلة الفلسفة حلول العام الجديد بباقة من البحوث والدراسات الفلسفية والفكرية والعقائدية بين دفتي العدد (٣٠) الذي إرتأى أن يكون بتنوعه وانفتاحه وتأصيله كالأعداد السابقة تدشيناً لهذه المسيرة العلمية التي تهدف الى الاستمرار في إتاحة هذه النافذة النشرة للباحثين الاكاديميين من جهة، والمساهمة في البناء الثقافي الرصين العام من جهة اخرى.

يضم هذا العدد بحوثاً مختلفة في الفكر الاسلامي، التراثي منه والحديث والمعاصر، على المستوى الفلسفي والعقائدي والاجتماعي، وفي الفكر اليوناني، والفكر العربي الحديث والمعاصر الاخلاقي منه والسياسي بخاصة.

ففي الفكر الاسلامي سيطلع القارئ أولاً على بحث من فضاء علم الكلام الاسلامي حول شخصية هامة لم تكن تحت مرمى النظر البحثي (ابو اسحاق النوبختي)، وادلته على وجود الباري عزّ وجلّ، وعلى دراسة حول الطبيعة الإنسانية من منظور التربية الاسلامية، وعلى مقارنة فكرية للنظر في العلاقة بين العقيدة وبناء الفرد والمجتمع من المنظور الاسلامي كذلك.

وفي الفكر اليوناني سيطالعنا العدد ببحثين الاول حول فلسفة الحرب، حيث التركيز على بيان مفاصل الاشكالية الاخلاقية فيها، وسبل تجاوزها بعد رصدها وتحليلها، والثاني حول (المرأة) في الخطاب الفلسفي كما كرسته مذاهب الفلسفة اليونانية.

اما في الفكر العربي المعاصر، فلهذا العدد إطلالة على أحد رواده، المؤرخ والفكر العربي (الفلسطيني الاصل) حيث يشتغل على نقد هذا المفكر للنظام الأبوي في المجتمع العربي، بهدف ترسيم الحدود الواصلة الى تكريس مجتمع حدائي، وهي اطروحة تنبني على نقد مكامن التخلف والضعف والمرض على شتى المستويات، من اجل الارتقاء بالواقع العربي الى مجتمع حديث ومتطور.

وفي الفكر السياسي المعاصر، يضم هذا العدد بحثاً يرصد مفاصل الفكر الليبرالي التقدمي في الفلسفة السياسية الاميركية المعاصرة، وهنا تجري مقارنة بين الاتجاه الليبرالي المحافظ والتقدمي على مستوى الثوابت والأسس، مع بيان الجذور التاريخية للاتجاه الليبرالي التقدمي في المجتمع الاميركي.

اما باللغة الاجنبية، فقد اخترنا لهذا العدد ثلاثة بحوث بالإنجليزية، الأولى منها في الفلسفة الاجتماعية، إنما في مجال الأدب، فيشتغل في ابراز الاتجاه الواقعي في الحياة كما في مسرح إبسن مؤكداً على ان الحياة الفردية والعلاقات الاجتماعية والإنسانية، تمثل ثلاثة ابعاد تتأسس عليها الواقعية الاجتماعية.



وفي هذا المجال من مجالات بحث الفلسفة الاجتماعية، يدور البحث الثاني فيتعرض، من خلال نماذج من الادب المعاصر الى مشكلة العنصرية في المجتمع الاميركي، مبرزاً إشكالية تمثيلات الهوية في المجتمع الغربي.

أما البحث الثالث فينظر على هذا المستوى كذلك، في مشكلات وجودية ذات طابع اجتماعي فلسفي من خلال تحليل شخصي لوجود طفل من الطبقة العاملة كما تجسد في قصة (ضحك جو) للفيلسوف والاديب المعاصر جيمس كيلمان.

ونأمل ان يساهم هذا العدد ببحوثه الفلسفية في الفكر العربي والاسلامي المعاصر، وفي فلسفة الأدب بتعزيز الثقافة الهادفة والوعي الفلسفي بقضايا إنساننا الرهن.

رئيس تحرير





# ***The Triumph of Social Realism in Works of Henrik Ibsen: An Examination of A Doll's House as A Case Study***

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## ***Abstract:***

*The aim of the current study is to uncover how Henrik Ibsen employs Realism to depict everyday struggles, highlighting the truthful representation of the late 19th century life. A Doll's House stands as a quintessential example of Social Realism, providing an exploration of societal conventions, gender expectations, and the search for personal identity. The success of the play lies in Ibsen's depiction of these themes through richly developed characters and realistic dialogue, which together create a genuine portrayal of family life and the challenges encountered by its characters, especially Nora Helmer.*

*The limited societal options, the societal roles and expectations imposed on women, all are tackled in A Doll's House. Despite Nora's*

*struggles, Helmer, her husband remains unaware to her sacrifices and clings to his own perspective. Her path to self-discovery and freedom continues to resonate with audiences, solidifying A Doll's House as a significant piece of dramatic literature. Throughout the play, Ibsen advocated for women's rights and championed equality between the sexes, which is reflected in the character of Nora Helmer. This study reveals the realist elements, focusing on how the play critiques societal constraints and explores themes of individual freedom and self-realization.*

***Key Words:*** Social Realism, A Doll's House, Women's Rights, Nora Helmer.

***انتصار الواقعية الاجتماعية في أعمال هنريك إِبسن:***

***دراسة حالة لمسرحية بيت الدمية***

الملخص:

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى الكشف عن كيفية استخدام هنريك إبسن للواقعية في تصوير الصراعات اليومية، مع إبراز التمثيل الواقعي لحياة أواخر القرن التاسع عشر. يُعد بيت الدمية مثلاً بارزاً للواقعية الاجتماعية، حيث يستعرض العادات الاجتماعية، وتوقعات الأدوار الجندرية، والبحث عن الهوية الشخصية. يكمن نجاح المسرحية في قدرة إبسن على تصوير هذه المواضيع من خلال شخصيات متعمقة وحوار واقعي، مما يُنتج صورة حقيقية لحياة الأسرة والتحديات التي تواجه شخصياتها، خصوصاً نورة هيلمير. تناقش بيت الدمية الخيارات الاجتماعية المحدودة، والأدوار الاجتماعية والتوقعات المفروضة على النساء. على الرغم من صراعات نورة، يبقى هيلمير، زوجها، غافلاً عن تضحياتها ويُصر على رؤيته الخاصة. لا تزال رحلتها نحو الاكتشاف الذاتي والحرية تؤثر في الجمهور، مما يرسخ مكانة بيت الدمية كأحد الأعمال الأدبية الدرامية المهمة. طوال المسرحية، دافع إبسن عن حقوق النساء ونادى بالمساواة بين الجنسين، وهو ما يتجسد في شخصية نورة هيلمير. تكشف هذه الدراسة عن العناصر الواقعية في المسرحية، مع التركيز على كيفية نقدها للقيود الاجتماعية واستكشاف مواضيع الحرية الفردية وتحقيق الذات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الواقعية الاجتماعية، بيت الدمية، حقوق النساء، نورة هيلمير.

## 1. Introduction

*Henrik Ibsen is undoubtedly one of the prominent playwrights of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following Shakespeare, Ibsen is the most often staged playwright globally. His most notable work, A Doll's House, brought him worldwide recognition and established him as the first significant innovative dramatist in English literature.*

*Some of Ibsen's most impactful social plays include "The League of Youth" (1869), The Pillars of Society (1877), A Doll's House (1879), Ghosts (1881), and An Enemy of the People (1882). These works cemented his reputation as a significant social reformer and moral educator. Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) created numerous plays focused on social issues. In later years, he shifted towards more symbolic works, like The Wild Duck (1884) and Hedda Gabler (1890). However, it was A Doll's House that won him a broad European and global recognition, and in this play, he addresses pressing social matters such as women's roles. Basically, Ibsen's plays are distinguished by their intellectual depth and artistic*

significance. As one critic notes, "They possess that quality of magic, of ecstasy, which defines the supreme artist: he evokes souls through his art, creating independent spirits who reveal not merely the author's ideas, but the very essence of life, illustrating humanity's purpose and meaning."

Ibsen's remarkable talent lies in his ability to transform ordinary subjects into extraordinary explorations of human experience. This blending of the mundane and the profound is what gives Ibsen's work its enduring greatness and timeless appeal. Allardyce Nicoll observes, "While outwardly Ibsen's scenes may seem 'ordinary' and materialistically conceived, inwardly they are extraordinary, often breathing the atmosphere of Peer Gynt's fantastical adventures in the hobgoblin's court" (Nicoll, 1901).

It is important to note, however, that like the Greek dramatists, Ibsen adheres to the principles of unity and Fate. Much like them, he minimizes sub-plots and limits the number of characters to the essentials. H. Granville Barker claims, "By simplifying the scheme of a play's visible action (its

underlying action being a separate matter), through its scenic setting, the number of characters, and in the singularity of its subject, he can make both its structure and atmosphere highly effective." (Barker, 1906).

Another characteristic of Ibsen's dramas is their realism or ordinariness; his themes, characters, scenarios, and settings are all recognizable to his audience. This was also a practice among Greek playwrights, who frequently drew from well-known myths and legends. However, Ibsen distinguishes himself by selecting his topics from the contemporary world around him. In this regard, he refrains from using characters and situations that are extraordinary or rare. His works portray typical humanity and its issues. "Ibsen brought us all back...to the right view of dramatic life; he made his audiences part of his plays. We live in, not look at, a play by Ibsen." (Roberts, 1912).

There are several technical elements that enhance the realism of his plays. These consist of precise stage directions, the use of ordinary language, and the avoidance of soliloquies and

*'asides. His focus on the tangible details of his settings and characters significantly aids him in achieving a lifelike appearance in his plays. In fact, Ibsen's realism was greatly tempered by his use of romantic symbolism. As Eric Bentley clearly demonstrates that: "much of the apparent realism in these plays is symbolic." The plays, as such, should be valued not for their realist or ideas (which are generally borrowed from contemporary thinkers like John-Stuart Mill, Darwin, or Kierkegaard), but for the skill with which Ibsen creates an illusion of realism. or transmutes "the borrowed trappings of contemporary thought" into an exciting dramatic experience."* (Bentley, ١٩٤٦).

*Ibsen's realistic dramas are rich in details and are recognized for their keen observation of reality. Their themes revolve around the social issues of their time. In these plays, Ibsen also highlights the significance of hereditary and environmental influences. Nicoll suggests that: "these factors appear to be shaping powerful characters who move invisibly across the stage."* (Nicoll, ١٩٥٧). In *A Doll's House*,

*Ibsen presents a social and moral dilemma, intending to shock a male-dominated society and challenge social institutions particularly marriage. He criticizing the oppressive position women hold in society. He compares a woman's role to that of a doll, passive and voiceless, unable to develop her individuality or express her true feelings. Nora, the play's protagonist, embodies this struggle for emancipation. For eight years, she lives under the illusion that she and her husband, Torvald, are the ideal partners. However, this illusion is ultimately shattered, forcing Nora to confront the painful reality of her situation. Roberts writes: "The story of the play *A Doll's House* seems perfectly ordinary. Marriages" are entered upon exactly like Torvald and Nora's, every day men go home to wives who share nothing but their physical and emotional life."* (Roberts, ١٩١٢).

*It can be argued that *A Doll's House* is Henrik Ibsen's most renowned play, which addresses universal themes related to male-female dynamics, the intricacies of female psychology, the exploration of true self-identity, and the pursuit of autonomy. This play effectively*

portrays the challenges and concerns of contemporary individuals, regardless of the era or setting. Among its many attributes, this aspect underscores Ibsen's relevance and the universal nature of his writing. Additionally, its ongoing performances in theaters since its inception contribute to its timelessness; Nora's actions continue to astonish readers, and each new generation finds its significance and beauty, despite the historical context in which it was created. Another intriguing aspect of this play is the diverse perspectives and discussions it has inspired, which persist in contemporary literature and critique. Naturally, the play's conclusion, wherein Nora leaves and forsakes her family, has been a focal point of extensive debate in critical discourse. When the play was originally written and staged, the idea that a woman could act independently of her husband's authority, particularly in leaving her home and children, was considered unthinkable. Social norms and behavioral expectations were rigorously established and adhered to by most members of society.

Through various techniques, such as dialogue, monologue, and often symbolic elements on stage, Ibsen effectively introduces us to the issues surrounding relationships and individual identity. Considering the themes and subject matter of the play, one could argue that it possesses universal and timeless qualities; thus, it remains relevant on stages around the world today, appealing to both readers and audiences alike. Regardless of the differing social contexts during Ibsen's time, the dynamics between men and women have not changed, just as a woman's quest for her own identity persists. Although it might appear that contemporary women cannot relate to Nora's predicament or that modern society does not judge Nora's choices, there remain shared experiences; they seek love, respect, and the journey to discover their authentic selves. The themes of the play resonate as both universal and contemporary since they deal with issues relevant to modern individuals. Thereby, placing Ibsen as a pioneer of modern theatrical expression, *A Doll's House* is indeed one of his works that can be categorized as modern psychological drama.



*"Ibsen's contributions mark a significant advancement in the understanding of the evolving concept of modern drama." (Quigley, 1980).*

## **٢. Literary and Social Background: Literature Framework**

*To fully grasp the importance of A Doll's House, it is essential to explore the literary and social background of the late 19th century, as this era was characterized by considerable changes in social norms, gender dynamics, and perceptions of masculinity. The late 19th century saw Western society undergo a phase of swift industrial growth, urban development, and social transformation. The inception of modern drama is rooted in the 19th century, featuring various playwrights with distinct styles and techniques. The era of modern drama is defined by various "isms," reflecting the rise of different literary movements that shape the way themes are addressed and depicted.*

*A notable characteristic of modern drama in the early years of the 19th century, is its focus on Realism, which seeks to address*

*and expose the genuine issues of life. In this context, modern drama strives to depict life as it truly is. Importantly, it was Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright, who made Realism and the drama of ideas well-known in contemporary theater. He uses theater as a platform to confront realistic themes such as marriage, justice, law, and social conflict. According to M.H. Abraham, "Realism in theater emerged as an artistic movement in late 19th-century France, characterized by its devotion to portraying life as it truly is, without idealization or romantic exaggeration. Societal values, attitudes and morals are shown in Realist Drama." (Abraham, 1988).*

*Many dramatists like Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov and Bernard Shaw were highly influenced by realism. They portray real life on stage, focus on detailed, authentic representations of events, characters, and social conditions. The main characters in their plays often stand up against injustices that personally impact them. The conversations among characters reflect natural, everyday language rather than being exaggerated for dramatic purposes. Characters are*

portrayed with depth, authenticity, and nuanced motivations. Characters and events are presented in such a way which depicts a real human experience unlike conventional drama and sentimental comedies of the previous era. These plays concentrate on real-life situations, confront common challenges, highlight behavioral dilemmas and difficult choices, feature plausible dialogue, and are typically set in relatable environments, utilizing the 'box set' style on stage, which includes three walls and an unseen 'fourth wall' that faces the audience.

Henrik Ibsen's contributions to theater were transformative and multifaceted, particularly exemplified in *A Doll's House*. First, he dismantled traditional social and artistic barriers by proving that high tragedy could center on the lives of ordinary people and be expressed in everyday prose. Rejecting the artificial conventions of plot Ibsen embraced a more authentic and relatable narrative style. Second, he revolutionized the art of prose dialogue, capturing not only the diversity of speech in different social contexts but also pioneering

the use of subtext—a layered dialogue that conveys unspoken thoughts and emotions, adding depth to human interactions. Lastly, Ibsen's profound understanding of human psychology, particularly the complexities of the feminine psyche, became one of his most enduring legacies. Charles Lyons captures Ibsen's literary significance, describing him as "the realist, the iconoclast, the successful or failed idealist, the poet, the psychologist, the romantic." (Lyons, 1987).

Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is a powerful example of Social Realism in drama, offering a constant examination of the psychological and emotional struggles of ordinary individuals within societal restrictions. The play also aligns with naturalist drama, a branch of Realism, aimed to delve deeper into the social and environmental forces shaping human behavior. Ibsen seamlessly integrates these elements in his play, using the everyday struggles of his characters to critique societal norms and illuminate the complexities of human relationships. In Norway, admission to education for women

was established in 1876. Yet, women faced limitations in the workforce, earning less than men and being offered primarily basic positions. The bourgeoisie culture expected wives to avoid employment. In this context, Nora challenges societal norms, even though she endures the burden of concealing her illegal actions. A husband's social standing was elevated when his wife was obedient, compliant, and under his authority. Torvald Helmer appears to take pleasure in lamenting the strain he feels due to Nora. He remarks, "I'd never have believed this. You really have forgotten everything I taught you." (Act II, p. 51).

Henrik Ibsen, born in Norway in 1828, composed *A Doll's House* during a period when society was heavily influenced by rigid Victorian social norms. Even after Norway gained independence from Britain in 1814, the Victorian impact on the middle class persisted. The play highlights the significance of maintaining a perfect exterior through Nora's obsession with making their home perfect and spotless for her husband. The title alludes to the roles assigned to Victorian

families; children who are invisible and quiet; a submissive and pleasant wife, and a reliable and competent husband. The couple's joy when Torvald receives a promotion and their conviction that it will ensure their safety and stability reflect these societal pressures. Torvald is particularly focused on avoiding any debt, as he perceives it as immoral and shameful. However, in a society increasingly driven by capitalism, the bourgeoisie, representing the rising middle class, faced new challenges due to their newfound wealth.

## **۲. Discussion and Analysis:**

### **۲.۱. Social Realism in Drama:**

Since literature serves as a reflection of life and society, it can only be accurately represented by the technique of Realism, which aims to depict the genuine state of contemporary life without embellishment. There is an absence of artificial elements, fantasy, or conjecture. Realism historically arose as a response to the Romantic movement that prevailed in the literary world during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. While Romanticism focused on imagination, emotion,

and the supernatural, realism aimed to deliver a more factual and precise representation of reality and facts. This transition was significantly shaped by the swift social, political, and economic transformations that unfolded during the Industrial Revolution, compelling writers to address the stark realities of urban life, poverty, and human experiences. A crucial feature of realism in literature is its focus on depicting life authentically. Realist authors aimed to illustrate the mundane and everyday elements of life as well as the intricacies of human behavior and social interactions. The environments and characters found in realist literature are frequently inspired by common life, making them familiar and relatable to readers. The importance of realism lies in its ability to reflect society and reveal its strengths, weaknesses, joys, and pain.

Realistic drama seeks to depict life authentically on stage. It is conveyed in theatre through symbolism, character development, stage design, and plot structuring. It centers on human actions – what individuals do and the reasons behind their

actions within their specific contexts. It offers a representation of experiences that resonate with the audience's own lives. Social Realism addresses and explores controversial subjects that are socially relevant and often uncomfortable. These issues encompass social and political themes such as injustice, gender inequality, prejudice, discrimination, flaws within marital and legal institutions, administrative failures, and the conflict between labor and capital. Social realists focus public attention on the crucial issues affecting the community, aiming to evoke empathy in the audience by emphasizing the hardships faced by individuals. The narratives are drawn from real-life experiences of the bourgeois class, featuring relatable characters whom we encounter in daily life, using everyday language, and set in typical environments that depict regular occurrences. Consequently, readers and spectators can engage with the narrative and see themselves reflected in the characters presented in the literature. Rather than merely enchanting the audience and readers like other literary forms, Social Realism

*strives to bring about reform and foster positive change within society. (Vaswani, ٢٠٢٠).*

### **٣.٢. Ibsen as Social Realist:**

*Henrik Ibsen (١٨٢٨-١٩٠٦) is regarded as the pioneer of modern realistic drama. His works critiqued societal values and explored unconventional themes while adhering to the structure of the well-made play. Ibsen's intention to imbue his realistic plays with tension and unexpected twists is significantly influenced by the French approach to the well-made play, known for its conciseness, clarity, and static characters. The exposition in his plays is driven by purpose, featuring scenes that are causally linked, with a strong emphasis on inner psychological motivations; the setting also shapes the characters' personalities, and the actions and possessions of the characters highlight their socio-economic status. He became an influential figure for subsequent writers of realism. (Ibid.)*

*Ibsen also employed what is now referred to as the "fourth wall" technique in his dramatic works. The audience observes in the darkness while the events on*

*stage unfold; the characters act as though the audience is not present (similar to most films and television programs). He considers this dramatic approach to be a vehicle for conveying his social and political messages. Early in his writing career, Ibsen produced a few romantic narrative verse plays, but these failed to achieve critical or commercial success. As a proponent of realism, he presents his work as a medium for communication among individuals, tackling significant themes in a relatable manner, with structure subordinate to substance. Often, he advocates a theory of natural determination to elucidate the external factors that influence both his characters and his role as a writer. Ibsen has incorporated some symbolic elements into his socially and politically realistic plays to create layered meanings and extensive rationalizations for the dramatic intricacies and dialogues within his works. He transcends mere realism and delves into the domain of "symbolic realism." (Dukes, ١٩٦٧).*

### **٣.٣. Social Realism in A Doll's House:**



### ٣.٣.١. **Male-Female Relationships:**

The topic of male-female relationships, particularly within marriage, is prominently featured in many of Ibsen's works. In other words, the dynamics between men and women are portrayed through societal expectations and established norms regarding their roles in both the family and broader society. If we examine the relationship between Nora and Helmer, we can clearly observe the transformation occurring in their connection. Initially, their relationship seems to embody an ideal representation of familial love, a portrayal that is intentionally set against a festive backdrop. Ibsen places his characters in a Christmas setting to highlight, or perhaps exaggerate, the perfect ambiance of their home. They each adopt their roles, both unknowingly and artificially, as a result of their upbringing in the societal context of that era. Their home resembles a meticulously staged setting where daily performances occur, and everything operates nearly flawlessly. Torvald Helmer assumes the role of a protective husband, embodying the dominant

characteristics of a romantic hero, while Nora appears as a delicate, dependent woman who values his protection and relishes in it. Toril Moi points out Helmer's idealism, noting that he represents the play's idealistic themes, and she remarks on his relationship with Nora: "Helmer's idealism and Nora's unthinking echoing of it make them theatricalize both themselves and each other, most strikingly by taking themselves to be starring in various idealist scenarios of female sacrifice and male rescue" (Moi, ٢٠٠٦).

Ibsen develops Helmer's character through distinction: as he is presented as a leading figure, a guardian, and a protagonist, is simultaneously someone who cannot handle adversity, lacking the ability to confront issues and face reality. This is reinforced by a comment asserted by Toril Moi, "Helmer's refinement cannot deal with death and pain" (Ibid.). In contrast, Nora, who frequently embodies the role of a delicate and sometimes childish woman, ultimately reveals strength and determination akin to a man's, thereby assuming Helmer's role. In the play's concluding scene, we witness a reversal: a fragile and

powerless male alongside a determined and courageous female who is able to handle the condition. Ibsen shifts the positioning of his characters completely from where they began, which suggests the idea of relativity in life, among other things. Ibsen's choice of language allows us to understand the nature of the characters and uncover their personalities, as well as the structure of their relationships. Each character possesses a distinctive manner of speaking, highlighting the differences between them and their interactions. As evident in words choosing of Nora's husband, Helmer, which provides a clear glimpse into his character and his perception of the marital dynamic. His speech is consistently composed and assertive, reflecting his confidence and his assumption of dominance in the relationship with his wife. His descriptions of Nora, such as calling her "an expensive pet" and "my most treasured possession." (Act III, p. ١٠٢), suggest that he views her as a valuable belonging rather than an equal partner. These remarks reflect the imbalance of power between them, as Torvald's attitude reduces Nora to a

decorative role within the marriage. Moreover, his rigid perspective implies that he expects others, especially Nora, to conform to his values and beliefs, emphasizing his controlling and patriarchal nature.

Helmer: "You see, you see! How right I was not to let you stay longer."

Nora: "Oh, you're always right, whatever you do."

Helmer: "Now my little song birds talking just like a real big human being". (Act III, p. ١٠٣).

The relationship between the two is an artificial construct. "I pretend to myself that you're my young bride, that we've just come away from our wedding, that I'm leading you into my abode for the first time—that I'm alone with you for the first time—utterly alone with you—my young, trembling beauty!" he says. "All this evening I've had no other desire but for you." Nora is not a young bride any longer, as they have been married for eight years and have three children. "You know, Nora—many a time I've wished that some impending danger might threaten you, so I could risk life and limb and everything, everything, for

your sake.” (Act III, p. ٩٠). These words sound like rescue to Nora, who, throughout the play, holds on to the fantasy that Helmer is an affectionate and keen husband, one who would make sacrifices for her. But by the end, this idealized image of her husband proves to be a mere illusion. Nora comes to realize that Torvald is neither compassionate nor morally upright; instead, he is as entrenched in his own illusions about their marriage as she once was. This awakening compels Nora to abandon the façade of their relationship and seek independence, recognizing that she must take control of her own destiny.

It should be noted that, the entire play focuses not on love, but on the quest for personal identity and the tragic conclusion of a relationship rooted in deception. From this perspective, it can be argued that the author aimed to authentically depict the repercussions of the relationship, the avoidance of the truth, and to illustrate the stance a woman should adopt to avert a familial disaster.

### **٢.٢.٢. Gender Roles and Nora’s fight against patriarchal norms:**

In addition to the themes of love and human ideals, a significant issue presented by Ibsen is the gender roles. This topic has sparked a debate about Ibsen in literary circles, with varied opinions among readers. Unni Langaas, in her analysis of the gender issue in *A Doll’s House*, stating that, "My overall view is that this drama is not so much about Nora’s struggle to find herself as a human being, as it is about her shocking experience of being treated as a woman because of the acts she performs" (Langaas, ٢٠٠٥). She further characterizes the play as a depiction of the consequences of a system that maintains a clear distinction between genders, which places men in a position of superiority over women in various aspects—economic, social, political, etc. According to Langaas, this situation should be interpreted as a reflection of the modernity of Ibsen’s play, as well as a fundamental characteristic of the dramatic genre as a whole. (Ibid.).

Addressing this issue involves an understanding of the gender roles within the historical context where the differences between men and women were often viewed as divinely ordained and highly respected, if not exaggerated, in the 19th century. At one point in the play, when Nora expresses her determination to leave her home, Torvald invokes religious and traditional views of women's duties. However, Nora does not adhere to these expectations, clearly challenging established norms and ideology. She is not depicted as a sinner, but rather as someone seeking to discover her true self, with the goal of eventually being a good mother and wife. Langaas perceives Nora: "the woman in *A Doll's House* as a powerful, strong woman". (Ibid.).

Nora, right from the start of the play, is a compliant wife, devoted, nurturing, and affectionate, always present for her husband to lift his spirits, bring him joy, admire him, and bolster his confidence. She embodies the ideal woman as defined by Helmer and her environment. One might argue that Ibsen amplifies Nora's persona,

portraying her as naïve and immature to highlight her theatrical role and to underscore the transformations she will undergo. By conforming to traditional feminine roles, Nora resembles more of a decorative object and entertainer than a fully realized individual.

As a complex exploration of gender distinctions, Ibsen challenges specific societal expectations while simultaneously highlighting the individual. He situates the personal dilemmas of his characters within a broader social context. This dual approach is why some of his works are seen as both social commentaries and psychological studies, thereby placing them within the realms of realism and modern literature.

### **۳.۳.۳. Realistic elements that shape Nora's character and the play as a whole:**

Each character in a play plays a significant role in the artistic process of creating dramatic personas; however, the character of Nora Helmer stands out as the most prominent. Ibsen presents various viewpoints on this character: we observe how other characters perceive her, how she

views herself, and we learn about her through her dynamics with her husband as well as with other male figures in the narrative, through her bond with Mrs. Linde, and her interactions with her children, among others.

The multiple facets of Nora that we observe on stage contribute to her character's complexity, allowing readers to interpret her in various ways. Nora embodies two personae: "Nora-the Little Girl" and "Nora-the Woman." The earlier version of Nora, presented at the beginning of the play, has not been subjected to psychoanalytic exploration to the extent that the latter has. This behavior is a natural outcome of her experience living as a doll and little girl under her father's care and later with her husband. "I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was papa's doll-child." (Act III, p. ٩٦). The main character, Nora, contemplates her existence as that of a doll, designed to meet the desires and expectations of others. Within her marriage, she has been diminished to an idealized image of the perfect spouse, lacking the autonomy to express her own wishes or seek her own ambitions.

Likewise, her dynamics with her father continued this pattern, wherein she was viewed as a toy instead of a human being. Nora has been perceived as the other by her father. Afterward, her father passed her to her husband, who regarded her as a valued possession. This realization of herself and her awakening is poignantly captured in Nora's self-discovery towards the play's conclusion.

"When I lived at home with Dad, he fed me all his opinions, until they became my opinions. Or if they didn't, I kept quiet about it because I knew he wouldn't have liked it. He used to call me his doll child, and he played with me the way I used to play with my dolls. And when... Daddy handed me over to you. You arranged everything according to your taste, and I adapted my taste to yours... Now, looking back, I feel as if I've



*lived a beggar's life—  
from hand to mouth.  
(Act III, p. ١٠٣)."*

Nora becomes aware of the suffocating aspects of her roles in her marriage and past, which catalyzes her path toward liberation and self-discovery. Frequently, Nora's statements and her decision to leave home have faced criticism, often without examining the underlying reasons or considering them valid justifications for her actions. Joan Templeton notes that: "the most common method of diminishing Nora's significance has been to question her morality; regardless of the language used, the core arguments have remained largely unchanged for over a century." (Templeton, ١٩٨٩). Ibsen demonstrates his deep understanding of human psychology, particularly that of women, and the processes that drive human consciousness. Griffin highlights that inner struggles take precedence over external ones, a hallmark of contemporary psychological dramas, stating: "the true conflict in *A Doll's House* lies not between Nora and Torvald, but within Nora's own mind" (Griffin, ١٩٨٨).

*It is clear that Helmer's desires are reflected in Nora's perspective on events, influencing her character in significant ways. However, this influence is not absolute, as evidenced by the conclusion of the play. In this instance, Torvald Helmer acts as a protector, the head of the household, and views his wife more as a decorative element rather than a true partner in life. Nora holds society, her father, and her husband accountable for rendering her dependent and unhappy: "Nora seeks to blame her father and her husband not just for the ways in which they wanted her to please them, but also for the fact that she wanted to please them" (Quigley, ١٩٨٥). Consequently, Nora assigns all the blame to them for her actions and for who she has become. Quigley interprets this sentiment as: "abdication of responsibility for her own actions" (Ibid.).*

Nora's conduct at the start of the play differs significantly from her behavior at the end. This discrepancy goes beyond just her actions; it also encompasses Nora's perspective on her surroundings. The shift in how she views her environment and her

role within it suggests a fundamental change within Nora. She comes to realize who she is not, and how life and others have shaped her; her departure is motivated precisely by her uncertainty about her own identity. Nora's evolution into someone in search of her true self serves as the main theme of the play. The turning point for her transformation is a long-held secret from her husband—she committed forgery to save Torvald's life during his illness. The disclosure of this act triggers a sequence of events that ultimately leads to Nora's self-discovery and a dramatic climax that questions societal conventions. Nora's character arc throughout the play is groundbreaking, as she transforms from a compliant and dutiful wife into a woman ready to confront the expectations of society and the standards of her era. Her choice to leave her family at the play's conclusion was both shocking and divisive for audiences at the time of its initial performance, underscoring the play's themes that were both controversial and progressive.

Nora: "Indeed, you were perfectly right. I am not fit for the task. There is another task I must undertake first. I must try and educate myself—you are not the man to help me in that. I must do that for myself. And that is why I am going to leave you now."

Helmer: (springing up). "What do you say?"

Nora: "I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer."

Helmer: "Nora, Nora!"

Nora: I am going away from here now, at once. I am sure Christine will take me in for the night.

Helmer: You are out of your mind! I won't allow it! I forbid you!

Nora: It is no use forbidding me anything any longer. I will take with me what belongs to myself. I will take nothing from you, either now or later." (Act III, p. 103).

Feeling that she would gain her freedom by leaving home, Nora believes that this is what she desires after her marriage. "I must try and get some sense, Torvald." (Act III, p. 100). She departs to discover what she truly wants for herself and her life. Her final

action in the play reflects her perception of herself and all the influences (including those around her) that contributed to her situation. Griffin articulates her last action as follows: "When Ibsen's Nora exits in the final scene of *A Doll's House*, she embodies through a physical gesture her reaction to the realization that her self-perception has been shaped by a social institution—in this case, the bourgeois family..." (Griffin, 1988). Nonetheless, Ibsen concludes his play in such a manner that suggests it is not a definitive ending, not only due to Nora's comments about possibly reuniting, but also because of the ongoing nature of Nora's psychological journey.

By examining Nora's character at both the start and the conclusion of the play, it becomes evident that she is a central figure who undergoes development, even if this transformation isn't immediately apparent. Ibsen skillfully manipulates her character throughout the narrative, initially presenting her as a playful and shallow woman and ultimately redefining Nora's entire persona by the end. This

highlights the principle of contrast within both her character and the overarching ideas. Through Nora, Ibsen demonstrates his prowess not only as a psychologist but also as a dramatist and a creator of a complex, modern literary work.

At the conclusion of the narrative, Nora departs from Torvald and her family. This act symbolizes Nora's liberation and her determination to challenge the patriarchal system. She returns her ring to Torvald and forcefully shuts the door. This marks the conclusion of their marriage. Henrik Ibsen paves the way for women to resist male dominance, highlighting the need for bravery in making significant decisions to attain freedom from men's control.

One of the features of contemporary dramatic and literary works, in general, is their openness to the audience and the potential for diverse interpretations. Another sign that reflects a modern technique in the development of a dramatic character is that Nora's character remains incomplete, indicating that her psychological journey is unresolved by the conclusion of the play. When we focus solely on this

character, it seems as though the narrative continues, not through the interactions among characters or the storyline, but within the character herself. Ibsen employs this technique to leave the reader with questions and a sense of confusion, as the conclusion is not truly finalized. Instead of providing closure, the ending offers hints about what may occur next.

In contemporary drama, there are no dramatic conclusions, traditional happy endings, or tragic conclusions that serve as a final goal. In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen steers clear of providing closure or explanations – on the contrary, the conclusion evokes fresh questions and uncertainties in the reader. By doing so, the author downplays the significance of subsequent events and highlights the universal nature of Nora's character and human relationships. Nora embodies the essence of womanhood, who, despite being dissatisfied with her existence, possesses the bravery to recognize that and to abandon the illusion that her life represents.

٣.٣.٤. **Symbolic  
significance of the title:**

*A Doll's House* has a symbolic expression, from its title to its conclusion. Through the title, which often serves as a metaphor or contains deeper implications, Ibsen captures the audience's attention, whether by causing confusion or surprise. According to Moi, "the figure of doll is the most important metaphor in *A Doll's House*" (Moi, ٢٠٠٦). This suggests that the essential understanding of the entire play lies within the interpretation of this metaphor, specifically regarding the character of Nora.

The title captures the mood of the play, particularly in the initial scenes. From this perspective, Nora can be seen as a doll living in a household where everything is neat and orderly, with singing and dancing integrated into daily routines. Nora is a pampered individual who enjoys shopping and is quite materialistic. She has a passion for dancing. Nora is depicted as a devoted and patient young woman, as shown by her purchasing gifts for all her family members at home.

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

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

Nora: "Yes, Torvald, we may be a wee bit more reckless now, mayn't we? Just a tiny wee bit! You are going to have a big salary and earn lots and lots of money." (Act I, p. ٢٧).

As the play progresses, the conflicts, both internal and external—intensify, making it evident that the title does not signify the ambiance of Nora and Helmer's household. In fact, even the metaphorical meaning of the title lacks positive implications. Nora's mental state and her perception of her own existence illuminate the significance of 'a doll's house'. Her entire life has been confined to a household governed by specific rules; her existence has been a meticulously rehearsed performance, where Nora herself was merely a doll, an ornament in one home and then

another, a being devoid of thoughts, emotions, and spirit. Eventually, the notion of a doll's house loses any semblance of something pleasant and serene, becoming instead a representation of something artificial and meaningless. While Ibsen may have contemplated the idea of a doll for these reasons, it is clear that his intricate artistic sensibility selected the most fitting symbol, one that conveys an apt meaning. A doll implies a sense of lifelessness, estrangement, and coldness.

Due to the difference between house and home, thus the second part of the title symbolizes insignificance. Basically, house is a place to take shelter and to live in. On the other hand, home is a place of love and harmony, and family lives with the view of understanding one another in home. A house is an emotionless word as compared to a home as Nora realizes at the end of the play that Helmer's house has never been a home for her. She tries her utmost to make it home but she never succeeds because Helmer does not want that. Eventually, Nora comes to terms with her unrealistic and idealized



perception of her husband when she realizes that he is essentially a stranger to her. This revelation prompts her to tell him: "I realized that for eight years I had been living here with a complete stranger" (III, p. ١٠٠), "I can't spend the night in a strange man's house" (Act III, p. ١٠١), and "I don't accept things from strangers" (Act III, p. ١٠٢). Helmer expects Nora to continue loving him despite his harsh treatment. When she tells him she no longer loves him because of his behavior, he reacts with shock, saying, "Nora! How can you say this to me?" (Act III, p. ٩٩). Essentially, Helmer's committed and controlling nature that ultimately leads Nora to leave him at the end of the play. She realizes that she has learned nothing valuable within his household and seeks to get away of his controlling power, "I must educate myself. And you can't help me with that. It's something I must do by myself. That's why I'm leaving you." (Act III, p. ٩٧).

It is important to note that during the late nineteenth century, men perceived women as inferior in all circumstances. In other words, the blame was always

placed on the woman, even if her husband was cruel and unkind. This is the issue the playwright critiques throughout the play and seeks to reveal. For this reason, *A Doll's House* is seen as a realistic play, as it exposes a prevalent social issue related to family life and marriage. Nora challenges the prevailing notions of marriage in her time. She explicitly states to her husband that a wife's sacred responsibilities extend beyond serving her husband and children, encompassing her own needs as well. The subsequent quotation illustrates this point:

Helmer: "But to leave your home, your husband, your children! Have you thought what people will say?"

Nora. "I can't help that. I only know that I must do this."

Helmer. But this is monstrous! Can you neglect your most sacred duties?

Nora. What do you call my most sacred duties?

Helmer. Do I have to tell you? Your duties towards your husband, and your children."

Nora. "I have another duty which is equally sacred."

Helmer. "You have not. What on earth could that be?"

Nora. "My duty towards myself."  
 Helmer. "First and foremost, you are a wife and a mother."  
 Nora. "I don't believe that any longer. I believe that I'm first and foremost a human being, like you-- or anyway, that I must try to become one. I know most people think as you do, Torvald, and I know there's something of the sort to be found in books. But I'm no longer prepared to accept what people say and what's written in books. I must think things out for myself, and try to find my own answer." (Act III., pp. ٩٧- ٩٨)

Nora's fantasies about her husband empowered her to resist the stifling atmosphere imposed by her husband and the prevailing societal norms. By the conclusion, after her transformation from a romantic to a pragmatic woman, Nora comes to understand that she as a plaything in her father's home as well as her husband's. She has now matured enough to recognize the flawed aspects of the prevailing conventions in her community. She confronts her husband: "I've been your doll-wife, just I used to be papa's doll-child. And the children have been my dolls. That's all our marriage has been, Torvald." (Act III.p. ٩٥)

The play contains several intriguing symbols whose meanings relate to the characters and themes, and these should be understood in that context as well. The festive atmosphere within the home, along with the decorative elements that indicate the prevailing relationships, is noteworthy. "The Christmas tree", part of this holiday decor, holds its own symbolism and aligns with the events occurring in the house. It signifies a more optimistic aspect of life, one that appears curated and adorned, yet it does not reflect reality; just as "the Christmas tree" will be stripped of its ornaments and become bare, life similarly reveals its less cheerful side.

When discussing visual imagery and its significance, it's important to highlight the iconic door that Nora closes behind her. Doors are prominent throughout the play, and their symbolic meaning is evident across the entire storyline. "Conversations or actions are repeatedly interrupted by the sound of a doorbell ringing or someone knocking...", observes Quigley in his analysis of the artistic methods used in Ibsen's work (Quigley ١٩٨٥). The door

signifies the unveiling of a world, and can be seen as a boundary separating the external environment from the family and its internal dynamics. However, it can also be interpreted as Nora's transition into a space where she is perceived as a doll, and her departure from that place. The act of her finally passing through the entrance door and forcefully closing it draws our focus to this aspect of the home and its potential deeper significance. As noted by Quigley, Nora's final action of slamming the door captures the attention of both readers and critics, while "the initial action of the play, Nora entering through the same series of doors, does not seem to have drawn as much interest or incited such extensive debate" (Ibid.). Thus, the doors function as mechanisms for concealment and revelation, marking both conclusions and new beginnings. By slamming the door at the play's conclusion, Nora leaves a part of her life behind and brings an era to a close. Yet, beyond that door lies a different, unexplored world. For the first time in the play, the doors represent a genuine boundary between two realms: an ending and a fresh start.

Ibsen's focus on psychology and his portrayal of profound human issues and internal struggles renders him both modern and universal. Moreover, his approach to depicting societal states, along with the way he crafted conflicts and significance, further enhances his modern and contemporary appeal. *A Doll's House* serves as a prime illustration of his 'modernity'; it explores internal conflicts, examines the psychology of individuals and relationships, and it is rich in symbolic meaning and expressive metaphors.

Realistic drama portrays ordinary conversations straightforwardly; for example, in the play, Nora tells her husband, Torvald, as she gets ready to leave him and their children at the end: "You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me" (Act III, ٩٣). This unpretentious, direct, and believable dialogue resonates profoundly within the context of the play and the unfolding drama between a husband and wife in their simple home setting. The sets of realist plays reflected the typical workplaces, communities, and residences of individuals. These

plays served as a mirror of the society and culture in which people lived. The everyday environments enhanced the impact of the performances.

### **Conclusion:**

Ibsen's approach to realism derives from Romanticism, embracing the notion that the human experience is characterized by profound alienation. We find ourselves estranged not only from the societal norms that distort our shared human identity but also from our individual identities, which are deprived of their true authenticity. This realization is embodied by Nora Helmer when she discovers that she is unfamiliar with both the world and her own self. The narrative explores the married life of Nora and Helmer and the events that lead to Nora's decision to leave her husband and children in pursuit of real-life experiences and her quest for self-discovery regarding morality. *A Doll's House* is a work where social realism prevails over romanticism, as it addresses the societal norms of its time. It also engages with the revolutionary movement regarding women's liberation. Its structure and

context align with the expectations of realistic theater.

It is important to highlight that in all of his "social plays," Ibsen focused on presenting problems as he perceived them, without striving to provide solutions. In terms of technique, *A Doll's House* represents a critical transition in the evolution of European theater. Two decades have rendered us accustomed to the groundbreaking changes introduced by Ibsen's dramatic style, making it difficult to recognize the extent of that transformation. The natural quality of dialogue and scenarios; the commitment to the "unities" of time and space; the elimination of artificial elements like soliloquies; and the avoidance of a happy ending when it is unwarranted, these elements have become so ingrained in contemporary drama that they are now expected. Ibsen advanced characterization long before others did, granting his readers or audiences an opportunity to perceive the mental and emotional states of his protagonists through details that, at first, might seem inconsistent with the actions on stage. Ibsen's sophistication and skill in

characterization are especially evident in his depiction of female characters; he adeptly utilizes scenic design, specific details, movements, and gestures to convey the essence of women's nature. He was a skilled artist who achieved what all artists aspire to: to articulate humanity's most profound and honest struggles. "A Doll's House," as recalled by Halvdan Khot, who was a child at the time of its release, "exploded like a bomb into contemporary life." (Meyer, 1974).

In conclusion, the literature on *A Doll's House* provides valuable insights into the play's use of realism. Scholars have explored Nora's awakening and its philosophical implications, as well as the realist critique of 19th-century societal norms. By examining these perspectives together, we can see how Ibsen's play transcends a mere critique of gender roles, offering a profound exploration of the individual's quest for authenticity within a society that imposes restrictive roles. The realism in *A Doll's House* makes it a powerful study of the tension between personal autonomy and social constraints.

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