

DRAMATIC IRONY *IN A DOLL'S HOUSE* PLAY

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Abstract

The emergence of dramatic irony has been reinforced by several critical stases regarding the way by which the reader might perceive a literary works via various meanings and literary insights. Critics pinpoint the reader ability to infer the latent messages of literary works in several ways. In addition, they emphasize the author's comprehension of some of his/her philosophical points of view concerning reality outside the text. The reader and the author play a decisive role in determining the textual as well as the contextual function of literary works due to the fact that the texts must be perceived in a certain way. Therefore, there should be a close scrutiny of the text's function in order to bridge the gap between the reader and the texts concerning the targeted meanings. Here, the vitality of grasping the text through reader's eyes is of paramount importance. In other words, readers must attend to the text and interpret it in a comprehensive way that contributes much to the understanding of the texts through diverse critical perspectives. Being so, the author-reader relationship is governed by a specific critical affinity to reach the far, or the implied, meaning of the text. This study will tackles such relationship by pursuing dramatic irony in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879).

Key Words: Characterization, Dramatic Irony, Ibsen, Text, Unconscious Irony

1. Introduction

There are several examples of the use dramatic irony in the play. Nora represents this notion to a great extent. She does not really mean to say that everything Helmer does is quite right, in face she means just the reverse. But Helmer's self –complacent as he is , takes her remark on its face value, not perceiving the irony behind it .Again when he tells her how at a party he always imagines her to be his bride whom he will be taking home for the first time , the whole of this passionate speech which he makes is characterized by irony. Of course, it is not Helmer who is consciously ironical here .He means every word that he speak here. Soon the whole relationship between Helmer and Nora will collapse. There is another bit of irony of Helmer's remark that all Nora's beauty belongs to him and is his very own .Very soon the reverse of what he has said is going to take place , he will lose possession of all Nora's beauty which at this moment he thinks to be his, and wholly and solely his. This is done through the play's text To put it another way, the text's content and form are inseparable; they could not be detached from each other. In this sense, the reader could use his/her erudite expertise in dealing with the text on the grounds of subjective to gain as many various meanings as possible (Cetnarowicz, 46).

A little later when Helmer looks at the black cross over the name of Doctor Rank on the visiting –card which the Doctor has left behind , Helmer says that Doctor Ranke,s suffering and loneliness were like a dark background to the sunlit happiness of Helmer and Nora .This remark is also characterized by an unconscious irony . Helmer speaks of his and Nora,s sunlit happiness which actually speaking has no solid foundations and which is going to crumble in a short while . Continuing that remark of his, Helmer says that he and Nora will not have each other to themselves alone, adding that his desire to hold her tightly in his arms is very strong. Very soon he will lose Nora altogether and then the question of his being able to hold her tightly will not

arise. Not only that, a danger actually threatens Nora Helmer discovery of this danger when he reads Krogstad letter. But instead of protecting her he begins to fault with her and to scold her in very strong terms.

He now makes a long speech assuring Nora that he will protect her that he has forgiven her, and that he will now look after his “little” scared, helpless darling. In a few moments Nora will leave him completely and the picture of his life with her which he is visualizing in this speech will never materialize. The unconscious irony in all these cases heightens the effect of all that happiness subsequently, but the irony in all these cases is perceived by us only in the light of what happens subsequently. In other words, we become aware of the irony only when we think of these remarks and speeches in the retrospect, after we have completed a reading of the play’s defamiliarization of dramatic irony. The concept of defamiliarization, consequently, sustained the reader’s comprehensive understanding of the implied meaning of the poem rather than the obvious content and form by dint of subjectivity (Peter, 24).

2. The Literary Representation of Mr. Rank

Doctor rank character is also further revealed in this act .At first he is misunderstood by Mrs. Linde who think him to be an insincere kind of man, however Nora tells her that Doctor Rank is Torvalds’s closest crony and a supreme friend, Mrs. Linde persuades Nora to end her relation with Doctor Rank so that she does not get into trouble afterwards .Mrs. Linde also wrongly thinks that it is from Doctor Rank that Nora had borrowed the money for taking her husband to Italy when Helmer had fallen ill several years ago. In this respect also Nora corrects Mrs. Lindes wrong inference, pointing out that Doctor Rank did not have any money at the time when Nora had needed it. Doctor Rank’s present condition is really pitiable, as we learn from his own lips. Using figurative language, he says to Nora “Lately; I have been taking stock of internal economy. Bankrupt! what he means is that his strength is all spent up and that his death is approaching.

Doctor Rank is full of self-pity. It is very painful to him that he will die prematurely because of the sins of his father. Of course, he puts the case jocularly saying "my poor innocent spine has to suffer for my father's youthful amusements" but there is no doubt that the thought of his premature death has a very depressing effect on him. Furthermore, he regrets the fact that the dead are soon forgotten, and he feels sad to think that, when he dies, his place will soon be filled in this house Mrs. Linde He gets into an amorous mood when Nora shows her silk stocking. He has so far been hiding his passion for Nora from her but now he gets an opportunity to reveal it to her. However, he finds that Nora loves her own husband even though she does find some pleasure in Doctor Rank's company. so he tells her that the pleasure that she found in his company made him believe that she too loved him, "You are a riddle me" he says to her, still, he would be glad to be of some use to Nora and he insists that she should specify what service he can do to her, though by now she has changed her mind and has no longer any intention to ask him for any favor reflected in the play's textual elements. The vagueness of these elements leads the reader to rely more on interpretation subjectivity to discover new elements in the targeted text in an erudite way. Hence, the reader's genuine critical awareness develops in accordance with this interpretation subjectivity through structuralism (Dwivedi, 83).

3. Mrs. Linde: The Archetypal Paradigm of an Idea Woman

Mrs. Linde in this act also, strikes us as a sincere, well-meaning kind of woman. she is not at all jealous of Nora's good fortune, but feels quite sympathetic towards Nora on learning about Nora's troubles. she is ready to mend Nora's old fancy-dress. she volunteers what she thinks to be good advice to Nora in respect of her relations with Doctor Rank, even though she is somewhat mistaken in her inferences about that man. she gets immediately ready to help Nora on coming to know that Krogstad has dropped into Helmer's a letter-box which is likely to prove disastrous to Nora "I will go at once and see Krogstad" she says to Nora, informing her at the same time that she might be able to influence him because of the intimacy that had at one time existed

between her and that man ,Mrs. Linde would try to prevail upon Krogstad to take back the dangerous letter so that Nora is saved from the deep anxiety which is weighing upon her mind and also from the consequences of her husband's coming to know of the facts from that letter.

4. Krogstad: Another Proliferate Literary Stereotype

Some further light is thrown on the character of Krogstad also in aforementioned chapter. He comes to see Nora immediately after receiving the letter of dismissal from Helmer. He wants from Nora an explanation, because he had been thinking that she would effectively speak to her husband on his behalf and that he would be able to keep his job in the bank. Krogstad seems to have modified his strategy somewhat .He now says that he will not make public disclosure of Nora's guilt and that the matter can be settled amicably among three of them – Krogstad , Nora, and Helmer. Krogstad is now not prepared to accept any money because he does not want to return the bond to Nora . He now wants to keep the bond with him in order to demand a higher price for it. What he wants now is not just the job that he was previously holding but a higher job in the same bank . He has suddenly become very ambitious too. He thinks that ,if he gets a higher job ,he will , within a year , become the manager's adherent. And, after that "it will be Nils Krogstad and not Torvald Helmer who manages the bank Krogstad also warns Nora committing suicide". There is no point in her drowning herself because the water in the river is ice-cold and because her dead body will ultimately rise to the surface of the water in a mutilated and unrecognizable condition .Even though Krogstad seems to be talking all time to Nora in a heartless manner, he claims that "he has a little of what is called feeling" when Nora says that he should show his feeling by thinking of her children and not exposing her guilt. Krogstad replies that neither she nor her husband had thought of his children .His logic, we must admit, is guilt, even though by trying to blackmail Nora he alienates our sympathy inserted in the text's meaning of the play. That is, the meaning is deconstructed through deferment and difference (Braidotti, 78).

5. Nora's Characterization

As for Nora, her anxiety about the possible disclosure of her secret , and her subservience to her husband , are emphasized in this Act. When the Act opens, Nora is alone and , in a brief soliloquy , gives expression to her fear about what might happen to her now in view of Krogstad 's threat thought she tries to dismiss her fear in view in the fact that Krogstad could not have been serious about his threat because he knows that she is a mother having three little children to look after .Her intention to put an end to her life is indirectly revealed to us thought her talk with the old Nurse when she asks the latter whether she would look after her children as well as she had looked after Nora herself, in case Nora disappear from her home in another brief soliloquy following this conversation , Nora again gives expressing to the conflict going on in her mind .she hopes that nothing would happen to her and that her fear is merely "stuff and nonsense". But the moment there is a knock at the door she almost screams with fear fortunately, the person who now enters is Mrs Linde and not Krogstad. From Nora's conversation with Mrs. Linde, it becomes clear to us that Nora is not as innocent or ignorant a woman as Mrs. Linde had thought her to be.

Nora explains that, having given birth to three children and having associated with other married women, she has acquired sufficient knowledge about such things as a man inheriting a disease from a father who had led a dissolute life, the reference her being to the consumption of the spine from which Doctor Rank is suffering. Then through her conversation with Doctor Rank ,it is revealed to us that Doctor Rank has been in love with her all these years and that she has instinctively been aware of the fact thought it is only now that Doctor Rank express his love to her in specific terms .Relying upon Doctor Rank,s warm friendliness towards her during all these years, Nora had planned to ask him for some money in order that she might be able to pay off Krogstad and get back from him bond by means of which he has acquired a hold upon her But when Doctor Rank express his love for her in clear terms , she thinks that it would be most indiscreet and unwise one to ask him for money . It shows her

scrupulous regard for the strict requirement of martial fidelity that though she could have asked money from a friend, she thinks it wrong to ask it from lover persons whose company on desire.

Her dead father belonged to the first category of persons as does her husband, will Doctor Rank belongs to the second category. However , she is not avers to a flirtatious talk with Doctor Rank to whom she shows her flesh –coloured stockings and who gets into an amatory mood because of that .During her talk with Helmer, Nora really tries her utmost to save Krogst's job in the bank , but she fails. When Helmer comes out with his real reason for not agreeing to keep Krogstad at his post ,Nora does not mince matters and describes her husband ,s way of Nora , Helmer hastily sends the letter of dismissal to krogstad ,she appeals to him to call the messenger back for her sake , for his and for the children ,s sake ,but Helmer does not relent .When Helmer says that he will take everything upon himself, she, not understanding what he really means feels horrified at the thought that Helmer should be ready to take upon himself all the consequences of her act of forgery .In another soliloquy she again expresses her deep anxiety at what might happen in case Krogstad betrays her secret .” He was capable of doing it. He will do it in spite of everything “she says to herself, adding “anything rather than that !Oh , for some help ,some way out of it” (72).

Her intention to commit suicide and her fear of committing suicide are brought out in the course of her talk with Krogstad who now calls upon her . when Krogstad leaves , after dropping the letter into the letter-box ,Nora feels overwhelmed by anxiety , and says to herself :”in the letter-box .There it lies !Torvald, Torvald , there is no hope for use now !” (58). Thus she is now in state of despair. However, she sees a ray of hop when Mrs. Linde says that she would go and have a talk with Krogstad. she then keeps Helmer occupied by beginning to rehearse the tarantella before him , asking him to correct her movements wherever necessary .A little later , on learning that Mrs Linde has not been able to find Krogstad , Nora once again gives herself up to despair. She now again forms a resolve to put an end to her life. in a brief soliloquy

she says : “five o'clock .seven hours till mid–night , and then four –and twenty hours till the next mid–night .Then the tarantella will be over .twenty –four and seven ?Thirty –one hours to live” (60). At the end of Act I, Nora had felt much distressed by the thought , suggested to her by Helmer comments on the lack of character in Krogstad that her children presence in her husband house would mean “depraving “ her children and” poisoning” her home .At the of the Act , we find her resolving to put an end to her life because If her fear of the consequences of the disclosure of her secret by Krogstad to her husband through the letter which has been dropped into the letter –box .Thus here again we find Nora’s plight to be very pathetic .Her state of utter helplessness and despair moves us deeply , and it is in that pitying mood that we proceed to read out reality reflected in the text. Therefore, Reality is seriously addressed. Literary texts are mere reflections of reality outside the text (Fagan 95).

6. Mrs. Linde: The Authorial Adumbrative Use of Dramatic Irony

Linde tells him that her life is now absolutely empty and she feels completely forlorn. She says that there is no pleasure in a human beings’ working for one’s self alone. She wants Krogstad to give her someone and some thing to work for .She offer to look after his children like a mother . Thus, the spirit of sacrifice in this woman is not dead. Previously she had sacrificed her own happiness for the sake of her mother, and her younger brothers, now she wants to do something for Krogstad children, In other words, she finds a certain satisfaction in working for others .There is another aspect of Mrs. Linde’s character also which comes out. When Krogstad offers to take back his incriminating letter from Helmer before the letter has opened it, Mrs Linde prevents him from doing so. Her first impulse certainly had been to try to prevent the letter from being read by Helmer, but now she says that she has reconsidered the whole situation and has come to the conclusion that Helmer must know the whole secret which Nora has been hiding .Now Mrs. Linde says that the concealment and the falsehood between Helmer and Nora must come to an end so that the two of them can reach some kind of understanding with each other .Thus Mrs Linde here appears as a

champion of truth as against falsehood, and of openness as against concealment She wants that the husband and the wife should face the facts squarely. The dramatic irony comprise two related concepts i.e., the monologic voce and the dialogic voice (Kurzweil 116).

7. Further Complication in Krogstad's Characterization

The character of Krogstad also appears in a different light now. He now rises in our estimation. So far we had looked upon him as an utterly unscrupulous fellow and as the villain of the piece. But, when Mrs. Linde offers to marry him, he regards him self as very fortunate .This windfall in his life softens him towards Helmer and Nora also . He had taken a tough line with Nora and, in pursuance of that, had written a letter exposing Nora,s secret to her husband . But now he isb prepared to take back his letter before giving Helmer the opportunity to go through it , and is prevented from this course of action only by Mrs. Linde .subsequently Krogstad writes another letter , this time addressed to Nora , and in it he expresses hid deep regret at having tried to blackmail her.

This second letter show the basic goodness of Krogstad ,s heart . it is only adversity and misfortune which compelled him to try to blackmail Helmer and Nora, and now when fortune has smiled on him repents of his attempt to blackmail them. Mrs. Linde had rightly said that it was only despair which had driven Krogstad to adopt unfair ways and means, and she was right also in saying that , with her by his side, he might become a different man altogether via several textual clues. Indeed, some of them, such as introspective attunement to feelings and receptiveness to others' feedback, are structural – compatible for and often promoted in critical readers' subjectivity (Trudeau 13).

8. Doctor Rank: The Intricate Reinforcement of Dramatic Irony

Doctor Rank in this Act is in high spirits even though death now stares him in the face. He has brought visiting –cards with a black cross mark on his printed name to indicate to the Hemler that his death is imminent. Like the Hemler , he too has been attending

the dance –party in the apartment upstairs , he has been drinking plenty of wine and is somewhat intoxicated He now tells the Helmer that he has had a merry evening and that he was entitled to it in view of a certain scientific discovery that he had made during the day.

Scientific discovery was, of course that the process of the disintegration of his body and health was about to begin and that it would not be long before he would die. It is because of the wine that he is in a jovial mood. Actually, his death is now very near, and there is no ray of hope for him through Ibsen's conceptualization of dramatic irony. Such conceptualization neither expresses nor legitimates readers' subjective experience, and in perceiving it readers have to deeply think and critical act like actual critics. They could identify with various critical viewpoints, accept literary values and messages, and tolerate various traditional approaches concerning the text (Gates 84).

9. The Genuine Revelation of Helmer's Characterization

The character of Helmer too is further revealed in the course of the plot. In the first place, witness an aspect of his character with which we had not been acquainted before. So far we have known him to be a man very fond of his wife but also one in whom the head is stronger than the heart and who therefore faces all situations in a rational frame of mind. But now we find that he is essentially a passionate man. It seems that he just needs some kind of external stimulus to arouse the latent passion in him. He has seen Nora dancing the Tarantella, and the seductive movements of her body have fired his blood. As a consequence, he now gets into an amorous mood and drags Nora away from the dance in order to make love to her He now speaks to her like a romantic lover as well as like a voluptuary.

He become almost poetic in describing his feeling towards her .He finds her fascinating, charming, and captivating, he tells her that all this evening he had longed for nothing but her body. He says that at a social function he always tries to imagine that she is his sweetheart who has given him a secret promise to get married to him and that he is just going to take her to his home for the first time .In other words

Helmer tries to recapture the ardors of a youthful lover .His passion at this time is damped only when Nora impresses upon his mind the fact that his best friend Doctor Rank, is going to day soon. The thought of death has a sobering effect on him so that his passion cools down. However, he still continues to use terms of endearment for Nora

10. A Drastic Development in Nora's Characterization

But is the character of Nora which develops the most in this Act .The crisis with which she is faced , after Krogstad has dropped the letter into the letter –box ,has destroyed her peace of min completely and has created almost a storm in her life However ,she goes through the dance – performance with composed mind because the dance provides her with an opportunity for an escape , from the predicament in which she was finding herself .Thinking that after going through Krogstad 's letter, Helmer would take everything upon himself the in order to protect her , she gets ready inwardly to put an end to her life because she does not want that her husband should take the blame for her guilt on himself.

As a devoted wife she would like to save Helmer from the consequences of the criminal act for which she had herself been wholly responsible. She speak to herself about the ice water in which she is going to drown herself, and thinks of the immeasurable depths of ocean which would drown her. However, before she can walk out, Helmer suddenly opens the door and confront her .Now comes a big shock for Nora .All her high expectations about Helmer's behavior are completely falsified. His reproaches her without a single thought of what she has been through, awaken her to the reality of this man. She finds that she had never understood this man before. She gives very brief answers to his question, leaving him to go on talking and giving an outlet to his indignation .She does not speak much even when he has gone through the second letter and told her that the danger is now over.

It is only when she has taken off her fancy–dress that she begins to talk after telling Helmer that she wants to have a serious conversation with him .Now it is her

turn to give him a piece of her mind. She is now a different woman from the one whom we have known up to this point. All her timidity is gone, all her subservience to her husband is at an end, and she is now an emancipated woman. She tells him that not only he but her father had also treated her as a doll. She says that as his wife, she has been living in a doll's house. She tells him bluntly that she has decided to leave him. When she speaks of her duty to her husband and to her children, she says that her most sacred duty is to herself. She says that she has now realized that she has an identity and an individuality of her own. She must think over everything herself and come to her own conclusions. Through her own thinking and through her own experiences she must arrive at her own principles of conduct, regardless of what society says and what religion says. She absolves him of all responsibility towards her, and she returns to him the wedding ring which he had given her at the time of the marriage. She says that from now on, he would be a stranger to her. Disregarding his appeals to her mind to change her mind, she goes down the stairs and steps out of the house, slamming the door behind her. This is done through the authorial dedication to realistic depiction of her characterization. That is, it is the meticulous incarnation of the consistent fluctuation between one critical identity and its exact opposite (Outhwaite 48).

11. Unconscious Irony in Nora's Remarks in the Initial Phases of the Play

There are several occasions on which we find Ibsen making use of the device of irony in *A Doll's House*. Early in the play, Nora in the course of her conversation with Mrs. Linde, tells her that she and Helmer have had a great stroke of luck because Helmer has been appointed the manager of a bank that he would now be getting a big salary and lots of commission, that from now on she and Helmer would have a carefree life, doing just what they please. She goes on to say that she is now very happy and is feeling greatly relieved of her economic worries. It would be lovely to have plenty of money and not to have to worry about it she says. In making these remarks, yet, there is unconscious

irony in what she is saying her because subsequently just the opposite of what she anticipates will happen.

Nora's conjugal life with Helmer will afterwards be completely shattered, and Nora would leave him in order to face an uncertain future. But at this point she does not know that the opposite of what she is dreaming will happen. Even we the readers do not know at this point that the opposite of what Nora is saying will happen. Even we realize the irony in these remarks when we read the play for the second time after we have come to know what ultimately happens to Nora and Helmer in the final Act of the play. In the same jubilant strain , Nora goes on to say Mrs. Linde on this occasion; "Oh God, Oh God isn't it marvelous to be alive and to be happy, Christine." Ultimately, this happiness is going to change into disappointment and dismay for Nora.

12. Unconscious Irony in Helmer's Connotative Remarks on Krogstsd

Then we find examples of Unconscious irony in the remarks which Helmer makes towards the close of Act I when Nora asks him if Krogstad had done something terribly wrong and if his action could not be condoned .Helmer tells her that Krogstad had been guilty of forgery and that he had then tried to escape the punishment for that criminal act through a cunning trick. Now whatever Helmer says she is applicable to Nora also because Nora too had been guilty of an act of forgery. However, Helmer is not aware of the fact that his remarks are applicable to Nora, because he does not have the least notion that Nora too had been guilty of the same crime as Krogstad. But we have already been made aware of Nora's criminal act; we have been made aware of it through the dialogue that took place only a few moments before between Nora and Krogstad. Nora herself also realizes that these remarks are applicable to her. Thus we have here a contrast between appearance and reality.

There is irony here because Helmer does not know all the facts which are known to Nora and to us. Helmer ignorant of the actual situation with regard to Nora , but Nora

herself and we the readers know the facts of the case .Helmer's remarks mean one thing to him but something entirely different to us and to Nora . The irony in Helmer's remarks becomes more pointed when Helmer goes on to say that generally it is the mothers who are responsible for the criminal acts committed by men. Most of the criminal acts, he says are traceable to the mothers of the evil –doers. Not only that, a person, who is guilty of a criminal act and has hide it , would be corrupting his children also because of the lies he has to tell and the deception he has to practice . Krogstad, says Helmer must have been poisoning and corrupting his own children . The effect of these remarks on Nora is tremendous because she is a mother too , and because she has herself been guilty of criminal act .It now seems to her that she is probably corrupting her children and poisoning her home just as Krogstad has been alleged by Helmer to be doing. This is because Structural relations overlap and develop according to the social and traditional construction of the text or readers' subjectivity (Lodge 62).

13. Unconscious Irony in a Remark Provoked by Nora and in Another by Helmer

Now such remark by Nora is another example of unconscious irony. Nora does not know this point that Helmer's love for her is, after all, only a selfish kind of love. At this point that also does not know that Helmer's love for Nora is of the selfish kind. Later, when we find Helmer's love for her collapsing, we shall recall this remark by Nora and realize the unconscious irony behind it. Then there is unconscious irony in a remark which Helmer soon afterwards makes to Nora when he says that, while her father's professional conduct had not been entirely above suspicion, his own professional reputation and conduct are certainly above suspicion and would continue to be so.

There is unconscious irony here because Helmer does not know (and we to do not know at this stage) that Helmer,s morality is going to collapse very soon and that his professional conduct might also be no longer above suspicious. After reading Krogstad's first letter, Helmer.

would get ready to sacrifice all his moral principles and would be prepared to accept all Krogstad's demands when Krogstad tries to blackmail him. This is due to the fact that text represents the authors' construction of the literary characterization (Skórczewski and Polakowska 42).

14. Unconscious Irony in Further Remarks by Helmer and Nora

A little later in the play, Helmer on being told by Nora that she has forgotten the movements of the Tarantella , tries to soothe her feeling by saying that he would teach her all the movements and that she should not worry at all about this matter .he addressed her as a "helpless little thing." Now there is unconscious irony in his addressing her in this manner because, within the next forty-eight hours, Nora would show her latent strength and would emerge as stronger than Helmer himself. Indeed , there is great irony in the fact that , will the supposedly strong-minded man , Helmer, is seen collapsing in a crisis the delicate , weak and helpless little thing Nora would emerge as a person of exceptional courage and strength by leaving her husband and her children and venturing into the world all alone to face an uncertain future.

What she means is that she is prolonging the rehearsal and is dancing wildly in order to prevent him from taking out the letter from the letter-box. Now we know why she has said that her life depends upon her wild dancing, but Helmer does not know what she really means. Thus there is irony here also. Helmer , in the course of the same rehearsal , says a little later that the child (meaning Nora) may have her way now but that on that the following night after she has given her dance -performance , he would take full charge of her .There is unconscious irony in both the parts , of this remark made by Helmer.

In the first place Nora would no longer be a "child" on the following night after she has complete the dance-performance and Helmer has gone through the incriminating letter written by Krogstad. Secondly Helmer would not be able to take full charge of Nora and she would get out of his control altogether. Helmer makes this remark in a self-complacent manner but his self-complacency would soon receive a

big blow. The effect of this remark is partly amusing and partly pathetic. We are amused by Helmer's self-complacency, but we also feel sorry when his conjugal life breaks up. However, it must be pointed out that we would also perceive the irony of this remark only after coming to know how Nora behaves subsequently. At this stage we also are unable to perceive the irony in this remark. Nora herself at this time does not know what course the events are going to take. There is similar irony in Nora's remark a little later when she tells Mrs. Linde that she has reason to rejoice because a miracle is going to happen.

15. Irony in Helmer's Claim of Nora as Being His Possession

After Helmer has brought Nora back from the fancy-dress ball, he begins to gaze at her amorously, saying that she is his most treasured possession, adding, "All this loveliness is mine and mine alone, completely and utterly mine." There is unconscious irony in this remark by Helmer because the woman whom he regards as his and his alone, would forsake him altogether and would begin to treat him as a complete stranger. But, of course neither Nora herself nor we at this stage know the course that events would take. It is only when we have read the play to the very end that we would realize the irony in Helmer's remark.

There is similar irony in Helmer's telling Nora at this very time that he thinks her to be his bride newly wedded to him and that he thinks he has just brought her home for the first time. A little later, when Doctor Rank has gone away after his last visit to Helmer, the latter tells Nora that Doctor Rank's suffering was like a dark background to the sunshine of their congenial life. He then holds Nora in his embrace, saying that he loves her so much that not even the tight embrace can satisfy him. There is unconscious irony in all this because the sunshine of his life with Nora is going to change into the darkness of clouds, and because he would never again be able to hold her in his embrace.

Conclusion

This study has focused on the author–reader relationship and how it affects and is affected by the subjectivity of literary interpretations regarding dramatic irony in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879). In fact, literary interpretations are various and diverse. They sometimes do not attend to the proper interpretation that must be followed when discussing a specific literary text. In the essay, I have discussed the adoption of the reader's subjective interpretation of literary works to come with the idea that the reader must master subjective critical stances in order to avoid being caught in understanding of obvious meanings of the text. The course of the discussion, I have pinpointed some critical arguments that could empower my adoption of the significance of the reader's subjectivity in interpreting literary works.

Throughout the discussion, I have concentrated on the reader's critical subjectivity in interpreting literary texts because such subjectivity is very vital form grasping the implied meaning rather than the authorial telling of the text or its obvious meaning. Being so, the text becomes a subject to a genuine interpretation; and it could be understood in a new different way to avoid being caught in the obvious manner of the text. I also adopted the significance of the reader's subjective interpretation as it brings about new meanings and lurking insights that do not appear easily on the text's surface. Accordingly, the reader's subjectivity of interpretation has its significance in producing proper and useful meanings which have not been deduced yet. Moreover, the reader's subjectivity is significant since it makes him explore new thematic or technical messages projected or used by the author in the text. In this regard, the duality of the duality of the author and the reader meets in the subjective interpretation of text; and they do not match when the reader only focuses on the authorial intention projected in the play's text.

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