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المحتويات

الصفحة	اسم الباحث أو الباحثين	عنوان البحث	
10-1	م.م رؤى بشير جمعة أ.د. احمد غالب السعدون	الخطاب اللغوي في عيادات طب أسنان الأطفال (دراسة تداولية معرفية لتفاعل الطبيب مع الطفل)	1.
22-11	سليمان الشقيري. أيمن الأحمد	قراءة سوزان ستينكفيتش لداليتي النابغة الذبياني: "أمن آل مئة" و "يا دار مئة"	2.
38-23	م. د. سلوى شكري شاكر	"الأبعاد التداولية لهجة العامية في الرواية العراقية المعاصرة" شبيه الخنزير، العزيرة، ثغيب: إنموذجاً	3.
46-39	م. د. واجده محمود خلف	الخطاب النسائي في مواجهة سلطة الذكورة رحلات المرأة العراقية لفاضل عبود التميمي اختصاراً	4.
63-47	Asst. Lect. Lamy Rasheed Al-Ali	Overtly Erroneous Errors in the Learner-Oriented Arabic Version of Barclay's <i>The Rosary</i> Using House's TQA Model	5.
77-64	Instr. Milad Ghazi Saeed ¹ (PhD)	Pain Woven into the Body: A Study of Somatics in Emtithal Mahmood and Jasmin Kaur's Selected Poems	6.
92-78	Assist. Lect. Rasha Rahim Tawfiq	Youth, Technology, and Civil Liberties in Contemporary Dystopian Fiction: <i>Little Brother</i> (Cory Doctorow, 2008) as a Sample	7.
115-93	Lect. Firas Muayyad Salih	Assessing EFL University Learners' Attitudinal Shift in Grammar Learning via the Inductive Approach	8.
128-116	Noor Saady Essa	Bullying and Suffering into the Life of the Main Character in Stephen King's <i>Carrie</i>	9.
138-129	Noorulhuda Adnan Aladhami	(Exploring <i>A Doll's House: A Comparative Analysis of Hnath's Sequel and Ibsen's Original</i>	10.
155-139	Asst.Lect. :Sundus Falah Mohammed	Rhetorical Functions of Repetition in Selected Prophetic Traditions	11.
173-156	Bashar Mohammad AL-Kasasbeh Naji Masned AlQBailat Zoubida Mostafa Madani	Euphemism in Arabic and French in Formal and Informal Situations: A Contrastive Analysis	12.
183-174	Zaid Ibrahim Ismael Asmaa Mehdi Saleh	Starving for Recognition: The Body Politics of Eating Disorders in Tsitsi Dangarembga's <i>Nervous Conditions</i>	13.
203-184	Mohanad Abdulkareem Waad Marwah Firas Abdullah Al-Rawe	Decoding Institutional Power: A Mixed-Methods Multimodal Analysis of High Table Symbols in the John Wick Movies Series	14.
217-204	Amjad Bashar MOHAMMED ATTA SALMAN	Sociolinguistic Challenges in Post-Conflict Iraq: A Study of Language Attitudes and Identity Reconstruction	15.
236-218	Lect. Haider Ali Khushan	Strategies of Imam Khamenei's speech in his third televised address to the Iranian people after the Zionist entity's attack)	16.
254-237	Ahmed Sakran Farraj	Some Temporal Expressions in Classical Arabic and Ancient Hebrew A Comparative Semantic Study	17.

Exploring *A Doll's House*: A Comparative Analysis of Hnath's Sequel and Ibsen's Original

Noorulhuda Adnan Aladhmi

English Department, College of Basic Education, Mustansiriyah University, Baghdad,
Iraq

noorulhuda.adnan@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to study the representation of women's identity, marriage and independence in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (1879) and Lucas Hnath's play *A Doll's House, Part 2* (2017). Through comparative analysis, the research demonstrates how these two plays establish a continuous feminist dialogue across distinct historical periods. Employing a comparative literature methodology informed by feminist literary critique and existentialist feminist theory, the analysis is grounded in Simone de Beauvoir's perspectives on female subjectivity. The study examines character development and thematic continuity in both plays through close textual analysis, with particular focus on Nora, Torvald, Anne-Marie, and Emmy. Ibsen presents Nora's departure as a radical act of self-awakening that challenges nineteenth-century patriarchy and marriage law. In contrast, Hnath explores the aftermath of Nora's decision and the complexities of female independence, including its emotional consequences, ethical considerations, and the influence of legal frameworks. The sequel complicates the notion of liberation by illustrating how a woman's pursuit of freedom and rights is often trivialized by men. The findings suggest that freedom in both plays is not a permanent state but an ongoing process negotiated within social constraints and moral responsibilities. Collectively, these texts remain pertinent to contemporary discussions of marriage, independence, and women's rights.

Keywords: feminism, gender roles, identity, independence, marriage.

استكشاف مسرحية بيت الدمية: تحليل مقارن لتكملة هنات ومسرحية إيسن الأصلية

نور الهدى عدنان الادهمي

قسم اللغة الانجليزية، كلية التربية الاساسية، الجامعة المستنصرية، بغداد، العراق.

الملخص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تمثيل هوية المرأة والزواج والاستقلالية في مسرحية هنريك إيسن «بيت الدمية» (1879)، ومسرحية لوكاس هنات «بيت الدمية: الجزء الثاني» (2017)، مع التركيز على كيفية تشكّل الحوار النسوي التواصلي بين العملين في ضوء سياقات تاريخية مختلفة. يعتمد البحث منهج النقد الأدبي المقارن، ويستند في فرضيته إلى النقد النسوي والنظرية النسوية الوجودية، ولا سيما رؤى سيمون دي بوفوار حول الذاتية والفاعلية النسوية. ويُوظف التحليل النصي لرصد تطوّر الشخصيات وديمومة الموضوعات الرئيسية في المسرحيتين، مع تسليط الضوء على شخصيات نورا، وتورفالد، وأن-ماري، وإيمي على وجه الخصوص. وتُظهر الدراسة أن إيسن يصوّر خروج نورا بوصفه

فعلًا جذريًا للوعي وتحديًا مباشرًا لبنية الزواج والقانون الأبوي في القرن التاسع عشر، في حين يعالج هناث مسألة ما بعد هذا الخروج، مبررًا الآثار الأخلاقية والعاطفية والقانونية المترتبة على استقلال المرأة. وتكشف المسرحية اللاحقة أن التحرر ليس حالة مكتملة، بل عملية معقدة تتطوي على مسؤولية وتضحية وتأثيرات عابرة للأجيال. وتتلخص الدراسة إلى أن الحرية في العملين تُقدّم بوصفها مسارًا تفاوضيًا مستمرًا لا نتيجة نهائية، مما يمنح النصين أهمية متجددة في النقاشات النسوية المعاصرة حول الزواج والهوية واستقلال المرأة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية، أدوار النوع الاجتماعي، الهوية، الاستقلالية، الزواج.

1. Introduction

This study uses feminist literary criticism and de Beauvoir's existential feminist theory to examine women's subjectivity, autonomy, and agency under patriarchy. The closure scene of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* 1879 shows Nora leaving her old life behind and heading for the unknown, which Hnath takes after fifteen years as a beginning of a promising future for a female writer in *A Doll's House, Part 2* (2017). Both Nora's versions in Ibsen's and Hnath's editions are described as rebellious characters, shocking the audience back then by presenting a protagonist who differs from the common prototype. The resurrection of Nora in Hnath's version reveals the struggle of women amid the rigidity of nineteenth-century institutions. Instead, Hnath's play recovers these challenges in modern theater, motivating people to confront issues such as identity, independence, and connection.

The comparisons between Hnath's and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, written in 1879 and 2017, examine how characters are developed, and themes are used to grasp the power of divergence and reunion while analyzing changing cultural views on gender roles, independence, and personal autonomy.

1. Plot Summary

In *A Doll's House* (1879) by Henrik Ibsen, marriage is portrayed as a male-dominated institution that denies love and unity. Nora Helmer seems content to play the part of a humble, passive housewife, but her surreptitious loan—a result of her husband's life-threatening illness—suggests an early model for women and moral courage that refuses to submit either to laws made by men or the trifling authority gained through marriage. Consequently, it reveals the Helmer household's power dynamics and disrupts Torvald's paternalistic authority.

Nora's epiphany that she has been treated as a 'doll' rather than an equal partner is shown by Torvald's reaction to the news, and his concern is only for his public image and his condemnation of Nora. Against Nora's insistence that millions of other women have forfeited their honour, he argues that no husband should be asked to do so, a gendered notion indeed of what it means to forfeit in the context of marriage (Ibsen, 1879/2014). A system that does not afford women moral and legal agency is provocatively rejected in Nora's imminent departure.

A Doll's House, Part 2 (2017) by Lucas Hnath reopens the scene about Nora's return and the aftermath of her leaving. Fifteen years later, Nora arrives as a successful author working for women's liberation, but is still legally bound to Torvald because of an unfinished divorce. Accordingly, Nora states that both sexes need not be equal in the eyes of the law, but it still emphasizes this discrimination, despite individual liberation, patriarchal law remains.

By confronting Nora with Anne-Marie and her daughter, Emmy, the sequel complicates Nora's liberation by revealing the emotional and ethical price. Anne-Marie personifies what can survive in traditional frameworks, while Emmy embodies the long-term effects of maternal absence. As a result, Hnath's considerations are that freedom is not a completed

state of liberation, but an ongoing bargained relationship among autonomy, responsibility, and social constraint.

2. Character analysis and development in-between Ibsen's and Hnath's sequel

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Lucas Hnath's *A Doll's House, Part 2* explore the intersection of gender, marriage, and freedom through shared characters. It is the ramifications of that awakening in a world still governed by social judgment and legal constraint that Hnath is concerned with, while Ibsen is more focused on the moment of waking up within a repressive nineteenth-century society. The relationship between personal agency and responsibility, sacrifice, and generational change is scrutinized by both playwrights through the characters of Nora, Torvald, Anne Marie, and Emmy. Moreover, some characters are missing in *A Doll's House Part 2*, for example: Dr. Rank and Mrs. Linde, Nils Krogstad, and the maid Helen, whereas the remaining characters are the wife Nora, their daughter Emmy, and Anne Marie (the nanny)

3.1. Nora: From awakening to consequence

At the beginning of the play, Nora seems to be overjoyed with her feminine duties. She seems oblivious to the limitations thrust upon her, takes joy in the privileges of marriage, and tolerates Torvald's poetical oppression. Yet under this facade of apparent compliance lies intelligence, persistence, and ambition. In her own words, her years of work and secret loan demonstrate a woman of both moral and financial courage. "Last winter I managed to get a lot of copying to do... It was almost like being a man," (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act.1, p. 37). Thus, Michael Meyer thought that Ibsen's women are often seen as worthy only if they are self-indulgent, which revealed the dignity of women to be "duty to herself rather than herself-sacrifice in marriage" (2004, p. 478)

As the play continues, Nora realises that her union with Torvald was a facade. According to her, "our home has never been anything but a playroom... I've been your doll-wife" (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act. III, P. 98). Her defiance stems from a fundamental conviction that true humanity necessitates self-education and self-discovery, not hatred. Ibsen portrays her character as a revolutionary, as she withdraws the socially imposed mask of identity and reveals her own truth when she states that "I am ... a human being like you / I must think things out for myself," (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act. III, Pp. 99-100).

As per the statement of Mithal Madlool Chilab, who says that whether the characters in *A Doll's House* by Ibsen or in any other plays, they represent real people. They get involved in personal tragedies and problems. Ibsen's characters are, in fact, "thinkers and feelers" who never stop appraising their own tendencies and conflicts. To further complicate the relationships among his characters and accentuate their virtues or failings, Ibsen creates a foil figure like Mrs. Linda for Nora in *A Doll's House* (2008, 76). Also, Salman Hayder Jasim et al. argue that Ibsen's figures are not romantic personae, but, on the contrary, very realistic personae with a spark of romance that shall serve to make their faults understandable (2024, p. 907).

On the contrary, in *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Hnath chooses to concentrate on Nora coming back after fifteen years of freedom, not during the uprising. The contemporary Nora is confident, financially self-sufficient, and bright. "All the fluttering around ... that's not me... that was a thing I was doing," she says, honestly, that her actions were not spontaneous or heartfelt during their time together (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Act 1, p. 53). Hnath's Nora has to deal with responsibility and consequences, in contrast to Ibsen's Nora, whose fight is one of realisation. She gives in to the pain that she caused by leaving and takes "full responsibility;" however, staying is very 'cruel' to her (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Act 1: pp.53-54)

Regarding parenting, Hnath shifts Nora's identity from a feminist to a mother. Since Nora admits she is emotionally remote from her kids, "Who am I to them? ... I am nobody," (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Act 1, p.9). Far from drawing an analogy between parental longing and denial, the metaphor of the wounded heart portrays emotional management. She says, "Everything will be different, and everyone will be free" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Act 1, p.128). Here, Nora implies that she foresees a time when freedom is the norm rather than the exception. So Hnath's Nora is the cost of individualism, while Ibsen's Nora is the birth of it.

3.2. Torvald: Authority Unveiled and Authority Defied

Torvald Helmer in Ibsen's play is a caricature of patriarchal control that privileges moral worthiness and social respectability. He is morally superior and often addresses Nora with little nicknames. He betrays his fervent but impracticable sacrificial dream: "I wish some terrible danger might threaten you, so that I could offer my life... for your sake" (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act III, P. 92). But when push comes to shove, it is all hot air! Torvald feels that, since Nora is a criminal, he cannot remain loyal to her; his reputation should be protected. Nora concludes there have been "millions of women who have done this!" (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act III, p. 102) His incompetence in the crisis betrays the impotence of his authority and hastens Nora's departure.

In Hnath's interpretation, he is presented as a wounded rather than a commanding person. He says that Nora's departure murdered his love for her, whereas betrayal or emotional destruction would only take her leaving. Nora's leaving, in his view, is avoidance; perseverance, he compares to strength. Nonetheless, Hnath permits Torvald's obscurity. He admits to self-doubt, regret, and anger; on some days, he even wishes he had been the one who had been left her instead.

Torvald's receipt of Nora's notes indicates his growing self-consciousness. He recognizes that he is ashamed and pained by being shown this way to her, but in the end, he takes responsibility by consenting to sign the divorce papers and proposing that she should create a different version of him as "a better man" in the future (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Act 1, p. 115). Torvald is reformed by Hnath from a patriarchal figure into a man dealing with its psychological fallout.

3.3. Anne Marie: Survival versus Choice

In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Anne Marie acts as a comforting mother figure. She is the emotional rock of the home and the one who takes care of the kids after Nora's leaving. The situation could not be more tragic, yet still under-theorized—she had already sacrificed when she left her child behind to pursue a career as an artist: this was the kind of sacrifice modeled for a whole generation of women.

Hnath gives Anne Marie a powerful moral voice. She emphasizes the difference between necessity and choice, thereby undercutting Nora's narrative of freedom. Anne Marie refuses Nora's plea of allegiance, replying "allies... sound like war... You should be coming in here... first words out of your mouth should have been: thank you" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Act1, p. 30). So Anne Marie comments on Nora's ungrateful attitude, rather her apology, thus, Anne Marie chooses Torvald's side by saying: "he is all I have in this world, my only family. He takes care of me. He supports me/ he's grateful to me for sticking around after you ran off for staying with him through a very difficult time" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Act 1, p. 59). Anne Marie questions her bond with Nora, suggesting that her own decisions are driven by financial necessity rather than fulfillment. It is evidence of her commitment to the family she was caring for that she has refused any monetary payment. Anne Marie serves as a way for Hnath to highlight class privilege and remind his

audience that not all women have equal opportunity to be independent. On the other hand, in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Anne Marie holds a very marginal or insignificant status.

3.4. Emmy: The Inherited Consequence

The children in Ibsen's play cease to be treated as individuals and instead become symbols of social as well as domestic liability. There is also Emmy in Hnath's sequel: she's the dutiful young lady, reared to be calm and practical, despite the fact of her mother's absence. Therefore, she informs Nora that she once searched for her mother's death certificate and learned that she had left by choice with nonsense of bitterness. Yet, despite what Nora would want, for Emmy, pleasure is not something to aspire to. The homecoming scene underscores Emmy's delicate relationship with the truth and her willingness to forge documents to save the family's reputation, indicating her clear preference for order over decency. Emmy describes herself as an "old soul" and highlights the generational impact of Nora's decision to leave her family (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2, Act I*, p. 83). Her motherless childhood has taught her emotional restraint, a fear of taking risks, and a tendency to seek safety in the approval of others and in participation.

Ibsen, in *A Doll's House*, depicts Emmy as a child who plays no significant role. Nonetheless, Hnath and Ibsen disclose through Emmy that emancipation changes the people who inherit its consequences, and cannot stop with the individual. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Hnath's *A Doll's House, Part 2* equally dramatize an ongoing inquest into identity, freedom, and culpability. Where Hnath examines the consequences of awakening, Ibsen dramatizes its necessity. The plays reveal, through Nora, Torvald, Anne Marie, and Emmy, personal freedom as inextricably bound to social systems, emotions, and generational legacy, not straightforward or even standalone. Besides, Hnath's sequel turns a slammed door in Ibsen's play into an honest conversation about what freedom actually costs.

3. Marriage, Love, and Social Constraints

Both versions of *A Doll's House* question the institution of marriage as a factor by which society forms, restricts, and defines individual identities, especially that tackles women's independence. Thus, read side by side, both texts represent a continuous dialogue over marriage for more than a century. Ibsen diagnoses marriage as an institution built on inequality and performance of roles; Hnath explores the long-term ethical, legal, and relational fallout of refusing it. The paired plays challenge themselves not to offer a resolved independence, accomplished and done, but freedom as a constantly negotiated and challenged one.

A woman's inferiority is moulded thousands of years ago, since the beginning of history, making her existence and value an end, one of obedience and virtue. Besides, she has become property with no rights passing through the clans as "a head of cattle" to be easily controlled. She is even regarded as the continuing state of man, rather than his counterpart. So, a woman is only being idealized insofar as she is obedient and well-behaved; she will be labeled as the accursed ontological loathsome blasphemy of humanity that ought to be condemned (Beauvoir, 1949, pp. 114-119).

Equally, texts portray marriage, not as a love-based relationship, but rather as an economic and social obligation, motivated by repressive customs. In Ibsen's play, marriage is frequently a matter of survival rather than a question of love. Mrs. Linde's revelation that she married in the past to help her ill mother and younger brothers highlights how women's choice of marriage was based on duty, not longing: "I didn't feel as though I could say no" (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House, Act I*, p. 19). This gives the view that marriage is a social system into which women are inextricably enveloped in demanding roles of dependence and renunciation. Hnath's sequel goes back to that critique with a focus on consequences. A question of salvation from such a prison is whether marriage can be obtained within such a

rigid, unchanging system. Kim Solga (2019) also observes that Hnath's script criticizes the politics of sequels by suggesting its protagonist is not perfectly liberated, and even that she is morally compromised; we see how Nora's independence resonates with those around her (Para. 16)

Identity in marriage is presented as performative and hierarchical. Nora Helmer's inferiority to her father and husband, as she is described as a "doll," only hints at the imbalance in her relationship with Torvald. His endearing pet names and moral dominance mock her as a puppet on display, rather than an equal companion (Ibsen, 2014, Act I, p. 12). For Toril Moi, "the most important" moment in the play is when Nora describes herself as "first and foremost a human being," for it represents subjectivity coming into being by rejecting an imposed identity (2006, p. 257). This insight speaks directly to Hnath's Nora, who looks back and gives a name (flirting, weakness, dependency) to the presence she used to inhabit unwittingly: "That was a thing I was doing" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, p. 53). In both versions, femininity is revealed as a strategy learned for survival in patriarchal marriage rather than an intrinsic identity. Subsequently, for any woman to be independent, she must have a fixed source of income.

More likely, feminist discourse posits economic autonomy as a vital characteristic of women's liberty that enables them to proclaim their means and exercise choices designed for them. Whether from a comfortable or middle-class family, a employed female can acquire talents and abilities that a lady who rely upon diverse people for her living has never had the opportunity to acquire. For a while, women might feel happy and free in an age of disorder, but later, after society has restructured the world. Yet, they frequently find themselves once again bound by strict norms and restrictions. (Abd Ali et al., 2024, p.119)

Rejecting these internalized roles is Nora's moral approach to consciousness in both versions. Ibsen's women must transcend the socially sanctioned roles of wife, mother, and ornament in order to claim their common humanity (Moi, 2006, p.258 & Templeton, 1997p.68). This repudiation, as Nora will later articulate in Hnath's play, is personal and cultural; she says that society says I should "be punished" if women abandon their families (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, p. 14). In her interaction with Anna-Marie, the traditional-versus-autonomous struggle is played out: caregiving and self-sacrifice are celebrated as moral obligations for women, but ambition and autonomy are viewed with suspicion (Radam, 2017, p. 159). Thus, the struggle for selfhood extends beyond the private circle into deeply rooted societal expectations.

There is an additional layer of reinforcement of these limitations, which appears in the form of inequality under the law. In Ibsen's text, Nora outright recognizes that the law sustains male dominance in marriage when she states that, legally, her leaving "frees" Torvald from responsibility and robs her of protection (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House, Act III*, p. 103). Hence, her exit is a personal rebellion, but also a direct challenge to a legal order that refuses women moral and financial independence. Henceforth, Nora's leaving is an explicit assertion of agency—morality and selfhood cannot reside together in matrimony as it is defined (Ghafourinia & Baradaran Jamili, 2014, p.225)

Hnath extends this critique when Nora discovers that it has actually been fifteen years since she left, that the divorce was never finalized, and that she is still legally married to Torvald. She also states that men may get divorces without any justification, yet women have to prove extreme abuse, proving that they do not have "equal rights to divorce" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, pp. 29, 41). In both plays, the law appears as a device that maintains male power and contingent female freedom.

If Ibsen dramatizes the necessity of departure, Hnath is interested in its aftermath. Nora's reappearance in *Part 2* renders freedom more than symbolic; it's an existential reality defined by loss and the clash of ethical claims. Freedom has, up to that point, been insufficient and partial in this play. Moreover, freedom works its way through relationships

rather than simply dissolving them. This conflict plays out most specifically in Nora's encounter with her daughter Emmy, who values marriage as a source of security and views her mother's absence as equivalent to emotional neglect. Nora's declaration that love should be "free" and apart from marriage as a "binding contract" comes into conflict with Emmy's lived testimony of loss (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, pp. 95–100). The transaction shows that for Nora, autonomy is a moral imperative, but it has inflicted real damage that cannot be reversed. As a result, scholars such as Kwok-kan Tam (2018) have analyzed that "readings of *A Doll's House* in different cultural and legal environments show that selfhood is never assumed but always contested" (p. 148).

Collectively, both works make a comparative arc: Ibsen introduces marriage as an oppressor of individuality; Hnath asks what happens after one has been acting on that opening. Nora's freedom is neither sentimentalized nor denied; it is presented as ethically valuable, costly, and socially lavish. Even beyond the walls of Torvald's home, Nora is caught in a net of law, memory, and relational obligation. In the end, both texts articulate that love cannot exist under conditions of inequality, but also acknowledge that dismantling those conditions does not alleviate suffering. In this way, freedom is not an endpoint but an ongoing availability made by choice, outcome, and compromise.

4. Independence and Sacrifice

Independence is afforded through the clash within marriage in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Lucas Hnath's *A Doll's House, Part 2*, but what each playwright envisions as that conflict varies. In Ibsen's play, marriage is basically a domestic system of infantilization and dispossession for women. This unequal relationship is most clearly seen in Torvald's condescension toward Nora, calling her a "you're a funny little creature. Just like your father used to be...Always on the look-out for some way to get money" (Ibsen, 2014, Act I, pp. 26–27). Hnath reconsiders this action by disclosing that, even after Nora's physical parting, marriage continues to function as a legal and social foundation that limits women's freedom. Even though Nora has walked out on her husband, she is still his legal possession, revealing how institutional power endures long after emotional separation.

Nora's self-realisation is experienced across the two texts. In Ibsen's play, freedom is secured through an act of radical self-accounting. Nora's claim that "I believe that before everything else I am a human being, just as much a one as you are" (Ibsen, 2014, Act III, p. 98) demarcates a clean break with patriarchal authority. Hnath, however, recasts this awakening as partial but not terminal. When Nora says, "I'm not the same person who left through that door. I'm a very different person" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, p. 12) Nora's words propose progress and transformation, however, they also suggest that independence is not a sole moment of liberty but a continued progression formed by experience, resistance, and compromise.

Sacrifice still emerges enormous in both plays, although its spread grows more exorbitant in Hnath's sequel. Also, in Ibsen's drama, as well, the sacrifice is fundamentally personal and internal. Nora's choice to confess "I have committed a forgery" (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act II, p. 74), a danger increased by Krogstad's allegation, "Your father signed this paper three days after his death," and Nora's declaration, "It was I who wrote papa's name there" (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act I, pp. 48-49). Hnath extends the implications of this sacrifice by outlining its effects on others. The physical fatigue of Anne Marie — "I want to sit down...I can't with my knees...inside it's even worse" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, p. 5) — and the accusation by Emmy, "It's like you've saved everyone from a boat that sank and left them with no way to get back to shore," (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, p. 100) reveal the emotional cost Nora's emancipation has charged beyond herself. Thus, Solga (2019) stresses that Nora's achievement and independence come at the cost of relational harm, particularly in her estrangement from her daughter, Emmy (Para. 13).

The fact of pulling out dramatises the opposition between rapture and correlation. Ibsen's play presents Nora's departure as an amoral necessity. "Has the woman really no right to save her dying father from pain, or her husband's life?" (Ibsen, 2014, *A Doll's House*, Act III, p. 101), and it here takes on moral codes refusing women agency. Azam (2014) reads this as "the first mutinous effort of female individuals against male-chauvinist mentalities" (p. 13). However, Hnath muddies this take by suggesting that leaving does not absolve one of responsibility. Although she justifies her decisions by saying, "I'm already in a prison...this is my chance to change the rules" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, p. 103), her freedom is nevertheless ethically interrogated by those experiencing the void left in her wake.

Economic autonomy is also differently stressed. While Ibsen gestures at the lack of finance and, therefore, agency under the financial terms of marriage that qualify Nora as being dependent, Hnath focuses on the material struggle for mere survival outside it. When Nora says, "I write books...about women...I have a pseudonym" (Hnath, 2018, *A Doll's House, Part 2*, p. 18), she confirms her own intellectual freedom as well as the ongoing discounting of women's contributions. Nonetheless, this contrast also illustrates that, in Hnath's play, independence is more than just an ideological principle that can become economically unworkable when the social system remains unequal.

As feminist scholars argue, it is at this juncture of self-awareness that Nora turns from a decorative figure to an agent, and the novel becomes her triumph over patriarchal oppression (Rahim et al., 2025, pp. 1794-1795). Others, like Alison Wall, assert those women's agency conflicts with their role as mothers. She says Hnath, through his version of *A Doll's House*, "implicitly realizes the persistent—though in the twenty-first century, partially sublimated—fear that female empowerment and motherhood are, in fact, incompatible" (2023, p. 71). Others, however, disagree, such as Julie Vatain-Corfdir, who says that not all endings are "pessimistic expectations" because, even though Emmy's mother leaves when she is still a child, by the end of the novel, she is a mature, healthy, and logical young woman. (2023, p. 36)

Ultimately, what Ibsen depicts as independence is a radical break that starts with self-knowledge; in Hnath, it is an ongoing, fragile state formed by sacrifice, care for others, and social defiance. Understand that they together mount a great, integrated feminist argument in which liberation is vital and expensive. As Nora moves through both texts, she reveals that autonomy can never be absolute but is always a matter of conflict and compromise; freedom is a question of courage, endurance, and moral responsibility.

5. Conclusion

This article demonstrates that Hnath's *A Doll's House, Part 2* diagnoses the moral and emotional afterlife of female enfranchisement, while Ibsen's drama exposes the oppressive structures of marriage so characteristic of the nineteenth century. What both plays, in tandem, suggest is that freedom is not a set of radical gestures but an ongoing, messy matter of social compromise, sacrifice, and duty. This study demonstrates the development of women's autonomy over time by comparing readings with a feminist focus, providing outstanding examples for contemporary feminist literary criticism.

Marriage, identity, and freedom course through Ibsen's drama as well and, at times, entangle him with Hnath's, though, nearly a century apart, the two dramas are separated. Nora's exit in Ibsen's original play is a revolutionary one, a rejection of the constraints placed upon women in the nineteenth century; it exposes matrimony, children, and societal desires for what they truly are – all-encompassing matters. By representing independence as a process demanding ongoing sacrifice, responsibility, and consequences never truly resolved, rather than as an achievement or a final event, Hnath's continuation clouds this narrative. The continuing trauma and ethical complexities of finding one's freedom in a society that still

supports male-dominated institutions are illustrated through Nora's interactions with Torvald, Anne-Marie, and Emmy.

Both plays form a circuit, with the continual exchange between personal freedom and social duty crackling like live electricity. If Hnath considers what the price of freedom might be in a world where discrimination permeates its systems, Ibsen underlines the necessity of escaping oppressive regimes. Ultimately, in the smaller story of Nora's own track — from repressed wife to empowered writer — we see that larger, ongoing generational fight for women's rights. This study proposes that *A Doll's House* and its twenty-first-century counterpart have both announced, in unison, that true freedom demands toughness but also the capacity to face the long-term consequences of one's decisions. They are still relevant because they address this timeless issue: how people can find their true identity in a society where social norms are deeply rooted!

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