

**APPEARANCE VERSES REALITY IN HENRIK IBSEN'S *A DOLL'S HOUSE*
AND *GHOSTS***

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Abstract

A close reading of Henrik Ibsen's dramas reveals that most of his critics and scholars capitalize on the playwright's creation of rebellious female characters. Very little or nothing is often said about the hypocritical or pretentious lives led by the female protagonists that eventually leads to their rebellion. Sometimes, statements about the pretentious existence of these female characters are limited to hypothetical pronouncements. The hypocritical existence of women in Ibsen's plays is probably due to the strict Victorian values the playwright satirizes in his works. The Victorian conventional norms like the respect of "law and order," the subordination of the woman in the family and society had very debilitating consequences on the female sex. In an attempt to respect these principles, women generally led inauthentic hypocritical lives. They put on social masks which were betrayed at some crucial point as the drama unfolded. This paper seeks to examine how Henrik Ibsen in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* represents his female characters as individuals who lead a double existence, namely, that of appearance and reality. Women are portrayed as having a double consciousness, one which conforms to what is expected of them by the patriarchal society and another which is in consonance with their true natural inner selves. Reading the plays from the New Historicist and Feminist, perspectives, the study submits that societal norms and values constraint women to lead untrue non-self-fulfilling lives that are diametrically opposed to their real natural desires for self-assertion. The study also demonstrates that women, tired of societal unrealistic principles against them, generally shade off their unreal selves at some critical moment in the plays and reveal their real personalities. They rebel against obnoxious societal norms that inhibit their search for self-assertion and fulfilment.

Key Words: *Appearance, Reality, Victorian, societal norms, values*

Introduction

Henrik Ibsen in his social dramas is concerned mainly with a critique of the Victorian middle class social norms and values that constraint individual behavior. Ibsen was a

Norwegian playwright whose works are commonly studied as part of English literature in many Universities around the world. Even though he was not an English writer by birth, (Mcfarlane 1994:10) notes that his works are considered as an important part of English literature because he was granted naturalization in terms of syllabus by two English Universities. (Plekhanov 2002: 89) equally postulates that the playwright's works are recognized as English literature given the relevance of his themes to the English Victorian society. The Norwegian middle class like the English Victorian bourgeoisie class believed very much in the principles of respectability, morality and the subordination of the woman in the family and public. The middle-class culture Ibsen satirizes was predominantly patriarchal. The female sex was often regarded as weak whereas the masculine sex was respected as strong. Women were held to be subservient and inferior to men in many aspects. The subordination of women in society was promoted by the sexist ideas of intellectuals and philosophers of the late 19th century. The myths, philosophical, and intellectual ideas of the society were unconsciously internalized by women and this conditioned their day-to-day behavior.

The theoretical approaches adopted for analysis are New Historicism and Feminism. According to Tyson, (1999: 98) New Historicists consider a literary text as a cultural artifact that can tell us something about the interplay of discourses, the web of social meaning operating in the time and place in which the text was produced. For New Historicists, the literary text and historical situation from which it emerges are equally important because text (the literary work) and context (historical conditions that produced it) are mutually constitutive. That is to say, they create each other. New Historicism views the relationship between literature and other cultural phenomena as reciprocal and mutually productive. Kriestwirth M. and Michael G. (1994: 535) quotes Stephen Greenblatt who writes in his essay, "Towards the Poetics of Culture" that New Historicism is "an array of reading that investigates or seeks to chart the ways in which a text in dialectical fashion both represent a society's behavior patterns and shapes or alters that culture's dominant codes." For Greenblatt therefore, when the relationship between text and society is investigated, an array of conflicting social and literary patterns emerge that demonstrate how art affects society and vice versa. New Historicists claim that a literary text is an instrument for the propagation of cultural values, be they

supportive or subversive of existing hegemony. This view is succinctly expressed by Culler (2000:130) when he says:

A key question of New, Historicists has been a dialectic of subversion, and containment, how far do texts offer a genuinely radical critique of religious and political ideologies of their day and how far are the discursive practices of literature in their apparent subversiveness, a way of containing subversive energies.

New Historicism intersects with some feminist concerns given that feminists stress the role of male power structures in forming dominant ideological and cultural constructs. Feminism is concerned with difference and marginalization of women. Feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal one which is organized in favour of men. One of the first feminist critics to articulate the theoretical assumptions and methodology of feminism as quoted by Bressler (2011: 144) is Annette Kolodny. She says:

What unites and repeatedly invigorates feminist literary criticism is neither dogma nor method but an acute and impassioned attentiveness to the ways in which primarily male structures of power are inscribed or (enclosed) within our literary inheritance and the consequences of that encoding for women as characters, as readers and as writers.

The male structures of power embrace phallocentrism, the belief that identifies the phallus as the source of power in culture and literature, with its accompanying male-centred patriarchal assumptions.

Moi (2006: 276) is a leading feminist theorist and critic who defines feminist criticism as “a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism.” To Moi, one of feminist’s major preoccupation is to challenge, critique and reject all established patriarchal values and phallogentric assumptions.

A critical reading of Ibsen’s plays under study from a New Historicist standpoint reveals that they are subversive discourses against Victorian patriarchal values or assumptions and at the same time, they seemingly propagate or contain these values. The female protagonists are portrayed as leading a double existence. That of reality and appearance. The life of appearance is in conformity with laid down societal norms and that of reality deviates from such norms. At one moment, one is given to understand that the playwright is in support of existing societal male oriented values and at another moment, one is lured

into thinking that the dramatist is a feminist kicking against chauvinistic principles. Ibsen wrote during the Victorian period. As such, the playwright in the works under study is concerned with a critique of the patriarchal Victorian societal values that condition most of his female theatrical figures to lead hypocritical lives, hence the appropriateness of feminism for analysis. Garton (1994: 106) notes that:

Ibsen's "heroines (are) at odds with the mores of the community in which they find themselves, unhappy with an environment which forces them to live inauthentically. They have all to a greater or lesser extent tried to conform, but at the cost of the repression of their 'wilde side.'

The "wilde side" Garton refers to here is the real natural self which is repressed in order to conform to societal norms and avoid being stigmatized as 'outsiders' by the community.

The relevance for New Historicism as an analytical tool is equally justified here because it relates text to the context and socio-cultural, political, economic, historical, intellectual and philosophical realities of the society in which it is produced. This is to say that there is a very close relationship between literature and the spirit of the time when it is written.

Intellectual and Philosophical background

The Nineteenth Century Victorian society was basically male dominated. The relegation of women to the background as mentioned earlier, was promoted by the sexist ideas of intellectuals or philosophers like Jean Jacque Rousseau and Freidrich Hegel. Rousseau considered it a scientific fact that women were naturally subordinate to men. Orjasaeter (2005: 21) postulates that according to Rousseau, "their nature was to reproduce and give birth to children, not to think abstract thought. Rousseau equally held that women ought to be weak and passive because by nature, they have less bodily strength than men. As such, women were to function in the family only as wives, mothers and daughters. They did not need to develop their intellectual capacities since they had no career openings before them.

Like Rousseau, Hegel believed in the eternal subordination of the woman in the family and society. To him, the unit of the generic members of the family was headed by "the father" who served as the bridge connecting the family to the outside world while women remained within the confines of the home. Hegel further postulates that in the family, we

find the law of women which is “emotive and subjective.” The law of men is public law and it is the law of the state. Moi (2006: 277) posits that Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* gives his most famous ideas about women in the following terms:

Women may well be educated but they are not made for the high sciences, for philosophy, and certain artistic productions which require a universal element. Women may have insight, taste and delicacy, but they do not possess the ideal. The difference between plants and animals the animal is closer to man in character, the plant is to the woman, for the latter is a more peaceful process of unfolding whose principles is the more indeterminate unit of feeling. When women are in charge of government, the state is in danger, for their action is based on the demand of the universal but on contingent inclination and opinion.

From this excerpt, it can be deduced that Hegel held women in a very low esteem. For him, the female folk could not serve as leaders let alone engage in intellectual activity. Christopher Innes (2004: 78) explains that during the Victorian period, women served more or less as decorations in the house. Women were encouraged to pursue domestic and cultural endeavours like drawing, painting, singing and playing the piano. Women were expected to get married at the age of twenty-one and begin bearing children immediately. Marriage was seen as the sole vocation opened to women. In the words of Nancy Cutts, as quoted by (Jain: 2006: 25), the middle-class woman was expected to “be a perfect lady, an angel in the house, constantly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity. Victorian married women were also barred from making contracts, appearing as witness in court, borrowing without her husband’s consent and initiating a law suit. A wife’s legal personality was subsumed under her husband’s.

Since New Historicists treat contextual non-artistic material as text that intermingles with literature, the philosophical and intellectual ideas discussed here will go a long way to enhance the understanding and interpretation of the texts under study.

Traditional Woman

The traditional woman in this section refers to the Victorian middle-class woman who led a hypocritical life of appearance so to conform to societal dictates. Nora and Mrs Alving in *A Doll’s House* and *Ghosts* are perfect incarnations of traditional women, who sacrifice everything for the welfare of their families. The opening scenes of *A Doll’s House* highlight conventional Victorian middle-class norms on the stage. Nora puts up a social

mask as a good housewife and mother, faithfully respecting her husband and ensuring a successful Christmas celebration. Her husband is portrayed as a symbol of masculine responsibility who takes pride in doing things for his young submissive wife. The play opens in winter and we notice that the family is actively preparing for the feast of nativity.

Helmer: (From the study) Is that my little lark twittering out there?

Nora: (busy opening some packages) Yes it is

Helmer: Is that my squirrel rummaging around?

Nora: Yes

Helmer: When did my squirrel get in?

Nora: Just now (putting the macaroon bag in her pocket and wiping her mouth). Do come in Torvald and see what I have bought

Helmer: Can't be disturbed (After a moment, he opens the door and peeps in, pen in hand) bought you say? All that there? Has the little spendthrift been out throwing money around again? (Ibsen 1959: 455)

Helmer all along belittles his wife calling her pet names such as, "little lark," "little spendthrift," "prodigal," "little bird," "sweet tooth," and "squirrel." As an epitome of a middle-class mother and wife, stereotype, Nora quietly gives in to such a dishonorable treatment. Her docile and near sheepish responses to Helmer seem to suggest that she never reacts negatively to these childish downgrading nicknames.

The playwright from every indication was certainly inspired by the doll-like character of Nora in the naming of the play as *A Doll's House*. Ibsen here uses the image of a doll to refer to Nora as a plaything to her husband. This impression is reinforced by the way she takes up her husband's words to refer to herself when she is accused by Helmer of being extravagant. She says, "you haven't any idea how many expenses we, skylarks and squirrels have." (Ibsen 1959: 457). When later Helmer suspects her of having eaten macaroons which is something forbidden for her, the pretentiously self-effacing woman replies, "I could never think of going against you." (Ibsen 1959:458). When Nora's husband cautions her never to borrow money without his consent, she submissively responds saying, "yes, whatever you say Torvald." Nora gives the impression that she depends solely on her husbands for both financial and material support. Helmer practically takes delight in doing everything for his wife. He gives Nora money for the necessary preparation during Christmas Eve. Nora in the first part of the play is presented as wholly dependent on her husband. For example, she will want her husband to supervise the making of her costume as the following dialogue demonstrates.

Nora- You know there is no one who has your good taste and I want so much to look well at the costume party. Torvald couldn't you take over and decide what I should be and plan my costume?

Helmer- Alright, I will think it over.

Nora- Oh, How sweet of you (Ibsen, 1959: 458).

This dialogue shows that the moral ideal of the middle-class woman was self-denial, complacency and dependence. The man was to remain the undisputable 'creator,' and 'doer,' for the woman who was expected to remain the pleasure giving partner. Nora's pleasure-giving role reaches its apex in the tarantella dance scene. She dresses in the costume Helmer designs for her and performs certain movements that fascinate her onlookers, that is, doctor Rank and Helmer himself.

The situation in which Nora finds herself in *A Doll's House* is similar to that of Mrs Alving in *Ghosts*. Like Nora, Mrs Alving elects to put up appearances as a good housewife and mother. She sacrifices everything for the love of her husband and only son. She constructs an orphanage in order to conceal her husband's disgraceful conduct. As a caring mother, she sends her son, Oswald abroad at the tender age of seven years just because she will not want the young man to "inherit anything whatever from his father." She is fully aware of the fact that her husband can contaminate their son with his moral failings. When Pastor Manders accuses her of having used all the late captain's money for the construction of the orphanage, Mrs Alving replies, "I sold myself for that sum, I don't want Oswald to touch a penny of it. Everything he has will come from me." (Ibsen 1951: 77). These statements are clear proofs of the fact that Mrs Alving does all in her powers to secure a better future for her son. Unfortunately for her, Oswald had already been infected at birth by his father. Mrs Alving is a perfect middle class mother who understands that the bond between the child and the mother is sacred and must not be tampered with. Her extremely pathetic self-sacrificial lifestyle is seen when she relates in retrospective terms how she used to struggle just to keep her husband home. She says:

I had been through a lot in this house, nights after nights in order to keep him home, I sat up in his study with him in his private drinking bout. I sat there alone with him for long hours... listening to his obscene, senseless talk I had to struggle with him, fight with sheer brute force in order to drag him to bed (Ibsen 1951: 227).

This excerpt shows that Mrs Alving spent sleepless nights trying to keep her husband indoors each time he returned home from town where he had affairs with prostitutes.

Despite her husband's lecherous nature, Mrs Alving pretentiously lives under the same roof with him for nineteen long years. She knows the truth about her husband but decides to put up appearances in public. In a desperate attempt to cover up her deceased husband's reckless lifestyle, she constructs an orphanage in his memory. She confides in Pastor Manders in the following terms, "it seems to me inevitable that the truth must come out and that people will believe it. I decided to dedicate this orphanage to Alving in order to dispel once and for all, any possible rumours and any possible doubts. (Ibsen 1951: 77). The orphanage is erected so as to keep secret the late captain Alving's scandalous lifestyle.

Other women who have been conditioned by societal norms to lead hypocritical and self-sacrificing lives are Kristins Linde and Regine Enstrand in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* respectively. They are portrayed as traditional women who think of existence only in terms of their relation to men. Kristine is very eager to reunite with her divorced husband, Krogstad in the opening scenes of act two in *A Doll's House* despite the fact that she manages an income of her own as a worker at the bank. She tells Krogstad that, "I need someone to care for, and your children need a mother. We both need each other Nils, I have faith that you are good at heart." (Ibsen 1959: 498). The salary she earns at the bank does not satisfy her as an independent being. She can only enjoy her money with a man by her side. Like Linde, Regine makes a self-sacrificing statement when Pastor Manders tries to persuade her to go to town with Jacob Engstrand. She says she'll gladly go with Engstrand provided there is a man there in town to take care of her. She further says, "Oh, I mean a man I could look up to, respect, and become attached to, as though I were really his daughter. (Ibsen 1951: 277). From the utterances of the women above, it is clear that society has conditioned them to look down on themselves as inferior to men. They think they can only have a meaningful existence in the company of men. The plays are indeed instruments for the propagation of the cultural values of the society in which they were written as postulated by New Historicists like Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose in their essays quoted above. Women are described as perfect respecters of the cultural values of submissiveness and complacent partners to their male counterparts as demanded by society.

The argument we are making in this paper is that women in the plays under study consciously put-up appearances with men just to conform to societal norms and values. Prove is that while feigning obedience to their husbands, they secretly engage in doing some of the things society forbids them from doing. For example, Nora in *A Doll's House* secretly eats macaroons and borrows money to enable her travel down to the Southern part of Italy with her ridiculously, intransigent sick husband. She equally secretly earns money through copying work and economizes it to pay back the loan. She reveals this in the following exchange with her old friend, Kristine Linde:

Nora—Yes of course, I was most responsible too. Every time Torvald gave me money for new clothes and such, I never used more than half, I always bought the simplest and cheapest outfits. It was a Godsend that everything looked so well on me that Torvald never noticed. But it did wear me down at times, Kristine. It is such a joy to wear fine things. You understand.

Mrs Linde—Oh of course.

Nora—And then I found other ways of making money. Last winter, I was lucky enough to get a lot of copying to do. I lucked myself in and sat writing every evening till late in the night. Ah, I was so often dead tired, but still it was wonderful fun sitting and working like that, it was like being a man. (Ibsen 1959: 489)

The last statement by Nora, “It was like being a man” is very revealing of the circumstances in which women find themselves in the Victorian middle-class society. They have latent talents that are stifled by obnoxious societal values. Women are forced to keep their inborn abilities to themselves. In other words, they are obliged to lead hypocritical or inauthentic lives for “harmony” to reign in the patriarchal set up. But there comes a time when the women emerge from their shells and take full control of their lives.

The Modern Woman

The modern woman is opposed to the traditional woman discussed above. The modern woman can be favourably equated to the “new woman” who emerged in literature in the later part of the Nineteenth century. The “new woman” was an emancipated woman who defied all the conventional middle-class restrictions on her personality. She was an independent individual who freely chose to do whatever thing she wanted. Ross Shideler (1997: 66) quotes the critic, Gail Cunningham who describes “the new woman” as one who:

Could now elect to put her energies into professional, rather than matrimonial achievement, and could justify her decision by pointing out that marriage, as conventionally defined, was a step little better than slavery. She could make her choice about having children, either with, or without the authority of marriage licence, and she could de-mand complete freedom from either parental or legal control in selecting her legal partner.

Cunningham's description suits the type of modern or 'new woman' we notice in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. That is, a woman who comes out of her shell to prove her worth to society that has for long taken her hostage with biased rules. As Templeton (1971: 140) succinctly puts it, 'the new woman' comes to the "realization that she might perhaps be something else other than her husband's little woman." Tired of leading self-deceptive and unfulfilling lives, Nora and Mrs Alving in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* respectively decide to shade off their masks and reveal their real selves. They muster courage and turn their backs to the dictates of men and societal norms that undermine their true human natures. These "new women" unmask themselves and reveal their real potentials. In other words, appearance is put aside and the real self is brought to the fore.

Nora in the closing scenes of *A Doll's House* does the unorthodox thing by breaking off her marriage. She declares herself independent and tells her husband that she'll like to go out to the wider world of men and discover who really, she is. When Helmer reminds her that she is talking like a child, and that she knows very little about the world into which she is moving, Nora says, "No I don't, but now I will begin to learn for myself. I will try to discover who is right, the world or I, "When he further asks her if really she is serious about abandoning him, and the children, she says, "I can't be concerned about that. I only know how essential this is. You have never loved me, you only thought it amusing to be in love with me (Ibsen 1959: 510). The standoff between husband and wife continues as follows:

Helmer- Why Nora, What a thing to say?

Nora- Yes, it is so, Torvald. While I was at home with father, he used to tell me all his opinions And I held the same opinions. If I had others, I concealed them, because he would not have liked it. He used to call me his doll child, and play with me as I played with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house... I mean I passed from my father's hands into yours. You settled everything according to your taste, and I got the same taste as you, or pretended to – I don't know which both ways perhaps. When I look back on it, I seem to have been living here as a beggar, from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks for You, Helmer. But you

would have it so. You and father have done me a great wrong. It's your fault that my life has been wasted.

Helmer—it's exasperating, can you forsake your holiest duty in this way?

Nora—What do you call my holiest duty?

Helmer—Do you ask me that? Your duty to your husband and children.

Nora—I have other duties equally sacred

Helmer—Impossible, what duties do you mean?

Nora—My duties towards myself

Helmer—Before else, you are a wife and mother.

Nora—That I no longer believe. I think that before else I am a human being, just as much as you are, or at least, I will try to become one. I know that most people agree with you, Helmer, and that they say so in books. But henceforth, I can't be satisfied with what most people say, and what is in books. I must think things out for myself and try to get clear about them...I had been living here these eight years with a strange man, and had delivered him three children—oh I can't spend the night in a strange man's house. (Ibsen 1959: 530).

Worthy of note in the exchange above between husband and wife is the fact that the woman confirms she has led a hypocritical life for eight long years with her husband. She is no longer ready to continue leading this kind of pretentious life. She decides to shed off the social mask and start life all over in an authentic manner. Gone are the days she believed in what the majority or books claim is right. Also worthy of note in the dialogue above is the appropriateness of New Historicism chosen for analysis. Text, New Historicists say can tell us something about the interplay of discourses of a particular era. From the way Torvald Helmer talks, we can deduce that he is a typical example of a chauvinistic middle class and husband figure who believes in the subordination of the woman in the family. He expects his wife to remain submissive to him and faithfully respect societal laid down norms and values. Unfortunately for him, his wife is no longer on the same plain with him. Nora is now a metamorphosed individual who has left the past behind her. Justifying her desertion of marital responsibilities to Helmer, Nora says:

Listen Torvald, I have heard that when a wife deserts her husband's house, just as I am doing, the law frees him from all responsibilities. In any case I am freeing you from being responsible. Don't feel yourself bound in anyway than I will. There has to be absolute freedom for both of us. Here take your ring back and give me mine. (Ibsen 1959: 512).

Nora thinks that abandoning her matrimonial home is setting her husband free as he will no longer be overburdened with marital responsibilities. She also knows fully well that the male-inclined laws will certainly work in his favour if the case were to be taken to

court. So, it is needless for Helmer to express feelings of regret for her departure. Through the New Historicist critical lense, we can deduce that the law in the Victorian middle-class society was tailored in favour of men.

Like Nora in *A Doll's House*, Mrs Alving in *Ghosts* overtly cry out foul against middle class hypocritical biased principles. When her so called spiritual counselor, Pastor Manders says that her marriage to the late captain was good since "it conformed to the strictest rules of law and order," Mrs Alving angrily retorts saying, "all the talk about "law and order" are the root cause of all the suffering in the world." When Manders rebukes her for being unusual in speech, she declares, "that may be, but I will not be bound by these responsibilities, these hypocritical conventions any longer, I simply cannot. I must walk my way through to freedom." (Ibsen 1959 :279). The plays here can be interpreted as subversive discourses against the prevailing statusquo. As Stephen Greenblatt and Louis Montrose notes, not only do texts propagate the cultural values of a particular society at a given time but they as well seemingly challenge these values. Ibsen evidently challenges the socio-cultural values of the Victorian middle class in the play under study. This is done through the characters of Nora and Mrs Alving.

Mrs Alving like her counterpart, Nora, comes to a full understanding of the fact that middle class precepts of "law and order" are fake in themselves. She is poised to walk her way through to freedom. She is no longer ready to continue leading a life of pretence in the name of a duty-conscious housewife. She equally realizes in the end that all her life-long struggles to conceal the disreputable character of her husband were futile and unreasonable. Overburdened by a guilt-ridden conscience, Mrs Alving tell Pastor Manders that:

I should never have lied about Alving, but I didn't care to do anything else at that time and it wasn't only for Oswald's sake, it was for my own sake too. What a coward I have been? ... I could first hear what people would say if they found out the truth. I should have said, listen son, your father was a corrupt and contaminated man. (Ibsen 1951: 280).

Mrs Alving realize too late that by concealing for a long time her husband's wayward conduct to her son, she was doing him more harm than good. This is so because once the long-standing deception is unmasked, all endeavours to maintain tranquility prove ineffective. There is practically nothing she can do to turn things around for her son. In

the retrospective excerpt below between Pastor Manders and Mrs Alving; we are given to understand that she was the brain behind the welfare of the family. But as a typical obedient self-effacing middle-class wife, she put up appearances and allowed her irresponsible husband to take all the credits. She says:

I could never have gone through with it if I had not got my work. I honestly claim to have worked, all the improvements of the estate, all the modern equipment that my husband got all the credit for. Do you imagine that he had no energy for anything of that sort. Lying all day on the sofa reading an old court circular. No, I tell you something else, it was I who encouraged him when he had his few good days, and it was I who encouraged him to manage everything when he went to his debauchery, or when he relapsed into whining self-pity. (Ibsen 1951: 76).

This excerpt confirms the fact that Mrs Alving was the real bread winner of the family but remained in the background so to conform to societal norms. She was the hidden hand behind “all the improvements on the estate” and the general welfare of the family. She does all the work but credits go to her good for nothing husband.

Conclusion

We set out at the beginning of this inquiry to demonstrate that Henrik Ibsen in *A Doll's House* and *Ghost* represents women as leading a dual existence, that of appearance and reality. The study submits that women lead this double existence as a result of the strict patriarchal values of the society in which they live. The Victorian middle-class society strongly believed in the respect of “law and order” especially by women. Women were relegated to the background as weak and unfit for intellectual and public activities. They were to function only as wives, daughters and mothers in the family or society. The playwright satirizes these values by creating powerful theatrical female figures who defy these rules in an attempt to lead more fulfilling and meaningful lives.

The women are first presented as perfect examples of good house wives and mothers as required by society. Later, they shade off the mask and take full responsibility of their lives and actions against all odds. By presenting the woman with a dual nature, the playwright wants the audience and or reader to see and judge for themselves the predicaments of the Victorian middle-class woman. Ibsen in the plays is seemingly crusading for a positive change in the way women are regarded in the society. For the

dramatist, there is urgent need to recognize the potentials of the mothers of humanity and give them full freedom so they can better contribute to the welfare and development of society.

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