

“DOORS” IN A DOLL’S HOUSE AND IBSEN’S THOUGHT OF FREEDOM

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims at exploring the representation of “Doors” in different places of the whole play. Based on the objectives and the nature of the study, the qualitative research method has been used to conduct the research. Content analyses have been applied to analyze the elicited data for the study. The study has explored that a very significant word “Door” connected to the title of the study was used to signify a number of notable points including welcoming anybody, keeping something secret, forbidding somebody to enter somewhere, forcing someone to stay, getting rid of something boring, something wanted coming, switching concentration, tension and stress regarding the arrival of something unwanted, and opening up a new horizon of freedom. The “Door” slammed by Nora at the very end of *A Doll’s House* indicates the closing of the door of dependence and opening up a new door, the door of true individuality, learning, maturity, and freedom. Finally, the true thought of Ibsen is found through his search for truth and individuality regardless gender and freedom. Hence, it can be said that the present study will be a great source of literary information for the future researcher in the connected fields.

Keywords: Door, Freedom, Women rights, Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*.

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INTRODUCTION

Women’s struggle for their rights and independent identity has been a major concern in every field of education and literature is not an exception. Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* explores the social phenomena in the 19th century’s patriarchal society where women did not have any open “Door” in the field of economy, education, and politics or even regarding family decision. Patriarchal system made the males supreme authoritative figures over women, children, and property (Lambert, 2009). All the doors of freedom and opportunity to contribute were closed for the women. In a certain stage, women began to fight for equal rights and campaigned for female suffrage. Although the period recognized distinctive shifts in their opinions of gender relations, it was still a time of notable female oppression. The so-called “woman question” was vigorously contested and by no means achieved’ (Marsh, 2013). In every society, women were subordinate to men from different perspectives though the form and degree of suppression differed from society to society, country to country. An increasing awareness of the injustice done with woman gave the shape of feminist movement. The spirit of feminism is also showed in the works of literature, for example, in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*, and in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, *The Ghosts*, and *Hedda Gabbler*. *A Doll’s House* was also presented on the worldwide stages which started in Denmark and continued to Sweden, United States of America, Australia, and also France (Suleiman, 2010). In an essay published in 1900, James Joyce expressed his admiration for Ibsen and the demonstration of his “extraordinary knowledge of women” in his plays (Eyre, 2015). Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* depicted all these issues very symbolically, especially with the symbolic use of “Door” in the whole play.

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

According to Tayeng (2017), women have been being under the deliberate control of the male part of every society from long ago and that has been a very common scenario all over the world though the degree and style of controlling or suppression were different from region to region and time to time. All these kind of subordination made the women aware of their condition and that helped them to begin a movement called feminist movement. Tayeng also explored that women finally got the point to open a new door for them, the door of freedom.

The theme of the study is closely connected to the present study as it also deals with the struggle of women, especially Nora’s fighting for independent identity. Ghafourinia and Jamili (2014) mentioned that the era of Ibsen witnessed a very vulnerable position of women who did not have their own space in any sphere of the society and that situation elicited them to start fighting so that they can open up a door of their individual identity. Jamili’s paper also uncovered the thought of Ibsen regarding the freedom of human being regardless gender or race. Creamer (2016) investigated the issues of discriminations to women in the name of patriarchy and the struggle of women for opening a new door, the door of independent identity with a reference to Ibsen’s writing. The researcher mentioned that Ibsen’s role was stronger as an individualist or humanist rather than as a feminist though the humanistic writing of Ibsen has the elements of feminism by nature. Ghafourina and Jamili (2014) also dealt with the phenomena of women right depicted in the writing of Henrik Ibsen, especially in *A Doll’s House*. His study uncovered the wrong social system of Ibsen’s era that helped the male part of the society to close all the “Doors” of rights and opportunity for women. He also pictured out the true thought of Ibsen that really gave voice to women and opened the door of freedom for them. Hence, all these papers unfolded some relevant issues connected to the present study though none of them elaborately dealt with the significance of “Doors” and related thoughts in *A Doll’s House* of Ibsen that the present study is going to do.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Due to the nature of the study, the researcher chose to conduct this study utilizing a qualitative approach. Basically, content analysis was used to analyze the work. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or any concepts. Through content analysis, researchers can analyze the presence of meaning and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. It is a method in qualitative research that is used to analyze text data obtained from printed sources such as articles, books, or manuals (Wahyuni, 2012: 122). The data collected in this research were used to analyze the presentation of “Door” by Ibsen starting from keeping the door closed being afraid of something to open up a new expected door, the door of independence, and the overall view of Ibsen regarding all those significant issues.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As the title of the study "Doors" in *A Doll's House* and Ibsen's Thought of Freedom" has a close connection with the "Door," the researcher has tried to disclose the significance of it based on the use of the word "Door" in different places in the play. "Door" has been mentioned in a number of places of the play including a number of different notable situations. At the very beginning of the play where the description of the Helmer's house comes, it is seen that "Door" gets more importance as a part of the house.

"A room, comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished. In the back, on the right, a door leads to the hall; on the left another door leads to HELMER'S study. Between the two doors a pianoforte. In the middle of the left wall a door, and nearer the front a window. Near the window a round table with armchairs and a small sofa. In the right wall, somewhat to the back, a door" (Act-I, P-22).

An important aspect of "Door" as a tool to hide anything from others is notably seen in the following lines of the play where Nora shuts her "Door" to hide all the macaroons she has bought from the shop and she also eats some of them keeping the door closed because her husband has seriously forbidden her to eat such things as she has problems in her teeth.

"NORA shuts the door. She continues smiling in quiet glee as she takes off her outdoor things. Taking from her pocket a bag of macaroons, she eats one or two. Then, she goes on tip-toe to her husband's door and listens." (Act-I, P-23).

"Door" has the close connection with giving anybody permission on enter somewhere that is unfolded in the following lines connected to the arrival of Mrs. Linden, a school friend of Nora and an important character of this play who is waiting at the doorway to be allowed into the house.

ELLEN. [In the doorway]. A lady to see you, ma'am.
NORA. Show her in. (Act-I, P-32).

Again, from the sound of the doorbell, Nora can easily understand that someone has come to meet Tovald but the visitor makes her little bit nervous because she has some secret business with him. Although the visitor, Mr. Krogstad says that he has come to meet her husband, she cannot be free from nervousness that is unfolded from her indifferent bowing while she closes the "Door" of the hall.

NORA. Then will you please go to his study.
[KROGSTAD goes. She bows indifferently while she closes the door into the hall. Then, she goes to the stove and looks to the fire. (Act-I, P-51)]

It is also seen that opening the "Door" has signified a true happiness. Nora hears the sound of her children coming from the outside and open the "Door" with much excitement to welcome and adore them. This beautiful scenario is unfolded in the following lines of the play.

[Outside on the stairs are heard children's voices.] There they are! There they are! [She runs to the outer door and opens it. The Nurse, Anna, enters the hall with the children.] Come in! Come in! [Stoop down and kisses the children.] (Act-I, P-59).

If the "Door" is open then anybody unwanted can easily enter. It is seen that, getting the "Door" open, Krogstad enters Helmer's house that make Nora unready and anxious. When she can understand that Krogstad can say anything regarding their secret issue, she shuts the door so that no one can hear their secret talks. In this case shutting the "Door" signifying something secret. All these phenomena are better understood from the following lines of the play.

KROGSTAD. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Helmer-NORA. [With a suppressed cry, turns round and half jumps up.] Ah! What do you want?

KROGSTAD. Excuse me; the outer door was ajar-somebody must have forgotten to shut it-NORA. [Standing up.] My husband is not at home, Mr. Krogstad. KROGSTAD. I know it.

NORA. Then what do you want here? KROGSTAD. To say a few words to you.

NORA. To me? [To the children, softly]. Go in to Anna. What? No, the strange man won't hurt mamma. When he's gone we'll go on playing. [She leads the children into the left-hand room, and shuts the door behind them. Uneasy, in suspense]. It is to me you wish to speak? (Act-I, P-61).

At the very beginning of Act-II, the word "Door" appears with another significant aspect that indicates the stress and tension of Nora about the coming of Krogstad with any letter mentioning their secret that she does not want to disclose. This restlessness bounds her to look at the outdoor and check the letter box. This issue is clear from the following lines.

NORA. [Dropping the cloak.] There's somebody coming! [Goes to the hall door and listens.] Nobody; of course nobody will come to-day, Christmas-day; nor to-morrow either. But perhaps-[Opens the door and looks out.]- No, nothing in the letter box; quite empty. [Comes forward.] stuff and nonsense! Of course he won't really do anything. Such a thing couldn't happen. It's impossible! Why, I have three little children. (Act-II, P-82).

Again, "Door" comes to indicate the safeguard that is seen from the saying of Torvald that Nora can practice her tarantella as she wishes and he can make himself isolated from any kind of noise made by Nora in her practice because he does not like get it and he has some works with a number of documents as well that need silence. All these points are disclosed in the following lines of the play.

"Now you ought to play the tarantella through and practice with the tambourine. I shall sit in my inner room and shut both doors, so that I shall hear nothing. As much noise as you please. [Turns round in doorway]." (Act-II, P-82).

"Door" gets another significant meaning from the saying of Dr. Rank. Here, it refers to seriously avoiding anyone in a certain moment through locking the door. Dr. Rank says Nora that he does not want Helmer beside him in the moment of his last breath even, if Helmer goes there, he will make the "Door" locked for him. This significant issue is mentioned in the following lines of the play.

RANK. I won't have him, I say- not on any account! I shall lock my door against him.- As soon as I am quite certain of the worst, I shall send you my visiting-card with a black cross on it; and then you will know that the final horror has begun. (Act-II, P-101).

Act-III also begins with the significant use of "Door." It is seen that Mrs. Linden is eagerly waiting near the "Door" to hear the footstep of Krogstad with whom she had a special relationship earlier. She cannot concentrate on the party even. She finally opens the outer door and gets the sound of Krogstad's footstep. Here, the "Door" signifies something wanted entering into the door. This matter is very clear from the following lines.

MRS. LINDEN. [Looks at her watch.] Not here yet; and the time is nearly up. If only he Hasn't- [listens again.] Ah, there he is. [She goes into the hall and cautiously opens the outer door; soft footsteps are heard on the stairs; she whispers.] Come in; there is no one here. (Act-III, P-129).

Keeping the "Door" open also refers to the sudden switching of concentration and unconsciousness that is seen from the happy union of Krogstad and Mrs. Linden who decide to live their life together that make them unconscious about shutting the door. After Krogstad leaves, the door remains open. This matter is unfolded in the following lines.

KROGSTAD: I never was so happy in all my life!
[KROGSTAD goes out by the outer door. The door between the room and the hall remains open.] (Act-III, P-136).

Again, "Door" indicates getting rid of something boring through shutting the door that is unfolded from the saying of Hemer about Mrs. Linden. When Linden leaves them, he shuts the door and says that now they are free from the boring lady. This issue is seen from the following lines of the play.

HELMER. [Accompanying her to the door:] Good-night, good-night; I hope you'll get safely home. I should be glad to-but you have such a short way to go. Good-night, good-night. [She goes; HELMER shuts the door after her and comes forward again]. At last, we've got rid of her: She's a terrible bore. (Act-III, P-141).

"Door" also signifies a different aspect that is understood through the fling of "Door" by Torvald. This opening of the door is not to welcome anybody rather to catch up Nora as she has done a serious fault according to Torvald's view. This phenomenon is very clear from the following lines.

"She is rushing out by the hall; at the same moment HELMER flings his door open, and stands there with an open letter in his hand." (Act-III, P-153).

"Door" indicates making anyone bound to stay somewhere forcefully through locking the door that is unfolded from the attitude of Helmer after getting the letter from Krogstad regarding the secret of Nora. Although Nora wants to leave him as she has easily understood that Helmer has taken all her sacrifices negatively, Helmer forced her to stay and excuse the whole issue and that is why he locks the outer door. This point is better understood from the following lines of the play.

NORA. Let me go-you shall not save me! You shall not take my guilt upon yourself!

HELMER. I don't want any melodramatic airs. [Locks the outer door:] Here you shall stay and give an account of yourself. Do you understand what you have done? Answer! Do you understand it? (Act-III, P-153).

The play ends with the most significant indication of "Door" through its closing by Nora who does not close the door to make herself safe or to forbid others to enter her house rather she closes the door from out. It refers to closing a big chapter of life and the hope and struggle to open up a new chapter. All these issues are unfolded from the following powerful last line of the play.

[From below is heard the reverberation of a heavy door closing. (Act-III, P-176).

CONCLUSION

The present study has found a number of significant issues related to the use of "Door" in the play *A Doll's House* from which the final closing of the door by Nora is most significant. It indicates the opening of a new door, the door of independence and new identity not only for Nora but also all the women of all time. It also can be said that the truth and freedom are the focus of Ibsen in his writing. In his way of searching truth and freedom, Ibsen has dealt with the theme of marginality, gender, immorality, hypocrisy, materialism, New Woman, etc. practiced in the patriarchal society. Finally, the researcher hopes that the future studies on the same field will be carried out. It is also expected that this study will be a strong inspiration for the future researchers and help them generate beneficial study in the respective field. This is also expected that this research work would be a milestone to make the women more conscious about their rights as well as it will elicit the male part of the society not to make any so called system to oppress the female part rather to extend the hand of cooperation to them in every step.

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