

توكيد الذات في مسرحيات مختارة لابسن

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ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى مناقشة موضوع توكيد الذات في مسرحيات مختارة للكاتب المسرحي هنريك إبسن: *بيت الدمية، والأشباح، وعدو الشعب، وعندما ينهض الموتى*. وتنتقل هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف دوافع هذه الشخصيات لتوكيد إحساسها بذواتها الذي يتخذ طابع تقدير الذات والبحث عن مكانة اجتماعية أو سياسية، وغير ذلك. كما تظهر وعي الشخصيات لفشلها الذي يؤدي بها إلى الإحباط، والجنون، والإنطواء للهروب من الوسط الاجتماعي، ومجابهة المجتمع ومخالفة تقاليده وعاداته، أو الانتحار. ويبدو السعي لتوكيد الذات لدى أكثر الشخصيات شهرة في المسرحيات المذكورة أنفأً. فتكتشف نورا في مسرحية "بيت الدمية" أسباب شخصيتها المضطربة وتقرر إيجاد حل يساعدها في فهم الحقائق حول نفسها والعالم من حولها، ولهذا تقرر مغادرة المنزل لتوكيد ذاتها باستقلالية كاملة. أما السيدة ألغينغ في مسرحية "الأشباح" فهي تخالف قوانين مجتمعها في محاولة منها لتبرهن صحة أفكارها، ولكنها تقشل بسبب ماضيها. ويحارب الدكتور ستوكمان البيروقراطيين الفاسدين، ويكافح ليثبت مكانته بهدف إنقاذ مجتمعه. أما البروفيسور ريبوك فهو يتخلى عن حبه الحقيقي من أجل الفن معتقداً أنه سيجد شخصيته الحقيقية في الفن. ويكتشف لاحقاً أن طريقته الأنثوية بإثبات قيمته الفنية كانت بمثابة العمى الكامل الذي أدى إلى دماره الذاتي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: توكيد الذات، مسرح إبسن

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Self-assertion in Selected Plays by Ibsen

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Abstract:

This study aims at discussing the theme of self-assertion in some plays by Henrik Ibsen; *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *A Public Enemy*, and *When We Dead Awaken*. The study proceeds to explore the characters' major motives to assert their own sense of selfhood which takes the form of self-esteem, and the quest for social or political status. It also, shows the characters' awareness of their failure that leads to disappointment, frustration, madness, introversion, alienation, or suicide. The quest for self-assertion appears in the most famous characters of the above-mentioned plays. Nora in *A Doll's House* discovers the causes of her confused personality, so she decides to find out a solution that helps her understand the truths about herself and the world. Accordingly, she leaves her house to assert her own self independently. Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* breaks her society laws in an attempt to prove her own thoughts. However, she fails because of her past. Doctor Stockmann struggles against corrupt bureaucrats and strives to assert his position so as to save his own community. Professor Rubek renounces his true love for the sake of Art, thinking that he finds his true personality in Art. Later on, he discovers that his selfish way of proving his artistic value has been complete blindness which leads to self-destruction.

Key words: self-assertion, Ibsen plays

This paper seeks to shed light on self-assertion in four plays by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen: *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House*, *A Public Enemy*, and *When We Dead Awaken*. The choice of this topic is based upon two factors, namely, the universality of the theme of self-assertion since it addresses all human beings and Ibsen's concern to tackle this theme at his time. Self-assertion is an individual urge through which one asserts one's existence in a given community. Man, in general, looks forward to having freedom and independence in order to secure identity. However, some writers are famous for their involvement in portraying this universal theme. One of these writers are Henrick Ibsen who succeeds in presenting characters' quest for a sense of identity, self-knowledge, or freedom. Ibsen has successfully given "the stage its first distinctively modern characters: complex, contradictory individuals driven by a desire for something..., the 'joy of living', a sense of themselves – that they can barely recognize or name." (Worthen 1993 585).

This paper discusses the theme of self-assertion in the above-mentioned plays in a chronological manner so as to trace the development in Ibsen's views of the self. These plays represent different literary stages in the playwright's career starting with realism and ending with symbolism. Moreover, they show Ibsen's interest in self-assertion for both male and female characters on equal grounds. Such an interest gives Ibsen a reputation of being a feminist who defends women's rights in society. Ibsen shows "women in a new light, as victims rather than mere passive recipients of the sterile role society sought to afford them". (Stephen 2000 264) However, his female characters strive to get rid of their sense of being victimised by revealing their own free will to be what they want to be.

The first paly is *A Doll's House*, which is a drama about a woman who becomes aware of the social demands for women's self-denial in the conventional marriages of the nineteenth century. Nora, the heroine of *A Doll's House*, is a fine example of the woman who rejects such a demand, defies social traditional conventions, leaves her husband, and abandons her children for the sake of asserting her own self.

In *A Doll's House*, Nora plays the fool and saves her husband's life without his knowing it (Bradford, 2007 25). She borrows money in order to help her ill husband. Consequently, she works to pay the debts. Knowing the truth, her husband becomes annoyed because he does not accept that his wife provides money without his consent. Their quarrel ends by Nora slamming the door and looking forward to find the real world.

The setting of the play is a room in Helmer's house. It is like a prison which isolates its prisoner from the real world or even from their own selves: "At the end of the play, Nora escapes from this box and enters the real world." (Barnet, 1997, 395). This box-like room represents the social milieu and a prison, the cage in which Helmer confines his twittering lark. Accordingly, "the significance of Nora's release from her husband and his world gains the added implication of the shattered box, the burst cage, the sudden coming into existence of the freedom of the outside world where the lark can try her wings." (Van Laan, 1983, 44). Nora escapes hoping to discover truths about the world, mainly about her own thoughts and feelings.

This play seems to be about the need of every individual to find out his or her personality. Nora, a woman in a male society, cannot justify her action according to the agreed-upon norms in her social group. "It is this paradigm of dutiful feminine submission that Ibsen would repeatedly subvert: Nora Helmer's refusal of the servicing identities conferred on her by husband." (Templeton 2001 202)

Being ignorant of the laws of society, she follows her motives and emotions regardless of any agreed-upon laws. She feels that forging her father's signature for the sake of rescuing her ill husband is a source of 'pride and joy'. When Krogstad, the lawyer, tells her that's "law does not concern itself with motives", she rapidly asserts that "law must be very stupid." (Act 2, p. 407). Thus she really needs to check her concepts, and question her motives in order to realise her personality in her social milieu.

There is a contradiction between Nora's sayings and deeds which may be a sign of her lost personality. She lives eight years pretending to depend totally on her husband consulting him about every trivial matter such as costumes, giving him the impression of being completely dependent on him: "I can't get anywhere without your help." (Act 2, p. 408), and pretending that she is unable to do the simplest action without his advice. Accordingly, she asks him to teach her how to dance: "Correct me, lead me, the way you always do". (Act 2, p. 416). Meanwhile, she takes decisions about serious matters such as borrowing money. Her mind is paralyzed by the contradiction between the impulses of her actions and the social rejection of these impulses. Consequently, she decides to leave so that she has a chance to rethink about herself, concepts, and behaviour:

I believe that I am first and foremost a human being, like you- or anyway, that I must try to become one. I know most people think as you do, Thorvald, and I know there's something of

the sort to be found in books. But I'm no longer prepared to accept what people say and what's written in books. I must think things out for myself, and try to find my own answer. (Act 3, p. 424)

Helmer Torvald, Nora's husband, may be the major reason of her lost identity because he encourages her to be totally dependent on him and insists that she is not only his wife but also his child:

It was simply in your inexperience you chose the wrong means. But do you think I love you any the less because you don't know how to act on your own initiative? No, no,. just lean on me. I would not be a true man if your feminine helplessness did not make you doubly attractive in my eyes. (Act 3, p. 422).

Eventually, Nora finds out the causes of her lack of self-knowledge, namely, the treatment of her father and her husband. She admits that her father has called her his little doll, and has played with her. Unfortunately, her husband treats her in the same way as her father:

I passed from Papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything the way you wanted it, so that I simply took over your taste in everything—or pretended I did— I don't really know— I think it was a little of both—first one and then the other. Now I took back on it, it's as if I've been living here like a pauper, from hand to mouth. I performed tricks for you, and you gave me food and drink. But that was how you wanted it. (Act 3, p. 423)

Nora blames her husband for following her father's way of spoiling her and preventing her from proving herself: "You and Papa have done me a great wrong. It's your fault that I have done nothing with my life. (Act 3, p. 423)

Having discovered the causes of her confused personality, she decides to find out a solution, so that she can understand the truths about herself and the world: "I must stand on own feet if I am to find out the truth about myself and about life." (Act 3, p. 423). As a result, she prefers to put an end to her marital life for the sake of asserting her own conscience and beliefs away from her husband's authority. On the one hand, she likes to be treated as a human being not a doll. On the other hand, Torvald, her husband, treats her as if she were his lovely doll. His treatment is a natural expression of his pride of being the head of the family in a patriarchal community. However, he promises to change his way of treating his wife: "At last Torvald dimly seems to recognise that Nora is a human being not a doll." (Barnet, 1997, 396).

The second play that tackles self-assertion as one of the major themes is *Ghosts* (1881). It refers to the characters' struggle to affirm their selfhood through their strife against their

environment. Here, Ibsen presents individuals who face social difficulties and do their best to get out of their predicaments in order to be themselves. However, they fail: Oswald wants to commit suicide; Regina accepts to be a whore; Mrs. Alving's attempts to assert herself end hopelessly.

The heroine of *Ghosts*, Mrs. Alving, tries to uncover misconceptions and misunderstandings. She longs for solving the situation: "Anyone coming to the story... of Mr. Alving in *Ghosts* for the first time would initially be in the same position as the hero: anxious to learn what has gone wrong and what should be done to put it right." (Morgan, 1987, 99) She desperately seeks to find her own self in her social milieu.

Mrs. Alving is expected to follow the social norms; however, she emerges as a rebellious character. She reads modern 'subversive, free-thinking books' and shows her great dissatisfaction with the morals of her society. Mrs. Alving expresses her disgust at social norms and her anxiety to defy them: "Oh, law and order! Yes, I often think they're the cause of all trouble in the world." (Act 2, p.58) She feels that it is time to get rid of all these heavy burdens of society: "I'm not putting up with all those duties and obligations any longer. I simply can't. I must somehow free myself." (Act 2, p. 58) In spite of all her attempts to have a progressive individuality, she fails to make a compromise between her ambition and social pressures.

Mrs. Alving attempts to assert her views even if they challenge her social surroundings. As a result, she has to argue with Pastor Manders who believes that people should follow the social standards of behavior. Pastor Manders accuses her of deserting her husband: "you rebelled _you cast off the cross, you deserted the sinner whom you should have helped; you went away risking your good name_ and imperilling other people's reputations into the bargain." (Act 1, p. 46) She defends herself saying that she has left her husband, the 'dissolute man', whose presence at the same place with his children will affect them badly.

Being a self-centered woman, Mrs. Alving controls the household. She obliges her husband to drink inside the house. She sends her son abroad for fear that he may be affected by his father: "She has imposed her own will on those around her. She forced her husband to give her control of the household". (King, 1981, 54)

As a strong, independent, and confident lady, Mrs. Alving wants her son to inherit from her only: "whatever my son inherits shall come from me and no one else." (Act 1, p. 53) She

builds the orphanage to spend her ex-husband's wealth because she does not want her "own son, to inherit anything whatever from his father." (Act 1, p. 52)

Not only does she ignore social norms by sayings but by deeds as well. She declares that she wants to hug the Pastor in spite of his religious status simply because she does what she feels: "I should like to give a big hug." (Act 2, p. 70). But, the pastor immediately criticises her liberal behavior: "You have a most extravagant way of expressing yourself." (Act 2, p. 70)

Mrs. Alving's failure to strike a balance between her thoughts and actions ends in a psychological struggle that rages inside her. Although she aspires to be unconventional, she tends to be restricted by conventions in her behaviour:

In *Ghosts*, Mrs. Alving wants to be free from the constraints of her society and has intellectually rejected many of its tenets. She is unable emotionally, however, to break with the traditional life she has led; at best she can hope to find liberation through her son. (King, 1981, 40)

She is happy to know that her son has the courage to disapprove these standards: "I've come to think along those same lines....though I've never had the courage to put it into words." (Act 1, p. 45)

To fulfil her aim, Mrs. Alving struggles to win her battle for independence and identity. She passes through different stages of character's development to reach self-discovery:

Not all the reading she then did in modern literature could erase the acts of non-modern actions. In her fantasy life she wants liberation from bourgeois culture. In actuality she cannot defy the marriage laws; cannot contemplate the incestuous union of her son with his half-sister; cannot practice mercy killing. Corresponding to this double twist whereby Mrs. Alving's narrative turns from husband-denunciation to self-discovery. (Bently, 1972, 188)

Eventually, Mrs. Alving's quest for selfhood ends pathetically. All her ambitions are retained in the last scene of the play: "Then, heredity determinism mocks all her plans, and she is defeated." (King, 1981 40). She fails in all her attempts to build her own self as she wants because of her past. Unfortunately, she discovers her failure in the last scene when Oswald asks her to end his life in an act of mercy-killing: "The collapse of Mrs. Alving's world, and at the last she is left terribly aware of the superficiality of her earlier view that she might someday live as though the past had never been." (Barnet, 1997, 230)

There are two other characters who experience situations similar to Mrs. Alving's. They seek for their own selves but fail in their quest. They are Regina and Oswald. Regina is an ambitious

young woman who wants to rise socially through her marriage to a rich man. She does not think of herself as a servant but as a member of the family. She learns French and etiquette, dreaming that one day she will marry Oswald and go to France with him. When she discovers that Oswald cannot marry her because he is her brother, she decides to leave him claiming that she will not nurse 'the sick'. She is selfish in her refusal to help her ill brother. She admits that she wants to fulfil her aims and enjoy life ignoring any social restraints: "A poor girl's got to make the best of her youth... I've got the joy of living in me," (Act 3, p. 94). She prefers to follow her mother's steps in losing chastity if she can gain wealth and prestige: "I expect I take after my mother." Thus, Regina's trial to constitute a notable self in society ends in a complete failure.

Similarly, Oswald's struggle for freedom is a way to regain his lost identity. On the one hand, Oswald wants to prove himself as an artist, so he turns a deaf ear to the clergyman who advises him not to spoil his soul in art. (Act 1. Pp. 39–40). On the other hand, Oswald is obsessed with his illness which he has inherited from his father. He is torn between his disease and his ambition to attain artistic reputation. He insists on being a painter as a way of constructing his own selfhood through art. However, fits of disease hinder him from accomplishing his real artistic position in the world of art. He wants someone to help him and he praises the freedom of his friends:

We are, Ibsen insists, the creatures of our past. From the moment of our birth, we are inevitably haunted, by every inherited debt... Oswald, in *Ghosts*, was born to be an exile from the sun: in the final resolution of his life, he prays in vain for the 'glad flames of day'. (Williams, 1981, 49)

Ibsen declares that man often fails to achieve his aims and assert his identity because of heredity and environment: "In *Ghosts* he (Ibsen) frankly faces, the problem of heredity disease, which interests him, not in itself, but simply as the physical type and symbol of so many social and ethical phenomena." (Hinchliffe, 1979, 66)

Ibsen seems pessimistic in his views about man's fate. He suggests that determinism hinders man's progress to self-assertion: "*Ghosts* suggests that in spite of striving for freedom, it can never be achieved and that life will always thwart mankind's hopes." (King, 1981, 40).

The third play that discusses the theme of self-assertion is *A Public Enemy or An Enemy of the People* (1882). It is concerned with the problem of the relation between the individual and society; and the likelihood for severe conflict due to the pressures of self-interest. The hero

of *A Public Enemy* strives to assert his position so as to save his own community. Doctor Stockmann does his best to prove his discovery concerning the reason of pollution in his town. However, there is an interaction between his own self and his social surroundings. All Doctor Stockmann's opponents are dedicated to their own self-interest even when it is at the expense of the common good. The Mayor is concerned with his own reputation, with his power, and with his sense of his own virtue. The liberal newspapermen, Aslaksen, Billing, and Hovstad are all corrupt because of their devotion to their own interests.

Doctor Stockmann finds his own self and identity through his community: "It's wonderful for a man to feel that he's done a service to his fellow citizens and his native town."(Act 1, p. 125). He derives his self-esteem from his relations with his fellowmen: "What a splendid thing it is to be in complete agreement with one's fellow-townsmen!"(Act 2, p. 137).

He struggles to get his right in freedom. He wants to be free to speak his 'mind on any subject on earth.' He is strong enough to resist the threats of dismissal by the Board of Governors. Even when he is announced an enemy of the people, he insists on serving his noble cause of protecting his fellow citizens from pollution: "I shall have done my duty to the people- to society... although they call me its enemy!" (Act 2, p. 148). In the process of realizing his self, Stockmann tries to find out his faults in order to avoid them in the future. He states once more that he wants to do his duty to society whatever the cost is: "Even if the whole world collapses, I will not bend my neck to the yoke!"(Act 2, p. 149). He thinks that man finds himself when his society is clean from all the corrupt bureaucrats. "He is unjustly called 'the enemy of the people' that's why he does not follow others like sheep. He devotes his life to what he thinks that is true." (Firouzjaee, 2017, 30)

The Mayor, Doctor Stockmann's brother, wants to be popular by convincing others of his great efforts to improve the town. His main objective is to contradict his brother of being too selfish to obtain his goal regardless of the social and governmental laws:

"You have an ingrained tendency to go your own way, whatever the circumstances – and in a well-ordered community that is almost as reprehensible. The individual must subordinate himself to Society as a whole- or rather, to those authorities whose duty is to watch over the welfare of Society."(Act 1, pp. 113-4).

The two brothers are not on good terms with one another. Accordingly, each one wants to prove that his thoughts and way of living are better than the other. However, Doctor Stockmann is more rational and enthusiastic to solve the problem of pollution. Thus, he does not mind stating that the Mayor himself has discovered the reason of the pollution if the result is for the

sake of the town. Obviously, he cares for public good more than his own interest. This play asserts "too strenuously the need to 'break through' the general, imposed pattern of life and thus win freedom by choosing on one's own responsibility." (Jump, The Critical Idiom: Tragedy).

Ibsen's Doctor Stockmann believes in his own principles and conscience. He challenges the social circumstances enforced by his faith in his conscience: "Who the devil cares if there's danger or not? What I'm doing now, I'm doing now, I'm doing in the name of truth and of my own conscience." (Act 3, p. 155). However, he fails to "construe a real conciliation between science and social context." (Bhuiyan, 2013, 344).

He is "debarred from that growth in personal awareness brought about by the anagnorisis or the discovery of tragedy,... the wholly good man who looks inward has nothing to contemplate but his own virtuous perfection." (Smith, 8).

At the end of the play, he declares that he has achieved self-fulfillment. He esteems himself highly as 'the strongest man in the whole world'. He intends to continue his struggle against the social constraints that limit his scientific investigation. He believes that "he should do his duties no matter if he may be called 'an enemy of the people' or his ideas to be called 'monkey tricks'." (Hooti & Davoodi, 2011, 206)

The last play here is *When We Dead Wake (or Awaken)*. This play views man's struggle from a new perspective. It goes deep into the characters' psychological traumas and can be regarded as a reflection of Ibsen's inner psyche. Ibsen believes that man's past creates a pessimistic present. So, his characters become unable to forget their past which, in a way or another, hinders their quest for personal identity: "In the modern plays of Ibsen, there is a break with the past, but it is not a liberation from the past... *When We Dead Wake* a more debatable instance. Ibsen had no optimism about optimists: he depicts them as weaklings... who fall headlong into pessimism." (Bentley, 1972, 193).

The characters in *When We Dead Wake* may be viewed either as individuals, symbols or types. Raymond Williams finds that this "drama is enacted by symbolic creatures formed out of human consciousness; puppets if you like; but not human individuals." (1952, 73).

The translator of this play, Peter Watts states that Ibsen portrays himself in Professor Rubek's character:

He (Ibsen) bitterly reproached himself for having buried his talent, and blamed that for his present sterility. This terrible and difficult play should be read with that guilt always in mind. In Professor Rubek, Ibsen draws a man who has renounced his true love; he has sacrificed Irena his inspiration, for the sake of what he convinces himself is his Art. (Introduction 14).

It does not matter how one looks at this play, whether as a realistic, symbolic, or naturalistic drama, because its message is clear whatever it is classified. Of course, its message conveys the idea that the wrong way of searching for the self leads to disappointment and the loss of one's true emotions.

The three main characters in *When We Dead Wake* are confused in their struggle for self-knowledge. Professor Rubek renounces his true love for the sake of Art thinking that he finds his true personality in Art. He believes that happiness lies in freedom and independence, "there's a certain happiness in knowing that one is completely free and independent... and in having everything one could possibly wish for"(Act 1, p. 229). He wants to prove his artistic value whatever the cost is, "An artist first and foremost. And I was sick with longing to create the great work of my life"(Act 1, p. 246)

Professor Rubek loves the model girl, but ignores his feelings for the sake of creating a perfect work of sculpture. He turns his back to his beloved dreaming of fame and glory. Gradually, he destroys his emotional life and circles in vacuum to find his lost half. He marries Maia, but has no affection towards her because of the image of the model in his heart. Later on when he finds Irena, the model, he thanks her for all fame he has achieved after the sculpture of Resurrection Day: "Thanks to you – and I bless you for it – I achieved my aim. I wanted to portray the perfect woman as I felt she must awake on Resurrection Day:... And so I created her in your image Irena."(Act 1, p. 247)

Irena blames him saying that all he has done is only for his 'own glorification'. She accuses him of being "concerned only with his 'vocation', with the statue that would bring him glory, that would be placed in museums –'grave vaults' as Irena calls them."(Williams, 1952, 73). Rubek confesses his mistake. He discovers that his selfish way of proving his artistic value has been complete blindness which leads to self-destruction, "he is racked and tormented by the knowledge that he will never succeed – never in all eternity will he be free to live the resurrected life. He must stay forever in his own hell."(Act 2, p. 270).

In his characterization of Professor Rubek, Ibsen succeeds in giving "the reader the impression of experiencing a piece of reality." (McFarlane 466). He visualises Rubek's inner psyche to the reader. He depicts his swinging between looking for self-assertion, satisfaction, and complete disappointment. At the end of the play, Rubek and Irena think that they are free, but actually they go to a 'tight corner' where they 'can't go forward or back'. (286). However, they do not recognise this fact. Rubek promises Irena that "up there we will hold our marriage feast." (289). Thus, they still have hope although it is completely in vain.

Obviously, Irena, the model girl, starts as a beautiful lovely innocent girl whose sole ambition is to prove her identity in satisfying her emotional desires. She loves Rubek but she fails in hearing one word of love from him. She leaves him and turns to a prostitute: "Irena, the lovely and innocent woman, has become the naked poseur at variety shows... Irena has played out lust into madness." (Williams, 1952, 74). When her ghost meets Rubek, she thinks that she will achieve her ambition of getting united with him. Nonetheless, she arrives at a blocked corner as it is mentioned above.

Rubek's wife, Maia, wishes to find her true identity and freedom. She gets married to Rubek, but she cannot attract him. She feels that they live separately, so she gets desperate. After that, she finds happiness with the hunter Ulfheim. At the end of the play, she gets her freedom and sings triumphantly:

I am free, I am free, I am free!
No longer the prison I'll see!
I am free as a bird, I am free! (Act 3, p. 290).

As a whole, *When We Dead Wake* confirms the necessity of the search for the self. Rubek hopes to assert his artistic identity, whereas Irena and Maia try to prove themselves in sexual pleasure and freedom.

To conclude, self-assertion is a universal need for every one anytime and anywhere. This need is reflected in Ibsen's play's. The characters in *Ghosts*, *A Doll's House*, *A Public Enemy*, and *When We Dead Wake* seek to find themselves in society using different methods to accomplish their aims. They face social obstacles and try to overcome them. Anyway, they often fail in their quest. Ibsen's characters rebel against the society, the state, against the dominating rules and restricting social norms.

Ibsen summarises the relationship between the individual and society in his statement: "One is never quite without responsibility and guilt in relationship to the society to which one belongs." (Beyer, 1978 7). He portrays this relation as having various facets of: subordination, dominance, and adaptation. He thinks that the subordinate persons are socially acceptable, but once they get released from the dominance of the higher authorities in their society, they will be considered rebellious or abnormal: "As long as the subordinates adaptor seems to adapt to the dominants' view, they are considered adjusted; when they do not, and rebel, they are considered abnormal" (Bradford, 2007, 25). This is the case of Nora, Mrs. Alving, and Doctor Stockmann.

Ibsen's plays are a reflection of his own ideas, attitudes and mood. He wants to assert himself, but his way of asserting himself changes through his artistic career. He moves between his strong sense of rebellion, his self-assertion and his suspicion about usefulness of his own ideas.

Although Ibsen deals with the theme of self-assertion for all human beings either male or female, but he is more well-known for his feminist views: "Ibsen's women are mostly housewives, some of whom are however not satisfied with being excluded from public life. Confined within the limited domestic sphere, they are eager to participate in public activities." (He, 2008, 134)

Ibsen is really 'the father of modern drama'. He has made the theatre "a forum for the exposure of contemporary ills and not just a medium for entertainment and aesthetics." (Cohen, 2000, 217). He is one of the founders of Modern Theatre and is ranked as a distinguished playwright in the European tradition. He is well-known for tackling hot universal issues as those discussed in this paper.

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