Mother, Wife and Role model- Kristin Orjasaeter

* COMPARE/CONTRAST IDEAS OF ‘FEMALE EMANCIPATION’
* INTRO
* Addressed women’s complex quest for freedom in the late 1870s.
* Ibsen known to hold conservative views towards women.
* Obvious that a doll’s house seen as part of a dialogue between the two authors- during their interactions (Ibsen and Collett), he underwent a change of opinion in regard to the oppression of women/ women’s right to freedom which is demonstrated in a dolls house.
* **‘Ibsen sends an enormously important signal to the public of 1879 by presenting a female heroine’s battle for personal growth and giving her the same right to freedom as any man’**. P21.
* Although Nora **‘represents a dawning women’s rights emancipation movement’** as stated by Schyberg, Kristin goes further in stating ‘**that Nora is so much stronger than the real bourgeois women of her day because she has the self- respect they were denied. Nora is not a realistic image of a bourgeois woman of her time’. P21**
* Her role within the narrative is probable, however the strength demonstrated from Nora to **‘turns her into a possible utopian model for women of the future, allowing them to create a free individual identity’**. P.22 question if she is a good/correct example of female emancipation if she is an unrealistic image of a bourgeois woman??
* Read through the play with the emancipation ideology of Camilla Collett in mind to explore the theme of feminism from a different lens.
* **Camilla Collett’s feminism**
* Collett very much supported the notion that a **marriage** should be a fruitful union, a union which would promote mutual growth among **‘two equal partners with mutual duties to respect and guide each other’**. She argued that in the same way the husband was expected to teach the wife, the wife also carried this obligation for her husband. Although upper class men were educated and developed reflective minds and thus were considered superior, they seemed to lack in the area of moral standards whereas women were deemed more naturally refined in this regard. Therefore, through this argument men needed guidance from their female counterpart just as much as the wives did from their husband deeming the two to be equal within their marriage.
* **Explore ideas of emancipation through her marriage/ role as a wife:** the title of the play can draw upon a few underline themes and ideas relating to Nora and Torvald’s marriage. The motif of the ‘doll’ is significant when we draw the comparison to Nora. A doll is a toy, an object devoid of any thought or emotion and is a form of amusement for its owner.
* On the surface, Nora can be considered to very much adhere to these ideals as she appears as an ‘**eager-to-please, doll like wife, nearly a child.’**
* However, this image is **disputed** through the saving of her husband’s life which demonstrates that she is not a child but only upkeeps this façade in order to fulfil her longing for having and maintaining a family. RELATE TO EMANCIPATION??
* Relating Nora’s act of saving her husband’s life to Collett’s feminist ideology, this can be seen as a form of emancipation as ‘**by quest for freedom, Camilla Collett meant respect for women’s value and worth as human beings’.** The concept of respect and more specifically self-respect was of particular significance to Collett when it came to freedom, forwarding the notion that **‘to become free, women had to be treated with respect by their surroundings in order to be able to become aware of their worth, and then they had to do substantial inner work to gain self-respect.’** Ibsen very much explores this idea of self- respect being linked to ideas of freedom in the character of Nora. This is demonstrated in the strong sense of pride expressed by Nora in the fact that she was able to save her husband’s life and raise the money herself to pay off the debt stated in her dialogue with Krogstad: **QUOTE** (P.35). In this regard, Nora can be seen to demonstrate an example of emancipation through her own self-worth.
* The child-woman complex played by Nora is not a new kind of persona, harking back to the works of Goethe and Shakespeare. However, in this instance Nora is playing a very risky game as Torvald expects her to be obedient but as the narrative progresses the cracks in her façade begin to show as her ambivalent character comes to the fore.
* The concepts of hiding and keeping things hidden are inextricably linked to the character of Nora, right from the outset of the play. Whilst hiding things like the Christmas tree and her eating of the macaroons inside the house, she also hides her true characteristics, playing the role of his ‘squirrel’ and ‘lark’. Nora completely masquerades herself at the fact that she is the one who saved her husband’s life by borrowing money remains completely unknown to him. CAN BE INTERPRETED AS EMACNIPATION??
* When we depict the nature of Nora’s and Torvald’s relationship, it is clear that Torvald treats her as a possession rather than a partner who he treats as an equal.
* Ibsen even subtly hints that because Torvald covered up Nora’s father’s embezzlement and therefore saved him from public disgrace, Torvald bought his wife as an exchange. In this sense Torvald has always considered Nora as his possession from the outset of their relationship and this is also how Nora interprets their marriage: **EVIDENCE p.31**
* Ibsen is clearly forwarding the notion that their marriage could had been more successful if Torvald had treated Nora as an equal and less of a possession.
* The depiction of their marriage allows Ibsen to highlight ‘**two disparate ethical standards’.**
* Torvald’s being **‘based on his concerns about his own reputation in the perspective of society’** whereas **‘Nora’s ethics are based on her concerns about the welfare of the family as a separate unity’.**
* Although Nora could be considered to adhere to the typical expectations of a woman in bourgeois society by being bound to her family, it is within Nora staying true to her ethical standards that we can consider her to be emancipated as this is also a rejection of **‘the traditional interpretation of the husband as the family’s rational mind’.**
* However, linking back to Collett’s definition of a marriage in which both partners should be regarded as equals and despite Nora’s interpretation of marriage being very much in line with this definition, she must have a change in behavior if she ever wants her marriage to become this.
* In order to upkeep the dynamic of their relationship in which Torvald’s authority is held at the forefront, Nora constantly remains subservient to him, undermining her won talents.
* However, if Nora truly wants there to be a shift in their relationship, she must abandon her façade of the child- women as their marriage will never be equal if she maintains this.
* Subsequently, Torvald must also be willing to comply and allow Nora to live by her own standards yet this idea seems quite far-fetched according to the final discussion between the two but Torvald does seem to show the potential for change: **QUOTES p.32**
* In this play, Ibsen depicts the institution of bourgeois marriage as ‘**a masquerade where neither of the partners is honest to the other and women are traded as commercial objects rather than respected as worthy human beings.’**
* Although on the surface, Nora’s acts of rebelling and acting on her own accord (by saving her husband’s life) can be seen as a form of emancipation to an extent, this fact still remains hidden from her husband and within the marriage which draws upon the real issue.
* Ibsen is thus implying that in order for a woman to feel emancipated within her marriage both partners must be treated equally and be given equal opportunity and as this is not the case for Nora and Torvald they break up.
* Contrasted with Nora and Torvalds marriage, Mrs. Linde and Krogstad newly established relationship seems to depict the ideal marriage and thus can also serve to illustrate a similar point that equal treatment between partners is needed for a successful marriage to work.
* Unlike that of Nora and Torvald, their relationship is based upon a mutual realization of a need for each other. Krogstad has no objection to accepting the fact that he wants the guidance of Mrs. Linde, ‘**claiming he would have been different had Mrs. Linde stayed with him.’**
* Mrs. Linde can be seen to embody the ideals of natural female refinement demonstrated through Krogstad’s transition from a crook to a gentleman by the end of the play under the female guidance of Mrs. Linde.

Mrs. Linde openly stating how she wants to assume the role of a mother to Krogstad’s children is in her view not sacrificing herself but ‘**claims that she is fulfilling her need to be of use’**: **QUOTE.** Although adhering to traditional gender expectations, it is different in this case when Mrs. Linde wants to pursue the role of a mother as it brings her fulfilment, granted to her by her relationship with Krogstad. A parallel between Nora and Mrs. Linde can be drawn here as both wish to become mothers as a form of fulfilment, rather than seeing it as a sacrifice.

* As a result, Krogstad is pronounced the winner of play, being rewarded with a loving relationship in which both members acknowledge the importance of mutual respect and treatment within the framework of a marriage.
* In essence, both the couples of the play act to demonstrate Collett’s ideals when it comes to marriage to a certain extent but in differing ways. Nora and Torvald’s marriage did not conform to Collett’s idea of a real union and thus had to break up whereas Krogstad and Mrs. Linde seem to adhere to these ideals, so the potential of a successful marriage looks more promising.
* **Drawing further on the idea of respect and its significance in regard to female liberation,** according to Collett **‘only the respect of the surroundings can initiate the sense of inner worth necessary to start the liberation process’**. However, both Nora and Mrs. Linde do not fit this description as the idea of sacrifice, a concept relevant to both characters contradicts this statement.
* Mrs. Linde married a man out of necessity for financial support in order to aid her mother in her last years and provide an education for her brothers. In a similar fashion, Nora sacrificed her integrity and committed a criminal act in order to save her husband by forging her father’s signature and both females appear proud of their sacrifices, thus ‘**the play demonstrates that sacrificing one’s own happiness for the sake of other people’s well being was regarded as a female duty’. P.34**
* In her other works, Collett explores themes of female sacrifice and its destructive consequences yet here Ibsen subverts this notion, ‘**demonstrating how the habit of making sacrifices gives women self-respect’. P.34**
* Despite this, in the context of the 1870s, self-sacrifice for the well- being of others would not be enough for women to gain respect, particularly if it was initiated and carried out on the ethical standards of women themselves. The example of Laura Kieler, a Norwegian woman who Ibsen knew, can be used as an example and some direct parallels can be seen to Nora’s narrative. She married a Danish minister who was ill and she borrowed money to save his life without him knowing. She struggled to repay her debts and after this was uncovered, her husband rejected her, took away her children and she was put into an asylum. **(p35)**
* Nora’s final exit is an indication of a rejection of this notion thus depicting her as a utopian model as **‘in 1879 even the strength to make a break was a utopian female role model’**. **(p.36)**
* In essence the character of Nora doesn’t so much explore ideals of female emancipation through act but more through the rejection **‘of conventional Victorian womanliness’. P.36.**
* COMPARE TO ANNA AS NOT IDEAL