

Patriarchy and Gender Performativity in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*

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ABSTRACT: This essay considers sexual difference and gender performativity in Henrik Ibsen's (1828 – 1906) *Hedda Gabler* (1890). Actually Ibsen criticizes the social condition of Norwegian society during the nineteenth century. Furthermore Ibsen's plays concern fundamental values and rights of human beings. As a social reformer, he challenges social conventions that are at heart to personal development and liberty. His themes are universal freedom of speech, repression of women, the institution of marriage, business ethics, religion, education, and legislation. Through his plays, Ibsen shows that each human being has infinite worth. He shows that the patriarchal system in this play attacks women because the woman does not have an important role in family until she is marginalized and oppressed. This essay applies feminism by using sexuality, and the terms gender and feminine defined by Judith Butler (1956). Feminist theory aims at understanding the nature of inequality of women and focusing on gender politics, power relations and sexuality. It highlights the real life depictions in literature in the nineteenth century to show and criticize how women are oppressed and stereotyped, especially in literature, and underscores the drastic consequences of the unjust attitudes toward women. Patriarchy and phallocentrism can easily be seen in this play, i.e. a man is superior, intelligent, and strong, while a woman is inferior, passive and imperfect. Ibsen does not suggest the solutions to what was called 'the women question,' like problems that Hedda encounters in her family and society.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender, Gender Performativity, Patriarchy, Phallocentrism, Sexuality.

INTRODUCTION

The male and female reproductive processes are described based on the cultural concepts of male and female. The stereotypes which restrict female activities continue to be existing if gendered stereotypes are employed in scientific imagery as a male strategy. The assumption that women are sexually passive has become an established theory in patriarchal societies. In social interactions and androcentric writings female sexuality and female sexual organs are subordinated. The researchers scrutinize signs of suppression of women and its consequences in the play and how they deal with this situation. Ibsen makes many hints about the roles of society and how the female gender was treated at the time. He believes that women have a right to develop their own individuality, but in reality, their role is often self-sacrificial. Women are not treated as equals with men, either in relation to their husbands or society.

Since 1960 Sexuality has played an important role as a key theme in the feminist studies. Feminists argue that sexuality does not have a natural evolution but it is constructed in a social context; its definition, just like gender, has a cultural orientation. It means that culture largely shapes the different types of sexual behaviour. Meanings of sexuality are culturally and socially communicated before they are subjectively expressed. Human sexual drive is formed, transformed or repressed with social learning. The cultural identity of women is defined with the patriarchal concept of femininity. The patriarchal assumption is that female sexuality is fulfilled through male sexuality and defines it as a real phenomenon. Women's sexual identity is represented as a part of the phallic system.

Socialization that begins in the family and continues through patriarchal cultural institutions inculcates in men and women the dynamics of domination/subordination with regard to sexuality. Then it is projected that masculinity indicates sexual dominance whereas femininity points to sexual submissiveness. Thus hierarchical gender differentiation is extended to a hierarchical sexual demarcation. Sexuality is the motive that conditions human relationships.

Attitudes to women are cleverly illustrated in relation to their sacrifices, financial dependence, marriage and treatment as possessions. When Ibsen said the play was not about women's rights, he marked women as equal to men because he did not place them in a separate group. In *Hedda Gabler (HG)*, Ibsen effectively creates a contrast between the social norms within his own period and the themes within the story. Hedda Gabler's manipulative nature is a contrast to the social expectation of women during Ibsen's time. Women were oppressed to a certain extent; they could not engage in playful, provocative activities, much less in any position of power.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), the major champion of Ibsen's works in England, commented on the character of Hedda Gabler in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1994): "Hedda Gabler has no ethical ideals at all, only romantic ones. She is a typical nineteenth-century figure, falling into the abyss between the ideals which do not impose on her and the realities she has not yet discovered" (126). Ibsen's preliminary notes on *Hedda Gabler* shows: "They aren't all created to be mothers" (1998: 30). The researchers try to show the signs of suppression of women and its effects on them in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*. He shows that women are unable to attain individual self. In this sense, the social role of women becomes a binding force to limit their search for individuality. To clarify this point the researchers use the theories of the feminist thinker, Judith Butler. Although her theories may be different in details, the fundamental aspect of her thinking is the same. One can see how gender difference and phallogocentric view marginalize and oppress women in this play. Hedda is hunted by a phallogocentric society in which men abuse and control the other sex. Men in this play control the economic politics as well as local and sexual politics. Butler is "keenly attuned to the workings of phallogocentrism and heterosexism, her Derridean/Foucauldian 'agenda' leads her to emphasize and celebrate and celebrate resistance without contextualizing it culturally and historically" (Bordo 295)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A gender stereotype is an inclusive concept for those characteristics both women and men should have or the roles they should play. The gender stereotype is harmful when it limits women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, to pursue their professional careers and to make choices about their lives and life plans. It is for example based on the stereotype that women are more nurturing that child rearing responsibilities often fall exclusively on them.

Butler indicates how body conceptions are greatly influenced by different factors like, gender, subjectivity, and sexuality. Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1999) says:

the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex. (8)

Butler focuses on the relationship between matter, body, and language. Butler disagrees with other feminists about the interactions between language and body. She declares that they complete each other, and therefore cannot be intelligible in any other manner than is presented through language, another feminist like Luce Irigaray (1930) radicalizes the body/language relationship by opening up a space for the female body's articulation outside of language. This theory now plays a major role in feminist and queer scholarship. Butler argued that it was a mistake to assert that 'women' were a group with common characteristics and interests.

As Butler said, this approach unknowingly controls and reifies gender relations, which results in a binary view of gender which divides humans into women and men. He argues that feminists rejected the idea that biology is destiny, but they gave an account of patriarchal culture which assumed that masculine and feminine genders would inevitably be shaped by culture, with 'male' and 'female' bodies so that there would be no other way out of this destiny. That argument allows no room for choice, difference or resistance:

The misapprehension about gender performativity is this: that gender is a choice, or that gender is a role, or that gender is a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, that there is a 'one' who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today. (Butler 1993: 94)

Butler argues that sex (male, female) is seen to cause gender (masculine, feminine) which, in turn, is seen to cause desire (towards the other gender). This is commonly regarded as a kind of continuum. Butler's approach – inspired in part by Michel Foucault (1926–1984) is basically to smash the supposed links between these, so that gender and desire are flexible, free-floating and not caused by other stable factors. She suggests that certain cultural configurations of gender “have seized a hegemonic hold, and calls for subversive action in the present,” (Hubel and Brooks 189) like 'gender trouble' which means the mobilization, subversive confusion, proliferation of genders, and identities. In this way, woman's identities, gendered and otherwise, do not express some authentic inner 'core' self but are the dramatic effect of their performances.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Judith Butler argues that any definition of matter is logically incoherent if it is put beyond a linguistic context. She states that through language it is possible to understand matter. To do so we should know how matter can perform the concepts and structures in which it is seen. The following passage from Butler explains the relationship between the body and its signification:

The body posited as prior to the sign, is always posited or signified as prior. This signification produces as an effect of its own procedure the very body that it nevertheless and simultaneously claims to discover as that which precedes its own action. If the body signified as prior to signification is an effect of signification, then the mimetic or representational status of language, which claims that signs follow bodies as their necessary mirrors, is not mimetic at all. On the contrary, it is productive, constitutive, one might even argue *performative*, in as much as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification. (Butler 1993: 30)

Butler shows that if the body is separated from its linguistic context, one immediately has to view the body as a signified term. The body has no meaning beyond language. Butler demonstrates the relationship between femininity and materiality, she does not distinguish the interaction between language and male and female. However she does not mean that these two bodies have different functions before the distinction of sex is defined in language. This does not mean that the male and female bodies are the same for Butler, but that when they come into being, they are equally constituted and constricted by language. The oppression of women is imposed on the body through the use of language, but this act of oppression happens at a distance from the materiality of the female body. If a language does not supply ample opportunity for feminine expression it is a functioning of the culture and not linguistic coherency.

The production of language takes place in a social environment whose values are represented. In order to stop the social inequalities, the language should be compromised in a way that the equalities could be restored. Butler put forth a kind of compromise that can be accommodated in the current linguistic structure. When bodies are able to create new spaces where they can be represented through communities or labels, they can expose the linguistic structures that have previously excluded them.

In order to eliminate some social inequalities, this approach is suitable for the modern linguistic context. Butler accepts the fact that there are differences between both sexes. She argues that both sexes make similar uses of language. Language must show the similarities not the differences. If one uses the language for the purpose of comparison and clarification, bodily language would easily distinguish between the speaker and the subject. If the speaker is woman, her role as the subject differs from her body because masculine language prevents women from using the language directly. However, Butler cannot acknowledge the feminine body as a distinct object, it can be better understood when it becomes clear how both bodies work with the world.

Butler suggests that the use of language is made possible by the bodies, and the body itself and bodily language must be applied to the linguistic context. In a male-dominated society, the positioning of the body is not well designated. The female removal and repression are done through her body. This prevents her from becoming embodied, that is, it is difficult for her to enter the linguistic sphere. The differences between the female body and the male body is a point where women are excluded from the realm of language. Because she has no permission to use this linguistic space, it may be possible for her to enter a tangible space.

Gender Performativity and Phallogentrism in Ibsen's Hedda Gabler

In examining Hedda Tesman's character, the reader learns that Hedda was created in Henrik Ibsen's image of a woman raised without a feminine influence. This reflects Ibsen's own upbringing of ineffectual parenting, particularly from his father Knud Ibsen, which later had impacted on his own parenting style. Henrik Ibsen's portrayal of Hedda Tesman is therefore a direct consequence of his own disconnection with the parent-child

construct, as well as the absence of the crucial mother figure. Hedda cannot bring herself to acknowledge that she is pregnant and tries not to talk about it:

TESMAN. [Following.] Yes, but have you noticed what splendid condition she is in? How she has filled out on the journey?

HEDDA. [Crossing the room.] Oh, do be quiet---!

MISS TESMAN. [Who has stopped and turned.] Filled out?

TESMAN. Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see---

HEDDA. [At the glass door, impatiently.] Oh, you can't see anything. TESMAN. It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol---

HEDDA. [Curtly, interrupting.] I am exactly as I was when I started.

TESMAN. So you insist; but I'm quite certain you are not. Don't you agree with me, Auntie?

MISS TESMAN. [Who has been gazing at her with folded hands] Hedda is lovely--lovely--lovely. [Goes up to her, takes her head between both hands, draws it downwards, and kisses her hair.] God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman— for George's sake.

HEDDA. [Gently freeing herself.] Oh--! Let me go. (*HG*, Act I 230)

Unlike other women, Hedda is not interested in ordinary concepts with women like being a mother and having children. She tends to act as if she were a man and strongly like to show men's values and thoughts. She desires to work the impossible and the forbidden, without being an outcast, but her condition makes it impossible.

In many cases, Hedda is not willing to act and behave based on her emotions, does not admire Tesman for the slippers his Auntie Rina embellished from her sick bed. She addresses Tesman's Aunt Julie by her first name, or even does not visit the dying Aunt Rina at the end of Act III, in which Hedda responds "No no, don't ask me to do such things. I don't want to look on sickness and death. I want to be free of everything ugly" (*HG*, Act III 279). Hedda, like Henrik, does not feel any natural instinct to nurture or preserve and honour the family unit. She is uneasy within this stereotype, and does not wish to be submissive. She perceives the current role of women as those who have relinquished any self-expression outside of home and marriage. For Hedda, life in a supporting role is unsatisfactory, and intolerable. Ibsen's experience with motherhood led to his portrayal of Hedda Tesman as a woman completely lacking affection:

BRACK. No, no, I daresay not. But suppose now that what people call—in elegant language—a solemn responsibility were to come upon you? [Smiling.] A new responsibility, Mrs. Hedda?

HEDDA. [Angrily.] Be quiet! Nothing of that sort will ever happen! (*HG*, Act II 174)

Throughout the play, Hedda systematically rejects all the elements of marriage and womanhood. Her mother had seemingly never played a role in her life. The reader is drawn to the absence of Mrs. Gabler as there is an extreme prevalence of Hedda's relationship with her father versus the absolute lack of the mother. Her mother is indicated as being absent for a prolonged period of time at the nostalgic reminiscence of Eilert Lovborg visiting Hedda when they were younger, in which only the General is mentioned being present. Hedda's masculinity was driven by her lack of a feminine influence. Irigaray believes it is the structures of language and thought through a challenging writing practice that takes a first step toward a woman's discourse, a discourse that would put an end to Western culture's enduring phallogentrism: "To claim that the feminine can be expressed in the form of a concept is to allow oneself to be caught up again in a system of masculine representations, in which women are trapped in a system of meaning which serves the auto- affection of the (masculine) subject" (Irigaray 122-123). Hedda's animosity is shown in her hatred of the fixture of femininity, Thea. She is beautiful, with thick healthy hair, and entirely ready to assume the motherly position that Hedda has such aversion to: "the girl with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off" (*HG*, Act I 232). Thea is comfortable assuming the role of motherhood to her husband's children. She is also thoroughly prepared to put her own ambitions aside when she helps her lover, Eilert Lovborg. This ingenious masterpiece, metaphorically the child they created together, is only attributed to the man and his contributions, and therefore undermines the female role in its creation. However Hedda is silent about many things during the story up to the end of play. Her silence is created by the phallogentric society. As Phallogentrism is an effort to oppress and silence woman, it denotes a system that privileges the phallus as the symbol of source of power. The word phallogentric is stemming from the idea that the structure of language is centered on the phallus. Cixous says, the female body in general becomes unrepresentable in language; it is what cannot be spoken or written in phallogentric symbolic order. Cixous and other poststructuralist theoretical feminists are both outraged and intrigued by these possibilities for relation between gender and writing (or language use in

general) that Lacan's paradigm opens up. According to Cixous in her book with Clement, "the crumbling of this way of thinking will take place through a Derridean-inspired, anti-phallo/logocentric philosophy of indeterminateness" (65). In literary works it can be defined as the privileging of the masculine (the phallus) in understanding meaning or social relations.

In contrast to Hedda, Thea is willing to be superior and appreciated. She does not admire her, but Hedda does this just because she thinks that she is subservient to her male rival. This disapproves of Hedda's thoughts because it prevents her from understanding and empathizing with Thea, which is itself a sign of Hedda's independence. Later, when she is no longer able to believe in Lovborg and his "vine leaves" (*HG*, Act II 486), she no longer has anything to live for, as Thea, the man whom she selected to live through and he was unable to persist through his own temptations, and in particular was able to give into Hedda's fixture of weakness. Furthermore, she had truly valued the control she had over Eilert Lovborg, and the knowledge that she had lost all of that control in that he had not followed her word about suicide left her with nothing in her life to have power over. Ibsen successfully uses his own experiences with parenting womanhood to portray a woman made heartless in lieu of her virtual entrapment, ultimately pioneering feminism on behalf of the female sex.

Patriarchy and Sexual Difference in Ibsen's Hedda Gabler

Henrik Ibsen has shown Hedda as a woman who is not satisfied with herself due to two different factors; the way she has been trained and brought up and what is expected her to follow as a woman. Everywhere in this play, one can face these two aspects of this conflict between Hedda's traits. Hedda is faced with the impossible feat of trying to live with these opposing traits. The male role she embraces in her marriage to Tesman, her desire for power over Thea and Lovborg, and her use of her father's pistols conflict with her role as a perfect wife that Hedda must have in this male-dominated society. Because it is impossible for Hedda to clearly choose between the male and female sides of her life, she tries to live a dual role by keeping her male beliefs and actions hidden. Many times, she does not speak openly, nor does she act in a manner that completely reveals the duality of her life. However, the final acts of the play reveal that these attempts to work out a compromise between her wish to behave as a male and her desire to conform to expectations of her as a woman will never work as she wants it to. Thus, Hedda kills herself and her real role rather than live a life that is not truly her own. From the beginning of the play Ibsen manages to show that Hedda feels and acts like men rather than a woman and this can be more obvious in the case of treating her new husband with an emotionless mood. An example of this is when Tesman yelps with joy when Aunt Julie gives him his old slippers:

TESMAN. My old morning-shoes! My slippers.

HEDDA. Indeed. I remember you often spoke of them while we were abroad.

TESMAN. Yes, I missed them terribly. [Goes up to her.] Now you shall see them, Hedda!

HEDDA. [Going towards the stove.] Thanks, I really don't care about it. (*HG*, Act I 229)

Though Aunt Rina had made them for Tesman many years ago, Hedda, cold and calculated, plays the role as a man and does not take to her husband's slippers with any interest. Marriage has been a major norm of society for as far back as history has been able to record. Each society has its own rules as far as marriage, and its own particular form of marriage; not every society has the same form of marriage, and with each form comes different roles that each partner must abide by based on their gender.

In fact, gender roles have been a significant aspect in marriages, as people can see from the records of society. In society, men are expected to abide by the roles society places before them, and women are to do the same. Men are expected to be the bread-winner of the family and support all the members of family financially, while the women take care of the house and the family. Women have been expected to be submissive to the husbands' needs, and the men are expected to be confident enough and tough skinned. When a man can fulfil the roles society places on his gender he is then able to be considered a man.

Hedda was not well equipped with what was needed to cope with the mainstream world because of masculine training and its impressions on her living path. At her father's death, Hedda was faced with the reality that she was totally trapped within the domesticated life, of which she had no familiarity or previous exposure. She perceives her life as very much tedious and monotonous when she thinks and looks toward the future. Such entrapment creates an inclination towards freedom, of which she recurrently mentions. Ibsen does his best to show us something about the might's of females' freedom and to do so he takes the advantages of an involved woman to make it happen. The fact that this liberation refers to death foretells Hedda's own death, and emulates Ibsen's view of the impossible female position of the time.

Since Hedda had desires which were simply manly, she had a deep hatred toward whatever associated with women such as being a sex doll especially for an average joe or being pregnant as a shame. At needing to create her own normalcy, she retains distanced relationships with other men, such as Brack and Lovborg, despite being a married woman. Hedda herself—an unwilling mother, undevoted wife, and a suicide—was viewed as unnatural; at the time, her unconventional ideas may also have been construed as unnatural; however she arrived at them naturally, by having a motherless upbringing.

In *Hedda Gabler*, Hedda's ability is both masculine and feminine; however, at the same time, this ability kills her at the end of the play. It is mere disappointing that despite all her capabilities, she is not able to make even a change in regard to the social values especially those associated with gender. When Tesman suggests that she is part of the family, all Hedda can say is, "Hm—I really don't know—" (*HG*, Act I 232). This makes her even more introverted and she prefers to say nothing and remain wordless. Being a woman and the social limits imposed on her due to her gender class, are to put chilling impacts on her desire and pave the way to feel being nothing important and deserving no respect even as much as her husband's cheap slippers. she will play with her pistols in an effort to amuse herself instead of actually voicing her male opinions.

Hedda chooses another way to make herself calm and that is pistols which are essentially with men. At the end of act I Tesman begs her not to play with the pistols, but at the beginning of the next act, Hedda is seen pretending to shoot Judge Brack. Thus, even after, both Judge Brack and Tesman try to prevent her from playing with these weapons, Hedda refuses to. This sounds like a cure for what she wishes to find but there is no hope to. What a fake and false comfort compared to its very reality.

HEDDA. [Goes up the room.] "Well, I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile.

ESMAN: [Beaming.] Oh thank heaven for that! What is it, Hedda. Eh?

HEDDA. [In the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn.] My pistols, George.

TESMAN. [In alarm.] Your pistols!

HEDDA. [With cold eyes.] General Gabler's pistols. [She goes out through the inner room, to the left.] (*HG*, Act I 274)

Hedda's only ambition as a female is to be a typical sort of woman in the society and to do so she prevents herself from showing her interest. Hedda tries to change her way of using power but still continues comparing herself with a smart man called Lovborg whose tact and elegance are greatly admired by her as much as makes her jealous of him. Hedda has known this genius since her childhood when she and Lovborg had an intense relationship. As a single young woman, she is not fully comprehending the emotions she felt. Thus, she sought another person to comprehend her. As soon as the relationship grew, her masculine traits sharpened, and Hedda realized that she could not love a man, because she wanted to play the role of a man herself.

Language of feminism adequately represents women should be developed in order to make themselves politically visible. "Given the cultural conditions under which women's lives were either misrepresented or not represented at all" (Cahill and Hansen 30), this linguistic development has been considered as an important progress. Hedda had learned that her actions should not be guided by her passions, and thus broke off when she began to fall in love with Lovborg. This was the first time she had manipulated someone else. Now in her late twenties, she has completely realized her male characteristics. However, she uses this power for humiliating purposes. In a cold act of manipulation, Hedda pretends to have been friends with Thea in their childhood days in order to increase Thea's confidence. Thea has a definite purpose in life, to fulfil her role as a woman and as a caretaker of the male in her life, whether the male is her husband or later Lovborg. Hedda lacks this strength to influence someone purely in the role of the female because she also wants to play the role of the man, so she must use other tactics. Thus, while Thea can use her power to care for and influence Lovborg, Hedda uses the only principle of femininity she knows to manipulate both of her admirers, Lovborg and Brack. She achieves this through her sexuality:

BRACK. But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple. HEDDA. Ah--that is quite another matter!

BRACK. A trusted, sympathetic friend---

HEDDA. ---With a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics---

BRACK. ---and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA. [With an audible sigh.] Yes, that would be a relief indeed. BRACK. [Hears the front door open, and glances in that direction.] The triangle is completed.

HEDDA. [Half aloud.] And on goes the train. (*HG*, Act II 252)

She encourages Brack's flirtation with her by telling him that her marriage to Tesman is only one of convenience. Hedda persuades Brack to believe her when she says that she had merely "danced herself out" (*HG*, Act II 251). Brack is emboldened by Hedda's availability and pursues the notion of a "triangular arrangement" (*HG*, Act II 252). Not only does Hedda's sensual behaviour towards Brack exhibit her manipulative nature, it also demonstrates that based on what the society expects, in some cases as a woman, she has conducted herself. Hedda's reference to her time being up shows the socially accepted view that women must marry. By conforming to this aspect of her society's standards, Hedda demonstrates that she has been labelled as a female and, in some ways, acts this part out.

When she marries, she tells Lovborg that he should not call her by her maiden name, Hedda Gabler, because it is a reality that Hedda has married Tesman and he should accept it as much as she does. However, Hedda becomes confident when she thinks, she has so much influence over this intelligent man and decides to challenge his masculinity. She deceives him into going to Brack's party and repeating his past drunken habits. Hedda is delighted then to find that as a result of this excursion, Lovborg's manuscript, his and Thea's child, has come into her hands. She burns it, destroying the bond that Thea and Lovborg had, and creating the situation for Hedda to take charge. Hedda quickly exercises this dominance by not telling the crushed Lovborg that she has the manuscript. She knows that Lovborg's regret and shame for apparently losing the manuscript will make him vulnerable to her influence. When he hints at his desire to take his life and escape the misery he has created for himself, the opportunity that Hedda had been waiting for has finally come.

She senses success and quickly gives him one of his pistols and advises him to die beautifully. Thus, when Brack comes to reveal the death of Lovborg, Hedda is momentarily satisfied. At the same time, she is upholding her virtues as the wife of Tesman. However, Hedda's satisfaction is soon replaced by disgust when she discovers that Lovborg has shot himself in the stomach at the singer's wretched apartment, searching for his manuscript. His death, far from symbolizing the courage and beauty that Hedda had intended, is instead revolting because it was unplanned.

While the story approaches its climax, Tesman, shocked about the death of his friend, decides to work on reforming the missing manuscript for the rest of his life, Thea is ready to be a source of inspiration for him. Hedda is unwilling to play the role as a female and pitifully offers to help Tesman and Thea. When her offer is denied, Hedda realizes that her femininity is of no use to her, even in her own house. Hedda is perceptive enough to see that soon Thea and Tesman will create a bond of companionship that Hedda could never create with anyone. Hedda has been trying to hide her male side for the sake of her expectations as a female. When she realizes that these efforts have been in vain, she is crushed. Thea will replace her as the new female of importance in Tesman's life.

She cannot now live like a male because society expects her to be like a female. Thus after these events Hedda decides to suicide. In the final acts of the play, she struggles with her masculinity so much when her character is challenged with the death of Lovborg. His death shows that she fails to take control over another's destiny. She does not have the power to control Lovborg and cannot achieve a role as a man. She makes a reluctant attempt to fall back onto the femininity that she knows, but she sees that Thea has already begun to establish a relationship with Tesman that Hedda never could have nor wanted to achieve. The only other possibility to play the role of a female is to be under the domination of Brack. The thought of succumbing to Brack's power by his blackmail and intentions of making Hedda his mistress is so horrible that Hedda knows that she cannot live that way either. She is unwilling to give up her freedom and power that she feels as a man and lives based on Brack's desires:

BRACK. Well, fortunately, there is no danger, so long as I say nothing. HEDDA. [Looks up at him.] So I am in your power, Judge Brack. You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

BRACK. [Whispers softly.] Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA. I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [Rises impetuously.] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never! (*HG*, Act IV 276-9)

This convinces Hedda that suicide is the only option. She cannot be the caretaker of Tesman because she has been denied that outlet, and now she cannot act as a male because she herself will be controlled by Brack:

HEDDA. [Without replying.] And supposing the pistol was not stolen, and the owner is discovered? What then?

BRACK. Well, Hedda—then comes the scandal! HEDDA. The scandal!

BRACK. Yes, the scandal—of which you are so mortally afraid. (*HG*, Act IV 269-71)

It seems that this is Hedda's weakness. For all her deliberate disregard of Victorian values and patriarchal restrictions, she is still considered as a victim to her surroundings and circumstances. She cannot control what society expects her nor can she control what she truly is. Remaining silent will not work, nor will pretending to be someone she is not. She is both a man and woman, and at the same time neither a man nor a woman but a human being who cannot tolerate the struggle between the forces brought upon her.

CONCLUSION

This paper was a study of the female character in a male-oriented society. Although *Hedda Gabler* deals with degenerated femininity, her situation clearly shows a depraved society as Ibsen considered it to be. He seeks to sacrifice the freedom and individual expression of its most gifted era to its own self-interest. Ibsen gives many dominant characteristics to Hedda and many feminine traits to her husband. She wants to live like a man so much that she goes mad. She is bored with the role that she is expected to play and criticizes severely others since she is frustrated and is treated with contempt. All of the women around her do their duty with pleasure and inferiority and even seem to embrace this subservience. What Hedda wants, she cannot do. She is so concerned with appearances and staying away from scandal that she sacrifices herself and her sanity.

Ibsen shows her pain and suffering and the slow methodical losing of her mind before her suicide. He is trying to point out that all women are not the same; they have different interests and goals and that it is very much satisfactory for women to choose what they want to do for themselves without society or men telling them what they should be interested in doing. A motherless heroine allows Henrik Ibsen to explore a major theme of his work, the ultimate isolation of women and their need for emancipation. She has no opportunities, no independence, and no interest in the female role she was supposed to assume.

Hedda may be represented as an idealistic heroine who stands against the patriarchal values. She is the one who is a victim of the phallogentrism, circumstances, a prototypical feminist, or a deceitful protagonist. Under the values of the Victorian age which expects a woman to observe, Hedda finds herself surrounded by a body and a repressive society forcing her to act and perform as expected. If Judith Butler's views on sex and gender are approached more closely, it becomes clear that Hedda's behaviour is not normal and she fails to make a balance between the kind of behaviour she wishes to have and the kind of behaviour expected by the society.

In her book *Gender Trouble* Butler argues that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman, it follows that woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, and a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the congealing is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. There might be necessarily no genetic factor in one's body, inherently forcing him/her to behave as a man or a woman. In other words, one may be a 'masculine' female or a 'feminine' male.

What Butler means is that gender is an act or a sequence of acts that is always and inevitably occurring, because it is impossible to exist as a social agent outside the terms of gender. She argues that sex and gender are discursively constructed and that there is no such position of implied freedom beyond discourse. If one accepts that gender is constructed and that it is not in any way inevitably connected to sex, then the distinction between sex and gender comes to seem increasingly unstable. In that case, gender is radically independent of sex, as Butler puts it raising the question as to whether 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps sex was always already gender, so that the sex/gender distinction is actually not a distinction at all.

For Butler, sex and gender are cultural constructions which define the body. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed. Butler has collapsed the sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already gender. All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence. This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a doing rather than a being. Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies will possibly deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender. Gender is not just a process, it is rather a particular type of process. Butler never suggests that every subject is free to choose which gender she or he is going to enact.

This issue becomes impartially visible in Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* when one juxtaposes Hedda and George Tesman's behaviour. Raised by his aunt, George is seen as a delicate and womanly-spirited character in the play. On the opposite side there is Hedda. Raised by a disciplinarian father, her manly behaviour catches man's attention more than George's womanly behaviour. Society, the very factor that gives power to George, deprives

Hedda the power. Since both George's and particularly Hedda's gender are not 'constructed' based on the expected norms of society, one shall notice the strangeness of these two characters when it comes to gender roles. Neither of them fit into the desired category that society demands, yet in a patriarchal society most of the chances or opportunities are in the favour of men, regardless of their gender performativity.

This provides a sense of freedom for George at least, yet it plunges Hedda into the deepest possibilities of oppression. In a society where the odds are already against women, things grow worse for a woman who is unable to perform her gender roles as expected. Hedda suffers from this issue. Since there is no escape from social constructions whose existence precedes hers, Hedda feels trapped inside the body of a woman being oppressed by the arbitrary social norms and constructs. She fails to compromise and seeks refuge in manipulating others as a way to escape from this prison and exert power and gain pleasure. Ultimately, her inability to conform the oppressive gender norms of the society leave her no choice to prefer death as her last resort; and since there is no escape from the society and the body enchaining her, she seeks refuge in manipulation of others and in death.

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