

**ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**



**WOMEN ROLE AND THE EFFECTS OF PATRIARCHY IN  
THE PLAYS: A STREET CAR NAMED DESIRE, A DOLL'S  
HOUSE AND HEDDA GABLER**

**M.A. Thesis**

**Mahmut Deniz**

**English Language and Literature**

**Thesis Advisor: Prof.Dr. Kemalettin Yiğiter**

**JUNE 2015**



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**ARZU TRAMVAYI, BİR BEBEK EVİ VE HEDDA GABLER  
ESERLERİ İÇERİSİNDE KADININ ROLÜ VE ATAERKİL  
TOPLUMUN KADIN ÜZERİNDEKİ ETKİSİ**

**ÖZET**

Kadınların temel insani haklarını tam anlamıyla yaşayamamaları geçmişten günümüze gelen önemli bir sosyal sorundur. Birçok usta yazarın kaleminden sorunun ciddiyeti defalarca farklı bakış açılarından değerlendirilmiştir, ancak soruna tam anlamıyla bir çözüm bulunamamıştır. Bu çalışmada daha çok kadınların geçmişten günümüze etkisini gösteren evlilik olgusu, kadın erkek arasında dogma haline gelmiş bir statü çekişmesi, kadınların erkeklerle eşitlik sağlayabilmek adına gösterdiği çabalar ve hatta dini etmenlerin bir çok kez olaya dahil olması işlenecektir. Bu sorunlar, Tennessee Williams'ın *A Street Car Named Desire* , Henrik Ibsen'in *A Doll's House* ve *Hedda Gabler* olmak üzere üç eserleri temel almakla beraber, Shakespeare'in belli başlı yapıtlarından olan: *The Tempest*, *Hamlet* ve *Romeo and Juliet* gibi örneklerle desteklenecektir. Eserlerin içinde kadına karşı soyutlama, statü olarak erkeklerin aşağısında tutma durumları ve evlilik olguları işlenecektir. Çalışmamda, ata erkil toplumun esiri haline gelmiş, erkek üstünlüğünü bazen zorunlu olarak bazen de kayıtsız kabul eden kadın karakterler olan Blanche, Hedda ve Nora'nın yaşamlarını ele alınacaktır.

**WOMEN ROLE AND THE EFFECTS OF  
PATRIARCHY IN THE PLAYS: A STREET  
CAR NAMED DESIRE, A DOLL'S HOUSE  
AND HEDDA GABLER**

**ABSTRACT**

Throughout the history women's not having been able to have their basic humanly rights has been a serious problem. These problems have been issued by many important authors from different perspectives; however, no profound solution has been found yet. In this work, the event of marriage, the rivalry over the superiority between men and women that has been a dogma, the struggle of women to have the equality with men and even the integration of religion into the subject will be issued. All these problems will be issued focusing on three main works: *A street Car Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* by Henrik Ibsen, along with using some of the remarkable works of William Shakespeare to support the ideas, such as; *The Tempest*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. In these works, the isolation of women, the women inferiority and the subject of marriage will be discussed. The paper will focus and cover the lives of three main characters; Blanche, Hedda and Nora, who either accept the superiority of men unconditionally or forcefully.

## **1. Introduction**

Throughout the history, the social problems have almost always been an important subject in literature. Within the social problems that human beings have experienced, the role of women has been issued in most of the authors' work. Women, as a matter of fact, have been the ones who were made suffer by depriving some of their essential humanly rights by patriarchal intuitions of men. Not only in the past, but also today the role of women is still suffering from a deep wound coming from the past and its effect still continues to haunt most women all round the world.

The root of this problem could also be stemming from religious texts. No matter how true or false ideas the holy books put forward about women, it is widely believed, generally through distorted minds of religious pioneers, that they mostly come after men. These ideas are believed to be issued in the holy books such as Qur'an and the Holy Bible. It is not a secret that we see the role of women in most lines of these holy books, however, both books, generally, brings negative results concerning the equality of women and men. So, one may consider the root of the problem through such a big power, which leaves no chance for women to claim the rights they should have, as they are meant to be inferior to men, just like Queen Victoria says in her letter to her newly married daughter: "...men are very selfish and the woman's devotion is always one of submission which makes our poor sex so very unenviable. This you will feel hereafter—I know; though it cannot said otherwise as God has willed it so". (Sheets 1983, p.73) Besides, referring to God as "He" and "Father" in the Bible, creates a big conflict in aspect of equality and, thus changes the roles in society. "The notion that artistic creation is a male domain has been central to Western patriarchy, an aesthetic corollary to the religious dogma that God the Father fathered the world." (Templeton 2001, p.303) Or the punishment of woman (Eve) after being deceived by the serpent, as it is written in the Bible: "God punishes Eve, and all women after her, with the

pains of childbirth and subjection to men.” (Bible 3:16) Just like in Bible, Qur’an also refers to women and men and claims: “Women have rights that are similar to men, but men are ‘a degree above them’” (Qur’an 2:228) or the claim that: “A woman is worth one-half a man.” (Qur’an 2:282) One may understand the root of the problems of women even from the perspective of religion. These powerful effects that may change the world easily can change the relations between women and men.

When we look into a brief history of women’s past, one can easily realize that the most essential women rights were given them not long ago. Furthermore, even the process to give women their rights started late, it has not been so easy to both put it into effect and have public accept the situation fully, as there are many men who still do not accept women as equal as them. As it was not so easy to perform such acts in the past, the process was also developing slowly, mostly by intellectual part of the society. For example, Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen interested in writing about women in his plays, besides, “He was one of the few Norwegian man who wrote about women being captives in their own homes, in their own marriages.” (Årboksredaksjonen 76) and he was also the one in whose works we can see “... an ever-increasing faith in and glorification of woman.” (Morris 1889, p.76).

Tennessee Williams interviews himself to reveal some unanswered questions and he asks the question: “But surely you’ll admit that there’s been a disturbing note of harshness and coldness and violence and anger in your more recent work?” (Williams 1998, p.181) and he answers: “I think, without planning to do so, I have followed the developing tension and anger and violence of the world and time that I live in through my own steadily increasing tension as a writer and a person.” (Williams 1998, p.181) the quotes give us an important aspect of that period when women were in such terrible condition, and Williams’ answer reveals that actually the time he lived made him write this way. As he goes on interview and another question comes: “Then you admit that this “developing tension, as you call it, is a

reflection of a condition in yourself?” (Williams 1998, p.89) and of course he gives the answer simply as: “Yes.” Furthermore, it is very easy to understand women’s role and statute through some important character of that time, for example sixteenth president of United States Abraham Lincoln says: “I go for all sharing the privileges of government who assist in bearing its burdens. Consequently I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage who pay taxes or bear arm, by no means excluding females.” (Bingham 2006, p.94)

However, naturally, women as human beings need and needed some rights to show their being the same as men, however, with so many restrictions by society, their role have been very difficult, as without basic rights they have been unable to express who they are. As part of the literature, many plays were written and staged at theatres to show women’s role in a patriarchal society. Author’s ideology of letting women to be freely a part of human being and to reveal their natural eligibility to act as free as men, was great approach to let women move one step forward in their act of gaining their basic rights. As a result of the restrictions women have had, the marriage, naturally, has also been a suffering phenomenon and their home a prison. Having no basic rights, women have been potential victims in marriages as shown in plays, such as; *A Streetcar Named Desire* by William Tennessee, *Hedda Gabler* and *A Doll’s House* by Henrik Ibsen. Along with these three main plays, William Shakespeare’s famous plays, such as; *the Tempest*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* will also be shown as examples that fully supports the approaches towards the women role and their role in marriage and their unconditional obedience and dependence of men in many aspects. In all these plays the most common aspects were that women role was issued showing the patriarchal effects on them, on their change, their marriages, reactions and even sufferings. In my essay, by focusing on patriarchal effects on females and their relations with men along with their marriages, I will mainly discuss the role of women in a patriarchal society and the outcomes of patriarchal approach towards women.

## **2. Blanche's Victimization by Patriarchy in *A Streetcar Named Desire***

In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the character Blanche Dubois is the best example of women victimization through a patriarchal society. Whenever she tries to perform an act which may exceed the rights women were given, Stanley Kowalski, husband of Stella Kowalski, would prevent this to happen in a rude and abrupt way. The rudeness from men presents itself in, for instance, the scene when Blanche enters the room where men playing poker on the table, as a sign of politeness, she expects men to get up for her, however, in scene three as Blanche enters the room and says: "Please don't get up." Stanley answers: "Nobody's going to get up, so don't get worried." Along with Stanley's mockery, this scene shows the act of rudeness with leaving Blanche's expectations down as a woman waiting to be respected. Another small detail also exemplify Stanley's rude act when he sees Blanche, he is trying to find out if she is going to stay over in his home and asks her in a vulgarly tone: "You gonna shack up here?" So, actually Stanley is far away from being polite, that's why Blanche describes Stanley in her own words as: "He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one!" (Williams 1998, p.72) Kowalski, as the example of patriarchal society, is a rude and aggressive character who treats very rude and violently to Blanche as he sees her as a threat to his superiority. "Vlasopolos maintains that Blanche is victimized by a 'gender-determined exclusion from the larger historical discourse' and because she is a threat to 'the dominant discourse of patriarchy' " (Kolin 1998, p.58).

## **2.1 Stereotypical Approach of Stella to the Masculine Society**

As Stella draws a typical woman character, she is much more different from Blanche and she never rebels actually against her husband Stanley's behaviors. Actually, Stella portrays the ideal woman type for Stanley Kowalski. According to Harris, "Stella could have had 'a creative potential' even greater than that of Blanche, [but] is so acclimatized to this unwritten but very palpable code [Stanley's patriarchy] that she never questions it." (Kolin 1998, p.60) However, having been from an upper-class family in the past, Blanche never accepts the way Stanley acts, and even though she is no longer rich and a part of any upper-class, she still pretends to be like one of them, and acts like one, besides she is still very sensitive about her age and beauty, too as she believes these could be merits of a woman that should be cared by most men. A good example of patriarchal strike was given in the play at dinner; upon Stella's request from Stanley to help her clean the table, "He hurls a plate to the floor" (Williams 1998, p.107) and furiously answers: "Now just remember what Huey Long said - that every man's a king - and I'm the King around here, and don't you forget it." (Williams 1998, p.107)

## **2.2 Blanche's Acceptance of Masculine Power**

As a typical woman type, Stella has no complaint against Stanley and for her, the only way of happiness is to have a male companion, however, even Blanche fights back to Stanley's strict masculine behaviors, her love and desire to Mitch gives us some clues that she is also the one who actually depends on man, however, this love and desire not only goes to Mitch, but also, in the scene one, at the beginning of the play, to Stanley himself.

“BLANCHE: I'm going to ask a favor of you in a moment.

STANLEY: What could that be, I wonder?

BLANCHE: Some buttons in back! You may enter! How do I look?”

Blanche desires for a male partner, no matter how rude they are, as she even wants to attract a man like Stanley with her beauty and physical appearance. This act clearly proves man superiority over women as well, because even Blanche does not want to miss the opportunity of being appreciated by a male. Furthermore, Blanche's contact to Shep Huntleigh for financial support is also an example of dependence on men. Although she is totally against Stanley's physical abuse to Stella, and she thinks she would be happier without this physical abuse by Stanley, she, at the same time, tries to find the solution with another male; Shep Huntleigh.

### **2.3 Use of Masculine Weapon Against Purity of Women**

In play, Blanche and Stanley actually have a common sin that was committed. Blanche, after her homosexual husband, Alan's death, spends some time with other men to be able to forget about the grief that came with the death of her husband. The reason that she wanted to spend time with men is also that she wanted to prove that she is still beautiful. However, these acts of her brought her a very bad reputation and she was almost considered to be a prostitute by both Mitch and Stanley, and impureness of Blanche caused Mitch to fall back from loving her, as his lonely mother would not be pleased to hear about Blanche's situation. As Mitch says after all he learnt about Blanche: "You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother." (Williams 1998, p.36) As soon as Mitch learns Blanche's past, his idea of marriage totally goes away and he becomes someone else. He approaches Blanche and tries to sexually abuse her, and when being asked by Blanche about what his intentions are, he replies:

MITCH: [Fumbling to embrace her]: What I been missing all summer.

BLANCHE: Then marry me, Mitch!

MITCH: I don't think I want to marry you any more." (Williams 1998, p.120-121)



The scene proves that Mitch, after learning Blanche's past, tries to abuse her sexually, even though firstly, he claimed: "You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be – you and me, Blanche?"(Williams 1998, p.96) But, of course, impureness of Blanche suddenly changed his mind. Here the scene also proves the impudence of Mitch who gave the hope of love to Blanche and he also at first claimed that he is interested in her, but the idea that she is not virgin automatically gives him the right to have sexual interaction with Blanche without officially marrying her.

However, we know also that Stanley rapes Blanche in his own house, while his wife Stella gives birth in hospital. In scene ten, when Stella is in hospital, Blanche and Stanley are alone at home, after a harsh conversation between them, the situation turns out to be violent, and by catching Blanche's wrist, who has a broken bottle in her hand in case of protection, Stanley says: "We've had this date with each other from the beginning!" (Williams 1998, p.180) and then "She moans. The bottle top falls. She sinks to her knees. He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed." (Williams 1998, p.180) On top of all these, he still goes on living as if nothing happened, while this act causes Blanche to lose her mind and be sent to asylum. "Blanche finds herself in a genuine danger; the biological difference between male and female physical strength and the history of violence against women in patriarchy underwrite her interaction with Stanley, and point to rape as the final outcome." (Hudgins 2001, p.112) This aspect of men is also an important example which is mostly peculiar to men and shows us the advantage of being a man in such cases. Thus, generally considered to be a superiority of masculinity that could be used as a weapon against women.

#### **2.4 Men Superiority accepted unconditionally by Stella and Blanche**

No matter how happy Stanley and Stella look, the fact is that, Stella is just obedient and never lets any problem happen between her and Stanley. Since she is a typical woman of

that time, her reactions make us understand the superiority of man over women. For instance, the scene of physical abuse in scene three shows how dependent Stella is. After a bad quarrel between Stella and Stanley “She backs out of sight. He advances and disappears. There is the sound of blow. Stella cries out.” (Williams 1998, p.57) however, next morning Blanche rushes to see her sister Stella as she was terrified by the night of Stanley’s beating her, but she finds out that Stella, sleeping in her bed calmly as if nothing happened and when Blanche asks her “How could you come back in this place last night? Why, you must have slept with him!” (Williams 1998, p.63) on Blanche’s questions, Stella answers calmly: “... I know how it must have seemed to you and I’m awfully sorry it had to happen, but it wasn’t anything serious as you seem to take it. In the first place, when men are drinking and playing poker anything can happen. It’s always powder-keg.” (Williams 1998, p.63) Furthermore, the same event repeats between the couple, Eunice and Steve who are Stanley and Stella’s neighbor. Steve beats his wife in scene five and she screams as she says: “You hit me! I’m gonna call the police!” (Williams 1998, p.75) but, the situation turns out to be the same as what happened between Stanley and Stella. Eunice comes downstairs and having a drink where she forgets about even the police and later Steve comes down and asks: “She here?” (Williams 1998, p.75) So, we can understand that these events repeat but always in favor of men.

A similar example to Stella's obedience is given in the play *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare as well. *The Tempest* is a play where the men's superiority or "patriarchy" is presented throughout the play. Prospero, for example, as the most powerful character of the play, shows his patriarchy even at the end of the play when the marriage takes place. We can see that the marriage is shown as male based as Williamson points out: "Prospero, the true patriarch, explains all significant information to Ferdinand, not to the dear daughter"(Williamson 1986, p.157), and daughter seems to be contend and obedient concerning the situation. No matter how much Prospero likes and values his daughter, he still

sees his own daughter inferior to Ferdinand, her legitimate husband. Being a woman, at the end of the play, Miranda's inferiority to men is shown by her own father, who valued her above all. So, just like in the situation of Stella subjection to men is obeyed and accepted by women unconditionally. They do not fight, do not claim right or cry for it, because, after all, it is what it has to be.

In modern life, considering Stanley's acts as normal behaviors would not be so easy because of the women rights and their role in modern society. However, for that period, as women lacked important rights, they had to obey rather than rebel. First of all, both women, Stella and Blanche, depend on men. Just as Stella who sees the only way of happiness through her husband, actually Blanche also sees this happiness through finding a husband. From the beginning of the play, along with Blanche's being shocked by the behaviors of Stanley and their bad relations, the issue of marriage is also a focus point. Blanche, before coming to her sister's house, had very difficult times because of men. She had a homosexual boyfriend who later was caught by her with another man and committed suicide. After all these, Blanche actually felt totally isolated and lonely without a man. Being also a teacher, Blanche left her job and started tackling with the problem caused by her husband. Her pain of losing him was doubled by his being a homosexual. Blanche's painful life stemmed from men, and the period she spent with her sister at her home was also a painful life mainly because of men, despite all, she is the one who looks for a relation with Mitch to maintain her life, as Stella asks her sister Blanche if she wants Mitch, and Blanche answers: "I want to rest! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes – I want Mitch... very badly! Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and not be anyone's problem..." (Williams 1998, p.81).

## **2.5 Blanche's dilemma of love and hatred towards patriarchy**

Blanche's approach to the subject of men differs in some way as she both hates them and loves them. She loves them because she is lonely and in need of a partner, but hates them due to Stanley Kowalski. However, after her relation with a homosexual boyfriend, she decided to give men another chance by trying to have a relation with Mitch, not to mention she tried to get closer to even Stanley. While she shows us the dilemma of love and hate towards men, she makes sure one thing to be understood perfectly clear that the men are all the same, they are not to be trusted. Step by step she makes her idea clear. Firstly, she deceived by homosexual friend and devastated, she did not lose hope and tried her luck with Mitch but no matter how closer she got to them, they always failed and disappoint her as they were always disloyal and unstable. She makes sure to show that all types of men, homosexual or straight, to be categorized the same, as she tries her luck with not only a straight man but also homosexual one, that's to say, Blanche clearly tries to prove that no matter what a woman does for men it is still hopeless, and thus they are unable to be nice towards women, the men are either deceiver like the homosexual friend of her or disloyal like Mitch.

## **3. Women Role and Masculine Effects in *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen**

The play *A Doll's House* turns out to present a different representation of women model, nevertheless, still deeply affected by patriarchal society. In *A streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche was victimized by patriarchal society and due to this, she ended up in an asylum, because of her being a threat to the masculine power of Stanley. However, the character Nora in *A Doll's House*, at the end of the play shows some feministic approaches toward the hitherto dominant patriarchal society, and leaves home. She does this act without considering its consequences though, as she prefers to venture out by facing the dangers of the outer world to the patriarchy “even if it brings alienation, familial breakup, the jeopardy created for the

children involved, or even death.” (Whiting 1997, p.137) Thus, the character Nora, unlike Blanche, “... leaves the “doll’s house happy, on her way to her much more modest workday home.” (Shideler 1999, p.189) However, although Nora seems advantageous due to her being rich, throughout the play, we see that the money is not the way of happiness as well, which play reveals another fact that the patriarchal effect is so strong that even the power of money cannot stop a typical woman in the “cage” (Whiting 1997, p.137) for a long time preventing her freedom.

### **3.1 Nora's Innocence of a Child with fatal mistakes**

As the play progress, Nora’s position in *A Doll’s House* is revealed. Nora’s fatal mistake is the matter of debt. She lies to her husband Torvald that she had the money from her father, however, she actually took the money from Krogstad who later in the play would blackmail her to gain his position as employer in the bank where Torvald is chief. Nora knows that Torvald would never accept the idea of a woman’s saving his life and she hides the matter as secret. She is so much afraid of that Torvald would one day find out the money was taken from Krogstad, she tries hard even to help Krogstad to get his promotion, however, since a woman hasn't got much significance at home, of course, Torvald would every time give the last decision about the subject however he wishes to . Thus, her mistake makes her suffer more than it should be in a patriarchal society and makes her to be totally dependent on her husband and his strong wills. This reveals another negative effect of patriarchy on woman, as she is totally incapable of doing anything. Her inability is revealed when Mrs. Linde comes and Nora finds out that she is poor and in need of a job. At the same time, Torvald was promoted to be the manager of the bank and is capable of taking Linde as employee if he likes. When Linde asks her if Torvald could give any position to her, she says: “He must, Christine. Just leave it to me; I will broach the subject very cleverly—I will think of

something that will please him very much.” (Ibsen 1879, p.22) As a doll in the house, she knows nothing but to somehow please her husband. The way Nora approaches the situation is rather childish, not because she just want to please her husband about the relevant subject, or lure him out with her affection, but also she generally gives decisions that she cannot predict the outcome and finally remains failed and disappointed as things turn out to be completely disastrous for her bad decisions. Experienced by her life and suffered a lot in outer world, Linde understands the way Nora approaches the subject and she says: “My dear! Small household cares and that sort of things!—You’re a child, Nora.” (Ibsen 1879, p.22).

### **3.2 Torvald as the Patriarchal Breadwinner**

The reason Torvald is the sole superior power stems from the lack of financial freedom of women of that time, and more importantly the stereotypical position of a woman as a housekeeper. The former usually triggers the latter event in a woman life. However, Nora’s being childish and being unaware of the real face of the world makes her accept the superiority of men blindly. Blindly, because she has already broken the masculine power and stereotypical conventions imposed to a woman, as “...Nora herself had to save Torvald by borrowing money and by working—two exclusively masculine activities forbidden to women in a bourgeois home.” (Shideler 1999, p.77) So, although we know that the men’s position as “breadwinner” makes him a superior power at home in that time, the problem does not stems mainly from who the breadwinner is at home. While the role of money is important in the play and determines the superior power, as Shideler says, “The family’s economic problems establish the play’s conflict, along with Torvald’s position of authority, which comes both from his economic dominance and from their joint belief in his superiority.” (Shideler 1999, p.76) it is also known that Nora proves her being half-independent at least by working and earning money. However, Torvald knows Nora has no other choice other than

depending on her husband, especially while she is blind towards such things, so she tries to be perfectly clear about the aspects of obedience and loyalty to her husband.

### **3.3 The Relation Between Nora and Her Father in the Past**

The patriarchal impact on Nora does not stem only from her husband, Torvald, but also her father. “Nora is a doll only in a metaphorical sense, having been spoiled by her father and now by her husband.” (Haugen 1979, p.103) As she says: “played with me as I played with dolls” (Ibsen 1879, p.161). As a “toy” in the house, Nora’s function for both her father and husband was the same, a source of amusement. In act three, Nora dresses her beautiful dress and dancing with Torvald. Suddenly Torvald, impressed by the “appearance” of her wife, says: “Do you know, Nora, I have often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life's blood, and everything, for your sake.” (Ibsen 1879, p.131) Which will actually appear to be an irony, as the danger he mentions happens soon after his speech, as Torvald shows his real face when he learns the matter of forged sign of Nora’s father for the money which she took from Krogstad, and thus Torvald says: “From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance –” (Ibsen 1879, p.135) This reveals us that he rejects his wife’s functions as a woman and, still wants her to stay at home exactly like a “doll”, because what concerns him is her appearance which is the only functions of her that remained. So, Nora, after so called the “great danger” happened, becomes nothing but a beautiful ornament in the house to amuse her husband. In act three, the dramatic scene occurs which reveals the title of the play itself when Nora is aware of her being a “doll” and exist only for amusement for her husband and her father at home and besides, she blames her father and husband for her ignorance and incapability, because she was nothing and did nothing, but only amused them, so she says: “I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I was father's doll-child; and here the

children have been my dolls.” (Ibsen 1879, p.142) So, Nora actually has been shaped into her father's desires in the past and she feels like following these steps with her husband, too. As Ibsen also stresses the dehumanization of women through patriarchal society, he accuses this community of turning nineteenth-century women into ignorant and useless beings “that a patriarchy which turns women into dolls clearly denies their humanity.” (Fisher 2003, p.101)

Nora and her father's relation could be compared to Miranda and Prospero in the play *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. Like in *A Doll's House* Nora, Miranda of *The Tempest* also undergo similar situation. The *Tempest* "both endorses and celebrates the dominant cultural narrative of the father's responsibility for educating his daughter and for settling her"(Miller and Yavneh 2011, p.137), which, actually, Prospero does for her daughter for "a prosperous and profitable marriage"(Miller and Yavneh 2011, p.137). So, one can understand that the portrayal of marriage is mostly associated to Sixteenth Century traditions in which the image of lust, or any sexuality and love removed from the marriage and social function of the marriage is given to the audience through Elizabethan era. Miranda, who is the victim of the society, is married by her father, according to O'Connell, represents "another example of the women whose role is that of object meditating between masculine desires"(10) or "masculine subjects"(O'Connell 1995, p.10).

Miranda, first of all, does not marry by her own decision, but because of her father, Prospero's decision. Her marriage is "brought about by the magic; it is part of Prospero's plan"(Ferguson, Quilligan and Vickers 1986, p.61). Although it pleases Miranda, it is still "designed by Prospero as a way of satisfying himself " ( Ferguson, Quilligan and Vickers 1986, p.61). As it is known that in Elizabethan era "daughters' marriages, in royal families at least, are designed primarily to please their fathers" ( Ferguson, Quilligan and Vickers 1986, p.61). So, the aim here is to please Prospero, who



takes his revenge on his enemies and succeeds, as similarly Nora's father who pleases his desires in the house and playing with his child like a toy, "a doll".

### **3.4 Nora's Desire to become the patriarchy itself**

Nora's deep desire of becoming like a man is actually revealed throughout the play, but she is incapable of expressing them in words. However, one can understand her dreams/desires as she says while she was working to repay the money she took: "Still it was tremendous fun sitting there working and earning money. It was almost like being a man" (Ibsen 1879, p.20). For her earning money, being the "breadwinner" is like being the dominant power in home, just as what her husband Torvald doing. Nonetheless, as Ibsen said in his notes for A Doll's House: "A woman cannot be herself in modern society. It is an exclusively male society, with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who assess feminine conduct from a masculine standpoint." (Ledger 2008, p.6) When we look through the meaning of being a man, it is something that related to religion as well, which itself is a very big power to influence the society, so this point could also be associated to religion, because, as one knows, God is referred as "He" and as "Father", so this is a big aspect in changing the roles in society. "The notion that artistic creation is a male domain has been central to Western patriarchy, an aesthetic corollary to the religious dogma that God the Father fathered the world." (Templeton 2001, p.303) Thus, as a man, this is Torvald's function and as a woman, it is Nora who should respect and obey. Since Nora is a straightforward representation of a typical house-wife, she already agrees the power of dominant men. Instead of fighting this power, she, most of the time, believes it would be the right decision to just obey it, as it is simply the facts of the world that all women must accept. Although at some point she tries to claim the power herself by taking the position of a man, but that is only because she envies it and wants to feel the power she had never reached in all

her life. While she is doing it in the play, she is still scared of being caught by her husband, which is to say, she wants to feel the power of a man, she becomes like a man until Torvald shows up, because his appearance means also the end of her dreams and desires. So, Nora is still under control of a man, even though she takes the position of a man because she can take the power only if her husband allows her to.

### **3.5 Linde's forceful succumb to the Money**

Character Mrs. Linde is another good example who is spoiled by man, and who depends on man. Linde is the character who left Krogstad for the sake of another man's richness to look after her family. However, after her husband's death, she decides to marry Krogstad for the same reason. There is no life for Linde without a man. While Nora broke the typical woman role at the end of the play and left house and man patriarchy, "...Mrs. Linde, has decided to return to the patriarchy which Nora has rejected." (Shideler 189) While we see the character Linde much more experienced and expect her to be more independent to man, she turns out to be dependent, too. However, Linde is desperate because of the fact that she has children and a sick mother to look after, thus she take refuge under the shelter of the man patriarchy who can help her maintain her life in a better way. So, Linde, actually juxtaposes a pragmatic and, at the same time, a typical woman character, because what she exactly needs is not a man companion but only man's power as "breadwinner", in exchange for a restricted and deprived freedom, that's to say, for her family, she sacrifices her freedom and accepts the rule of patriarchy.

### **4. Hedda Gabler and the Problem of Marriage in a Patriarchal Society**

The play Hedda Gabler, exhibits the composition of Nora's lifestyle and Blanche's personality in the character Hedda. Hedda, while fighting against the conventional women

roles in society, she at the same time, proves her power as a woman model, which is far beyond the stereotypical characters. Nora has a victorious condition at the end as she slams the door and leaves the house while Hedda claims her victory by taking her own life herself. On the other hand, Kowalski's wife Stella for instance, accepts her fate as is, and obey the superiority of men unconditionally, like Shakespeare's Juliet. However, the reason of their need for a victory stems from their suffering from a patriarchal society. Patriarchal effects from the society means a monotonous life for Hedda, which includes boredom and uselessness for her, as for Nora, it is a big obstacle which prevents her to express herself through her own, real identity. Thus, while the patriarchy is a big problem for both of these women characters, their relieve depends on different reasons of patriarchal society.

If we look carefully into both characters' past, one can clearly understand that both of these characters influenced from their fathers. As mentioned before, Nora was like a doll for her father and thus remained as a doll for her husband too, however, Hedda, who lost her mother quite early, was brought up by her father and, thus, followed the trait of her father as a model. As a good representation of patriarchy, while Nora's father applies his patriarchal behaviors and aspect on Nora, Hedda's father influences his daughter with his masculinity. The only difference between two characters is that Hedda was grown up with patriarchy, but Nora was grown up under patriarchal power. And thus, the women roles are represented in different dimensions in these two plays.

#### **4.1 Hedda Gabler or Hedda Tessman**

Although Hedda is married to G. Tessman, the title of the play is Hedda Gabler, rather than Hedda Tessman which, from the beginning of the play, automatically creates a conflict between married couple, Hedda and Tessman. The reason for this is answered by Eyre that

“she is to be regarded rather as her father’s daughter than as her husband’s wife.” (6) According to Ibsen: “Hedda was born when her father was already an old man and had left the army in slightly discreditable circumstances.” (6), and Hedda, thus “...is left to vindicate her father’s reputation.” (6) As Hedda lost her mother when she was a child, she spends most of her time with her father, who is a general, so, this makes her to follow her father rather than her mother. As Ibsen indicates, “She really wants to live a whole life of a man.” (Eyre 6) Besides, in the play, it is also clear that she has the masculine behavior rather than feminine, as she is fond of riding horse and playing with gun. So, the way she behaves is masculine, which she sees as the advantageous, because, the more she is seen as female, the worse status she gets in society. Thus, again, the root of the problem goes back to patriarchal power of the society, and how it influenced Hedda in the life.

#### **4.2 Feministic Approach towards Stereotypical Society**

“Hedda may be a tragic or mythic figure; first she is a woman.” (Solomon 2004, p.50) No matter how Hedda behaves or what she does to show her prominent aspect as masculinity, the real problem is that, as Solomon implied, she is still “a woman”, and thus, a victim of patriarchal society. “...it’s quite reasonable to conscript her to the ranks of fighter for the freedom of women while characterizing the men in her life as her oppressors” (Eyre 5) so it is understandable that her position in the life as fighter results from her being in a patriarchal society, because it is men who is the “oppressor”, so what she does is to show her feministic aspect to the society of men by fighting against her “oppressors”. However, despite her pregnancy, she suicides because she does not want to accept the patriarchal power. So, briefly, the play is actually “‘about’ feminism and patriarchy.” (Eyre 5) However, instead of obeying the patriarchy till the end of the play like Nora, she fights against it from the beginning. It can be understood from her marriage to Tessimson that the whole marriage, from

the beginning of the play, is actually based on a fake act of Hedda who maintains to achieve her goals but eventually fails. As Scolnicov says, “Hedda Gabler ends where the final scene of *A Doll’s House* begins.” (98) That’s to say, Nora awakes much later than Hedda in the play, but the patriarchy surrounds both characters no matter what.

### **4.3 The Corrupted Marriage of Hedda with Tessman**

When we look through the play, we can see that actually, as a woman, Hedda suffers from patriarchy, because, when she was alone she had the power, she lost it with Tessman, and the reason of her marriage with Tessman was “...only because there is no other feasible option in life.” (Rustin 2002, p.123) So, here comes the biggest problem between two characters Hedda and Tessman; the marriage. Women of that time were married, because they were supposed to, so as Hedda. While reading the play, it is easy to see a forceful marriage, that’s to say, Hedda is married someone whom she has never wanted to marry. So concerning her suicide, which is again related to resisting masculine power, “Hedda Gabler kills herself rather than have a child by a husband she does not love.” (Rustin 2002, p.12)

Hedda and Tessman, who are officially married couple, throughout the play exhibit a problematic relation. Although they are married, for instance, as mentioned above, Hedda still has the surname as “Gabler” not Tessman. The problem of communication between this married couple prove Hedda’s dissatisfaction with Tessman. Only Hedda is dissatisfied because, Tessman has no problem with her, as he is the one who loves Hedda. However, from Hedda’s background, in the exposition part of the play, we understand that Hedda had a relation with the character Lovborg. And since she is in the possession of somebody who she does not love, her actions turn to be revenge against men. “Confined to the narrow range of activities suitable to a woman of her station, Hedda compensates for her lack of control over her destiny by manipulating the people around her...” (Paris 1997, p.60) Her method of

revenge as “manipulating” helps Hedda to be able to control men community around her, so that she will control them, and thus avoid patriarchy of men, instead of being under control of it. Thus Tessman is actually a toy rather than a husband for Hedda.

#### **4.4 The use of gun as phallic symbol in the play**

The way of suicide that Hedda commits reminds us, again, use of a male symbol in her suicide. She uses a gun to suicide, which is symbolized as “phallic”. The guns were the things that were left for Hedda by her father, and Hedda used them to possess a masculine power. “Symbolically, they supply her with her defense against male invasion; with them, she has a strength—and a power to shock—not available to most women.” (McFarlane 1994, p.122) her being fond of pistols is the same as her being fond of masculine power. Her guns “...keep Lovborg at a distance, and deter Brack—through significantly, not for long.” (McFarlane 1994, p.122) however, she is the one who is responsible for the death of Lovborg as she provided him with her pistol, but the Judge Brack discovers that the pistol belongs to Hedda as he asks Hedda if the guns are in the place where Hedda kept them: “Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?, to which Hedda answers: “No.” then it comes the crucial point of the play when Hedda loses power against the men and has to succumb as Brack says: “Well, you need not. I saw the pistol found in Lovborg’s pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.” And when Brack claims that the discovery of the pistol means Hedda’s scandal and only he can save her by lying to the police, and finally Hedda spells the words of her loss against the men: “I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and demands. A slave, a slave then! [Rises impetuously] No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!”(Ibsen 1891, p.53)

#### **4.5 Hedda's Desire for Masculine Power**

The relation between Hedda and her old friend Mrs. Elvsted who represent a typical feminine character reveals an opposition between them. “Hedda cannot help a man create, either biologically or intellectually, because...she desires to arrogate the masculine role to herself. Thea is willing to take the passive role.” (Templeton 2001, p.209) Thea is a good example of the character Stella or Mrs. Linde, as both of these characters accept the masculine power. As Egan describes Mrs. Elvsted: “The mere look of Mrs. Elvsted, her mild, wondering face, her pathetic voice, her intense trustfulness, almost brought tears to the eyes!” (Egan 1997, p.227) From the description of Mrs. Elvsted, we could understand she is the typical woman who exactly fulfill to be a woman in a typical and obedient sense. Throughout the play, she shows how to serve or obey the rules that were given by man, as she never rebels against the patriarchal society.

Hedda Gabler, throughout the play, shows her hatred against the marriage, or whatever is related to men. Thirsty for power over the men, Hedda is really strong character both in mind and personality. Conversation between Hedda and Judge Brack reveals her hatred for marriage and men, for instance, Brack asks: “Not even—the specialist one happens to love?” and Hedda answers: “...don’t use that sickening word!” (Ibsen 1891, p.53) most of her hatred is due to her limited acts in life, because of being a woman, she has many retractions, that is to say, she cannot do what men do, as she says in her conversation with Lovborg. Lovborg asks if she loved him when they were together and young, and Hedda answers: “No, not quite.”, then Lovborg asks: “What was your motive, then?” and the answer by Hedda reveals something important related to women: “Do you think it quite incomprehensible that a young—when it can be done—without anyone knowing—should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which—she is forbidden to know anything about?” (Ibsen 1891, p.30) the quotation explains the reason that Hedda left Lovborg while they were quite close friend,

and the explanation comes again with the domination of men and patriarchy. She wants to see what men see, do what they do or think what they think, as she knows that she will have real freedom with it.

#### **4.6 The Bitter Victory of Hedda and Blanche**

If we evaluate the situation of Blanche and Hedda together, naturally, we may get some similarities between these two characters. As mentioned before, Nora was representing a typical housewife almost to the end of the play, however, both Blanche and Hedda fought back the power of patriarchy and, eventually, Blanche ended up in asylum as she lost her mind due to Stanley's strict masculine behavior and Hedda ended her life with a gunshot. That is to say, actually both characters lost the fight against the men. However, both characters' life was ruined by men, as well. Similarly, both characters distinguish themselves through their intelligent characteristic. Thus, women's being intelligent in a patriarchal society means declaring a fight to men by them, because patriarchy does not allow a feminine character to be superior to them in any way.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The women problem, as mentioned above, is very complicated which starts even from the creation of the earth and which is actually divinely claimed that women are inferior to men. No matter how differently these religious extracts were interpreted by many feminists, but when the subject matter is the religion, there is and have to be an obligatory situation for them to obey or not to discuss about, since questioning religion itself was another problem that not only blamed feminists who could speak against the religion, but the situation could result even in death for them. Generally, these plays represent the gender roles and their problems in a similar way to show the women role in a patriarchal society and apart from



some religious aspects, in three main plays, *Hedda Gabler*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *A Doll's House* and being the sub titles in the thesis, Shakespeare's *the Tempest*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, one may see that the characterization is quite similar to each other. Hedda is the revolting woman, while Mrs. Elvsted is a typical woman model. Blanche and Stella's relation is, again, similar to Hedda and Mrs. Elvsted, as while Stella accept the power of patriarchy over her femininity, Blanche rebels against the tyranny of masculinity throughout the play. Similarly, Nora and Mrs. Linde are represented in similar way as, Nora who at the end of the play leaves home to claim her victory against men authority, while Mrs. Linde decides to stay and accept the patriarchal power. Nevertheless, all these women mentioned have suffered from the patriarchy and either they survived by their feministic approach towards the matter and claimed their victory in the battle, or they just suffered along with losing their humanly functions. However, even the victories that were claimed by women which were mentioned above resulted negatively for them, that is to say, although some of the characters claimed their victory against patriarchy, all those who were against men somehow were punished at the end, like Beneatha's losing her mind, Nora's leaving home by venturing outside world leaving everything/everyone behind and Hedda's suicide. So, as long as the equality for both genders is not provided, the problem seems to last much longer than it should be, turn out to be worse in time.

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