

Power, money and materialism

Ibsen

- Ibsen presents money as symbolic of power in his portrayal of both Krogstad and Torvald's control over Nora, Torvald through his limitations on her spending and Krogstad through the debt owed to him. The entity of reliance on money casts a perpetual shadow over the narrative; both Nora and Mrs Linde are reliant on men for financial security because **Victorian women were unable to earn sufficient wages.**
- Power is presented as attractive by Ibsen; Nora seems to enjoy Torvald's masculine dominance – **'Torvald has so much power over so many people'**
- For Nora, deception is power; this notion is introduced in the first theme when she spends money behind Torvald's back.
- Despite Torvald's efforts to control **'my little spendthrift'**, Nora is able to assert her power through slight acts of deception, such as her nibbling of macaroons.
- Nora recognises the power in her sexuality, which she uses to exert influence over Dr Rank and further deceive Torvald. There is an acknowledgement of the temporariness of this method of manipulation, in her admission that she fears a loss of power **'when I am no longer attractive.'**
- Religion and Victorian societal expectations place power in the hands of men and the upper class. The threat of societal ruin allows Krogstad the ability to manipulate Nora, who owes a sense of **'duty'** to her family. Nora herself plans to blackmail Torvald, by threatening his **'masculine pride.'**
- Nora and Torvald's marriage is founded on, and held together by materialism, an unspoken common interest. Torvald perceived a successful partnership as one built on the provision of material pleasures, which **'we shall share.'**
- The entirety of Torvald's moral code is based on money and the material, as evident by his harsh condemnation of Nora as a **'hypocrite, liar'** and **'criminal'**. Torvald blames Nora for ruining his banking career, and thereby his connection to money; without material wealth, their relationship ceases to be of any meaning to him.
- The Christmas tree is a symbol of materialism in the play, valued for its aesthetic value and external adornment. It's withering, **'dishevelled branches'** in Scene 2 in a foreshadowing of Nora's ultimate disillusionment with material wealth.

Coleridge

- C – Sir Leoline is ironically symbolic of the traits which his character lacks; namely, the courage and conviction of a Lion. Comparable with Torvald's feigned loyalty to Nora.
- C – Descriptions of nature in Christabel allude to duplicitous femininity, the lack of control for their sexual urges; the alluding to a garden references Eve's original sin. – **'The huge, broad breasted, old oak tree.'**
- C – Wealth and materialism represent stature; Geraldine's introductory description as **'richly clad'** with **'gems entangled in her hair'** creates an impressionistic effect of opulence, which encourages Christabel's consideration of her as being an honourable individual.
- C – Geraldine claims that she was born from a **'noble line'** without identifying her family or parents; there is a societal obsession with materialism, revealed by the embedded institution of social hierarchy, in which an individual's rank takes precedence over their very identity.
- C – The castle stands an undisputed symbol of culture and societal power, representative of man's seemingly insurmountable power and ability to dominate nature and the female sex. Geraldine seems to possess many of the female stereotypes, she is weak and defenceless, yet able to step **'Over the threshold of the gate'**, to infiltrate the castle and take control.
- C – Geraldine is painted as a wicked seductress through the imagery of a serpent, a **'bright green snake'**. This imagery invokes a consideration of the original sin, in which woman is fooled by the cunning of a snake.
- KK – The power of the Khan lies in his God-like ability to manipulate nature, creating the pleasure dome **'by decree'**, a consistency with his dominion of the sacred river Alph.
- KK – **Coleridge took a dose of laudanum, a preparation of opium used as a medicine in the 19th century, to dull a pain. In his opium trance, the tale of the Kubla came to him.**
- KK – Coleridge describes a world of incredible natural beauty, possessing **'forests as ancient as the hills themselves'** and **'caverns measureless to man.'** Yet, there is an emphasised focus on the man-made pleasure dome, which he desires to **'build that dome in air'** himself. There is a material sense to this inspiration, an obsession over the material overriding the beauty of the natural.