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Peer Gynt's Boundary Crossings: The Global Map of His Empirical and Mental Journeys

Knut Brynhildsvoll

Abstract Peer Gynt spends most of his life in the airy atmosphere of dreams and fairytales. He constantly crosses different kinds of real and mental borderlines. In my article I concentrate on three central motifs of the play, which have clear symbolic significations in the original cultural context, and examine the problems one is faced with by using the same images in Chinese productions of the play.
Key words platonic vs. ristotelian ontology; boundary crossings; mountain; self
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Peer Gynt is a traveller in time and space. He is constantly crossing visible and invisible borders without ever finding a place where he finishes transgressing himself. The main obstacle is that Peer's intellectual efforts are directed towards questions concerning "being," in what form ever, but his actions and imaginations lead him into a lifestyle distinguished by rapid changes. Whereas his reflections are captured in a system of Platonic ontology of being, his boundary-crossing activities link him to an Aristotelian ontology of becoming. This contradictory model of a double-tracked existential concept prevents Peer from being able to synchronize the anti-directional movements of his life, which only at the end of the play coincide in a moment of duration.

Instead of facing reality Peer prefers to escape into imagination, with one exception. During his stay in America he starts fleeing from imagination into reality, thereby turning his life from that of a dreamer to that of a business tycoon and a self-made man. It is striking that the gap between act three and four marks the most significant borderline between the one who is dreaming his life and the one who is performing his life. And one should keep in mind that Peer is the only one to inform his listeners about his past, and nobody can be sure that his autobiographic narrations are authentic, it might just as well be that he provides his past with fairy-tale features, thus narrowing the gap between the real and the imagined Peer.

When we take a look at Peer's strategies of escaping we easily recognise that he prefers fairy-tales as his means of conveyance. After the humiliating decline of the Gyntian family Peer's mother resorts to fairy-tales in order to make the situation endurable for herself and her son. The result is that Peer gradually loses his ability to distinguish between faction and fiction. The major part of boundary crossings in *Peer Gynt* depends to a great extent on the fairy-tale structure of the plot, which enables the main figure to abandon the limitations of time and space. Among the significant fairy- tale motifs of the play the following are too glaring to be overlooked: Peer's fight

with the trolls, his numerous confrontations with figures who expose him to temptations and ordeals, his habit of hiding behind the guise of others and his ability to move through the air. It is however striking that the macro-structure of the play is turned into a sort of anti-fairy tale. Peer is not the one who enters the mountain hall in order to liberate the princess. On the contrary, he is seduced and enticed into the mountain by the false princess and finally forced to find his way out again on his own, with assistance of his mother and Solveig. And at the end of the play it is not Peer who saves the princess, but the princess who saves Peer, thus inverting the traditional happy end structure of the fairy tale.

Since folk tales consist of wandering- motifs one may expect to find the same motifs in more or less adapted versions everywhere according to the narrative traditions of changing cultural contexts. At the end of this article I will approach this problem with my point of departure in different symbolic usage of words like "self," "pig," and "mountain" in the Norwegian and the Chinese tradition, hereby paying attention to divergent cultural significations and focusing on questions related to problems of sense-making and the transference of symbolic meaning.

As far as I have ascertained the word "border" appears only once in *Peer Gynt*.[1] During his conversations with his guests at the beginning of act 4 Peer claims not to like the notion "break with" because it leaves no possibility for retreat. That's why "the thought of overstepping the mark/Has always made me a bit cautious" (Ibsen 329), he ironically enough says. Nonetheless he develops a mastery in "overstepping" boundaries in the course of a strategy aiming at avoiding permanency. In the following I will give a short survey of the most obvious expressions of boundary crossings in *Peer Gynt*.

A: National and language borders: Norway-America, America-Morocco, Morocco-Egypt, Egypt-Norway
B: Imagined national and language borders: From the respective location to England, Gibraltar, Greece, Turkey, Iraq, China
C: Cultural and experience boundaries:
  1: Bad fortune experiences—Norway
  2: Good fortune experiences—America
  3: Intellectual experiences—Germany
  4: Hardworking and egocentric experiences—England
  5: Taste and spiritual experiences—France
  6: Hedonistic experiences—Italy
  7: Self-defence experiences —Sweden
D: Spatial boundaries: High-low, earth-air, inside-outside, urban-rural, western-eastern, forwards-backwards
E: Temporal boundaries: Past-present-future
F: Landscape boundaries: Valley, mountain, sea, desert, forest
G: Professional boundaries: Trade, business, shipping, gold digging, trick actor
H: Social and religious boundaries: negro-white man, tycoon-slave, rich-

poor, large farmers—high officials—petit bourgeois (lower middle class)—small holders,—craftsmen, Christian-Muslim

I: Psychological boundaries: sexual urge-love, degradation-sublimation, id-I, self-self enough, passion-confession, self-assertion-humiliation, attraction- rejection, impulsive-reflective

J: Mental boundaries: Sane-insane, normal-mad, exsalted-depressed, appearance-being

K: Metaphysical boundaries: God-devil, heaven-hell, christianity-paganism

L: Movement boundaries: Running-riding-dancing-flying-fleeing

M: Genre boundaries: Dramatic poem, play in the play, narration, song

N: Subgenre boundaries: Dream play, parable, theatre of the Grotesque, meta- physical drama-satire

O: Boundaries of poetic expression: Dialogue, monologue, ironic speech, comments, symbolic and allegoric expression

Peer Gynt looks upon himself as a "world citizen." If we trace Peer's boundary crossings on a map and project them on a globe, and as the globe turns around the spectator or the theatre director is enabled to plot in different combinations and re-combinations of the main figure's global itinerary, thereby attaching importance to aspects regarding the global place from which the play and the players are being observed. Because I am publishing in an international journal, I want to draw attention to a topic and two motifs which may cause misunderstandings.

Let me start with the mountain motif, which is very ambivalent and has layers of meaning in Chinese culture and art. Here I will concentrate on those most relevant to Ibsen's use of the motif, leaving out mountains as places of worship and religious rituals. In *Peer Gynt* the mountain region serves as a setting for the conflict between Peer's higher and lower self. In most of the scenes he gives way to his animal instincts, but finally he refuses to abolish his human nature. The mountain sceneries are thus a sort of battlefield between two psychic energies, one of which links him to the bright and one of whom links him to the dark side of his psychic spectrum. In this connection it is interesting to notice that the Chinese notions *yin* and *yan* initially were the names for two sides of a mountain. *Yin* represents the dark side of a mountain and *yan* the bright side. Consequently the symbol of *yin-yan* is a circle divided in two parts, one of which is black and the other white. However, in Chinese philosophy the concept of *yin-yan* is not a concept of either-or, but a concept of mediating the contrasts. According to this principle balance and harmony are reached only by means of blending the polarities, not through eliminating the one side at the cost of the other. As far as the mountain due to the *yin-yan* vision of the world is a space where the interactions of polarities take place, there can be no such things as pure evil and pure good, only different kinds of mixtures. Because Chinese and Western approaches to metaphysical questions in that respect differ fundamentally, the use of mountain motifs might be a challenge for the directing of *Peer Gynt* in a Chinese cultural context. Nevertheless, in the Chinese fairytale tradition there is a small selection of narratives

dealing with folkloristic creatures living in caves and grottoes, evoking the notion of an underworld inhabited with beings totally different from those living in the upper world. In Wolfram Eberhard's collection of Chinese fairy-tale types there are two examples of human beings visiting the underworld. The content of the first one is the following: A man makes frequently visits in the underworld; the man invites another man to follow him; he gets lost there and is reborn as a pig; the man doesn't find him any more in the underworld. He returns to the upper world, searches for the newborn pig and slaughters it; He goes back to the underworld and picks up his friend, who has turned to a human being again (Eberhard 199).

In this narrative one easily recognizes the main outlines of Peer Gynt's visit in the hall of the mountain king. During his stay in the underworld Peer gradually merges into a troll provided with the attributes of the pig, the animal tail. Finally he is freed from his existence as a pig, and through the assistance from the outside world he is reborn as a human being. [2]

By all narrative similarities there is a significant difference between the Chinese and the Norwegian versions of the motif. Whereas the passage through a pig existence in the Chinese version reflects the thinking around the transmigration of souls, the Ibsenian version ascribes to the pig existence a symbolic quality with clear references to sexual urges and the loss of human control. These semantic connotations you will hardly find in the Chinese tradition. On the contrary. In the Chinese narrative and cultural tradition the pig as the twelfth animal in the zodiac represents positive values and brings happiness and good luck. The incompatible semantic use of the word pig marks a cultural difference, which every theatre director has to take into consideration when staging *Peer Gynt*, at least when the intention is to do justice to Ibsen's play.

As a philosophical drama Peer Gynt deals with two different ways of being one's self, both of which are incompatible to each other. This dualistic way of reflecting human existence is however unfamiliar to traditional Chinese philosophy, which emphasises the whole as a system of interconnected parts. Whereas *Peer Gynt* is a play about the two ways of being, the main notion of Taoist thinking is called *the Way* (Tao). According to Taoist understanding *the Way* is a designation for the main direction of all things self-display. Everything has its roots in Tao; consequently everything strives to make Tao's law their own. As distinct from Christian faith the Taoist concept of God lacks the idea of command and control. Metaphysical instances like the thin man and the button moulder, who pursue Peer in order to punish him for having failed to realise God's intention with him, are alien to Taoist thinking. According to my sources Tao has no self that it wants to promote, no goal that it wants to reach. That means you cannot approach Tao through choosing between alternatives, but merely through a process of assimilation, which makes you more Tao-like.

One of the reasons why the Western metaphysical thinking was not influential in classical Chinese culture results to a certain degree from the special character of the Chinese language. Descriptions of classical Chinese language stress the lack of copulative or so called auxiliary verbs. I quote from an article on Chinese thinking: "The Chinese terms usually used to translate 'being' and 'not-being' are *you* (有) and *wu* (无). The Chinese *you* means, not that something 'is' (esse in Latin) in the

sense that it exists in some essential way; it means rather that 'something is present'. 'To be' is to be available, to be around. Likewise, *wu* as 'to not be' means 'not to be around'. Thus the Chinese sense of 'being' overlaps 'having'."[3] Regarding this divergent use of the verb one may imagine how difficult it might be to find proper expressions for Ibsen's dialectic of being oneself and being oneself enough in a Chinese context. During the recent centuries the need for finding adequate substitutes for the auxiliary verbs favoured the word *shi*, meaning 'this,' "thus indicating proximity and availability rather then 'existence'" (Hall and Ames 2). It is apparently significant for Chinese thinking that it denies the presumption of essential features and antecedent-determining principles which explain the order of things from a transcendental point of view. Instead classical Chinese thinkers, among them Guo Xiang (ca. 252 – 312 C. E.), preferred to look upon the world as a self-creating process of spontaneous becoming, for which he used the term self-so respectively *so-of-itself* (Brook 91). In Guo's notion of *self-so* "constancy and change are continuous" (Brook 322) and the power of transformation is self-generating within a more or less harmonious world of interrelated things.

Whereas the Taoist thinking advocates an individual way of self-realization, classical Confucianism emphasises a social self aiming at overcoming selfishness, which is considered to be the greatest obstacle on the way towards a society based on principles of solidarity and harmony. In an Ibsenian context one should likewise pay attention to the fact that according to Confucius "there is no essential human nature" (Hall and Ames 1). Humanity is a cultural achievement "articulated as a specific complex of roles and relationships" (Hall and Ames 2) making the Confucian self "irreducibly social" (Hall and Ames 2). Hence there are obvious reasons to believe that an asocial figure like Peer Gynt occurs as a stranger to a Confucian audience. It is significant that Confucius from the point of view of common sense rejected every airy enterprise and "denounced the danger of leaving the firm earth to soar into the unknown hazy regions of fantasy" (Werner 73).

In a lecture given at a conference in Hon Kong last year I suggested people use the term "the contextual self" for Peer Gynt's lived life. In an article about Chinese thinking, David Hall and Roger Ames introduce the term *ars contextualis* (Hall and Ames 1) for the most general understanding of order. Whereas the Western system of order is based on "uniformity and pattern regularity," the Chinese idea of order is connected with the notion of "the artful disposition of things" and "the manner in which particular things present-to-hand are, or may be, most harmoniously correlated" (Hall and Ames 2). In *Peer Gynt* Ibsen depicts the cognate conflict between an order represented by personal and ethical regularity on the one hand and an order characterized through spontaneously organized combinations and re-combinations of concrete scenic settings according to the contextual necessity on the other hand. On the level of his lived and imagined life Peer goes for an aesthetic representation of personal order more in keeping with the Chinese preference for combining the diversity of phenomena in accordance with "the artful disposition of things" expressed in the term *ars contextualis*. From this point of view it seems likely that a Chinese audience would comply with Peer's contextualized changeability rather than with the unifying

demands required by a single-ordered world-understanding governed by universal principles. There are obvious reasons for productions of *Peer Gynt* in China to pay attention to the Chinese way of thinking, giving priority to "the belief that the things of nature (including the human existence itself) may be ordered in any number of ways", and in connections with works of art this is "the basis of philosophical thinking as *ars contextualis*" (Hall and Ames 3).

The previous considerations have shown that images and symbols created under the influence of Western cultural traditions are not directly transferable to cultures alien to the original sources of creativity. When the symbolic and philosophical framework of *Peer Gynt* moves to China, it may prove necessary to adapt it to comparable expressions and images in the target culture. Likewise the dialectic of self-realisation in Ibsen's play may be subject to re-evaluations according to the theories and practices of self-understanding in the traditions of Eastern thinking. That doesn't of course mean that you need the context of a foreign culture to open ours eyes to the changing relations for the changing relations between the play's boundary-building components. In *Peer Gynt* Ibsen constitutes a global network of interrelated themes, motifs, and genres that link and relink various single elements in order to highlight the multiplicity of combinations the play allows.

【Notes】

1. "og det, at overskride Grænserne, har stedse gjort mig lidt forsagt." (Ibsen, CE, vol. VI/1, p. 136). Referring to the aesthetic intentions of artistic writing Ibsen asserted that "i vor tid har enhver digtning den oppgave at flytte grænsepæle" ["in our time literature should aim at moving borderlines"] (Ibsen, CE, vol. XV, p. 371).
2. The same motif in a slightly varied form one finds in a fairy-tale called "First discuss the Price when the Pig is Dead" in Wolfram Eberhard, *Chinese Fairy Tales and Folk Tales* (London, 1937), p. 164ff.
3. David Hall, Roger T. Ames, "Chinese Philosophy," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. Craig (London, 2009) 1f.
4. Cf. Brook Ziporyn, *The Penumbra Unbound. The Neo-Taoist Philosophy of Guo Xiang* (New York, 2003) 91ff.
5. Quoted after: E. T. C. Werner, ed., *Myths and Legends of China* (London, 1922) 73.

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The Lady from the Sea: Emergence from Marine Unconscious to Awakened Living

Rakesh Mohan Sharma

Abstract The article attempts to explore Ellida's search for freedom in the perspectsive of humanistic psychology. She walks from the phases of simple innocence, rebellion, ordinary consciousness of the self to creative consciousness, which she realizes only after the establishment of adult-adult relationship with the stranger and Dr. Wangel. In her journey of life, as long as the Lady From the Sea (Ellida) remains a mermaid in the child-child mode or parent-child mode, she continues to oscillate between the forces of progression and regression. The moment she develops an adult perspective on reality through productive orientation towards life, the mermaid in Ellida's mind dies and the mother hood in Ellida takes birth. Therefore by choosing Dr. Wangel, she hopes to fulfill all her needs—the need for identity, relatedness, rootedness, and transcendence. It is through this psycho synthesis that she is able to stand as an awakening human being, fully free and fully responsible.

Key words Innocence; consciousness of self; Dasein; self-actualization

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The play, *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), falls in the same genre as *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *Rosmersholm*, insofar as the search for freedom is concerned. However the contours of this particular search, when placed in the perspective of humanistic psychology as enunciated by Rollo May, Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslow and Erich Berne, unveil and explore new dimensions with rich insights into Ibsenic ethos. Rollo May says that there are physical and psychological ties between children and parents, and our growth and maturity depend upon how people handle the situations when these ties are broken; Abraham Maslow talks about fulfillment of basic and meta needs as requisites for self actualization. While Erich Fromm talks about the perennial conflict between the "Having-Mode" and "Being Mode" and the resolution through the productive orientation towards life, Erich Berne dwells upon the need of transcending the child-child or the parent-child relationship to reach the Adult-Adult one. For Rollo May, there are four phases in the process of self actualization. The first three are respectively named as simple innocence (before a consciousness is created), rebellion (in which we seek to establish our strength), and ordinary consciousness of the self (when we are capable of understanding some of our errors and recognizing

some of our prejudices and even become capable of learning from our mistakes and assume responsibility of our actions). The fourth one is creative consciousness of the self (when we are able to see truth without distortion), in which we are able to make choices and confront our problems. We are not bound by the past, our role training, nor the standards taught by others. In the words of May, "Consciousness of the self gives us the power to stand outside the rigid chain of stimulus and response, to pause and by the pause to throw some weight on either side to cast some decision about what our response will be."[1]

Ellida is a light-house keeper's daughter. Instead of some decent Christian name she is given the name of a ship indicating thereby that ship without water is good for nothing.[2] Thus her dependence on the sea is both physical and psychological. Since water is all around her, any object not connected with the sea is something alienating. To sea, she becomes fully related, with sea she identifies her self and in sea, she develops her roots. Therefore awayward and unpredictable nature becomes a part of her being.

In this stage of simple innocence she develops girlish infatuation towards a blue-eyed sailor. The sailor exerts such a powerful and paralyzing impact on her that she simply cannot resist the temptations to let the sea witness hermarriage to the sailor. Whenever the two meet, their conversation focuses upon "the storms and calms," "the dark nights at sea," and "the glitter of the sea on sunny days."[3]

The stranger feeds to Ellida's tendency to remain a child and to cling to the protection of parents. He stands before her as a power principle who will help her in self-enlargement, self-awareness, and maturity. When the stranger runs away from her a sense of fear, helplessness and uncertainty begin to engrip her and she begins to realize "how utterly mad and meaningless the whole thing had been" (*LS* 63).

These are two people who might help her overcome her infatuation for the sailor, Arnoholm and Dr. Wangel. She rejects Arnaholm, her childhood friend , because he does not appeal to her taste for mystery, But she accepts Dr. Wangel, a widower, despite her concern that his grown-up daughter and professional responsibilities might disturb her peace of mind.

In this context Erich Fromm gives us very illuminating insight into human predicament:

> Man cannot live statically because his inner contradictions drive him to seek for equilibrium, for a new harmony instead of the lost animal harmony with nature. After he has satisfied his animal needs, he is driven by his human needs. While his body tells him to eat and what to avoid—his conscience ought to tell him which needs to cultivate and satisfy, and which needs to let wither and starve out. But hunger and appetite are functions of the body with which man is born—conscience, while potentially present, acquires the guidance of men and principles which develop only during the growth and culture.[4]

At Dr. Wangel's house, she becomes a freak of nature. She cries, "The water here is never fresh. There is no zest, no sparkle. Ah! here in the fjords the water is sick"

(*LS* 39). In Rollo May's frame work, such a situation is bound to result in a state of confusion and bafflement. And the primary result is that she begins to feel empty from inside and isolated from Wangel and his daughters. The sense of powerlessness seem beyond her control. She is unable to direct her own life to influence others or to change the world around her. Ellida develops a deep sense of despair and futility. She sees that her actions make no difference. There appears a conflict in her mind. Alone and empty, she feels that there is a danger to her existence and her values she has identified. Such circumstances restrict her potential to grow as human being. In May's theory anxiety can be understood only as a threat to Dasein.[5] This anxiety engirdles her in the form of various abstractions. But when Lyngstrand acquaints her with her real predicament in terms of a story similar to hers, her anxiety becomes concretised and ontological. When he tells her about the sailor's resolution of getting his wife back, who had deserted him in his absence by marrying another man, her hands start trembling and a sense of being paralysed engirdles her. The stranger seems to exert a stronger and benumbing influence on her. She feels guilt as well as despair. In fact, the encounter with the stranger in absentia is the culmination of unfulfilled needs and aspirations desires, in the stifling and restricting environment of Dr. Wangel's house. This unfulfilment transports her to obsessive thinking, staring, wringing hands, and her asking for security. From now onwards, she becomes victim of the forces of regression and progression, which is externalized by her going into the sea and coming out of it regularly.

> To bring her out of her fixations, Dr. Wangel offers to take her away to some new and safer place for change. She rejects his proposal saying that she has no salvation. She stands obsessed with the idea that she can't get rid of the horror and the mystery of the sea, "I know only too well that . . . I shall never be rid of this thing, not even out there... I am afraid it will never be. Never in this world." (*LS* 65)

Despite the fact that it has been a considerably long time since she the stranger abandord her, she still fears of his reappearance. Therefore, under this obsessive phobia she refuses to live with Dr. Wangel as his wife and explains in categorical statement, "Because of the fear that man strikes into my heart and the fear is so terrible... such as I think only the sea could hold" (*LS* 66).

This fear had been influencing her for almost three years or even more when she was expecting the child. Slowly, the idea of the stranger begins to weigh large on her mind, and results in her Ellida having hallucinations: "Yes suddenly I find myself seeing him standing there quite clearly in front of me. Or rather a little to one side. He never looks at me. He is just there" (*LS* 67). And he looks like the one out at Brathamarren. The thing that she sees most clearly is his breast pin with a big bluish white pearl in it.

Thus, Ellida has been suffering this agony alone without telling Dr. Wangel. Sometimes this terrifying makes like a hysteric woman. She cries out, "Help me, if you can! I feel this thing closing in on me more and more" (*LS* 67).

Anxiety enfeebled and baffled her. Rollo May suggests an answer for the anxiety. He contends that when we do not know what we want or feel and when we stand in the midst of general upheaval and confusion, we sense danger and turn to people around us for answer. We may turn to them because we have been taught to rely on others in the time of crisis, yet paradoxically, the more we attempt to reach out to others to ease our feelings of loneliness, the more lonely and desperate we become. That is why after sharing her agony with Wangel, she feels somewhat calm, composed and serene. Although sharing her heart's burden does bring her a sense of relief and security, her relief will be temporary, because encounter with the reality has not yet taken place. So, when she really meets the blue-eyed stranger and hears the man declaring that he will remain her only lover, the fear overtakes her again. She confesses to Wamged that she cannot come out the obsession and start living as Wangol's Wife. But it is a psychological law that any person who is possessed with fear or some fixed notion, must come out of it. Neurosis and psychosis are only defense mechanisms to avoid confrontation with reality. And one can't be in the state for a long time. He or she has to come out of it. Moreover, when the danger of the stranger's imminent arrival comes near and nearer, Ellida's consciousness gets more and more restricted and therefore, severe anxiety overtakes her, which in turn compels her to think more and more both about her past and future. Before she confronts the reality, she has to ensure herself that she understands her situation in the proper perspective. This begins the emergence of the third stage, that is, the ordinary consciousness of the self. She attempts to view her relationship with these two men in terms of her future.

In her relationship with the stranger, she understands that he could meets her love and fascination for the mysterious, vast, wayward, open and variegated. His sudden appearance in her life, his eyes, his hectic schedule, his act of murder of a mate without any reason and running away to some unfixed destination, all go well with her love for the mystery. Above all, his strange, terrifying and yet enchanting style of marrying her by joining two rings together only to throw them into the wide sea, again helps her look at life and future with a sense of awe. His promise of coming back to take her along to an unfixed place at an uncertain time fascinates her love for the unknown. All these things feed her tendency to remain a child, who is psychologically dependent on the forces more powerful. All these experiences conflict in her unconsciousness with her decision to marry Dr. Wangel. Now that the stranger is about to come to take her away, she stands confronted with a choice—whether to continue her stay with Dr. Wangel or to go with the stranger. When she thinks about the marriage to the stranger, she feels nothing but confusion. She realizes, that everything in her life with the sranger has been based on compulsions. It could not be otherwise. The stranger did everything as if by force. Never did he seek for her consent. He perhaps could not make authentic decisions because they were never conscious ones. Had he been conscious, she would never have permitted him to leave her behind alone. She would have accompanied him through thick and thin. And the way the stranger was travelling the whole world, writing letters from different parts of the globe—China, Australia, California— would have satisfied her instinct of love for the new and the unknown. Had the decision been willful, she would not describe it

as "mad folly", "wildly idiotic" and "incomprehensible." Therefore it was a decision, if at all it can be called one, taken in a state of paralysed mind.

It is with this survey in her mind that she compares her marriage with Dr. Wangel. The comparison brings out many similarities. In the case of the stranger, she had no will of her own, while in case of Dr. Wangel, things were no different because Dr. Wangel too did not offer her any wilful choice. He offered to provide for her not because he loved her but becuse of his domestic needs. He only thought of his own needs. In retrospect, she feels that she sold herself. Both she and Dr. wangel entered a transation grounded on their needs.

It is solely up to her to make a choice and take action. Kierkegaard says that truth exists only as the individual himself produces in action. Ellida assumes god-like status in existential design. She feels the necessity of assigning a meaning to her existence and exercises her freedom and act authentically. To be authentic, she has to be what she is. If she lets others, the stranger or Dr. Wangel, define goals for her, it will again be an inauthentic act. However she makes a choice and that is, she may decide to follow moral dictates of the world, an easier way of coping with her problem. Such a decision is easier than facing responsibility because exercise of freedom is costly. But such a decision is not going to help her as it is bound to produce self-alienation, apathy and despair. And it is this despair which has engirded her already and she wants to come out of it. This anxiety, conflict and despair pose direct threat to her Dasein and the question of choosing between "being" and "non-being" begins to emerge. Now it is the time when she has the freedom to move backward or forward to cope with her anxiety, which Kierkegaard describes as 'dizziness of freedom'. There is a fundamental choice before her. If she decides to assume responsibility and question the person or persons, she will be using her experience of anxiety constructively. If she fails to ask pertinent questions, she will be denying her responsibility and blocking her freedom. In Rollo May's theory, she will be a victim of guilt, because anxiety is also an ontological characteristic of human existence. Guilt will occur out of the realisation that she can choose and yet she fails to choose. In case of her failure, guilt will overpower her. Therefore, to come out of this conflict, she will realise her freedom and potentialities only to the extent that she, in her own consciousness, plans and choose her goals. In May's theory, the more conscious we are, the more spontaneous and creative we will be. Ellida's objective then is to increase her consciousness. According to May, in such a situation, severe anxiety tends to restrict consciousness and we try to defend ourselves from pain through a variety of defense mechanisms. It is in this larger framework of mind that she prepares herself for confrontation with the stranger and Dr. Wangel.

The encounter with reality is always dreadful, there is always resistance and therefore she has to ensure that he will not harm her. Despite this assurance, when the stranger tells her that he has come to fetch her, she recoils in terror. Taking the first step is not so easy as she has been thinking in the past. Moreover, despite non-fulfillment of meta-needs at Dr. Wangel's house, she has never been a victim of any debauchery as in the case of Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* nor as Helmer did to Nora. On the whole, Ellida is treated honourably enough at the house of Wangel. Therefore,

recoiling in terror is but a natural reaction, psychologically convincing. The stranger, too, on his part understands that, after a gap of so many years, she is no more the same enchanting being as she was when they joined the rings. Therefore, he has to act very carefully and tactfully. This reminds us of Adam's Eve who had lost her innocence after eating the forbidden fruit. The stranger cannot take Ellida away by force because she is now Mrs. Wangel, not Ellida. However, his interest and purpose are well served when he addresses her by her first name, Ellida, despite objections from Dr. Wangel. After all, Ellida has waited for him for a considerable span of time as a faithful over. There is a hell of difference between her present situation and past then. Therefore, she has to be treated differently. She has to be given an option, a choice to decide, "I am asking you whether you don't want to" (*LS* 45). In fact the tone and tenor of the stranger's pleadings before Ellida still sounds compulsive and binding on her. On the surface level, it seens that he wants to take her along out of her free will, but the reality is that he offers her no choice whatsoever.

With such dictatorial and authoritative directions to her, the stranger expects that Ellida should come out with her decision at once. He simply forgets that her state of mental anxiety requires rational understanding of the situation rather then a hasty decision. Therefore when the stranger wants to know her opinion, her reaction remains hysterical, "No, no, no ! I will not. Never, never, I will not. I tell you. I can't. I won't. (in a lower voice) Besides I daren't" (*LS* 77). She is no more composed, serene or peaceful and therefore her immediate refusal to go with the stranger has no firm basis and is not final. Had it been final, she herself would have left the scene, never to look back. On the contrary, she stands as if in a state of physical paralysis and cannot take even a step away from there. Despite having said no, she remains in a state of fear and clasps a tree by the pond for support. Even after knowing that the stranger cannot take her away by force, she gets panicky, "Don't touch me. Don't come near me. Keep away. Don't touch me. I tell you" (*LS* 78). The reaction, no doubt, is hysterically conditioned yet it is very significant because by now she has come to realize that the stranger should not be allowed to play any significant role in her decision making. She wants to maintain an equi-distance, at the same time, she clings tightly to Wangel's arms and cries, "Oh Wangel! Save me! Save me... if you can!" (*LS* 78)

It is apparent that she wants to have Wangel's protection to help her out of the stranges fear that she wants to have the cover of Wangel's protective umbrella but here again, it is to be noted that she does not want to be saved from the stranger, on the contrary, she wants to be saved from herself. She is only asking Wangel to stand nearby so that she is able to come out of stranger's fear and mysterious spell which his very presence causes. Wangel remains standing as another alternative choice. For Dr. Wangel, the stranger's claim over Ellida may have been childish nonsense but for the stranger "the rings bound us as solemnly as any church-wedding" (*LS* 80). Finding Dr. Wangel and Ellida before him, the stranger budges from his earlier style a little and declares, "If Ellida wants to come with me, it must be out of her free will" (*LS* 80). But for Ellida, exercise of this free will is not a quick affair. The deferment of the decision till tomorrow is to her advantage, the stranger and Dr. Wangel

seem to stand in a straight line before Ellida, and the choices before her are many.

The first choice is that by responding to her impulses, she slams the door of Dr. Wangel's house and goes with the stranger. But this choice is not easy as she is no more an inexperienced child whose inauthentic decisions will be exonerated. During her long stay at Dr. Wangel's house, she has begun to feel attracted to the life on land, although such an attraction has not found its expression yet. Moreover, going with the stranger out of sheer impulsiveness is not going to help her. She has become a fully grown adult, with full consciousness of her self as also her meta-needs. Life with the stranger is surely going to be full of uncertainties which have been troubling her for a long time. The second choice is that she sends the stranger back from where he had come with a firm refusal. That is, of course, very painful because human beings don't live by bread alone. After all the stranger's presence and the associations with him are such things to which her mind responds naturally . She considers herself a part and parcel of what the stranger stands for. Such a choice is again limiting because she will have to go to Dr. Wangel, in whose house she already feels like an old carp caught in shallow waters. It is out of this mental dilemma that she weighs the pros and cons of both these alternatives and such a debate in her mind helps her in realizing the consciousness of self and it is out of this consciousness that she shuttles between Wangel and the stranger.

The nearer she reaches the momentous decision, the more panicky she becomes. In order to hide her panic, the first thing she does is to escape the decision-making process by locking herself in her room, which further helps her in making circumspection. The entire sequence of events flash upon her psyche and she finds that her marriage with the stranger as well as with Dr. Wangel were both similar acts—one for the mind and the other for the body and were transactional in nature. That is why she asks Dr. Wangel to cancel the transaction and give her full freedom again (*LS* 100). She further tells him:

> There is absolutely nothing here to keep me. I have no roots in your house, Wangel. The children aren't mine. What I mean is, I don't have their affection. Nor ever have had. When I go—if I dare go—either tonight—with him or tomorrow to skyjoldviken-I haven't even so much a key to give up—or instructions to leave—anything at all—I am completely without roots in your house. I have been on the outside of everything, right from the very first moment (*LS* 107 – 08).

Her concern for freedom becomes so intense that she refuses to entertain any genuine or moral concern of Dr. Wangel for her secure future. She just does not worry about her future as long as she lacks her basic freedom. Given the force of her new ideal, she asserts that she must have her freedom because she wants to face the stranger as a completely free agent. She does not want to dodge the central issue by claiming to be another man's wife nor by claiming that she has no choice. It is with complete consciousness of the self that she explains her free will, "I must be free to choose. Choose one way or the other. I must be able to let him go away alone or go with him"

(*LS*101).

The argument she advances to Wangel is that when she married him, she knew not much about him. He too, was more or less, a stranger. For Wangel, this idea is morally horrible and unthinkable, but for Ellida, it is something terrifying and attractive. How deep is her desire to be free is well-spoken in her own words:

> That is why you must give me my freedom. Release me from all ties. I am not what you look me for. You can see that now yourself. Now that we understand. We can separate... freely. What is there to protect me against. There is no external power or force threatening me. The thing is more deeply seated, Wangel! The pull is within my own mind. And what can you do about that? (*LS* 102).

Now that she is on the threshold of the decisive moment that is going to influence her whole life, she stands utterly bewildered. Sometimes she thinks that by tomorrow she will have ruined any promise the future held and lost whole of her freedom, and at other times she strongly feels that she belongs to the stranger. Torn between two claims over her, she asks finally, "So how can you help me against this? What advice can you give me?" (*LS* 103). On her part, the advice she seeks is not going to be binding, yet Wangel may offer her something utterly new. No wonder, she finds Wangel a step ahead from his earlier stand and position, in that he does agree to give her freedom, not now, but tomorrow when the stranger go leaves. It is at this stage that Bolette, who makes an attempt to unlock the knot of her obsession by asking her if she has ever spoken a single loving word to Hilde :

> ELLIDA [half aloud to BOLETTE]. What's wrong with Hilde? She looked quite upset!
> BOLETTE. Have you never noticed what, day after day, Hilde has been yearning for?
> ELIDA. Yearning for?
> BOLETTE. Ever since you came to this house?
> ELLIDA. No. no! What?
> BOLETTE. One single loving word from you.
> ELLIDA. Ah! Could this be where I am needed! (*LS* 104).

This single thought of mothering Hilde's affections transports Ellida into the stage of creative consciousness, full of joyous moments because here in she can develop productive orientation towards life by entering into realm of motherhood. She is candid enough to tell Wangel that there has been nothing in his house to hold her, nothing to support her and nothing to help her, to draw her in.

For the first time, Ellida accuses Wangel of stifling her imagination by not allowing a kind of life she was made for. She blames Wangel of transporting her to a place which just could not allow her to have free play of her cravings. In Maslow's terms, Wangel never cared for her meta-needs. He, his daughters and the surround-

ings were such as did not let Ellida realize herself. As all existentialists blame society to a large extent for not allowing people to be true to their natures, so does Ellida. In Freudian scheme, society works through super-ego mechanisms to restrain the expression of uncivlised impulses. In existential design, society waylays individuals by inducing them to behave in inauthentic and self-alienating ways. While the stranger offered her an illusory world, Wangel's world came out to be no better. Therefore, all her struggle turns out to be an existential search to know and recognize who really she is. In both cases, Ellida feels she has lost not only her sense of identity but also sense of relatedness to nature. This is how she accuses Dr. Wangel of stifling her imagination. The moment Wangel finds her in such an accusing mood, he at once decides to free her from whatever grip he had over her but he does not free her out of fun or anger. Instead, he frees her out of total love. While giving her absolute freedom, he also frees himself from her responsibility. He tells Ellida that the freedom which she is seeking cannot be attained without responsibility. The two have to go together. From henceforth, she will be responsible for all her actions. While Ellida now, is free to choose, her eyes are opened to the fact that Wangel has acted so, out of immense love for her and she begins to see, "How blind I have been not to see it" (*LS* 121).

At once she understands the significance of Dr. Wangel's offer of freedom and responsibility together and therefore even when Dr. Wangel has freed her, she refuses to give any importance to the last warning given by the ship's last bell. She turns, looks intently at the stranger to tell in a firm voice, "Never can I go with you now" (*LS* 121). and clinging to Wangel, "Oh I will never leave you now"(*LS* 121). She closes the whole chapter with the stranger. With this consciousness of the self, she enters the final stage of creative consciousness, in which she actually attains maturity. She is able to see the truth without distortion. The moments of her insight into the significance of freedom which is inextricably linked with responsibility are joyous ones and she comes closer to self-realization because now she is able to make choices, confront her problems and take responsibility for all her actions. She reaches the stage in which she is not pushed along by deterministic forces. Now she finds herself not bound by the past, by her role training or by the standards taught by the others. She stands fully conscious of those forces and at the same time, capable of coping with them and freely choosing to act. As Rollo May puts it, "consciousness of the self gives power to stand outside the rigid chain of stimulus and response, to pause and by a pause to throw some weight on either side to cast some decision about what the response will be."[7] It is out of this creative consciousness of the self that she tells the stranger, "You will no longer have any power over me at all. To me, you are a dead man... one who came back from the sea and who now returns there. But I no longer fear you. Nor am I swayed by you" (*LS* 121 – 22). After all, he has left a vacuum which must be filled with. Ellida makes some serious attempt to explore some alternative. She has to understand her old decision in some new frame. Fromm sums up such a situation:

Man finds himself surrounded by many puzzling phenomena and having reason,

> he has to make sense of them in some context which he can understand and which permits him to deal with them in his thoughts. The further his reason develops, the more adequate becomes his system of orientation, that is, the more it approximates reality. But even if man's frame of orientation is utterly illusory, it satisfies his need for some picture which is meaningful to him. Whether ever he believes in the power of a totem animal or in a rain god or in the superiority or destiny of his race, his need for some frame of orientation is satisfied... the need for a frame of orientation exists on two levels, the first and the more fundamental need is to have some frame of orientation regardless of whether it is true or false. Unless man has such a subjectively satisfactory frame of orientation, he can not live sanely. On the second level, the need is to be in touch with reality by reason, to grasp the world objectively. But the necessity to develop his reason is not as immediate as that to develop some frame of orientation, since what is at stake for man in the latter case is his happiness and serenity, and not his sanity.[7]

She reaches the place where the stranger has asked her to wait with the million dollar question "To decide! To decide one's whole life! And no going back" (*LS* 119). In the presence of the stranger, Ellida speaks with increasing vehemence:

> Wangel, Let me say this and say it so that he hears it ! Of course, you can keep me here! You have both the power and means to do that. And that is also what you mean to do! But my mind... my thoughts... my desires and longings... these you can't bind! Then they will go roving, ranging... out in to the unknown... which I was made for... and which you have shut me away from! (*LS* 120).

And since Wangel has acquainted her with a new dimension of life that freedom cannot be realized and felt in a vacuum or void, she learns that it can be realized only through assuming responsibility. She feels the jerk, "Freedom... and responsibility too? That puts different aspect of things" (*LS* 121).

Now, as Bolette had suggested that she should at least have spoken a soft word to Hilde, Ellida's decision is actuated by her new productive orientation. As her decision comes out of her free will and choice, she at once becomes ready to devote herself to Wangel, with the hope that he too will reciprocate in the same way but there will be a third force of love also and that is devoting time to children. Ellida's declaration that "I shall win them" springs out of her realization that life just cannot be pushed or pulled along in a vacuum. Despite their mutual incompatibility, it is with this force of love and patience that Dr. Wangel is able to win her affections, bring her back from the point when she had become a wreck on the brink of nervous breakdown and that love cannot he allowed to stagnate. It, in turn, has to be transferred to. The mermaid in Ellida has to die and a mother in Ellida has to take birth. Such a state of mind can well be illustrated in the light of Erich Formm's "frame of orientation and devotion" concept. In Fromm's terms, we all need a perspective on reality, a frame

of orientation and devotion, if we are to live productively. Such orientations are necessary because we need to make good sense out of our many experiences. Productive individuals utilize reason as well as feelings in their attempts at adaptation. A very fine illustration of such an adaptation emerges when Ellida's previous conception that the biggest mistake of mankind is the choice to live on land rather than on sea, undergoes a metamorphosis. She tells Arnholm, that once a creature has settled on land, there is no point going back to the sea. Francis Ferguson sums up her realisation:

> The miraculous cure is proved when Ellida herself realizes that her cherished freedom which the doctor gives her at great cost to himself does not really consist in following her unregenerate passion, as she had assumed, but in power to choose her own course, according to her new clarified vision of her self of other people, and of the real world. [8]

From maintains that we need an object for devotion and that form and content of that object differs widely among people. For Fromm, freedom is not seen in traditional terms but in such ideals as love, truth and justice which we all struggle to attain. It is out of this productive orientation that Ellida begins to see her future in terms of her relatedness, first with children and then with Wangel. She develops a fundamental attitude, a mode of relatedness in all areas of human experience. Such an attitude encompasses her mental emotional and sensory responses to self, to others or things. It involves use of her powers and maximum realization of inherent potentialities. Fromm states that we can use our powers and capacities only when we are free and independent of control by others. Under these conditions, we can use our reason and imagination to penetrate to the essence of our experiences. We are capable of of understanding mature love, on an intellectual and emotional level. The fact that she develops an active concern for children Bolette and Hilde for their well-being and benefit is indicative of the realization of what F. L. Lucas describes as, "Lastly, though freedom is vital, the only real freedom is in the end, not political but personal and individual and freedom means responsibility. Only by accepting personal responsibility, one can become personally free."[9] Such a concern involves knowledge of others and an acceptance of other's weaknesses as well as strengths. By her decision to stay with Dr. Wangel, Ellida fulfills all her needs—the need for identity, with that she becomes aware of her own characteristics and capabilities; the need for relatedness, with that she feels the necessity to be in contact with and with one another; the need for rootedness, with that she visualises her role as mother and wife both in Dr. Wangel's house, and finally she satisfies the need for transcendence to resolve her conflict by acting in a creative manner. Such are the lineaments of her freedom.

The entire psycho analysis of Ellida's being can be encapsulated into a psycho synthesis in the light of the theory enunciated by Erich Berne that life is nothing but a gamut of relationships catagorised as child-child, child-parent or parent-child and adult-adult relationships. As long as Ellida was in child-child mode or child-parent mode, she remained in the grip of marine unconsciousness. The moment she was pushed by circumstances into developing and adult-adult relationship mode, she was

able to stand as an awakened being, fully free and fully responsible.

【Notes】

1. 6. May, *Man's Search For Himself* 193,161.
2. Michael Meyer, *Henrik Ibsen: The Lady From The Sea* 15. Michael Mayer tells us the significance and source of Mrs. Wangel's name as Ellida. He says that, in the Saga of Frithiof the Bold, there is a ship named Ellidi. Halvdan Koht points out in his biography of Ibsen, "there means something like 'the storm-goer'. Such a name gave a stronger suggestion of storm and mysterious troll powers; the ship Ellidi in the Saga was almost like a living person fighting its way against evil spirits that tried to drag it down."
3. James McFarlane, ed., *The Oxford Ibsen*, vol. VII (London: Oxford Uni. Press, 1996) 62. (All subsequent quotations from the text have been taken from this edition and marked as *LS* in parentheses).
4. Fromm, *The Sane Society* 28.
5. Dasein is a term used by existentialists to describe the unique character of human existence. Each of us can become aware of the fact that we exist in a particular place of a particular time. We cam then make our own decision in a responsible way.
7. Fromm, *The Sane Society* 63 – 65.
8. Francis Ferguson, "The Lady From The Sea," *Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen*, ed. Daniel Haakonson, 1966. Quoted from James McFarlane, ed., *Henrik Ibsen*, 412.
9. F. L. Lucas, *The Drama of Ibsen and Strindberg* (London: Casel and Co. Ltd., 1962) 210.

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Discord and Harmony between Human and Nature: An Ecological Interpretation of *The Lady from the Sea*

Dai Danni

Abstract *The Lady from the Sea* is one of Ibsen's symbolic and romantic works in his late years. In this play, Ibsen does not simply advocate to "returning to nature" as Rousseau used to do. He has deeper thinking on the same issue. The core problems that Ibsen focuses on in *The Lady from the Sea* include the following: How can human beings really achieve harmony between human and nature? How can they really find out the spiritual home where they can calm down their souls? Or how can the sea become sea and the nature become the nature? These forward-looking questions are given much attention in the twenty-first century. Ibsen's answer is as follows: Before human beings obtain real freedom and real love, and realize themselves in true love, the sea does not belong to human beings, while the nature is not humanized, either. They must realize that neither the sea nor nature belonsg to them. Only true love can create harmony between human and nature and provide a home where they can have their souls released.

Key words Ibsen; *The Lady from the Sea*; human nature; soul's home

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The Lady from the Sea, a drama full of romantic colors in Ibsen's later writing career, whose deep ecological thoughts are still enlightening nowadays, concentrates on spiritual ecology of human and the relationship between human and nature.

The female protagonist, Ellida, in this play changes from "a half-dead mermaid lying in the tide pools" into a free and happy lady who is sound both physically and mentally. This thought-provoking life course focuses on reflecting the deep ecological perspectives which Ibsen endeavors to express in this play.

I. A Mermaid Dying in the Tide Pools

Even towards the end of the whole play, Ellida always leads an extremely abnormal spiritual way of life: she lives in her own world all along; however, it seems to other people that she is strangely ill, nervous, and restlessness day and night, while the cause of which is invariably unknown.

In Act I, Ibsen has already set a keynote for Ellida's spiritual ecology through

Ballested's words, "She's wandered in from the sea and can't find her way out again. And so, you see, she lies here, expiring in the tide pools" (228). Ballested is no other than a casual passerby in Ellida's life, who has no substantial intimate contact or communication with her; therefore, his opinions can exactly represent Ellida's image in most people's eyes. Thus it can be seen that Ibsen actually inputs a lot of thoughts in choosing Ballested instead of Doctor Wangel or Bolette to draw a global outline for Ellida, and his judgment can be more objective in the common sense. In Ballested's eyes, Ellida is "a mermaid lying, half-dead" "by this rock" "between those islands" (228); imprisoned in her inner "islands" and "rocks", she can hardly step out of her mental defense. She has to conduct desperate struggles in vain as the mermaid does; it is no wonder that Ballested, the clear-minded onlooker, names his painting "The Dying Mermaid" (229), which happens to suggest Ellida's unpredictable future: it is unknown where her beauty and dream will go.

In common people's eyes, Ellida is regarded as "a mermaid half-dead", which is still a beautiful and illusory artistic conception; while in her husband Wangel's eyes, this image is much more material and realistic: "No, not exactly (for reasons of health). Although she's definitely shown signs of nervousness in the past two years. Off and on, I mean. I really can't make out just what the trouble is. But this bathing in the sea—it's become almost the one ruling passion of her life.... They call her 'the lady from the sea'" (236 – 37). It is thus clear that, in the eyes of her most intimate partner, who has closest contact with her, she remains a lonely soul unwilling to open her heart. Therefore, the mighty ocean is the only outlet of her spiritual communication. In 1886, Ibsen wrote *Rosmersholm*. In the summer after the publication of the play, he went to the north of Jutland in Denmark. From the middle of July till the end of August, 1887, he lived along the east coast of the peninsula, where he collected materials and searched for inspiration for *The Lady from the Sea*, more importantly, enjoyed the pleasure of having access to the sea. On October 5, 1887, the year before the completion of *The Lady from the Sea*, Ibsen spoke at his publisher Hegel's banquet that the summer he had spent in Denmark enabled him to "discover the sea": the calm and gentle Danish ocean brought peace and tranquility to his soul, which played a significant role in (his) creation (Ibsen 268). As it can be seen that Ellida's attachment to sea is actually the thought of Ibsen himself: in his eyes, the sea has a special sense of belonging, which brings him the peace of mind. Thus, Ellida's behaviors fully interpret the poetic imagery of the union of human and sea. On October 30, 1888, after the completion of *The Lady from the Sea*, Ibsen put in this way in his letter to his friend Brandes: "it would be quite impossible for me to settle for good in Norway. Nowhere would I feel less at home than there" (Ibsen 272). At this moment, Ibsen further explained that, Norway, in his heart, was but a solitary island in the sea, and he could not find out "the feeling of a home" in the far-away north Europe. He could only endow the mightier ocean with his emotions. In *The Lady from the Sea*, this point is also referred to from time to time — being unable to make out what is on her mind, Wangel repeatedly persuades Ellida to move back to the seaside; however, Ellida declines time and again, showing that, she can never ease the pain of her inner emotions. She has to put on a bewildered look ostensibly all

the time, while in the meantime, she does not know what she is waiting for at all. Thus she has no choice but to bathe in the sea to seek for the so-called evasion and comfort every day. Lyngstrand's narration of Ellida reveals more or less some similar information as well, "(M)y idea was to have the figure of a young woman, a sailor's wife, stretched out, lying in a strangely troubled sleep. And she would be dreaming, too"(245). Ellida is precisely this kind of woman: she lives in her own dreamland, incapable of facing real life; she takes it for granted that nobody in her family can understand her at all, while the stranger—the only inner sustenance which is deeply buried at the bottom of her heart—is in the middle of nowhere. This tough dilemma can therefore only be peacefully and psychologically balanced in the sea. Ellida often speaks such words as, "I think it's stifling here"(247),which also indicates that she is unable to feel the warmth of her family, on the contrary, she is inflicted with enormous pressure and imprisonment from the family. As a result, she longs for freedom even more, and going to bathe in the sea everyday becomes her only way of relaxing her mind.

In Act II, Ellida says, "Night and day, winter and summer, I feel it — this overpowering homesickness for the sea" (257). Wangel then proposes to move to the seaside, and he believes that Ellida can regain her health and pacify her mind in that way; however, Ellida says that is of no effect—as she well understands that, the constraint of her soul can never be undone by simple change of geographical location, and her inner sorrow can only be relieved in special ways. Ten years before, when Ellida was still a fair young maiden, she met a strange sailor by accident. They talked only about the ocean when they were together. Whenever she recalls their meet at that time, Ellida might cherish not only remembrance of those days, but also great longing in her mind:

> About the storms and the calms. The dark nights at sea. And the sea in the sparkling sunlight, that too. But mostly we talked of whales and dolphins, and of the seals that would lie out on the skerries in the warm noon sun. And then we spoke of the gulls and the eagles and every kind of seabird you can imagine. You know—it's strange, but when we talked in such a way, then it seemed to me that all these creatures belonged to him... I almost felt that I belonged among them, too. (260)

This is such a realm that puts an end to all the realistic restrictions and combines human and sea as a unity—it especially highlights amiable feeling of humans towards sea and nature when they experience love and happiness at heart. On those beautiful moments, seafishes and seabirds are all like family members, or even extension of humans' own lives.

Pleasant hours flew past, and then the stranger told Ellida that "he'd stabbed the captain that night" (261), and had to get quickly away. Before his departure, he put both his and Ellida's rings together in a key-ring and flung into the sea with all his effort so as to show that they two "would marry (them)selves to the sea" (261). In Ellida's eyes, all this was romantic, even somewhat resembled the legendary sto-

ries of heroes or knights. She was totally enthralled at that moment, thinking that all the stranger's acts were completely appropriate. Afterwards, the stranger roved all over the world. He sent her six letters in succession from different continents of the world, asking her to wait for him. From Ibsen's regular correspondence with his friends, We can see that he treats the stranger with favor: on February 14, 1889, in his letter to Prof. Hoffory, he wrote that, "He is dressed as a casual tourist, not in traveling clothes. No one is supposed to know who he is or what his real name is. This uncertainty about him is the essential element in the method I have deliberately chosen" (Ibsen 275). It may be inferred that the uncertainty and the consequent mystique of the stranger is exactly where his charm is located, and it is precisely this point which deeply attracted Ellida. After he watched the stage production of *The Lady from the Sea* in person in Weimar, Germany, Ibsen wrote another letter to Hoffory on March 26 of the same year, heaping praise upon the actor who played the stranger: "I could not wish for, or even conceive of, a better performance — a long, thin figure with a hawk face, piercing black eyes, and a wonderfully deep and soft voice..." (Ibsen 277). All the descriptions further confirm the natural essence of the character Ibsen created, a character as uncertainty and mystique as the sea, but also charming and experienced enough to attrazt Ellida and lead her to indulge him for days to come. She cannot get him out of her mind. She feels the stranger's "inexplicable control in her spirit" even by the sea, "night and day, winter and summer, I feel it — this overpowering homesickness for the sea" (257).

Later on, Ellida married Wangel and gave birth to a boy after two or three years' time. She thought "the child had the stranger's eyes" (266), and "his eyes changed color with the sea. When the fjord lay still in the sunlight, his eyes were like that. And in the storms, too—" (265) This was really baffling! The boy was born several years after the stranger's departure, and he could not be the child of Ellida and the stranger; however, why Ellida deliberately had such feeling? What's more, she even emphasizes that she "saw it well enough" (265). Hither the visual mistake reveals her inner secret: in the depth of her heart, Ellida by no means forgets the stranger; furthermore, she bears deep emotions towards him. In his manuscript notes on the first draft of the play, Ibsen once mentioned that, "The secret of her marriage lies in that, the bewitching power of imagination pulls her back to the past, by the side of the loafer whose whereabouts is a mystery. This is what she hardly dares to admit or even think about. In the last analysis, she fancies by the light of nature that, she leads a couple's life together with him all along" (Hemmer 347). This at least explains that, in her deep heart, Ellida would rather lead a couple's life with the stranger, and she still dreams of the free life which takes after the extensive and unbounded ocean. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the public, she has to preserve her image of Ms. Wangel, without any extreme or sensitive acts; thereupon, she has no alternative but to find sustenance in the changeable and unpredictable sea all day long, so as to feel the spiritual communication with the stranger, and to experience the wandering life all over the world as the stranger has described for her.

While living together with Wangel in the five to six years' time, she loves him wholeheartedly indeed, but in the meantime, she can hardly forget the stranger as

well. Especially after the boy was born, his strange eyes correspond to a certain desire in her subconsciousness. People can faintly feel that the honest and faithful Ellida often feels restless and uneasy in her mind; or we can even say that she bears double sense of guilt at the bottom of her heart: she not only feels sorry for Wangel (as she misses the stranger in her heart), but also feels ashamed and regretful for the stranger (as she stays together with Wangel in real life). Just because of her honesty, she is burdened with the sense of guilt; and just because of the deep sense of guilt, Ellida is often bothered with ominous illusions and scared to death. According to what she says, "Sometimes, suddenly, I can see him standing large as life in front of me. Or actually—a little to one side. He never looks at me. He's simply there.... And clearest of all I can see the stickpin he wore, with a great blue-white pearl in it. That pearl is like the eye of a dead fish. And it seems to be staring at me"(265). This is evidently her illusion, just like Rosmer or Rebekka can sometimes see the white horse as described in *Rosmersholm* (1886), the play finished only two years before *The Lady from the Sea* (1888); while behind the illusion, her inner sense of guilt and fear is revealed. Soon after that, her son died mysteriously. The boy's death has aroused great shock and all sorts of imaginations in Ellida's heart. How can such a good boy meet with his death so soon? Is it possible that she has done something wrong and thus brought about the day of reckoning comes? From then on, Ellida carries the sense of guilt day after day, and "no longer dares to make love" with Wangel. In this play, Ibsen avoids on purpose describing all the details of the child's death, which undoubtedly strengthens even deeper mystic colors of the whole story and gives rise to more reveries from readers and audiences: on one hand, the natural father of the child is Wangel, and the boy's death seems to break up the close-knit red line between Ellida and Wangel, which further results in Ellida's not being able to find the spiritual sustenance in real life, and she is thus obliged to entrust her care on the sea day after day so as to relieve her yearning for the stranger; on the other hand, subconsciously, Ellida has already regarded the child as the offspring and the spiritual conjunction point of herself and the stranger; Once she loses this connection, she is like a boat lost at sea. She tries to give her life direction, but as things go against her wishes, she becomes like a solitary island. Her house stifles her and she must go to the sea to search for inner consolation.

In this play, what Lyngstrand says about his plan of the group sculptures might as well be set down as an echo of a certain voice inside Ellida's heart. Lyngstrand mentions that he would carve in the group figures "a young woman, a sailor's wife, stretched out, lying in a strangely troubled sleep. And she would be dreaming, too" (245).

> And there'll be one other figure. A kind of specter, you might say. It would be her husband, that she'd been unfaithful to while he was away. And he's been drowned at sea.... He was drowned on a voyage. But then the strange thing is that he comes home all the same. It's night, and now he stands there over her bed, looking down at her. He'll stand there, dripping wet, like a man dragged out of the sea.... (he) said, "But she's mine, and mine she'll always be.

> And if I go home and fetch her, she'll have to go off with me, even if I came as a drowned man up out of the dark sea."... I can see the unfaithful wife so vividly in my mind. And then the avenger, drowned, and yet coming back from the sea. I can picture them both so clearly. (245 – 47)

All the voices stand for "other's" criticism of "self", which corresponds to the dull anxiety in the dim recess of Ellida's mind, and can also be regarded as the collective and unconscious manifestation at the bottom of her heart. A restless and guilty person sometimes can feel an upbraiding voice flooding from a certain corner or even from all quarters far and near, yet the voice actually tends to come from the traditional depth, the collective unconsciousness repressed in thousands of years. It is precisely this deep sense of guilt that forces Ellida to carry a big mental burden on her shoulders, which enables her dare not to open her mind even to the nearest and dearest family members. she feels sorry for the stranger's entrustment, while at the same time, she also fails her husband's great kindness. Accordingly, she lives in self-reflection and condemnation everyday without any sense of happiness. Revelation of herself to the sea is her only outlet of true feelings.

Probably, what Ellida fears most in her heart is the real death of the stranger. If he really drowned in the sea three years ago, then Ellida would almost make sure that her illusions of these three years are not illusary at all, but the drowned ghost coming for revenge on her. Human beings may not fear living creatures, but with regard to unknown "ghosts," nobody can be exempt from being overcome with horror. Therefore, as soon as Ellida hears from Lyngstrand about the sailor's "definite death", she becomes even more frightened, and eagerly asks Wangel to "help me! I feel it's tightening—tightening around me. More and more" (265). Thus it can be seen that, Ellida is seriously ill indeed: the disease of the body can be cured by medicine, and Dr. Wangel is right the person for solving the problem; while the disease of the soul can only be healed by mental medicine, and the stranger is supposedly the only person to work out the trouble. Ellida's entrusting her emotions on sea everyday is but an expedient measure as what Chinese often identify as "temporary medical relief."

II. Approaching of True Love and Happy Singing of the Sea

When Ellida sees the stranger with her own eyes, Ellida's fear about "the drowned ghost" fades completely; while in the meantime, her yearning for freedom and new life in her deepest heart is relumed and strengthened. At this critical moment, the person who really loves her and is ready to give her freedom for a sensibly inspiring life, will play a key role in her choice. Out of care for her, Wangel by no means agreed to let her go in the very beginning, which stirred her revolt all the more, and deepened her sympathy on the stranger. It grieves Wangel inwardly:

> Wangel (in quiet pain). I see it so well, Ellida. Inch by inch you're slipping away from me. This hunger for the boundless, the infinite—the unattainable—will finally drive your mind out completely into darkness.
>
> Ellida. Oh, yes, yes—I feel it—like black, soundless wings hanging over

me!

Wangel. It's not going to come to that. There's no other way to save you. At least, not that I can see. And so — so I agree that—our contract's dissolved. Right now, this moment. Now you can choose your own path — in full freedom.

Ellida (stares at him briefly as if struck dumb). Is that true — true—what you're saying? You mean it — with all your heart?

Wangel. Yes, I mean it — with all my miserable heart.

Ellida. Then you can—? You can let this be?

Wangel. Yes, I can. Because I love you so much. (319)

Once she obtains freedom, Ellida immediately feels that "this transforms everything" (319). Why? What Ellida cherishes most is freedom and true love. At this moment, both Wangel and the stranger are willing to give her freedom and ask her to make her own choice and take care of her own business, and thus in the aspect of "freedom", Wangel at least does not lose to the stranger; however, in the aspect of "true love", the stranger loses greatly to Wangel. The stranger never shows sincere thoughtfulness and gentle love to her; what he behaves can only be related to "not being able to losing his hold of" the beautiful young lady and his willingness of "not letting go of the beauty." Maybe this is only out of his own principles of "insisting for the sake of insistence" (320). And upon it, he leaves at ease.

An interesting detail needs to be paid attention to here: the stranger uses Norwegian "de," which is supposed to address an alienated person, to call Ellida for the first time at this critical moment; and before this scene, he uses "du," the address especially for intimate people, for Ellida every time they meet. This also shows that the stranger is more likely to put away their friendship or "love" easily for his own sake, and further proves that Ellida makes a right choice in her life. Previously, maybe Ellida thinks that the stranger is also afflicted with the lovesickness of missing the sea all day and all night just like herself, but now the reality has broken her fantasy and she cannot really see herself in the stranger. A man who does not love her sincerely and wholeheartedly is obviously not worth cherishing. Furthermore, Ellida finds recently that Wangel's two daughters, Bolette and Hilde, also need her emotionally and she is sure of herself being their real mother. All this makes her longing for the possibly new life to come in the near future:

Ellida. They're not mine—but I'll win them to me.

Wangel. Ours—! (Joyfully and quickly kissing her hands.) Oh—how can I thank you for that one word!

Hilde (in a whisper to Lyngstrand). Why, she and Father—they look as if they're just engaged!

....

(The great steamer glides silently out over the fjord. The music can be heard closer in toward shore.) (321 – 22)

The final scene further describes Ellida's real inner world to readers: at this moment,

her attitude towards life also changes tremendously. A thereupon comes her "smiling gravely" (322), which seems to indicate that, she has fully understood the true meaning of life; looking back at all the past experiences, she cannot help sighing with emotions that, "Once you've really become a land animal, then there's no going back again—into the sea. Or the life that belongs to the sea, either" (322). At this moment, being not sentimentally attached to the stranger at all, she is able to lead a really happy and enjoyable life with Wangel, without concerning herself with anything else. Wangel is just like the land which brings her a feeling of perpetual steadiness and practicability, and this characteristic is precisely the greatness of everyday life. while the sea-like mysterious and uncertain stranger can only occasionally stir waves in her maiden's heart without any sense of belonging. Once the thrill and excitement is over and the mysterious mask is unveiled, she can no longer discover her past attachment on him. With the great steamer's carrying away the stranger "silently out over the fjord," Ellida's attachment to the sea is also predicted to gradually come to naught; while in the meantime, the music symbolizing the good life "closer in toward shore" (322), seems to declare publicly of Ellida's happy future—the real life of returning to the land.

The sea reveal itself the core subject of the play from the very beginning. In the earliest notes on the play on June 5, 1888, Ibsen wrote that, "Temptation of the sea. Desire for the sea. Human beings' affinity towards the sea. Bond of the sea. Attachment to the sea. Impulsion of returning back to the sea. Fishes are the archetypes of the evolution of species. Are there still this sort of memory rudiments in people's minds? Maybe in certain people's brains?" (Salome 38)

The highly dynamic life of the ocean, which is imbued with adventures and excitements, fills one with special longing indeed: the sea can control one's emotions and wills; the sea can also make one fascinated about it. *The Lady from the Sea* gives us the following answer: it is exactly the nature that possesses such power, and the biggest secret within is that human beings' wills rely on "something without wills." The so-called "something without wills," or something even more powerful than human beings' wills, is precisely the precious love and wish in the heaven and earth.

In this play, before Ellida, "the lady from the sea", resolves her innermost doubts and conflicts, no matter how she goes to bathe in the sea everyday, her mood is still hardly cheered up; Dr. Wangel is prepared to move to the seaside for her, while she says that would be helpless. The stranger is like "the free ocean", while he does not really love Ellida, and he can not help the lady from the sea find the soul's home, either.

How can human beings really achieve harmony between harmony and nature? How can they really find out the spiritual home where they can calm down their souls? Ibsen clarifies the topic through *The Lady from the Sea* for his readers and audiences: Before human beings obtain real freedom and real love, and realize themselves in true love, the sea does not belong to human beings, while the nature is not humanized, either. Only in free and self-conscious situations with true love can human beings really achieve harmony between human and nature and find out the home where they can have their souls released.

Karl Marx says, "The completed naturalism equals humanism, and the completed humanism equals naturalism; it is the real solution to all the contradictions between human and nature, and between human and human; it is the real solution to all the conflicts between existence and essence, objectification and self-assurance, freedom and necessity, and individualism and species. It is the answer to the mysteries in history, and it knows for sure that it is exactly the answer"(81). These words are precisely the thoughts which the deep ecological ideas manifested in *The Lady from the Sea* leave for us.

【Note】

1. All the lines of *The Lady from the Sea* in this article are taken from *Henrik Ibsen: Four Major Plays*, vol. II, trans. Rolf Fjelde(Signet Classics, 2001). Only page numbers are indicated. Same hereinafter.

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Periphery and Tragedy: Ibsen and the Emergence of a Literary Form

Leonardo F. Lisi

Abstract This paper challenges the claim that there can be no such thing as a modern tragedy by offering a new interpretation of the structure of Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*. On the one hand, the events of this play are governed by the actions of characters that cannot help but act in accordance with a subjective determination, autonomous of all external considerations. On the other, these characters time and again reveal themselves as bound by external laws that exceed their control. The opposition between these two principles goes through a number of dialectic turns, which makes the play's tragic conflict center on the impossibility of determining which of these principles ultimately governs the construction of its meaning. Significantly, this dialectic mirrors what Kierkegaard twenty years earlier predicted would constitute the structure of modern tragedy, where the conflict no longer rests on the fact that a necessary order opposes the hero, but on the question if such an order even exists. I conclude the paper by arguing that the emergence of such a new conception of tragedy in Scandinavia during the nineteenth century is a product of its specific position at the cultural and economic periphery of the world-system. It is the movement of literary forms across different cultural context, then, that makes possible the birth of a new literary form.

Key words *John Gabriel Borkman* modern tragedy Kierkegaard modernity

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This article is part of a new book project that I am just beginning, and in which I trace the evolution of modern tragedy through different socio-historical positions in the modern world-system during the nineteenth century. On the one hand, I thus agree with the claim, originating in the late eighteenth century and made prominent in our days by George Steiner, that modernity does not allow for tragedy, understood in its classical sense. On the other hand, I show that new kinds of drama emerge during the nineteenth century, which retains fundamental aspects of the structure of tragedy while adopting it to the conditions of modernity. If there is no tragedy in a classical sense, then tragedy nevertheless survives through a historically conditioned process of morphological transformation.

In this article I want to focus on the kind of tragedy that I claim it emerges in Scandinavia during this period, at the periphery of the world-system. In its essence,

this tragic paradigm consists of a dialectical relation between two equally constitutive but opposed representational principles, neither of which can claim priority, and which therefore leave the fictional world of the text without stable semiotic determination. One principle concerns contingency and subjectivity. The other is about necessity and objectivity. I want to illustrate the dialectical relationship of these prinziples first by offering a partial reading of the form of Ibsen's John Gabriel Borkman by briefly contextualizing this reading in the larger historical argument of the project.

Dialectic

At its most immediate level, the dramatic world of *John Gabriel Borkman* is determined by the principles of subjective desire. The suffocating environment of the play derives from the stubborn decision of Borkman and his wife to avoid each other's presence for years on end; an exercise of willpower so absolute as to be almost impossible to believe. This present condition itself is, of course, a product of Borkman's own ruthless will-to-power, for the sake of which all other considerations were suspended: his love for Ella; the well-being of his investors; the future of his wife and child. As Borkman explains, his actions and their consequences were dictated only by the fact of his own character: "People don't understand that I had to because I was myself—John Gabriel Borkman—and no one else" (Ibsen 380/336).[1]

For Borkman, significantly, adherence to the demands of subjectivity leads to deceit: the misrepresentation of the actual value of his stock, which is a deliberate manipulation of the semiotic structure governing relations between individuals. The external, objective realm thus shows itself to be vulnerable to the subject's desires and manipulations, and Borkman is not the only one to take advantage of this situation. Gunhild, too, we are told, was responsible for making the family appear wealthier than it was; an activity notably also couched in the language of signification: "Yes, the word was always that we had to 'represent'" (Ibsen 331; translation modified/297). This exploitation of the gap between sign and referent extends even to Ella, who attempted to usurp Gunhild's place as Erhart's mother. Identical to Borkman, moreover, Ella's misrepresentation of her role derives from her subordination of reality to an irrepressible subjectivity. As she tells John Gabriel, her relation to Erhart was dictated not by compassion but by her inability to restrain the desire for motherhood: "But I couldn't reconcile myself to that loss. And that's why I took Erhart in" (Ibsen 372/330).

The laws of economy, society and nature: meaning lies not within existing rules of signification, but in the dark realm of subjectivity, which is free to use them as it wills. The central question of the play accordingly becomes that of an action's motivation: why did Ella accept Erhart, as Gunhild asks her in act one; why did Borkman abandon Ella, as she challenges him in act two; why did lawyer Hinkel betray his friend, as Foldal wonders, and so on. The power to determine the world belongs to subjectivity and freedom, on which objective relations show themselves to be dependent for their proper interpretation.

By virtue of their very difference, however, the realm of subjectivity also remains unable to fully control the world confronting it. That is, if the vulnerability of

the external, objective realm is the source of individual power—which makes it possible to manipulate the world according to our wills—its very contingency is also the source for dramatic conflict, since it remains inherently ungovernable. Borkman's eventual fall is due to a contingent set of circumstances: to the fact that Ella chose not to respond to Hinkel's advances; that Hinkel wrongly thought she did so on Borkman's instructions; that Borkman in turn had confided in his friend. As so often in Ibsen, the situation provides for conflict, but not, as George Steiner points out, for tragedy, since the contradiction is in principle remediable and not absolute (Steiner 291 – 92). In fact, far from tragic, the collision almost becomes farcical instead: the discrepancy between the uncompromising nature of the striving subjectivity and the contingency of its downfall makes the former look absurd: Borkman still posing as Napoleon so many years on.

This inherent vulnerability of the characters of the play opens a new perspective that negates the first. Contrary to what might at first appear, the present is determined not through subjectivity but its denial. The world with which the play opens is a negative space defined by the absence of the very attributes that encapsulate the essence of each character's desire. In a modern version of the Dantean law of contrapasso, every character is punished by the very law he or she attempted to manipulate: Borkman broke the law of economics and is deprived of money and power; Gunhild broke the law of social representation and is deprived of social standing; Ella broken the law of nature, and is deprived of life. Far from contingent and open to manipulation, the sphere of external objectivity acquires a metaphysical structure that operates by absolute necessity. The specific, contingent reason for Borkman's catastrophe—Hinkel's betrayal—becomes irrelevant in this larger context, where it is not how a subject's plans are frustrated that matters, but that they ineluctably must be. The particular articulation of this law is secondary to its universal principle. He who lives by the sword dies by the sword. Subjectivity, in this context, is no longer primary or absolute, but rather accidental and secondary: nothing you can do, no matter how many precautions you take, can save you from the certainty and strict necessity of the law of retribution that rules in the objective world.

Pace George Steiner, *John Gabriel Borkman* thus takes the shape of contradiction after all: the realm of contingent, subjective desires, or freedom, clashes with the nezessary metaphysical order, or fate. But the determination of the present as defined by the principle of objectivity itself runs into problems, and is negated no differently than its predecessor. From a further perspective, this universal law is not an end in and of itself, but simply the premise that the action of the play negates. Its dramatic world, after all, is conditioned not by the absolute stasis of a negative present (nothing ever changes in Dante's *Inferno*), but by the characters' persistent belief that the laws that punished them will be suspended: Borkman awaits "the hour of restitution," when his fellow bankers will "come up to me here in this room!" (Ibsen 357/318); Gunhild places her faith in Erhart to provide "Restitution for my name and honor and fortune! For the whole of my desolated life" (Ibsen 331/298); Ella seeks to adopt her sister's son so as to break the necessity of death itself. The iron rules of power, society and nature are challenged in direct contradiction of Foldal's claim that

restitutions of this kind are impossible: "The law," as he points out, "doesn't make such allowances" (Ibsen 363/323). Instead the central characters all live on the belief articulated by John Gabriel himself: "There are no precedents for exceptional men" (Ibsen 375/333).

If the present is the punishment for a tragic error committed in the past, then the future derives its force from its ability to cancel that necessity by the sheer power of subjective hope. It is not only Ella who cannot bear the thought that the law she's punished by should be unmovable and therefore simply must pursue its refutation. Borkman too makes it clear that faith in restitution is an existential necessity for him. Similarly, without hope for Erhart's "mission," Gunhild would "despair" (Ibsen 340/305), making her subjective need take absolute priority and become the standard for all others.

The perspective on the play that sees action as posited by the characters' subjectively necessary orientation to the future is nevertheless also negated. At a further level, this forward thrust is contradicted by the imposition of an absolute present that makes all escape impossible. As Mark Sandberg has recently reminded us in an illuminating article, *John Gabriel Borkman* makes use of a remarkable continuity of time in the changes between its acts. The transition between act one and two occurs by means of a "sound bridge," as the Dance macabre that Frida begins to play toward the end of the first reaches its conclusion at the beginning of the next. At the close of act two Gunhild rushes out of Borkman's room only to reappear at the beginning of act three entering her own downstairs. Act three ends with Ella stopping Gunhild's rushing after Erhart, with which act four in turn begins as we view the immediate completion of this action from a position outside the Borkman home.

What is striking about this mode of representation, however, is less the fact that it reduces the disruption of time within the play by establishing a fluid continuum than that it increases it outside it. The time that elapses between acts one and two is suggested to correspond to the time that passes within them, as the changing of the scene while the curtain is down can take as long as it takes for the Dance macabre to reach its end. With the transition between act two and three, however, this correspondence of the temporality of characters and audience becomes notably more difficult, since the time required to descend from the upper to the lower storey of the house presumably is less than that required for the changing of the scenes on stage. By the time we reach the change between acts three and four the conflict between the characters' world and ours has become unmistakable, to the extent that the fictional time that elapses between the acts is by far less than what it takes to change the scenes in the reality the audience inhabits.

The temporality of the play is thus not merely continuous, but in fact decreasing when measured against the standard of our own. The effect of this disruption is a radical increase of the sense of stasis in the play by making time telling notably longer than time told. The characters that seem so like us are on the other imprisoned in a temporality several times too small.

The desire to escape the law of retribution through a future that exceeds it is in this way ironically negated by the characters' confinement to a present which has be-

come absolute: there is no "beyond" beyond it; no alternative time is represented, nor any possibility of breaking its gradually decreasing scope. Caught in an ontological order over which the characters can exercise no control, the category of necessity returns to the pole of objectivity, which once more provides the ultimate conditions for the construction of the world in which they move.

I have traced here the dialectic of subjectivity and objectivity as it evolves through four distinct stages within the older generation comprised of John Gabriel, Gunhild and Ella. This process is not final: any stage can claim authority with equal justification and be overturned as well as any other. In fact, the dialectic repeats itself, and is expanded, at the still further level of the relation between the older generation as a whole and the younger group made up of Erhart, Fanny Wilton and Frida. The structure of the play at large vacillates between the Manichean universe of the older generation, in which all relations are posed in terms of absolute distinctions, and the more modern world of Erhart and his friends, where all is compromise and no decision final. The former thus operates according to the rules of drama, in which divisions and conflicts must be immediately drawn so as to resolve themselves within the span of a few hours, while the latter resembles the logic of the novel, in which each event needs time to develop in all its permutations. The universe of the younger generation lays claim to the future, to which the novel truly does belong and in which drama becomes an increasingly marginal artistic form, but the play's own enactment of the outcome of that struggle is left ambiguous.

In this remainder of this article I want to leave aside this further elaboration of the dialectic of the play and instead show how the impossibility of ultimately determining which principle has priority and posits the conditions of the plot and world we witness, is Ibsen's crucial contribution to the regeneration of the tragic form.

History

At the conclusion of his monumental *Lectures on Aesthetics*, Hegel distinguishes between modern and ancient tragedy. In its essence, the difference lies in the conflict at work, which in ancient tragedy is constituted by the opposition between two equally necessary and justified substantive principles. The characters in ancient tragedy, that is, do not embody particular subjectivities but rather contradictory moral commands ("sittliche Mächte" [Hegel 555]), both of which carry legitimacy: the law of the state which Creon follows, against the law of the family by which Antigone abides (Hegel 544). Underlying this opposition is the common identity of both moral principles in the Idea, which is revealed through the mutual and necessary destruction of the heroes, who cannot exist without their opposite (Hegel 549). In modern tragedy, on the other hand, interest is placed with the particular and contingent subjectivity of the characters, which provide the motivation for the action and its conflicts (Hegel 556). In this latter mode, the final reconciliation that is central to Hegel's appreciation for the genre is problematic at best. Without an underlying identity between the subjective hero and the "existing power" that opposes him, the ending can consist only in the unilateral destruction of the former by the latter, and the hero's acceptance of this fact (Hegel 565 – 66).

To Hegel, of course, this characteristic of modern tragedy constitutes its weakness with respect to its ancient paradigm, but others following him (Goethe, Theodor Vischer, Friedrich Hebbel) instead redefine the genre so as to provide its contemporary incarnation with a more noble place. From this view, the aim of tragedy is not the reconciliation of two equally necessary but opposed positions, but rather the asymmetrical relation between the principle of contingency and that of necessity, which leads to the ruthless destruction of the former. As Hegel had rightly seen, however, in this modern structure the element of inevitability central to tragedy disappears. By making the manifestation of necessity dependent on the destruction of a particular subjectivity, necessity is grounded on a principle that denies it: particularity could always have been different and no specific set of circumstances can accordingly create an absolute collusion since its alternative is automatically implied. Indeed, the horror of the situation here lies not in the necessity of the relation between opposing principles, a universal law and a specific subjectivity, but in the extraordinary bad luck that they should have come together in the first place when other trajectories can be envisioned. Had Klara in Hebbel's *Maria Magdalena*—according to Ibsen the greatest modern play—only not slept with Leonhard, or the noble secretary whom she really loves not left town, the catastrophe would have been avoided. Having espoused the capitalist principle of infinite possibility it can no longer be contained and the very attempts to destroy it ironically reintroduce contingency as the category organizing the relation between the formal structures within the work as a whole. As such these plays arguably constitute artistic failures, since they contradict their own explicit purpose; indeed, arguably they even contradict the criteria of their very genre, since, as Goethe already knew, the permutation of narrative alternatives is the lifeblood of the novel, but remains inassimilable to the drama, which is bound, ontologically, to aunique, and inherently limited, time and space(Goethe 280 – 81).

These difficulties that arise from the attempts to incorporate the modern principle of subjectivity to the structure of tragedy are resolved at the core of European culture in a number of different ways. What I would like to briefly suggest here is that Søren Kierkegaard provides a solution to this same dilemma that both offers an answer to the structure operative in John Gabriel Borkman and indicates how it might be a specifically Scandinavian phenomenon. In an essay from 1843 that has still not been appreciated for its radicality, Kierkegaard re-imagines the entire framework for modern tragedy and rewrites Hegel's analysis of Antigone for a modern world. Retaining the form of dialectical necessity defined by Hegel as proper to pre-modern drama but taking as its content the principles of contingency and necessity established by his heirs, Kierkegaard argues that tragic conflict in the modern world is characterized not by the fact that a necessary order opposes our contingent individuality, but rather by the impossibility of deciding if such a necessary order still exists, and what determination the events we witness therefore carry. By making contingency and necessity equally applicable principles for the construction of the same dramatic plot, the vacillation between them posits nothing external to itself and denies any determination to which alternatives might be imagined. If in Hegel's tragedy the conflict is absolute and positive because both constitutive principles must be operative in the situation, in tragedy

as conceived by Kierkegaard the conflict is absolute but negative because neither can ultimately claim priority. Not an ultimate identity of equals, but a simultaneity of asymmetric opposites.

The impossibility of determining whether it is the principle of subjectivity or objectivity that governs the construction of John Gabriel Borkman partakes of this conception of tragedy. Pity and sorrow are here not effects of the certainty of the destruction of the hero, but of the irreducibility of doubt. As Borkman tells Foldal when discussing the latter's own attempt at the genre, and with a clear allusion to Aristotle's definition, it is with doubt that the great fall: "Har du selv tvivl, da står du på faldenden fødder" ["If you yourself have doubt, you stand on falling feet"] (Ibsen 364; translation modified/323).

Kierkegaard, Ibsen, and then Strindberg: all operate with this structure, which applies the dialectical necessity of a pre-modern form to organize the contingency of modern experience. Scandinavia's position at the periphery of the world-system during the nineteenth century—squarely placed between distinct historical forces—provides the genre's temporal and geographical boundaries: a few decades, and then it vanishes again.

【Note】

1. All references to *John Gabriel Borkman* are given first to the English translation, followed by the page number in the Norwegian original.

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Ibsen's Use of Holy Days: An Amalgam of Philosophy, Poetry and Religion

Trausti Ólafsson

Abstract The article discovers how Ibsen makes use of mythological elements in ten of his plays, simultaneously relating them to 'holy days' or religious festivities from three different traditions. This includes an interpretation of the significance of Easter in Emperor and Galilean, 1873, then focusing on how other Christian feasts remain in the background of Ibsen's theatre: St John's Day in *Brand*, 1866; Pentecost in *Peer Gynt*, 1867; and Christmas in *A Doll's House*, 1879. This is followed up by showing how two Ibsen plays, *The Wild Duck*, 1884, and *Rosmersholm*, 1886, draw on significant commemorations and ritualistic observances from the Jewish religion. Then it will be traced how three of Ibsen's plays relate to the Eleusinian Mysteries, in antiquity among the best known of all celebrations of the Magna Mater. Written with an interval of almost exactly two years between them, these plays are: *The Lady from the Sea*, 1888, *Hedda Gabler*, 1890, and *The Master Builder*, 1892. Following the discussion of pagan mysteries in Ibsen, the paper refers to the concept of the Day of the Resurrection of the Flesh as a dramaturgic device in *When We Dead Awaken*, 1899. To conclude it is suggested that Neoplatonic philosophy, well-known to Ibsen after his studies of Julian the Apostate, is a constant resource to the amalgam of philosophy, poetry and religion in the Ibsen cycle.

Key words religion; mythology; Neoplatonism; ritual

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When Ibsen's plays are read with religious motifs and ritualistic structures in mind, it can be seen that there are various mythological elements in the action, the dialogue, and the characters of his works. Elsewhere, paying special attention to Ibsen's use of holy days from different religious traditions, I have undertaken such reading in some depth, and this previous research will be briefly summarised here.[1]

While Ibsen was writing his plays in nineteenth-century Western Europe, the religious issue naturally concerned in particular the Christian faith and the institutionalised Churches, Catholic and Protestant alike. Only a year after the first publication of *Peer Gynt*, von Hartmann reaffirmed his argument that "Christianity is no longer a vital factor of our developing civilisation, and has already traversed all its phases" (Hartmann xix). Earlier Hegel had, as Ameriks summarises it, "pictured orthodox Christianity, especially in its medieval form, as the deepest alienation, as an internalising of the master-slave relation within one's mind and throughout one's religious activity". Later, while "Feuerbach and Marx came to bury all religion", as Ameriks

also says, "Kierkegaard aimed to rejuvenate it by calling for a return to Christian orthodoxy" (Ameriks 260).

These thinkers belonged, of course, to the educated, intellectual European elite, and it is impossible to maintain that their thoughts and their theories represent a general tendency of the era. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the writings of Hegel, Kierkegaard and Marx were widely influential, not only affirmed or disputed by the intelligentsia, but also discussed by ordinary men and women. It is also clear that in the nineteenth-century Western world the Christian faith had been generally weakened by the dominance of scientific materialism and the impact of the theory of evolution in the natural sciences. Svendsen, a Norwegian writer on philosophy and the history of ideas, stated that at the time Ibsen wrote *Emperor and Galilean* the whole intellectual era in Western Europe was coloured by the struggle "concerned with the question of Christianity as the basis of European culture" (Svendsen 84). In that kind of intellectual environment, an atmosphere in which the traditional union of Christianity and humanism is being undermined, Ibsen wrote Emperor and Galilean, a play which the playwright claimed would be his "*hovedværk*", his "magnum opus" (*HU* XVII: 73).[2]

Ibsen's "hovedværk" is set within the period in history when the clash between Mediterranean paganism of antiquity and Christianity was reaching its climax, resulting in the rise of Christianity as a governmental religion in the Roman Empire, followed by the exclusion of Mediterranean pagan worship. Accordingly, the play about Julian the Apostate touches upon the problems which the interrelation of governmental politics and religion raises, but even more it focuses on the significance of religious belief for the individual. That specific concern of Ibsen's, the impact of the communal and collective operation of religion, and the values of religious faith and ethics on the personal level, occurs in his plays from early on. Already in his second play, *The Warrior's Barrow*, Ibsen had examined a discord between religions: the conflict between the Viking ethics of pride, honour and vengeance and the increasing influence of Christianity with the emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation. A corresponding theme recurs in *Lady Inger* where the political effects of the rise of Protestantism are in the background of the action, while in *The Pretenders* the relation of State and Church is central to the story.

It is, however, with his conception of a play about Julian the Apostate in the early 1860s, that a new religious dimension, the concept of a sacred time evoked and celebrated by a religious feast, is developed in Ibsen's dramaturgy. In a draft of *Emperor and Galilean*, the first scene is set at Christmas (*HU* VII: 346), but in the final version the play opens on the night before Easter Sunday. The reason for Ibsen's change from Christmas to Easter in this opening scene seems to be that, as he worked on the play, the idea of resurrection, so irrevocably related to Easter in the Christian religion, became an important element in the play, whereas the idea of the incarnation celebrated at Christmas was of less importance to the playwright's interpretation of Julian's religious dilemma. One of the central conflicts in the play is how Christian belief in the resurrection of the flesh contrasts with the Neoplatonic view of a spiritual resurrection while still living in a physical body; and it can be argued that those dis-

parate ideas are one of the main reasons for the religious crisis Ibsen describes in his protagonist.

It is from his conception about a play on Emperor Julian and onwards that a continuing reference to religious feasts becomes a significant element in Ibsen's playwriting. While "preparing a tragedy, *Julianus Apostata*" (*HU* XVI: 102), Ibsen explained that he was also writing Brand. Interestingly Ibsen sets the final act of the play about Brand, the prophet of human will, on St John's Day, the feast to celebrate the birth of John the Baptist, who prophesised the end of the world. His second dramatic poem, *Peer Gynt* comes to an end on Whitsun Morning, a holy feast representing the end of the waiting and spiritual reunion. The fourth Ibsen play set on a Christian holy day is *A Doll's House*, which takes place at Christmas, the feast of the turning back to light and the emergence of a new era.

A few years after *A Doll's House* Ibsen writes two plays with significant commemorations and ritualistic observances from the Jewish religion. Here we refer to *The Wild Duck* with Hedvig Ekdal as the Paschal victim offered in vain; and *Rosmersholm*, but the Levitical legislation of the Day of Atonement, an annual purification of the whole Hebrew nation, is in the background of Rebekka's confession and her and Rosmer's self-sacrifice in that play. Both these plays not only draw on motifs from Hebrew religion, but are also permeated with mythic and legendary allusions from other mythological traditions and ritualistic practices.

Here it is important to notice that Ibsen's residence in Italy and Germany, as well as a long visit to Egypt, added considerably to his personal experience and knowledge of different mythical and religious traditions. Ibsen shared this interest with scholars and artists of his time. Following the trend of the German Romantic movement, many scholars and poets were interested in ancient Mediterranean religions, and wide-ranging research, archaeological and historical, was undertaken at the various cultic sites. In 1863 – 65 Gerhard published his research on the archaeological remnants at the site of the Great Mysteries of Eleusis, which in antiquity was an annual festive veneration of the Greek fertility goddess, Demeter, and her daughter Persephone, and remarked that the main celebration of Demeter at Eleusis took place in the autumn month of Boedromion.[3] Ibsen refers directly to this Hellenistic autumnal feast in *Emperor and Galilean*, and fifteen years later he writes three plays that allude to the Eleusinian tradition and corresponding religious practice. Written with an interval of almost exactly two years between them these plays are: *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hedda Gabler*, and *The Master Builder*. All three are set in late summer or early autumn, that is, close to the classical dates of the enactment of the Great Mysteries at Eleusis. In the case of *The Master Builder* the playwright seems to set the enigmatic ending of the play precisely on the eve of the most secret mysteries enacted in the Eleusinian Telesterion.

Ibsen's last play, *When We Dead Awaken: A Dramatic Epilogue*, has as its central metaphor a Hebrew-Christian conception of a time yet to come, that is, the Day of the Resurrection of the Flesh. The powerful image of the Last Day is thus of major importance when the play is discussed, but Ibsen's *Epilogue* draws also significantly on alchemical and Gnostic visions, and an analysis of these elements is therefore of

importance when interpreting that play.

Mapped out in this way, it can be seen that Ibsen's application of religious holy days as a dramaturgic device starts with Christian feasts followed by a reflection on Judaic rituals. It is thus as if Ibsen, after having explored the significance of the Christian feasts, undertook archaeological research in order to find what lies beyond Christianity, namely the religion of the Jews, which is here discovered as an underlying element in *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm*. Because of the interrelation of Christianity and Judaism, sharing the same patriarchal God, there are, of course, Hebrew details discernible in the plays, which precede *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm*. In the same way elements from the celebration of the mystery of the Great Mother are observable in some of the plays from *Emperor and Galilean* onwards. This category occurs already in *A Doll's House*, but in that play *Nora Helmer* imitates patterns of sacred veiling interwoven into the structure of *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Nevertheless, it is with *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder* that Ibsen makes his most profound examination of the Demetrian motherhood and other Mediterranean mysteries. As a result Ibsen establishes his own syncretism, which fully developed in the apocalyptic vision of *When We Dead Awaken*.

It is probable that Ibsen not only became acquainted with the general terms of Hegel's dialectical philosophy as has often been pointed out, but that he was also aware of his interpretation of mythologies, and in particular the story of the resurrected Egyptian god, Osiris. That deity was, in Hegel's explanation, "perpetually restored, and thus posited as one born a second time, as a representation—he is not something natural but something set apart from the natural and the sensible. Thereby he is defined and posited as belonging not to the natural as such but to the realm of representing, the soil of the spiritual, which endures beyond the finite" (Hegel 626). To Hegel, the death of Osiris is thus only dying as observed by the senses, and not death as spiritually conceived; in the spiritual sense Osiris is eternally restored and returned to himself. As noted above, the idea of resurrection, which in Christianity is signified by Easter, is important in *Emperor and Galilean*. The play depicts a dilemma that arises because of the irreconcilable contrasts between the pagan idea of spiritual resurrection Hegel had explained in his interpretation of the Osiris myth, and the theological idea demonstrated with the Christian creed of the resurrection of the flesh. Ibsen neither solved nor abandoned that problem with *Emperor and Galilean*. On the contrary, after the play about Julian, allusions to myths of eternal cycles of death and rebirth, and the manifestation of these cycles in the act of sacrifice, abound in his plays.

Since Hubert and Mauss, who determined "the unity of the sacrificial system" by identifying within "the theme of sacrifice" three major elements, "the entry, the victim, and the exit"[4], and van Gennep who, in *The Rites of Passage*[5], followed in their footsteps, anthropologists and historians of religion have written extensively on ritual. Their scholarly conclusion as regards the main structure of rituals is amazingly uniform; in the apparent complexity of religious enactment, the basic pattern of initiation rites includes, almost without exception, the three phases Hubert and Mauss analysed. As Turner, an expert on ritualistic performances, explains: "Such rites char-

acteristically begin with ritual metaphors of killing or death marking the separation of the subject from the ordinary secular relationships." Turner then describes the final phase of the initiation, which concludes the rite "with a symbolic rebirth or reincorporation into society". In between these two phases there is a stage of what Turner calls *margin or limen*, a phase which usually comprises, as he further explains "a sacred condition protected against secularity by taboos and in turn prevented by them from disrupting secular order, since liminality is a movement between fixed points and is essentially ambiguous, unsettled, and unsettling" (Turner 273 – 74). Ibsen's characters often find themselves within an "unsettled, and unsettling" condition, similar to what Turner called liminality. This is, of course, not unexpected; what is new here is the discovery that by setting his works within the sacred time of religious rituals, Ibsen adds to his theatre a festive dimension, which demands special attention and partly explains the intriguing universality of his texts.

The anthropological research summarised above was, for obvious reasons, not accessible to Ibsen. However, that does not mean that Hubert and Mauss's legacy, and van Gennep's innovations in the field, are not valid for the purpose of the present inquiry. Neither Hubert and Mauss, nor van Gennep and his successors, were studying phenomena that were post-Ibsen. Instead these scholars were gathering information about human behaviour which, because ritual "occurs even in animals", as Burkert says, might be older than mankind (Burkert, "Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual" 57). The Bible, a key book with which to understand ritualistic practice among the Semites, and in which the principal narratives follow ritualistic patterns, was a major object of investigation for Hubert and Mauss. The same book was an endless source for Ibsen. In one of the earliest biographical studies of the playwright, Gran remarked that already in his childhood Ibsen could sit for hours with his textbook in Christian religion and look up the passages referred to in the Bible: "here he had an extreme need to understand the depths" (Gran 9). The pattern of the ritualistic tripartite process was, of course, within reach for Ibsen in various other sources. As Burkert has explained: "there is an initiation structure in the plot of most ancient romances, but the same is true of many common Greek myths, as it is of fairy tales" (Burkurt, "Ancient Mystery Cults" 66 – 67). Of all this collective cultural inheritance Ibsen had an abundant knowledge, and he continually turned to these sources in order to establish a syncretic background to his plays.

The enactment of ritual is intended to provide an awareness of the temporal that is different from everyday comprehension of sequential, linear time. With an extensive insight into ritualistic practice and a wide knowledge of the history of religions, Eliade made a clear-cut conclusion: "Every ritual has a divine model" (*The Myth of the Eternal Return* 21). Every imitation of the divine model of ritual indicates, as Eliade has also argued, that the religious act is aimed at a meta-empirical reality ("Methodologische Anmerkungen zur Forschung der Symbolen den Religionen" 119). Within the meta-empirical reality, established with the ritualistic enactment, the worshippers are brought back to the primordial time when the act imitated was initially performed. The regeneration of time in ritual is, according to Eliade, especially important in the enactment of 'the End-of-the-World-myths', because, as he adds:

"even in eschatologies, the essential thing is not the fact of the End, but the certainty of a new beginning" (*Myth and Reality* 75 – 76). A collective enactment of a traditional religious ritual thus aims at a perpetual regeneration of the initial time in which the primordial act of the divinity, the hero, or the legendary ancestor, took place.

The theory is, as we have seen, that the religious rite enacted on holy days connects humans with the divine, and while it does so the performance of the rite becomes a physical manifestation of the idea of that which is eternal. A sacred ritual is thus not only an act, which aims at transcending human solitude, but also an act that portrays the wish to go beyond the finitude of human existence. This wish and the complications it involves are at the root of *Emperor and Galilean*, and the theme of the temporal as opposed to the eternal, of life as opposed to death, seems ever to have haunted Ibsen's mind after his composition of that play. From then onwards, the idea of an eternal return to primordial time in ritualistic performances recurs throughout his work, maybe never more evident than it is in the title he gave his last play, *When We Dead Awaken*. While working for the eternal as opposed to the temporal, Ibsen applied the concept of holy feasts in his dramaturgy, and did so because the sense of the eternal is already embedded within the concept of sacred time, immediately incorporated in any religious ritual. Ibsen continuously proclaimed that the elevation of the human spirit was an evolutionary necessity, and he understood this quest as the supreme objective of human life. In order to encourage this process particular circumstances are needed: the time, space, and action preset in religious feasts; and Ibsen makes effective use of these qualities in his theatre. By designing the ritualistic notion of primordial times into some of his plays, Ibsen created a dimension in their action, time and place, which goes beyond their apparently realistic approach.

Ibsen critics have commonly referred to truth and freedom as key concepts in his "realistic" thinking, but the third important key concept deeply rooted in many of the plays he wrote, that of the *ånd*, by tradition translated into English with the word "spirit", is missing in conventional discussion of the "reality" of Ibsen's theatre. When Ibsen describes the human condition, he connects the term "spirit" immediately to truth and freedom (Ólafsson 23, 128 – 29).

The concept of the "spirit" is classically related to religious thought and mystical practice through which it has entered poetry since the early ages. In H. G. Wood's thorough documentation of this custom in Christianity, he concludes that the poetical expression for the eternal human search for spiritual fulfilment was in all ages to describe the "ultimate happiness under the symbol of feast" (Wood 210). Ibsen's use of religious feasts and holy days, here discussed, follows this apparently ancient tradition, but the playwright develops the trend by giving it a secular and naturalistic guise, and thus emphasises its concurrent significance.

Ibsen could not have read the Bible with interest without coming across the term "spirit", which in the Christian scheme was established by St Paul. The influence of the Bible on Ibsen includes, the Pauline understanding of "spirit", or *pneuma*, as St Paul chose to name that human faculty. Nonetheless, Ibsen's identification of himself with the neopagan Emperor Julian (HU XVII: 61; HU XVIII: 73) might at first sight complicate the question of how to interpret his continuous application of the

word, with which the Neoplatonic term *nous* is usually translated. This is so because the usage of *nous* in Neoplatonic discourse is not an exact equivalent of the Pauline *pneuma*, and the problem of distinguishing between the two has been multiplied by the confusion caused by the tradition to translate both terms into English, and Norwegian, with the same word. The Neoplatonic *nous*, which Beierwaltes equates with the German *Geist*, suggesting that it could be called "intelligibility" in English (Beierwaltes 299), has instead sometimes been translated, "by the Christian term *Spirit*" (Bevan 197). *Nous* in Neoplatonic usage is a faculty with which humans can deliberately approach the indefinite divinity by philosophical contemplation and, sometimes, mystical practice, whereas the Christian *pneuma* is not a faculty over which the human mind has similar provision. In the Christian doctrine the communion of the devotee with the divine demands at all times the devotee's absolute reception of and submission to the definite Christian God. But even if it seems evident from Paul's Epistles that he does not equate *pneuma* with *nous*, the parallels between Pauline thought and that of the Neoplatonists are more important here than their diversities. According to Beierwaltes, there are two concepts in Neoplatonic discourse that refer to the inner life of man; one is *nous* while the other is called *psyche* (Beierwaltes 299). It is in this division that we find the important analogy between Christian thought and Neoplatonism, because, as Bevan argues: "St Paul and Plotinus alike made a distinction between something called *psyche* and the higher part of the Soul" (Bevan 198).

It is evident that Ibsen thought of the human soul as consisting in a similar dichotomy. We can see this in a public speech he gave in Christiania shortly after the publication of *Emperor and Galilean*, when he said that any man or woman who sincerely looked at their personal inner life could not avoid viewing "the dregs and the sediments" of their own being. In the same speech he further claimed that when he had worked on those shadowy particles of the human being in his plays, the effect had been like taking a cleansing bath. On the same occasion Ibsen had earlier explained his attempt to write about the opposite component of the human soul, that which is "superior to the everyday ego". Then the dramatist added: "I have written about it in order to manifest it before and within myself" (*HU* XV: 394). The impact Neoplatonic philosophy apparently had upon Ibsen via his studies of the Apostate, is discernible in these quotations, and so too is his apparently extensive reading of St Paul. That which, in Ibsen's formulation, is superior to the everyday ego seems to indicate the higher part of the soul, a faculty that corresponds to what is called nous in Plotinus's philosophy, and that which is termed pneuma by St Paul, but the difference between the two seems to depend on philosophical and theological nuances rather than a different model of human faculties.

Ibsen criticism has to a great extent concentrated on "the dregs and the sediments" of the human soul referred to by the playwright. I have chosen to focus on the other part of the soul, that which is superior to the everyday ego, and examine how the playwright applies religious imagery to visualise this human faculty in his theatre. In Grotowski's opinion, "a secular consciousness in place of the religious one", seems "to be a psycho-social necessity for society", and for this reason he argued for the inevitability of a ritualistic theatre and the "holy" actor, however emphasising

that "one must not take the word 'holy' in the religious sense" (Grotowski 42, 49). Almost one hundred years before him, Ibsen, sharing Grotowski's concern about the decline of religion and its effects on individuals and society, as well as the theatre, established his own syncretic approach to the subject matter on which he dwelt in his plays; and he did so to emphasise the importance of religious awareness in an apparently spiritless world.

When Ibsen died, his wife said "that he was a deeply religious human being" (Hage 43), and shortly after the death of the playwright, Fibiger argued that 'the religious problem was so deeply rooted in Ibsen's soul from his childhood until his old age, that he was never free from it; on the contrary it became more and more dominating in the course of his life and thereby also in his poetics" (Fibiger 22). Following in the footsteps of Goethe who, as Jamme claimed, "all his life attempted to express his religious affinity in the images of Greek mythology" (Jamme 95), Ibsen expressed the strain of reconciling the everyday human ego with the superior one; and he did this by melding in his poetry metaphors derived from Neoplatonic philosophy, along with Gnostic and alchemical models and images from various religious traditions. It may well be true to some extent, as Esslin maintained, that "Ibsen's first and most obvious impact was social and political" (Esslin 71), but his aim was not solely to show life as it appears in its outward features and thereby to encourage social change. In Ibsen there is, as Ewbank has rightly observed, "an otherness which we suppress or 'naturalise', at the risk of losing his uniqueness" (Ewbank 31). At the end of his lifelong work Ibsen had created a series of plays in which his 'otherness' is manifested in many ways, including the thematising of religious festivals here discussed.

It is within festive time celebrated on sacred days that the ritualistic aspect of religion is made visible in performance. At the same time the reflecting human mind is invited to interpret and integrate the meaning of the feast. This was the practice and philosophy of pagan Mediterranean cults, but the authoritarian Christian Church was through the ages unwilling to allow such personal interpretation. For the Church the obedience of devotees to its authority had, when Ibsen wrote his plays, long become more important than the practice of spiritual devotion as means of self-development. Since the days of Constantine I, and especially after the defeat of the ideals Emperor Julian represented, the Church had operated as a political power, depriving the Christian faith of much of its potential spiritual qualities.

It is well known that Ibsen attacked both political bodies, the Church and the State. It is not as widely recognised that he did so out of his profound longing to assist humanity in its urgent spiritual need. In *Emperor and Galilean*, Julian, referring respectively to Christian faith and Greek philosophy, claims that the new truth is no longer true and the old beauty is no longer beautiful (*HU* VII: 81). It is reasonable to conclude that the playwright shared his character's sentiments, for Ibsen clearly meant that the truth of the Christian religion as preached by the Church was no longer valid, and he felt that the Church imprisoned the human spirit rather than liberated it. It is also evident that Ibsen, especially in his later years, grieved for the beauty of the philosophy of German idealism that was fading away before an increasingly nihilistic worldview. Ibsen's hope against hope at this crossroad was in a new spiritual cate-

gory which he saw as evolving out of an admixture of religion, philosophy and poetry, three modes of expression developed to define and to demonstrate human thoughts and feelings.

In its essence, a traditional sacred ritual can be defined as an artistic form of expression including the imagination of poetry, the reflection of philosophy, and the spiritual devotion of religion. Therefore it is, I think, important to acknowledge that by accommodating so many of his works to the notion of sacred feasts from various religious traditions, thereby engendering the plays with pagan philosophical ideas and classical mythological elements along with crucial Judaeo-Christian images, Ibsen attempted to manifest the idea of the amalgam of philosophy, poetry and religion in his theatre.

Until now the presence of religious feasts in Ibsen's plays has not been given its due, especially not in the theatre. As Bentley has argued, performances of Ibsen suffer much from: "the pretence of putting Ibsen on firm naturalistic ground" (Bentley104). Half a century has passed since Bentley's comment; nevertheless, the situation has not greatly changed where Ibsen productions are concerned. Critics and audiences, even theatre artists, pursue the naturalistic approach, often of course decorated with symbolic images, but Ibsenite theatre is invites to something more insightful. The next step may be to approach the staging of an Ibsen play "as though [we] were at some ancient religious ceremony", as Gordon Craig noted of his 1906 *Rosmersholm* production with Isadora Duncan and Eleonora Duse (Bablet 88).

【Notes】

1. See Trausti Ólafsson, "Ibsen's Theatre of Ritualistic Visions: An Interdisciplinary Study of Ten Plays," *Stage and Screen Studies*12(2008).
2. All the quotations of Ibsen's works are taken from *Hundreårsutgave: Henrik Ibsen, Samlede verker*, 21 vols, ed. Francis Bull, et al. (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1928 – 57). The sources are indicated with the abbreviated *HU* followed by the Roman numeral of the volume referred to: VII, XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII.
3. See Eduard Gerhard, *Über den Bilderkreis von Eleusis* (Berlin: Die Köningliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1863 – 1865)256.
4. See Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Cohen & West, 1964)19 – 49.
5. The work was originally published in 1911.

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The Use of the Gun and the Myth of Freedom[1]

Sabiha Huq

Abstract In *A Doll's House* Nora has admonished a life living through hypocrisy and falsehood, and consequently her departure from that life has been the most crucial point. In the twenty-first century *Nora* still retains the position of an administrator of shocking revelations, sometimes through directorial extravaganza as is the case with Thomas Ostermeier's *Nora* at the Schaubühne, in which Nora does not slam the door on the husband but rather shoots him dead. Nora's reinvention in the new European context reveals something about the male imagination namely that it loves to play with female objects devoid of realities and possibilities. This technique of playing with *femme fatale* has made playwrights and directors popular, and it is becoming customary outside the West too. The Centre for Asian Theatre's *Resurrection* is an example with the last scene presenting Irene chasing and knocking Rubek down with a gun. The paper intends to critique the myth of freedom projected through the use of gun in these two productions suggesting that emancipation of women remains a far cry because they are still seen and projected through the authority of men's desires.

Key words *femme fatale*; reinvention; revelation; myth of freedom

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In the play *A Dolls House* Torvald calls Nora "mad" and her action "monstrous," which probably has nothing to do with Ostermeier's monstrous Nora who kills Torvald quite arbitrarily. I address Ostermeier's Nora as "monstrous" exposing my position as someone against her monstrosity, and I think that the whole idea of changing Nora into a killer doll itself is perverted. Goethe once wrote about the German reception of Kalidas's *Shakuntala*, "that our sensibilities, customs, and ways of thinking have developed so differently from those in this Eastern nation that even an important work such as this ... can have little success here" (Fischer-Lichte 362). Similarly, I may have a misunderstanding of the present day German theatre practices, which is different from the theatre practice in the Indian Subcontinent. As an Ibsen scholar, I posit that Ibsen's original intention has been submerged to a great extent. Ibsen never wanted to show men and women as mortal enemies, and shooting and killing between them was never his intended prescription for women's emancipation. It must be acknowedged that these days Ibsen has largely been living through international reception, and the various productions in different cultures have witnessed a great range of experimentations. Thus innovation has become essential, and such innovation is healthy too. This particular German production has been celebrated for its novelty and acute shock upon the audience, and it is difficult to go against its popularity.

There are good inventions in the Ostermeier production; postmodern theatre with all its essences is here. From the revolving stage to the rocking lifestyle—everything is included in the production. Despite the necessity of innovation in the autonomous world of theatre it must be mentioned that the production provokes feminist ideas regarding exploitation of the female body on the stage. *The New York Times*' Theater page comments that violence is both a symptom and the only means of escape from the poisonous social system the play depicts. Ostermeier refashioned the conclusion to provoke a spasm of shock to the audience of today's more shock-absorbent age. The play presupposes that Ibsen's original ending has no intrinsic meaning for the audience of contemporary theatre audience. Still the coverage criticised the violation of the original spiritual dimention in the following way:

> Certainly, as cultures evolve, the perceived significance of any given work of art will change. And Mr. Ostermeier's production commendably translates the play's social dimensions. But it also violates its spiritual ones. Nora may, in the play's famous last scene, claim that her sheltered life has left her with no moral bearings, but the audience knows better. We can rightly judge that Nora's transgression was more a legal than an ethical one, her motivations far purer than those of her self-regarding husband. In altering Ibsen's ending, Mr. Ostermeier has drawn a veil across Nora's spiritual awakening. Unless, of course, he believes the moral high ground can be taken by force. (Isherwood)

The spiritual agency or the moral ground that makes the audience empathazie with Nora's cause has been removed for the sake of producing shock. In an interview Ostermeier told: "It's just that it was very shocking to society at the end of the 19th century that a woman should leave her husband and children. We can't nowadays have the same moment of shock when two thirds of families split up" (Kalb).

I do not have any argument against this, and I like at least half a dozen things he has done in his production. Ostermeier updates the play to a contemporary setting: the action takes place in a luxury-apartment that represents contemporary architectural style, which is described as "post-Bauhaus nightmare" by many. Dr. Rank is younger than usually played and is bisexual and HIV-positive. The multilevel house attracts the audience with its twenty-first century furniture and huge platform representing the catwalk for the model-like Nora whose physical attraction affects even the tramp Krogstad. The characters use cell phones and laptops, which is also commendable. The introduction of a black au pair as the children's nanny is also a good import. Occasionally, the characters burst into fits of momentary hysteria that is also skillfully used to show the restlessness of postmodern life.

Above all, the idea of using Lara Croft image from the video games for Nora is extremely contemporary and realistic. Nora, instead of dancing a tarantella, excites Torvald by dressing up as Lara Croft. Ostermeier wrote in an e-mail from Berlin about Nora's Lara Croft costume:

> Lara Croft is a male fantasy; men think it's sexy to see strong women. But in re-

> ality many of them don't believe in equality. Nora is initially fulfilling her husband's male fantasy when she dresses up like Lara Croft. When she really does use a weapon and does what Lara Croft does in the video games, it's no longer funny for the men. (Kalb)

The use of the huge fish tank as a living symbol on the stage may be interpreted as the modern enclosure that binds humans in the name of freedom and enlightenment. Nora herself has become an image. Accordong to critics like Kalb, "she today belongs both to Ibsen and to the world as a marvelously variable repository of skepticism about the much-touted advances for her sex." The play raises the question whether anything has fundamentally changed for women in 130 years. Probably, that is why Krogstad's sexual attraction for Nora is a valid concept. His attempt to assault her makes the play dirty, but resonates with reality. Every single man on the stage is attracted to her sexually, and Dr. Rank, who was a kind of psychological refuge for Nora, proves to be the worst as his hands frequently slide up Nora's skirt. The play has proved the reality of the post-modern and post-industrialized world where women are commodities that anyone can use, and sex and violence have become the most available trades.

Even if all these realities are accepted, it becomes difficult to bear the fact that Nora actually kills Torvald with the gun. The myth of freedom is associated with the myth of armed women. Lara Croft is a resurrected figure of the ancient amazons. It is true that probably hundreds of women may have wanted to kill Torvald through centuries, but the killing process itself is a very ill-judged implementation of the well judged plot. I recall one of Professor Erika Fischer-Lichte's classes where the play *Nora* was discussed. The discussion mainly centered on Nora's role as a killer. We thought her hysterical, possessed, and some of us went so far as to call her typically Nazi. I wonder if Ostermeier ever thought that he would place her on the turntable again. While in this era Nora should have been safe with her emancipated life I wonder why he has created her figure as one that can be questioned and crucified again.

I agree with Julie Holledge who writes that in this production there is no room for rational female agency: "Ostermeier gives his audience visual and kinaesthetic pleasure at the expense of a subjective identification with his Nora. Anne Tismer is too out of it to allow an empathetic connection" (Holledge).

Contemporary German theatre is called director's theatre. Probably Toril Moi is right in her judgement about Ostermeier's assessment of Ibsen's modernism. He thought that Ibsen is not modern enough and to modernise the playwright the director took his freedom to alter the ending. It is not enough to say that Ostermeier misrepresented Nora, I would even claim that both Ibsen and Ostermeier abused her. In the 19th century Ibsen exploited her to become famous. His original intention was to show the vulnerability of the social institution called marriage. But the world interpreted it as a mother's departure from the life of her children. I am talking about negative criticism of the play. Of course, Nora was unable to live with a man who insulted her sole existence as a human being, not only as a woman. Still, she could not avoid the consequences. In this century Ostermeier has turned her into a killer doll, who has shaken the very root of married life.

This reminds of Patricia Klindienst's claim that "Patriarchal culture feels that... something monstrous is incorporated when the woman returns from exile to tell her own story" (Klindienst 621). In this post modern production Torvald spits on Nora's face, Rank places his hands in between her legs to prove his love, Krogstad uses physical force on her, and as a consequence she also learns the language of violence. Ostermeier's intention is to show that virtually all human interactions in a bourgeois society can be reduced to sexual or financial transactions. In his interpretation of the play, sex is the strongest source of power, but he also shows that modern technology-based life has not brought any degree of enlightenment to western culture as the basic animal instinct of human beings are provocative. The characters emit a strange shriek that is symptomatic of this. While they fling themselves into the giant aquarium in the living room, that also connects the human and the animal world.

The image of the gun stands for violence which is created by women; even though violence originated in men, Its legacy continues in both sexes. On the other hand, women have mostly been victims. Even today we cannot say that women use guns frequently to solve domestic or private problems. Ostermeier has rightly chosen the violent use of gun, because his purpose was to inflict shock on the audience. The gun, the image of power, has become the symbol of the twenty-first century when the whole world witnesses the violent aggressiveness across nations and countries. An empowered Nora visualized by a creative mind which is essentially male, must take hold of a gun. I am not entitled to call it "mad" or "bad", but one can nevertheless judge how such western productions influence the globalized cultural sphere that also affects the other parts of the world while I turn to the play *Resurrection*.

Nilu wrote in his note that his play breaks the illusion of reality as he intentionally avoided any sort of realism. Nonetheless, the realism that works within his dialectical process is the realism of a post-colonial and post-9/11 modern world. He juxtaposes Ibsen and his characters in an illusory world where colonialism and feminism struggle to be heard from within.

The mixture of English and Bangla in the play has been one of the major features which reminds of the "cultural contamination" that is one of the central cultural and political issues of the play. The characters' utterances in Bangla and English have exposed the contaminated cultural identity of the local audience. Moreover, they are engaged in a dialogue that touches the heart of the problematic meeting of the post-colonial and the culturally globalized modern world, which is interesting.

Ibsen as a character of this play tells Hedda Gabler why he made the three characters of his plays namely Nora, Rebeka, and Hedda commit suicide, "I needed to [kill you]. I freed you through death from the filthiness, narrowness, and pettiness that bound you" (my translation). He refers to Nora's departure as her death and says that in a doll's house only a doll can live, and Nora was a human being with intelligence and conscience. She had to leave that house. However, when he is engaged in a conversation with Nora, he changes his mind. Nora tells him, "Henrik Ibsen, you made me talk on behalf of all women and I said I am not a woman, I am a human being" (my translation). The next moment Ibsen represents Torvald and says in English, "first and foremost, you are a wife and a mother" (uttered in English).

Here Nilu presents the dualism existing in the lives of today's women, who have been given the opportunity to be educated, to earn a living wage, but who realize that nothing has changed. They are still living in a world of dominance and cruelty. Ibsen becomes the symbol of absolute authority of abuse whom the characters accuse.

I call the freedom of women a myth, because I have my own definition and interpretation of freedom in the third world countries. It is like Rousseau's utterance "man is born free but everywhere he is in chains." On Indian subcontinent the idea of women's freedom is a myth, as freedom for them does not really exist. I would cite one example of the popular goddess Durga whom the Indian Hindus call 'mother.' She was granted weapons by the gods, which are trident, discus, thunderbolt, etc. This beautiful image of the goddess could not change the lives of millions of Hindu women. Durga was created to fight an inhuman force that unleashed terror on earth. Except in the extremely entertaining Indian movies, one would rarely hear of a woman's defeating impropriety or immorality. Even today, many women are murdered because of dowry, burned by acid, abducted or otherwise openly humiliated. Freedom has become a good topic for public debate, and a popular catch phrase for gender activists. The women who dance with weapons in *Resurrection* recall the the dumb image of Durga, and I call them powerfully powerless.

Probably the writer and director Nilu never thought that the play would become a thin symbolic representation of the globalized third world whose authorities are the World Bank, IMF, and so on. The poor countries live on their will, and the imbalanced trade and cultural flow that are mostly dominated by the developed countries. The play reiterates the neo-colonial perspectives of today's uneven globalization, and the position of the third world countries is clear enough. The silent control of developed and strong countries over the underdeveloped and weak ones create existential fear. The rise of military power and religious fundamentalism have been the aftermath. In this situation if Irene and Rubek dance and sing, "I am free" and then Irene in military dress kills Rubek with a rifle, the political connotation becomes very clear. The tension involved in world politics, imbalance of power, the struggle within and without, all these are born out in the play. The unequal power game within a single landscape can be sensed. While the countries are entangled in a struggle between the economic dependence and the rise of militancy, the women suffer the most. The way the play uses gun is quite symptomatic of this struggle, but the handling of the weapons by women is far away from reality. I cannot avoid the recent phenomenon that can be called the darkest moment in the history of Bangladesh. The rebellion of the Bangladesh Rifles against the Army and the killing of about a hundred Army officials was a matter of serious national as well as international concern. However, the women who were killed or humiliated had nothing to do with the power struggle. In 1971 there were several female freedom fighters and many deflowered maids, but the play does not connote that, rather the way the women hold gun in *Resurrection* is a mere fantasy even today. It reminds of the thrillers or high action movies, but at the same time it should be acknowledged that what happens in the underdeveloped world today is nothing different. Nilu highlights the social situation and tells the untold story of political intrigue. The problem lays in the presentation of it and making women

scapegoats. It may seem to the traditional theatre audience that women's emancipation is either leaving the family or shooting the husband. the images of mothers, sisters, wives, or nurturing women—that are usually held sacred, are destroyed in such productions. Society still runs with those images of women, and women still work as silent partners in the development process. The one and all encompassing aggressive and vindictive woman's self gets way in these productions, which is partial, unrealistic, and abusive.

I want to emphasize like Patricia Klindienst that "In freeing our own voices we need not silence anyone else's or remain trapped by the mythic end. In undoing the mythical plot that makes men and women brutally vindictive enemies we are refusing to let violence overtake the work of our looms again. We have that power. We have that choice."

【Note】

1. In this article, VDs of *Nora* and *Ressurrection* have been consulted.

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Ibsen's Compass: Points of Dread and Desire

Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey

Abstract By studying the emotional charge of the extended virtual milieu in Ibsen's last twelve plays as a body, patterns are revealed which contribute significantly to the plays' analysis, interpretation, mise-en-scène, and performance. The "here"—the virtual space evoked on stage—in Ibsen's mature dramas is easily identified and falls within a fairly limited range (the plays are all set in contemporary Norway, largely in private spaces, and—with the exception of *The Wild Duck*—in separate dwellings rather than apartment buildings). But the "there"—the extended virtual milieu—is far more extensive, and reaches in all directions of the compass. This extended sphere includes not only specific places found on a geographical map (Paris, America, the Alps) but also vaguely defined areas or general directions ("the sea," "the north"). Specific or general, they are not so much physical as mental and spiritual *loci*, assigned certain qualities evoking strong emotional responses. They exert a power to attract or repel. No analysis of Ibsen's plays is complete without an understanding of this spatial "push and pull," these compass points of dread and desire. Although some of them have been noted in individual plays, the patterns and congruences emerging by studying the entire cycle give greater weight to each instance and focus attention on hitherto unnoticed riches in Ibsen's text.

Key words virtual space; vectors; spatial; "push and pull"; compass points

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How often do we have the opportunity to read, see or produce Ibsen's plays the way he wanted? Ibsen insisted that "only by grasping and comprehending my entire production as a continuous whole will the reader be able to conceive the precise impression I sought to convey in the individual parts of it. I therefore appeal to the reader that he not put any play aside... experiencing them intimately in the order in which I wrote them."[1] In 2008 I had the opportunity to do precisely that, working with Ion Theatre, San Diego, on a year-long project producing monthly concert readings of Ibsen's last twelve plays, from *Pillars of Society* in January to *When We Dead Awaken* in December.[2] In the process I was made vividly aware of certain aspects of Ibsen's dramaturgy, among them what I call Ibsen's "compass."

I observed that Ibsen's last twelve plays—his "realist cycle" (Brian Johnston's term)—are strikingly concerned with locations, spatial relationships, and directions. In contrast to the roughly contemporary plays of Strindberg and Chekhov, Ibsen's plays are filled with references to places and areas—loci—and directions—vectors.[3] These *loci* and *vectors* are carefully selected and artfully included. But a look at any

one of the twelve plays hardly alerts the reader and audience viewer to their existence and significance. Only some loci are flagged by proper names. Only a few *loci* and vectors are discussed at length by the characters. The rest are general in nature and included in the dialogue in such a seamless way as to be nearly invisible. But when the cycle is considered *in toto*, when the twelve plays are read or seen in sequence, the cumulative impact is undeniable. How many Ibsen characters do not express their feelings about "the north"? Characters go north, or come from the north, or go back up north. What is it about "the north" that warrants referring to over and over again? And what about "the south"? How many characters long to go south? How many have returned from the south, changed?

In this paper I will discuss *loci* and *vectors* in Ibsen's "realist cycle," their nature and function, and why I see them as enrichening the plays and deserving attention and analysis by theatre practitioners. To do so I will first inventory the body of *loci* and vectors. What are they? Which ones recur most often? How are they charged, positively or negatively? How do they impact the characters? I will then suggest how, when the plays are being moved from page to stage, *loci* and vectors—if noted—will subtly add dimension to the characters, inform blocking and scenography, and make the virtual milieu more "real."

Loci are either "here"—the virtual place created on stage by the actual set and visible to the audience—or "there"—any place off stage, be it next door or across the Atlantic. *The locus* "here" for each of the twelve dramas is easily identified and falls within a fairly limited range.[4] The plays are all set in contemporary Norway, largely in private domestic spaces, and—with the exceptions of *A Doll House* and *The Wild Duck*—in separate dwellings rather than apartment buildings.[5] The geographical location is unspecified: "*Handlingen foregår... i byen... ude ved fjorden... i en kystby... i en liden fjordby... udenfor hovedstaden.*" Six are set in a town, three of them in a substantial villa; two in a major city; two on country estates; one on an estate at the outskirts of a city; and one in nature. All but *A Doll House* and *The Master Builder* are set near a fjord, or in or near a coastal or fjord town, reachable by steamer.[6] It is worth noting that the plays gradually incorporate more and more nature, from the *havestue* (garden room) in *Pillars of Society* (1877) and the *havestue* and *blomstervaerelse* (garden room with conservatory) in *Ghosts* (1881) to complete exteriors in the later plays.[7] In *Lady from the Sea* (1888) and *Little Eyolf* (1894) the only interior set is, in fact, a havestue. Note also the movement from interiors to exteriors and upward in *Master Builder* (1892) and *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896). Ibsen's last play, *When We Dead Awaken* (1899), is set entirely out of doors, moving from domesticated sea level to untamed mountain heights. As Ibsen intended his cycle plays for the stage and not just for the reading public, his move away from interiors to exteriors must be seen as significant, as it was taking place at a time when theatre technology had perfected the box set creating lifelike domestic interiors but was still unable to satisfy demands for "realism" in exteriors and was not yet ready to move into symbolism or expressionism via the New Stagecraft.

On the other hand, references to any *locus* "there"—any place in the extended virtual milieu, the entire unseen world outside the *locus* "here"—are far more exten-

sive and often specific. In addition to frequent references to general areas ("the sea," "the north," "the mountains") and spatial relationships, directions and points of the compass (up, down, in, out, "up north," "in the south," "over on the coast"), they include named areas and places. Ibsen anchors the extended virtual milieu with references to actual natural geographical or topographical features (the Ortler Group, the Dolomites, the English Channel, the Brenner Pass, the Ampezzo Valley, Capri, Lake Taunitz, the Arctic Sea), manmade places (Paris, London, Rome, New York, Halifax, Archangel), and areas, nations, and continents (Tirol, Italy, England, California, China, Australia, America).

Some *loci* are defined or described in terms of polarity ("up there" vs. "down here," "home" vs. "abroad," "Old World" vs. "New World," "countryside" vs. "city") where spiritual and cultural life, physical size, and relative modernity factor are included E. g., it is understood that, compared with Paris, Rosenvold has little to offer Osvald Alving. In *Pillars of Society* "our" Norwegian engineers are compared with the pragmatic ones of "the larger countries" (the industrialized nations of Europe) when the railway coming to town raises the question of the human cost of progress.

Both the *locus* "here" and the *locus* "there" act on the characters, attracting or repelling them. When characters "here" (all characters tend to be "here"; the reactions of absent characters are largely uninteresting to a dramatist) are attracted "there," a vector of desire is created. Although reaction to the present "here" can be strengthened in performance in that it is directly presented and kinaesthetically available to the audience, a character's ongoing yearning for a distant "there" can be a very powerful vector.

Loci also have varying emotional charges, depending on who is speaking. Not surprisingly, the "here" is viewed favorably by the conservative characters in the place where the action is set, while the "there" is correspondingly criticized. No surprise, then, that Rørlund in *Pillars* praises Norway and denounces "the great nations of today" as kalkede grave, "whited sepulchres." The rebels, conversely, criticize the "here" and are attracted to the "there," yearning for change or escape. (I shall return to the effect of the *loci* and vectors on the characters in the following.)

As far as vectors are concerned, some are oriented to explicit compass points: West, North, East, South. Others are implied, depending on the "here" of the speaker. If "the sea" is mentioned, it usually means West or South,[8] "the mountains" imply East or North or possibly West (as in *Master Builder*, which is set in an inland valley).[9] "Down there" can mean 'southern Europe' or 'southern Norway' or simply 'down below, at a lower level, on the floor below.' "Out there" refers to the sea, "up there" to the north or up in the mountains, and so on. The context clarifies and charts the thoughts and movements of the characters, including whether they are going away or coming home and how they have arrived "here" or "there": on foot or by steamer, train, sleigh, or streetcar. We almost get a time table for some of the traffic—in *Ghosts*, for example, we are told that the morning steamer usually arrives around lunch time, necessitating Manders' stay overnight on the Rosenvold side of the fjord to be in time for the dedication ceremony, which al-

lows Ibsen to include the delicious moment when Manders declines Mrs. Alving's invitation to stay overnight under her roof.

"The North," "north," is the most frequently mentioned point on the compass. Not surprisingly, in view of Norway's shape, location, geography and climate zones, 'the north' is almost always viewed negatively. Dr. Stockmann in *Enemy of the People* rings particularly eloquent variations on the theme of the north as a cold backwater. In *The Wild Duck* and *Lady from the Sea*, however, the north is also the place of clean, clear air, "quite fresh" contrasted with "stale city air."[10] Hilmar Tenneson in *Pillars* romanticizes the North Pole as an "invigorating" area—but only to read about.

A special case is Finnmark, an area in the far north associated with untamed, differently gifted "others" believed to have magic powers. Rebecca West comes from Finnmark. The Stranger in *The Lady from the Sea* is a *kven* (sami) from Finnmark, though born in Finland.[11] Irene in *When We Dead Awaken*, we are told, speaks with a northern accent, a tiny reference hinting at her uncanny powers.

"South," "down south" are recurring references, often concretized as places in southern Europe (Italy, Capri, Rome, Paris), and almost always positively associated with warmth and culture.[12] The young Karsten Bernick had to go to Paris and London to see the world. Torvald Helmer was dying—it was only by going south to Italy that he could be cured. It is only in Paris that Osvald can truly grow as an artist, and down south that Lyngstrand can become a famous sculptor and Frida Foldal get conservatory training as a pianist.

There are very few references pointing to eastern Norway. In one draft of *Enemy of the People*, one of the journalists speaks with an eastern dialect, denoting lack of sophistication. Areas east of Norway are generally ignored. There are no references to Sweden—in spite of, or perhaps because of, the Union—and none to the Baltic. Finland is mentioned only as the birth country of the Stranger in *Lady from the Sea*, and Russia—adjacent to Norway in the north—is mentioned only as a possible home of rich yacht owners in *Ghosts*.

"West," on the other hand, is often mentioned, referring to the coast of Norway and, beyond it, the sea, England, and—the ultimate wild west—America. West is overwhelmingly positive, associated with the sea, connections to the outside world via the sea, and the wealth resulting from these connections. The estates Rosenvold and Rosmersholm are both located near a fjord in western Norway.

"America" occupies a special position. (The city New York is mentioned once, but the country is never politicized or concretized as the United States, always referred to simply as "America.") Dr. Stockmann in *Enemy* sees it as escape via Captain Horster, who regularly sails to America. For others, especially in *Pillars*, America inspires a variety of responses. It is "the New World," on a par with "the South Sea" and "a Primeval forest" when it comes to fanciful escape, but also an iconic place of red indians where you hunt buffalo with bow and arrow. To Johan Tønneson it is a place where women are entitled to independence and income, to Karsten Bernick it is "*et opagiteret samfund*," a (politically) aroused society, in contrast with "*vor lille kreds*," our little circle, of seemly and modest women. To Martha Bernick

it is a place where Johan has had a "life in bright shimmering sunlight, drinking in youth and health" while she has aged prematurely in Norway. America is natural and unspoilt, but it is also wild and bestial, the place of unscrupulous business deals with profit as only motive. The American shipowner in *Pillars* is ruthless and immoral, the American sailors perpetually drunk "wild animals."

Some vectors are not horizontal but vertical. Unless combined with "north" in "up north," the numerous references to "up" usually refers to the mountains. Elevation is generally positive. "Up," however, is positive or negative, depending on who is speaking and how they view centers of culture. If you desire to "get away from it all," mountains offer the surest escape. If you crave culture, as the Tesmans both do in *Hedda Gabler*, the mountains, from which Thea Elvsted and Løvborg have come down, are a negative backwater.

In the later plays, the up-down movement becomes more pronounced, the sets being what Brian Johnston calls "scenic metaphors of 'vertical liberation'."[13] Mines and mining are mentioned in *The Wild Duck* but central to John Gabriel Borkman, who declares his love for the veins of ore deep underground. Ascending, actual climbing, occurs in *Lady from the Sea*, *Master Builder* "up into the free air" (253), *Little Eyolf* (Allmers' cataclysmic mountain hike), *John Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken*. There is even vertical imagery echoing the late nineteenth century interest in ballooning—Jules Verne's *Five Weeks in a Balloon* had appeared in 1873—in a brief remark of Ballested's in *Lady from the Sea* but more notably in *John Gabriel Borkman*. Likening himself to the captain of a balloon, Borkman explains to Ella how he felt when he wrestled with all the projects that he was about to launch:

> I imagined that I was some kind of captain of the sky—I walked the sleepless nights preparing my giant balloon for the battle, ready to sail out over an unknown, perilous sea... I wouldn't take you or your belongings with me in the balloon... you don't take what's dearest to you on such a journey... life isn't always the dearest thing.... (*Ibsen Volume III* 158)

The most powerful of all attractive loci "there" is the "out there" of the open sea or the liminal sea board with its free open horizon. Eight of the twelve plays are situated by a body of water, and especially the open sea and fjords opening out to the sea act on the characters as powerful magnets, pulling their bodies and filling their minds. The water symbolism is especially well developed in *Lady from the Sea*, comparing the open sea to the tepid fjord to the stagnant pond.[14] The sea is one of the two major forces in Elida's life.

All these references are not included in order to transmit information about a locale. Ibsen is not interested in mapping the geography of Norway or any part of the earth. His "Norway" is a metaphoric world.[15] In other words, specific or general, the *loci* are not so much physical places as mental and spiritual constructs assigned certain qualities which evoke strong emotional responses in the characters. The vectors are lines in a virtual forcefield, attracting or repelling them. No analysis of Ibsen's plays is complete without an understanding of this spatial "push and pull" on

the characters, these compass points of dread and desire.

At the same time the wealth of references, anchored by references to named places and features, create an illusion of solid "reality." They create a consistent virtual world with its own internal logic. Ibsen has an unerring sense for spatial relationships, placement, and movement, both within the confines of a theatre set—perhaps developed during his days as stage manager in Bergen—and within the larger metaphoric world created in each of his plays.

This internal logic must not be ignored. The more precisely Ibsen pinpoints a spatial relationship, the more damage a careless translation may do, as seen in this example from *Hedda Gabler*:

> Tesman: . . . How could she stand it holed up out there, so far from everything, hm?
> Hedda: . . . Doesn't he live out that way, Eilert L? vborg, I mean?
> Tesman: Yes, right up in that area.[16]

A translation that alternates between "out there" and "up in that area" confuses reader, theatre practitioner, and audience alike. Did Thea come in to town from the coast, or down from the mountains? Ibsen, on the other hand, is crystal clear: the place of the Elvsteds where Løvborg has been staying is *der oppe* ("up there," i. e., in the mountains or north of the capital).

As Ibsen was writing—the first eight plays of the cycle were penned on the Continent—of course memories and impressions of the Norway he had known colored his metaphoric map. But he deliberately moved from specificity toward universality. The specific actual inspiration became submerged, hidden in the general. As Janet Garton has pointed out, what is spelled out in an early draft often disappears from the text, absorbed into the subtext, in the final version.[17] For example, *The Wild Duck* takes place in the unspecified "*byen.*" But the fact that Werle is able to assemble three chamberlains for his dinner party—twenty-five percent of the total number in the entire country—coupled with the layout of the apartment building including a studio attic suggest a major city. In fact, one draft of *The Wild Duck* specifies "Kristiania."[18]

How can Ibsen be so detailed as to include specific place names and at the same time strive for universality through general descriptions of locations ("*I byen*")? One clue to this paradox may be the fact that in the published texts, specific names never appear in the Nebentext, the stage directions, only in the dialogue. The specific names, put into the mouths of the characters, are not designed to inform about an actual area—some of the Norwegian place names are even invented—but to give specificity and validity, color and substance, to a virtual world as seen by its virtual inhabitants. In the stage directions, on the other hand, aimed at the theatre practitioner or the reader imagining the location, actual place names would limit rather than encourage the dramatic imagination and claim for the virtual world a verisimilitude that is not only impossible but undesirable.

An interesting aspect of *loci* and vectors is the respective force, eloquence, and

persistence with which Ibsen's characters express their emotional responses. Often they make brief, formulaic or cliché statements, not expecting to be gainsaid. But once in a while Ibsen has a character elaborate, clarify and embroider. "The north" provokes such strong and eloquent negative responses. In *Rosmersholm*, Rebecca explains that Dr. West was broken down by "those winter storms we get up there in the north... no hope of resisting..." (220)—and that they came down from Finnmark to "a great new world" south (213), though she also speaks lyrically of the north's "tranquility like that of an island of birds at rest under the midnight sun..." (221) In *Enemy*, Dr. Stockmann describes his life up north in great negative detail, "stuck up there in the grey north" (131), isolated from civilization in "an awful bit of foul weather," where "half-alive creatures need a veterinarian, not a doctor" (182).

Why this insistence? Why this repetition? Ibsen's elaboration on the theme of the awfulness of the north certainly conveys the degree of Dr. Stockmann's revulsion for the north. But above all, the nature of that elaboration helps convey his character—a Norwegian audience member would understand what kind of person Stockmann is from the way in which he expresses his unhappiness with the north.

It is, in fact, primarily as subtle character descriptors that the *loci* and vectors function. A character is fleshed out by the location of his or her response to a *locus* or vector on one or several spectra. Stockmann's disgust with the north is a case in point. "The north is such and such"—Stockmann goes on and on. On a spectrum of "voluble-taciturn" he places at "voluble." On a spectrum of "enduring-complaining" he is no stoic. On a spectrum of "culture loving-culture insensitive" he is culture loving. On a spectrum of "timid-adventurous" he is adventurous. On a spectrum of "realist-idealist" he is a blue-eyed dreamer: when threatened, he rejects the north as a possible retreat and instantly settles on "America" as the locus of his desire. (*Enemy of the People*, in fact, has two negative *loci* for Dr. Stockmann: "a little backwater like this"—bad—and "up north"—worse.) Ibsen often uses a character's response to a *locus* to place that character on a spectrum of sophistication or naiveté. Someone who has been to Paris does not mythologize it as readily: Regine's Paris is not Osvald's. When talking about Paris and in comparison with Osvald, Regine comes across as simple and a little foolish—but also focused, diligent, and ambitious.

Some persons are emotionally charged through their association with *loci* and vectors. They may live in or have come from a certain place ("the Americans"), or they may be professionally tied to it (artists in Paris or Rome). Some persons are emotionally charged precisely because they are not tied to any place at all. Sea captains, travelers, and artists are especially rootless or free in opposition to the rooted or trapped.

Take, for example, the character of the ultimate traveler: the actor with a touring theatre company, who is not only rootless but whose forced travels rarely result in financial gain or respectability. One such actor, who has stopped touring and remained in a provincial town as a bird of foreign plumage and jack-of-all-trades, is Mrs. Dorf in *Pillars of Society* (once with Møllers' theatre company), another is Ballested in *The Lady from the Sea* (once with Skive's theatre company). Even Ulrik

Brendel in *Rosmersholm* was once with a theatre company. Mrs. Dorf and Ballested both stopped traveling and tried to sink roots. He became his town's all purpose artist: painter, tourist guide, band leader and French horn player. She took in washing and opened a dancing school. He is useful and the town is receptive to "foreign" influences, at least in the tourist season. She is a woman without a man, abandoned or having jumped ship, neither of which is respectable, in a town which once supported the arts but now is too moral to do so. He survives, she goes under. Their different fates reflect not so much their own characters—both are described as honest and hard-working—as the prejudices of their respective communities.

But while actors, artists, and travelers—especially single female travellers[19]—are suspect, sea captains like Horster in *Enemy* are a special breed, simultaneously rootless (which is suspect) and respectable (because responsible for communication, transportation, and the country's commerce). Rootlessness equals freedom, which is both alluring and frightening. "Sea people don't care what happens on land," asserts Hovstad. Dr. Stockmann agrees: they are "like birds of passage . . . at home both north and south"[20]—a questionable trait. But sea captains and the ships they man (steamers, tourist ships) connect the farflung parts of the country and link it with other countries. They partake of the openness and freshness of the sea.[21] On the other hand, captains or owners of yachts and cutters—rich Englishmen, Russians, Americans, foreigners (*Ghosts*) or landowners (*When We Dead Awaken*)— pursue their own pleasure and do not benefit mankind. Ibsen makes use of images with sufficient grounding in reality to motivate the longings of his characters, in this instance to make viable the rumor of Regine's paternity.

Are any of the opinions expressed by the characters Ibsen's own? Not necessarily, though some generally held opinions of the time were certainly shared by Ibsen. America as the land of the free—the land of opportunity, rough and tumble, high risk, and instant riches—is hardly an original idea. Kurt in Strindberg's *Dance of Death* as well as the Stranger in his *The Burnt Lot* have returned from America, both tempered by the experience. Kurt vigorously defends America when Edgar dismisses it as "*något rysligt busland*" (some god-awful land of thugs).[22] If there was ever a generally held image based on equal portions of non-experience, propaganda, hearsay, and wishful thinking, it was surely the image of "America" (not the political unit USA) in the 1880s – 90s. Who in Scandinavia at that time did not, at least to some degree, embrace this image? America was alluring and distant enough to function as much as a magnet, *livsløgn*, and impossible dream, as a solution, escape hatch, and unassailable option.

Ibsen's own opinions do not figure openly, but resonate beneath the opinions, prejudices, and condemnations expressed by his characters. In plays dealing with social politics and family—the first four plays of the cycle—Ibsen's opinions are fairly clear. But in the last four plays, his opinion—say, of Borkman or Rubek—is elusive and, perhaps, irrelevant. The no-nonsense, openminded female characters who are least convention-bound—Lona Hessel, Nora Helmer, Dina Dorf, Petra Stockmann, Hedvig Ekdal, Mrs. Berta Sørby, Hilde Wangel, Asta Allmers, Fanny Wilton, Frida Foldal, Irene—may say a thing or two that strikes one as spoken by Henrik Ibsen.

But there really are no true *raisonneurs* in his cycle.

In so far as Ibsen's take on a character is ironic, the character is in the course of the action exposed as foolish, crooked, sly, misguided, "moral." But Ibsen increasingly avoids heavy satire: for example, in *Ghosts*, Regine, Manders, and Engstrand are all cleverly and subtly revealed. (The fact that they are often played with heavy-handed satire and stereotyping is another matter.)

Why is the "compass" important? For each character, the "here," the site of the action, is the center of his or her own world and compass. For each compass Ibsen informs us about locations, directions and spatial relationships, making sure to capture in words what is intended to be conveyed simply and powerfully and—possibly primarily—gesturally on stage. He does so for three reasons: first, because he writes for a reading public as well as a theatre audience; second, because gestural intentions obviously cannot be communicated to actors entirely without textual cues; and third, because the information in question is of vital importance. That information is about the characters' "compass," how they are aligned by Ibsen to their world, to places far and near, to the sea and the mountains. The real payoff of the compass is how it benefits the actor by adding another character dimension to be explored.

This exploration contributes to a production in performance because almost all of the sites in the twelve plays are situated by a body of water or on or near mountains, or both. (*Ghosts* and *Little Eyolf* are set between fjord and mountains.) The only plays not set near either water or mountains and without a strong link to nature are *A Doll House and Hedda Gabler*.[24] Sea and mountains are the major magnets in Ibsen's plays and his characters are aligned to their force fields like iron shavings.

The clearest example is Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea*, whose relationship to the sea informs her whole being. There is not a moment when she is not aware of the direction of the sea, and hardly a moment when she is not drawn there. (All the town residents in *The Lady from the Sea* know where the tourist steamers dock and are attuned to their comings and goings.) A director or actress who does not know the direction of the sea and the fjord for each set of that play not only misses the opportunity to explore a most significant and powerful influence on Ellida's character, but also confuses the audience by ignoring the logic and map of Ibsen's virtual milieu. Similarly, do not Rosmer and Rebecca know where the millrace is located and feel its fearful pull? Who in *Pillars of Society* does not know where the harbor is, where the shipyard? Who in *Enemy of the People* does not know where the polluted effluent is emptying into and poisoning the sea? Who living at Rosenvold does not know where the morning sun hits the mountain peaks at a given time of year? Allmers knows in his bones where his desired mountains are, just as he and Rita have internalized the dreaded direction of the dock where Little Eyolf drowned.

Not all characters are aligned with the constant powerful magnets of water and/or mountains. Some are temporarily drawn to something in their immediate surroundings. Hedvig, Hjalmar Ekdal and Old Ekdal covertly focus on the wild duck in "*havsens bunn*." Kristine Linde is tuned into the Consul's party upstairs. And is not Gunhild Borkman aware every waking moment of the location of her husband above her head? Every one in *John Gabriel Borkman* knows the direction of the city and,

beyond it, the beckoning south. Gunhild and Ella hear from which direction Fanny Wilton's silver sleigh bells are rending their hearts.

However metaphoric the map, Ibsen's characters are oriented and aligned according to their desires and fears and the actors portraying them must act accordingly. The extended virtual milieu, the external landscape, is echoed as an internal landscape. Whatever "-ism" or aesthetic filter is used in the scenography—realism is not required,—and whatever natural features are signified or shown to be visible to the characters, the actors must know the layout of their virtual world and internalize it. It is not a question of an actor physically pointing, broadly indicating where things are. It is more a question of "mentally pointing," the actor being aware of the forces acting on his or her character and being willing to align the portrayal accordingly. A nod, a shrug, tilt of the head, a lifted chin, a quick upward look—that is all it takes to communicate to the theatre audience the integrity of the great reckonings in Ibsen's "little rooms." Whether this alignment is clearly visible or otherwise directly evident to the audience is of secondary importance. Of primary importance is the subtle effect it has on the actor, expanding the inner world of the character, which, in turn, reverberates in performance in numerous intangible ways.

There are three functions of the compass.

First, although the "map" is not a map, the information not information, the specificity of Ibsen's metaphoric map lends substance and credibility—"reality"—to the world of each play. And only by having "reality" can this world be contested, gradually undermined, and exposed as unreal—a grand scheme, glimpsed only by looking at the entire 12-play cycle.

Second, the emotions expressed about the points of the compass reveal the characters uttering them. Their responses to the map fill in the characters in far more subtle ways than the usual givens (sex, age, profession, hair color). Background, inherited traits, family story, expectations, significant relationships, interest in culture; character traits like fortitude and adventurousness, as well as gifts like artistic talent and quickness of mind; hopes, dreams, projects—all is highlighted through references to the map. Ultimately these maps are Ibsen's own. He is, after all, the master draftsman of all the maps, which, when taken together, reveal the grand map in his 12-play dramaturgical master plan.

Third, the specificity and detail of a character's compass gives the actor a very particular challenge and opportunity to contribute to the complete work of theatre art. As director Rick Davis sees it, the actor's task is to consider—beyond the basic understanding of action and situation (vital building blocks though they be), and well beyond motives (always present) and psychological tics (usually invented)—the ways in which he or she as an interpretive artist can give "human shape to this large reservoir of meaning that shadows the overt level of the play's action . . . to communicate something of the scale and audacity of these works [Ibsen's plays] to a contemporary audience."[25]

Exactly how this is to be done, Davis does not say. He approaches a recognition of what I call Ibsen's "compass" when he hints at interplay between characters, virtual milieu and extended virtual milieu: Ibsen's "landscape" (which includes the sea-

sons) is, as he puts it, "echoed as an internal landscape within the responsive characters" (Davis and Johnston 57). But he is silent about the implications for either the translation, study, rehearsal, or performance of the text. I suggest that in his "compass" Ibsen provides one way—a way deserving further exploration—of giving human shape to "this large reservoir of meaning," inviting actors to truly do what Henry James termed "the deep and delicate thing."

【Notes】

1. See Rick Davis and Brian Johnston, *Ibsen in an Hour* (NY: Smith and Kraus, 2008)55.
2. Ion's artistic director Glenn Paris chose to use the translations of Brian Johnston and Rick Davis for the project. Unless otherwise indicated, translated passages in this paper reflect this choice. The twelve plays are contained in three volumes: *A Doll House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *Hedda Gabler* in *Ibsen* 4 *Major Plays*, trans. Rick Davis and Brian Johnston (Lyme, NH: Smith and Kraus, 1995); *Pillars of Society*, *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm*, and *The Master Builder in Ibsen Volume II: Four Plays*, trans. Brian Johnston (Lyme, NH: Smith and Kraus, 1996); and *The Lady from the Sea*, *Little Eyolf*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, and *When We Dead Awaken* in *Ibsen Volume III: Four Plays*, trans Brian Johnston and Rick Davis (Lyme, NH: Smith and Kraus, 1998). In the following, these volumes will be abbreviated *FMP*, II and III, respectively.
3. Lake Como in *Miss Julie* and Copenhagen in *Dance of Death* as well as Moscow in *Three Sisters* and Paris in *The Cherry Orchard* function more as concepts than as physically orienting magnetic poles.
4. Four of the plays—*Pillars of Society*, *A Doll House*, *Ghosts*, and *Hedda Gabler*—have only one virtual milieu, one set; *Wild Duck and Rosmersholm* have two, and the rest have multiple sets. Only *Wild Duck*, *Lady from the Sea* and *When We Dead Awaken*, however, have more than one location, one locus. (*Master Builder*, for example, has three sets but only one locus, namely Solness' house.)
5. The only truly public spaces are the newspaper office in *Enemy of the People*, "Prospect Park" (*Udsigten*) in *Lady from the Sea* and the spa park and mountain sites in *When We Dead Awaken.* Semi-public areas are included within a home in *A Doll House* (Torvald Helmer's office with separate entrance from the landing), *Enemy of the People* (Captain Horster's meeting room), *Wild Duck* (photo studio), and *Master Builder* (architect office).
6. This is in itself not surprising; most towns in Norway are located on waterways or the seaboard.
7. One might consider the loft "havsens bunn" in *Wild Duck* (1884) with its "forest" and animals as a version of "nature."
8. Or possibly East, seen from any area west of Oslo fjord.
9. Hilde, in the company of some other young women, had made the acquaintance of Dr. Herdal up at a mountain lodge in the summer. The other women headed westward, to the coast, while Hilde continued alone, down from the mountains, to visit Solness.
10. Note the difference between these two references to the clean air of the north: In *The Wild Duck* it longingly refers to a locus "there," in *Lady from the Sea* it refers approvingly to the "here" of the speaker.
11. This piece of information about the Stranger explains part of his fascination and power. Johnston and Davis suggest "This little exchange can be omitted" (III: 74) without explaining what it conveys or implies and why they feel it could be omitted.
12. Clearly there are personal experiences of Ibsen's informing the attitudes of his characters when it comes to the south of Europe, especially Italy.
13. See *Ibsen Volume III: Four Plays* xii.
14. The potential flow of water between sea and fjord makes for interesting possibilities in the fjord,

resulting alternately in dangerous undertow or fresh new water from the sea.

15. Brian Johnston makes this point in "The Reality of Ibsen's Dramas," III: viii.

16. Rick Davis and Brian Johnston, tr., in *FMP* 223.

17. "Translating Ibsen—From Page to Page—to Stage?" in *Drama Translation and Theatre Practise*, eds. Sabine Coelsch-Foisner and Holger Klein (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004) 89 – 98.

18. Nasjonalbiblioteket, Avd. Oslo, Håndskriftsamlingen, Ms. 8:o 1944, p. 5.

19. The amount of luggage of a female traveller is in direct proportion to her rootedness, i. e., respectability. Ibsen carefully notes Hedda's mountain of trunks, Rebecca West's brown sealskin trunk, Hilde Wangel's and Lona Hessel's knapsack. Kristine Linde travels light because she has few possessions, Thea Elvsted because she has deserted her home and husband.

20. See *Four Major Plays* (*FMP*) 134.

21. Captain Alving in *Ghosts* is an army captain, not a sea captain.

22. August Strindberg, *Dödsdansen* in *Samlade Skrifter* 44 (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1988) 38.

23. The press as mouthpiece for public opinion is prominent in *Pillars*, *Ghosts*, *Enemy*, *Rosmersholm*, and *JGB*, and implied in others, e. g., *A Doll House* and *Hedda Gabler*.

24. Nora mentions that she would like to eventually "get down to the ocean again" (*FMP* 12 – 13), but the sea does not pull her. The "freezing black water" (39) Krogstad dismisses as a way out for Nora may be a local millpond or stream but beyond its function as a potential tool for suicide nothing is made of it. Hedda's view of nature seems fully processed into picture postcard format. Interestingly, *A Doll House* and *Hedda Gabler* are the only plays without a visible window on the set. Hedda looks out through a side door to see the yellow leaves of September, but the audience is not described as seeing them. On the other hand, the attic in *The Wild Duck*, though located in the capital, includes "havsens bunn," the bottom of the sea, which is a powerful magnet for Old Ekdal, Hjalmar Ekdal and Hedvig.

25. See "A Translator's Note", *FMP* x.

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Negotiating Difference: Contemporary Bengali Representations of *When We Dead Awaken* and *The Wild Duck* in Bengal

Tapati Gupta

Abstract This article concentrates on two recent Bengali productions of Ibsen: *When We Dead Awaken* (Punorujjibon-new life) and *The Wild Duck*. (Dulali-literally, daughter, here the name of the wild duck; hence the identification with Hedvig is made). Both were first produced in 2006. For the source material for this article I had to depend on the director's scripts since the translated and adapted texts are not available in print. I must acknowledge my debt to the respective directors, Amalesh Chakraborti and Suranjana Dasgupta for access to the scripts and for enabling me to watch the performances. The first is more or less a faithful translation while the second is a condensed adaptation which is also an interesting excursion into the intra-cultural. The negotiation of sociocultural differences through strategies of intercultural theatre will be the thrust of the discourse. Although Amalesh Chakraborty the translator-director of *When We Dead Awaken* is more or less faithful to the original English text the nuances of the poetic rhythm of the Bengali language naturally creates differences that are inevitable. Moreover there is the added responsibility of making the Bengali version stage worthy and socioculturally acceptable to an "other" culture. "Playability" and "speakability", or rather a "playable speakability" are important criteria of drama translation.[1] He has, "out of practical necessity", edited and omitted certain passages and scenes. One of the main reasons for the director to keep to the original Ibsen is because he felt that the characters, especially a knife-wielding Irene may not be acceptable to a Bengali audience. The problem could perhaps be solved by trying to maintain the western ambience. Also the artist-model relationship as problematized in Ibsen is alien to Indian middle-class reality. Hence a transcultural production has been attempted. The irony is however that he has effected a major change through the mise en scène of the conclusion and his approach to the figure of the Deaconess. Such changes are perhaps aimed to inscribe a foreign play into the Indian cultural context and introduce a free and alternate readability in an otherwise faithful translation.

Key words acculturation; interculturality; multiculturalism; multilingualism; diegetic space

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Every translation especially of a drama text is bound to be an adaptation especially in the stage version. It is a constant process of the production of meaning which adds to the meaning of production.[2] The issue in this case of a Bengali version of Ibsen's *When We Dead Aowaken* is how an Indian audience will receive the character of a knife-wielding Irene of her gory and symbolic deeds, striding the stage in western costume and deportment but speaking the local language. The actors' bodies raise the question of the validity and commensurability of western deportment in an "other" language situation. In the case of India, however, the residual colonial culture and the tradition of producing Shakespeare on the Bengali stage (begun in the nineteenth century) somewhat validates the western costume of the Bengali speaking actors and helps the process of acculturation. Speaking from his western location, Pavis says, "The fact that other cultures have gradually permeated our own leads (or should lead) us to abandon or relativise any dominant western (or Eurocentric) universalizing view."[3] In the case of postcolonial India and the contemporary wave of globalized culture, the audience is more ready perhaps to admit and accommodate difference.

Does interculturality focus on the element of sameness in cultures? So it does, according to Jelena Luzina,[4] Interculturality, she points out presupposes sameness while multiculturalism involves difference. In this case the culture that gives (the First Culture) is no less gratified than the culture that receives (the Second Culture), by this reciprocal understanding of the sameness in an ideal. On the actors' part it is transmigration into a different cultural space therein discovering and making the audience discover the truth, in the case of this play, at the core of creative living and creative death. The source culture, on the other hand, is enriched by extending its operation in an "other" rhetoric which loses its otherness by aligning itself with a similar poetic mission. The Bengali language and the western costumes meld into a balanced cross- cultural apprehension that creates what I would call a "hybridized" performative multilingualism: the western attire and body language are made to link with the Bengali language. The stage language of the body merges with the linguistic communication creating a multilinguistic fusion, though it is not logocentric multilingualism. We hereby arrive at a new definition of multilingualism. If the objective of language is communication, then it is widely acknowledged that this aim may be achieved, in life as in drama through extra linguistic means: viz. dress and bearing, gesture and facial expression, choreography and scenography etc. At a recent international Ibsen festival a foreign delegate was surprised to find how body language changed with dress. This she had observed in Indian delegates who carried themselves differently and spoke a different body language when they wore western dress. We may surmise from this that when in western dress they spoke in the native tongue the result may be termed 'multilingualism'. The concept of course is more pertinent to theatre.

Transcultural presentations, though empowered by sameness are at the same time deconstructed by differences that are negotiated through stage presentations, which, if successful, are positively mediated by the audience reception. Here we have an intertwining rather than a merging of cultures. In this play the most important deviation from the original Ibsen is perhaps the *mise en scène* related to the appearances of the

Deaconess, nurse and the apocalyptic last scene. Although the audience was aware of this being a western play, the Christian meaning of the figure of the Deaconess was bound to overshoot the mark. Yet the enigmatic presence of the black-clad woman is too powerful a spectacle to be omitted and too redolent with symbolic possibilities if enunciated through a suitable *mise en scène*. In the Bengali play she appears ominously in the dark and vanishes as ominously as she appears. In the scene of the avalanche in the end, she too is crushed and extinguished. This is the death of Death. With her out of the way, Irene is free to lead a new transcended life away from worldly travails as the ascent to the mountain heights suggests. This is how the translator-director responded to my queries on May 14, 2009.

> I consider the Deaconess to be a symbol of death in the play. Irene considers herself to be dead—she is like a dead soul roaming the earth for redemption. The deaconess, who always travels with Irene is dressed in black and is symbolic of the spiritual death which Irene has suffered. Her persistent desire to get rid of the Deaconess is symbolic of that attempt to overcome her spiritual death. Unlike Ibsen's text where the Deaconess remains alive, we chose to portray her death in our production to suggest Rubek and Irene's eventual triumph over spiritual death. This interpretation is largely derived from my understanding of hints offered by Ibsen in his text.

The chaos with which the original Ibsen play ends is a finale, to some an extremely ambiguous one, shunned by Chakraborty. In his play Irene and Rubek's death is illuminated in a visionary glow. They do not die but move towards new light and new life. This is positive and definite as admitted by the translator-director himself, when he answered my queries regarding the production, I am tempted to quote his very interesting remark on the conclusion:

> Ibsen concludes the play with the death of Rubek and Irene and the lingering sound of Maja's song. But I feel that prominence should be given to Rubek and Irene whose love doesn't simply die. Artists do not just die. The concluding vision in our production, which is not present in Ibsen's text, signifies the triumph of both love and art beyond the realms of physical death. It suggests man's eternal quest for an enlightened existence to overcome the frustrations of our lives. A play should not end in such a note of frustration. As a dramatist it is my duty to show hope symbolized by the protagonists' attempt to look forward to a new dawn, a dawn of spiritual regeneration.

This remark leads us to the leading issue of the *mise en scène*, which is how the production relates to the middle class milieu, which the director may not have thought of. We can, however, find a place for the religious sensibilities of a Bengali middle class audience among the other issues of ideology, social context, audience reception, and what is called direitor's theatre. In the Hindu philosophy death is a passing into a new state of being, a positive new life. The title Punorujjibon means new life.

Tagore's Post Office is a classic example of the negation of death and the passing into a new and better life.

This fusion of Ibsenian ambiguity and Indian traditional belief fits a strategy of syncretic theatre that Christopher B. Balme says:[6]

> theatrical syncretism is in most cases a conscious, programmatic strategy to fashion a new form of theatre in the light of colonial or post-colonial experience. It is very often performed in a europhone language, but almost always manifests varying degrees of bi-or multilingualism. Syncretic theatre is one of the most effective means of decolonizing the stage, because it utilizes the performance forms of both European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination of their respective elements, without slavish adherence to one tradition or the other.

In this case an English Norwegian text is recreated in an Indian language but the ambience is europhone[7]. Furthermore one may say a new kind of multilingualism emerges in the dress and deportment of specially the women, Irene and Maja. Speaking Bengali, wearing western Victorian costume their gestures and deportment are at best, hybridized. A new stage language and mise on siene evolves, a range of signifiers through gesture, native Bengali accent and intonation and other non-linguistic signs enunciate a new form of communication.

Suranjana Dasgupts took up the challenge of Indianization in her condensed adaptation of *The Wild Duck*, as "Dulali". (first performed in Calcutta on 31st December 2006). Writing under the constraints of time, and to tailor the play into a night-long theatre festival in which a number of plays were enacted, she had to condense it into 40 minutes' performance time.

Realizing the difficulties of transferring the play into a middle class Bengali character and social ambience, Dasgupta makes it take a journey to north-western India, Punjab, to be precise, where defence services are a more common vocation than in Bengal . All this makes the character of Old Ekdal or Herman chacha plausible, as the menagerie on the roof and the revolver in the domestic setting are also plausible. A text belonging to the culturally different sphere (Culture of the First) is melded into an Asian language, Bengali, which is just one among the many languages recognized by the Constitution of India, besides hundreds of other Indian languages. This transference into the Linguistic Culture of the Second simultaneously produces a subtextual ethnical Culture of the Third which belongs to a distant Indian state. In this production I find a problematized and politicized intra-culturality which is worth exploring.

Dasgupta was faced with the difficulties of overcoming the intertextual expectations of the audience many of whom would be familiar with the original *The Wild Duck* albeit in English translation. Also within a span of 40 minutes the realism and the symbolism of the original had to be expressed. Since the language used was different, intertextuality was mediated through the difference, and a new text emerged. The mise en scène enunciated a different and artificial dramatic tradition. Gregers (here *Rajbinder Singh Mal*) doubles as the narrator (*or equivalent to Vivek*, *or Conscience in*

the indigenous jatra).[8] Gregers ascends the stage passing through the audience (as in the jatra) uttering a Punjabi proverb related to the beauty of Truth: "*Jo bole so nehal / sat sri akal*". The difference is this that it is not a narrator who stands outside the text but very much a protagonist. Gregers would recount the past, (not out of keeping with Ibsenian ways), create a diegetic space, and give choric commentary. He also sings snatches of Hindi film song. There is simultaneous utilization of stage space: Gregers running his commentary on one side, signifying sometimes the outside, at other times his own room in the Ekdal family while the intense family drama would go on within what we would call the Edvig (here Himani) space. Intertextuality is complex and deeply entangled with the *mise en scène*. According to Aaltonen, "Intracultural theatre does not cross its own cultural boundaries, whereas transcultural theatre does—proposing to go beyond particular cultures on behalf of a universality of the human condition. Transcultural directors are concerned with traditions only in order to grasp more effectively what they have in common and what is not reducible to a specific culture."[9] In this instance, a western text transmigrates into Indian space. In this vast imagined community characterized by internal differences, the play enunciates Punjabi *mise en scène* while keeping to the language of Bengal, a province on the extreme east of India. In this play Bengali is spoken with a north Indian accent and intonation as Punjabis would do. The "jungle" on the roof and its menagerie. specially rabbits and the wild duck, has not lost its mystery and deep interrelationship with old Werle (*Joginder Singh Mal*), old Ekdal and above all, Hedvig who symbolically substitutes as the dead and maimed bird. This rooftop jungle and old Ekdal's occasional forays into rabbit shooting was only credible in a north-west Indian farmhouse.[10]

To sum up, what has Dasgupta done with the text? She has appropriated an Ibsen text and due to the constraints of performance, condensed it. The act of condensation has made her introduce elements of narrative and commentary embedding these in the text. With an eye to naturalism she has transferred the setting to distant Punjab in north western India.

The alternative space the audience confronted is that of a Punjabi household speaking with a Punjabiised Bengali accent. With an eye to the social context Dasgupta has made use of intracultural elements placing the Bengali language text within a Punjabi setting. She has created a traditional Punjabi atmosphere, introducing the Punjabi lori (lullaby) song at the end and making Gregers utter a Punjabi proverb in the beginning. She has Indianized the names and made use of some typically Punjabi ones eg. *Rajbinder Singh*. Drawing out the Ibsenian message of a layered and socially variable attitude to love, the transcultural has also come alive. The lori the mother Gina (Gayatri) sings over the dead body of Hedvig (Himani) creates pathos and resignation, a permanent end to untruth but also the dawning of new realization of love. As in Ibsen husband and wife find oneness in their love for the child but in this Indian version, the mother gets more prominence than the father. One realizes that the play is based on love, even though it may be love for morally maimed beings living in a fictionalized world thriving on the life-lie. The fiction of the text is newly fictionalized through the mise en scène. The text is intercultural, intracultural and transcultur-

al. In this cultural collage genre boundaries overlap.

In this article I have attempted to analyse the various modes and rationales of adapting Ibsen texts into different social settings. Although the context is a particular regional culture of India this kind of research if applied to different global situations, does point to the rich variability and therefore livingness of an Ibsen play.

【Notes】

1. 5. 9. See Sirkku Aaltonan, "Time-Sharing on Stage. Drama Translation in Theatre and Society," *Multilingual Matters*, *Topics in Translation 17* (Clevedon, 2000): 41, 30, 13.

2. One has to be able to help a "genuine", audience understand the meaning of the production (and the production of meaning). See Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) 3.

3. Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992) 5.

4. Jelena Lužina, "Interculturalism: trends, exotica, aesthetics, poetics and so... forth!" *Theatre Theory Blesok* 47, March-April (2006): 22.

6. Christopher B. Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*: *Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 2.

7. The translation is from that of Eva La Gallienne (New York: the Modern Library-Random House, 1961).

8. An indigenous open air play popular in Orissa and West Bengal, districts in the eastern part of India.

10. Dulali can best be described as intracultural theatre. Sirkku Aaltonen (Clevedon, 2000) points out how modern Japanese theatre has incorporated Western elements but also infused elements from the traditional Noh and Kabuki.

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Ibsen in the Globalized Society: Multiculturalism—or the Lack Thereof—in Norwegian Ibsen Performance

Lixian Cheng

Abstract This paper discusses Ibsen performance in a contemporary Norwegian context. Despite popular stereotypes of ethnic and cultural homogeneity, Norway is in reality a multicultural society. This multicultural reality, however, has been slow to penetrate Norwegian Ibsen performance, with actors of minority background rarely seen in Ibsen productions. This paper investigates the reasons behind the underrepresentation of multicultural actors in Norwegian Ibsen performance as well as the Norwegian institutional theatre performance in general, focusing on notions of realism, conceptions of Ibsen in Norway, and structures behind the Norwegian theatre system.
Key words Ibsen; multiculturalism; performance; institutional structures
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This paper discusses Ibsen performance in a contemporary Norwegian context by first problematizing this simplistic notion of a "Norwegian context," or any national context for that matter. So often we speak of what is happening with Ibsen in a "German context" or a "Japanese context," but do such generalist statements truly hold in the twenty-first century, in both our globalized and increasingly connected world, as well as our globalized, multicultural home societies?

To many, the word "Norway" brings up images of blonde, blue-eyed, Viking-esque creatures. We think social welfare state; we think fairness or even sameness; we think equal opportunity for all. Such was my impression, in any case, before I moved to Scandinavia.

The fact is, however, that Norway is not excluded from the global migration phenomenon. In fact, Normay has always experienced some incidence of migration, even though substantial non-Western, and even non-Scandinavian immigration was slow to impact the country. The first larger waves of immigration began in the late 1960s, and today, the immigrant population totals 8.3% of the country's total inhabitants. When the criteria are expanded to include all persons of immigrant background. What

Statistics Norway defines as "first-generation immigrants with no Norwegian background, persons born in Norway with two foreign-born parents, persons born abroad with one Norwegian-born parent, persons born in Norway with one foreign-born parent, [and] persons born abroad with Norwegian-born parents" (Mathisen 15). The population of inhabitants with immigrant background comes to 13.5%. In Oslo, the Norwegian capital and my current home, 25% of the population is of multicultural background.

Norway's multicultural reality, however, has been slow to penetrate Norwegian Ibsen performance. Actors of minority background are rarely seen in Ibsen productions, contrary to the equal opportunity myth, and as Anne-Britt Gran notes: "Ibsen's Solveig continues to be white and blonde" ("What is new," my translation). The reasons for this phenomenon are multiple. First of all, we can look at the status of Ibsen in Norway: despite the playwright's critical view and self-imposed exile from his own country during his lifetime, Ibsen is a major national cultural icon for Norway. It pays to construct him in such a manner that connects him to a stereotypical Norwegian identity or cultural values, as the Norwegian government, recognizing the playwright's cultural capital, has done in their international exportations of Ibsen. Some initiatives may be well-intentioned, such as Nora's Sisters, an international seminar series using Ibsen as a starting point for discussions on equality and women's rights issues in different countries and cultural contexts. But some are ambiguous in their intentions, such as the now somewhat infamous *Peer Gynt* performance in Giza for the finale of the 2006 Ibsen Year. Anyway it is difficult to believe the Norwegian foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre when he claims that the government is "not trying to 'use' Ibsen to 'sell' Norwegian goods and services" (translated by Regjeringen.). Støre maintains that the government's objective is rather to "help Ibsen audiences and readers to trace the links between the content of his plays and their Norwegian backdrop... [and] to encourage the large number of people who are fascinated by Ibsen to learn more about Norway and all things Norwegian."[2] These euphemistic statements do little to give the impression of a Norwegian cultural backdrop that reflects its present multicutural reality. For that matter, neither does it reflect Norway's long-standing diversity with the indigenous Sami and other national minorities.

Further, if Ibsen represents—or is constructed to represent—Norway, he also represents a particular and pervasive theatrical tradition in Norway. This "Ibsen tradition" broadly implies a realistic tradition—Ibsen is after all hailed as the father of modern realistic drama—that is often regarded negatively as a barrier to innovation, and even inclusion, in the Norwegian theatre. "The fact that we don't see Pakistani actors in Norwegian Ibsen productions," writes Gran, "owes not least to the fact that realism on stage is the norm." She continues, "Both Peer Gynt and Nora were white and Norwegian in Ibsen's plays. A black Peer Gynt is quite simply not realistic in the artistic conception."[3] Rather, when a Peer Gynt of non-ethnic Norwegian background is seen on the Norwegian stage, it is most often in the "acceptable" form of an international production invited to Oslo. This is most apparent at the Ibsen Stage Festival held biennially at the National Theatre in Oslo. The festival is a showcase of both national and international Ibsen performance, where multiculturalism is generally con-

tained to the international guest performances. The Norwegian productions, to a handful of exceptions, remain played by entirely ethnic Norwegian casts. In the few exceptions where a Norwegian actor of minority background appears on the festival stage, the part is not blindly-cast, but rather cast as such because the specific interpretation calls for it: for example, in a 2006 production of *Hedda Gabler* by the State touring theatre Riksteatret that was invited as a Norwegian guest performance to the festival, Hedda was played by a Norwegian actress of Indian heritage, as the production specifically set Hedda and Jørgen in an interracial marriage. Riksteatret's press releases claimed that the interracial relationship heightened the drama's traditional conflict ("*Hedda Gabler*," "*Høst 2006*"). Realism thus becomes doubly discriminatory to actors of multicultural background: either they remain shut out of Ibsen productions, or brought in to play "the immigrant."

Unfortunately, it is not just Ibsen performance that poses such problems for actors of minority background, such is the general pattern of Norwegian theatre performance. Actors of minority background have for years faced particularly difficulties in accessing the stages of the country's large institutional theatres.

The term "institutional theatre" is used in Norway in reference to theatres funded by the government on a permanent, ongoing basis. The Norwegian theatre system is one of the most highly subsidized in the world, with even independent theatres becoming increasingly reliant on public funding. However, public funding to independent theatres cannot compare to the amount of funding institutional theatres receive, especially the national touring theatre Riksteatret, and the four national institutions, The National Theatre, The Norwegian Theatre, The National Stage, and The Norwegian Opera. In 2008, these five performing arts institutions together received over 779 million Norwegian kroner, the equivalent to over half of the total State budget for the performing arts. Along with this privileged funding set-up, these major institutional theatres also enjoy benefits such as being regarded as "serious" or "high-quality" theatres, as well as extensive media coverage and publicity for their work. As national institutions, they also acquire the status of bearers of Norwegian culture and tradition—a culture and tradition that is rapidly evolving with increased immigration to the country—yet are to large degree still not reflecting this multicultural national reality in the actors they are hiring. And why not? When I first began my research into this question, I concentrated on the issues earlier discussed: long-standing traditions of Ibsen and realism. As I started to dig deeper, however, I began to hit not only such artistic or conceptual barriers, but also structural barriers within the institutional theatre system that limit minority actors' opportunities. Yet perhaps more aggressive way. Skin colour was just the tip of the iceberg—like all minority issues, I realized this was about access. And access, or rather, obstacles, to acting education institutions plays a major role in the problem of the continuing underrepresentation of minority actors on the institutional stage.

For years acting education in Norway has been dominated by one school: The State Theatre Academy, established in 1953. The oldest and most prestigious theatre school, for a long time it was the only professional theatre school in Norway, which had contributing to a monopolizing effect on the Norwegian theatre scene. Graduating

acting classes from the State school fed more or less directly into the acting companies of the State institutional theatres. High numbers of applicants to the academy's acting program, which range between 400 and over 800 applicants each year—thus spawned the rise of alternative acting schools in Norway.

Despite the presence of these newer theatre schools in Norway, however, prestige, status, and ultimately employment preference remains concentrated on the State Theatre Academy. Aspiring actors know that if they want to make it onto the big stages of the country, they have to go through this channel—other theatre schools, no matter how good their programs may be, just don't provide the same filter into the established theatres. This was confirmed by the empirical research I conducted, interviewing over twenty individuals and groups in the Norwegian theatre community, from representatives from all of the major institutional theatres in Oslo, to acting students and teachers at different theatre schools. Every representative of the institutional theatres I contacted named a strong preference for graduates of the acting program at the State Theatre Academy, with one representative fittingly calling it an "unwritten contract" between the academy and the theatres. As Per Mangset describes, the tradition has always been that representatives from institutional theatres are to follow the academy's students during their education through internal performances at the school, and are expected to give them a chance after graduation by hiring them for at least a period of time (Mangset 26 – 28). There is strong criticism against theatres that fail to follow this norm.

The eight to ten lucky graduates each year of the State Theatre Academy are thus almost guaranteed a job, while their non-academy counterparts from other theatre schools in Norway have to fight through the system which presents further barriers considering that auditions are not common practice in Norway. Rather, institutional theatres either go, as mentioned, to the State Theatre Academy when they are looking for new actors, or hire professional actors they have worked with, known previously, or seen and liked in other productions. This second method of recruitment, however, is closely linked to the first: if graduates of the State Theatre Academy receive more interest from institutional theatres, how will the alternatively-educated actors get the chance to make it onto the professional stage to be seen by representatives from other institutional theatres?

In Norway there is also a difference between State-funded schools and private schools, and not just in regards to funding. In addition to the State Theatre Academy, there are two newer State theatre schools, although they too rank lower in status than the academy. These schools, however, like the academy offer three-year educations leading to a Bachelor degree. The private schools, however, do not work under this Bachelor degree system. As a result, their degrees are not "approved" by the Norwegian actors union. Graduates from these non-approved institutions must, according to the actors union's regulations, have a minimum of three-year's work experience on the professional stage in order to become full members of the association.

Graduates of private theatre schools thus face another *Catch-22*. If their education does not warrant them the opportunity to join the professional actors union and receive the aid and benefits of membership (such as being listed in the union's member

catalogue, a resource that the institutional theatre representatives also named as a tool in actor recruitment), they will have even less chance to complete the professional work.

Such structural barriers within the Norwegian institutional theatre system thus make it difficult for non-State school educated actors, and in general non-State Theatre Academy educated actors, to get the chance to prove not only themselves, but also the quality of their educations, on the institutional stage. In such a closed theatre system, alternatives to the State Theatre Academy—professional theatre schools in their own right—will continue to remain undervalued.

The system and its barriers also make their impact acutely felt on the situation of minority actors in Norway. For example, if the State Theatre Academy route is still the way of getting onto the institutional stage, it becomes a problem when in their now over 50-year history, they have only accepted a handful of acting students of minority background into the acting program. Further, the private schools in Oslo that I spoke to possess a demonstrated openness and inclusive attitude, matching the number of multicultural students the State Theatre Academy has accepted in their entire history, in a single program year. But when all students from private and non-State Theatre Academy schools, regardless of what nationalities they possess, face such difficulties in the Norwegian institutional theatre system, it is no wonder why the problem of lacking minority representation on stage persists.

I emphasize again: the problem is not as obvious as discrimination against minority actors on the basis of their skin colour. Rather, this is a more indirect and invisible, and thus even more aggressive form of discrimination, precisely because of its invisibility. Gran terms this phenomenon well as "institutional racism," asserting, "even though the individuals in cultural life are not racist and exclusionary, rules, norms, and actions in the field lead to racist consequences" ("*Giskes rolle*"). These rules, norms, and actions in the Norwegian institutional theatre scene must be re-assessed and re-structured: this would be the most effective and efficient way to increase the level of minority representation on the Norwegian stage, not to mention levelling out the playing field of the institutional theatre to become a fairer place for all actors working in Norway.

In 2006, the Norwegian government announced that the year 2008 would officially be "The Year of Cultural Diversity," an integration initiative directed towards increasing awareness as well as the level of minority participation in Norwegian cultural life. The theatres made some efforts during this year, especially Riksteatret which hired a number of multicultural actors for their productions, as well as organized a multicultural theatre festival in conjunction with two independent theatres. However, the future of such efforts to incorporate cultural diversity and culturally-diverse actors into the theatre remain uncertain, as the Year of Cultural Diversity made no concrete, structural changes to the system. The government, despite holding so much power over the theatres considering that they are funding the majority of them, remains hesitant to set concrete measures such as setting quotas for minority artists to increase representation, or instate budget cuts for institutions failing to incorporate cultural diversity into their operations. The responsibility to multiculturalize is therefore still up to

the theatres, but now with the Year of Cultural Diversity over, along with the lack of real consequences from the government, what impetus is there for them to change?

This is the biggest reason as to why multicultural Ibsen performances in Norway are so few and far between. Because the rules of the Norwegian theatre system govern also the way the playwright is produced in the country. In order for a multicultural Ibsen performance tradition to be established in Norway, we must begin looking at the system as a whole.

【Notes】

1. Hereafter, unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Norwegian are mine.
2. See J. G. "Støre. Ibsen's calling is to ask questions, not to give answers". *Dagbladet*, Jannary 28,2006.
3. See A. Gran. "Giskes rolle i det nye Norge," *Aftenposten*, March 17, 2006. <http://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/ kronikker/article1251120.ece >accessed 10 November, 2007.

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Intercultural Implications of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*: Experiences with a Production of Ibsen's Play in Mozambique

Helge Rønning

Abstract The point of departure for this paper is a discussion of the 2006 production of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* at Teatro Avenida in Maputo, Mozambique. The article consists of reflections on the adaptation processes from one historical and cultural setting—Europe in the late nineteenth century to Mozambique in early twenty-first century. The focus is not so much adaptations as such, but an attempt to come up with some reflections on how a play like *A Doll's House*, where gender roles are important, may provide a theoretical model for how modern societies have changed their perceptions of the relationship between men and women. The adaptation of the play in a particular African context serves as a springboard for principal reflections on what interculturalism implies in relation to dramatic and literary works.

Key words adaptation of drama between cultures; modernisation; drama interculturalism

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In 2006 the theatre group that for twenty years has been central to Mozambican theatre—Mutumbela Gogo—produced *A Doll's House* at its permanent venue Teatro Avenida in Maputo, Mozambique. I participated in the production as a dramaturg, and was part of the process of adapting the play to a contemporary Mozambican situation, as well as following closely the way the actors and the director worked with the play. The production was directed by Manuela Soeiro, and the actors were Isabel Jorge as Nora, Adelino Branquinho in the role of Helmer, Graça Silva as Mrs Linde, and Jorge Vaz as Krogstad, and João Chauque as Dr. Rank. (I shall return to the significance of the names in the production).

First some words about Teatro Avenida and Mutumbela Gogo. The theatre itself is an old cinema in the centre of Maputo, and the possibilities the stage offers is to a certain degree limited by the fact that the theatre was not originally constructed with the purpose of being a proper theatrical arena. This has not, however, prevented the company from staging many impressive productions. The company produce original new Mozambican drama as well as international classics. Of plays that they have late-

ly staged may be mentioned *A Street Car Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams, *Die Räuber by Friedrich Schiller*, *and Miss Julie* by August Strindberg. As a principle the company tries to give their productions of the classics a Mozambican twist. And this was also the intention with the production of *A Doll's House*. But while the Mozambican context is important for the work of Mutumbela Gogo, they are also aware of the significance of maintaining a link to the historical and cultural origins of the plays that they produce.

Thus Mutumbela Gogo's *A Doll's House* was faced with a double challenge—how to make the play relevant for a contemporary Mozambican audience, and also to show how the situation in Mozambique today may be interpreted in the light of developments in the European society, which Ibsen depicted, and which was very different from today's Mozambique. It was this double perspective we wanted to maintain in our production of Ibsen's play. In order to be able to do so, we first had a discussion among those involved in the production of how it was possible to understand the central thematic structures of the play in the light of a modern African society full of contradictions. Already here we had to make an important choice. Ibsen's plays deal with the lives of nineteenth century European bourgeoisie. Which social group in today's Mozambique occupies that particular role? It is obvious that this play does not deal with the lives of the majority of the country's population, which lives in poverty in rural areas, nor is this the life that is lived by the urban poor in Maputo's "bairos". As in 19th century Europe we had to be aware that our production both had to reflect the life of an elite, economically and educationally, as well as appeal to an audience that in some way or other could relate to this life.

Here, however, we had an advantage, and that is linked to the popularity and influence of Brazilian telenovelas in Mozambique. Every night and afternoon there are telenovelas screened on Mozambican television. They are high melodrama, much in the same way that *A Doll's House* may be interpreted. A characteristic phrase often used about Ibsen's drama, but not so often used about melodrama is that it deals with "real people in real situations". However, if we look at it in a different perspective and bearing in mind the melodramatic tradition, the characters of the play differ very little from the usual types found in telenovelas. Borrowing from Raymond William's description in *Drama form Ibsen to Brecht*, the innocent, childlike woman, involved in a desperate deception; the heavy, insensitive husband; the faithful friend; the evil villain who is reformed by love.[1] The main situations are also similar to those found in the melodramatic intrigues of the telenovelas: the guilty secret, sealed lips, a fatal letter, which will reveal it all, the appearance of the villain against a background of idyllic happiness. Maybe the secret of the play is that both the plot conventions and the stock figures from melodrama carry over into serious psychological topical drama. And the same may be said about the Brazilian telenovelas.

For us the link to Brazil had another advantage, and that was that a modern Mozambican audience is used to watching and identifying with settings and social situations that are different than their own. Many Brazilian telenovelas depict the lives of a modern Brazilian upper or middle class, which is very different from even the lives of the Mozambican elite, but which nevertheless a Mozambican audience may relate to

and recognize. Consequently we decided to give our *A Doll's House* a Brazilian touch, and link it to the world of the telenovelas.

Now Brazil is important for other reasons as well. Like Mozambique it is a Portuguese speaking country, and while the influence from Brazil is not as strong as it is in other Lusophone parts of Africa, there still are strong links. Lusophone African elites study in Brazil. Rich people may go there for medical treatment. Brazilian music has a certain influence. Mozambicans and Angolans go there to establish business contacts and import fashion. There is a carnival tradition in Mozambique though not as strong as in Brazil. Indeed the name Mutumbela Gogo has its origins in the carnival in the part of Maputo called Mafalala, and it apparently means something like "put on your masks." So while it is not really relevant for a modern Mozambican elite couple to go to Italy for medical treatment, as Helmer and Nora do in Ibsen's original, they might go to Brazil. And the famous tarantella in Ibsen's play is certainly not a dance that any one has any idea about in Maputo, but the samba is another matter. So we sent Nora and her husband to Brazil, where she learned to dance samba the Brazilian way.

The next challenge was to find names that would ring a bell in Mozambique. Nora was fine. That is a name in the Lusophone world. In Mozambique—not very common—but it exists. Torvald Helmer, however, not a chance. But who is Helmer? He is a banker and in Mozambique people in finance often have a background in India, and many are Muslims, and the fabulous actor Branquinho, who had the part of Helmer, is of light complexion. Consequently Helmer had to have a Muslim name, Omar Mussagy. And Mrs Kristine Linde? The first name Christina—fine. But Linde? In Norwegian it is the name of tree. Consequently we used the word for tree in Portuguese, which is a common name in the Lusophone world—Madeira. Fru Kristine Linde became a senhora Christina Madeira. And then Nils Krogstad. Nils is a name that signifies a traditional Norwegian common rural background. So the first name was not a problem. We choose Joaquim, a very common Portuguese name. Krogstad is also a name with rural significance in Norwegian. Because it starts with a K sound, We choose Cossa, a suitably Mozambican Portuguese name. And Doctor Rank? The name connotes a certain straightness and clarity, a bit like a twig of a tree, so we went for the Portuguese name Ramos, which means a branch of a tree.

We could of course have set the play as in the original at Christmas, but people do not really go to masked balls at Christmas in Mozambique, although they may certainly do so during carnival. And this also provided us with yet another Brazilian link. So we changed the time of the year of the play to carnival time.

The next challenge we faced with was to trim the play. We could not have a production that lasted much more than one and a half hours. At Teatro Avenida there are no intermissions. Where to cut? The first act is obviously more long-winded than the others, and also less dramatic. Therefore we cut more lines in the first act than in the others. The correctness of this decision became apparent when we used the entire text in a Portuguese translation as our basis. For an audience whose usual period of attention is limited to the length of an ordinary film, the first act of *A Doll's House*, which is rather complex in providing background information and explanations was clearly

too much. But the next two acts have more drama and suspense. There is some clowning when Dr. Ramos gets drunk, and the eroticism between him and Nora has a strong appeal. And not least the intense final melodramatic act worked well. Incidentally it is echoed in telenovelas. Adaptation is not only about transforming a play from one cultural setting to another. It is also about drama and media conventions.

A Doll's House is a drama with a woman as the central character is about the conflict between women and men and their different views of existence and society. This conflict represented a profound challenge to nineteenth century European society as a whole. As it does today, but it also is very much a challenge to social roles in the modernizing societies in the early twenty-first century on the African continent. Here I consciously use the word modernizing, because what makes Ibsen's play so adaptable is not only that it deals with the role of women in a society where traditional values are pitted against new. It deals with an important feature of modern existence, which also is an important theme on Ibsen's work, namely the widening gap between an objective culture and the subjective existence of the individual. Nora's development implies the growth of an individual consciousness in which the objective culture of society is thoroughly male, even if this society may pay lip service to the role of women, and have women in important positions. The prime minister of Mozambique in 2006 was a woman. The problem, however, is more profound, and this is what Ibsen delineated in his first notes to *A Doll's House*, namely that there were two sets of rules in society, one for men and another for women. And we printed these notes in the programme for the production.

The Mozambican interpretation of *A casa da boneca* thus implied two perspectives. The first was related to the clear gender aspect of the play, which was emphasized in the production. The second one had to do with the structure of feeling related to living between cultures and between mores—one more traditional, one more modern. And this is a theme that cuts across gender boundaries. The coming of modernity is fundamental to the conflicts of societies that straddle a traditional existence and a modern one, and where people migrate constantly between two sets of values: one in the city, and one in their background often in rural society.

This is a move that often has taken place within the life of one individual, and certainly something that implies differences within families. This development is very pronounced in contemporary Africa. It formed a background to our interpretation of the play, though it was implicit in our staging, and never as clearly pronounced as it has been in other African productions of *A Doll's House*, for example the one that was performed in Zambia in 2006. In that production the setting of the intrigue was moved to a village. The play was adapted by Chela Chilala, given a new title *Forbidden ground*, and was directed by Benne Banda.

We decided to maintain the drama's links to the coming of a steadily more complex and differentiated society with diverse partial systems and functions of economic, social and cultural character. This differentiation is particularly pronounced in relation to the growth of the modern nuclear family. Contrary to what is the case in traditional African communities, the new modern existence implies a change in the demarcation between what is public and what is private and intimate. In the modern Mo-

zambique of the elite there is a tension between the public and private spheres, and the barriers between different types of behaviour and activity that are appropriate in each of these. There are clear demarcations between genders at the same time as new social roles for women do emerge. This is what we wanted to highlight by giving our version of *A Doll's House* a modern, urban, Mozambican atmosphere.

The role of art and literature in contemporary global modernities is to express the experiences of encountering this new way of life in a manner that combines the perspectives of the great history of society with the small biographical history of the individual. It is part of the strength of Ibsen's drama that it recreates how individual encounters with the rapid conditions of modern change result in psychological ambivalence as well as feelings of uncertainties and contradictions. His dramas pose the questions: How is the individual to understand his or her position in a new social and historical situation? What are the backgrounds and the futures of the individual and society? Is there going to be constant change, or will some permanent features of existence remain the same? It is this sense of non-simultaneity in global modernities that explains why Ibsen's dramas feel to be so much part of the structures of feeling of cultures so different from where they had their origin. This feature makes his plays uniquely relevant to the understanding of how to face modernity all over the world.

Half a year after the *A Doll's House* production, the Swedish playwright and novelist Henning Mankell, who for many years has worked with Teatro Avenida, wrote and directed a play with the same company based on *A Doll's House*. The play was called *As filhas da Nora* (*Nora's Daughters*) and has as its focus how the three daughters of the Mozambican Nora meet at her grave ten years after her death and reflect on their destinies and on Nora's influence. Granted Mankell has changed the gender of Nora's children. His drama is an attempt to explore the situation of modern Mozambican women. The three sisters all have inherited a sense of loss from their mother. They all express incomprehension of her actions. They have not met her, only caught glimpses of her, and every time they have tried to find her, she has just disappeared. What binds them together is a sense of loss, which they when they were young, compensated for by among others singing pop songs in the style of the Supremes, something they also do at the end of the one-hour long play.

The three sisters, whose name incidentally are the same as the three actors who portrayed them in the original production—Graça,[2] Isabel[3] and Yolanda[4]—have lived different lives, and disagree between themselves about how life is and ought to be. What keeps them together, however, is the sense that they share a common feminine destiny, in which they do not really control their own lives, and here the parallel to their mother is explicit.

Graca is the oldest daughter, and she is a typical Mozambican rural woman. She has married a small hold farmer. She has two children thirteen and fifteen years old. Like many women in agriculture she does most of the work. She brings up the children. She toils in the fields. But she knows that her role in society is important. She provides the food that others eat. Her husband does not treat her well, and she is poor. Her dreams of a quiet and fulfilled life away from the city have certainly not become true. Yolanda the second daughter is a typical wife from the city. She is preg-

nant with her second child. But now she lives alone, because she has discovered that her husband, who does not provide her with enough money for running the household and school-fees for the children, has a second family. He drinks and he has cheated on her and established a permanent relationship with another woman, who has a daughter with the same name as her daughter. She is bitter, but still she does not really want to divorce him. The third sister Isabel taunts her to do just that. She is apparently the free woman. She is elegant. She comes to their meeting speaking on a cell phone. It soon becomes clear that she is a high-class call girl. She asks her sisters: "What is the real difference between us? We lived different lives, but when all comes to all, we are the same."

The sisters quarrel between themselves, and they refer to Nora, whom they say wanted to live a life of her own, but she is both a heroine and also guilty of being without a full life. Isabel proposes that the three sisters move together in her house with the children. And another sister answers: "But that would imply a war against men." And Isabel answers that that would mean that the men would realize that we as women understand them. In the end Isabel says: "Women do not fight. They discuss, they shout, but they do not fight." So Mankell's text like Ibsen's is about the difficulties of how to realize individual liberation within a society that puts great emphasis on communal and collective togetherness.

A small final note on these two productions: in 2008 and 2009 Mutumbela Gogo had great success with another play about the relationship between women and men and the contradictions of class that date from the same period as Ibsen's play. Henning Mankell adapted and directed *Miss Julie* by August Strindberg under the title *A Menina Julia*. And that production focused on the same conflicts of sex and individuality and power that also play such a central part in *A Doll's House*.

The Maputo adaptation of Ibsen's play, which kept the essential structure and elements of the original, and Mankell's follow-up raise some interesting principal issues of encounters between cultures and intercultural adaptations of theatre and other art forms. Practically every single individual in today's world regardless of continent, status, age, education, how they earn their living, religion and other forms of distinctive characteristics, is in some way or other part of a modernizing experience. All cultures are in some way or other hybrid. They are a result of the meeting with other cultures—technologies, values, art, and entertainment.

To me the issue of multiculturalism lies not in the notion of multiplicity, but in the concept of culture.[5] Consequently the question of cultural identity is a very problematic one. It is possible to pose the question thus: Is to maintain a cultural identity something that creates a boundary, that closes off from influence from the outside? Is culture something one subjects oneself to as an individual? Is collective identity stronger than what you possess as an individual? Does culture precede the individual and is it above the choices of the individual? Or on the other hand: Is cultural identity something that is created in a meeting between individuals and groups, and something that we open up for through a fundamental respect for the way others chose to create cultural identities. In intercultural work it is necessary to criticize essentialist understandings of cultures. The reason why we are able to understand, appreciate, and

adapt art originates in other cultures and epochs is that literary works and particularly drama in a striking way express experiences and conflicts that we also encounter in our existence. And we have many existences that change with time and contexts.

One of the most fundamental issues in the debate over cultural identities is the one which has to do with gender roles. It is around this question that the conflict between closed cultural identities and open ones comes to the forefront. Gender identities are fundamental. When they are challenged they reveal all the oppressive structures that often exist in cultures that profess to essential identities. Thus the relationship between men and women in societies that undergo modernizing changes is thus maybe the most important theme for understanding such social transformations. What happens in many African societies including Mozambique can serve as a pertinent illustration of this. That is why *A Doll's House* functions as such a clear expression of social and gender identities and of raising the issue of what freedom and independence imply.

Ibsen's dramas from the late nineteenth century confront modern globalized audiences with questions of whether it is society or the individuals that are divided and disharmonious. Why do the characters that move on the stage and that the audiences recreate in their minds suffer problems and challenges so similar to their own? How have these people and their situations come about? They are fiction, and Ibsen created them in the nineteenth century, but the distresses they face are real enough. They are intrinsically linked to social and psychological existences not only of Ibsen's period, which may be characterised as the first modernity, but also of the global modernities that exist all over the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

【Notes】

1. Williams Rayond, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1971).
2. Graça Silva.
3. Isabel Jorge. In later productions Lucrécia Paco took over the role of Isabel.
4. Yoland Fumo.
5. For a discussion of this see among others: Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams. Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars* (New York: Henry, Holt , 1995); Jens-Martin Eriksen & Fredrik Stjernfelt, *Adskillelsens politikk* (København: Lindhardt og Ringhof, 2008); Amartya Sen, *Identity & Violence* (London: Penguin, 2006) and *The Illusion of Destiny* (London: Penguin, 2007).

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The Making of a World Dramatist: Ibsen and Det Norske Theater

Tanya Thresher

Abstract This article assesses the roles played by the city of Bergen and Det Norske Theater in making Ibsen a world dramatist by examining the cross-cultural influences the twenty-three-year-old Ibsen encountered there. In codifying Bergen and Det Norske Theater as spaces that permit a transgression of the national into the international, the article suggests both spaces as valuable points of departure for mapping Ibsen across nations and cultures.

Key words Bergen; Det Norske Theater; cross-cultural; early career; space

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In an October 1902 report in the Viennese *Neue Freie Presse*, Ibsen claimed in a conversation with Felix Philippi, "anyone who wishes to understand me fully must know Norway. The spectacular but severe landscape which people have around them in the north, and the lonely shut-off life" (Meyer 17). To understand Ibsen fully as a world dramatist, readers and theatre patrons not only need to know Normay, but two specific spaces: the city of Bergen to which Ibsen moved in October 1851, and in which he resided for the following six years, and Det Norske Theater, the Bergen theater at which the young dramatist served an intense apprenticeship at that time.

Both of these spaces are, of course, iconically Norwegian: Bergen the geographical space nestling on the west coast of the country between seven mountains. And Det Norske Theater as a cultural space played a prominent role in the project of nation-building that was taking place in the early and mid-nineteenth century during the Norwegian National Romantic movement. The violin virtuoso Ole Bull founded the theater in 1850 in deliberate opposition to the Danish-influenced Christiania Theater, and precisely, as he stated to the theater board in the "Uforanderlige Grundregler" [unchangeable ground-rules[1]. so that the theater in Bergen should present opportunities to establish and develop an independent dramatic art in the mother country] "give Anledning til, at en selvstændig dramatisk Kunst kunde fremkaldes og udvikles i Fædrelandet" (Figueiredo 125). Moreover, Bull considered that, "Theatrets Virksomhed, den musikalske derunder indbefattet, saavidt muligt bør fremkaldes gjennom nationale Elementer" (Figueiredo 126). The national enterprise of the theater made evident by its very name "Det Norske Theater," The Norwegian Theater was

echoed in its fundamental commitment not only to a Norwegian ensemble, but also to the use of the Norwegian language on stage, something that due to the success of several of the Bergen actors, later meant that the Bergen dialect came to be considered by many as Norway's theatrical language. The national program of the theater is something that also accounts for the very hiring of the young Norwegian dramatist, Ibsen, who by the time of his employ had seen the premiere of Kjæmpehøien [*The Warrior's Barrow*], at the Christiania Theater (Sept. 26, 1850) and had published Catilina (1850), the only Norwegian play published since Henrik Wergeland's Venetianerne, eller Venskab og Kjærlighed [The Venetians, or Friendship and Love] seven years previously.

My interest in the two spaces of Bergen and Det Norske Theater lies, however, not in codifying them as national spaces, but rather to suggest that they might also be spaces that permit a transmission of the national into the international. A reading that suggests this transgressive potential would explain how these spaces allowed Ibsen to expand his cultural and geographical horizons beyond his native country and map out the young writer's development as a world dramatist, a development later reinforced by his twenty-seven-year exile outside of Norway and the global appeal of his corpus.

The geographical space into which Ibsen moved in 1851 was characterized on the one hand by a staunch national spirit that had led to the establishment of a the very theater to which Ibsen was recruited by Bull, the city being regarded as less influenced, or in some minds, corrupted, by Danish influence than its eastern counterpart, Christiania. On the other hand Bergen was filled with a cosmopolitan spirit that had its roots in the history of the city as a major Hanseatic trading post, the heart of the urban space being the Vågen harbor, the nexus of economic activity, an area with an openness to the sea and frequent visitations from foreign ships, sailors, and tradesmen, or even, as Ibsen was to experience first-hand in 1856, royal visitors from abroad.[2] In the 1850s Bergen developed into an important import hub beyond its well-established Hanseatic connections with, for example, grain coming in from the Black Sea region and coffee coming directly from Brazil (Ulvund 21). With the additional arrival of the telegraph in the latter half of the decade and the consequent ease with which international news could reach local newspapers and hence the general Bergen populace, the city became increasingly aware of the affairs of countries beyond the Norwegian borders. According to Ivo de Figueiredo in his biography Henrik Ibsen Mennesket (2006) [*Henrik Ibsen The Person*], the city of Bergen was during Ibsen's residence there

> et annet sted—større enn Grimstad, så vidt mindre enn Christiania, men likevel ikke noe midt imellom. Med de vestlandske fjellene, striler og landsmål i ryggen, var byboernes blikk vendt mot seg selv og mot havet. Vannveien til verden gikk om Hamburg, og i århundrer hadde byen vårt preget av kontinental kultur og mentalitet. Bergenserne var kosmopolitter. (121)
>
> [a different place—larger than Grimstad, if smaller than Christiania, but nevertheless not something in between. With the western mountains, strils[3], and landsmå[4] l at their backs, the citizens turned to themselves and to the sea. The

> waterways to the world went via Hamburg and for hundreds of years the city had been characterized by a continental culture and mentality. The Bergen people were cosmopolitans.

While we do not know exactly the persons whom Ibsen encountered while in Bergen, we might surmise that during his residence at the Sontum Pensionat, the dramatist met at least visitors from Great Britain, as the guest house was a preferred residence for travelers from that country, who were even afforded the luxury of a traditional British breakfast if they wished. Additionally Ibsen's encounters with individuals from different cultural backgrounds might also be suggested from at least two of the members of the theater itself: the actress and purportedly best singer of the ensemble Madame Prom Wiese, whose father was from Malaysia, and the Czech-born musician in residence at the theater Ferdinand Giovanni Schediwy, who was to arrange the music for Ibsen's own *Gildet paa Solhoug* [*The Feast at Solhaug*] and *Olaf Liljekrans*.

Culturally Bergen offered a variety of private and public venues, ranging from literary salons (such as the one hosted by Ibsen's future mother-in-law, Magdalena Thoresen), clubs, associations and several newspapers, all of which showed influence from abroad. Cultural institutions such as *Det Harmoniske Selskab* [The Harmonic Society] and *Det Dramatiske Selskab* [The Dramatic Society] dated back to the 1700s, and became increasingly professionalized during the 1850s. Ibsen's own involvement with the exclusive literary society, *Forening av 22. desember* [The 22 December Association], is but one example of an ambitious cosmopolitan agenda within the cultural framework of the city. One of the two lectures Ibsen delivered to the society concerned the influence of Shakespeare on Nordic literature. All in all, it appears that the city of Bergen was able to "*oppvise et omfattende kulturliv, på samme måte som en hvilken som helst større by på kontinentet—om enn stadig preget av det halvoffentlige selskapslivet og bare dels institusjonalisert, dessuten dilettantisk og, selvsagt, umiskjennelig bergensk*" (Figueiredo 122) [provide a comprehensive cultural life just like any other large city on the Continent—though that cultural life was at the same time always characterized by amateur entertainment and was only partly institutionalized, along with being dilettante and, of course, unmistakably from Bergen].

One important aspect of cultural life in Bergen was the theater, something that the nineteenth-century theater historian T. Blanc in his book *Norges første Nationale Scene* (1884) [*Norway's First National Stage*] attributes to an almost intrinsic theatrical spirit on the part of the Bergen citizens, suggesting that

> [d]et viser sig jo endu den Dag i Dag, at Bergenserene er de af vort Lands Befolkning som fortrinsvis er i Besiddelse af dramatisk Begavelse; allerede i sin naturlige Kvikhed, og Smidighed, sit medfødte Lune og sin Gemytlighed, sit Sprogs Blødhed og Bøielighed, besidder de Egenskaber, der kan hjelpe den dramatiske Kunstner et godt Stykke på Vei. Bergenserne havde ogsaa fra gammel Tid af havt et stort Ry som Privatskuespillere, og det Bergense Privattheater, der er mindre paavirket af de danske Traditioner, end Tildf? ldet var med Hovedstadens, havde hævet sig til en høi Rang og omtaltes med Ros baade af Inden- og

Udenlandske. (607)

[even to this day, it seems that people from Bergen are those citizens of our country who to their advantage are in possession of dramatic talent. Their natural wit and flexibility, their inbred good humor, and the softness and malleability of their language give them the qualities that can help a dramatic artist a great deal. The people of Bergen have from times past had a good reputation as amateur actors, and Bergen's amateur theater, which is less influenced by Danish tradition than is the case in the capital, has been ranked highly both nationally and internationally].

If we look at the entire repertory of Det Norske Theater we gain a better understanding of exactly what kinds of dramatic art were being practiced in Bergen, and how diverse that art was in terms of cultural origins. In total three-hundred-and-forty different plays were performed in the thirteen-and-a-half years the theater was in operation, with an average of twenty-five premieres a year and usually two or three performances on each of the two show nights, Wednesday and Sunday. Forty-five percent of the plays performed were one-act pieces with one or two-act vaudevilles or comedies being the most popular forms of entertainment followed by musical comedies and then farces. Only eight percent of the repertory was more serious drama such as that of Ibsen and Bjørnson. While Nordic plays were frequently performed pieces, with C. P Riis' *Til sæters* being performed twenty-nine times over the seasons, and H. Nielsen's *Slægtningerne* twenty-seven times, the most played single dramatist was by far Eugene Scribe with forty performances of seven different plays.

While Ibsen worked at the theater, five of his own plays were performed, each being premiered on the founding day of the theater itself, *Sancthansnatten*, *Kjæmpehøien*, *Fru Inger til østeraad*, *Gildet paa Solhoug*, and *Olaf Liljekrans* [*St John's Night*, *The Warrior's Barrow*, *Lady Inger of Østeraad*, *The Feast at Solhaug* and *Olaf Liljekrans*]. And while these plays generally only had two performances, they did play to large crowds, something that attests to the high expectations of the young Norwegian dramatist. *Gildet paa Solhoug* was Ibsen's most popular play, being performed five times in the 1856 season alone and five more times between 1860 and 1862. If we turn specifically to plays with which Ibsen was involved as a scenic director, we know that the young dramatist witnessed the performance of one-hundred-and-twenty-two new dramatic pieces, of which sixty-two were French, twenty-eight Danish, sixteen Norwegian, eleven German and five anonymous. These figures alone are an indication of the international extent of the theatrical activity with which Ibsen was engaged.

The origins of the plays are but one indication of the international flavor of the theater. Additionally one might consider the thematic focus or setting of the pieces, which we unfortunately do not have adequate time to investigate here. As one example, I would however like to briefly mention the Danish playwright Henrik Hertz' *Scheik Hasan*, a three-act comedy with a "Turkish" setting written in 1851 and inspired by *One Thousand and One Nights*. First performed in Bergen in February 1854, Ibsen not only served as the stage director for the production, but he also de-

signed some costumes for it. While the drawings show a conventional nineteenth century theatrical interpretation of Oriental dress rather than any specific historically-researched representation of the East, they do reveal an awareness of cultures beyond Western Europe and suggest an expanding geographical referencing on the part of the young dramatist.

This cursory look at the repertory of the theater indicates its status as a space in which local and foreign come together, although there are incidents in which the meeting of the two was less than fortuitous. Most Bergen theater-goers were, as has been explained by several scholars culturally competent and had cosmopolitan expectations of the theatrical experience.[5] And yet, at the first performance of Henrik Wergeland's *Fjeldstuen* in 1850, Ole Bull's zealous demands for authentic Norwegian folk-life almost led to a debacle, as the local dancers he brought to the theater from Hardanger, Lærdal, and Nordfjord were so authentic in their national costumes, that they followed the custom of not wearing any underclothes, much to the dismay of the audience who glimpsed to dances' bare buttocks as the girls were swung around in dance. Marie Midling Bull's comment that "dansen hadde ikke gått gjennom den nødvendige foredlingsprosess" (Memoir) (the dance had not gone through the necessary refinement process), along with the shock of the expectant audience and the confusion of the dancers who resisted being led offstage by any of the theatrical staff, is on the one hand evidence of a kind of cultural disorientation as local and global expectations were not commensurate, but the success of the event on the other hand indicates that such cultural collisions were not insurmountable within the theatrical space that Bergen provided.

An important expansion of Ibsen's geographic and cultural spaces instigated when a mere three months after his arrival, the Theater Board sponsored Ibsen to travel to Europe to travel to Europe. According to the archives, Ibsen's mandate was an examination of "*Arrangementet af Alt, hvad der henh? rer til Scenens Indretning, Utstyr og Decortioner, de spillendes Dragter, mv.*" [the arrangement of everything that belongs to the mise-en-scene, equipment and props, the costumes of the actors etc] (Rudler 236). This trip took Ibsen (along with the acting couple Johannes and Louise Brun) to Copenhagen via Hamburg, and then on to Dresden. Popular scholarly opinion often concludes that the most important and lasting impact of this international experience was Ibsen's encounter with Hermann Hettner's book *Das moderne Drama*, about which Halvdan Koht in *The Life of Ibsen*, for example, enthusiastically states, "nothing else held Ibsen's interest as did this declaration of a program by Hettner" (Ewbank 60). In line with Inga-Stina Ewbank, I would like to suggest however, that the reading of Hettner's program for revitalizing theater, which is a rather dry, academic text that for Ibsen was in a foreign language, must have at least been matched, if not surpassed, in terms of influence to seeing live professional theater performed at the Royal Theater in Copenhagen and afterwards at the Hoftheater in Dresden. In Copenhagen Ibsen readily understood the language and he was exposed to an acting ensemble that was held in high esteem during this the Golden Age of Danish acting, an ensemble that included Johanne Luise Heiberg, the tragedian Michael Wiehe, the comedian Joachim Phister, and the relative newcomer, Frederik Høedt famous for his

modern, psychological acting style. Given Ibsen's later pronouncements on acting, it is possibly Høedt's more nuanced, realistic acting style, that most struck the young dramatist. It challenged the pervading theatrical aesthetic of the time as exemplified in the work of Mrs. Heiberg, As Michael Meyer suggests, the 1856 reviews of the Trondheim visit of the Bergen company that noted with interest the way in which the actors kept upstage and turned to each other rather than the audience when conversing, are evidence of the fruits of Ibsen's trip to Copenhagen and Dresden (Meyer 127).

The Copenhagen stay, which took place from April 20 to June 6 1852, likely exposed Ibsen to twenty-four of the fifty-six plays that were part of the repertoire of the 1851-52 season at the Royal Theater. Included in these twenty-four plays are four by Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, although the latter in an adaptation by the Danish Sille Beyer called *Livet i Skoven*).[6] In examining the repertory, it appears that Ibsen would have seen three Shakespearean tragedies within two weeks of his arrival in the city, even if those texts would, as according to the custom of the time, be cut a good deal. Ibsen also saw four plays by Holberg (*Henrik og Pernille*, *Barselstuen*, *Pernilles korte Frøkenstand*, and *Den Vægelsindede*), a tragedy by Oehlenschlager (*Hakon Jarl*), Mozart's opera *Don Juan*, and numerous vaudevilles, comedies, musicals, and ballet pieces. Quantitatively vaudevilles and comedies constituted the majority of the Royal Theater's repertoire in line with the popular tastes of the time. Ibsen was likely also struck by the national character of much of the repertoire he saw at the Royal Theater as "here—unlike in the case of Christiania Theater—Holberg and Hertz dominated over Scribe" (Ewbank 67), and many of the vaudevilles, such as *Recensenten og Dyret* [The Reviewer and the Animal] by Heiberg and *En Søndag paa Amager* [A Sunday on Amager] by Johanne Luise Heiberg were bound not only to Denmark by virtue of their authors, but more specifically to the city of Copenhagen and its surroundings in their settings.

Ibsen again witnessed the Copenhagen-style acting when he continued on to Dresden and its Hoftheater, which featured some of the most exciting staging and acting of shakespear that Europe had to ofter. In addition to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Richard III* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Ibsen attended performances of pieces by Fredrich von Schiller, Johan Wolfgang Goethe, and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Considering the less familiar language, we can conclude that Ibsen concentrated more on the visual features of performance here, and, as Rudler states that "*de nye ralistiske tendenser innen tysk scenekunst og kravenedet stilte til regiarbeidet market han især*" (243) [he especially noticed the new realistic tendencies in German stagecraft, and the demands that put upon directorial work]. Another major aspect that would have struck Ibsen was the acting style of the Polish-born Bogumil Dawison. On loan from the pioneering Vienna Hofburg Theater (which H. C. Anderson had recommended Ibsen visit, in fact, but for which the Bergen theater board was unable, or unwilling, to provide additional financial support,) Dawison was playing both Hamlet and Richard III in a fierce and unpredictable realism, a style that Ewbank suggests must have "brought out the ironies and ambivalences in these 'sacred' texts and thus

been a pivotal experience for the young Ibsen that went into the matrix of possibilities from which his own later plays would emerge" (71). Ibsen's experience not only of Dawison, but also of Høedt and even of Hettner were certainly decisive for his later theatrical development as each in its own way pointed to a new direction in theatrical aesthetics, one characterized by a more radical realism and emphasis on the psychological.

The actual European experience that Det Norske Theater afforded Ibsen was only one part of the dramatist's growing internationalization. Other factors are undeniably Ibsen's meeting with the city of Bergen and Det Norske Theater, spaces that were to have a decisive effect on his future career. In his letter of resignation to the board of directors dated July 23, 1857, Ibsen wrote that he would never forget what he owed Bergen theater. In my opinion traces of the theatrical and cultural experiences of his six-year stay on Norway's west coast may be found in Ibsen's later oeuvre, and Bergen and Det Norske Theater provide valuable points of departure for a mapping of Ibsen across nations and across cultures.

【Notes】

1. All translations from Norwegian are the author's own.
2. In 1856, both the Swedish Crown Prince Carl Bernadotte and Prince Napoleon, visited Bergen respectively, and both were entertained by the Norwegian players of Det NorskeTheater.
3. *Striler* are people, usually farmers and fishermen, from the rural areas in Hordaland County who were considered different from the city dwellers in dress and speech. The term was often used to denote someone who might row into Bergen within one day.
4. *Landsmål* is the written Norwegian language established in the nineteenth century by Ivar Aasen as an alternative to the Dano-Norwegian, or riksmål, that was prevalent in the country.
5. See for examples in Kari Gaarder Losenedahl, "Theatermannen," *Ibsen i Bergen*, ed. Johan Fredrik Kroepelien (Bergen: Bodoni Forlag, 2006) 89 – 122; Ellen Gjervann, "Tretten år i teatret—triumph eller tragedie," *Hovedfagsoppgave Universitetet i Bergen* (1998); Roderick Rudler, "Ibsen som teaterstipendiat i Dresden," *Edda* 66 (1996):236 – 43.
6. This is the only Shakespeare play that Ibsen staged in Bergen during his residence there.

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Post-Perestroyka Receptions in Staging Ibsen

Margarita Odesskaya

Abstract The last ten years have displayed a growth of interest in the plays of Ibsen in Russia, with a great number of performances, both in the main cities and in the provinces. I will consider two Moscow stagings—by Sergey Kutasov (*Pillars of Society*) and Migdaus Karbauskis (*Hedda Gabler*). Also, I will review two St. Petersburg productions: *Hedda Gabler* directed by Vladislav Pazi, and Michael Bychkov's *Nora*; and two provincial productions directed by Vladimir Ageev. I try to present the picture of new interpretations Ibsen's drama on Russian modern stage.
Key words Russian; modern; productions; different approaches
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Once the famous actress Olga Knipper—Chekhova rather accurately defined Russian theatre attitudes toward the plays of Henrik Ibsen: they attract and repel at the same time. Ibsen unites a naturalistic sketch of the bourgeois life at the end of the nineteenth century and a symbolic interpretation of each turn of his characters' path into a fantastical amalgam. But directors poorly handled this union. In the Soviet time, Ibsen was not staged often in Russia. Because in the theatre which was subject to ideological tasks, there was no room for "atypical" family conflicts. Soviet viewers were offered heroes who served the interests of the society, did their civic duty. [1]

It should be stated that the last ten years have displayed a growth of interest in the plays of Ibsen in Russia, with a great number of performances, both in the main cities and in the provinces. As before, Ibsen's plays are very attractive and, at the same time, difficult to understand for Russian directors and audience. It is indicative that like a hundred years ago the plays *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, which focus on vivid types of freedom-loving and emancipated heroines, remain in the greatest demand for the Russian stage. It is symptomatic that the young directors: Nina Chusova, Migdaugas Karbauskis, and Irina Keruchenko all presented *Hedda Gabler* in Moscow. All three were thesis projects. I will consider two stagings by Migdaus Karbauskis in Moscow and Vladislav Pazi in St. Petersburg.

Hedda Gabler

Migdaugas Karbauskis's staging in the Moscow Theatre-Studio of Petr Fomenko (2004) looks, at first sight, very conservative and traditional. The director and actors have rather succeeded in recreating the bourgeois spirit of a respectable house. Patriarchal and antiquated nature seen with sympathy and slight irony by the director shines through the gestures, manners, motions, and intonations of Aunt Julle and the

maid Bertha. The artist Vladimir Maximov has created modernist style scenery of the Tesmans new house, which is close to the original play. We remember Ibsen's description: "There is a spacious, beautifully and tastefully furnished sitting-room, the decor has kept in dark colors". Such details of Ibsen's scenery as the oval table, small round table, soft armchairs, poufs, and carpets make the sitting-room cozy. The scenery design by the artist Maximov rhymes vertical lines of columns with vertical strips of wallpaper of the two rooms symmetrically located in the back part of the stage. The vertical lines contrast with the roundness of the dark sofas. The house interior contrast of softness and roundness with vertical straightness repeats itself metonymically in the exterior of the heroes, the Tesmans. The Hedda figure is slim, graceful, elongated, and almost incorporeal in a long tight dress of the modernist style. While Jurgen, on the contrary, is a good-natured, stout, and big-bellied man, a bumpkin.

It looks as if contrast is the main principle in the Karbauskis performance. This is the basis of an interpretation of this complicated and contradictory play of Ibsen and rather ambiguous character of the heroine whose motivation is difficult to trace logically. Beautiful, elegant, and ironical Hedda is set off against all. Her gestures and motions show decadence, boredom, and grace. She smokes a cigarette in a long holder, lazily moves along the stage, and laughs openly over the weaknesses of the people surrounding her. However she reigns over Lilliputians and stands against an army of mice. The director obviously has arranged the heroine with absolutely vaudevillian characters to find a logical motivation for Hedda's behavior, her conflict with the world, and a kind of misanthropy. Coming home after a stag night, Hedda's husband bares his belly not only to his wife but also to the audience: the belly falls out of a rich red corset squeezing his flabby body. The comically accentuated physical unattractiveness of Tesman offends Hedda's esthetic feelings, which are fixed on beauty and perfection. The audience has quite a limited choice in responding to the scene of the fool's striptease. The other two male characters match Tesman well. The assessor Brack embodies sexism. His somewhat vulgar manners and lustful glances like Don Juan can't help but to provoke derision from the proud and emancipated Hedda. And finally, clever and extraordinary Lovborg, who has once managed to stir Hedda's heart and now evokes if not love, then at least jealousy, is comical from his first appearance on the stage. His character is intentionally simplified; he looks like a clerk who buries himself away in his work. Having been provoked by Hedda, he who tries deliberately to stick to society's rules appears suddenly tousled and in a dirty coat after the stag night. And the demoniac heroine practically forcedly thrusts a pistol as a present into the hands of Lovborg, who misses the point of what he's expected to do while she explains with a parting wish to have a beautiful death. In order to emphasize the insignificance of the men surrounding Hedda, Karbauskis dresses all of them in the same suits in one of the scenes and Bertha gives them all the same scarves. This simplification of the male characters allows the director to explain to the audience that Hedda should love nobody, because she really has nobody to love. In Karbauskis vision, the problem resides not in Hedda, but in the faceless vulgar society around her. However what to do with the last scene of the play? How to motivate her wish to

go off gracefully by shooting herself in the temple? The director suggests his solution.

The performance has a cyclic composition. It starts with a spectacular scene. In twilight, Hedda is sitting in a semi-circle of sofas, isolating her private space from the other world, with her back to the hall. She's playing with pistols and is aiming with the sound of the gramophone. In this gramophone, Hedda will burn a manuscript of the genius, a child of Thea and Lovborg. In the last scene of the performance, Hedda sits down with her back to the audience again. The semi-circles of sofas are put together and she is sitting inside. The circle has closed. Hedda sets a pistol against her temple in a picturesque and decadent manner. The shot rings out. Hedda falls down and disappears in the circle behind the sofas. A puff of smoke rises over the sofas. At this moment Tesman comes in, patters: "Shot! Right in the temple! Just think!", and quickly leaves for the other room where he and Thea try to reconstruct the manuscript. In a moment, Hedda gets up, smoking a cigarette as before and walking lazily with an air of boredom leaves the scene. The whole play is being dissipated as a cigarette smoke. Nothing changes, everything goes on as before preserving just monotonous boredom. Possibly, the director, who justly viewed Hedda's suicide as illogical, wanted to say that.

It is difficult for a contemporary audience to understand the behavior of Ibsen's characters, their decadence, hyper-aestheticism and narcissism, their noble aspirations and hovering over the world, their pathetic motions and poses, their thirst to rule human fates outside of the historical environment. The Karbauskis performance recreates a world of philistines, but this world is only the tip of the iceberg in the plays of Ibsen. Besides that, *Hedda Gabler* belongs to the late period of Ibsen's creative activity and tolerates neither such a simplification in interpreting the conflict nor a comic one-sided reading of the characters.

The staging of *Hedda Gabler* by Vladislav Pazi, Maria Bryantseva's scenery designs, and Vladimir Bychkovsky's incidental music together with the characters created by the actors transfer us into the atmosphere of the *fin de siecle* epoch. Vladislav Pazi's staging is noted for its high aesthetic culture and rather scrupulous reading of the text of Ibsen's plays. The audience are impressed with the cultural traits of the settings.

The whole performance is considerately constructed. One is plunged into the cold and poetic world of Ibsen's beauty from the very first minutes of the performance a semi-transparent tulle curtain with softly falling, light, whirling snow projected onto it. The pictures change: the quietly falling snow becomes a gusty snowstorm, then waves rise dangerously, sigh, and hit against a shore, large seagulls like those from Hitchcock fly straight at the audience. And due to the brilliant work of the light artist, Yevgeny Ginzburg, wavy curtains that serve as a part of the interior of the Tesman house turn into a severe and well-shaped contour of mountains, which will change color during the performance. The curtain rises to reveal a light, aesthetic construction of the house of the newly married Tesmans. This is a Crystal Palace or the Snow Queen's palace wherein fragile open-work partitions are made of white plastic and glass and look exquisitely beautiful, while at the same time somewhat decorative and flimsy. This contributes to a feeling of temporal, ephemeral existence. Spiral

glass stairs go up to the skies, to infinity. In just such an airy house filled with delicate and graceful flowers lives Hedda, who herself is a flower of evil, a woman that absorbs scents, sounds, gestures of decadence. One even forgets that Ibsen describes furniture of dark colors. Here everything is white and plastic.

The artist and director have carefully thought over the color symbols. Color has its own score in the performance. Blue, the color of waves and its shades from pale blue, light grey, and lilac down to black, will explode alarmingly with red at the end of the performance. Against the pastel background of soft lilac-pink and pale blue flowers decorating Hedda's house, a graceful red bouquet will appear. Thea brings it. The bouquet embodies the first sparks of rivalry, jealousy, which this naive, somewhat funny simpleton has excited by accident in the soul of the passionate, easily inflamed, but outwardly cold and ironical Hedda. This Hedda is erotic and gifted with soft, creeping motions of a flexible cat and enveloping intonations of voice that can cast a spell even on Thea. The scene wherein Hedda is worming a secret of the heart out of the artless Thea is played as a stylization of female vicious sensuality with the Japanese motive that decorative imaging is characteristic of symbolists. Hedda in a pink-pale blue kimono lies languidly by Thea's feet playing with a peacock's feather, lets down Thea's beautiful hair, pours alcohol out to her friend, and proposes to Thea that they drink to "Brudershaft" She instills the poison of her caressing voice inside the girl.

The color red will repeat itself in an autumn bouquet and leaves at the door open to the garden. But behind the open door there is the blackness of the chasm which Hedda suggests that Accessor Brack should enter, thus tempting him and aiming at him as if fighting an erotic duel with this cynical provincial Mephistopheles. Proud Hedda stands high above all, she climbs the stairs, and reigns against a background of mountains like a Nietzschian diabolic goddess of the modernist epoch. The color red first alarmingly lights up the mountains and then inflames as a fire in the tall column of the white chimney where Hedda has thrown the Lovborg manuscript to have revenge on the silly Thea, to crush and destroy her former lover, a genius. Thus she settles scores with her romantic past. The rising fire is the climax of the performance. The color red will burn into a bouquet of autumn leaves, which Hedda will clasp to herself in the last scene before the suicide shown symbolically as her stepping upstairs.

The staging of Vladimir Pazi is a performance of the single heroine who's in the center of the play. Thus, the conflict between a brilliant, strong personality and society, through which the play is frequently interpreted, has been rubbed out. Other characters are rather relevant to their roles. Each actor's work is interesting in its own way. Tesman is an absent-minded scientist, alienated from everything that happens in real life. Thea in her absurd costume looks cranky and resembles Tesman. Aunt Julle is a good-hearted fat woman whom Hedda slightly scares, she somewhat resembles a housekeeper. Parts of Lovborg and Brack have been a bit muffled; these characters just serve as background for Hedda. The actress Elena Pisarenko has managed to transfer the whole scale of complicated feelings of her heroine: she is arrogant, haughty, ironic, vulnerable, nervous, passionate, jealous, erotic, crafty, cool as a

queen, cruel as a demon while as a romantic she aspires to belong to higher world.

Pillars of Society

Sergei Kutasov has interpreted Ibsen's play *The Pillars of Society* (which he staged in Ruben Simonov's Moscow Dramatic Theater in 2006) as a political allegory, a pamphlet. The director has tried to realize in his staging the idea that it is always impossible to remain an upright politician in a corrupted society. Kutasov's staging contains direct allusions to the Soviet political elite and present-day supreme power. The performance has been mounted in the black-white color-spectrum (the artist Svetlana Logofet).

The stage is black. Behind a transparent curtain, men in black official suits stand, a loud-speaker voice and a storm of applause sound. The men come out to the proscenium and utter demagogic speeches interrupted by applause that resembles the Soviet tradition of supreme authorities addressing the people. The curtain rises. The stage is in the shade. All the small stage is stuffed with stacks of grey bags and barrels. Claustrophobic atmosphere is being built up.

Except for the "Fathers" of the town, all other characters are dressed in light linen. They speak of America, the family is afraid of arrival of American relatives. Supreme authorities, Karsten and his surrounding are introduced as a corrupted power. Rummel and Sandstad represent a couple of Karsten's security guards resembling "new Russians", friends of the mob. The security guards keep the Mayor of the town under control. One of them is playing menacingly with a spade. Karsten is carrying bags all the time and stacking them at his doors in the background. Obviously, these motions show his hard, even dirty work on creating his reputation. Lona, arrived from America, tells that the house smells rotten and needs ventilation. Really, the house stuffed with bags resembles a kind of Soviet vegetable store.

In Act Two, the stage is changed after Karsten talks with Lona. Karsten stands on the proscenium; a transparent net separates the back part of the stage. Everything is arranged as if the bags have served as bricks to wall off Bernick. The stage resembles a prison. Karsten Bernick finds himself in the center of a self-introspection that tells his conscience is awaking. He is separated from Lona by the netting wall. Bernick is rushing about the stage. Suddenly the stage is enveloped with smoke and Rorlund looking like a devil appears. Karsten asks his advice on whether it is right to make human sacrifices to a community for its welfare. Rorlund turns abruptly and his spectacles flash out a red light, thus strengthening a demonic effect. Rorlund says that sacrifices are possible. Bernick has become aware of his own dark past and his ungodly rise to the top of power. His conscience tortures the Mayor stuck in the evil. His eyes have opened. The stage looks even more like a prison where Rummel and Sandstad work as jailers. They beat Karsten, bend his arms and forbid him to tell and do what he wants. They put obstacles in the way of his possible repentance. One brings the news that the ship "The Indian Girl" with Karsten's son, Olaf, aboard has sailed. In the background, behind the netting curtain, there appear characters in white shirts, in shrouds. They all, including Karsten's small son, have died when the rotten vessel sank. The supreme authorities come onto the proscenium. Karsten tries

to repent but the "Fathers" of the town press hard upon him. A speech delivered by Bernick is muffled with a storm of applause as in the first scene.

The director has taken out of Ibsen's play and accentuated just one motif of the political impotence of a leader in a corrupted state. The director uses the play as a mythological model, which, in his opinion, illustrates political processes taking place both in the Soviet and the post-Soviet state machine. This idea has made Sergei Kutasov change the denouement of Ibsen's play. A happy ending with spiritual discernment and revival to a new life, which is important to Ibsen, is impossible for the journalistically one-sided version of Sergei Kutasov.

Nora

The play *The Doll's House*—staged by Michael Bychkov at the St. Petersburg Bely Theater on the small stage in the Fyodor Dostoevsky Museum in 2003—is a joint Russian-Norwegian project. It is evident that the problems of women's emancipation shown by Ibsen using the Helmers as a case of point seem somewhat melodramatic and archaic to the director. That is why Michael Bychkov's interpretation concentrates on form and style, rather than the idea of the play. The director looks at the heroes and developments of the play as something distant from him, with irony and affection of a modern man. Michael Bychkov considers the Ibsen play as a kind of a palimpsest taking off the parchment cultural layers of the past times. That is why Bychkov's staging unites the styles of Meyerhold's theater and silent films. The director accents stylization. This is the principle the modern Russian director uses when staging Ibsen. We feel as if we were really present at a performance in the doll's house. We see the doors of another doll's house, a toy theater, open as in Hoffman's story "*The Nutcracker*". Actors are made up like silent film stars—Astaire Nielsen (Marina Solopchenko) and a kind of Rudolf Valentino, a fatal jeune premier, (Alexander Bargman) who appears on the stage with pomaded dark hair, dark eyelids and a beauty mark on the cheek. Krogstad (Valery Kukareshin) is a classical demoniac character of the silent films in the style of Konrad Feudt. Mrs. Linde (Svetlana Pismichenko) is also a cliché character of the silent films. Inside the refined sets made by the artist Emil Kapelyush: screens in the modernist style, a flowing down gown of Nora, thin lathes of a China teahouse resembling a bird cage, the heroes play a melodrama under the live music of a ballroom pianist (the composer and performer Valery Piguzov). They pose in a simplified and artificial manner as jeune premiers, tender husband and wife: they roll up their eyes, bend their arms, and modulate voice in a relevant way. One can see that the play's name *Doll's House* sounds out significantly in the interpretation of Michael Bychkov. Everything in this world is as fragile and insecure as a doll's house. Everything is play and pretense. In the last scenes of the performance, when Torvald gets to know about his wife's forgery and goes into hysterics, the changed Nora who has turned from a doll, squirrel into a human being puts on a black coat and sitting in the "China house" as in the cage quietly tells Torvald how wrong they were living. Then she goes upstairs and dissolves in the dark. Torvald is left caged in the house. The last scene is made in the same decorative manner, but without the simplification and melodrama of silent films. The performance of Michael

Bychkov is featured with high aesthetical culture and light and graceful actualizing of the eternal themes of classical drama.

Ibsen in province

The Ibsen plays staged by Moscow director Vladimir Ageev are impossible now to see in the theater, they are on kept on amateur video shot by the director. However these stagings are worth looking at. First of all, Ageev's choice of the Ibsen symbolic plays: *Lady from the Sea* and *When We, the Dead, Are Being Aroused*, all hadn't been staged in Russia for a hundred years. These plays are not only difficult for a mass reader or audience to understand, but for a director to adapt for the stage. Ibsen was one of the first dramatists of the modernist epoch who changed the philosophy of the plot. Long philosophical dialogues turning into monologues, which manifest ideas of freedom, art, creation, and love, break the traditional structure of the Aristotle drama and make the plot of a play static and difficult to adapt for the stage.

Vladimir Ageev as a director belongs to the conceptual theater. His stagings approach philosophic and symbolic dramatic art and destroy the traditional, psychological theater. Ibsen's plays in the theater of Ageev are staged as play-dreams. Unreal and phantasmagoric images from the world of a fairytale, myth, and dream revive on the stage. When interpreting a play, Ageev constructs the artistic world by the principle of semantic binary oppositions. A blending of grotesque and symbol goes through the structure of the Ageev performances *Lady from the Sea* and *When We, the Dead, Are Being Aroused.* A sick community in the performance *Lady from the Sea* is set off against Ellide who has absorbed the free elements of the sea, poetic fantasy, and a dream. To depict the sick community of fiord dwellers the director uses allegoric images. The teacher Arnholm is practically a Chekhov character, a man in the shell, "thin, frail, and ill." Lyndstrand is a butterfly-man, and Wangel who binds Ellide's freedom with a noose moves along the stage in a wheelchair. A poetic fantasy, a dream of the sea maid Ellide about an omnipresent and free foreign sailor with the symbolic name of Freeman is materialized on the stage into a mighty fantastic image. In the background, the immense figure of a mythological horned sea creature, a frantic director and musician, becomes visible though the haze. This is both a demoniac figure of dark elemental forces, fairytale trolls unconsciously living in the Ibsen's characters, and an inspirer of dreamy, poetic, and musical images, a director of the symbolic world orchestra.

As Ellide's husband Wangel has given her freedom of choice he gets up out of the wheelchair while she having chosen Wangel finds herself in the wheelchair now and, what is more, a picture frame falls down upon her from the top. The dream has vanished into thin air. The story of the picture, which is being painted by the artists Ballested at the beginning of the play about a half-dead sea maid who is lost in the skerries, is becoming a reality.

Having considered some new stagings of Ibsen's plays in Russia, I would like to note that the Norwegian dramatist is becoming relevant again for the contemporary Russian audience. Directors have different approaches to interpreting the heritage of the great master. One can see in these performances a whole spectrum of the modern

theater's points of view to classical drama. The spectrum covers neo-traditionalism, drama adapted for the actual issues of Russian life, neo-symbolism, and postmodernist stylization as a reactivation of a classic work seen through the prism of cultural associations.

【Note】

1. More details see: Margarita Odesskaya, "Hedda Gabler: Life in Time," *Ibsen and Russian Culture*, *Ibsen Conference in St. Petersburg* Ozt. 1 – 4, 2003. Ed. Knut Brynhildsvoll (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2005) 85-96.

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The Theme of "Discussion": Ibsen, Shaw and Ding Xilin Compared

Sun Jian

Abstract Ibsen's plays, especially his social plays, are known for the theme of discussion, which, according to Shaw, marks a technical novelty and a departure from the traditional well made play of Scribe. Shaw is a great admirer of Ibsen and also a practitioner of the so-called Ibsenism. His discussion plays are very subversive in terms of their political and moral purposes. Shaw in turn influenced Ding Xilin who wrote many plays in the early twentieth century in the style of Ibsen and Shaw by using the idea of discussion in his plays. This paper will examine how the three playwrights use the idea of discussion in their plays and explain why discussion plays were so popular in their respective situations.

Key words Ibsen; Theme of Discussion; Shaw; Ding Xilin

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In many ways, the theme of "discussion" is one of the most import traits of Ibsen's plays, his social plays in particular. Michael Meyer, the noted Ibsen biographer, pointed out: "Nevertheless, what excited his contemporaries and caused these plays to spread throughout the Western world and make the theatre something it had not been since Grecian times was the fact that they discussed, in dramatic form, the kind of topic about which people argued in newspapers and debating societies and on street corners."[1] In his perceptive comment, Meyer clearly captured the essential power of Ibsen's dramatic creation and also showed the contributions the Norwegian playwright made to the European theatre which was undergoing an important change from the traditional elitist drama to the modern and the popular at that time. And Ibsen was acclaimed "the father of modern drama" for starting this exciting transition.

A reading of Ibsen's plays shows that the device of "discussion" is used extensively in his plays of the middle and the last periods (though we can also find the employment of the device in his earliest plays) in which the relationships between husband and wife and between individuals and society reach a crisis. The characters need to have discussions to air their views and reposition themselves in the conflict. It is not an exaggeration to say that discussion has become a dominant theme in modern drama ever since it was first discovered in Ibsen's plays, especially his most performed play *A Doll's House*.

It is acknowledged that *A Doll's House* starts as a very traditional play with all the salient features of a well made play that the French playwright Eugene Scribe is famous for. However it breaks out with the last act when for the first time in the theatre in Western Europe, a wife asks her husband to sit down and talk, and to discuss the issues vital to the husband and wife relationship. The language that Nora uses is not difficult but the seemingly easy everyday utterance is endowed with a poetic power and a kind of subtle irony. And the effect is electrifying. Toril Moi is very accurate to point out that "*A Doll's House* shows how Nora finds a way out of her idealist and melodramatic scenarios towards the everyday, dramatized onstage by having her change into her everyday dress and launch into the deliberately non-spectacular conversation that ends the play. In *A Doll's House*, then, the everyday stands for the realm in which words in a conversation begin to make sense, where we can manage to see that language—or, more precisely, our use of language—expresses us" (Moi 248). It is true that when Nora speaks to her husband demanding that they talk, she uses the language of everyday. So finally through discussion, the disillusioned but enlightened Nora finds herself, and most important of all, a voice of her own and she leaves the house banging the door behind her.

As a sensitive and an insightful English playwright, Bernard Shaw, the self-proclaimed Ibsenite, quickly perceived the strength of Ibsen's technical innovative approach to the dramatic conflict and declared in his The Quintessence of Ibsenism ("a masterpiece of Shavian polemic writing"[2]): "But at just that point in the last act, the heroine very unexpectedly (by the wiseacres) stops her emotional acting and says: "We must sit down and discuss all this that has been happening between us." And it was by this new technical feature: this addition of a new movement, as musicians would say, to the dramatic form, that *A Doll's House*- conquered Europe and founded a new school of dramatic art."[3]

The technical novelty that Shaw talks about in the book is the discussion which marks a break of convention, "Formerly you had in what was called a well made play an exposition in the first act, a situation in the second, and unraveling in the third. Now you have exposition, situation, and discussion" (Shaw 171). Certainly when Shaw made that comment, he obviously had in mind the Scribean well made play and he wanted to make a breakthrough in the English theatre which was dominated by the plays far away from the sordid social reality. He aimed at creating a kind of theatre in which people could respond to the social ills by voicing their own opinions. That is one of the reasons why Shaw wanted to introduce Ibsen into England at a time when many English people regarded new ideas from the Continent suspiciously. Shaw, as a pro-socialist writer, was quick to respond to the creative Endeavour of Ibsen and his great influence, believing that "The discussion conquered Europe in Ibsen's *Doll's House*; and now the serious playwright recognizes in the discussion not only the main test of his highest powers, but also the real centre of his play's interest" (Shaw 171).

Bernard Shaw, thus inspired, began to experiment with this special form to embody his radical ideas. He needed a way to express himself, and a way that would be shocking and effective. With the help of Harley Granville Barker, a young man twen-

ty years younger than him, Shaw was able to put several of his discussion plays at the tiny Court Theatre in Sloane Square in London. Barker produced several of Shaw's earlier plays—*Candida*, *Captain Brass bound's Conversion*, *Man and Superman*, *How He Lied to Her Husband*, *You Never Can Tell*, and *The Man of Destiny*—along with such new Shaw plays as *John Bull's Other Island*, *Major Barbara*, and *The Doctor's Dilemma*. And Barker even acted in Shaw's play, *The Widower's Houses*. The Shavian theatre was crowded with an audience made up of women, intellectuals, and especially young people who came to the theatre to experience the change and to share his theatrical values. Major Barbara, Shaw's most important play for the Court, is a case in point. It aroused disquiet by touching upon a very sensitive topic of prostitution. Shaw was bold in presenting in the last scene a series of intellectual discussions during which the characters reacted to each other nakedly on this controversial social issue. Similar scenes can also be found in *The Widower's Houses* and other plays. It goes without saying that with those discussion plays; Shaw successfully set up a theatre of dissent and subverted the then British theatre which was entertaining but politically safe. It is agreed that Shaw has done much to naturalize Ibsen by spreading his brand of Ibsenism in the theatre and making a stir there. As Errol Durbach says, "This is Shaw at his best: provocative, audacious, polemical... His Ibsen remains a theatrical realist who holds the mirror up to society and shows the age its moral form and anti-idealist pressure" (Errol 234).

Among the modern European playwrights, Ibsen without doubt exerted the greatest influence upon the Chinese political movement and the Chinese theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century. When Ibsen was writing his plays, China was painfully struggling to rid herself of the shackles of feudalism and to free herself from the oppression of imperialism. On May 4th, 1919, a great movement took place in Beijing. The movement was initiated by the students and intellectuals calling for political, ideological and cultural reform. At that time, two important themes became dominant in the Chinese political and social scene: salvation and enlightenment. In order to solve the problem, new ideas should be introduced and spread. It seems that traditional values could not free China from a feudalistic state. As a result, many books written by western scholars were translated into Chinese. Science and democracy were popular catchwords at that time. The thoughts of the western thinkers and philosophers played a big role in awakening people from their long dream that China would always be invincible under the doctrines of Confucius. Together with the influx of political ideas and theories, many literary works from the west were introduced into China as well. Particularly the period witnessed the performances of many western plays, especially plays by Ibsen.

During the May 4th movement, people started to focus their attention on many social issues, about how China, as a great nation in the world, came to such a state of chaos in the late Qin dynasty. Young intellectuals in particular questioned the problems of the political system and the traditional values upon which China stood. So heated discussions and debates were widely held and people found that the theatre was an important venue for these activities. And the spoken drama became a very effect way of exploring all the social problems. So consequently "among the many re-

forms launched then was a theatre reform" and "In order to serve more pressing political and intellectual needs, the Chinese theatre world needed to change to a modern, Westernized spoken drama" (Eide 183). That is the reason why Ibsen caught the fancy of the people immediately after he was performed in the Chinese theatre. And Ibsen's "modern aesthetic principle of drama meets the need of setting up the modern Chinese aesthetic principles" (Liu 81).

Like Shaw, Hu Shi, a well-known Chinese scholar and a political activist also advocated a kind of Ibsenism in the then journal *New Youth* calling people especially intellectual to rise up and expose the evils of the society by learning from Ibsen. "We must admit that Ibsenism, to a large extent, is something borrowed and reconstructed (in the Chinese context). Its purpose is to expose the dark reality and to criticize the social and cultural customs of the feudalistic society" (Wang 195). In a sense, Hu Shi has done much to popularize Ibsen's ideas of the modern theatre and to inspire the young Chinese playwrights to write plays which would reflect the reality and the pains of the people in everyday language. That explains the reason why so many brilliant plays were written and produced at that time by so many talented young playwrights with Ding Xilin as one of them.

Ding is rarely mentioned when we talk about playwrights who have been influenced by Ibsen in China. Instead, we often hear people mention the names of Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Cao Yu and other well known writers. However if we examine some of Ding's plays closely, we will find some family likeness between him, Ibsen and Shaw in their respective works. As we can see, the three dramatists were all writing at a time when their societies were undergoing radical changes, shifting from one stage to another one amid great ideological liberation. Under such circumstances, conventional ideas, beliefs, concepts and theories were questioned, debated, challenged and even destroyed. Those great changes were inevitably reflected in their plays in which a lot of hot issues were discussed.

When Shaw was busy experimenting with the theatre, he did not realize that his great plays as well as his brilliant essays had attracted the attention of a Chinese student from Shanghai studying in England at that time, Ding Xilin. Ding was studying physics at the University of Birmingham as a science student. But he loved literature and read a lot of novels, plays and essays. Plays by Ibsen and Shaw impressed him deeply and he was particularly fascinated by their use of language and the portrayal of female characters in their discussion plays. When he came back from England, he tried his hand in playwriting while teaching physics at the universities. Though amateurish, he wrote many plays which made him one of the most influential playwrights in the May 4th movement and he was described as a dramatist with "a divine hand", the highest compliment people give to a writer who writes superbly. Most of Ding's best plays were written from 1920s to 1940s. They include *One Wasp*, *Dear Husband*, *Oppression*, *After Drinking* (based on Arthur Schopenhauer's novel), *The Air in Beijing*, *Three Yuan*, *When the Wife Comes Back*, *Miao Feng Mountain* and so on. Among those plays, the most influential ones are *One Wasp*, *Oppression*, *Dear Husband* and *Miao Feng Mountain*.

In 1923, he published his first one-act play *One Wasp* at the suggestion of some

friends who ran a magazine. The play was a great success when published. This is a play about love and it exposes the hypocrisy of the society at that time. It describes two young people Mr. Ji and Miss Yu who struggle to get their freedom of love by using their wit and wisdom. The mother of the son Madam Ji in the play is an old fashioned woman who is interested in acting as a go-between for her nephew. She does not realize that the girl she wants to match is her son's girl friend. And to her dismay, she happens to see them Mr. Ji and Miss Yu kissing each other. When they are discovered, the son jokingly says there is a wasp on the girls face. Though simple, the play is full of talk and discussion about love, freedom and marriage with a touch of humor, irony and repartee. The performance of the play aroused great interest in the audience, especially the college students when they saw it on campus. And the critics were also generous in their praise of the play, describing it as the best comedy they had ever seen.

Ding was encouraged by the positive critical review and he continued writing. The play *Oppression* written and performed three years later also caught the attention of the audience. *Oppression* is about the landlords in the big cities like Shanghai in the1920s who refused to admit single male tenants. There is a gap between the owners of the houses and the needed. When the landlady is about to reject the tenant one day, there comes a single female tenant. So the two decide to unite to fight the landlady by pretending they are a married couple. Then they rent the house and stand up to the landlady. Though the play contains some jargons fashionable during the revolutionary years such as *proletariat*, *capitalist*, *the oppressed*, the verbal ingenuity of the play puts Ding Xilin at the top of the playwrights at that time. And Hong Shen, a famous Chinese director, described this play "the only masterpiece".[4] It was staged in Beijing on June 5, 1926, directed by Yu Shangyuan.

A reading of Ding Xilin's plays shows that there are some similarities between him, Ibsen and Shaw or rather Ding has inherited and borrowed much from the great masters. For one thing, like Ibsen and Shaw, Ding was writing at a time of turmoil and turbulence. That was an era of revolution when the old order of the world was about to collapse and the new order was about to come into being and it was also an era which required people to think, to question, to doubt and to discuss. In order to do this, language should be changed in order to suit the change of the world. The result of the May 4th Movement was to free China from the confinement of the old style of talking and writing. This is what Ibsen and Shaw did in their respective discussion plays; and Ding made great contribution to popularizing the simplified Chinese characters and baihua (colloquialism) in spoken drama in China. And also, Ding actively explored the relationship between husband and wife and dramatized the conflicts between the old and the new ideas over this relationship on the stage. Most of his plays are about this kind of relationship and gender problems with a kind of contemporary relatedness.

Ding Xiling wrote more than ten plays in his life time while working as a professor in different universities. Though his dramatic output cannot match that of the great masters, his contribution to the development of the Chinese spoken drama cannot be overestimated. This paper has only touched upon briefly one aspect of his plays.

However his plays are worth exploring in great depth. In this respect, Zhang Jian's comment shows how important Ding Xilin was in modernizing the Chinese theatre in the twentieth century: "His comedies can rightly be regarded as successful new forms born in the process of sinicizing the Ibsen type of social plays. . . . In his artistic practice, he not only improved the coarse and monotonous language used in the early Chinese social plays, but also found a rationalistic type of comedy both in form and content for the Ibsen type of social plays" (Zhang 234).

【Notes】

1. See Michael, Meyer. "Ibsen: a Biographical Approach," *Ibsen and the Theatre*. ed. Errol Durbach (London: Macmillan, 1980) 22 – 23.
2. See Martin, Esslin. "Ibsen and Modern Drama," *Ibsen and the Theatre*. ed. Errol Durbach (London: Macmillan, 1980) 71.
3. See Bernard, Shaw. *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1913) 175.
4. See the quotation from Zhang Jian, *The History of the Chinese Comedies* (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2006) 234.

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The Role of Women in the Reception of Ibsen in Finland in the 1880s and 1890s

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Abstract Before the First World War, Finland produced an astonishing number of theatre performances of Ibsen's plays and critical studies and essays on his works. Along with great actresses such as Ida Aalberg, female critics and writers played an important role in Ibsen's reception in Finland at the end of the nineteenth century. The most important female critic in Finland, who wrote about Ibsen, was Irene Leopold. In the 1890s she presented Ibsen and modern Scandinavian literature in the periodical *Finsk Tidskrift* (in Swedish). Irene Leopold reviewed *Master Builder* and *When We Dead Awaken*, and discussed Georg Brandes's views about Ibsen. Like many other critics at that time, Irene Leopold was interested in Bjørnson. The leading woman writer in Finland in the 1880s and 1890s was Minna Canth. Her plays and stories were in many respects influenced by Ibsen. They also raised a lot of critical discussion which was clearly connected with the ideological debate around Ibsen and his works.

Key words Henrik Ibsen; Irene Leopold; Minna Canth; criticism

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I. Finland and Norway at the End of the Nineteenth Century

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, one of the most receptive countries to the works of Henrik Ibsen was Finland. The first article about Ibsen was published in Finland in 1871 and the first doctoral dissertation as early as in 1879. Three years later, the author of the dissertation, Valfrid Vasenius (1848 – 1898), also wrote an extensive monograph on Ibsen, concentrating on the leading ideas in Ibsen's plays (See Holmström; Liukko 8, 23; Varpio 100ff.; Riikonen, "*Peer Gynt* in Finland" 81).

After Vasenius, several other academics and university professors were greatly interested in Ibsen, also participating in the ideological debate of the time. The most notable of these scholars was K. S. Laurila (1876 – 1947), who wrote a large monograph about Ibsen's political and moral ideas in 1922 (Riikonen, "Politiikkaa" 45).

Along with academics, such leading critics as the poets Eino Leino (1878 – 1926) and Kasimir Leino (1866 – 1919) discussed the Norwegian playwright in several essays and articles (Riikonen, "Politiikkaa" 35; id., "Ibsenian Scholarship"

518). Since 1878, Ibsen's dramas were regularly translated, performed and published in Helsinki.

We can say that before the First World War, Finland, a country with a very small population, produced an astonishing number of theatre performances of Ibsen's plays and, additionally, critical studies and essays on his works. Only Shakespeare could compete with Ibsen in the number of performances and scholarly works.

On the other hand, in the ideological debate of the time, two Swedish writers, August Strindberg and Gustaf af Geijerstam were attacked by those who were worried about public morals. Geijerstam, for instance, was called by a Finnish conservative critic "a miserable apostle of immorality with red cheeks" (On Geijerstam's visit to Helsinki, see Koskimies 59; Liukko 42). The debate around Ibsen and Strindberg was also closely connected with the coming of Darwinism and other new ideas to Finland; in other words, they all were important factors in the modernization process.

One reason why Finland was so receptive to Ibsen and other Norwegian writers was the social and political situation in these countries. It is easy to find several similarities between Finland and Norway in the nineteenth century. Both countries had a foreign ruler, the King of Sweden in Norway, the Emperor of Russia as the Grand Duke of Finland. Both were Lutheran countries with somewhat puritanical moral ideals, and in both countries the role of the middle class and its economic activity were growing. The social and moral problems which Ibsen dealt with in his plays were also deeply felt and eagerly discussed in Finland.

Along with male scholars and critics, great actresses, female critics, translators and writers held key positions in Ibsen's reception in Finland at the end of the nineteenth century. his article will focus on women's activities as actresses, translators, critics and writers.

As background information, I would like to first present some facts about women's position in Finland. Writings about the position of women were published in Finland many years before the first performances of *A Doll's House*, paving the way for a considerable increase in women's opportunities for obtaining higher education which took place in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Finnish women had access to university relatively early. The first woman, Emma Irene Äström, graduated from the Imperial Alexander University (now the University of Helsinki) in 1882. Moreover, Finland was the first European country and the third country in the world, after New Zealand and Australia, to extend the suffrage to women (1906, in Norway in 1913).

Even before these reforms in nineteenth century Finland, Women had started language education. Educated women usually had a very good command of several languages. In most cases, their native language was Swedish, which opened the doors to other Nordic languages. Such major European languages as French, German and English were also spoken and read by women. Usually coming from the upper classes, they were able to travel abroad and thus broaden their cultural horizons and language skills. A good command of foreign languages was the basic element in women's activities in the field of literature. It was soon discovered that women were capable of making foreign literature accessible to Finnish readers in the form of translations, critical essays and reviews.

II. Ida Aalberg and Other Actresses

The best known figures in the reception of Ibsen were, of course, the actors and actresses. The most famous of all actresses in Finland at the turn of the 19th century was Ida Aalberg (Baroness von Uexkull-Gyllenband) (1857 – 1915), "the priestess of Ibsen's ethical art," as she was called by a theatre critic. Her performances in the roles of Nora and Hedda Gabler were greatly admired. The first Finnish performance of *A Doll's House* took place in Helsinki in 1880, soon after the world premier. A Finnish woman, who was living in Kristiania, had sent information about the Norwegian performance to the director of the Finnish theatre. A kind of climax in Ida Aalberg's interpretation was the tarantella scene (Heikkilä 80). Later on, in 1892, she moved the climax from this scene to the final scene of the play (Liukko 65).

When Ida Aalberg played the role of Hedda Gabler, the critics' opinions about Hedda's character differed greatly. One critic maintained that Ida Aalberg had managed to make Hedda's behaviour understandable, but to conservative critics Hedda Gabler was like a red flag. Agathon Meurman (1826 – 1909), for example, argued in his article "*Onko Hedda Gabler ihminen?*" ("Is Hedda Gabler a Human Being?"), that Hedda was a devil in woman's clothes. However, the role of Hedda Gabler was a great artistic success for Ida Aalberg. In her interpretation, Hedda was "a female devil, a deeply unlucky and disappointed human being, who is ready to pay a full price for her doings and who in her death receives a spiritual beauty", as her acting was eloquently characterized (See Liukko 56; Heikkilä 318; Riikonen, "Politiikkaa" 39).

Although Ida Aalberg was best known for her roles as Nora Helmer and Hedda Gabler, she played many other Ibsenian roles as well (e. g. Äse, Rita Allmers, Ellida Wangel and Rebecka West). She also visited Kristiania, Bergen, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg and Berlin and had a tournée in Hungary. Together with Valfrid Vasenius, she met Henrik Ibsen in Munich in 1880 (Heikkilä 98), and Bjørnson three years later in Paris (Heikkilä 172).

Other great Finnish actresses to be mentioned here are Katri Rautio (1864 – 1952), who played Selma in The League of Youth and Margit in the Feast at Solhaug, and Olga Poppius (1866 – 1939), who played Hedvig in *Wild Duck*.

It should also be remembered that the Swede Hedvig Charlotte Raa – Winterhjelm (1838 – 1907), who played in the first performance of *Ghosts*, had played Lea by Aleksis Kivi in Finland and spoke and wrote Finnish.

III. Irene Leopold's Essays on Ibsen

The most important female critic in Finland, who wrote about Ibsen, was Irene Leopold (1860 – 1940). In her obituary in a Swedish newspaper, she was called "en ambitiös och fint bildad andens arbeterska". It is very difficult to find any adequate translation for this lively phrase; it is something like "an ambitious and refined maid in the realm of spirit".

In the 1890s, Irene Leopold presented Ibsen and modern Scandinavian literature in the periodical *Finsk Tidskrift* (in Swedish). Her essay "*Strödda drag ur Ibsen-kri-*

tiken i Helsingfors" ("Occasional remarks on Ibsen criticism in Helsinki") was published in the Festschrift for Ibsen in 1898. One sign of the great enthusiasm for Ibsen in Finland is the fact that out of the 26 contributions in the Festschrift, six were from Finland. Along with Irene Leopold, the other Finnish contributors were the novelist, short story writer and playwright Juhani Aho, the literary scholar Werner Söderhjelm, the actress Ida Aalberg, the writer and artist Jac. Ahrenberg and the critic Ernst Grästen (Liukko 90).

In her essay, Irene Leopold enumerated several Finnish contributions to the study of Ibsen, beginning with the first articles which were published in 1871 and 1874. Irene Leopold also discussed the two monographs by Valfrid Vasenius and articles by other academic critics. Among the academic critics referred to by Irene Leopold was the philosopher Hjalmar Neiglick (1880 – 1889). It was a great loss to Finnish philosophy and criticism that he died while young. Neiglick criticized *Rosmersholm*, which, in his ironic opinion, was a play "the dialectic obscurity of which probably would make Ibsen immortal". On the other hand, as Leopold reminds us, Neiglick regarded, for example, *The Pretenders* as a work with as great a subtlety as Hamlet or *Faust*. In her presentation, Irene Leopold also discusses the first performances of Ibsen's plays in Finland.

In her articles in *Finsk Tidskrift*, Irene Leopold reviewed *Master Builder* and *When We Dead Awaken*, and discussed Georg Brandes's views about Ibsen. *When We Dead Awaken*, Ibsen's last play, inspired several writers and critics. Another essay, by the young James Joyce, was noticed by Ibsen himself. In Finland, the play was reviewed by the Finnish poet Eino Leino (Riikonen, "Ibsenian Scholarship" 519). While Leino mainly described the plot of the play, Leopold was more concerned with the characters. According to her, Ibsen had, like Émile Zola and the Swedish writer Per Hallström, touched upon the dark side which the individuality of the artist reveals in its relation to other values of life. Irene Leopold also drew attention to the subtitle of *When We Dead Awaken*, "epilogue", arguing that the play as a whole, with all its three acts, is a dramatic finale, the last act in a tragedy, preparation for the final catastrophe. Despite her admiration for the play, Irene Leopold had some reservations about the play as a drama. To be true to its nature, a drama demands action. In this sense, *When We Dead Awaken* is removed from the fundamental principle of dramatic art (Riikonen, "Ibsenian Scholarship" 519).

Although Irene Leopold often referred to Ibsen's female characters, she never wrote any comprehensive essay about women in Ibsen's plays. However, in one of her essays, she presented Lou Andreas-Salome's book about women in Ibsen's plays; she also discussed women in the works of the Danish writer Peter Nansen (1861 – 1918). Being a versatile critic, Irene Leopold also wrote an extensive essay on women in the tragedies of Aeschylus.

IV. Minna Canth's Plays and Novellas

The leading woman writer in Finland in the 1880s and 1890s was Minna Canth (1844 – 1897). Minna Canth's plays and stories were in many respects influenced by Ibsen. Although she was by no means an imitator of Ibsen, we can often find traces of

Ibsenian characters in her stories and plays. Canth's tragedy *Kauppaneuvos Toikka* (Commercial Councillor Toikka) is to some extent based on *Pillars of Society*. The female characters of her far better play *Sylvi* have some common features with Nora, Rebecka West and Hedda Gabler (Rossi, *Le naturalism* 87; id., Against Naturalism 142). The play, where a woman married to an older man murders her husband by poisoning him, is of course more melodramatic than Ibsen's plays.

Canth's novella *Salakari* (Pitfall) includes a passage where two men discuss *Rosmersholm*. Canth's ethical views can be considered as a combination of Ibsen's ideas in *Brand* and *Rosmersholm* (Liukko 44). In Canth's novella Köyhää kansaa (*Poor People*) we find a doctor, who presents ideas, which are in accordance with the views of Dr. Rank in *A Doll's House*, while in the novella Hanna, the father of the title person is very similar to Captain Alving in *Ghosts*. Moreover, the characterization of the title person in the novella Agnes is influenced by Canth's reading of *Hedda Gabler* (Liukko 66).

Minna Canth's works also raised a lot of critical discussion which was clearly connected with the ideological debate around Ibsen and his works. For instance, the Governor of the county where Minna Canth lived, called her "a decomposed maggot" and "a whore of the worst kind". It should be mentioned that Ida Aalberg, the great interpreter of Ibsen on stage, made a great success in the role of the gypsy girl Homsantuu in Canth's play *Työmiehen vaimo* (*A Worker's Wife*).

Keeping in mind the great interest in Ibsen among educated Finnish women and Ibsen's great female characters, it is not surprising that when the Finnish Women's Association celebrated its fourtieth anniversary in 1924, there were lectures by K. S. Laurila on Ibsen and women on the programme. As I have noted in an earlier essay (Riikonen, "Ibsenian Scholarship" 520), Laurila's flowery style becomes almost enthusiastic when he describes the figure of Solveig, calling her "the Holy Virgin of the Protestant imagination, a Nordic Madonna, the ideal woman of Nordic men's desire". Laurila castigates the immoral men in Ibsen's plays, and at the same time idealizes women as kinds of holy figures. Like Agathon Meurman, Laurila was a typical representative of moralistic criticism, but, of course, on different grounds.

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Misinterpretation and Innovation: Receptions of *A Doll's House* during May Fourth Movement in China

Chen Liang

Abstract As an emancipating cultural movement, the May Fourth Movement marked a dramatic shift in Chinese national ideology and Chinese playwriting. Ibsenism, upon its introduction into China, played a leading role in the cultural renovation. The reception of Ibsenism was, to a large extent, localized and in that particular situation, politicalized to meet the requirements of Chinese intellectuals to launch a revolution in the social sphere. Thus misinterpretation of Ibsenism was inevitable. Although it failed to cover the complexity of the esthetic value of Ibsenism, it has effectively shaped the realism of Chinese play writing in the twentieth century and laid a solid foundation for the development of modernity of Chinese drama.

Key words Ibsenism; *A Doll's House*; misinterpretation; May Fourth Movement

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As an important part of enlightening discourse booming during the May Fourth Movement, Ibsen and his Nora have played a peculiar role in the emancipation of individuality and female roles. Its significance is most evident in the shaping of Chinese contemporary literature, especially the contemporary drama. In the 1910's, the blossoming of Ibsen's plays has effectively consolidated his peculiar place in China. The flourishing of Ibsenism was closely connected with the historical discourse during the May Fourth period, leading to ideological revolution and drama reconstruction. As a representative of knowledge-power mechanism, Ibsenism has been a favorite for Chinese intellectuals due to the common concern over social problems. Translations of Ibsen's plays from May Fourth Movement to the founding of PRC are listed in the following chart (Song 36).

The ideological connotation and literary style of Ibsen's drama are rich and complex. As a great dramatist, his creation can be divided into three stages which are characterized by literary romanticism, realistic criticism and symbolism respectively. As shown in the chart, the translations and receptions of Ibsen's plays were mainly the ones with strong realistic criticism on social problems in the second stage, among which *A Doll's House* was the most prominent one.

Play	1919 – 1927	1928 – 1949
A Doll's House	4	5
Ghosts	2	1
An Enemy of the People	2	0
Hedda Gabler	1	1
Master Builder	2	1
The Wild Duck	1	2
The Lady from the Sea	1	2
The League of Youth	2	0
Pillars of Society	1	1
Little Eyolf	1	1
Rosmersholm	1	1
When We Dead Awaken	0	1
Lady Inge	0	1
John Gabriel Borkman	0	2

What made the Chinese intellectuals during the May Fourth Movement dissatisfied with the ancient Chinese plays was their attachment to traditional political ideology. They longed for a new form of play to take its place and revolutionize Chinese social and political culture. Ibsen's influence on China during that time was mainly in the social arena rather than limited in theatrical field.

I

A Doll's House, since its introduction into China, has triggered various interpretations and even debates from different cultural perspectives. The most prominent critics in contemporary Chinese literary circle, Guo Moruo, Lu Xun, and Hu Shi, have provided different interpretations of the play as well as the comments on female roles in a Chinese cultural setting.

From an idealistic social perspective, Guo Moruo[1] pointed out a revolutionary cultural interpretation of Nora's fate after her departure from home. During studying in Japan, where the western thoughts were transferred to Asia, Guo Moruo began to read Nordic literature, including Ibsen's plays. In 1921, he read many Ibsen's plays, among which *A Doll's House* left him a deep impression and affected his later play writings. The female images depicted in his plays were rebellious in character, ready to fight against personal injustice. Later, the image of Nora of Guo Moruo has wit-

nessed the change from the one devoted to individualistic rebellion to the one fighting for social revolution. Nora written in 1942 by Guo Moruo was a classical work of this new ideological shift which was featured by his radical and revolutionary cultural interpretation of Ibsen's plays.

Guo Moruo holds that the rebellious women like Nora must combine the reform of social regulations with individual liberation. He calls for the awakening of Chinese women to leave the hypocritical husbands to march on a road of liberation. This has not only showed Guo Moruo's identification with Ibsen, but also his concern over Chinese women from a Chinese cultural perspective. In "The Key to Nora", Guo states that Ibsen has not made clear of the problem of Nora's fate after departure from home.

The politicalizing of Ibsenism is not only a result of the textual analysis of *A Doll's House*, but also a natural choice under Chinese cultural setting. Also, it is closely related to a Chinese woman, Qiu Jin[2], who shares much similarity with Nora in Chinese history.

As a famous female democratic revolutionist, Qiu Jin despised feudal system since childhood. Before the age of twenty-five, she had a similar marriage of living in a doll's house. The corrupted authorities in Qing Dynasty as well as new democratic influences have strengthened her decision to leave home and devote herself to revolution, which has won much admiration of Guo Moruo. According to him, Nora in Ibsen's play is only spiritually liberated, while Qiu Jin took a more revolutionary action, which has best exemplified Guo's social and revolutionary idea. "As a pioneer, she has totally broken through the unreasonable boundary and created a new times for new Chinese women and morality."[3]

Not interested in traditional female make-ups, Qiu Jin liked to carry a dagger and preferred male suits and horse-riding. Guo Moruo once commented, "She knows the female revolution is only one part of the national and social revolutions and can only be realized after the latter ones are achieved, so she joined the Chinese Revolutionary League.[4] All of her efforts have proved her glorious spirit. She is the master of her emotion instead of the slave of it."[5] In 1958, in the prelude to *Historical Survey of Qiu Jin*, Guo Moruo reemphasized the significance of Qiu Jin's anti-feudal, democratic endeavors in a new historical setting and regarded it as the right choice for the future of Nora. In his eyes, women in different times should shoulder different duties. In the time of Chinese socialist construction, women enjoyed more advantageous rights, yet had to cope with many new problems. The heavy task of socialist construction required the improvement of the ability of women to make more contribution to the whole society. It is from keen realistic aspect that Guo Moruo reinterprets Nora's image and encourages Chinese women to improve themselves. The rebellious spirit of Ibsen has been successfully applied in a Chinese setting to highlight the female consciousness for social reform.

The interpretation of Guo Moruo is in accordance with the development trend of Chinese history and has been attached with important political significance. The cultural awareness of Guo Moruo is derived from his idealistic social-oriented consciousness which is characterized by the rebellious spirit of anti-feudalism, anti-hegemony, pursuit of freedom and liberation.

II

Among Chinese scholars in the early twentieth century in their efforts of literary revolution, Hu Shi[6] appeals for a practical literary view which intervenes social reality and is endowed with more social function. "Literature should be written for life and should be produced for saving human beings and the world" (*Complete Works* 369). According to Hu Shi, Ibsenism is characterized by its realistic focus on life.

According to Hu Shi, freedom is closely hand in hand with responsibility. He says, "In an autonomous society or republic country, anyone who is free to choose will be responsible for his choice" (*Complete Works* 615). Although the activities of *A Doll's House* and *The Lady from the Sea* are mainly within the family, they can also be applied to the society or country. In 1918, Hu Shi put forth the notion of Ibsenian individualism, which highlights the individual rights, yet ignores its social foundation, even set it as a confrontational force against society. Two years later, Hu Shi, after reconsideration, revised the notion and called for "non-individual new life". According to him, individualism should not be egocentric and must be put into social setting. Only when the individual devotes himself to the social cause can he make social reforms. The genuine individualism embodies the responsibility towards the society.

The key concern in Ibsen's plays are on human beings and the concern shown to the social problems and familiar affairs are to depict the existential state of human beings and reveal the psychological activities in order to review the nature of life and its significance. Accordingly, in terms of realism in Ibsen, it can be approached from two aspects: the former realistically mirrors the social reality, while the latter profoundly depicts the psychological world of the individual. Hu Shi's reception of Ibsen's realism mainly focused on the former perspective. He commented, "The literature of Ibsen and his view of life are realistic in essence" (*Complete Works* 485). He mainly approaches Ibsenism from a sociological perspective and aims at social criticism. Influenced by *A Doll's House*, he wrote *Marriage* and published it in *New Youth* in 1919, which was still considered as a pioneering play of modern Chinese drama. The heroine, Tian Yamei, the first Chinese Nora, has successfully escaped from the feudal boundary and run away with her beloved. Yet Hu Shi's literary understanding of Ibsenism is too realistically-confined that it fails to cover its value on the exploration of humanity. The biased reception with the overemphasized attention on the social function of literature makes Hu Shi's reception too practical and limited.

In his *Marriage*, although Tian Yumei departs the family as Nora has done, yet, he fails to convey the truthful and vivid activities of character's psychology. The play, which has been widely criticized as being too imitative of Ibsen's style and carries limited originality and creativity, originates from his abstract imagination and is too morally-oriented.

What Hu Shi concerns most is social reform which aims at the revolt against feudal restrictions of female roles in the family and society. In his reception, Ibsenism is simplified and endowed with Chinese features, which reduces the profundity of the play and makes the characters like Nora an ideological symbol, less attractive. The

simplification of the dichotomy between female and male conflicts neglects the multiple connotations of individuality and morality portrayed in Ibsen's play.

The individualism put forth by Hu Shi marked the beginning of Chinese liberalism. As remarked in one speech, "To fight for your personal freedom is to fight for national freedom! To fight for personal dignity is to fight for national dignity! Slaves can never build a country of freedom and equality!" (*Complete Works* 663), which constitutes Hu Shi's feedback to the new coming era.

III

Lu Xun's[7] reception of Ibsenism is a materialistic and practical one, negating the individual fighting in the spiritual sense. The emphasis originates from Lu Xun's individualistic concern which has become an important cultural symbol during the May Fourth Movement. As commented by Mao Dun, a famous Chinese literary figure in the early twentieth century, "Individualism has become the main goal of the new literary movement during the May Fourth Movement period. The literary criticisms and writings have been consciously or unconsciously aimed at this goal" (298). Yet, the individualism of Lu Xun includes both individualistic elements and collective consciousness, emphasizing sound and independent individual spirit and social responsibility as well. He pays attention to individual independent spiritual value and practical social base, which is the point where Lu Xun receives and interprets Ibsenism.

Long before the introduction of Ibsen in the *New Youth* in 1918 by Hu Shi, Lu Xun had mentioned Ibsen in "Cultural Perseverance" in 1908, highlighting his pursuit for truth and rejection of bourgeois mind (48). Yet, Lu Xun holds different idea. He is dubious towards the dramatic awakening and doubts whether it is durable and valuable. According to him, it will be hard to sustain any spiritual activities without the economic base.

It was long before The May Fourth Movement that Lu Xun began his introduction of and comment on Ibsen. From 1902 to 1909, Lu Xun travelled to Japan and began his seven-year search for his "individual revolution" which was featured by the reshaping of Chinese national character. In his efforts, Ibsen has played a prominent role in arousing the rebellious spirit of the Chinese people and experiencing cultural enlightenment. Before the May Fourth Movement, Lu Xun's comments on and introduction of Ibsen was not systematic and academic. What constituted an influential academic debate was his speech "What will Nora do after her Departure?" delivered at Beijing Female Normal University on December 26th, 1923. It has been widely acknowledged as a classical critical essay in interpreting *A Doll's House*, which reflected Lu Xun's deep concern over Chinese social problems. In Lu Xun's eyes, the fate of Nora after departure is open to interpretation. Ibsen has freed himself from providing any specific answer. Proceeding from the Chinese cultural setting then, Lu Xun provided his analysis of Chinese problem in analyzing Nora in his speech, "There are indeed only two ways for Nora to choose: either be degenerate or come back" ("What will Nora Do?" 159). According to Lu Xun, as far as the spiritual revolution is concerned, the departure of Nora marks a dramatic spiritual revolution. Compared with the urgent need for Chinese spiritual awakening, the heroic behavior of Nora will ef-

fectively break the fragile fantasy of the Chinese people at that time.

Yet, will the departure of Nora be effective in constructing female independence? According to Lu Xun, this is far from enough. The first important step for Nora to break away from her family is to control economic power after her awakening. In the play, except for her awakened consciousness, Nora owns nothing. It is only through economic independence that Nora can enjoy independent character and genuine freedom. According to Lu Xun, the economic power is the realistic base for Nora to gain individual independence.

IV

As has been mentioned, the interpretations of Chinese intellectuals of Ibsen were quite politically-oriented. The May Fourth period witnessed Ibsen only as a social reformer rather than his original identity as an artist, which, to a great extent, limits the Chinese interpretation of Ibsenism within a narrow scope and tends to simplify the artistically versatile connotation of Ibsenism to reinforce the political and cultural upheaval force which was to take place in China. In terms of esthetic exploration, there are much more to be unveiled. For example, in *A Doll's House*, several binary oppositions can be found besides the realistic criticism exclusively paid attention to. There are conflicts between law and love (Nora forges the signature out of love to save her husband, yet acts against the regulations of law); the confrontation between poetic imagination and reality (the illusionary world Nora lives in is soon broken by the harsh realistic crisis); the relation between action of making choice and consequent duty (Nora is afraid of telling her husband the truth. After forging the signature, she is willing to shoulder the responsibility all by herself instead of taking advantage of Dr. Rank's love and borrowing money from him); the interactive relation between public and private affairs (Nora fancies to be kept safe and happy in her private life, yet troubles from public affairs eventually intrude into her life and leave her no escape); the doubt of religion (in the play, Nora keeps suspicious of the role religion plays in life and wants to check its validity).... In a word, what has been revealed by Ibsen is far from a simple scene, rather it's a complex revelation of the comprehensive crisis the society is facing. Simplified politicalization will eventually deteriorate the esthetic value and creativity of Ibsen's plays.

Yet, this kind of misinterpretation has its positive significance. The realistic style and individualism practiced in Ibsenism has changed the poetic tradition of Chinese theatre and laid a solid foundation of Chinese theatrical realism, which has profoundly influenced the development of Chinese theatre in the twentieth century. The introduction of new element leads to a series of theatrical renovation, which covers play writing, performance, stage directing and so on. Influenced by the popularity of Ibsenism, lots of plays with strong realistic concern mushroomed, focusing on problems of female rights, marriage, love, morality, social corruption and so on, which, although limited in their literary value, marks an important step forward in the modernization of Chinese theatre during the twentieth century. It has widened the horizon limited in pure esthetic concern and endowed Chinese theatre with keen realistic concerns during the twentieth century.

Besides, the individuality highlighted in Ibsenism has effectively facilitated the individual emancipation during the May Fourth Movement, whose main contribution is the awakening of individuality. Traditionally, the Chinese individuality was dependent on the imperial hierarchy, social morality and parents. It was until the May Fourth Movement that it found its independence and self-value. Also, it is Ibsenism which provides the Chinese playwrights with the initiative and motivation to conduct theatrical innovation.

What is more important is in the main discourse shaped during the May Fourth period. The reflection on modernity portrayed in *A Doll's House* has been covered and replaced by the desire of Chinese intellectuals for modernity. *A Doll's House* has broken the illusion of a warm and kind bourgeoisie family and revealed a series of paradoxes of modernity, pondering over the questions of how to get rid of hypocrisy and how to manage the modern nuclear family. For most of the Chinese intellectuals who were still anxious of catching up with modernity, this reflection was a step too fast to catch. The desire to construct modernity has already been internalized in their literary and cultural design. That is the reason why mushroomed variations of interpretation to Nora and the plays which were not consistent with the cultural context at that time: getting rid of hypocrisy was changed into fighting against repression; running away from modern nuclear family was replaced by the betrayal of the feudal family; the loss between the old and new religious beliefs had been replaced by personal free and romantic belief; the liberation on the spiritual level had been shaped into the political revolution and reasonable design for the whole country. The misinterpretation due to specific historical context has constituted a peculiar Chinese cultural scene and has profoundly influenced the contemporary Chinese national ideology.

When the Chinese modern drama has just been shaped, romanticism prevailed with its esthetic appreciation of plays. The early Chinese play groups, Chun Liu Play Group and Jin Hua Play Group, mainly portrayed emotional setbacks and tragedies in life. Yet, the harsh reality during that time soon reminded them that romanticism did not work in easing the social upheavals and political crisis. After the May Fourth Movement, with the enlightenment of Ibsen's plays, romanticism in Chinese plays was conversed into realistic considerations. As pointed out by Hu Shi in his "Ibsenism", "The most serious error of human beings lies in his refusal to open his eyes and face the reality. . . . The merit of Ibsen is that he dares to speak honestly and record the corrupted facts in the society and reveal them to us. . . . The literature of Ibsen and his view of life are realistic" (37). Thus, the misinterpretation of Ibsenism, to a certain extent, marks the formation and maturation of modern Chinese theatrical value, which replaces the traditional idealized notion of reinforcing social morality through artistic performance with the new one with keen realistic awareness, the development of Chinese theatre coming to a new age.

【Notes】

1. Guo Moruo (1892 – 1978) is a famous Chinese scholar, poet and playwright. He is a pioneer of the New Poetry of China and noted as the literary leader after Lu Xun.
2. Qiu Jin (1875 – 1907) is a famous feminist in China who is strongly rebellious against feudalism

and fights for female rights.

3. See Guo Moruo's "The Key to Nora", *Xinhua Daily*, July 19th, 1942.

4. The Chinese Revolutionary League is the first bourgeois party led by Dr. Sun Yat-Sen to overthrow Qing Dynasty.

5. See Guo Moruo's "The Key to Nora", *Xinhua Daily*, July 19th, 1942.

6. Hu Shi (1891 – 1962) is a famous Chinese scholar, poet and philosopher. He is one of the leaders of the New Cultural Movement for his innovative literary ideas during the May Fourth Movement.

7. Lu Xun (1881 – 1936) is a famous Chinese literary critic, translator and founder of the New Literature Movement. With outstanding contribution in preserving Chinese cultural heritage and translating foreign literary works into Chinese, he was noted for his progressive ideas and rebellious attack against feudal system.

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Playbird or Featherbrain?

May-Brit Akerholt

Abstract Translation does not merely involve a linguistic interpretation but also a dramaturgical interrogation, including cultural and dramatic traditions in both the source language and the target language texts. "Mistranslation" does not simply mean choosing a "wrong" word. A word may change characterisation and interpretation. Henrik Ibsen coined the word "spillefugl" for Nora, with its ambiguous suggestions of "play", "gamble" and "perform". The word has often been translated as "featherbrain" and "spendthrift", or other derogatory expressions which change Torvald's attitude to Nora and the game they play together, and affect productions in English. This article discusses the implications of translation choices in *A Doll's House*, with particular reference to Australian productions.

Key words translation; misinterpretation; *A Doll's House*

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As Frode Helland claimed in his plenary address, there is no pure, uncontaminated original as such.[1] No, there is nothing "sacred" about Ibsen's original texts. However, it is of some concern that so many of the English translations which have almost become classics, and are used in teaching institutions and theatres, misrepresent or ignore some vital aspects of the original plays and thus disturb their dramatic intentions.

The Italian writer and translator Umberto Eco says he felt a "radical loss" of several expressions in a German translation of his novel *Baudolino*; however, he realised that if the translator had dared to use stronger expressions, the target culture readers may not have been convinced of the main character's use of language (*Mouse* 43). Eco's acceptance of the translator's choices shows a common translation dilemma. The language he wrote for his main character is created from the idiosyncrasies of his native tongue, a language his readers relate to, just as the translator tried to create a language for the character that his readers could relate to. However, if there is a "radical loss" in the German version, it means it has failed to recreate what was special, or unique, about the language of the original character. Thus a whole aspect of the characterisation has not been translated to the new language dress.

This complex question of idiosyncratic and characterising use of language becomes even more relevant in theatre translation where the dialogue is spoken by different characters, with different attitudes, different points of view, different styles of language. To refer to Eco again, "translation is not only connected with linguistic competence but with intertextual, psychological, and narrative competence" (*Experi-*

ences 13). He is touching upon one of my own convictions when it comes to translation: that it is crucial for a translator to be able to "read" or interpret the original plays' dramaturgy; that is, to know how to isolate how a playwright builds and manipulates a text and uses language as a characterising tool, structuring linguistic idiosyncrasies to build a theatrical language. At a translation conference in Norway,[2] Barbara Haviland discussed the problems of translating Solness' word "*sånn*" (*The Master Builder*) as an example of the way Ibsen builds characterisation. Having translated this play for a production in Sydney, I believe Solness' use of this word has an irony embedded in it; it is, in a sense, the character's way of mocking other people's view of him. But the point is, a translator must understand how each detail of the language functions linguistically and dramaturgically in order to create a new text that is a blueprint for performance as well as a dramatic narrative. Language and characterisation go hand in hand.

Dramaturgy is not about "explaining" meaning, but opening up for the complexities of a text, exploring its possibilities. It is about word choices and interpretation of how the words will function or be performed on stage, about the impetus for action, or lack of, which words contain, about the reasons a character says them and their effects on the character who receives them. Peter Brook suggests something similar in discussing his famous production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "... all the important work ... was based on my convincing the actors that there were two plays; one was what we call the secret play ... The other play ... has been discussed and worked over intellectually [and is] like dough that's been worked and kneaded, but the yeast was the sort of sensitivity that enables the actors to pick up the secret play—which runs parallel and through the apparent play—and to share their perception with the audience"(99).

In the final instance, it is the dough and the yeast that make up a play's dramaturgy. The Germans have a good expression for it: "sein und schein"—"be and seem". The text is the "sein" (it is, it exists), and the subtext, the "schein"—a complexity of thought behind, beyond, the actual words, lines, characters, story, theme; an otherness that adds dimension to the words. When "sein und schein" coexist, meaningful dramatic dialogue happens. And, as French writer Hélène Cixous argues, it is the director's role to "seek to bring onstage the conflicting meaning systems that are always lodged in a complex work";[3] to find and explore the yeast and the "schein". But unless playwrights, and their translators, create a complex dramatic language within which meaning is constructed through conflicting and juxtaposed signals, the work won't give rise to the imagination of the theatre artists who eventually will free it from the page. It is in the language that action happens. Every moment on stage is manipulated by the text.

I am in no doubt that Ibsen wrote his plays according to the dough and the yeast principle. This paper explores some of the ways he builds characterisation and action through language in the first scene of *A Doll's House*, looking at how the seeds for the last scene are planted from the very first scene.

Ibsen coined the word "spillefugl" for Nora, with its ambiguous suggestions of "play," "gamble" and "perform," and "spill" or "waste." My literal translation

"playbird" does lack the original's connotations of "waste," and to a degree "gamble".[4] The point is that the word is as ambiguous as Torvald's attitude to her. He is proud of his doll-wife, in a sense he even puts her on a pedestal for what he sees as her womanly qualities, or little female follies, at the same time as he reproaches her for them.

Just a few lines in the opening scene illustrate several interesting translation issues. The first translations are mine; I have kept the language vernacular, yet as close as possible to the original.[5]

> TORVALD: Has the playbird been out wasting money again?
> ...
> Nora! ... Is frivolity getting the upper hand again? (other possibilities: Is frivolity showing its head again? Is frivolity on the move again?)
> ...
> What are the birds called who always waste their money?

And Nora's answer to the last line:

> NORA: Yes, yes, playbirds—I know, I know. But let's do what I say, Torvald; that gives me time to decide what I need most. (*Belroir: Word for Word* 18 – 19)

The following are from different English translations from between 1961 and 2004:

> TORVALD: Has my little featherbrain been out wasting money again?
> ...
> The same little scatterbrain.
> ...
> What do they call little birds who are always making money fly?

> NORA: Yes, I know—ducks-and-drakes! But let's do what I said, Torvald, and then I'll have time to think of something that I really want. (*A Doll's House* 148 – 50)

* * *

> TORVALD: Has my little spendthrift been out squandering money again?
> ...
> Here we go again, you and your frivolous ideas!
> ...
> What do we call my pretty little pet when it runs away with all the money?

> NORAI know, I know, we call it a spendthrift. But please let's do what I said, Torvald. Then I'll have a bit of time to think about what I need most. (*Ibsen: Plays* 110 – 12)

* * *

TORVALD: Has the little spendthrift been out wasting money again?

...

Is that dizzy little head of yours spinning around again?

...

What do we call those little birds that are always spending their money?

NORA Spendthrifts—yes, I know, I know. But let's do what I say, Torvald; then I'll have time to think about what I really need. (*Ibsen's Selected Plays* 147 – 49)

* * *

TORVALD: Has the little spendthrift been out throwing money around again?

...

Are your scatterbrains off again?

...

What are those little birds called that always fly through their fortunes?

NORA Oh yes, spendthrifts; I know all that. But let's do as I say, Torvald; then I'll have time to decide what I really need most. (*Four Major Plays* 44 – 45)

There are some good lines here, and interesting bird imagery. However, like most English translations I have read, these, too, use a purely derogatory word for "spillefugl" or "playbird." The ambiguity is lost and the balance of the characters' "game" disturbed. I also find it difficult to believe that Nora would accept these words as Torvald's pet names for her.

Another point here is the way the translations ignore that Torvald depersonalises Nora - the two which do use "the" are not doing it consistently. Throughout the first scene, he distances himself from her—and perhaps also from himself, from his own feelings? - by using impersonal constructions. To say "the playbird" instead of "my playbird" is as quaint, or unusual, in Norwegian as it is in English. I see no reason, linguistic or dramatic, for any translation to substitute "the" with "my", even in a production set in contemporary times.

A third point of note is the particular language Ibsen has chosen for Nora in her answer to her husband: "But let's do as I say, Torvald. That gives me time to decide what I need most." Her choice of the words "decide" and "need" is significant. These words illustrate how Ibsen builds her character, suggesting that she is capable of making decisions, and that her pre-occupations with money comes from need, not dizzy waste; "think" and "want" cannot do that. Of course, an audience does not sit in the theatre and consciously interpret the line in this way. But an actor will use these words as part of an accumulating effect of a certain strength which keeps under-

mining the doll-image. The dialogue gives "stage directions" to the theatre artists who interpret the work for the stage; in this sense, "need" and "decide" are part of the play's "yeast". Throughout the first scene, tiny suggestions of another Nora keep adding to the image she presents to the audience; a Nora who is capable of telling Torvald to "do what I say." Her language belies the frivolous image Torvald has of her and subtly undermines the doll-wife face she presents to the world.

Thus the watering down of Nora's suggestive language in so many translations negates Ibsen's dramatic intentions. Fjelde uses "need" and "decide," and then he adds a "really", no doubt to emphasise her plea, with the result, I believe, that he dilutes the line instead. This tendency to use more words than the original is something that happens again and again in English versions, and has nothing to do with differences of language. To add little unnecessary words such as "really", "little," "very," merely takes away from Ibsen's concise yet inclusive stage-language. [6]

It is fine for translations to be imaginative and inventive, and to create specific dramatic languages for the characters in the new version, but not if they ignore the idiosyncrasies of the original, or the aspects of characterisation which are at the core of the play's action. The translation examples discussed here demonstrate a certain distortion of the original text; a failure to read the play dramaturgically. Just as Nora's dramatic language often has a subtext hinting at an underlying strength, or resolve, Torvald's particular use of language suggests a need to allegorise their life together. The idyll they both believe is built on a strong foundation, is constantly undermined by the dramatic language Ibsen gives his characters. I write this knowing the glass-house I sit in.

Edvard Beyer, in his "Postscript to *A Doll's House*," discusses how Ibsen's dialogue is close to everyday speech, at the same time as it is tightly organised and dramatically effective: "There is hardly a single line that does not have a demonstrable dramatic function.... And all of a sudden single everyday words take on a double meaning or foreboding undertones." [7] Yes, "close to everyday speech," yet a "tightly organised" form of speech. Perhaps the reason many translators make Ibsen's lines more colloquial than they are is because they think of Ibsen as a "naturalistic" writer, even as a "prose writer" as John Northam suggests (82).

But more interestingly, Northam also claims that in drama, translation choices are often made in reference to standard usage in the world outside theatre (82). That may well be one of the main reasons for deficient Ibsen translations; they are often written by people who are not intimately familiar with the theatre, who may fail to understand the plays' dramaturgy, and the way in which Ibsen's dialogue is written in terms of performance. They may fail to realise how actors use the language, how subtext works, how a line gives rise to a movement, how it contains stage directions for the performers. Ibsen knew.

Most of my Ibsen translations have been published after they have been produced. I have been lucky enough to continue to work on most of them in the rehearsal room, both as translator and production dramaturg. I have made the same discovery every time: the team's interpretation of characters and action also influences language choices and becomes part of the fine-honing of the final text.

【Notes】

1. Frode Helland said this in his plenary address "Empire and Culture in Ibsen: Some Notes on the Dangers and Ambiguities of Interculturalism" in the International Conference on Ibsen Between Cultures held in Fudan University in June 2009.
2. International Translation Conference organised by NORLA and the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, May 24 – 26, 2009, Ringerike, Norway.
3. Quoted by Morag Shiach in her book *Hélène Cixous: A Politics of Writing* (London: Routledge, 1991)69 – 70.
4. This translation was initially produced by Company B Belvoir, Sydney, 1989. The cast of this production had reservations about 'playbird' initially, but accepted it after my explanation why I had chosen it, and soon they came to love it. And I am aware he calls her 'Ødeland'—squanderer, wastrel - once.
5. See Akerholt, "The Text, the Whole Text and Nothing but the Text in Translation," *About Performance: Translation and Performance*, Centre for Performance Studies, University of Sydney (1995):1 – 13.
6. On the other hand, little Norwegian words such as "jo", "javel", "sånn" and others which add tone and meaning can be a real headache to a translator, but that is another paper.
7. Beyer, Edvard, "Postscript to *A Doll's House*", *Henrik Ibsen, Collected Works*, vol. 4(Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 16th ed., 1978)415. The quotation is translated by me.

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A Doll's House and *Kramer vs. Kramer*: Objections to Family Law

Bjarne Markussen

Abstract Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) and Robert Bentons film *Kramer vs. Kramer* (1979) are two of the most significant family dramas in western culture. Not only because they deal with fundamental family relations, but because they challenge the legal boundaries for these relations. It could be argued that both dramas have had an impact on western family law. The article will compare *A Doll's House* and *Kramer vs. Kramer* with regards to both existential and legal themes. Both Nora and Ted make existential choices. She chooses freedom before her duties as a mother and wife. He gives up his personal freedom to be with his son. The ties between them are strong, and being a "weekend daddy" is no longer an option. He chooses love and parental duties before freedom, and his position is therefore more like Mrs Linde's, who needs "someone and something to work for." Legally speaking, *A Doll's House* represents a critic of several basic assumptions in nineteenth-century family law which subordinated the wife to the husband. *Kramer vs. Kramer*, on the other hand, represents a critique of twentieth-century child custody court which subordinated fathers to mothers as child carers. The common target for these critical efforts is the enlightenment theory of motherhood.

Key words *A Doll's House*; *Kramer vs. Kramer*; family Law; law and literature

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Law has always been an important literary theme, from the Greek drama, through Shakespeare and Kafka, and finally in the modern crime novel. Since the twentieth century, film and television have also revealed a great fascination of crime, investigation and court dramas. Ibsen is a part of this tradition. *A Doll's House* is not only about freedom and emancipation of women, it is also about crime and legal thinking, the kind of thinking that put women in a subordinated position in nineteenth-century society. In his drama, Ibsen exposes the basic assumptions for the nineteenth-century family law, and for this purpose Helmer plays an important role. He carries with him an ideological structure, and every time he opens his mouth, small pieces become exposed, connecting religious beliefs, moral standards, gender assumptions and aesthetic ideals about law. As it turns out, Nora is not too impressed with the laws.

Many have asked the question: Where did Nora go? My question is: What did

Helmer do after Nora left? One hundred years later, in 1979, Robert Benton gave an interesting answer in his film *Kramer vs. Kramer*, starring Meryl Streep and Dustin Hoffman. The film starts where Ibsen's play ends, a wife leaving her husband and child. In her absence a close relationship builds between Ted Kramer and his son Billy. Ted is a modern Helmer, except more sensitive, flexible and intelligent. When he is left alone with Billy, he transforms himself into a devoted father and a competent care person for his son. In the end, he has to fight in court to keep it that way. Helmer also had a genuine interest in how children should be raised.

In my book *Rettshistorier* [*Tales of Law*],[1] I have argued that *A Doll's House* and *Kramer vs. Kramer* are two of the most significant family dramas in western culture. Not only because they deal with fundamental family relations (husband-wife, parents-children), but also because they challenge the legal boundaries for these relations. In fact, it seems like both dramas have had an impact on western family law. In the struggle to pass the 1888 Marriage Act [*Lov om Formuesforholdet mellem Ægtefæller*], Norwegian left wing politicians adopted both the dollhouse metaphor and Noras rhetoric regarding equality between the sexes. A century later, lawyers quoted *Kramer vs. Kramer* in legal disputes regarding child custody. According to the professor of law, Andrew Schepard, the film may well have had a significant influence on the changes in the child custody court the latter years.[2] It can therefore be said that both dramas have had an impact on the western legal culture: The way we think about right and wrong, legal and illegal, and law and gender. In this article I will compare the two dramas with regards to both existential and legal themes.

Complementary Dramas

A Doll's House and *Kramer vs. Kramer* are complementary dramas. The first focuses on the female character, the latter on the male. On the existential level, both Nora and Ted make important choices. She chooses what she calls "[m]y duty to myself" before her duty to be with her husband and children (Ibsen 105). She seeks the kind of basic personal freedom that is necessary for an independent human being. Ted has this basic freedom, even though he is torn between his employer and his son. But what is interesting, is that when Joanna returns and wants sole custody, Ted refuses. He chooses to be with his son, even if his personal and social freedom is limited. Being a "weekend daddy" is no longer an option. Ted chooses parental love and duties before freedom, and his position is therefore more like Mrs Linde's in *A Doll's House*, Nora's old friend who needs "someone and something to work for" (Ibsen 84).

On the legal level, *A Doll's House* represents a critique of several basic assumptions in nineteenth-century family law which subordinated the wife to the husband. *Kramer vs. Kramer*, on the other hand, represents a critique of the twentieth century child custody court which subordinated fathers to mothers as child carers. The common target for these critical efforts is the Enlightenment theory of motherhood, according to which the mother *in virtue of her sex* is a better provider of care for her children than the father. "The earliest education is most important and it undoubtedly is woman's work", Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes in his famous book *Émile* from 1762. "If the author of nature had meant to assign it to men he would have given them milk

to feed the child" (Roussau 5, n. 1).

In *Kramer vs. Kramer*, Nora's project of emancipation is accepted and inscribed in the story of Joanna's struggle to become a whole human being and to gain economic independence. Unlike Helmer, Ted understands that Joanna had to leave her home, her husband and child, and that their marriage did not give her enough room to fulfil herself. But what he will not accept is the opinion that women are better parents than men. In the child custody trial at the end of the film, Ted argues that a father can take as good care of his child as a mother can. In relation to Ibsen, the play is now turned upside-down. The male protagonist struggles for equality between the sexes, while the emancipated woman uses the old ideology of motherhood as a discursive resource.

A Doll's House and the Norwegian Marriage Act

Let us take a closer look at the dollhouse metaphor and the Norwegian Marriage Act. In Ibsen's play, Nora has committed a crime in order to save her husband's life. She has forged her father's signature on an IOU (written acknowledgement of debt) to raise money so that the family could go abroad and Helmer could get the recreation his health depended on. When the play starts, he doesn't know about this, and he is looking forward to becoming the new manager of a bank. The trouble starts when he decides to fire Krogstad, the very person Nora borrowed the money from. Krogstad starts to blackmail her to get his position back, and the plot tightens. In the final argument between Nora and Helmer, she realizes that he is not the man she thought he was, and that their life together has been inauthentic. She is supposed to be his little skylark, not an independent human being. She has not been happy, she says, just merry:

> But our home's never been anything but a doll's house. I've been your doll-wife, just as I was Papa's doll-child at home. And the children have been my dolls in their turn. I thought it fun when you played with me, just as they thought it was fun when I played with them. That's been our marriage, Torvald. (Ibsen 103)

The dollhouse is a metaphor for the bourgeois marriage. In the Marriage Act at the time, the wife had no legal capacity in financial matters. The husband was his wife's guardian; she was a ward. That is why Nora had to forge her father's signature in the first place. She was not allowed to borrow money in a regular way. As a ward, she is inferior to her husband, and the roles of the skylark and the doll-wife are well fitted for such a position.

Most interpretations focus on Nora's emancipation. But as I said, the play is also an investigation and exposure of the ideological conditions for the 19th century family law. Helmer carries with him an ideological structure, in which we find religious notions about husband and wife, a moral system where respect for the law is essential, romantic gender ideals, and a gender based anthropology, that says gender pervades the person. "Nora, Nora, you're a typical woman," Helmer replies when she says

she doesn't care about the creditors (Ibsen 11). Theses ideals also correspond with a certain kind of aesthetics that Helmer cultivates, a late romantic aesthetics called *biedermeier*. Helmer tries to make Nora into his little piece of bidermeier art, but in her tarantella dance at the end of the second act she breaks the rules, and drives Helmer out of his mind: "this is sheer madness," he says (Ibsen 78). It is this whole ideological structure that Nora turns her back to in the final scene, when she says that her duty to herself is just as sacred as her duties to her husband and children. "First and foremost you're a wife and mother", Helmer reminds her. But Nora no longer believes him:

> I believe that first and foremost I'm a human being, just as you are, – or at least that I must try and become one. I know that most people will say you're right, Torvald, and that it says something like that in the books. But I can't go on accepting what most people say and what is says in books. I have to think things out for myself so that I'll understand them. (Ibsen 105)

Nora doesn't argue against the Marriage Act itself. She only questions the foundation for it. And she creates a powerful metaphor to describe her life under the law.

In the same year the play was released(1879), a process has already underway to introduce a new law regarding property of spouses. This process started in 1875 and was not finished before 1888, and the reason why it took so long was that the left wing and the right wing could not agree. The left wing struggled for equal rights, while the right wing wanted the husband to administer the marriage property, unless a marriage agreement was made. In the end, a moderate, left-wing bill was passed. Married women gained the same legal capacity as unmarried women, with some exceptions. This law was in fact written by Ibsen's literary fans. And we can see from the negotiations in the Parliament that a new kind of rhetoric gained ground, a rhetoric in the spirit of *A Doll's House*.

A modern society cannot live with the image of the married woman as a doll. When a metaphor like that is powerfully presented, society can only react in two ways. It can deny it, and challenge it with other, idealized images.[3] Or society can accept and reproduce the image, and finally change the law. This was the strategy of the left wing. Here are some examples from the process:

> **1880**: Gina Krogh, a prominent person in the women's movement, reviews *A Doll's House* in *Aftenbladet*. She internalizes and reproduces Ibsen's metaphor, encouraging women to face "the miserable doll-life" ["det elendige Dukkeliv"] many of them were living (Krogh 1). She also thanks Ibsen for the strict and stern judgement he had made. In fact, she pictures the author as a judge.

> **1880**: In his book *Kvindens Myndighed og formueretlige Stilling i Ægteskabet* [On woman's legal capacity and financial situation in marriage], Hagbard Emanuel Berner writes about the injustice in "the many 'Doll's Houses'" ["de mange 'Dukkehjem'"] in Norwegian society (Berner 7). The

book is about the Marriage Act.

1882: In the Parliament the struggle continues. Two contradictory bills (right wing vs. left wing) regarding property of spouses are given.

1884: Ibsen, Bjørnson, Kielland and Lie write a letter to the Parliament, arguing for equal rights in marriage. The letter is sent on by H. E. Berner, who later became one of the architects behind the new law.

1884: The letter is quoted in a document where the left wing stops a right wing bill (Indst. O. Nr. 80).

1885: *A Doll's House* is criticised by the priest M. J. Færden in his book Kvindespørgsmaalet [On the question of women's emancipation]. According to Færden, Nora's travelling bag will replace the wedding ring as a symbol of the woman's position in marriage.

1888: A moderate left wing bill regarding property of spouses is introduced by H. E. Berner and others. It says that married women shall have the same legal capacity as unmarried women, with some exceptions.

1888: In the Parliament debate, the left wing stresses the female perspective, criticises "the male view" ["Mandfolkbetragtningen"] and the lack of interest for women's social position in Norwegian literature (!). There are no explicit quotations from *A Doll's House* in the debate, but some of the statements echo both the play and the letter. For example, the left wing politician Viggo Ullman opposes the argument that the husband is the natural representative for the spouses. He says: "For it is crystal clear, that in the marriage both husband and wife should be equal representatives; and the only solid and reasonable thing is that they are given equal status, and that both represents the marriage and what follows from it" (*Storthings Forhandlinger I Aaret 1888* 140)[4].

Statements like this can be read as political responses to literature, responses to Nora's final argument and her vision about marriage as something more than just a life together.

Kramer vs. Kramer and the Sole Custody Adversary System Paradigm

Kramer vs. Kramer does not offer a powerful metaphor. Instead, the film itself became a metaphor —for a failing child custody court system. That is why the film has become a point of reference in American family law.

The film starts with Joanna Kramer (Meryl Streep) leaving her home to become rehabilitated, after five years as a mother and wife in a traditional family. Her husband and careerist Ted (Dustin Hoffman) is left to care for their son Billy. Father and son develop a close relationship, and build a new life together. A year and a half

later, Joanna returns, now as a successful designer of sports wear, wanting her son back. Ted denies, but the court decides in Joanna's favour. Judge Atkins "went for motherhood straight down the line", we are told.[5] But when Joanna comes to the take Billy with her, she realizes that he already is at home.

Aesthetically, *Kramer vs. Kramer* is a good example of what I use to call "the plot of the single father", a plot developed in the 1860's with George Eliot's novel *Silas Marner* and Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*. In the plot of the single father, the mother is manoeuvred out of the story, permanently or for a limited time, to create space for the development of a close father-child relationship. (Not necessarily the biological father.) In this process, the father figure goes through a metamorphosis. He becomes a primary care person for the child, and his values and priorities change. This is exactly what happens to Ted in *Kramer vs. Kramer*. He becomes a great father, he loves his son, and he also realizes that he has not been the kind of husband he should have been. He accepts Joanna's interpretation of their marriage. But he does not accept the idea that motherhood is superior to fatherhood.

In the film, the trial is a play-within-the-play, and it serves different goals. At one level, the courtroom is a battlefield where custody and gender roles are at stake. At another level, the legal theatre itself is questioned. Both lawyers play rough. They construct narratives and concepts of the enemy that neither Ted nor Joanna can answer for. They have lost control over they own conflict. "Did you have to be so hard on her?", Ted asks his lawyer. "Do you want the child or don't you?", he replies.

But the courtroom is also a room for reflection and self-awareness. Ted and Joanna have to listen to each other, and when they meet again at the end of the film, they have a different way of looking at each other. Benton also uses the trial as a narrative device. Here stories are told that the film doesn't show: the story of the marriage and the story of Joanna's new life.

In the legal argumentation, two principles govern: the principle of "the best interests of the child" and "the tender years doctrine", that says that a child should follow the mother, at lest when it is young. Ted's rhetorical strategy is to disconnect the tender years doctrine from the principle of the child's best interests. Good parenthood is gender neutral, he argues. Joanna's chooses the opposite strategy; she tries to strengthen the connection between the doctrine and the best interesting principle. She speaks about "my child", not "our child". When she says "I'm his mother", she is talking about something other than a genetically relation. It is an ideological statement. Ted can never parry it with the corresponding "I'm his father". Ted's testimony goes like this:

> You know when you were talking before ... I mean my wife ... my ex-wife ... when she was talking before about how unhappy she was during our marriage, I ... I guess most of what she said was probably true. There's a lot of things I didn't understand, there's a lot of things I would do different if I could. Just like I think there's a lot of things you wish you could change. But we can't. Some things, once they're done, can't be undone. My ... my wife ... my ex-wife says that she loves Billy, and I believe she does. But I don't think that is

the issue here. If I understand it correctly, what means the most here is what's best for our son, what's best for Billy.

My wife used to always say to me: "Why can't a woman have the same ambitions as a man?" I think you're right. And maybe I've learned that much. But by the same token, I'd like to know what law is it that says that a woman is a better *parent* simply by virtue of her sex?

You know ... a lot of time ... think about what makes someone a good parent. You know, it has to do with constancy, it has to do with patience, it has to do with listening to him, it has to do with *pretending* to listen to him when you can't even listen no more. It has to do with love, like ... like she was saying. And I don't know where it is written that a woman has a corner on that market, that a man has any less of those emotions than a woman does.

Billy has a home with me. I've made it the best that I could. It's not perfect. I'm not a perfect parent. Sometimes I don't have enough patience, and I forget that he is just a little kid. But I'm there. I get up in the morning, and then we eat breakfast, and he talks to me, and then we go to school, and at night we have dinner together, and we talk then, and I read to him, and ... and we built a life together. And we love each other.

If you destroy that, it may be irreparable. Joanna, don't do that, please. Don't do it twice to him.

At the end of the film, Joanna realizes that Ted is capable of taking care of her little boy, and transfers the custody to him. It seems like we get a happy ending. But I don't think it is quite that easy. Sole custody is not necessarily the best solution. *Kramer vs. Kramer* is more than an attack on the tender years doctrine and its ideological foundation, the notion of motherhood that arose in the Age of Enlightenment. It is also an attack on a certain legal paradigm for solving conflicts. Andrew Schepard has called it "the sole custody / adversary system paradigm". Within this, the parents meet as opponents, and the dispute is solved by awarding one parent sole custody and the other visitation rights. Since 1979, the paradigm has been challenged. There have been changes, and according to Andrew Schepard, *Kramer vs. Kramer* is partly responsible for this. In his book *Children, Courts, and Custody*, he writes:

> Because it is so well known and respected, *Kramer vs. Kramer* is a useful place to begin in order to understand the rapid changes in the child custody court from the time of the film's release until today. Indeed, the movie may well have had a significant influence on those changes, since it popularized and promoted the goals of gender equality in custody determinations and the notion that parents should forgo legal advantage, put aside their anger, and reach their own agreements in their child's best interests. (8)

If the Norwegian law regarding property of spouses from 1888 partly was a response to literature, the changes in American child custody court can partly be seen as a response to film. From this we learn that literature and film have played an important

role in the western legal culture. But does *A Doll's House* and *Kramer vs. Kramer* still have any actuality left?

As long as the Enlightenment theory of motherhood still inflates our thinking, our social practices and our laws about family life, these dramas will maintain their critical power. Women want an equal share of the duties and pleasures of child care, which is founded in biology, so that they can combine work with family life. While men want to spend more time with their children, no matter whether the are living with the children's mother or not. And it is exactly these two groups that lead the gender equality movement in Norway today.

【Notes】

1. Bjarne Markussen, *Rettshistorier. Foreldre og barn i litteratur, film og lovgivning* (Oslo: UniPub, 2008).
2. Andrew Schepard, *Children, Courts, and Custody. Interdisciplinary Models for Divorcing Families* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004) 8.
3. In an article in *Luthersk Ugeskrift*, the priest M. J. Færden called the wife "the priestess of the hearth and altar of home." ["*Prestinde ved Husets Arne og Alter*"] (Færden 32 – 33).
4. For further documentation, see Markussen 35 – 46.
5. All quotations from the film are based on my transcriptions.

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Meeting Points of Ibsen and Rabindranath

Kazal Krishna Banerjee

Abstract One point sometimes needs to be made during Ibsen-discussion done on behalf of Bangladesh, about how the struggle for national independence here started out of a historic language movement that took place in 1952. One major related truth is that from "the first, Ibsen was associated with cultural independence, particularly as a result of his appointment as resident dramatist and later director at the Norske Teater" (Innes 7). Henrik Ibsen's role is thus clearly comparable to that of Rabindranath and other literary greats of the nineteenth and twentieth-century Bengal; for, by "choosing to write his poems and plays in Norwegian" also, Ibsen "was making a political statement" (Innes 8). In this article, I compare historical details surrounding these two paralles as well as the cultural and political roles that both Ibsen and Rabindranath played. My main focus will be on parallels and correspondences between Rabindranath and Henrik Ibsen, their joint relevance and its implication for some debates in theory.

Key words Henrik Ibsen; Rabindranath Tagore; meeting points

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First, I briefly recount some of the national and social concerns of both Henrik Ibsen and Rabindranath in order to show how their similarities provible a point of departure for discussions about modernity and modernism.

1

As is well-known, at one stage of his life, Ibsen gave up the plan to become a doctor and turned to literature. At twenty, he wrote *Catiline*, even in case of which Ibsen's true concern has been said to be Norway, and not Rome, "It was Norway in its peaceful slumber of reclusion from the 'big world' that Ibsen wished to arouse" (Clurman 28). In 1850, another play, the one-act *The Warrior's Barrows*, was staged at Christiania for three performances. Harold Clurman writes as follows, "Shortly after this debut he engaged in semi-political journalism and wrote theatre criticism. Through his verse and other miscellaneous writings he began to attract a little attention as a nationalist poet" (Clurman 14). And it was at this time that Ibsen paired with Ole Bull, the renowned violinist, in another nationalistic venture. Bull's efforts to plead with the Storting (the Norwegian parliament) to support the Norwegian theatre he had set up in Bergen had failed. But nationalistically this theatre had more meaning than the one in Christiana; for, there the language was still Danish. To help one get more light about this situation, I can place what is available from the translator of Haldvan Koht's *Life of Ibsen*:

> Although Denmark and Norway had a common literary language, pronunciation of this language differed widely in the two countries. Danish, with its extensive changes from the old Scandinavian, could at times be difficult for the Norwegians to understand. Danish actors using Danish pronunciation were traditionally preferred on the stage until well after the middle of the nineteenth century. In Ibsen's generation a change occurred; thanks to the agitation of Bjornson and others, cultivated Norwegian pronunciation was introduced on the stage to replace the characteristically Danish sounds. The difference was comparable in degree to that between an extreme Oxford pronunciation and a general American pronunciation. (Clurman 14)

Bull and Ibsen met, talked and felt that they could create a "Norwegian theatre" together. They started on a heated campaign. In 1851, they arranged a musical evening to raise money—"Ibsen contributed a prologue in verse, read by an actress, and Ole Bull composed a song with music sung by a choral ensemble." What one cannot but mark is that Ibsen's playwright's career was thus conspicuously shaped by the later part of this campaign. For, as Harold Clurman informs us, "Shortly after, Ibsen signed a contract to assist the theatre as an author." And, "The theatre's directorate decided to grant him two hundred dollars to go to Copenhagen to study stage technique. He could then qualify as a stage manager and director, under a five-year agreement at three hundred dollars a year" (Clurman 15). Clurman who claims to have "seen and liked" some of Ibsen's "Bergen designs for settings and costumes," informs us also that "As the house author, he was commissioned to dramatize "the life of the nation." (the assignment was very much in the vein of our federal project of the 1930s when artists were instructed to "paint the national scene) Thus, Ibsen's playwright's career and his nationalistic objectives developed in the same vein and track.

The Bergen Theatre granted Ibsen release when he was offered the post of "artistic director" at the Christiana Theatre. He began work, as usual at such times, by announcing an "ambitious program." Regarding future activities of Christiana Theatre, Ibsen, according to Haldvan Koht's paraphrasing,

> the inner life of drama, not just its outward action, should reflect the spirit of the nation—an idea in keeping with the constantly reiterated plea that a work of art should do no more than simply strive to imitate nature or life. Art must search out spiritual truths (in Ibsen's words), "that higher symbolic representation of life that would clarify the questioning thoughts of people." (Clurman 16 – 17)

It was for the Christiana Theatre that Ibsen's next play, *The Vikings at Helgeland*, was written in 1858. But when its production was postponed by its trustees, Ibsen came out with "a sharp attack" on them in a "national liberal newspaper," stating that the theatre "was unable to support, encourage or in general bother itself about

Norwegian dramatic literature." A representative of the theatre brushed this aside, calling Ibsen "a major nonentity."

What else may impress any one of us is how, after the closure of Christiana Theatre because of financial loss, Ibsen, as additional preparation for coming up as a "national Norwegian dramatist," applied "for a grant to collect country legends, ballads, folk tales; above all to make contact with people along the way." Harold Clurman comments as follows: "The trip proved of inestimable value" (Clurman 19). We can, in this connection, mention also what, while engaged in shaping *Brand*, Ibsen wrote to his publisher, "I find it my god-given talent to arouse my countrymen from their lethargy and make them understand what direction the great issues of life are taking." His then was like a sense of mission "to awaken the nation and to lead it to think great thoughts." It was at that time that Ibsen also said, "Every one of us must strive to improve the state of the world." We are told also that at that time Ibsen's "attitude toward the theatre was very much as Schiller's had been when in 1783 he said of Germany, 'Had we a national theatre, we could become a nation'" (Clurman 22).

It is thus that we find Ibsen to have emerged as a brilliant playwright particularly as a product of the nationalistic churning that took place at that time. Christopher Innes, coming to appreciate *Hedda Gabler*, a quite late play in Ibsen's career, offers to do so only "against the political, social and literary background of the period." Innes' categorical claim is that, "Ibsen's development as a playwright can only be understood in terms of the cultural battle for Norwegian independence..." Innes elaborately explains why things came to a particular pass where the question of Norwegian theatre or culture got entangled with that of the Norwegian nation,

> Until 1814 Norway had been ruled by Denmark. It was then transferred to Sweden, in a union that again subordinated Norwegians to a foreign king, though they gained a limited local autonomy. Despite the political changes, during the first half of the century Norwegian art and literature remained almost exclusively Danish, while the Norwegian language itself was largely restricted to the peasants. But, in the year of Ibsen's birth, 1828, the historian Rudolf Kayser had initiated a new Norwegian history" by giving a series of lectures maintaining that linguistic evidence showed that Norway had been populated by "Nordic" tribes from the north, while the Danes and Swedes were originally "Goths" having come from the south. This played a crucial part in the struggle not only for a Norwegian culture but for a Norwegian nation. (Innes 5)

Innes adds much more information to what Jon Nygaard tells us about Ibsen's involvement "in the early workers movement"—as to how in 1850 "moved by the political passions that had swept Europe, Ibsen helped to establish a short-lived highly political newspaper, *Andrimmer*, which called for the dethroning of the Swedish King and the founding of a socialistic republic in Norway." Later on, after Ibsen's "narrow escape the previous year when his *Andrimmer* co-founders ... were arrested and sentenced to long prison terms," he rejected "practical political involvement", and "by

joining the Norske Teatre in 1852,... placed himself at the forefront of the cultural struggle." What this "cultural struggle" meant becomes clear from some "integral elements in Ibsen's early plays: the recording of folk-lore and the historical glorification of the Vikings (which became the subject of his early heroic tragedies), and the development of the Norwegian language." Innes writes, "From the first, Ibsen was associated with cultural independence, particularly as a result of his appointments as resident dramatist and later director at the Norske Teater. In choosing to write his poems and plays in Norwegian, Ibsen was making a political statement" (Innes 7-8). What thus becomes clear is that giving up political activism for Ibsen did not at all mean ceasing to be political. His contribution to Norwegian nationalism was no less valuable for its belonging to the area of culture.

2

As for the part of Rabindranath Tagore coming from both Bangladesh and India, we can start by mentioning how, because of the stirring spirit of nationalism and patriotism therein, two Tagore-songs are now the national anthems of Bangladesh and India. This is perhaps a unique case in the whole world. People of Bangladesh and India were so inspired by Rabindranath's works that two of his songs were chosen to be the national anthems of both of the countries.

There is endless other information to be placed in support of Rabindranath's upholding the causes of his colonial country, India. We are told that he "had expressed his patriotism as far back as 1877 when he read his poem attacking the Delhi Durbar. His letters from London in 1878-80 extended his range. During the 1880s and especially in the 1890s he gave vent to some sharp criticisms of the British—his comments on the opium traffic with China and the Sedition Act, for example" (Dutta 141). With a mysterious similarity to the pattern of Ibsen's life or activities, Rabindranath decides to revive Bankim Chatterjee's journal, *Bangadarshan* (Mirror of Bengal) that had been the literary sensation of his teens. He edited it from 1901 for five years." There is another detail interesting so far as the venue of this Ibsen Conference is concerned. In *Bangadarshan* that Rabindranath edited, he "enthusiastically reviewed *Letters from John Chinaman*, a book anonymously published in Britain in 1901 purporting to be letters from a Chinese government official criticizing the British in China. (In fact, the author was Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson.) Rabindranath then also "replied to Lord Curzon's suggestion in a speech in 1902 that the East was prone to exaggeration or extravagance'." "More significantly he cited the *Arabian Nights* as an example of eastern exaggeration about the East, and Kipling's just-published novel Kim as an instance of western exaggeration" (Dutta 142).

In an essay titled, "Taking a Dip" written in 1984, at the age of only 23, Rabindranath placed his deep understanding of how true love, even for one's country, was indivisible, or how it had to be love for the whole mankind. Rabindranath wrote, "The world is present in every *katha* or *bigha* of land. So there has to be universalism if one goes for truly loving even one katha of land of this world" (Roy 20). Quite early in his life, Rabindranath proved his clear realization also as to how senses of self-interest might turn nationalism or patriotism into a destructive phenomenon, and

how thus these also had dialectically opposite potential. In Bangadarshan of 1901, Rabindranath wrote, "Conflict is the nature of interest. In the domain of European civilization, that conflict is increasingly flaring up. Signs are there that there will be push and pull and grabbing over parts of the world" (Roy 20). Rabindranath rather pointed at Europe as example of how self-interest pollutes patriotism:

> Attachment to people's countries in Europe is what is impeding the desire of attaining humanism, attaining success, and European civilization is turning into a big horror for most of the world. Europe is seeking for soil only, for gold, domination—doing that in such a greedy manner, horrendous manner that human's eternal craving for truth, light and immortality is evaporating from before Europe and making her violent. It is the path towards annihilation; it is not the path towards, it is annihilation. This example of Europe before us, very near us, is working as an everyday illusion. (Roy 20)

Rabindranath proved the very sharp eye necessary for marking that nationalism was a historical development, and particularly that it had its basis in people's growing reliance on science coming up to create their own competence. It was thus that they could give up senses of religious identity and opt for statehood on the basis of senses of national identity. He categorically connected it with the point of time since when "their minds were made free from fear through discussion of science." Referring to independence, Rabindranath claimed that "establishment of self-rule is not one outside happening, it depends on the confidence on the intellectual capacity of one's own on which one's own competence principally bases itself" (Roy 21).

Rabindranath thus proved himself very perceptive and quite ahead of his time by marking both the good and bad of nationalism, and by marking also how Europe had turned imperialistic because of the narrowness coming from capitalistic greed there. Though he was for a long time in sort of an obsessive grip of liberal ideas of appreciation of the British rule in India and such other places, finally he could look straight into the true face of British imperialism. He then castigated it, and advocated for sort of one internationalism for the welfare of the whole of our world and mankind; he even claimed this to be the lesson coming from the sadhaks (devotees) of India, of driving away divisive ideas. It is not even that Rabindranath did not mark how arrogance of nationalism had resulted into extermination of whole races in South America and Australia. He explained the First World War also to be an imperialistic venture, as he wrote the following:

> Provision for human sacrifices was being made from different directions at the altar of worship of gods of national boundary. No fuss was there so long foreigners could be sacrificed. Suddenly in 1914 tension raged among the priests for sacrificing each other... It is this misjudgment which is called nationalism, collective arrogance on the part of a country. (Roy 20)

What is amazing is that Rabindranath again connected this with the change-bringing

impacts of science and technology, and asked the question, "Who will unify whom the forces of science have brought together"? (Roy 21) He perhaps identified the social or political system to be what holds back or divides the nations among whom the barriers of geographical distance have been made to go by science.

3

Now, do the two—Tagore and Ibsen—prove some parallels and meeting points? What is remarkable is that coming coincidentally from a colony-like country like Norway located surprisingly in Europe, and proving many comparable thought-patterns and mindsets, Henrik Ibsen, like Rabindranath, had both positive and negative attitudes to nationalism, liberty, independence, etc. As related earlier in this essay, he was very much for the independence of Norway from Danish clutches, and contributed a lot to the cultural part of that struggle. But, with an artist's characteristic keenness, Ibsen developed the opposite edge of the nationalistic passion also. One historic event is particularly responsible for that. It is how in course of the war of 1866 Prussia annexed the Danish provinces of Schleswig-Holstein. Now, what led Ibsen to and confirmed him in his opposition to the nation-state and his pan-Scandinavian patriotism is the lack then of support for Denmark from Sweden and Norway. Like Rabindranath, Ibsen developed over time much sharper eyes than he had, and what followed is what critics describe to be the naturalistic or realistic phase of his playwright's career. And therewith followed an ebb in nationalism. Christopher Innes writes, "His letters, and later public speeches, also show that as he turned to naturalistic work, with its inherent criticism of society, he was less concerned with nationalism than individual freedom" (Innes 8).

Sharper eyes for issues and interests of individual citizens led Ibsen to question the worth of the state or its authority also. As Rabindranath, in spite of coming from a colony and feudal background, could see the big value of the October Socialist Revolution, Ibsen also proved radical insight into the problem. In his letter to George Brandes, of December 20, 1870, he gave out the almost Gramscian attitude to liberty, "I must confess that the only thing I love about liberty is the struggle for it; I care nothing for the possession of it" (Innes 24). For, herein comes the well-known Gramscian sense of the importance of will. Doesn't this sound like the Maoist idea of constant revolution also? Like one upholder of dialectical and historical materialism, Ibsen wrote as follows, in the same letter:

> The great events of the day occupy my thoughts much at present. The old, illusory France has collapsed.... Up till now we have been living on nothing but the crumbs from the revolutionary table of last century, a food out of which all nutriment has long been chewed. The old terms require to have a new meaning infused into them. Liberty, equality, and fraternity are no longer the things they were in the days of the late-lamented guillotine. This is what the politicians will not understand; and therefore I hate them. (Innes 24)

One may not like or may very much misunderstand what more Ibsen then writes in

that letter about politicians: "They want only their own special revolutions—revolutions in externals, in politics, etc. But all this is mere trifling. What is all-important is the revolution of the spirit of man" (Innes 24). What he writes to Brandes in a separate letter, of February 1871 helps people to understand his leftist ideas.

> I shall never agree to making liberty synonymous with political liberty. What you call liberty I call liberties; and what I call struggle for liberty is nothing but the constant, living assimilation of the idea of freedom. He who possesses liberty other than as a thing to be striven for, possesses it dead and soulless for the idea of liberty has undoubtedly this character; that it develops steadily during its assimilation. So that a man who stops in the midst of struggle and says: "Now I have it"—thereby shows that he has lost it. It is however, this dead maintenance of a certain given standpoint of liberty that is characteristic of the communities which go by the name of states—and this it is that I have called worthless.
>
> Yes, dear friend, the great thing is not to allow one's self to be frightened by the venerableness of the institution. The state has its root in time: it will have its culmination in Time. Greater things than it will fall; all religion will fall. Neither the conception of morality nor those of art are eternal. To how much are we really obliged to pin our faith? Who will vouch for it that two and two do not make five in Jupiter? (Innes 24 – 25)

At different parts of this long quotation Ibsen sounds like so many well-known kinds of radicals or revolutionaries. And, finally he sounds so much so Marxist in his attitude to state, religion, institution, morality, art, etc. —all being viewed as changeable over time. He finds almost no place for "faith" in any of these. In a letter written to Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, he wrote, "It is said that Norway is an independent state, but I do not value much this liberty and independence so long as I know that the individuals are neither free nor independent." He denounced "prejudice, narrow-mindedness, wrong-headed notions, dependence and the belief in groundless authority." We know how Ibsen personally suffered from the narrow morality, conservatism and provincialism of Norwegian society. And, as we have found above, proving a third phase of comparableness with Tagore, Ibsen even went to question the necessity of a state. As this one can never be an absolutist position, there was contradiction in the relevant views of both Rabindranath and Ibsen; we can elaborate on them, but before that we can recognize that both had perceptions of the harm of the state. Though Ibsen accepted pension and public honour from the state, we can quote again what in a letter to George Brandes, he wrote, "There is absolutely no reasonable necessity for the individual to be a citizen. On the contrary—the state is the curse of the individual."

4

It is not that Toril Moi does not recognize Ibsen's nationalism. She even quotes Ibsen's very memorable words uttered in the context of *Rosmersholm*,

> Anyone who wishes to understand me must know Norway. The spectacular but severe landscape which people have around them in the north, and the lonely shut-off life—the houses often lie miles from each other—force them not to bother about other people, but only their own concerns, so that they become reflective and serious, they brood and doubt and often despair. In Norway every second man is a philosopher. And those dark winters, with the thick mists outside—ah, they long for the sun. (Moi 36)

And, if this is not all for getting the true or whole Ibsen, this is a portion. Definitely there were other conditioners and shapers—national culture and international, to which Ibsen exposed himself. Toril Moi goes for a critical analysis of Ibsen's above ideas, of 1886; she admits that "Ibsen here gives voice to a still powerful national myth, for I know highly urban, postmodern Norwegians who believe the same thing." She further writes, "The powerful romantic image of the Norwegian landscape and the equally powerful belief in its metaphysical connection to the Norwegian soul was crucially important to Ibsen and to everyone else living in Norway in the 1840s and 1850s" (Moi 38 – 39). Moi then raises the point of connection between all these and the political picture:

> At the time, the quest for national autonomy did in fact take the form of a quest for a highly idealized national identity and a veneration of the spontaneous expression of the Norwegian soul. That Ibsen was inspired by these trends is obvious, but to acknowledge that the young Ibsen at times saw himself as a national bard does not oblige us to consider his whole career from that point of view. (Moi 39)

This Toril Moi mentions both in spite of and in support of her recent and scholarly thesis in *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism* that "places" Henrik Ibsen as a "founder of European modernism." Though Moi does not write off "Ibsen's modernity," hers is definitely an effort at bringing a shift, and relocating Ibsen. One wonders at what then happens to Ibsen's unbelievably strong involvement with Norwegian nationalism and other social issues of his time, most of which were projects of modernity. We find Jon Nygaard telling us that "The basic concept in order to understand Ibsen's vision of identity, freedom and power is 'Modernity'." and then defining "Modernity in a general sense" to be "the institutions and modes of behaviour established first of all in post-feudal Europe." Modernity's is thus an anti-feudal and pro-capitalism role. The way we find many other critics also to have denied Ibsen's national and social involvement and created for him an identity of a writer of closet plays only, Moi's new thesis, however well-intended, gives a wary look. We cannot make out why Moi finds modernism to be an indispensable position for one playwright like Ibsen and why then she goes even for an elaborate redefining of modernism for making in it a room for Ibsen. What transpires is that because of Norway's delayed delivery from kind of a foreign rule, modernity was still and more a valid program there to which Ibsen catered in his cultural and literary ways. In Bangladesh, the historic

Language Movement, secular nationalism and other modernity projects were highly facilitated by Rabindranath and other literary greats. Little arises there even now the question of applicability or relevance of postmodernism, etc.; ideals and concepts of even modernism appear to have been rather superimposed on us. And it is by his projects of modernity that Ibsen also impresses us so much, in spite of the spatial or temporal distance that is true for him in our case in the sub-continent. How to make out Ibsen's modernism if it was mostly a colonial or post-colonial Norway then, as even Moi finds? We cannot think of locating Rabindranath or most other literary greats of India in modernism or post-modernism.

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Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Nneora*: *An African Doll's House* as a Paradigm

Alex C. Asigbo

Abstract In theorizing adaptation, revisions and or translations, scholars have always been of the opinion that every adaptation or translation is an original in its own authentic sense. It is on that basis that we see adaptations as serving as a bridge between two cultures. Ibsen's works as universal masterpieces lend themselves to re-visions and reinterpretations across cultural lines, for the themes of his works have always revolved around "the struggle for integrity; the conflict between duty to oneself and duty to others." One playwright who finds parallels in Ibsen's works that can be interrogated for cross-cultural dialogue is Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, an up-and-coming Nigerian playwright. Utoh-Ezeajugh's adaptation of *A Doll's House* into *Nneora*: *an African Doll's House* is here examined to discover the extent to which it has served to expose uniformities between Scandinavia of Ibsen's day and the Africa (Nigeria) of Utoh-Ezeajugh's day.

Key words *A Doll's House*; *Nneora*; adaptation

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Any discussion on world drama and theatre without a place for Norwegian iconoclast and playwright, Henrik Ibsen, is definitely, skewed. This is because, at a time when playwrights were content to see drama as a medium for mere titillation of the senses, Ibsen revolted against the norm by making drama relevant to the moral edification of his society. The many influences which Ibsen exerted and continues to exert on succeeding generations of playwrights are eloquent testimonies of the timelessness of his thematic preoccupations.

In discussing Ibsen's creative oeuvre, one must of necessity, notice that his themes command universal application; hence his works appeal to people of all cultures and climes. Thus, Prentice Hall explains:

> Not only was he the creator of the modern realistic prose drama, but he also was one of the first writers to make drama a vehicle for social comment... because of his boldness, his innovativeness, and his extraordinary talent, Ibsen is now widely regarded as the greatest and most influential dramatist of the nineteenth

century. (Prentice Hall 967)

The fact that Ibsen's works has been transposed, revised, translated and often adapted in many places all over the globe, proves Ibsen's place as one of the most important figures in world drama.

Since profound and relevant arts thrives best in open vision, Ibsen's success as a playwright and innovator can best be measured from the variety of critical attention which his works have continued to receive. Concerning this openness of vision and form in Ibsen's works, Chamberlain says

> that even when a prescriptive ideological or metaphysical element seemsdominant, it is suffused with doubts of the most fundamental, though never utterly destructive kinds; that the mock-heroic indications are almost invariably as powerful as the heroic; and that Ibsen's... themes are constantly establishedin contexts of ironic appraisal. (1 – 2)

Here lies the secret to Ibsen's success—a penchant for all to see points or views to identify with at all times. This is also what makes Ibsen's works an adapter's delight since his themes command universal application.

I. The Practice of Adaptation

From the beginning of time, the inclination to adapt, remold, reshape, or remodel other people's ideas has remained one of man's most enduring attributes. Man is thus succinctly put, a recycler of ideas who instinctively perceives in other people's works that which can be used to further his or her own cause. This innate attribute of humanity, it can even be argued, has been responsible for humanity's various developments in different fields. In the artistic and literary world, this trait has remained most ubiquitous. Indeed, not even the greatest book of all times— Holy Bible is free of from this trait. Thus, the bible story of Noah's flood is said to have been adapted from the Babylonian national epic, The Gilgamesh Epic, said to have been in existence long before the Bible was written. [1]

The practice of adaptation from the Greek theatre, which borrowed extensively from the Egyptian theatre, is to say the least, necessary for the healthy growth of world literature. In today's world writers are not just adapting but inter-textualizing, revising and re-visioning. Adaptation usually appeals to writers or dramaturges' desire to explore the timelessness in a work of literature and interrogate those attributes in such a work that commands universal appeal. This is why it will be safe to say that literature does not develop in a linear progression but in a cyclical manner.

In spite of the fact that adaptation as a literary tradition has come to stay, some people still feel that it is a lazy way of surviving an intellectually fastidious society. [2] This view however, is not without equivocations as some scholars have insisted that

> There is something to be translated or transposed to satisfy the need and taste of a new generation or a new social climate... the inevitability of translationbe-

> comes apparent because of what is referred to as the concomitant necessity of each generation to remake its canonical text. (Bamidele 38)

Adaptation is thus a necessary practice of humanity in their attempt to rediscover themselves through examining the past for lessons that could prove beneficial to the present generation. Adaptations should therefore not be engaged in for "the mere sake of translation but to cast a bridge between two cultures" (Udrescu 75).

However, even though adaptation or translation is accepted as a thriving literary tradition, one is tempted to ask how creative or original an endeavor it is. Chinweizu however, believes that the question is in bad taste as he asks:

> Didn't Shakespeare base his historical plays on Holinshed? Did he declare so in his manuscripts? Does that make him a plagiarist? Didn't Brecht lift ideas and texts from other plays and adapt them to his own purposes? Isn't that a legitimate creative activity? Does that make him any less original? (Chinweizu 53)

Chinweizu's propositions call for deep reflection but Bamidele holds the view that

> there should be a creative need to translate or transpose a work of art and such a need reminds us that all differences between original and versions are inexorably reciprocal. A creative need for any literary... piece so translated or transposed becomes in the effort of the translator an original re-definition of the earlier text in terms of the modernist moment of the respective language of the remake. (Bamidele 38)

Bamidele's rationalizations appear to be saying that the issue of originality and or creativity is trivial and should therefore not arise since differences between the original and so called versions are reciprocal. This is why adaptations assist in the healthy growth of world literature. What should concern us as theorists and critics should therefore be efforts geared towards discovering "ways in which a particular writer/translator absorbs a tradition and from it, develops his own authentic (individual) voice" (Bamidele 38). It is on this premise that we analyze Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh's reworking and re-visioning of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* into *Nneora: an African Doll's House* to discover how the work has been able to cast a bridge between the African and Scandinavian cultures.

In *A Doll's House*, Nora comes in from Christmas shopping and her husband Torvald Helmer showers her with pet names all the while insinuating that she's a scatter brained spendthrift and therefore not capable of taking care of herself. Next, Nils Krogstad comes in to see Helmer and we sense the tension and resentment in Nora. As Krogstad goes in to Helmer, Dr. Rank comes out and gets introduced to Mrs. Kristine Linde. Helmer comes out at this juncture and is prevailed upon to offer a job to Kristine even as he leaves in the company of Dr. Rank and Kristine. Krogstad makes good his threat by dropping a letter revealing his dealings with Nora for Helmer. As Helmer reads the letter and abuses Nora, Krogstad's apology letter contai-

ning the blackmail document is delivered. With this, the Helmers are saved but Nora learns a bitter lesson from the entire ordeal. She decides that duty to oneself should supersede duty to others, especially when those others have been selfish and mean. She thus resolves to leave her matrimonial home in search of self fulfillment. As Helmer pleads with her to stay, she goes out and just when a ray of hope enters Helmer's eyes, we hear the door slam shut.

In *Nneora: An African Doll's House*, Nneora comes to the aid of an unemployed young graduate, Ikenna by paying his debts and promising to help secure him a job through her benefactor and lover Osita. Next, she goes to Osita and deceives him into believing that Ikenna is her cousin; hence Osita promises to fix him up. Years later when we see Ikenna and Nneora, Nneora is heavily pregnant and from conversations, we learn that that she already has four girls. We also learn that Ikenna had a major operation two years ago; that the Bank sponsored it through Nneora's intervention and that Ikenna is definitely less than happy and satisfied with the fact that Nneora has only given birth to girls so far. Before the scene ends, a strange phone call informs Ikenna that a letter containing important revelations about someone close to him is in his office drawer.

Nneora's parley with Dr. Frank reveals that she's carrying a set of male twins even as we notice that she's distracted over the impending revelation through the letter. While watching a maiden dance across the street, Nneora runs into her old classmate and friend, Linda. They go to Nneora's house and while they were interacting, Linda reveals her ordeals in the hands of her estranged husband, Osita. She equally informs Nneora that she's in town in search of husband who from all indications is a changed man. Nneora also tells her own story. According to her, the man who has been her lover and benefactor before she met Ikenna, who helped get a job for Ikenna; who also approved Ikenna's treatment abroad on the bank's bill, is still insisting on a last date with her. That man, Osita Nonso, had given her up till yesterday to fulfill her promise of a date or he will reveal the whole affair to Ikenna. Linda here learns to her horror that Osita Nonso, the husband she is returning to is the same heartless man about to break up Nneora's marriage as she storms out in confusion. Osita comes to Nneora's house to remind her that her time is up and that he is determined to follow through with his threats. At the Bank's end of year party, Ikenna goes up to his office to pick up the all important letter, but before he could open it, Nneora distracts him by feigning labour pains.

Back home, Ikenna after reading the letter throws tantrums calling Nneora names and describing her as unfit for the marriage institution. In the midst of his tantrums, Linda enters with a repentant Osita and Osita apologizes for his behavior, revealing that he was eaten up by envy and that Nneora has remained a faithful wife to Ikenna. Linda also reveals that Nneora is carrying a set of male twins as they take their leave. Ikenna realizing that his position, moral and social status is no longer being threatened decides to forgive Nneora. Nneora however, declares herself unwilling to continue staying in the same house and union with Ikenna, especially since Ikenna has proved himself unworthy of her love. Ikenna tries to reason with her, but resolves to henceforth look out for herself. According to her, it will take a miracle for her to stay

back. With that, she goes into the room, ostensibly to pack her things even as a glimmer of hope comes into Ikenna's eyes.

II. Africanizing *A Doll's House*

Societies have different cultures but sometimes, certain similarities exist. These similarities make it possible for one interrogating certain cultural variables to generalize on some issues. In investigating the practice of adaptation, the most necessary step to take is to "discover ways in which a particular writer absorbs a tradition and from it, develops his own authentic voice" (Bamidele 38). In analyzing Utoh-Ezeajugh's efforts therefore, certain parameters must of necessity, guide our investigation. These parameters as I have said elsewhere will include "moral, social, political and cultural considerations" (Asigbo 104). In setting out, one would first of all, observe that the Scandinavian society of the middle and late nineteenth century has a lot in common with the Nigerian and indeed, African society of the middle and late twentieth century. These areas of socio-cultural contiguity will include—the place of women in the scheme of things; societal expectations of and on the marriage institution as well as a man's place and responsibility to his family.

African society of the twentieth century saw the woman's place as predominantly revolving around housekeeping as well as rearing children. Reaffirming this, Evwierhoma says: "In several of these cultures, despite the change impacted on her by modernization, the woman is still largely marginalized. Although her image may be salutary and dignified, roles ascribed to her centre around those of housekeeping and mothering" (1). Ibsen's Norway of the late nineteenth century betrays some similarities with Utoh-Ezeajugh's Africa especially as it concerns the pecuniary perception of the woman. Also, in both societies, the institution of marriage is seen as sacred, even though, ironically, it is always the woman who has to go the extra mile to keep it from breaking up. In these societies, the woman is seen merely as a wet nurse and pleasure-giver to the man who sees himself as the only one intellectually endowed to think and act on behalf of the family. We thus notice that Helmer considers Nora as incapable of serious intellectual exertion but rather sees her as a play thing and an object of entertainment. She is thus either his "... little lark twittering" or his "... squirrel rummaging around" (43-44). Helmer's entire attitude toward Nora has always been patronizing as can be gleaned from the following lines: "You're an odd little one... You're never at a loss for scaring up money; but the moment you have it, it runs right through your fingers; you never know what you've done with it. Well, one takes you as you are. It's deep in your blood" (46). This masculinist attitude as exhibited by Helmer is, sadly enough, a common index of the Norway of Ibsen's day even as it is still largely prevalent in today's Africa. To the typical African male, a woman's place is in the kitchen; hence any claim to intelligence which the woman makes, must be in culinary matters. This chauvinistic attitude, we dare say, was even observed in Europe of the nineteenth century as was alluded to by no less a person than Fredrick Nietzsche when he opined that there's something inherently masculine in any woman that displays unusual intelligence.

Since attitudes change, it is not surprising that today's Europe has become so

woman-friendly that women can now aspire to the highest political offices. This can be evidenced from the fact that also consider Angela Uerkel, current Chancellor of Germany occupied the highest political office in Britain for many years. It equally goes to show that there is a ray of hope for the African women as they are becoming more and more involved the act of governance. The case of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, current President of Liberia, is a vindication of the fact that today in Africa; women are no longer seen as second-class citizens but as equal partners in the development agenda of many African nations.

III. Adaptive Techniques

A reading of Utoh-Ezeajugh's play will reveal a work carefully crafted to serve as a bridge between two cultures. First, she was able to take the heroine's name (Nora) in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and turn it into an eponymous heroine in the African version. The remarkable thing is that Nneora, (Nora) literally translated as "Mother of all" still retains all the feminine virtues exhibited by Nora and has indeed been described as "an embodiment of all that is virtuous in the quintessential woman... submissive without being slavish, assertive without being pugnacious" (Asigbo 269). Utoh-Ezeajugh's astuteness in being able to turn what one might regard as universal attributes of womanhood into virtues that can be regarded as uniquely African, is worthy of commendation. Nneora therefore, both in name and indeed, remains the perfect mother figure—self sacrificing, unobtrusive as well as altruistic.

Also one notices that the playwright, through subtle use of innuendo highlights two central tenets of African life, namely the supremacy of the male child and the sometime untealthy influence of the African extended family. One thus notices that Ikenna's behavior changed for the worse immediately after his uncle's visit. What this goes to show is that most of the human dimension tensions experienced in most African families, will most of the time, be traced to influences exerted from without by members of the extended family. In *Nneora* for instance, the playwright goes to great lengths to prove that in the African world, female children are regarded with disdain. Indeed, complaining about this, Nneora says: "That was what I thought until six months ago, when your uncle paid us a visit. I donot know what you two discussed, but I know that since then, your behavior towards our children has never been the same again" (37).

When finally, Ikenna couldn't hide his feelings again, he bursts out saying: "Do not tell me you are going to give birth to girls again, oh no... what have I done to deserve this kind of stigma?" (102). As callous as the above excerpts appear, they truly reflect the typical African male's attitude to the presence of only female children in the family. To the African male, a man must have male children to keep his name alive and continue the family tree.

Socio-politically, one observes that Utoh-Ezeajugh's reworking of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* remains relevant not only because it updates and reflects the social reality of the African socio-political history, and in doing that, eliminates the cultivation of elitism, but also because it is able in the words of Achebe to "seek the things that belong to its peace... speak of a particular place, evolve out of the necessities of its his-

tory, past and current, and the aspirations and destiny of its people" (16). There is no gainsaying the fact that the African society of today is still very much encumbered by gender inequality. This is occasioned by the presence of various cultural practices that tend to oppress and marginalize women. Indeed, right from the last quarter of the twentieth century—precisely in 1975, when the United Nations Organization declared the first International Women's day and decade, to the Beijing Conference of 1995, various women and non-governmental groups have been involved in various forms of advocacy, all aimed at improving the lot of women in the scheme of things.

In tackling the feminist question therefore, Utoh-Ezeajugh shows herself to be acutely aware of the social realities of her immediate society; a society characterized by the most tenacious, vicious and oppressive form of repression against women; a society, in which in the words of Linda in *Nneora*, "men gang up to steal everything that belongs to us, including our God-given right of existence. And you know what bothers me most? For centuries, we women have silently endorsed this social gang-up" (71).

In speaking out against the marginalization of women therefore, the playwright does not, like her Western counterpart, endorse Feminism wholesale, but instead pitches tent with some of her African foremothers; people in the ilk of late Zulu Sofola, who advocated an African version of feminism or what is generally referred to as Womanism or Motherism.

The intrinsic difference between Feminism and Womanism or Motherism can be found subtly buried in Nora's attitude towards her children as against that displayed by Linda and Nneora towards their own children. Beyond the fact of renting a nurse maid to take care of the Helmer children, one notices that Nora, in spite of all her other feminine virtues cannot qualify as an ideal mother since she did not think twice about abandoning her children in her quest for freedom and self-fulfillment. This is diametrically opposed to the actions of Linda who made sure to leave with her children and of course, that of Nneora, who insisted on bringing up her children herself. Herein rests the basic ideological difference between Western feminism and African Motherism or womanism. While to the feminists, child bearing and rearing can be sacrificed on the altar of ideology, to the motherist or womanist, being motherly and womanly cannot be compromised for ideological leanings. The African woman therefore, even as she fights against all forms of discrimination based on gender considerations, sees herself in the archetypal role of "Mother Africa", nourishing and taking care of her children. She would therefore rather die than think of leaving her child behind.

Gender relations as a site of conflict, have produced a rich corpus of both creative and critical literature. Many people however, appear to be agreed on the fact that the female gender is marginalized even though certain other scholars maintain that it is the woman who does the most unobtrusive kind of marginalizing and hegemony.[3] Without pitching our tent for or against the feminists, one can safely say that what Utoh-Ezeajugh advocates is a symbiotic relationship anchored on mutual love and respect between the sexes. To Utoh-Ezeajugh, marriages in which the woman functions as the man's possession are not worth the name and should be opted out of by any woman with any sense of self worth. In the words of Nneora: "I will no longer force myself to stay in an institution which takes everything a woman has to offer and gives

nothing in return" (120 – 121).

On the level of crafting and ideology, however, a marked difference exists between Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Nneora*. Of course, the dance exhibition and Bank end of year party are Utoh-Ezeajugh's way of Africanizing a Scandinavian story through portraying the African gregarious nature and love for communal living through partying and group socialization. In Ibsen's play, true to European love for individual living, the party held at the Helmers is a private affair involving only close friends of the family. Ideologically, Ibsen's work betrays relative pessimism when compared to its African version which harbors a measure of optimism for the family as a unit of existence. Ibsen's relative pessimism stems from Nora's final act, the door slam, which shattered the status quo and marked the end of patriarchal hegemony in European orthodox thinking. For the feminists however, the slammed door marked the liberation of women from archetypal inhibitions and propelled them into the mainstream of socio-political life. Torvald Helmer's shock and disbelief as he watched his once docile wife Nora walk away into the night and slam the behind her, can be likened to what Ibsen's audience must have felt as they watched the torpedoing of everything they had been brought up to believe about the family and role divisions between the sexes in it.

The African version on the other hand, holds up a measure of hope for a new kind of union anchored on real love, understanding and mutual respect for each other. By not slamming the door, and by allowing Ikenna to see a ray of hope in his attempt to pacify his estranged wife, Utoh-Ezeajugh seems to be telling us that when all is said and done, what the men need is re-education and some measure of assertiveness, to shock them out of their selfish and egotistical tendencies. Indeed, by saying that she (Nneora) would bring up her children to know what real love means and entails (124), the playwright is more or less saying that a new breed of human beings will emerge, one that is unblemished by pretences to male superiority and that shares a belief in the equality of the sexes. This new breed willingly supports fellow members in trying moments, and in time, will emerge to take the place of the present generation.

Finally, one will observe that Utoh-Ezeajugh's attempt at reworking a Scandinavian story is from all indications, a successful one. She has been able, not only to update Ibsen's play in line with current realities, but also to cast a bridge between the Scandinavian and African cultures, through portraying areas of cultural contiguity. Where Ibsen closed the door on filial understanding and forgiveness, she gives us another chance at trying to make it right. Above all, she raises our hope in the possibility of a future where true love will reign supreme.

Acutely aware of the subtle differences existing between the Scandinavian and African culture, Utoh-Ezeajugh explores the theme of marital infidelity as the reason for the schism which the Ikennas experienced. Keeping to Ibsen's original of making Nora borrow from Krogstad would not have been a serious issue for conflict in a typical African setting. As a playwright acutely aware of these cultural peculiarities, she explores an area that remains controversial in most African societies of today. This singular touch of local color gives Utoh-Ezeajugh's work a voice of its own.

【Notes】

1. See "The Gilgamesh Epic" in Prentice Hall Literature's *World Masterpieces*. Gilgamesh, the Babylonian national epic, tells the story of the eponymous hero's titanic wisdom in saving his world from flood by building a big boat.

2. Conversations with Dr. Emma Emeasalu on November 9, 2008 at Port Harcourt.

3. See for instance, Chinweizu's *The Anatomy of Female Power: A Masculinist Dissection of Matriarchy* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1990). There, Chinweizu endeavored to prove that women possess the most subtle means of controlling the male folk.

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The Biographers' Tale of Ibsen's Childhood

Jens-Morten Hanssen

Abstract At fifty-two years old Henrik Ibsen began to work on a book in the autobiographic genre. The text ended up as a fragment with ten pages of childhood memories. Ibsen's most recent biographer, Ivo de Figueiredo, deconstructs the text and turns it into a key text for his biographic project. Perhaps the entire description is a lie, says Figueiredo, at any rate it is literature and in this respect a prelude to Ibsen's later poetic calling. The article explores how seven Ibsen biographers—Henrik Jæger, Edmund Gosse, Gerhard Gran, Halvdan Koht, Michael Meyer, Robert Ferguson and Ivo de Figueiredo—address Ibsen's childhood memories. What function and role do they acquire in the biographers' presentations of Ibsen's childhood? This phase of his life is poorly documented. Several biographers resort to ingrained myths. Few except Figueiredo are struck by the strong signs of literary construction in Ibsen's text.

Key words Henrik Ibsen's childhood; memoirs; biographies; literary construction deconstruction

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Ibsen was known as an author who held his cards close to his chest. Any statements that he made to the public he made through his writing. He kept other types of statements to a minimum. Midway in his career however, he contemplated otherwise. In January 1881 Ibsen began to work on a book in the autobiographic genre. The text though ended up as a mere ten pages of childhood memories. Then he gave up. The text fragment addresses the period when the Ibsen family lived in Stockmann's Gaard where Henrik was born in 1828 and Altenburg's Gaard where they lived from 1831 to 1835. Knud Ibsen's notorious ruin escape mention, which is note worthy because all of the elder Ibsen's business activities were discontinued, his properties lost and the family was obliged to move to the country home Venst? p three kilometres outside of town, is not mentioned.

What I would propose to do here is to look more closely at this text and to explore how Ibsen's many biographers, in other words, those who presumably should be the most interested in the text, address it. What function and role do Ibsen's childhood memories have in the biographers' presentations of his childhood?

What is the text about? The contents can be summarised in three points.

1) Ibsen identifies the spatial coordinates of the first years of his life. He starts by telling where he was born ("in a house on the market-place," Stockmanns Gaard) and describes the surrounding wonders:

> It stood exactly opposite the front of the church, with its high flight of steps and conspicuous tower. To the right of the church stood the town pillory, and to the left the town-hall, with the prison and the lock-up for mad persons. The fourth side of the market-square was occupied by the High School and the Lower School. The church stood apart in the middle. (Jæger 5 – 6)

What is striking here, and Ibsen also makes a point out of this, is that everything in the description of the landscape is about architecture, about man-made building art. Robert Ferguson writes in his Ibsen biography from 1996 that the text provides a hint that "the world always seemed to [Ibsen] the creation of some cosmic set-designer" (Ferguson 255). We can instead perhaps maintain that Ibsen personally here is a cosmic set designer. Ivo de Figueiredo opens his recently-written Ibsen biography namely with a stage direction based on elements from the childhood memory text (Figueiredo15). Figueiredo's biography gets underway, accordingly, in literal terms as a drama with a point of departure in Ibsen's own set design.

2) Further, Ibsen describes his two earliest memories. The earliest stems from the time when Ibsen's nanny carries him up into the church tower and allows him to sit in the open window of the tower and gaze out over the square, his home and the courtyard, held securely from behind by the nanny. Ibsen recounts his memory of the view in detail and then relates what happened when his mother caught sight of him up in the tower window. With a loud shriek she had fainted away, "as people used to do in those days" (Jæger 8), and cried and kissed and fondled him once she had him safely back in her arms again. The second memory is connected to a silver coin embossed with "King Fredrick Rex", which Ibsen one day was rolling on the floor so that it disappeared into a crack in the floorboards.

> My parents, I believe, thought this an omen of evil, as the coin had been a christening-gift. The planks were taken up; but, in spite of much careful seeking and groping, 'King Fredrick Rex' never came to light again. It was a long time before I ceased to regard myself as a great criminal. (9)

3) The second half of the text is characterised by descriptions of the street life in Skien. "Skien, in my young days, was an exceedingly lively and sociable town, quite unlike what it subsequently became" (11). He describes the Fair which was held in February every year, the 17th of May (where not much of a celebration was held) and Midsummer Eve (when there was, however, considerably more merriment).

The following seven Ibsen biographies have been studied:

* Henrik Jæger, The Life of Henrik Ibsen, London 1890

* Edmund Gosse, Ibsen, London 1907
* Gerhard Gran, Henrik Ibsen. Liv og verker, Kristiania 1918
* Halvdan Koht, The Life of Ibsen, New York 1931
* Michael Meyer, Ibsen. A Biography, London 1967 – 1971
* Robert Ferguson, Henrik Ibsen. A New Biography, London 1996
* Ivo de Figueiredo, Henrik Ibsen. Mennesket, Oslo 2006

I will start with Ibsen's most recent biographer, Ivo de Figueiredo. He is in our selection the one who does the most with Ibsen's childhood memories and who employs them in the most interesting, though not uncontroversial, manner. For Figueiredo, Ibsen's childhood memory text becomes a classic example of self-staging, with extremely limited value in terms of information in the way of empirical data about Ibsen's childhood. Figueiredo reads the text as fiction. "Perhaps the entire description from his childhood is a lie. At any rate, it is literature, written by an author who did not just write plays and poetry, but also wrote his own life" (Figueiredo 19).[1] The most central part of the text in Figueiredo's interpretation is the tower window anecdote. According to Figueiredo the aging Ibsen here appears "as 'the poet sphinx' to be." "He was a poet and the poet did not belong in the nave of the church, in society. He belonged in the church steeple ever obliged to view the world from the outside and from above, to describe it and the human tragedy" (17). In the biographer's reading, the text becomes a mythical presentation of the poet's universe, his cosmology. There is no childhood, only stories. The aging Ibsen knew this, and therefore wrote a description of his childhood which simultaneously creates a mythical prelude to his own poetic calling (15 and 17).

It is tempting to characterise Figueiredo's reading as influenced by a relatively recent trend within literary theory: deconstructionism. First of all, this school insists on erasing the distinction between literary and non-literary texts. Secondly, it emphasises the importance of intertextuality. Thirdly, it makes a point of reading texts against the grain in order to disclose their inherent negation. Fourthly, it is sceptical of all pretensions of objectivity. These are elements that we can recognise in Figueiredo's interpretation of Ibsen's childhood memories. The text as such carries features of non-fiction. It pretends to say something about a historically given event, namely the childhood of the actual person Henrik Ibsen. Figueiredo then turns around and reads the text as literature; Ibsen's childhood hereby becomes fiction. He brings in the aspect of intertextuality by interpreting the text as a prelude to Ibsen's later writings and poetic calling. It is, in other words, a text written in relation to something outside of itself, a set of texts, a subsequent literary production, which Figueiredo insists that the text must be read in relation to. The biographer reads the text against the grain by interpreting it counter-intuitively. The text pretends to relate experiences from a little boy's life. Figueiredo claims that it is a kind of creation myth, the adult poet's account of how he became an author. Ibsen was de facto not an author in the present time of the text. The biography denies this. The little boy does not perhaps know that he is a poet but the text establishes him as a poet. The scepticism about objectivity in Figueiredo's interpretation finds expression in part by his denying the childhood as a given historical phase in Ibsen's actual lifetime, in part by

his making the events referred to in the text into mythical occurrences. There is no reality, only myths.

How have we ended up with Figueiredo's post-modern approach? At what point was Ibsen's childhood lost?

The childhood memory text was written in January 1881. For seven years it lay untouched in Ibsen's desk drawer, until he surrendered it to Henrik Jæger, who wrote the very first Ibsen biography in book format, published in Copenhagen in 1888.[2] In Jæger's book the text was made public for the first time, rendered in its entirety in the first chapter of the book, in other words, the section that covers Ibsen's childhood and upbringing.

What function does the text acquire in Jæger's book? Two aspects must be mentioned, not because they are so remarkable in their own right, but because subsequent biographers have chosen somewhat different solutions: The text is in Jæger's book placed in the chapter that addresses Ibsen's childhood. This implies that the text is—actually—about Ibsen's childhood. The text is presented in its entirety, which implies that it is important.

Henrik Jæger presents the text with the following laconic introduction: "Referring to his earliest impressions, Ibsen has written the following notes and has placed them at the author's disposal" (Jæger 5). Then the text is rendered. And the sentence that immediately follows asserts "What Ibsen related in this passage is enough to give us an idea of what the influences of his childhood must have been" (13). I wonder about that.

It is of relevance to linger a bit over the label that Jæger gives the text: "impressions." It is in reality quite appropriate as a characterisation. The term impression implies distance. One has experienced something, but what is at the base of the experience is at such a distance that what one is left with is not a living memory, but rather scattered impressions.

Childhood memory texts are a genre that must always be read on this premise. Childhood is always something that a writing subject, a narrator, looks back upon. It is not something that the narrator has, but something the person concerned has had, and which accordingly, in the moment he or she sits down to describe it, must retrieve from memory. The art of reminiscence is not an exact science. To the contrary, it is characterised by selection, repression, sublimation, conscious or unconscious manipulation and other psychological mechanisms. In literary memoirs, the actual factors forming the basis for the narrator's reminiscences will almost be irrelevant. What is of significance is the fact that something is remembered, how it is remembered and the type of narrative form the memories acquire, not whether the memories are in accordance with actual, historical factors.

When Ibsen sat down and wrote his childhood memories he was fify-two years old. The events that he describes are accordingly 45-52 years back in time. To use Jæger's terminology: The text describes a more or less loosely constructed series of impressions from childhood that have been deposited in Ibsen's mind or memory. Actual events in connection with Ibsen's childhood are of secondary importance.

Following the cited text, Jæger describes the text in a few brief, analytical phrases.

> gloom and melancholy had the larger share. The solemnity of the church, the horrors of the prison, the threat of the pillory, the terrors of the madhouse, combined to make an impression which might well cast a shadow over his youthful light-heartedness and infuse a precocious gravity. (Jæger 13)

This analysis immediately takes the reader aback, because it cannot be described as wholly on the mark. The tone and atmosphere of the memory text viewed as a whole cannot be characterised as being exclusively sad and gloomy. The latter part of the text focuses to the contrary on the merry city life of Skien, the market days in February, the celebration of Midsummer Night's Eve, etc. It is not necessary to search any further than Edmund Gosse's biography from 1907 before the analysis comes to the opposite conclusion. "It is interesting", Gosse writes, "to find that his earliest impressions of life at home were of an optimistic character" (4). Although Gosse in his foreword claims that Jæger's biography has become "obsolete" (vi), Gosse's chapter about Ibsen's childhood and upbringing is based on one source alone: Henrik Jæger's biography. Gosse has not taken the trouble to investigate other sources. Even using the same point of departure with regard to sources, however, they come to different conclusions. The childhood memories are presented in ways that are diametrically opposed: Jæger emphasises the sadness and gloom, Gosse the optimism.

What is the reason for this slightly tendentious reading on Jæger's part? The reason cannot be other than that the myths about Ibsen's difficult periods in Norway had already congealed into facts. If one reads consecutively the many Ibsen biographies that have been written, one can detect the outline of a common formula. One can virtually produce a format for how Ibsen biographies are to be constructed. A two-part rough structure would be as follows: Ibsen's life up to the time of his departure for Rome in 1864 is characterised by trial and error (predominantly the latter), struggle, opposition, toil, acidic reviews, financial difficulties, evasiveness and betrayal on the part of official Norway. After 1864, Ibsen gradually finds himself. He has success with *Brand* and *Peer Gynt* and eventually writes the modern drama, his finances are stabilised, he reaches his life's telos: namely to work as a free and independent author.

This was a myth that Ibsen personally not only took part in creating but for which he was chiefly responsible. If one considers carefully his time in Norway up to 1864, it is difficult to feel particularly sorry for Ibsen. He had had eight plays staged and seven published (in addition to countless poems). He had been a dramatist and stage director in Bergen and artistic director in Kristiania. After travelling abroad, Ibsen developed a reputation to a certain extent as a stiff-necked hater of Norway, to a certain extent as a severe critique of Norway. This has had an impact on his biographers and to an equal extent influenced the depiction of Ibsen's time in Norway.

It is certainly not a coincidence that British Edmund Gosse deviates somewhat from this formula. Gosse was first and foremost interested in telling the story of Ibsen's life to English-reading audiences. The official Norway's treatment of Ibsen in his biography therefore becomes somewhat peripheral. He thereby has a more unbiased view of Ibsen's childhood.

With Norwegian Gerhard Gran's biography from 1918, however, we find ourselves once again fully in the midst of the myth of Ibsen's difficult and sad childhood. Gran quotes approximately one-fourth of the childhood memory text. In addition to this a few sentences are slightly rewritten and included in the main text. But before Gran quotes from the text, he first presents Ibsen's childhood memories through the eyes of the adult poet:

> When Ibsen in his old age seeks to retrieve his childhood memories, he does not find, like so many others, an innocent paradise lingering like a happy dream in his soul, no mother's tenderness, no father's concern, no pleasant Saturday evenings, no joyfully bright Sundays, no exciting undertakings in competition with happy friends; the images that emerge in his memory are all pervaded by a fantastic gloom, none of them are found on the sunny side (Gran 1: 3).

In terms of narrative technique, Gran here implements the omniscient third-person narrator. This type of narration is quite common in biographies, in spite of the fact that it raises some problems. Biographers are supposed to be able to substantiate all data and allegations through written sources. The omniscient third-person narrator is normal and unproblematic as a technique for a novel, but in a biography, the use of such a narrator in principle means that the biographer is exceeding his or her authority. A biographer is not all-knowing about the life of the biographic subject.

The above-cited paragraph could have been taken from a novel. Gran professes to have detailed knowledge about the emotions and moods that were in Ibsen's mind when he sat down on January 17, 1881 to write his childhood memories. He knows what Ibsen found (images pervaded by a fantastic gloom) and what he did not find (idyll). The critical reader must naturally ask how Gran has come to this conclusion. The sources provide no basis for such a portrayal.

Gran's biography starts with some quotes from *The Epic Brand*. The biographer establishes an identity between Ibsen as a child and the title character of *The Epic Brand*, whose childhood is characterised as such: "He was one of those children who seem old, one whom playmates in the break never succeed in drawing into their romping games, who quietly look on and are sufficient to themselves" (1).

Brand as a child sat "with his back turned to the sun" in much the same way that none of Ibsen's childhood memories are to be found "on the sunny side" (3). Gerhard Gran's depiction of Ibsen's childhood is a blissful hodgepodge of the following elements: 1) free interpretation on Gran's part; 2) an identification with Brand's childhood, e. g. a fictional character from Ibsen's writing; 3) a description in terms of the myth about Ibsen's difficult, sad and lonely childhood. Gran reads the childhood memory text in the same way as Jæger does. He finds only "fantastic gloom", but thereby overlooks that which might point in a more optimistic and bright direction. In sum, Ibsen's childhood in Gran's biography becomes fiction, a literary depiction; it becomes a literary depiction.

Halvdan Koht's biography from 1928 – 29 creates a contrast with Gran's biography. It stands out distinctively from all of the others in our selection. There are no di-

rect quotes from the childhood memories at all, not in the two chapters in the first volume that are about his childhood and upbringing in Skien and neither in the two chapters in Volume Two that address the time when the childhood memories were written, 1881. Did not Koht know about the text? Of course he did. If one goes over his biography with a fine-tooth comb, one finds three minor references (Koht 28 – 29, 184, 316 – 317). More importantly is that Koht twice as an editor was personally responsible for publication of the childhood memories: in the first volume of Ibsen's "Posthumous Works" in 1909[3] and in Volume 15 of the centennial edition of Ibsen's "Collected Works" in 1930[4]. Koht's Ibsen biography up until today reigns supreme in terms of its thoroughness and on the basis of scholarly criteria and is qualitatively speaking one of the best Ibsen biographies. It appears to still have the status of a reference work in Ibsen studies. It cannot be doubted Koht's superior command and extensive knowledge about the primary sources providing insight on Ibsen's life and work. So the reason why Koht gives the childhood memory text so little attention in his biography is without a doubt because he did not find it relevant. One must assume that Koht was of the opinion that it said essentially nothing about Ibsen's childhood. It is for him neither a central Ibsen text in other respects.

In Michael Meyer's Ibsen biography, however, published in three volumes 1967 – 1971, the childhood text makes yet another appearance. Meyer's treatise runs off with the prize for the most naive employment of the text. It is rendered in its entirety in the chapter about his childhood. As a means of reinforcing or perhaps rather repairing the text's (for Meyer) presumed authenticity, the biographer has taken it upon himself to insert three footnotes. The second of these footnotes is interesting. It refers to the same verse lines from *The Epic Brand* that Gerhard Gran brings up as a fictional equivalent. The footnote has a rather random placement and cannot be read in any other manner than as Meyer "buying" Gran's view about Ibsen's childhood and Brand's childhood being of the same nature.

Following the text Meyer writes: "Here Ibsen tantalisingly concludes his reminiscences. When he was seven, his childhood suddenly became clouded by misfortune and disgrace, and even in old age he evidently had no desire to commit his later memories to print" (Meyer 12). What Meyer finds to be important about the text, in other words, is where it ends, and what it has left out, namely, a description of Knud Ibsen's ruin and seven-year old Henrik's reactions to it. Meyer, however, then assumes that Ibsen's project in the text as such is to provide a credible description of his childhood. A continuation would have given us reliable information about this dark point in Ibsen's upbringing. The perspectives presented here show how highly problematic such a view is.

The two most recent Ibsen-biographies, by Ferguson (1996) and Figueiredo (2006 – 07) are both characterised by a healthy critical distance to their biographic subject. The biography as a genre has its historical roots in the panegyrics of antiquity, the so-called epideictric rhetoric. It is historically speaking also related to the hagiography, but has in modern times acquired its anti-hagiographic representatives. Ferguson goes the furthest in this direction. Several biographers address many of Ibsen's less sympathetic qualities, his boundless vanity, his uncompromising egoism,

his touchiness, his unstable temperament. Ferguson allows a kind of hermeneutic suspicion to pervade more or less his entire portrayal. Ibsen's allegedly difficult period and unkind treatment in Norway before he emigrated, is particularly by Ferguson, but also by Figueiredo, given a strong dose of nuance and is to a certain extent disproved.

Ferguson employs the text in the chapter about *Ghosts*. The childhood memories were written while *Ghosts* was being written. Ferguson implies through this structure that the text says more about Ibsen in the year 1881 than about Ibsen's childhood. This choice can appear to be less naive than Meyer's example. But Ferguson's commentaries on the text before it is cited show that he follows in Meyer's footsteps. Ferguson refers to the fact that Ibsen stopped writing at exactly the point at which his father's financial ruin began, with its baleful effect on the atmosphere within the family, and on their status in the community. Yet one regrets that he did so, and turned his back on an undertaking that might have proved cathartic and increased his sum of happiness (Ferguson 250).

Ferguson has, accordingly, also focused on that which is not found in the text and demonstrates a touching consideration for Ibsen's psychological well-being. Had he kept writing, it could have had a therapeutic effect on him! He would have been a happier human being! This view is first of all based on the assumption that Knud Ibsen's ruin was a traumatic experience for Henrik. It has not been proven beyond a doubt that it was. Second of all, it is based on the assumption that Ibsen through his text wished to reach a kind of clarity about his own childhood. The aspect of literary construction that Figueiredo points out is not a possibility that occurs to Ferguson.

Ferguson's comments following the childhood memory text are more general, but also more focused on Ibsen's personality and psychological constitution. What is most clearly evident, Ferguson claims, is the extent to which Ibsen's was always the bystander's perspective on life. And there are aspects that shed light on his lifelong timidity and his ambivalent attitude towards authority: the adventure in the church steeple; the episode with the policeman from whom he hid beneath his bed; his fascination with the stocks and their invitation to ritual humiliation; the solipsistic removal of any references to brothers and sisters (Ferguson 254 – 55).

The strength of Ferguson's approach is that the text is related to and situated in the temporal context in which it occurred, 1881. The tendentious readings of Jæger and Gran, which emphasise Ibsen's unhappy childhood, have with Ferguson vanished into thin air. But Figueiredo's radical reading remains a far way off. Ferguson operates still with the perception of a historically given event, Ibsen's childhood, which Ibsen's text, admittedly from a highly distanced perspective, in part says something about and in part could have said more about (if Ibsen had written more).

In that we have now come full circle and are once again back to Figueiredo, let us lift up the perspective and reflect a bit about childhood and literary biographies in general. Why even write about authors' childhoods at all? What makes Ibsen an interesting subject for a biography is that he was a great writer. The point of departure for all literary biographies is the literary work of the biographic subject. But childhood is precisely the life phase in which the author has not yet become an author. He or

she has not written a word! One finds the answer to these rhetorical questions by referring to two of the features of the biography genre. First of all, a biography is expected to begin at birth and end at death. The lifetime of the biographic subject determines the start and finish of the biography's course of action. Secondly, the biography genre swears by teleology, in other words, the school of thought stating that everything that happens has a specific purpose and a specific aim. In accordance with this, the biographer seeks to establish causal connections in the biographic subject's life. The author becomes an author for specific reasons. And all the connecting lines refer back to childhood. The child becomes the adult human's father.

How do our biographers stand in relation to this? All seven establish different types of causal connections between Ibsen's childhood and his subsequent career as an author. All Ibsen biographies focus on the factors leading up to his life's *telos*: becoming a writer. This is the fundamental common thread in all Ibsen biographies. That Ibsen easily could have had the same childhood but become something other than an author, is a possibility that the biographies discount. To the contrary, they take as a point of departure that Ibsen was "a born artist".[5]

The function of Ibsen's childhood memories in this image is, as we have seen, varied. Figueiredo's use of the text is elegant and intelligent. He reads the text in the context of Ibsen's almost life-long project of self-staging. Ibsen was, starting from the time around 1870, very concerned about creating unity between life and work and about giving the impression that he was a poet because he was *obliged* to be a poet. Here the lines of causal connection run perhaps in the opposite direction. The childhood memory text naturally sheds light upon Ibsen's childhood, but the spotlight is situated in 1881. The causal relations are established in retrospect.

Figueiredo also clearly sees that the text is not very informative as a source of insight on Ibsen's childhood. The text has many elements that tend towards literary construction. An example: Ibsen tells of a black poodle with fiery red eyes that was in the church tower where the nanny allowed Ibsen to look out. This poodle once startled a watchman who was in the process of calling out the hour from the church window, so that the watchman fell out of the window and was killed. "This incident of the watchman and the poodle had happened long before my time," Ibsen writes (Jæger 7). This is, in other words, something Ibsen never experienced personally, but something he had only heard about. The text is full of typical Ibsen motifs. The tower is a reference to *The Master Builder*, "the mental institution" to *Peer Gynt*, the poodle perhaps leads one to think more about Goethe's Faust than Mopseman in *Little Eyolf*, but at any rate the motif has literary allusions, something that we can presume interested Ibsen more than reminiscing about some scruffy dog from Skien.

What is more difficult about Figueiredo's method is that Ibsen's actual childhood falls out into the sidelines. His biography is constantly at risk of getting lost in the forest of myths. Figueiredo writes that for him it has been

> imperative to take the myths and the myths' reality just as seriously as the reality itself. In other words, this book is about Ibsen's life, but also the Ibsen myth that tradition has created over the course of more than a century and which it is

impossible to disregard. (Figueiredo 19)

It is certainly correct that it is difficult to penetrate behind the myths, but simultaneously, this is exactly what one expects a biographer to attempt to do. If one removes oneself too greatly from the perception of an actual, historical lifetime, which the biographer attempts to describe and present in a coherent form and in a reliable fashion, the biography genre is, as such, undermined.

Ibsen's childhood is the phase of Ibsen's life that is most poorly documented. The sources exist, but there are not many of them and the degree of reliability varies greatly. Many of the sources contradict one another. It is then tempting perhaps to resort to myths and literary construction. Ibsen's childhood is perhaps most suitably read as literature.

【Notes】

1. All translations from works published in Norwegian are done by the author.
2. Two years later two different English editions were issued in London (trans. Clara Bell) and Chicago (trans. William Morton Payne) respectively. In this paper the London edition has been used.
3. See Henrik Ibsen, *Efterladte skrifter*. Ed. Halvdan Koht and Julius Elias (Kristiania, 1909) 1: 304 – 310.
4. See Henrik Ibsen, *Samlede verker*. Ed. Francis Bull, Halvdan Koht and Didrik Arup Seip (Oslo, 1928 – 1957) 15: 365 – 71.
5. Confer the title of an Ibsen biography that we have not addressed here, Hans Heiberg's from 1967.

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Preface to *The Interplay Between Art and Politics: A Study of Langston Hughes's Poetry*

Nie Zhenzhao

Abstract The dissertation of Luo Lianggong explores the interplay of politics and artistry embodied in the poetry of Langston Hughes, the great African American poet in the twentieth century. It is composed of six parts with focus on the relationships between Hughes's political consciousness and the theme, the subject matters, the artistic point of view, and the artistic form to explore the interplay between politics and art as well as the different modes of the relationship between politics and art in different decades. It is characterized with the following three features: The first lies in his focus on the interplay of politics and artistry, the mainline of his dissertation, to develop his exploration. The second is its diachronic and synchronic structure in accordance with the theme. The third is his insistence of combining theories with textual analysis.

Key words preface; Luo Lianggong; *The Interplay Between Art and Politics: A Study of Langston Hughes's Poetry*

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兰斯顿·休斯(Langston Hughes,1902—1967)在长达40余年的文学生涯中创作了14部诗集、11部戏剧、10部长篇小说和短篇小说集、2部自传和一些散文和翻译作品,留下了一大笔宝贵的文化遗产,是美国黑人文学崛起的丰碑,被誉为"哈莱姆桂冠诗人"。他是一个美国黑人作家,但是他的黑人身份不仅没有阻碍他融入美国文学,相反他却成了美国文学的成就卓著的代表人物。他创作的文学作品具有浓郁的美国民族特色,已经成为美国文学的重要组成部分。作为美国黑人民族的代言人,他"像德莱塞将美国文学从清教文学中解放出来一样将黑人文学从胆怯中拯救出来",为黑人文学在美国文学中赢得地位奠定了坚实基础。在休斯的创作中,黑人文学的印迹是十分鲜明的,正是这种民族的印迹,体现了美国文学在思想、主题和艺术形式上的多元化。休斯的创作以诗歌成就

最大,因此批评界认为他是“自惠特曼以来美国最伟大的民主诗人”,在美国黑人文学和美国文学史上都具有十分重要的地位。

休斯不仅是伟大的美国黑人民族诗人,而且也是有着国际声誉的世界诗人。他的作品被广泛地翻译成法、德、俄、日、西班牙等国的文字以及非洲的文字,已经成为世界文学中的经典,并且引起了广大学者的关注和研究。对休斯的研究已经取得了丰硕的成果,然而同欧美学者的研究相比,中国对休斯的研究仍然显得薄弱。对中国读者而言,休斯并不是一个完全让人感到陌生的美国黑人作家。早在 1933 年,随着休斯访问上海,我国就开始介绍休斯和翻译休斯的作品。鲁迅还在《准风月谈》中发表论文,称休斯是一个“走出了黑人圈子”的进步作家。新中国成立后,尤其是自改革开放以来,休斯的诗歌被不断翻译介绍进来,引起我国学术界的高度关注,一批学者展开了对休斯的研究。在我国研究兰斯顿·休斯的学者中间,尤以华中师范大学的罗良功教授用功最多,成就突出,可以视为我国研究兰斯顿·休斯的代表。

良功长期从事英美文学的教学和研究,基础十分厚实,诗歌方面尤其如此。早在 1999 年,良功就开始研究兰斯顿·休斯。此后,他在《外国文学研究》、《当代外国文学》等杂志上发表了一系列研究休斯的专题论文。他于 2002 年出版的《英诗概论》一书,是我国高校广泛使用的教学参考书,奠定了他在英语诗歌研究方面的坚实基础。2003 年,良功赴美国宾夕法尼亚大学师从美国非裔文学教授赫尔曼·比弗斯博士和语言派诗人和理论家查尔斯·伯恩斯坦教授研究诗歌,特别是美国非裔诗歌。查尔斯·伯恩斯坦是美国艺术与科学院院士,在美国诗歌创作界和学术界都有很高地位。良功跟随他学习,不仅近距离接触到美国一流的创作家的理论家,而且还通过他接触到美国诗歌界的许多重要诗人和学者,并同他们建立起广泛的联系。通过在美国一年的学习与研究,良功学业上突飞猛进,查尔斯·伯恩斯坦和斯坦福大学的玛乔瑞·帕洛夫教授都向我表示了对良功的赞赏。良功回国后,产生了通过攻读博士学位把休斯研究推向深入的愿望,并于 2005 年以优异成就考入华中师范大学,在我的指导下攻读博士学位。良功用功勤奋,学养深厚,视野开阔,为人谦虚,学风纯正。正是这些特点,形成了他自己的学术个性。

良功在攻读博士学位期间,继续从事休斯诗歌研究,立志做一个有成就的兰斯顿·休斯研究专家。经过三年的努力,他圆满地完成了自己的学业,通过了自己的博士论文答辩,获得了博士学位,以自己的行动实现了做一个休斯专家的学术目标。陈众议、黄铁池等同行专家对他的博士论文给予了高度评价。2009 年,在上海外语教育出版社优秀博士文库遴选中,良功的博士论文《艺术与政治的互动:兰斯顿·休斯的诗歌研究》在专家评审中脱颖而出,被收入这一在全国很有影响的文库中。这再次表明,良功研究兰斯顿·休斯的成果得到了学术界的认可。良功的博士论文就要出版了,可喜可贺。在他的论文出版之际,我觉得有必要作一简单评价,作为读者阅读时的参考。

良功的博士论文《艺术与政治的互动:兰斯顿·休斯的诗歌研究》有其明显的特色,这首先在于其研究的学术焦点自始至终都聚焦于兰斯顿·休斯诗歌的"艺术与政治互动"这个根本问题之上,并把"艺术与政治互动"作为论文的主线,将休斯诗歌创作中的一个个重要学术问题贯穿起来,形成一个有机的整体。论文作者认为,休斯政治意识的核心价值观表现在两个层次,即种族自由平等的民主理想和人类友善和谐的道德理想。休斯从种族伦理关系出发,根据不同的社会政治形势不断调整、扩展自己的政治视角,从阶级关系、文化、性属、种族、伦理等多重角度探寻通向理想的道路。作者从休斯关注社会的视角变化中揭示出一个基本特点,这就是:休斯的政治思想塑造了诗歌艺术,诗歌艺术又传达了他的政治思想;在休斯的不同创作时期美国政治环境宽严不同,其政治意识的表现呈现出从外向而内敛的变化,而诗歌艺术形式却由平实到激进,两条相反的轨迹反映了艺术与政治之间的对话,两者形成互为呼应、互渗互补的关系。正是基于这一思辩独特的认识,论文作者采用对照的方法,集中讨论休斯的诗歌在不同时期表现出来的政治与艺术互动的基本特点。

在诗歌创作中,休斯的政治就是对文学的社会责任和文学的教诲功能的强调。关于这一点,良功在他的论文中作了很好的阐释。他在论文中指出:"休斯是一位具有强烈社会责任感的诗人,始终强调文学的社会作用。"像马克思所赞扬的欧洲 19 世纪批判现实主义作家一样,休斯是一个有强烈政治倾向的诗人。休斯在"黑人艺术家与种族山"一文中强调黑人作家应承担的社会责任,对黑人诗人回避种族身份写作的倾进行批评,表达了"借助文学翻越种族大山获取自由"的政治理想。正是出于一种带有政治倾向的社会责任感,休斯为美国黑人民族提供了"美国黑人文学"的范例,加速了美国黑人文学融入美国文学的进程。对于休斯文学创作的上述基本特性的研究,正是良功在休斯研究中的新的发现,是休斯研究学术史上的一次飞跃,无论对于他自己或是其他人的研究,都是十分重要的。

良功的博士论文还有另一个重要特色,这就是与"政治与艺术互动"主题相呼应的历时性与共时性论文结构。论文按照休斯创作发展的历史线索,把休斯的诗歌创作分为四个发展阶段,然后找出各个阶段的一个个结点,把休斯的诗歌文本、休斯的创作道路同当时的历史、文化、政治与批评环境结合起来,探讨休斯诗歌创作的具体特征。作者精心安排的这种论文结构科学合理,有利于展开对休斯诗歌的深入讨论和问题归纳。例如在第一章讨论哈莱姆文艺复兴时期休斯的"波希米亚式的种族意识及其书写"时,作者就有意识地在哈莱姆文艺复兴的历时性框架结构中,将休斯的种族身份的自我认同、美国民族身份的诉求、自由的信念、唯美主义的种族艺术观、种族发现与诗歌艺术视角的变换、波希米亚式的种族书写、黑人文化元素与民族意识表达等重要问题集合在一起,从共时性的视角揭示出休斯在整个哈莱姆文艺复兴时期的思想与艺术特征,即休斯诗歌"强烈的种族责任感,即对民族身份的认同与诉求、对民族自身的发现与检审、对种

族意识的艺术表达”。正是在这一准确判断的基础上,作者认为休斯这一时期的诗歌“回应了时代对于美国黑人民族意识的呼唤,表现了诗人自己对于民族、国家的强烈的认同和独立的理解”,并认为休斯强烈的民族意识及其波希米亚式的诗歌艺术相得益彰,推动休斯的诗歌创作走向成熟。作者在论文中指出:“休斯的诗歌在政治与艺术上的互动不仅仅是政治表达的调整和实验,而且是美学意义上的不断实验。”这一结论不仅是对休斯诗歌创作的正确总结,而且也为休斯诗歌研究的深入奠定了新的理论基础。

作者对“政治与艺术互动”的研究贯穿论文的始终。例如第二章,作者用“红色年代”建构论文的历时性结构,向前承接哈莱姆文艺复兴,向后连接 40 年代诗歌直至麦卡锡时期之后。这种历时性结构不仅有利于从整体上对休斯诗歌创作的发展脉络进行梳理以及对其创作特点进行科学总结,而且有利于发现休斯各个不同创作时期的重要问题并从共时性角度对它们进行分析与总结。在第二章里,作者在历时性框架中发掘出休斯的“左倾政治观”、“激进的社会理想”、“左翼诗歌与红色主题”等一系列重要学术问题,从共时性的角度论述了休斯诗歌创作“走向人民阵线美学”历时性特征。作者对休斯的诗歌在人民阵线美学影响下走向成熟的过程进行细致描述,尤其是对休斯在这一时期形成了“非间离美学”进行深入分析,指出“非间离美学在很大程度上是一种政治美学,表现了休斯艺术为政治服务的诗学观”。作者的这一观点能够准确说明休斯 30 年代中后期诗歌创作总体倾向,论辩有力,让人信服,应该看成是作者对前人研究的重要发展。

第三章也采用了同样的方法。作者从历时性角度将研究的视角聚焦于 40 年代的诗歌,深刻分析和讨论了休斯诗歌创作含蓄的政治观、艺术立场的现实主义回归及诗歌艺术的政治表达等共时性问题,有力地论证了休斯的诗歌创作从革命到抗议的历时性总体特征,认为休斯“通过强调政治表达中的艺术性形成了一种新的政治美学观,深刻地影响了他在这一时期的诗歌创作,并奠定了其 50–60 年代文学艺术观的基础”。论文作者最后以麦卡锡时代作为休斯创作的一个重要的历时性结点,将直至休斯逝世的最后一段创作历史连接起来,构成休斯创作的完整的历时性艺术与思想结构。休斯创作的最后这一段历史十分重要。在这个时期,休斯的诗歌在艺术题材的选择上体现了他的艺术原则和政治意识,社会责任感和艺术责任感进一步加强,自觉地通过含蓄的艺术形式和手法表现政治,政治和艺术上更为成熟。作者在细腻地分析休斯诗歌的基础上指出休斯这一时期诗歌的重要特点,即政治作为休斯诗歌创作的艺术题材主要表现在两个相互包容和印证的层面:一是种族,一是种族的精神状态。作者还认为,休斯的平实而又激进的诗歌在很大程度上是对他压抑的政治意识的一种补偿,明显具有种族文化特质、民主政治理想和先锋主义技巧的特征。作者对休斯复杂的创作历史过程的描述深刻细腻,总结准确精当,观点明晰科学,历时性归纳概括与共时性分析总结相互交织,出色地给我们描述了休斯诗歌创作的发展演进历

程和总体特征。

良功在整篇幅论文的写作过程中,还有一个特色应该提到,这就是他在整个论文写作中自始至终都能够坚持理论同实际相联系,坚持以休斯的诗歌文本分析为前提,无论是问题的发现还是观点的归纳,都来自诗歌的文本。他只要提出了新的看法和观点,都要搜寻大量的其它文本材料进行考证阐述,用事实对自己的观点加以确认,做到实事求是,有根有据。对于休斯诗歌的研究,良功的眼光独特,见解深邃,因而能够在新的发现基础上对休斯的诗歌进行科学归纳与总结,把以前的休斯研究提高到一个新的层面。做学问需要潜心专研,专心致志,切忌浅薄浮躁和急功近利。可以说,良功在论文的写作过程中真正做到了刻苦认真地读文本,老老实实地做学问。他治学严谨,学风淳正,问题意识突出。尽管他已经在休斯的研究中取得了可喜的成果,是一位在学界有了一定影响的休斯研究专家,但他为人低调谦逊,从不骄傲自大和自以为是。从他的研究中可以看出,他保持了一种难能可贵的优良学风。

总之,良功的博士论文观点突出,分析细腻,材料丰富,评述充分,特色鲜明,的确不失为一篇优秀的博士论文。当然,论文也并非十全十美,有些问题还需要继续深入探讨,有些措词还需要推敲。但是瑕不掩瑜,相信良功会在博士论文出版后继续对这些问题加以研究,把对休斯的研究提高到一个新水平。

中华经典,世界共享

——评王晓平教授的《日本诗经学史》

刘九令

Title Classic of China, Treasure of the World : Review on *The History of Japanese Research on The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem*

Abstract *The History of Japanese Research on The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem*, the latest work by Professor Wang Xiao-ping, is regarded the first Chinese academic work to discuss and evaluate the research of *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem* conducted in foreign countries. Focusing on *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem*, the great classic of China and treasure of the world, Professor Wang's new book is a comprehensive study with many different perspectives and topics, for instance, the early Japanese research documents of *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem*, the dissemination and translation of *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem* in Japan, the reception of *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem* in Japan, the comparative study of *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem* in Japan, as well as detailed discussions on various cultural phenomenon relating to *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem*. With Sino-Japan literary and cultural communication as the special concern, and numerous first-hand materials as the basis for the research, Professor Wang's book distinguishes itself with broad international academic vision and originality. Since the book is the first of the kind, it will surely put forwards the research of *The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem*.

Key words *The History of Japanese Research on The Book of Ancient Chinese Poem*; comparatively literature; internationality

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一部优秀的文学作品大多具有世界性,即所谓越是民族的越是世界的。《诗经》作为中华民族的传世经典之一,不仅滋养了历朝历代中国老少妇孺的精神世界,也成为世界其他民族所共享的宝贵食粮。由于不同民族之间存在着历史、地理、文化、习俗风尚等诸多方面的差异,使得对来自异域的文学作品的解读有意识或无意识地打上了本民族的烙印。此外,作品本身存在着开放的阅读空间,加之读者自身的文化背景、学识素养、期待视野也大有不同,因此作品在异域被接受过程中会存在曲解,甚至是误读。正因为如此,文学作品就有了一种不同于其源出国的特殊命运,由此丰富了作品本身的存在意义。

有一句广告词说的很好:事件的魅力往往不在事件本身,而在于背后千丝万缕的关系。《诗经》为世界其他国家所接受,而接受最早的恐怕当属与我们一衣带水的近邻日本了,这是一个事实。而日本人究竟是如何接受、如何阅读这部文学经典的呢?阅读后日本人又做了什么呢?关于这一系列问题的考索是一个极具吸引力的学术课题,王晓平教授在这一方面走在了前头。2009 年 9 月由学苑出版社出版的《日本诗经学史》集中展示了他在这方面取得的学术成果。之所以说是"集中"是有根据的,作者本人早在上个世纪 80 年代就开始研究《诗经》,特别是《诗经》在日本的流布与接受研究。如,先后发表了《〈 诗经 〉迭咏体浅论》(内蒙师院学报 1982 年第 2 期)、《马瑞辰〈毛诗传笺通释〉的训释方法 文史 1985 年 第 25 辑》、《〈 诗经 〉在日本的传播与研究》(中国文学年鉴 1993)、《〈 诗经 〉文化人类学阐释的得与失》(天津师大学报 1994 年 6 期)、《诗经的异文化变奏》(河北师范大学学报 2001 年第 1 期)、《诗经之于江户文艺》(天津师范大学学报 2002 年第 3 期)、《京都市藏唐抄本〈毛诗正义秦风残卷〉》(天津师范大学学报 2005 年第 5 期)、《诗经日藏古本的文献学价值》(天津师范大学学报 2006 年第 5 期)、《东洋文库所藏唐抄本〈毛诗残卷〉考》(日本帝冢山学院大学人间文化学部研究纪要 2006 年第 8 号)等。可以说,这部专著里凝结了王晓平教授对这一问题三十的学术思考,还有汗水。

需要补充的是,我们看到的这部 50 多万字的《日本诗经学史》,实际上只是删节版,最初是 60 多万字的著作,由于种种原因,王晓平教授不得不忍痛割爱,将相当一部分也很有价值的内容"大手笔"地删掉,这对于读者来说绝对是一件憾事。不过,或许将来还会在王教授其他著作中发现此次被砍掉的《日本诗经学史》的肢体的某一部分,这同样值得期待。

关于这部《日本诗经学史》学术性质,作者这样写道:"本书不仅是一部日本诗经研究史,而且也涉及日本传存的〈诗经〉文献,〈诗经〉在日本的传播和翻译,日本人对〈诗经〉的接受和有关〈诗经〉的比较研究。对有关的〈诗经〉的各种文化现象,都有简略的描述"(王晓平 522)。由此可见内容之丰富,视角之多样。另外,由于日本研究《诗经》历史悠久,代表人物众多,学术宗派林立,因此对各种纷繁复杂的问题进行条分缕析是一项颇为棘手的工作。纵观全书,《日本诗经学史》的写作体例基本上是以"问题别"为中心,以一种"逻辑"上的历时性视角,纵向地考察、评价了日本学者对《诗经》的研究。具体而言,首先考察日本人读了什么;其次,弄清日本人是怎么读的;再次,搞清日本人读出了什么;在此基础上,作者试图弄清日本人为什么这样读。由于研究问题中展现了内在的连续性,同时又突出了问题的重点,使得原本艰深的学术内容读起来脉络十分清晰。

内容上,《日本诗经学史》涉及到了日本人研究《诗经》的诸多方面。书中首先考察了《诗经》写本在日本的流布,写本是日本人解读、研究的物质载体和前提基础。在考察各种写本流布情况的同时,还从文献学、比较文学等多维视域考察其意义。其后,着重考察了清原诗经学、明清诗经学以及江户时代的《诗经》

研究。其中非常值得品读的是江户时期不同学派对《诗经》的研究和阐发，如朱子学派、古学派、阳明学派、折中学派站在不同学术立场的解释。接下来，从比较文学视角考察了《诗大序》、《毛诗正序》等诗歌理论对诸如“诗论”、“歌论”、“俳伦”这些日本文学理论的影响。还有，同样是采用比较文学方法，论述了日本文学对《诗经》的吸收与借鉴，以及《诗经》在异文化背景下的变异情况。紧接着，从研究方法的视角宏观地梳理明治时期以后日本人对《诗经》研究的种种成果，此外也从微观的角度对日本人从文化学角度阐释《诗经》的得与失逐一地进行了客观、理性的评价。第九章历时性地考察了日本人对《诗经》多种重写方式。最后，第十章中将日本的诗经学放在世界文学的坐标中审视，发掘其存在的特殊意义。

这部《日本诗经学史》可圈可点之处颇多。首先是严谨但不僵化、宏观却不空洞的学术风格。当下中国学术界存在一个怪现象，中国传统学者或受日本学风影响很深的中国学者人与当下中国的许多学者之间存在两种倾向，前者喜好以小见大，侧重于细小问题考索追查，后者则是乐于宏观概括，倾心于大的理论突破。两种研究风格固然是各有千秋，又各有弊端。于是，在中国既能绵密考据又不纠缠于琐碎，既有宏观视野和深厚理论又不泛泛而谈的研究十分难得。王晓平教授的这部《日本诗经学史》取两者之长，避两者之短，将中国两种学术风格的优秀之处完美地结合在一起，既有一手材料的对比甄别和细小问题的严谨考证，使得文章根基夯实，有准确度和可信度，同时也有当前最新理论的支撑和应用，显得文章有深度和高度。写作风格上，吃透材料，直指关键，描述巧妙，论述精炼，材料翔实，理论精当。从这个意义上讲，王晓平教授的《日本诗经学史》不失为当下一部学术写作典范。

其次，该书的另外一个特色就在于材料的原始性。众所周知，搞古典文学难，搞外国古典文学更难，搞两国以上古典文学的交流难上加难。难在两国古典资料的难寻、难辨、难读、难解。《诗经》在日本传播和被阅读已有千年的历史，作为载体的写本、抄本、传本经过悠长岁月的传承，既有遗失散佚，又有自然的书虫啃噬和破损，也有人为的故意篡改和以讹传讹。因此，如何找到第一手资料并能甄别真伪，确定其学术价值，是一项漫长而且很有技术含量的工作。《日本诗经学史》中所引许多资料都是古代的，并且是首次发现和被利用的，因此书中的观点也大多具有原发性。另一方面，即使有幸得到珍贵资料，如何阅读也是一件难事。古代至今，时代相距久远，日本的古语以及古典文法与现代日语有很大差异。不惟如此，经过两种不同文化思维的转换，将古代日本人的学术研究翻译成我们中国人能够接受的话语，也需深厚的两国古典文学素养和文献阅读能力。王教授凭借自身深厚的学养发掘并利用了这些原始材料，收录到著作之中，使其成为中日两国学者共享的珍贵资料，令这批沉寂多年的资料退去满身灰尘，焕发出当代学术生命之光，照亮后来学人的研究之路。

最后，“以此观彼，以彼观此，彼此关照”的强烈比较意识。但凡学术之意义

与价值大多通过不同视域、不同坐标下的审视与比较方能凸显。《诗经》流布于东瀛之国,成为中日比较文学研究的对象。第一章《〈毛诗〉写本促成的文化传递》从"媒介学"角度,揭示《毛诗》写本东传的过程以及这一过程中日本的遣隋使、遣唐使以及留学僧的作用,并提及日本特殊的阅读方式——"素读"。第四、五、六章则立足于"影响学",考察了《诗经》对日本文学从诗经论、诗论、歌论、与俳伦等文艺理论到《万叶集》的具体文学作品,以及俳谐、和歌等文艺创作诸多方面的影响。此外,第十章《日本诗经学与国际学术的互动》中,将日本的诗经学与中国文化、日本国学、东亚民歌研究、欧洲的民谣等的比较引介过来,突出了日本诗经学在全球视野中的地位和作用。通过多层次、多角度的比较,使得考察对象一次次展示出相应的价值与意义。纵观近年来纷繁复杂的各种文学专著,采用比较文学的方法进行研究并不稀罕,但是像《日本诗经学史》这样将其用得如此之广、如此之深、如此之妙的,可以说是凤毛麟角。

若要考察王晓平教授《日本诗经学史》的学术价值,当须将其放在大的《诗经》学研究史的坐标系中进行考察。中国是《诗经》的产生国,因此最早研究《诗经》,研究《诗经》成果最多的也是中国。因为研究对象、研究方法、指导思想、研究立场多有不同,所得结论大多相异。如何梳理、评价前人的研究,为后来研究提供借鉴、做好铺垫是《诗经》研究史的重要工作。关于这一点,先生这样论道:《诗经》学术研究史是对《诗经》研究的研究,即以历代《诗经》研究者及其论著为研究对象,考察学术成果的正误得失,揭示学术观点的源流变化,总结学术研究的发展规律,为以后的研究提供有益的经验和借鉴(赵沛霖 482)。遗憾的是,中国这样的《诗经》研究大国直到 20 世纪才有《诗经学史》。到目前为止,至少有如下代表著述:夏传才《诗经研究史概要》及其增注本、赵沛霖《诗经研究反思》、韩明安《诗经研究概观》、袁长江《先秦两汉诗经研究论稿》、陈桐生《史记与诗经》、张祝平《朱熹诗经学论稿》和傅丽英《明代诗经学》、赵沛霖《现代学术文化思潮与诗经研究——二十世纪诗经研究史》。这些优秀的学术成果大大推动了中的《诗经》研究,也为今后的研究做了很好的基础性工作。不过这些研究史只是局限在中国文化语境中进行考察,难脱中国的思维模式。日本由于地利上的原因,研究开始的较早,资料较多,成果十分丰富,形成了一道有别于中国的研究风景。将日本人的《诗经》介绍到中国来,给中国的研究提供借鉴,为我所用,由此推动本国研究进一步发展,是亟待解决的课题。到目前为止,日本国内也没有一部诗经的研究史。王晓平教授这部《日本诗经学史》使诗经研究史中外国人的研究不再缺席,让中国的《诗经》学史研究不再孤单。

不仅如此,王晓平的《日本诗经学史》的意义并不局限于填补引介外国诗经学史研究的空白,更重要的是将会启发《诗经》研究沿着这一方向进一步走下去。有了《日本诗经学史》,不久的将来或许会有《韩国诗经学史》、《法国诗经学史》之类的研究,中国的诗经研究会有更多的外来元素相继登场,丰富《诗经》研究。另外,《日本诗经学史》中所描述的日本人研究诗经与中国人研究多有相似

之处,也有不同之处,那么对中国的《诗经》研究与日本的《诗经》研究进行比较,发现异同,总结规律,在此基础上行合理公正的评价也是一个令人期待的课题。

作为一位具有国际性眼光的学者,王晓平教授并没有认为完成一部《日本诗经学史》就算是大功告成了,针对将来的研究方向提出了如下意见:首先,开展日本所藏《诗经》善本、珍本的整理出版工作的合作。包括写本的在内的日本《诗经》典籍,急需尽快抢救,以免毁损散佚,此事相当紧迫。其次,在培养研究新生力量方面,中日双方学校就培养能够使用对方语言的《诗经》硕士、博士而实行留学生交换制度,使青年研究者具有国际视野和能够活跃于国际学术舞台的知识结构。再次,推动国外《诗经》研究著述的翻译出版,并创办面向国际学术界的《诗经》研究刊物,把中国的学术成果介绍出去(王晓平 523)。这些宝贵的意见如何实施起来,恐怕还有待晚辈学人的努力。

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