



## Articles on Ibsen 2001

The main source for this year's survey of essay-length commentaries on Ibsen is the *Proceedings of the Ninth International Ibsen Conference*, held at the University of Bergen, Norway, June 5-10, 2000. The *Proceedings* include five plenary presentations on various topics and numerous other papers grouped under the following headings: "Staging Ibsen Today," "The Legacy of Ibsen: Twentieth-Century Theatre," "Ibsen and the Concept of the Tragic," "Ibsen, Genre and Historical Experience," "Ibsen and the Bourgeois Experience," and "Ibsen in Changing Cultural Contexts." 2001 also saw the appearance of the second issue of *Ibsen Studies*; a "symposium" of three essays (in Norwegian) that look at aspects of Ibsen from the point of view of disciplines other than literary studies; and several essays published separately (especially noteworthy in the last category are two splendid essays on Ibsen plays that are infrequently discussed: *Lady Inger* and *Love's Comedy*). I begin with the issue of *Ibsen Studies* and the other non-conference essays and then turn to briefer discussions of the papers from the Bergen Conference.

Most of the essays in the second issue of *Ibsen Studies* help make it far superior to the disappointing inaugural issue of 2000. Lis Møller (1) examines various types of repetition within and between Ibsen's dramas of contemporary life: e.g., repeating something in order to make it symbolic; the echoing of "words, sentences, or phrases--verbatim or varied--by the same person or distributed over a number of people"; repetition to build up dramatic intensity; frame repetition; "the reflection or reappearance of persons and constellations of persons"; the repetition of "themes, motifs and images" from play to play; repetition as theme, as in Ibsen's "portrayal of the past and the bygone's continued influence." The most important part of the essay is Møller's use of Peter Brooks's *Reading for the Plot* to account for Ibsen's extensive use of repetition and her realization that she needs to modify Brooks' conclusions. Brooks, drawing on Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, finds that repetition is a prerequisite of plot. As it oscillates between reproduction and variation and between backward and forward movements, textual repetition provides a "binding of textual energies that allows them to be mastered by putting them into serviceable form," tying "one textual moment to another in terms of similarity or substitution rather than mere contiguity." It is central to the process that forces "us to recognize sameness within difference, or the very emergence of a *sjuzhet* from the material of *fabula*." "Repetition as binding. . . works toward the generation of significance." In response to this, Møller argues that if "we take our starting point in Ibsen's theme of repetition and reappearance in order to illustrate the workings of repetition in his plays, a more complex and contrast-filled picture is drawn. . . . Repetition is not just an interplay between identity and difference and between regression and progression; it also produces a tension or conflict between movements in opposite directions. Repetition is not only binding; it is also potentially unbinding." Møller supports her claim with good readings of *Ghosts*, *The Master Builder*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, and especially *Lady from the Sea*.

Mark B. Sandberg (2) focuses on a key aspect of modernity that he calls the "mimetic home," that is, "a home not experienced as authentic, natural, and grounded but representational--as a diminished copy that falls short of what used to be. It is a home made strange by the awareness of the people living in it, not by physical changes

in its structure.” For many, “Ibsen among them, the idea of modern dwelling was not imagined as a change of venue, but as the familiar home made strange, the home that looks exactly like a home, but without the emotional attachment or confidence in its authenticity. The question that interests him is how one goes on living in a defamiliarized home. . . . A follow-up question we in turn might ask of Ibsen’s dramas would be: ‘How might we best describe the kind of consciousness that puts the home permanently out of reach?’” To explore this aspect of modernity, Sandberg first turns to a phenomenon contemporary with Ibsen’s last plays, “the folk-museum movement of the 1890s in Norway,” and discusses the kinds of responses, both intended and otherwise, that the products of this movement evoked in those who visited them. Sandberg then uses this material to examine the “mimetic homes” of *The Master Builder* and *When We Dead Awaken*, thereby creating new and important considerations of these plays. Two highlights are a rare focus on the home that Solness presently occupies, usually obscured by the familiar foregrounding of Solness’ three major building projects: churches, happy homes for human beings, and castles-in-the-air, and Hilde’s finding it very easy to live happily in the house that is not a home for Solness and his wife. Sandberg’s essay acquires additional value from helping non-readers of Norwegian gain some familiarity with the important work of two of the best younger Norwegian commentators on Ibsen, Frode Helland and Lisbeth Pettersen Wærp.

The late Inga-Stina Ewbank’s richly detailed and engagingly written account of Ibsen’s visit to Copenhagen in 1852, where the Bergen Theater had sent him so that he could learn state-of-the-art theater practices, is the most thorough discussion of this topic with which I am familiar (3). Ewbank provides a complete and exact list of the plays that Ibsen could have seen during his stay (after pointing out erroneous information of this sort in earlier accounts of his trip), and for better known plays, such as Shakespeare’s, she indicates how the Copenhagen versions differed from the original texts. She also provides important infor-

mation that cannot be gained from a list of plays, such as the fact that the Royal Theatre’s 1851-1852 season was “wholly dominated by the tension between [Johan Ludvig] Heiberg as Director and Frederik Høedt as newly-engaged actor with ideas of his own which had the effect of splitting the personnel of the theatre into warring camps.” And she speculates interestingly on how Ibsen must have responded to such aspects of his trip as, on the one hand, experiencing a “wondrous release from Christiania (and Bergen) parochialism” and, on the other hand, discovering that the grand resources of the theater and the great skills of the theater artists were more often than not expended in the service of such trivia as the extremely popular vaudevilles. A major highlight of this essay is Ewbank’s disputing the frequent claim that “the most important and lasting impact on Ibsen” of his 1852 study tour was his discovering Herman Hettner’s *Das Moderne Drama*; surely, she points out, “the young man who had already written *Catiline* and *The Burial Mound* could learn more about “psychological character conflicts” from seeing Oehlenschläger’s *Hakon Jarl* than from “reading a fairly academic book in a foreign language.” Other highlights are Ewbank’s discussion of Ibsen’s *St. John’s Night*, which is in all probability “the first and most direct creative result of Ibsen’s 1852 tour,” and her splendid reading of Ibsen’s “Rhyme-Letter to Mrs. Heiberg,” which “merges memories of 1852 with those of a summer’s day in 1870 when Ibsen visited Mrs. Heiberg,” who was preparing to direct *The Pretenders*.

The “new material in the National Library of Norway” that constitutes the subject of Tone Modalsli’s essay (4) are four previously unknown letters from Ibsen and some papers of Bernhard Dunker, who was “regarded as the foremost trial lawyer” in Norway in the middle of the nineteenth century and “also played a prominent role in cultural life,” for example as a member of the board of directors of the Christiania Theater, 1860-63 and 1865-66. Modalsli includes, in both Norwegian and in English translation, the two most important letters by Ibsen, sent to Dunker on June 22, 1864,

and May 5, 1866, which provide new information on Ibsen's journey to Rome and his experiences with art there. The Dunker papers, which Modalsli discusses in detail, reveal that Bjørnson's collecting money to support Ibsen in Rome was augmented by other efforts of this sort. Bjørnson participated in these as well, but the evidence indicates that Dunker had the leading role.

The only weak effort in *Ibsen Studies* 1 (no. 2) is Helje Kringlebotn Sødal's "new interpretation" of Agnes in *Brand* (5). He dismisses existing interpretations of the character as simplistic readings of her as the typical "romantic heroine," as sentimentalizations, or as definitions of her only in relation to Brand: as his victim, his opposite, his judge, or his justification. No one, he believes, has tried to focus directly on Agnes herself, to determine her choices and values and to ask critical questions about them. In his view, Agnes is so far from being Brand's opposite that she is, in fact, his "greatest and most important supporter" and "never becomes Brand's opponent as far as the ideas in the play are concerned." He agrees with those who think her joyful outcry as she dies shows that she has been cruelly deceived, but he also distances himself from them by adding: "She is, however, not only deceived by her husband, but by her own values which have also destroyed her life and sent her to an early death. Like her husband she regards duty as the most important human value. She fails to combine deontological thinking with evaluations of the consequences and the actual situation in the most decisive conflicts in the play. Brand alone could hardly have forced her to the last sacrifices, because he insists on the *self-willed* sacrifice, which necessarily must come from within. But since Agnes' values and her deontological thinking are close to Brand's, his thoughts become fatally seductive to her." Sødal's interpretation of Agnes might be more persuasive if it had been more effectively articulated. The essay is rambling and repetitious, the critical positions he is opposing are defined only by snippets and sound-bites, and his own thinking about Agnes is not presented in a clear and straightforward manner but has to

be gleaned from separate glimpses of it in various parts of the essay.

Lynn R. Wilkinson's "Gender and Melodrama in Ibsen's *Lady Inger*" (6), which ranks among the best essays on a single Ibsen play, is a superb study in complete command of its various materials: the play, Norwegian history, "the tradition of melodrama as it developed in nineteenth-century Europe," and the studies of melodrama by Peter Brooks and his followers, especially the "feminist theorists and historians [that] have used his study as a point of departure for their own investigations." The heart of her essay is a richly detailed reading of the continuous breaking down of the gender categories in the play. The play thus suggests "that [gender] is not a transparent or natural category; at best, gender, like the binary oppositions of melodrama, is potentially misleading. Ibsen's play suggests an awareness of the social function of gender that points forward to recent work in cultural history." *Lady Inger*, she concludes, "is a melodrama about melodrama, both in the sense that it catalogues and criticizes a number of popular melodramatic conventions and in the sense that it suggests the ways in which melodrama and its conventions can shape--and distort--one's view of the world. In other words, the conventions of melodrama allowed the playwright to imagine a play that brought into focus the hollowness of mid-nineteenth-century ideologies of gender and nationalism--even as he was able to do so only in a way that seems over-complicated to readers today."

Asbjørn Aarseth (7) increases our awareness of Hegel's influence on act four of *Peer Gynt* by quoting passages from Hegel's *Aesthetik* and showing how they could have inspired various details in the act. Moreover, most of the details newly linked to Hegel tend to reinforce Aarseth's well-known interpretation of the play: "It is my view that *Peer Gynt*, based in structural terms--like Goethe's *Faust*--on the pattern of a morality play, explores the romantic idea of human identity based essentially on the pre-Darwinian, idealistic opposition of human as opposed to animalistic nature. Peer himself is in so many ways morally as well

as intellectually dominated by what the nineteenth century referred to as the beast in man.” Aarseth’s second 2001 essay is more complicated (8). His starting point is Ibsen’s telling William Archer in 1898: “It is much easier. . . to write a piece like *Brand* or *Peer Gynt*, in which you can bring in a little of everything, than to carry through a *konsekvent* scheme, like that of *John Gabriel Borkman*, for example.” Aarseth translates *konsekvent* into English as “severely logical” and then questions whether the coherence of a dramatic structure can reasonably be thought of in such terms. He finds a more appropriate term in “enthememe,” which Aristotle in *Rhetoric* calls “a rhetorical syllogism,” and supports the choice by arguing that persuasion, the aim of rhetoric, can be seen as the purpose of drama since in “a wider sense persuasion may be understood as the creation by verbal or artistic means of a kind of emotional effect or stirring of the imagination into consciously and temporarily accepting an illusion or a poetic faith.” This is a promising beginning, and the subsequent reading of *Lady Inger* as an enthememic structure adds considerably to the promise. When Aarseth then shifts to the plays from *Ghosts* on, however, he tends to lose track of his focus and to become involved in such distractions as rehashing his “glass cabinet” model from his 1999 book on Ibsen’s dramas of contemporary life and drawing comparisons between Lady Inger and Mrs. Alving.

Inga-Stina Ewbank’s second 2001 essay, written for a volume of essays on Theodor Fontane (9), is for the most part a study of Fontane’s reviews of Ibsen’s plays and his evolving sense of “what Ibsen does, and why and how he does it” and of how this evolving sense may well have affected Fontane’s development as a novelist. Her concern is not influence in the ordinary sense but what Henry James had in mind when he wrote of *Hedda Gabler* that “if the play doesn’t enable us to say that we know Ibsen better, ‘we may at least say that we know more about ourselves,’ and about our critical assumptions.” She does, however, mention Ibsen’s and Fontane’s both drawing on the 1890s theme of the “nervous” woman in *Hedda Gabler* and *Effi*

*Briest* and finds it possible that some aspects of *Effi Briest* derive from *The Lady from the Sea*. This section of the essay is also valuable for its many fine remarks about the relevant Ibsen plays Ewbank is discussing, those from *Hedda Gabler* on. For me, however, the most important contribution of the essay is its two opening pages. Here Ewbank focuses on what Fontane identified in his review of *The Lady from the Sea* as the “Ibsen-effect,” the effect “of working directly on one’s nerves and senses.” This effect, she writes, while likening it to a similar effect in Shakespeare, “arises. . . from sympathy with characters but also, and more keenly in the case of Ibsen, from an ineluctable sense of a pattern closing in, of what the playwright’s people *have* to do.” The same effect is evident in *Effi Briest* when the letters revealing Effi’s affair are accidentally discovered: “What happened,” Fontane writes, “was what was bound to happen, what always happens.” An example of this effect in Ibsen is Hedda Gabler’s burning of Løvborg’s manuscript, which also resembles the incident in *Effi Briest* “by reminding us of the text as text, of the art as art. In both these works, although they belong to different genres, the effect of intense involvement co-existing with self-conscious textuality is produced by an art passing through and beyond naturalism. The play and the novel are alike in combining the aesthetics of naturalism with a transcendence of its ideology.”

Susan Torrey Barstow’s “‘Hedda Is All of Us’” (10) is an extremely well researched and richly detailed study of the effect of matinee performances and productions in the English theater of the 1880s and 1890s and especially of the first London staging of *Hedda Gabler*, which began as a matinee production. Barstow points out that both the popular and the independent matinees “were dominated by women--as spectators, actresses, and dramatic protagonists,” and that because of this they “provided a space for the observation and critique of staged femininity. Thus the matinee encouraged the development not only of a new drama but also of a new feminist self-consciousness.” Turning to the *Hedda Gabler* production, she uses

such materials as accounts of what it was like to attend matinee performances and the testimonies of women who saw the production to argue that it empowered women both politically and in other ways. An especially interesting aspect of this discussion is her cogent critique of the theory-driven notion that realism cannot be an instrument of change since it presents ideological constructs as objective truth and therefore necessarily validates the normative values of the dominant culture. The essay successfully accomplishes what it sets out to do, but a note of warning is in order. Barstow's inaccurate and otherwise unsatisfactory summary of *Hedda Gabler* clearly indicates that she is interested in Ibsen's play only because of the production's apparent impact on its audience. Readers seeking new light on the play itself will not find any here.

Alan L. Ackerman Jr.'s "Visualizing Hamlet's Ghost" (11) is a long and highly theoretical study of the representation of human interiority in modern drama. Ackerman often seems to be more interested in providing précis of the ideas of certain highly regarded theorists than in clearly demonstrating his various claims, but his essay is nonetheless well worth reading and it should be read in its entirety by those who want to get the full benefit of his references to Ibsen. These mainly concern *Ghosts*, which Ackerman calls a "ground-breaking experiment in dramatic realism" and a "deep meditation on the duality of spirit and form, and specifically a notion of form that is rigid and absolute as opposed to one characterized by what Oswald calls the 'joy of life.'" He also states that "*Ghosts* brilliantly defines a split between two different kinds of seeing and two different kinds of ghosts. Consequently the play represents a radical revision of the phenomenology of the stage, as the audience is forced to question what it means to see a ghost. The play's most stunning moment of ghostly representation is the ultimate moment and climax, a scene that takes us back to the mother-son closet scene in *Hamlet*. At the end of *Ghosts* Oswald shrinks into himself. He is completely solipsized by his inherited disease, and, paradoxically, his final collapse, the representation of his inwardness or interiority,

is the *coup de théâtre*." Later, when Ackerman is discussing the Proteus chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses* he has more to say about *Ghosts* and makes an important remark about *A Doll House* in connection with Ibsen's causing his spectators "to transgress the limits of his dramas," to project their imaginations "between the lines or outside of the structural limits" of the plays.

Hans Erik Aarset's consideration of *Love's Comedy* (12, in Norwegian) is another 2001 item that ranks among the best essays on a single Ibsen play. The usual critical practice with the play is simply to offer an interpretation of it or to discuss it in relation to various familiar Ibsen themes, while Aarset provides a thorough study of it from the point of view of the categories of traditional comedy. These include the standard character types; the standard *topoi*, or locations of comedy, such as the basic contrast between the urban and the pastoral; and the standard action formulas, which Aarset considers according to Aristotle's beginning-middle-end pattern. He notes how *Love's Comedy* adheres to these categories and also how it creates its own identity by deviating from them. The most interesting and valuable section of his essay looks at the great amount of metadrama and self-referentiality in the play. All this leads up to an interpretation of Svanhild's choice of a marital partner, but it is even more valuable for helping us see how the play *works* as a dramatic construct.

Svein Atle Skålevåg, in the first essay in the *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* "symposium," focuses on representations of mental disturbances and physical conditions with mental complications in Ibsen's plays (13, in Norwegian). His main examples are the opinion of the Provost in *Brand* that human personality is like an untamed foal needing to be brought into control by being subjected to the norms of society, the conditions of Dr. Rank in *A Doll House* and Oswald in *Ghosts*, and Wangel's treatment of Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea*; he also glances more briefly at *Rosmersholm* and *Little Eyolf*. The lens through which he examines these representations is a detailed history of psychiatry in Norway and elsewhere in Europe in the nineteenth

century, and his basic conclusion is that Ibsen's handling of the mental and physical disorders represented in his plays tends to evolve along with the evolution of medical knowledge. The essay is also valuable for its detailed consideration of the relation between Oswald's condition and syphilis.

In the symposium's second essay, Anne Marie Rekdal explores Ibsen's complex attitudes toward freedom and the possibilities of achieving it (14, in Norwegian). Her primary text for this exploration is *Ghosts*, which she examines through the lens of Lacanian psychology. To some extent this involves translating the dynamics of the play into Lacanian terms rather than using them to illuminate it, but at least the Lacanian terms fit the play extremely well, so that there is no distorting of it. Furthermore, whether it is because of her Lacanian lens or merely her own astuteness, she makes some stunning observations about the play. One has to do with how the play ultimately undermines the "joy-of-life" notion that it for so long projects as an ideal. Another, which I wish I had known about or had been able to come up with myself when I wrote my paper on *Ghosts* for the 2000 Ibsen conference in Bergen, is that Mrs. Alving, wanting *both* to free Oswald from the guilt he feels because of his illness by telling him that he inherited it from his father *and* to preserve his belief in the "joy-of-life" ideal, is *compelled* to come up with the positive view of her husband's "joy-of-life" that she provides in act three. Rekdal's essay apparently derives from her doctoral dissertation and the book she turned it into, *Frihetens dilemma. Ibsen lest med Lacan* (2000). I have not yet had the opportunity to read her book, but on the strength of this essay I am very much looking forward to it.

In the symposium's third essay, Fredrik Engelstad perceives Ibsen as an "elucidator of power" (15, in Norwegian). Engelstad's methodology is to move from play to play, describing within each of them the workings and effects of power in individuals and social groups and relating his findings to the power categories formulated by Max Weber. I am troubled by his cursory dismissal of Nietzsche's possible relevance to his topic, but I am even more

troubled by other aspects of the essay. Engelstad makes little attempt to differentiate the plays in terms of the extent to which power issues are really central to them. His discussions of the power issues remain on a high level of generalization, and while they are on this level usually accurate enough, they are seldom very searching and sometimes seem superficial. To take one example, his saying that Hedda Gabler's suicide results from a loss of power is to ignore a good deal that Ibsen has shown and suggested about her and her aspirations. What troubles me most is that Engelstad's findings have little to offer to help us increase our understanding and appreciation of the plays. Perhaps that stems from Engelstad's thinking of the plays and their characters as "case-studies." A shorter version of this long essay, in English, appears in the *Proceedings of the 9th International Ibsen Conference*, the focus of the remainder of this survey (16). In reporting on its contents I will discuss only those essays that I can genuinely recommend, and to the extent possible I will discuss them more briefly than I have discussed the fifteen preceding essays.

The *Proceedings* opens with the conference's five plenary addresses. Claudio Magris, a noted writer and critic from Trieste, offers "autobiographical" notes concerning Ibsen and Trieste writers, including himself. His essay contains many interesting observations of a general nature on individual plays (17). Toril Moi (18) argues that Ibsen's esthetic in the dramas of contemporary life is an "anti-theatrical" one, that he deliberately works against--by avoiding, parodying, and other means--the practices that produce "theatricality" in the sense established by Michael Fried. A major source of "theatricality" in this sense is acknowledging the presence of spectators and thus that what is appearing before them has been consciously prepared for their benefit and appreciation. Other sources include presenting the staged piece as a series of tableaux and creating "sensory extravaganzas." Moi shows how Ibsen accomplishes his anti-theatricality in analyses of *Pillars of Society* and *The Wild Duck*. The material in this essay has subsequently been worked into her 2006 volume,

*Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, which also exists in a Norwegian translation.

Joan Templeton is concerned with defending Ibsen's realistic drama from the attacks on dramatic realism conducted by Brecht and his followers, post-modern literary theory, and performance theory (19). Templeton traces the decline of the reputation of realism brought about by these attacks and begins her defense by demonstrating logical flaws in the attackers' arguments. But to my mind her defense is strongest when she argues that "Ibsen's realism is less realistic or illusionist than is commonly believed" (thus exploding the "argument" that Ibsen should be devalued because he worked in a mode now shown to be flawed). To support her contention, Templeton cites two "post-realist" aspects of the dramas of contemporary life: the "character-figure," which, like Ulrik Brendel or the Rat Wife, is "both the psychologically developed character we associate with realism, sometimes termed 'three-dimensional,' and at the same time a figure in the symbolic design of the action," and "the fourth-wall bourgeois parlor," the function of which "lies far less in what [it shows] us than in what [it doesn't]. For Ibsen's subject is what is unshowable, indeed, unmentionable in the bourgeois parlor: the disavowed, the disallowed, the rebellious, the anarchic."

My own plenary address is an attempt to define tragedy through an analysis of *Ghosts*, thereby also identifying *Ghosts* as tragedy (20). My main focus is on Mrs. Alving's unfailing belief in her capacity to make her circumstances correspond to her wishes and her ultimately discovering, like Oedipus, not only that she does not have this capacity but also that her acting as if she did have it may well have helped cause the horror she must confront at the drama's end. Wu Xiaojiang (21) describes the choices he has made or would make in staging three Ibsen plays in China in order to universalize (*An Enemy of the People*), localize (*A Doll House*), or nationalize (*Hedda Gabler*) them.

I turn now to the papers from the regular sessions of the Bergen conference. Laura Caretti (22) compares the approaches of four women di-

rectors--Andrea Breth (Germany), Deborah Warner (England), Edith Roger (Norway), and Margareta Garpe (Sweden)--toward *Hedda Gabler* by describing their stagings of the final moments of the play. Johnny Gavlovski., a member of the Grupo Arte Atid theater company, describes his group's exploration of "Ibsenian psychoanalysis" (23). This concept derives from Ibsen's works having been "determinant for the father of psychoanalysis" and thus Gavlovski's essay contains numerous references to Freud's citations of Ibsen. Gavlovski also indicates how the group's exploration has affected its methodology. Maria E. Brunder provides a detailed analysis of Elfriede Jelinek's famous 1997 "reworking of Ibsen in Brecht's didactic manner," *What Happened After Nora Left Her Husband, or The Pillars of Society* (24).

Errol Durbach's excellent study identifies Hedda Gabler and Rebekka West as "Euripidean" heroines and describes the dialectics of their plays, which he classifies as "erotic tragedy" (25). Hedda and Rebekka are Euripidean because, although they "profoundly destabilize the basic assumptions of a democratic social order," "their tragedies make it impossible for us to withhold awe, and even a form of qualified approval in the face of their agony." The dialectics of their plays are marked by "an argument embodied in equally compelling, but equally dangerous, alternatives" and by the tracing of a paradigm that is psychic as well as cultural: "the trauma of the woman ensnared between erotic and ethical drives--but also the model of her culture eroded by antithetical but absolutely necessary value-systems." The bulk of the essay is a fine analysis of Rebecca West's experience that also draws on Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

Raminta Gamziukaitė provides an interesting and important examination of the centrality of *Einseitigkeit* ("onesidedness," in this context denoting the opposing of extremes) in Ibsen's plays (26, in German). She finds this particularly manifested in the familiar triangle of a man flanked by two sharply contrasted women and by such oppositions of extremes as Brand and Peer Gynt or Skule and Håkon. Her discussion of Ibsen's use

of contrasts of this sort draws on Wagner, Thomas Mann, and Schiller's distinction between naïve and sentimental types. Keld Hyldig focuses on Johanne Dybwad's 1925 production of *Ghosts* at the National Theater in Oslo, which he calls a "neo-classical staging" (27). He does not explicitly define what he means by classical style in this context, and his essay suffers from the dubious assumption that realism cannot convey a play's tragic nature, but he does a good job of defining the production's basic characteristics. Andrew Kennedy studies the deaths in some of Ibsen's dramas of contemporary life (28) and concludes from them that Ibsen created "a new kind of tragedy": "It is a form that is less closed [in contrast to traditional tragedy] than we might expect from the appearance of an absolute-seeming ending. Total inevitability is suspended in favour of a significant self-affirming choice, reached abruptly--but through patterns of obsessive emotion and self-imagining--and driven by absolutely felt, but actionally non-inevitable, moral alternatives--comparable to the Kierkegaardian either/or in *Brand*." Jette Lundbo Levy studies the relation between "the concept of the tragic" and "the concept of the erotic" in *Love's Comedy* and *Rosmersholm* (29). The focal idea of her argument is most effectively put when she writes: "In order to make a union between the erotic and the utopian, woman and the sublime in the erotic is sacrificed. This sacrifice in its double form is the core of the tragic in Ibsen's modern prose dramas." She is obviously concerned with a potentially important idea, but in its present form her essay constitutes only a first attempt at articulating her argument and thus puts a great burden on the reader.

John Lingard's study of Norwegian folklore and the uncanny in *Little Eyolf* focuses on "the Rat Lady scene" in connection to two other texts: Ibsen's 1857 essay "On the Folk Ballad and its Significance for the Literary Arts" and Freud's famous paper on the "*Unheimliche*" (The Uncanny) (30). This is a very well researched and richly detailed rendering of the topic. Agnese Mortukáne (31) argues that Hedda Gabler, Halvard Solness, and John Gabriel Borkman are not only tragic figures

but also, and inevitably, comic as well: "as proud personalities they can neither console themselves nor reconcile themselves with compromises. In accordance with the scope of their nature, their self-delusions, which are quite inevitable in such a situation, are also great--pathetic, exaggerated, and this evident incompatibility with the real situation makes them comic." In its present form the essay is scarcely more than a sketch, and Mortukáne has difficulty articulating her ideas, but what she has to say is certainly worth considering.

Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife's excellent study of *Hedda Gabler* draws on suicide theory, the practices of Greek tragedy, and the history of the concept "courage" to argue that Hedda achieves genuine tragic status through her suicide (32). Marie Wells offers a fine analysis of *Ghosts* and a productive glance at *Rosmersholm* in the service of exploring some of the key issues involved in trying to read Ibsen's plays as tragedy (33). Lisbeth Pettersen Wærp argues that *When We Dead Awaken* is permeated by ambiguity and that its "ambiguity can be understood on the basis of the two versions of the sculpture "The Day of Resurrection" (34). For those who can read Norwegian, this essay has been superseded by Wærp's excellent book *Overgangens figurasjoner* (2002). For others this essay will provide at least a glimpse of Wærp's ideas and methodology. Vigdis Ystad focuses on the self-inflicted deaths in *A Doll House* (as it was first conceived according to Ibsen's initial reference to it, "Notes for the Contemporary Tragedy"), *Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler* (35). She claims that these deaths must be understood from the point of view of tragedy because they are sacrificial acts through which the characters triumph by affirming themselves and their values. I say "claims" because the essay contains much more assertion than argument and demonstration.

Thorbjørn Tønder Hansen discusses Otto Brahm's "concept of naturalism" and his staging of *Ghosts* as the first offering of his Freie Bühne (36). This is a fine essay that is at its strongest in showing how suited *Ghosts* was to Brahm's purpose in opening the Freie Bühne. Gunhild Hoem focuses

on the metaphysical dimensions of *Emperor and Galilean*, especially the “Symposium with the spirits” in Part I (37). From this she derives the formula “through darkness into light,” which she calls “the establishing idea structure upon which most of Ibsen’s dramas are built.” In my view, Hoem incorrectly transforms the articulation of the arena in which Julian must act into Ibsen’s message on how we should all live. But the essay is nonetheless worth reading for its exploration of a play and especially a particular aspect of it that tends to transform Ibsen commentators into Peer Gynts searching for the nearest roundabout.

Brian Johnston analyzes *Rosmersholm* and *The Master Builder* to show how in them, as in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus*, the “dramatic plot recreates [the] past story as tragedy,” or, as he also puts it: “The plot reconstructs” what the play reports about past events “as a logical agon of tragic knowledge re-enacted in the immediate present” (38). Although Johnston discusses only two plays, this fine essay is an outstanding contribution to the understanding of how Ibsen plays work and should be read by anyone interested in Ibsen. The essay should also completely dispose of the silly idea that Ibsen’s plays are really badly written novels. Beret Wicklund discusses *Rosmersholm* as a “gothic drama” (39). In my view, she inaccurately represents many aspects of the play and sometimes pushes her conception of “gothic” to an extreme, but I also believe that anyone interested in *Rosmersholm* should consider this essay’s take on it. Andrey Yuriev also discusses *Rosmersholm* (40). I am completely unimpressed by his attempt to read the play as an allegorical reworking of Gnostic thought and as an example of a “mystery play tradition in Ibsen’s realistic drama,” but I must say that his accounts of Ulrik Brendel and Peder Mortensgaard in the first half of the essay are very much worth reading.

Jorunn Hareide reports on the responses to Ibsen’s plays of his mother-in-law, Magdalene Thoresen, who was herself a writer (41). Hareide provides relevant information on her writings and otherwise contextualizes her comments. The value

of the essay lies in its letting us see Ibsen’s work from the point of view of a particular intellectual and social type. Jørgen Dines Johansen’s topic is *John Gabriel Borkman* (42). I think he discusses the title character too exclusively in moral terms, but as usual in his studies of Ibsen he views the play from numerous points of view, and as usual he provides a stimulating discussion that should be of value to anyone considering the play. Unni Langås’ well-written and valuable analysis of *When We Dead Awaken* focuses on the play’s various representations of Irene after her separation from Rubek and is informed by such perspectives as Pygmalion and anti-Pygmalion narratives and Freud’s discussion of “the uncanny” (43). Langås concludes that the play “through its disquieting staging of male desire, ambition and power, and through its focus on the use of the female body in the aesthetic, erotic, and economic exchange, asks provocative questions about some of the most typical conventions and deepest prejudices in nineteenth-century culture.” Jessie Locrantz’ “guide to understanding *Hedda Gabler*” (44) clarifies numerous instances of the “social mores, customs and habits” represented in the play that would be unfamiliar to new readers not experienced in reading Ibsen. Sample topics include the forms of address used by the characters, Tesman’s wanting to cut the pages of his new books, and the degree of potency in the punch drunk by Løvborg. This essay should be a big help for students, and even veteran commentators on Ibsen might well find it useful here and there. Peter Madsen is sometimes abrupt in his conclusions, but his study of the many themes of *Pillars of Society* is nonetheless interesting and valuable (45). His basic idea is that the play “may be interpreted as a kind of foundation myth” (based on Bernick’s final redemption and achievement of full powers) “staged as a bitter farce” (based on Bernick’s manipulations).

Tore Rem gives us “another British Ibsen,” that is, the Ibsen who affected late nineteenth-century Britons not from the stage but through the books in which his translated plays were published (46). This well researched and informative essay is most

important for its account of the Newcastle publisher Walter Scott, who published “the first competent and widely distributed translation of Ibsen” and who as a rule “very consciously directed much of the marketing of his books towards a working-class readership.” Helge Rønning’s focus in his hard-to-summarize but important essay (47) is the dwelling places within which Ibsen’s characters dream dreams that are too grand for both their settings and themselves. He considers the settings in relation to their “thematically significant spatial arrangements” and their architecture, especially as their architecture reflects European architectural styles contemporary with the plays. The contrast between the settings--the “closed rooms” of Rønning’s title--and the characters’ “open dreams” reflects “one of the central aspects of the encounter with modernity,” the “experience of having been thrown into a new and impersonal world,” two results of which are “the unresolved contradiction between modern and traditional society” and the contrast between *Gesellschaft* (society) and *Gemeinschaft* (community). Rønning has subsequently incorporated the material of this essay into his 2006 book *Den umulige friheten: Henrik Ibsen og Moderniteten*.

Astrid Sæther argues for an understanding of Hedda Gabler that corresponds to Ibsen’s writing in a preliminary note for the play: “Hedda has deep poetry in the very depths of her soul” (48). Sæther has difficulty in fully articulating her ar-

gument, and she fails to show how Nietzsche’s thought is relevant to it, but the understanding of Hedda that she argues for nonetheless makes the essay worth consulting. Orm Øverland’s account of the reception of Ibsen in the United States from 1889 to 1910 is an unusually good example of this type of study, especially because of its many very well chosen quotations (49). The essay has some of the same kind of interest as William Archer’s look at typical early British reviews of Ibsen’s plays, “Ghosts and Gibberings,” but its real focus is the provinciality of American public commentary on Ibsen up to the turn of the century, as he was slowly coming to be accepted and even admired, and the subsequent abrupt about-face of this commentary. Chen Aimin explores the reasons for the popularity of Ibsen’s Nora in China and traces the versions of Nora that have emerged from one cultural period to another (50). The writer’s political and theoretical sophistication makes this essay very much worth reading. The last item in the *Proceedings* is Kari Gaarder Losnedahl’s guide to the exhibition “Ibsen in Bergen,” which was held in the Bergen Museum during the conference. Its purpose was to give “an update of what we know today about Ibsen’s life and theatre experiences” during his stay in Bergen and to question the various negative myths about his stay. The exhibits are lacking, of course, but the guide itself contains a good deal of interesting material.

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1. Lis Møller, “Repetition, Return, and Doubling in Henrik Ibsen’s Major Prose Plays,” *Ibsen Studies* 1: 2 (2001), 7-31.
  2. Mark B. Sandberg, “Ibsen and the Mimetic House of Modernity,” see item 1, 32-58.
  3. Inga-Stina Ewbank, “Ibsen in Wonderful Copenhagen 1852,” see item 1, 59-78.
  4. Tone Modalsi, “Ibsen, Bjørnson and Bernard Dunker, 1864-66: New Material in the Manuscript Collection of the National Library of Norway, Oslo Division,” see item 1, 94-106.
  5. Helje Kringlebotn Sødal, “Beautiful Butterfly, Agnes mine? A New Interpretation of Agnes in Henrik Ibsen’s *Brand*,” see item 1, 79-93.

6. Lynn R. Wilkinson, “Gender and Melodrama in Ibsen’s *Lady Inger*,” *Modern Drama* 42 (2001), 155-73.
7. Asbjørn Aarseth, “*Peer Gynt* and Hegel’s Ideas on Egyptian Art,” *Scandinavian Studies* 73 (2001), 535-46.
8. \_\_\_\_\_, “Logic and Rhetoric in Ibsen’s Drama,” in *Dialoguing on Genres: Essays in Honour of Andrew K. Kennedy on his 70th Birthday*, eds. Ulf Lie and Anne Holden Rønning (Oslo: Novus Press, 2001), 13-25.
9. Inga-Stina Ewbank, “*Hedda Gabler*, *Effi Briest* and ‘The Ibsen Effect,’” in *Theodor Fontane and the European Context: Literature, Culture and*

- Society in Prussia and Europe*, ed. Patricia Howe and Helen Chambers (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001), 95-104.
10. Susan Torrey Barstow, " 'Hedda Is All of Us': Late-Victorian Women at the Matinee," *Victorian Studies* 43 (2001), 387-411.
  11. Alan L. Ackerman, Jr., "Visualizing Hamlet's Ghost: The Spirit of Modern Subjectivity," *Theatre Journal* 53 (2001), 119-44.
  12. Hans Erik Aarset, " 'Å omkalfatre utfall og intrigue': Genrerefleksjon og metafiksjon i Ibsens *Kjærlighedens komedie*," *Edda* (2001), 294-314.
  13. Svein Atle Skålevåg, "Sannheter om sinnet – Ibsen og psykiatrien," *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 18 (2001), 261-71.
  14. Anne Marie Rekdal, "Henrik Ibsen og friheten som dilemma," see item 13, 271-81.
  15. Fredrik Engelstad, "Henrik Ibsen som makt-dreder," see item 13, 281-96.
  16. *Proceedings – IX International Ibsen Conference, Bergen, 5 – 10 June 2000*, ed. Pål Bjørby and Asbjørn Aarseth (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 2001). All subsequent items are from this volume.
  17. Claudio Magris, "Ibsen and Triestian Literature: Autobiographical Notes," 15-27.
  18. Toril Moi, "Ibsen's Anti-Theatrical Aesthetic: *Pillars of Society* and *The Wild Duck*," 29-47.
  19. Joan Templeton, "Genre, Representation, and the Politics of Dramatic Form: Ibsen's Realism," 49-64.
  20. Thomas F. Van Laan, "Ibsen's *Ghosts* and the Concept of the Tragic," 65-76.
  21. Wu Xiaojiang, "Universalization, Localization, and Nationalization: Directorial Approaches to Ibsen's Drama on the Chinese Stage," 77-88.
  22. Laura Caretti, "Close-ups on Women Directing *Hedda Gabler*," 91-100.
  23. Johnny Gavlovski, "Grupo Arte Atid: The Influence of Ibsen in the Works of Freud. A Latin-American Experience," 101-09.
  24. Maria E. Brunner, "Ibsen in Post-modern Austrian Theatre: Bourgeois or Proletarian Emancipation?" 139-46.
  25. Errol Durbach, "Ibsen's Euripidean Heroines and the Dialectics of Erotic Tragedy," 179-88.
  26. Raminta Gamziukaitė, "Einzeitigkeit als Voraussetzung des Tragischen in Henrik Ibsens Dramen," 189-99.
  27. Keld Hyldig, "A Neo-Classical Staging of Ibsen's *Ghosts*," 201-10.
  28. Andrew Kennedy, "A Choice of Death? Logic, Symbol and Form in Ibsen's Modern Tragedy," 211-16.
  29. Jette Lundbo Levy, "The Concept of the Tragic and the Concept of the Erotic in *Love's Comedy* and *Rosmersholm*," 217-23.
  30. John Lingard, "Known of Old and Long Familiar: Norwegian Folklore and the Uncanny in Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*," 225-32.
  31. Agnese Mortukáne, "Comic Sparks in Ibsen's Tragic Plays," 233-37.
  32. Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife, "Identity, Suicide and Tragedy in *Hedda Gabler*," 239-47.
  33. Marie Wells, "Rescuing Ibsen for Tragedy," 249-56.
  34. Lisbeth Pettersen Wærp, "Henrik Ibsen's *When We Dead Awaken*, Arnold Rubek's 'The Day of Resurrection,' and the Concept of Tragedy," 257-64.
  35. Vigdis Ystad, "Sacrifice, Suicide and Tragedy in Ibsen's Drama," 265-72.
  36. Thorbjørn Tønder Hansen, "Otto Brahm's Freie Bühne – on the Function of *Ghosts* in 1889," 299-307.
  37. Gunhild Hoem, "*Emperor and Galilean*: The Problem Child of Literary Scholars," 309-14.
  38. Brian Johnston, "Play It Again. Past Story Revisited as Tragic Plot: *Rosmersholm* and *The Master Builder*," 315-24.
  39. Beret Wicklund, "Ibsen's Demons: *Rosmersholm* as Gothic Drama," 335-40.
  40. Andrey Yuriev, "The Revelation of Things Unseen: A Mystery Play Tradition in Ibsen's Realistic Drama, with Particular Reference to *Rosmersholm*," 341-50.
  41. Jorunn Hareide, "Ibsen's Drama – as seen by Magdalene Thoresen," 369-75.
  42. Jørgen Dines Johansen, "The Closing of an Epoch: Punishment and Euthanasia in *John Gabriel Borkman*," 377-85.

43. Unni Langås, "Death, Femininity and Art in *When We Dead Awaken*," 387-93.
44. Jessie Lokrantz, "A Guide to Understanding *Hedda Gabler*," 395-403.
45. Peter Madsen, "House, Community, Society," 405-11.
46. Tore Rem, "Ibsen as Book: Another British Ibsen," 413-22.
47. Helge Rønning, "Closed Rooms and Open Dreams," 423-31.
48. Astrid Sæther, "Beauty – Discontent – Nothingness: *Hedda Gabler* and Nietzschean Concepts of Creativity," 433-41.
49. Orm Øverland, "The Reception of Ibsen in the United States 1889-1910," 453-62.
50. Chen Aimin, "Noraism in the Changing Chinese Cultural Context," 471-77.
51. Kari Gaarder Losnedahl, "'Ibsen in Bergen': Guide to the Exhibition," 511-24.

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