



## Survey of Articles, 2002-04

**Editor's Note:** I am honored to follow Otto Reinert and Thomas Van Laan as the author of our annual survey of articles on Ibsen, and I extend my deep thanks to both these distinguished Ibsen scholars for their much appreciated service to *Ibsen News and Comment*.

This year's survey will reduce a six-year backlog by covering three years. Because of the growing number of articles on Ibsen, the survey will no longer cover articles not written in English, which has become the lingua franca of Ibsen studies worldwide. The survey will systematically cover articles published in refereed journals; selected articles from un-refereed publications, including proceedings and festschrifts, may also be included. Joan Templeton

Abbreviations: *IS* (*Ibsen Studies*); *MD* (*Modern Drama*); *Scan* (*Scandinavica*); *SS* (*Scandinavian Studies*). Articles are numbered consecutively in parentheses following the title; the second parenthesis includes page numbers and, where necessary, other bibliographical information.

### 2002

*IS* II, number one, the only volume of the biannual journal to appear in 2002 and the first to be edited by Knut Brynhildsvoll, the successor to Vigdis Ystad and Frode Helland, shows few signs of editing. A journal that has chosen to publish exclusively articles in English has a duty to contributors who write more happily in other languages, and here, the well-known Danish theatre scholar Jytte Wingaard's "Henrik Ibsen and Denmark: Performances of Ibsen's Contemporary Drama at the Royal Theatre" (1) (9-33), is very ill served. Wingaard's extensive research, including much archival work, and her wide knowledge of Danish theatrical history deserve better than an English that is often difficult to understand. I am puzzled by Wingaard's claim that the early Royal performances of Ibsen were stilted because of the directors' refusal to

"defy" Ibsen's stage directions; surely the culprit is the clash between the romantic and vaudeville traditions of the Danish stage and the demands of Ibsen's new realism, a subject which Wingaard herself discusses. But because of the article's uncertain English, I am not sure that Wingaard's views are accurately represented. In any case, her account of the early Danish productions, especially the performances of the reigning idols Betty Hennings and Emil Poulsen, is a very informative contribution to Ibsenian stage history.

The title of the other article in *IS* II, "A Jungian Reading of Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*" (2) (34-53), suggests a formulaic study of how a literary text "fits" a theory, but this is happily not the case. Erineç Özdemir's very perceptive essay demonstrates that the Jungian notion of the collective

unconscious and its representation in archetypal images is a superb critical lens through which to view both Ibsen's notes on *The Lady from the Sea* and the play itself. This by itself would be a feat, but Özdemir does not stop here; she shows how the Jungian aspects of Ellida's thralldom to the Stranger and the sea dovetail with her condition as an unfree woman, arriving at a brilliant meeting of Jungian and feminist analysis. The article is also beautifully written.

The third piece in this issue, "Yet Another Honour: Ibsen and the British Scandinavian Society" (3) (54-58), is Tore Rem's five-page account of his discovery of an interesting new bit of Ibseniana—Ibsen's honorary membership in the short-lived British Scandinavian Society—and as such, it belongs to the "Ibseniana" part of the volume. It is instead featured as an article (probably because two articles would have made a very sparse issue), while the "Ibseniana" section is made up of an account that is three times longer, Margherita Giordano Lokranz' "Three Unpublished Letters by Henrik Ibsen" (4) (59-74). One letter turns out to have been published (in an obscure library catalogue); it is Ibsen's note to Luigi Capuana, who was translating *A Doll House* into Italian, insisting that the play's ending must not be altered. Of the other two letters, one consists of a few lines thanking a certain Alfredo Mazza for a newspaper account, and the other is a brief letter to the same Mazza denying him the rights to translate *A Doll House* into Italian. Lokranz tries to flesh out the letters' significance by adding a reduced account of the Italian and German controversies about staging the end of *A Doll House*. The English of the article is sometimes incomprehensible. Like Wingaard, Lokranz is very ill-served by the lack of a copy-editor competent in English.

A journal that includes articles written only in English should provide English translations of Ibsen's writings. But Ibsen's letter thanking the British Scandinavian Society for honoring him

is left untranslated in Rem's article, and while Lokranz provides translations of the letters she has unearthed, she does not translate a letter from Ibsen to his French translator Prozor. This kind of editorial carelessness is shocking.

I turn now to articles in other journals.

Since all characters have speech habits (idiolects), Kristian Smidt's "Ideolectic Characters in *A Doll House*" (5) (*Scan* 41:2; 191-206) is oddly-named. But it is also fascinating. Smidt shows how Ibsen's language indicates class and character, e.g.,

Regine's lower-class vocabulary, Tesman's foolish "Hvad" and "Tænk det!,"—before making an extended analysis of two aspects of speech habits exhibited by the characters of *A Doll House*: the number and types of words they repeat.

Nora's exclamatory "å," which she uses eighty-two times, is shown to be an "admirably subtle way of revealing her emotional nature and nervous state of mind." Nora's "jo" is usually left untranslated in English, and Smidt suggests some intelligent solutions. Tackling the famous difficulty of "det vidunderlige," he argues that "miraculous" is wrong for Nora's early uses of the word because she is not waiting for a miracle, only something "wonderful." Torvald's love for "Nå" and his eternal "lille" when he addresses Nora are also analyzed as pointers to his character, along with the speech habits of Rank and Krogstad. Smidt's essay teaches us much about the art of Ibsen's dialogue.

It is surprising to find Anne Marie Rekdal's weak "The female *jouissance*: An Analysis of Ibsen's *Et Dukkehjem*" (6) in *SS* (74:2; 149-80). An application of Lacanian theory to *A Doll House*, the essay is badly translated from the Norwegian, a problem compounded by the fact that the language of Lacan often reads like parody to begin with. Rekdal's intentions are seriously thwarted by such passages as: "If desire moves beyond the phantasms toward das Ding [the Thing], this movement implies a rejection of Le-Nom-du Père [the Name of the Father]." Language aside, what can be

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understood of the article is unconvincing. Its not entirely clear account of prior analyses of Nora is a very inadequate précis that does not accurately represent the authors it glosses over. Rekdal's thesis is that we can profitably read *A Doll House* through Lacan's reading of Sophocles' *Antigone* as a conflict between the law (Creon) and "jouissance," i.e., absolute pleasure (Antigone). Applying Lacan's idiosyncratic reading to Nora seems very wrongheaded; if Nora has been called a bourgeois Antigone, it is not because she enacts some kind of orgasmic *vérité* but because she refuses the moral imperatives of her world. In any case, to describe Nora's hiding her true self through her inauthentic squirrel acts as "the imaginary 'ego' (moi) hid[ing] the subject 'je'" yields no new insights. And Rekdal's application of the Lacanian pleasure principle is surprisingly puritan; it is "problematic" that Nora finds it amusing to tell Mrs. Linde that she might have a secret admirer, for this embodies "sexualization, daring, and prohibition." And Nora hardly plays "unrestrained erotic games" by showing Dr. Rank her stockings. A contradictory shift in the meaning of "jouissance" takes place when Rekdal discusses the tarantella, which is seen as an unproblematic representation of the female refusal of the phallus. The notion that Rank dies so that the "symbolic order," which "has castration as a requisite," can be restored, seems nonsensical; the ending of *A Doll House* dramatizes the death of the "symbolic order." And I know of no "long tradition" in Ibsen studies that at play's end, Nora is both "a man" and "desexed."

In "Bringing *Brand* into the 20th Century: Cecilie Løveid's *Østerrike*" (7), another article in *SS* (74:1; 47-60), Tanya Thresher prefers "palimpsest" to Løveid's own "overmaling" (overpainting) to describe the nature of Løveid's adaptation of *Brand*. Thresher is interested in how Løveid uses Ibsen's text to question the binary, hierarchical opposition between "male" and "female" in Western thought and thus write a play that is "beneficial for the postmodern female subject." Løveid's theatre is both an avant-garde challenge to Ibsen's psychological realism and indebted to Ibsen in its femi-

nist challenge to the entrenched pieties of Western sexism. Both Brand and Ludvig are seducers who force others into their own views of the world, but Løveid's Agnes refuses to be seduced. Ludvig has given her a copy of *Brand* for instruction, but she destroys the book and disappears, leaving her dress behind. Ludvig, who is ecstatic because the dress is all he has ever wanted of Agnes, dons it, goes to find a dead male friend, and acts out a scene of copulation that Thresher shows seems a tailor-made dramatization of Luce Irigaray's theory of the male who can love only himself and thus embodies a kind of homosexuality. Thresher valiantly tries to explain the incomprehensibility of the last part of *Østerrike* as a challenge to the "primacy of the gaze" through a "postmodern turn to the ear," but this, as it must, fails.

Toril Moi's " 'It was as if he meant something different from what he said—all the time': Language, Metaphysics, and the Everyday in *The Wild Duck*" (8), appeared in *New Literary History* (33:4; 656-86) and was later incorporated into *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*. In this essay on *The Wild Duck*, Moi does not acknowledge the writers on Ibsen who have made most of her points. Her chief argument, that the moralizing sentimentalists Gregers and Hjalmar are dangerous enemies of the everyday, represented principally by Gina,

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is the thesis of my "Sense and Sensibility: Women and Men in *Vildanden*" (*SS*, 1991), later incorporated into *Ibsen's Women* (1997). Moi's comments on Gregers' and Hjalmar's empty language echo the work of John Northam, Thomas Van Laan, and, again, myself. Moi also offers the following familiar ideas in Ibsen criticism as new: Gregers is obsessed with symbols; there exists a communion between Gregers and Hedvig; the "depths of the sea" is a phrase from folk literature; Ibsen did not want Hjalmar played as a clown; Hjalmar's behav-

ior with Hedvig is appalling; Gregers and Hjalmar are egotists; Relling is not Ibsen's *raisonneur*. And among Ibsen critics, it is hardly "widely believed" that every person needs a life-life. Moi's notion that Wittgenstein's distinction between metaphysical language and plain language is a useful tool for understanding *The Wild Duck* is peculiar; Gregers' and Hjalmar's moralistic clichés and self-serving sentimental platitudes do not constitute "metaphysical" language. And Moi is a naïve reader of Sarcey, the doyen of French drama critics when Ibsen was first performed in Paris. Sarcey did not despair at his failure to understand *The Wild Duck*. Rather, he was so irritated by what he considered Ibsen's symbolically laden "canard énigmatique" that he comically avowed that while some cooked the duck with olives, some in its own blood, and some with turnips (all classic French duck recipes), he has absolutely no sauce to propose.

The late Inga-Stina Ewbank's " 'Strangely Inscrutable Art': Ibsen, James and Early Modernism" (9) appeared in the anthology *English and Nordic Modernisms* (ed. Bjørn Tysdal; Norwich: Norvik Press, 25-40). Like all Ewbank's writing on Ibsen, the essay is informative, suggestive, and ambitious; its aim is to trace James' evolving interest in Ibsen, from his snobbish yet admiring denigration of Ibsen's imaginative world, the "poor dear Norsefolk, including the Colossus" [Ibsen], to a more positive view, and, ultimately, to a thoroughgoing appreciation of Ibsen's art. What James

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admired above all was Ibsen's difficulty. Ewbank finds a parallel between the richness of meaning—the ambiguities and complexities—of James' late novels and Ibsen's late plays, and speculates that James may have found in Ibsen a model for his "strangely inscrutable art" (a term James applied

to Ibsen's plays). Ewbank's larger point is that contrary to a prevailing opinion in England that Ibsen is too simple to be considered a modernist, he, like James, is an example of modernism's devotion to ambiguity and uncertainty. Even if one believes that Ibsen's mind is less open than Ewbank will allow, or that James did not need Ibsen to develop into the author of *The Ambassadors*, Ewbank's essay shows how both playwright and novelist wove complicated "tissues of relations" among characters that tantalize and test their readers' powers of analysis.

The "of" in the title of Branislav Jakovljevic's "Shattered Back Wall: Performance Utter-

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ance of *A Doll House*" (10) suggests that its author has problems with English prepositions, and the article is peppered with unidiomatic English that *Theatre Journal's* copy-editor should have corrected (54:3; 431-48). "Performance Utterance" is a term from J.L. Austin's often discredited theory of "performative speech acts," and Jakovljevic succeeds neither in showing that theatre and Austin's theories support each other nor that "*A Doll House* is a play about writing." Nor is he well acquainted with Ibsen's text, e.g., Krogstad and Helmer are said to share happy memories as fellow students. But the article makes an original, arresting point about *A Doll House* and realist theatre in general: the connection between spectator and play is not made at the level of the invisible fourth wall in front, but offstage, "the ambiguous sphere where the 'unreality' of theatrical event and experiential 'reality' of the audience interact, merge, and shape each other." Nora goes "offstage" into "real life," and Jakovljevic provides us with a fascinating ac-

count of her future in the sequels written to *A Doll House* and in the actual lives of two women indelibly affected by Nora, Laura Kieler and Eleanor Marx-Aveling.

Three articles in the “Praxis” section of the 2002 *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* are devoted to directing *Hedda Gabler*. Rhonda Blair’s “*Hedda Gabler*: Revisiting Style and Substance” (10) (16: 2, 143-153), easily the best of the three, discusses the author’s experience directing a university production in which she wanted to move on from her former “materialist feminist” production of the play. No Ibsen scholar will be surprised to learn that Blair’s reading of Michael Goldman, Mary Kay Norseng, Inga Stina-Ewbank, and Errol Durbach caused her to discover a complex psychopathological and occasionally mythic structure in Ibsen’s great play. Her description of how she attempted to translate these meanings into performance makes for very interesting reading. John Staniunas’ “Negotiating Between Then and Now: Directing Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler*” (12) (155-61), in which he, too, describes an experience directing a university production of the play, is, to quote from “Monty Python,” “something completely different.” Staniunas, who regards Kate Burton’s lamentable performance as Hedda as a “star-making turn,” gives us a narration of his trip to Norway to “research” Ibsen, in which he “walked the entire city of Oslo.” Especially gratifying was a discussion at the Ibsen Center, where everybody was “brilliant” (and where Staniunas takes a graduate student for an eminent professor). Afterwards, Staniunas returned to Kansas convinced that any production of the play “had to be orchestrated in a very careful and physical manner.” Staniunas has unwittingly written a parody of an eager, exceedingly naïve theatre instructor. The third “praxis” article, Michael A. Conolly’s “Mapping Desire: Couching Hedda and Eilert’s Conversation in Act II of *Hedda Gabler*” (13) (163-170) starts with the premise that because intelligent students often do not understand what is wrong with Oswald or why Hedda kills herself, Ibsen’s texts are opaque. Conolly wants to demonstrate that careful reading

of the text demonstrates why the characters act as they do, and he focuses on the tête à tête between Hedda and Løvborg to prove it. There is nothing wrong with Conolly’s line-by-line examination of the conversation, which is often very intelligent, but there is nothing original about it, either. And the point should have been not that Ibsen’s texts are difficult, but that they require attention.

I turn now to a selective account of the proceedings *Acta Ibseniana: Ibsen and the Arts: Painting—Sculpture—Architecture* (ed. Astrid Sæther; Oslo: Center for Ibsen Studies). The sixteen papers were read at a conference in Rome in 2001 sponsored by that city’s Norwegian Institute and the Ibsen Center in Oslo. Many seem to be unrevised drafts, and some are rehashes of papers that were read and occasionally even published elsewhere. The sub-title is very misleading; the volume is mostly about Ibsen and Italy, and sculpture and architecture are represented only as metaphors to describe, not very helpfully, Ibsen’s method of dramatic construction. The quality of the papers is wildly uneven, ranging from the original and informative to the incomprehensible (and thus ignored in this survey). Of the former, Helge Rønning’s “Henrik Ibsen and Italian 19th-Century Liberalism” (14) (23-36) treats a topic that is virtually missing in the biographies; for anyone interested in Risorgimento Italy’s likely influence on, and affinities with, Ibsen’s own thinking, this fine comparative précis of political history and theory is a must read. A second important contribution is Mai Britt Guleng’s excellent “Lorentz Dietrichson—Ibsen’s Roman *Cicerone*” (15) (49-60). Guleng, the author of a dissertation on the distinguished Norwegian art historian and critic Dietrichson, Ibsen’s friend and guide in Rome, has here produced an authoritative account of Dietrichson’s influence on Ibsen’s views of classical and baroque art and demonstrated the wrongheadedness of Meyer’s claim that Ibsen’s tastes did not reflect those of his own day. Two other interesting essays are Giovanni Antonucci’s delightful account of Rome in Ibsen’s day, “The artistic rediscovery of Rome” (16) (43-48), and Roberto Alonge’s “Italy in Ibsen’s Dramatic Work”

(17) (37-42), another in the long line of Alonge's provocative and mostly successful attempts to establish a violently erotic sub-text in Ibsen's plays by teasing out the perverse and fetishistic tastes of the male characters. Asbjørn Aarseth's "Effects of Ibsen's Encounter with Classical Art—with Particular Reference to *Peer Gynt*" (18) (91-98) seeks to show that in *Peer Gynt* Ibsen "indirectly" pays a tribute to classical art through his use of ancient Egyptian monuments; Ibsen did so because he "wanted to make use of the main point in Hegel's interpretation of the differences between symbolic and classical art." The fact is that Ibsen almost certainly did not read Hegel, but even if he did, he was the last writer on earth to devote his art to promot-

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ing other people's ideas. Aarseth's article is in part a re-hash of his earlier article in *SS* 73 (2001), "Peer Gynt and Hegel's Ideas on Egyptian Art." Of the essays on Ibsen and painting, Lars Roar Langslet's "Ibsen and Munch" (19) (71-80) is a précis of part of his 1994 book, *Edvard Munch-Henrik Ibsen*; Laura Caretti's "Ibsen and Raphael" (20) (81-90), which the editor characterizes as a challenge to "the traditional views on Ibsen's relation to Raphael," focuses on a "connection" that has nothing to do with the artists, i.e., a reproduction of the "Sistine Madonna" hung on the wall of the set of the 1879 world premiere of *A Doll House* in Copenhagen. In "Things. Archaeology as perspective and metaphor in Ibsen" (21) (99-108), Karin Sanders com-

plicates the simple, describing her subject as how architecture can act as "a foil *for* or perspective *in* Ibsen's work" and claiming that Ibsen is like an archeologist as he unearths "*things*" (italics abound in this essay: "*hard . . . digging. . . fossils*"). But Ibsen, unlike an archeologist, has created what he is "excavating," and using a metaphor for what is already evident arrives at no new understanding of the text. Sanders does not seem at home in Ibsen's universe, which is scrupulously devoid of poetic justice; Borkman falls, she says, because he built his empire on the "ruins of a woman's love."

Finally, I note two articles on translating Ibsen into foreign languages. Behzad Ghaderi, who has translated *Peer Gynt* into Persian and who is working on translations of the prose plays, writes of his experiences in "Cultural transactions with Ibsen: Problems and Objectives in Translating Ibsen into Persian" (22) (*International Journal of Translation* 14; 69-77). As far as I can judge, the essay is a thoughtful account of the textual and cultural difficulties in transposing Ibsen's Norwegian into a Persian idiom, and even if one has no Persian, one learns something about the intricacies of translating. The second article is Inga-Stina Ewbank's "Translating Ibsen for the English Stage" (23), published in the anthology *In verbo veritas?* (ed. Annabelle Despard; Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget, 71-85). Ewbank builds on her article of the same title published in *Tijdschrift voor Skandinavistiek* in 1998 (already reviewed in this journal), in which she described her experience translating Ibsen's plays for six British stage productions, with comments on important aspects of Ibsen's language; here, she develops these comments in another essay, that, like all her essays on translating Ibsen's language, is required reading for English translators of Ibsen.

## 2003

Articles that make major contributions to Ibsen studies are infrequent, so when one does appear, there is cause for celebration. Otto Reinert's " 'God's Stepchild': Doubt and Doctrine in *Kong-*

*semnerne*" [*The Pretenders*]" (24) (*SS* 75:1; 45-54) is the deepest reading of the play on record. Anyone who has seriously considered this complex drama has had to grapple with the meaning of protagonist

Skule's "doubting his own doubt," and Reinert's examination of this difficult subject gets to the

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bottom of things. Underneath the national drama, the Shakespearean historical tragedy, the intrigue play, the play about two types of consciousness, is a work in which, for the first time, Ibsen “explicitly treats human character as a matter for metaphysics.” Skule is paralyzed because he is trapped in an “epistemological conundrum,” an impossibility of knowing what is true and what is right. The contrast between the fortune’s child Haakon and the tormented doubter Skule has been much discussed, but as a psychological subject. Here, Reinert shows how Skule’s doubt arises from the impossibility of understanding why Haakon is given *ingenium* rather than himself, why the world is random and unfair, and, ultimately, why he cannot know the wishes of God. Ibsen’s play, Reinert shows conclusively, “has a core as much philosophical as psychological.” And far from being an extraneous blot on the play, the Bishop from hell and his ghostly soliloquy reinforce the significance of Skule’s final decision. Perhaps the most brilliant analysis is that of Haakon’s riddling last line, in which Ibsen turns away from the theme of redemption embodied in Skule’s sacrificial death to mark “the mystery of inequity in a divinely ordered world.” For by having Hakon call Skule “God’s stepchild on earth,” Ibsen may not be suggesting that Skule was God’s disobedient child out of place on His earth but that he was the victim of God’s injustice, which in the context of the play’s nationalist-Christian teleological basis—Haakon is God’s rightful king—is blasphemous. Reinert does not want to push his point—the meaning of the line “must remain doubtful” in this play about doubt—but he has made it, nonetheless.

Reinert’s essay provides us with a new lens through which to read Ibsen’s great play.

Two fine articles on Ibsen appeared in 2003 in *MD*. One of them is essential reading for anybody interested in *The Wild Duck*, Matthew Smith’s “*The Wild Duck: A Play of Play*” (25) (45:1; 9-22). This rich, sophisticated, and eloquent essay on an essential aspect of Ibsen’s great tragic-comedy demonstrates how the bourgeois play space in Werle’s house is mirrored by the cruder but more imaginative and ultimately deadly play space of the loft; shows how the “Von Domarus principle” in psychology, i.e., that similarity can become identification (which can lead to madness), operates in play in general and in Hedvig’s play in particular; examines the characters as contrasting kinds of players (Gregers is an anti-player who ironically causes Hedvig to slip into the Von Domarus condition and become the duck); and analyzes how the classic connection between theatre, playing, and sacrifice is worked out in the play: how a “mad Dionysian offering” becomes a “sacrifice ending in abomination.” Smith has written a brilliant, tight essay in twelve pages on a topic which for many people would require a dissertation or a book. In another article in the same issue of *MD*, “Reading, Writing, and Authority in Ibsen’s ‘women’s plays’

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” (26) (1-8), Penny Farfan briefly but intelligently traces to what extent the acts of writing or reading by Lona Hessel, Nora Helmer, Helene Alving, Rebecca West, and Hilde Wangel are transgressive gestures that defy the patriarchal notion that authorship and readership are an exclusively male domain. She stretches her point in claiming that in burning the manuscript, Hedda is destroying “the forces shaping the civilization of the future”; Hedda could not care less about “forces,” and burning the

manuscript is transgression enough. But Farfan's essay is an interesting and original contribution to the study of Ibsen's defiant women.

Errol Durbach's "Who is Solveig? Where Is She: Four Denouements at Vinstra" (27), in *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies* (14:1; 28-41), is, like all Durbach's work, both thought-provoking and delightful to read. The first denouement in question is that of the Norwegian company in Vinstra which annually presents its version of *Peer Gynt*; the three others belong to companies from China, Argentina, and Canada which were invited to per-

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form at Vinstra in 2000. Durbach presents the Vinstra denouement, in which Solveig is the incarnation of the ideal wife-mother who saves Peer from oblivion, as untouched by a modern critical tradition, expressed in the work of James McFarlane (*The Oxford Ibsen*) and myself (*Ibsen's Women*), who argue against the presentation of Solveig as a tired cliché. For Durbach, the problem is how to retain the “positive impulse in the Romantic vision” and at the same time qualify the discredited 19th-century stereotype of the Eternal Feminine. For the Drama Society of Beijing, this problem did not exist; its Solveig was the Chinese equivalent of the Western stereotype. In the Buenos Aires denouement, an actor spoke the lines of all the characters in a dramatic monologue, a kind of “psychic event” that did away with the problem of Solveig. The third denouement was that of a Vancouver production on which Durbach worked and which used his adaptation of the play; the second half of his essay discusses his and director John Wright's efforts to dramatize the full ambiguity of the text. Durbach's complex interweaving of text and performance

must be read rather than paraphrased, but the major point is that while Peer was played as Young and Old concurrently, as he has been elsewhere, here there are also two Solveigs. Solveig's role in general was rewritten so that she was “constantly available” and thus a “living antidote to the waste and finality of the unexamined life.” Durbach's text emphasizes the Button Moulder's imperious warning, but in a brilliant stretching of Ibsen, has Solveig produce in defiance the button her sister gave Peer long ago. Peer's nemesis is thus temporarily defeated in an ending without closure. Durbach notes that purists may object to his adaptation, but he justifies it on the grounds that he was aiming at a *Peer Gynt* for our time. Durbach's version of *Peer Gynt* joins the tradition of fearlessly modern transcreations of the play that began with Peter Stein in Berlin in 1971.

In 2003, Atle Kittang joined Knut Brynhildsvoll as editor of IS. The same carelessness that marked the sole volume of 2002 reigns in the two volumes of 2003. The text seems not to have been copy-edited in spite of the fact that English is not the first language for any of the contributors; the documentation in both notes and references is wildly inconsistent; and, incredibly, nobody seems to have made sure that the pieces were properly placed. Reading Jette Lundbo Levy's “Epitological melancholy” in the articles section, one suddenly realizes that it is a book review.

The quality of the articles as a whole is very poor. Of the five essays in the first volume, only Chengzhou He's “Ibsen and Chinese ‘problem drama’” (28) (54-70) is praiseworthy. In a precis of part of his University of Oslo Ph.D. dissertation, the author treats the enormous influence of Ibsen on modern Chinese drama, focusing on the “Nora plays” of the early 20th-century. He traces the phenomenon from Hu Shi's *The Greatest Event in Life* through the “departure plays” of the 1920's, demonstrating that Ibsen's influence lay in his realistic fourth-wall and, more importantly, in his creation of a woman who refused the traditional roles assigned to her by society. He shows, too, that the Chinese dramas, which reflected the changes taking place in China, are simplistic morality plays,

and, in some cases, tracts for reform, and that Ibsen's psychological complexity and symbolic dramatic structures went unappreciated. Ibsen was the most important foreign author in 20<sup>th</sup>-century China, and He's essay is a "must read" for anybody interested in Ibsen's world reception. Unfortunately, what the editors describe as a companion piece, Wang Ning's "Reconstructing Ibsen as an artist: a Theoretical Reflection on the Reception in China" (29) (71-85), is embarrassing. Its highly non-theoretical argument—that Ning's fellow Chinese scholars should learn to appreciate Ibsen as an artist rather than as a revolutionary thinker—is made repeatedly in scolding language that is more proper to a letters-to-the-editor column than an academic journal. His account of the "right," i.e., Western view of Ibsen as a complex artist is greatly marred by the error-ridden and unidiomatic English, but the more important point is that his potted summaries of modernist theory as needed lessons for his uninformed countrymen are condescending, and, in my experience, not as necessary as Mr. Ning believes. His Chinese colleague He's essay is a case in point.

Of the other essays in the volume, Håvard Nilsen, in "How Ibsen Found his Hedda Gabler" (30) (7-31) does not succeed in convincing us that Ibsen based Hedda on Lou Andreas-Salomé. That Brandes discussed Nietzsche with Lou and introduced Ibsen to Nietzsche through his essays does not mean that Brandes discussed Lou with Ibsen, but even if he did, this hardly constitutes a convincing argument for influence. Nilsen's scanty internal evidence—that both women were daughters of generals, both married scholars [unlike Tesman, Andreas was famous], both were "femmes fatales" [Hedda is fatal to herself]—is no more convincing, especially since one cannot imagine a woman less like the cowardly, trapped Hedda than the fearless, revolutionary Lou, philosopher and author and one of the most radical women of her time.

And it is equally unlikely that Ibsen based the self-destructive Løvborg on the monumental achiever Brandes. A second essay, Alvild Dvergsdal's "To Be Oneself: Satan's Ruse: Critical Reflections on Self-Realization: *Peer Gynt*" (31) (32-53) also fails to convince. It is not clear, however, how much the difficulty of the English damages the sophisticated argument, which is that apophatic theology's notion of the incomprehensibility of God can help us read *Peer Gynt*, in which the unknowable self has replaced the unknowable God. And since it is impossible to agree that Peer "starts with" the view that it is a main goal for the human being "to live and work to find his or her inner self," the problem is compounded. Peer evades his self from beginning to end; that is why he must go into the Button Molder's ladle. Finally, the last unconvincing article in this issue is Andrey Yuriev's "'The Revelation of Things Unseen': A Mystery Play Tradition in Ibsen's realistic drama, with particular reference to *Rosmersholm*" (32) (86-112). One has the sense that this often incomprehensible essay would not be clearer in Russian, but what is truly striking is a general wrongheadedness of large proportions. Misuing Bakhtin's comment on Dostoevsky—that his works "displayed the dimensions of the universal stage of the mystery play"—a judgment that

no one could disagree with, Yuriev claims that *Rosmersholm* is imbued with the conventions of the mystery play itself. In an earlier article, Yuriev claimed that *Emperor and Galilean* belonged to the tradition of the mystery play, and here,

he refers to his past arguments and adds *Rosmersholm* to the list, claiming that Brendel is a parody of Maximus (and also of the poet Heine); the name "Ulrik" is said to come from Goethe's "Urian" in the *Walpurgisnacht*, Rebecca is said to be based on Herodias' daughter, and Mrs. Helseth's mispronunciation of "Uldrik" is Ibsen's sly reference to the supernatural "huldre." And so on.

The second issue of *IS* in 2003, like the

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first, is mainly composed of articles that attempt to prove dubious propositions. The one article I find truly instructive is Frode Helland's too brief and ambitious "Petrified Time: Ibsen's Response to Modernity, with Special Emphasis on *Little Eyolf*" (33) (135-44). The essay, except for two general introductory paragraphs, is wholly about *Eyolf*, and I would have liked more explanation of the meaning of Helland's metaphorical "petrification" and "melting" in what he claims is an important modernist topos in Ibsen's plays. But the analysis of *Little Eyolf* is clear enough and provides an insightful way to read Allmers' and Rita's sad absolutism: his need for a sure, "frozen" meaning in a meaningless world and her need for a sure, "frozen" relation with her husband. The child is the ultimate sign of change and thus a threat to both absolutisms. Helland loses me when he argues that "petrification of life is connected to a parallel melting or virtualization . . . at the same time as everything stiffens or freezes, meanings melt down, signification becomes free, meaning is privatized," and I cannot agree with the often expressed view that Alfred and Rita cannot be taken seriously in the play's ending, but Helland's analysis of *Little Eyolf* as a modernist expression of epistemological and metaphysical crisis is convincing.

The second article in the issue, Lisbeth P. Wærp's "Ibsen's Poetics: 'The Tragic Muse,' *Brand*, and *When We Dead Awaken*" (34) (145-60) begins with an instructive reading of Ibsen's passage on the statue "The Tragic Muse," showing how Apollonian and Dionysian elements figure in the description and noting that Ibsen's comments anticipate Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. But Wærp's attempt to apply the contrast between Apollonian and Dionysian values to Ibsen's plays in a "poetological study" fails. Einar is too superficial to embody "Dionysian" values, and "the god of gentleness and love" whom he and Agnes worship suggests the opposite. Nor does the fact that Brand refers to Bacchante and Silenus strengthen the idea of Einar as Dionysian; Brand is castigating half-heartedness, not characterizing Einar. And it is strange to claim that the categories "fa-

ther" and "priest" reflect, respectively, Dionysian and Apollonian identities; the fanatical world of

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Brand and his hard god seem very far from the moral and aesthetic values of pagan Greece. Wærp seems aware that she is on difficult terrain—she writes "what I have chosen to call the Apollonian and the Dionysian"—but the terms, in fact, mean something in themselves. To claim that Rubek's statue "Resurrection Day" is Dionysian seems particularly bizarre. The allegorical marble virgin reaching toward heaven, far from being "sensual and "erotic," is, in Rubek's terms, "the purest of women," a sterling example of 19th-century idealist art. Like others who would make Ibsen into a conscious proponent of theories, Wærp claims that Ibsen "emphasizes and makes explicit the Apollonian/Dionysian dichotomy" in the union of Rubek and Irene.

Trausti Ólafsson's intensely written essay "Ibsen's *Brand*, 1866: The Day of Prophecy" (35) (161-85), the issue's third article, strings together quotations from the Bible, Biblical exegesis, Lessing, Derrida, Kierkegaard, Kant, and other philosophers, Auden, theorists of tragedy, Ibsen biographers, and a good many Ibsen scholars, as though

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all of the citations were hard facts, and identifies the writers of the citations only in notes (there are 128). This hodgepodge of unexamined quotations

is confusing, especially since many of them seem unnecessary to Ólafsson's argument, which is that while Brand's and Agnes' sacrifice of Alf cannot be justified ethically, it can be justified religiously because it belongs to the historical and biblical tradition of ritual child sacrifice, which Ólafsson traces in detail, and because the ways of God are unknowable. Added to the problem of the blurring of theology and literary criticism in this argument is Ólafsson's notion that Ibsen is a conscious proponent of Kierkegaard's notion that "we have no choice other than to 'fear and tremble' because we are already in the hands of God. . . whose will we cannot know." This article, which at times reads more like a sermon than an essay, tends to turn Ibsen's ambiguous, complex Brand into a teaching play, an apologia for both Brand and God that obliterates the play's dialectical core.

The issue's fourth article, Behzad Ghaderi Sohi's " 'What – Is – This?' The Third Kingdom and the Dawn of Chaos in *Rosmersholm*" (36) (186-209) is often difficult to understand, but its main idea is that Ibsen was strongly influenced by Schiller's enlightenment discourse in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. There is no reason to believe that Ibsen knew Schiller's work, and Ibsen was in any case familiar with the ideals both of the enlightenment and of 19th-century revolutionary Europe. It is interesting, however, to have the parallels between Schiller's and Ibsen's cultural humanism pointed out, even if it is not possible to agree that "Ibsen must have drawn on" Schiller's work. I have difficulty with the idea that *Rosmersholm* is a dramatization of the end of enlightenment ideals, since the "priest ridden" (Ibsen's term) Norway of the play has not yet experienced the enlightenment, nor is it possible to accept the drunken failure Brendel as an embodiment of the joy of Greek idleness. Nor is the complex Rebecca a "type character." And the major premise of mimesis is not propriety, but imitation.

The next-to-last article in the issue, Bjørn Tysdahl's "An Advocatus Diaboli Reading Ibsen's Letters about Art from Rome" (37) (210-24) warns us not to take too seriously the passages on art in

Ibsen's letters to Bjørnson from Rome. I cannot agree with Tysdahl that Ibsen's "knowledge of Italian life remained that of a tourist." While it is true that Ibsen frequented fellow Scandinavians, he ate and drank in *osterias*, walked countless kilometers through Rome and its environs, enjoyed the pleasures of *far niente*, thought and reflected about everything he saw, and spoke admiringly of Italian life in letters he wrote home. That said, it is true that we should note that Ibsen's letters to Bjørnson were written when the latter was collecting money to help Ibsen survive in Italy. But this does not necessarily mean that Ibsen was telling Bjørnson what he wanted to hear. Ibsen had a mind of his own, and when he wrote that he had come to agree with Bjørnson on the beauty of classical sculpture, there is no reason to think that he was equivocating. The notion that Ibsen told Bjørnson that he found the inspiration for *Brand* in St. Peter's to let Bjørnson know that he was working also fails to convince, both because it is illogical—Ibsen would not have needed to invent such a dramatic account—and because it denies Ibsen's deep admiration for Italian Renaissance art, amply documented elsewhere.

It is curious that *IS* would include an article whose thesis is that a prior article in *IS* is deeply flawed, but this is what we have in the last article in this issue, Kari Lothe's "Response to Erlinç Özdemir's 'A Jungian Reading of Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea*'" (38) (225-35). Lothe disputes Özdemir's originality on the grounds that Jungian analyses of Ibsen's play had already been made at the Jung Institute in Zürich. Since Lothe does not indicate that these "presentations" were published, her complaint seems both irrelevant and unfair. Even stranger is her admission that hearing that a master's thesis at the University of Oslo was also a Jungian account of the play, she read the published version and "regrets to admit" that it had lost much of its Jungian flavor. The quality of what follows is not surprising: Özdemir's analysis is said to be faulty because Ellida's weakness disqualifies her from having a "persona"; Jung's real importance is that Ellida is the "anima" of Wangel, who receives no attention from Özdemir; Ellida cannot have

completed the process of “individuation” because this must take place over a life-time. Lothe does not recognize that literature may anticipate or reflect psychological and philosophical structures without

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slavishly embodying them. The value of Özdemir’s essay lies precisely in its suppleness, its valuable attempt to show not how Ibsen’s play and Jung’s theories are the same, but how Jung’s theories can be useful in our reading of Ibsen.

I turn now to articles in other journals. Sara Jan’s excellent “‘At the side of Shakespeare’: Ibsen’s *The Pretenders* and Victorian Shakespeare” (39), in the series *Victorian Shakespeare* (ed. Gail Marshall; Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1, 119-27), demonstrates how mainstream drama critics of the 1890’s used the authority of Shakespeare, whom they read sentimentally, to condemn plays of the new realism, including Ibsen’s. Jan then focuses on how the 1913 production of *The Pretenders* at the Haymarket reversed the anti-Ibsen sentiment by treating Ibsen’s play as a Victorianized Shakespearean tragedy. In Archer’s pseudo-Elizabethan translation and with lavish period costumes and sets by Henry Irving’s designers at his Lyceum Shakespeare, the production was featured prominently in the press. Irving’s son Laurence, who played Skule, was praised for his similarity to his father’s famously intense Hamlet, and the roles of Hamlet and Macbeth were collapsed into one as Irving’s Skule became a “generic Shakespearean tragic figure.” Ibsen was now, in the words of the *Daily News*, “at the side of Shakespeare,” and his *Pretenders*, according to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, constituted a wonderful contrast to the “poor stuff” of *A Doll House* and *Hedda Gabler*. Jan’s account of how Ibsen got his first mainstream triumph in England through his transformation into a Victori-

anized Norwegian Shakespeare is fascinating. The article cries out for illustrations.

Merrill Kaplan’s thesis in “On the Road to Realism with Asbjørnsen and Moe, *Peer Gynt*, and Henrik Ibsen” (40) (*SS* 75:4; 491-508) is that what she calls Ibsen’s “critique of realist techniques” in *Peer Gynt* can be understood in the light of Ibsen’s publishing of Norwegian folklore. She starts with *Peer*’s amusing tale of the devil’s failure to convince his audience of his ability to imitate a pig; he hides a real pig under his clothes, but the audience pronounces that the squeals are exaggerated. It seems to me that the point of the joke is not that realism is inauthentic, but that audiences don’t know the real thing when they hear it. And it is not at all evident that Ibsen criticized in *Peer Gynt* a method he would invent twelve years later. Alliteration gets the best of Kaplan when she claims that she sketches a line of continuity from “Herder to Hedvig”; there is something about Herder here, but nothing about

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Hedvig, and only one ending paragraph about Ibsen’s prose plays. There is, however, a lively, thoroughgoing account of the collecting of Norwegian folktales, in which Kaplan expertly analyzes the *eventyrstil* of Asbjørnsen and Moe, showing how they attempted to give the impression of orality in written form by making their readers feel that they were listening to unmediated folk experience. Casting themselves as tellers, not writers, they engaged in a process of appropriation which in turn allowed their middle-class public to appropriate the “folk.” Kaplan also gives us a fine account of Ibsen’s own role as gatherer and publisher of folklore. But she fails to establish a meaningful comparison between the attempt at authenticity in the collecting of folk-

lore and in the writing of realistic drama. While it is true that in both, there is “the impression of spontaneous speech in carefully rehearsed and scripted dialogue,” realistic drama lacks both a frame story and a narrator, not does it “tell” but rather “shows.” And unlike the folktale, it pretends that its audience is not there. The argument that Ibsen was “indicting the *eventyrstil* when he has Peer tell other people’s tales” does not convince; there is no reason to think that in Peer’s plagiarisms Ibsen was condemning a tradition which he himself appreciated and which he made such brilliant use of in the same drama.

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**“Riikonen’s beautifully researched essay is one of the best Ibsen reception studies I have come across anywhere.”**

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At the end, Kaplan comments that “self-conscious use of realist techniques” does not surface again in Ibsen’s work until *An Enemy of the People*, “after a period of simpler problem dramas,” but in fact, the use of three-level nesting, in which the audience watches people who watch other people “outside,” appears in *Pillars of Society*.

Three essays in the oddly named *Literary Sinews*, a Norwegian collection in honor of Bjørn Tysdahl (ed. Jakob Lothe et. al; Oslo: Novus) are devoted to Ibsen. The most impressive is H.K. Riikonen’s masterly précis “*Peer Gynt* in Finland: the Finnish Translations of Ibsen’s Play and their Use in the Theatre” (41) (81-94). Riikonen first accounts for the very rich history of Ibsen’s early reception in Finland, including the first book-length study of Ibsen to appear in any country, then gives a thoroughgoing account of important productions of *Peer Gynt* in the early years of the 20th century and in the 1980’s. He is especially interested in the translations of the well-known figures Otto Maninén and Pentti Saarikoski, and one wishes he had included English translations of the passages he cites, although one gets some sense of them in his

explanations. Riikonen’s beautifully researched essay is one of the best Ibsen reception studies I have come across anywhere. Kristian Smidt’s “Byronic Stirrings in Henrik Ibsen” (42) (139-45) is a brief but useful précis of what we know about Ibsen’s relation to Byron. Ibsen read some Danish translations, but of which works we do not know, except for “a couple of poems” from *Childe Harold* which a sometime friend had translated, and which Ibsen appreciated for their “element of freedom”; there is also a parodic Byronic hero in *St. John’s Night*. Smidt’s claims that Ibsen “almost certainly read” the Danish translation of *Marino Faliero* and that it might well have been a source for *Catiline* do not convince me, nor does the contention that *Emperor and Galilean* owes something to *Sardanapalus* because both Julian and the Assyrian king praise Dionysos and die in battle. Smidt’s comment that Byron “inspired so much of [Ibsen’s] thought and influenced so much of his work” overstates what his essay establishes. H. Neville Davies’ “Fellow Travelers: Lemuel Gulliver and Peer Gynt” (43) is almost all overstatement, or, more properly, wild surmise. Davies claims that it is “not unlikely” that Ibsen read *Gulliver’s Travels*, but in fact, it is. There is no reason to think that Ibsen would seek out a translation of this English 18th-century novel. Davies says that a German version of *Gulliver’s Travels* written for children would have been “just the thing” for Ibsen’s son Sigurd, and then reels off a list of other translations of the novel in several languages, including one “that would have been most attractive” to Ibsen, a French volume. That Ibsen knew very little French and that there is no reason at all to think that he knew this volume does not deter Davies from writing an appreciative account of its illustrations and to speculate that because *Peer Gynt* “has no avowed connection with *Gulliver’s Travels*” Ibsen could respond to Swift’s novel “with an even greater freedom”! One is further amazed to read that Gulliver’s ship “Antelope” is transformed into Peer’s reindeer, and that while Gulliver is tied to the ground with pegs, Peer is “ensnared by love.” The notion that appearance and reality are often very different is

claimed to be “distinctly Swiftian,” when of course it is one of Western literature’s oldest and mightiest themes, and Ibsen’s trolls are said to be versions of Swift’s creatures, as though the trolls of Norwegian folklore did not exist. At the end, Davies mentions that he is working on a comparative study of Mary Gulliver and Solveig, women “who remain at home while their menfolk travel.” One can hardly wait.

Paul Rosefeldt’s “Ibsen’s *A Doll House*” (44) offers a two-page precis (in *Explicator* 61:2; 84-85) of how Ibsen “defames the patriarchal figure” and associates fatherhood with pollution by making Mrs. Linde the victim of an absent father; Anne Marie the victim of a father who refused to acknowledge his paternity; Dr. Rank the victim of a syphilitic father; Nora the victim of moral pol-

lution inherited from her father; and Krogstad a father who victimizes his children. Since Torvald is the authority for the last two examples, this considerably weakens the notion that “fatherhood is absent or corrupted” in *A Doll House*.

Rachel Ditor, a dramaturg in Vancouver, describes in “Questioning the Text” (45) (*Theatre Topics* 13:1; 35-43) her work on a student production of *Hedda Gabler* at Simon Fraser University. Students were asked to read the play and write down any questions they had about plot and characters, a technique that both absorbed them and helped them understand how to act Ibsen’s text. Teachers of undergraduate Ibsen classes and dramaturgs who work with actors, especially student actors, will find this essay helpful.

## 2004

Errol Durbach and I were invited to be the guest editors of the first number of the 2004 *IS*, which consists of revised, edited articles based on papers read at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Ibsen Conference in 2003, hosted by the Ibsen Society at Long Island University, Brooklyn, and organized by myself, as ISA President, and Prof. Durbach, the President of the International Ibsen Committee. The issue consists of three plenary addresses and six other papers selected by the editors, who offered the volume “In loving dedication to the memory of Inga-Stina Ewbank, a gracious colleague, sensitive translator, and incomparable scholar of Ibsen’s dramatic language.”

Prof. Ewbank’s forty-five-minute opening plenary address, “Reading Ibsen’s Signs: Ambivalence on Page and Stage” (46) (4-17) is presented here in an abbreviated form to meet the exigencies of publication. The paper is another of Prof. Ewbank’s elegant arguments for the complexity of Ibsen’s language and stagecraft, “the openness of Ibsen’s art to contrary interpretations” and the rewards and difficulties of that openness. Arguing that Ibsen’s essential ambiguity has been a given in Ibsen studies since James McFarlane read “Meaning and Evidence in Ibsen’s Drama” at the first

international Ibsen conference in 1965, Ewbank

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traces the tradition through newer works and gives examples of different kinds of Ibsenian ambiguity, from language, including idiom, repetition, even Ibsen’s use of punctuation, to an ultimate ambiguity in the meaning of the plays as a whole: *Brand*, for example, asks the deepest kind of ethical questions only to offer contrasting answers. Ewbank’s discussion of the problems of translating Ibsen’s pure Germanic language into the polyglot vocabulary of English, e.g., the idiomatic impossibility of translating the unattached pronouns of normal Norwegian discourse, and of translation itself as a culturally mediated process which can never produce equivalents, only similarities, is a last contribution to her series of earlier articles on this subject; together, they make up the best work on Ibsen translation in Ibsen studies. Following

Ibsen's own notion that readers of works are also "meddigtere" (creators), Ewbank ends her plenary with a discussion of how translators, actors, direc-

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tors, and critics are re-creators of Ibsen's texts.

Marvin Carlson's plenary, "Unser Ibsen: Ibsen on the Contemporary German Stage" (47) (55-69) could have been written to illustrate Inga-Stina Ewbank's final point. He treats six highly publicized productions in a country where Ibsen, like Shakespeare, is virtually considered a home-grown talent. The first, Peter Zadek's wildly successful *Rosmersholm* of 2001, was a mixed media affair as the great actors Angela Winkler and Gert Voss triumphed in psychologically subtle acting on a typically German non-representational set. The next two productions, both of *A Doll House* and both featured at the 2003 Theatretreffen, were deconstructionist attempts: Thomas Ostermeier's Schaubühne *Nora*, in which Nora does not leave Torvald but rather shoots him to death, and Stephan Kimmig's Hamburg Thalia *Nora*, in which Nora does not leave but rather exits to the back patio and lights up a cigarette. Both German productions typically owe as much to the sets as the direction: Jan Pappelbaum's outlandishly lavish apartment for Ostermeier's yuppie Helmers and Katja Hass' ultra high-tech minimalist apartment for Kimmig's. Two exciting versions of *Borkman* were equally arresting: Leander Haussmann's 2002 Bochum production, a mixture of "realism and theatricality," which contained the meta-theatrical notion that Foldal's tragedy was *John Gabriel Borkman*, and Sebastian Neubling's Basel production of 2001 that drew on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to create an expressionist, *unheimlich* vampire version. Carlson's last exam-

ple of German-speaking Ibsen was the phenomenal 2000 *Enemy of the People* by Lars-Ole Warburg in Basel, in which Michael Neuenschwander, playing Dr. Stockmann, "stepped out of the world of the play" to give a speech on the current scandal of Nazi gold in Swiss banks and to produce a genuine fax which threatened the actual theatre with a forced closing for harboring the man who disclosed the scandal. Ibsen's drama and the real world fused as Hovstad, Billings, and Aslaksen tried to shout Dr. Stockmann down. Warburg's production is a transcreation that represents the best impulses of the contemporary German stage.

The last plenary address of the 2003 conference was Eric Bentley's "What Ibsen Has Meant" (48) (103-11), in which the great drama scholar, translator, and critic argued against the notion that Ibsen "meant" anything. In an essay that will perhaps surprise readers of *The Playwright as Thinker*, Bentley attacks those who would try to find judgments or messages in Ibsen's plays and those who follow the latest academic trends, forcing Ibsen into molds in which he doesn't fit. Bentley wants

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to rescue Ibsen for the theatre, for the spectator's "single experience both spiritual and emotional" which no critical account can manage to define. Bentley argues that Beethoven's notion of musical composition, "Muss es sein? Es muss sein" (Must it be? It must be), is the only appropriate theory with which to approach Ibsen's art, for things happen in his dramas not because he takes sides but because, given the situation and the characters, they must of necessity happen. Ibsen is not agreeing with Nora when she leaves, Bentley claims, but

he is not agreeing with Strindberg's objections to her leaving, either. Ultimately, Bentley's argument is that the "meaning" of Ibsen's plays is simply that they capture the "quality of life" and thus belong to "civilization." Carlisle called Shakespeare the "hero as poet," and Bentley believes that Ibsen is a hero in this sense. Bentley's view looks back to the purist Romantic notion that art follows its own, organic form, unsullied by argument.

I now turn to the other papers in the volume in the order in which they appear. In "Hedda and Hjørdis: Saga and Scandal in *Hedda Gabler* and *The Vikings at Helgeland*" (49) (18-29), Merrill Kaplan uses her wide knowledge of the sagas and the critical literature on them to make an original, clever, and entertaining contribution to the tradition of Hedda as a modern version of Ibsen's Viking heroine. Linking Hjørdis' hunger for fame and Hedda's fear of scandal with the way Ibsen's plays "take on problems of representation," Kaplan argues that Hjørdis wants into oral tradition while Hedda wants out of realist theatre. While the first claim is clear enough—Hjørdis emphasizes

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**"Hjørdis rides off into oral tradition and 'avoids entirely the stopover in Reykjavik and any authorial mediation by troublesome, pen-wielding Icelanders'."**

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her wish to be remembered and praised in song—the second is, to use Kaplan's words, "somewhat more metaphorical." And rather than arguing that Hedda's need to escape her world and her ultimate suicide express a wish to escape the bourgeois world represented by realist theatre, which would perhaps be more logical, Kaplan argues that Hedda wishes to escape from a play authored by Brack: his courtroom scenario of what would happen if she refuses his blackmail. Kaplan's account of Ibsen's *Vikings* as an example of the Norwegian side of the saga debate, in which the Icelandic writers

of the sagas were viewed as mere scribes writing down what was Norwegian cultural property, is both original and fascinating. Hjørdis rides off into oral tradition and "avoids entirely the stopover in Reykjavik and any authorial mediation by troublesome, pen-wielding Icelanders." This is delightful stuff.

The next essay in the volume is Arnbjørn Jakobsen's "'To Waste One's Life': Biblical Language in Ibsen's Dramas of Contemporary Life" (50) (30-39), another in Jakobsen's line of

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**"Jakobsen's analyses of Ibsen's biblical language, a subject that is not often commented on and that often gets lost in English translation, are extremely valuable."**

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welcome articles on Ibsen's biblical language, a subject which he has investigated more fully than anyone else. Here he shows how in the language of the Norwegian Bible, Ibsen found images and conceptions to express his major theme of what he called in *Catiline* "man's aspirations." Jakobsen examines the function of "å forspille sitt liv" (to waste one's life) and its opposite "å leve livet" (to live one's life), in the context of Christian ideas of atonement and "oppreisning" (vindication), in *Pillars of Society*, *Rosmersholm*, and, most fully, *John Gabriel Borkman*. He demonstrates how Borkman's defense of his crime and his plans for the future are saturated with Biblical echoes of redemption, vindication, and rebirth. Gunhild, too, has her version of redemption and vindication in her dreams of Erhart, who, in his turn, uses Biblical language to refuse "the yoke" his mother has placed upon him. None of Ibsen's contemporary plays has a Christian context, Jakobsen points out, but in these plays that are free of religion, biblical language is what Ibsen uses when he wants to express "man's despair and deepest longings." Jakobsen's analy-

ses of Ibsen's biblical language, a subject that is not often commented on and that often gets lost in English translation, are extremely valuable; they show us another dimension of Ibsen's text.

Sara Jan's contribution to the volume, "Peer Gynt and the Dialogic Imagination" (51) (40-54), uses Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, especially in his discussions of Dostoevsky, to rescue Peer from the moralistic judgment that his "verbal excesses" are the result of egotism, moral emptiness, and the refusal of authentic selfhood. In doing so, Jan wants to show how "Ibsen's presentation of the imagination" in the play "dialogically resists its own repudiations" of "digt." As Bakhtin wrote of Peer's exact contemporary Raskolnikov, Peer is forced to "converse with his own double, with the devil, with his alter ego, with his own caricature." On one level, Peer's account of his reindeer ride is, in Aase's term, a "lie" and thus can be read in the Platonic tradition of the censure of fiction; on another, Aase's exuberant, over-determined language of abuse is itself a celebration of verbal excess. This "second and alien discourse" is, Jan argues, present throughout the play, and she gives many examples of it: in Peer's address to the "old warrior" that is "only a fir tree," in the character the Woman in Green, the opposite of Solveig, and above all, in the scene of Aase's death, where Peer uses make-believe and evasion to ease his mother's death. In this game of "seeing as," Peer's stick becomes "as powerful in its way as Prospero's staff" in a scene that vaunts the "potency of the imagination." Jan

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**"Jan has made excellent use of Bakhtin in an essay that realizes and celebrates Ibsen's complex representation of the creative imagination."**

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Asbjørn Aarseth's "The Greenhouse, the

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**"That some of Ibsen's most significant women protagonists lack mothers has often been noted, but Ellen Hartmann is the first to offer a sustained analysis of this subject."**

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Zoo, and the Aquarium: Allegories of Inauthenticity in Ibsen's Modern Drama" (52) (70-79), is an English version of some of the points made in Aarseth's *Ibsens samtidsskuespill: en studie i glasskapet's dramaturgi*, and the editors included the paper in these selected proceedings for readers who do not have Norwegian or do not have access to the book. Aarseth notes that the verb used for Mrs. Alving's sending Oswald away—"sad ham ud"—is the same as that for moving plants out of a greenhouse into open air and also the same for the Norwegian translation of what baby Oedipus' parents did to him; Mrs. Alving's act is as fruitless as that of the rulers of Thebes, and the greenhouse is part of an ironical "metaphorical system" in which Oswald does not prosper but is shielded from "light and truth." The attic of *The Wild Duck* is said to be a "zoo" which mirrors the protected, unhealthy family life of the Ekdals who live outside it, and the "aquarium" is a reference to the carp pond in *The Lady from the Sea*. All three places are inauthentic: the greenhouse is a place where plants are unfit for the open air, and the animals and the carp do not know what life is like outside their confined spaces.

That some of Ibsen's most significant women protagonists lack mothers has often been noted, but Ellen Hartmann is the first to offer a sustained analysis of this subject. In her contribution to the conference, "Ibsen's Motherless Women" (53) (80-91), Hartmann draws on Helene Deutsch and Nancy Chodorow's theories of female psychological development, which show that strong mother-daughter relationships can cause girls to accept traditional gender roles, to argue that Ibsen makes the rebelliousness of Nora, Hedda, Ellida, and Rebecca

more plausible by not giving them mothers as role models. Hedda's father was her role model, and the mentor of Rebecca West was her mother's husband, the radical Dr. West. Hartmann also sees an opposite side of the coin, arguing that motherlessness may cause girls to grow up unable to accept the heavy physical and psychological demands of motherhood. She points to Nora, Rebecca, Ellida, and Hedda as "not psychologically ready for intimate love, sexuality, pregnancy, or motherhood." Nora married an infantile man, Hedda, a passionless one, Ellida, an older father figure, and Rebecca, in a more complicated scenario, succumbed to her sexual desire for her own mother's husband, which marked her for life, and now loves a sexless man. Nora's love for her children is genuine but immature; Hedda hates becoming a mother; after giving birth once, Ellida refuses sexual contact with her husband. All these women, Hartmann argues, are unable to face their lives as they are and live in fantasy worlds in which they "idealize and misunderstand the significant men in their life." Only Ellida, through her and her husband's therapeutic communication, wins through to adulthood and true motherhood. The motherless state of Ibsen's women is, like every other aspect of his plays, a complex subject.

One of the most important goals of feminist literary scholars in the past three decades has been to rescue works by women from oblivion. Rebecca Cameron's "Ibsen and British Women's Drama" (54) (92-102), the last article in this issue of *IS*, discusses four virtually forgotten plays by British women playwrights highly influenced both by *A Doll House* and by the ensuing widespread debate: Elizabeth Robins and Florence Bell's *Alan's Wife* (1893), Elizabeth Baker's *Chains* (1909) and *Penelope Forgives* (1930), and Githa Sowerby's *Rutherford and Son* (1912). Cameron shows how the scandalous *Alan's Wife*, in which a mother kills her disabled child out of kindness, has important affinities with *Ghosts*; here, however, where eugenics is the unspoken subject of the play, the heroic wife kills her child out of Christian duty, a far cry from Helene Alving's motive and from Ibsen's play.

Baker's and Sowerby's plays focus on entrapment and emancipation; in *Chains*, it is the husband who heroically decides to remain with his family rather than to leave for meaningful work in the colonies,

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**“Cameron’s very interesting account of the contemporary British feminist reaction to Ibsen’s plays helps us to see just how radical Ibsen was.”**

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and in *Penelope Forgives*, a counterpart to *A Doll House*, Penelope is able to leave her bad marriage only because the convenient death of an aunt provides her with a new home. In *Rutherford and Son*, the protagonist outwits her tyrannical father-in-law by staying in the home and becoming a shrewd business woman who outmaneuvers him for the sake of her son's future. Cameron shows how all four women playwrights, familiar with the realities of woman's position in society and uneasy with the ending of *A Doll House*, critiqued emancipation from the home "as either impossible or a false alternative to staying." Cameron's very interesting account of the contemporary British feminist reaction to Ibsen's plays helps us to see just how radical Ibsen was.

I now turn to the second issue of the 2004 *IS*, a very uneven volume which contains a very important contribution to Ibsen studies, Evert Sprinchorn's brilliantly researched, eye-opening "Syphilis in Ibsen's *Ghosts*" (55) (191-204). Sprinchorn first establishes the "epidemic proportions" the disease had reached by the 1880's, providing fascinating details, e.g., Victoria Benedictsson said that fifty per cent of the men she knew were infected. He also makes the interesting suggestion that Ibsen might have been influenced in his choice of syphilis as the major symbol of the ghosts by the experiences of his friend Brandes. It was Brandes who told the woman he would later marry, Henriette Stodtmann, that her husband (who never consummated his marriage) had syphilis, and in the third volume

of *Main Currents* (1874), the fearless Brandes had censured society for forcing women to give birth to children who would inherit their fathers' disease. Ibsen took a huge risk in his choice of syphilis not only because it was a taboo subject, but because he was laying himself open to criticism by the medical establishment, and Sprinchorn shows, for the first time, how diligently Ibsen did his homework. Like Oswald, Ibsen may have consulted a "leading doctor" in Paris, and Sprinchorn believes that he has found him in the published lectures of Dr. Albert Fournier, France's leading authority on syphilis, which were available to Ibsen in German translation. Sprinchorn shows how Oswald's account of what the doctor told him—that he would be turned into "a helpless child . . . to have to be fed, to have to be"—is a paraphrase of Fournier's descriptions

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**“Sprinchorn’s article lays to rest forever all arguments that Ibsen’s portrait of syphilis is uninformed.”**

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of the victims of tertiary syphilis: “a big child, docile. . . who has to be dressed and undressed, led by the hand,” an “idiot” who has lost control of his excretory functions. One telling detail clinches Sprinchorn’s argument; only Fournier wrote about the symptom he called “ramollissement rouge,” a red softening of the brain that makes Oswald think of “cherry-colored velvet drapes.” Ibsen could have also read in Fournier the fact that victims of syphilis often present no physical symptoms. And critics who deplore Oswald’s sudden breakdown as implausible should read Fournier’s description of a patient who becomes dumbstruck and expressionless, “exactly like Oswald.” Sprinchorn describes actual cases of such sudden lapses in Jules Goncourt and Nietzsche. Fournier insisted that the disease could be transmitted in other ways than genital contact, and Sprinchorn shows that in Scandinavia, it was believed that one way was smoking an infected pipe. Sprinchorn argues convincingly

that Oswald acquired syphilis through smoking his father’s pipe, which Ibsen emphasizes by making it “a large Meerschaum, lest the point be lost.” Sprinchorn then reconstructs from year to year the whole action of *Ghosts* according to Fournier’s time table, in which “inception commonly occurs between ages three to ten and the tertiary stage manifests itself often twenty to twenty-six years after inception,” showing how Ibsen’s exposition is perfectly constructed on medical grounds. Sprinchorn’s article lays to rest forever all arguments that Ibsen’s portrait of syphilis is uninformed. It also shows us that Ibsen’s exposition in *Ghosts* is even more meticulously constructed, even more ingenious, than we knew. Bravo!

In the same issue of *IS*, Tore Rem’s “‘The Provincial of Provincials’: Ibsen’s Strangeness and the Process of Canonization” (56) (205-26), a superbly suggestive study, begins with Harold Bloom’s celebration of Ibsen’s “trollishness,” his strangeness, as his greatness, and goes on to treat an overlooked and important point in the early British reception of Ibsen. Ibsen was not condemned merely because he was scandalous, but because his difference from cultivated Englishmen made him “provincial.” For the critic of *The Academy*, if Ibsen were an Englishman, he would be considered “suburban.” Even Hedda Gabler revealed her lack of class; she walked home after parties. In a fascinating use of Matthew Arnold’s analysis of provincialism—“it does not persuade, it makes war . . . it seems to aim at an effect rather upon the blood and senses than upon the spirit”—Rem shows how in the 1880’s and 90’s, Ibsen seemed to Englishmen the very opposite of Arnoldian “sweetness and light.” Ibsen’s provinciality was a composite of his being a Norwegian, and thus backward and uncultivated, of his characters’ low social status, and his general lack of decorum. Rem demonstrates how Henry James tried to come to terms with what he called Ibsen’s “bare provinciality” and ultimately came to admire him for making something of the “barrenness and bleakness of his little Northern democracy.” For Shaw, no such problem existed; “Ninety-five percent of an Ibsen play is as true of

any English town as it is of Christiania,” he wrote. But Rem shows how Shaw’s attitude to Ibsen was much more complicated than is generally thought;

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*A Doll House* “will be as dishwater when *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is fresh as paint,” Shaw pronounced. Rem traces the gradual canonization of Ibsen in England from the disdain of the 1890’s to the admiration after Ibsen’s death in 1906 through a “process of aestheticizing” which emphasized the artist over the social reformer. He ends his article with a very interesting discussion of how canons are formed, by whom, and for whom, and speculates that Ibsen’s ultimate place may be determined by his fate within the English-speaking world community. And now that Ibsen is part of the Pantheon, Rem suggests, his strangeness may be in danger.

Another article in this issue of *IS*, Eric Østerud’s ambitious “Nora’s Watch: Time, Space, and Image in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll House*” (57) (147-75) contains so many subjects and theoretical assertions and references that it is sometimes difficult to follow the arguments. His notion that the Helmer marriage shifts from the erotic to the aesthetic seems not to be borne out by Torvald’s urge to get Nora into bed at the end, or her admission that if she stayed with Torvald, she would want to continue making love to him. And the idea that masquerade is a metaphor for Nora’s life with Torvald is hardly a new idea. But Østerud succeeds in showing how Ibsen links eros and thanatos in the last scene with Dr. Rank and in the play in general, in Nora’s erotic and suicidal connection with Torvald. In the section “Love’s Primordial Scene,” Østerud is especially good on Torvald’s need to construct over and over again the same tableau, in which he would halt time and change by per-

petually re-enacting his taking of his virgin bride. He and Nora live as “eternal threshold dwellers,” neither children nor adults. Turning again to eros and thanatos, Østerud gives an extended analysis of the Neapolitan tarantella’s juxtaposition of the two concepts and their meaning in Nora’s watch, her waiting to see whether she will live or drown herself after her tarantella is over. I can’t agree that in Nora’s watch, she manifests herself as an individual for the first time, for after all, she is waiting to see how Torvald will judge her when he reads Krogstad’s letter. And she has already manifested herself as an individual, albeit a closeted one, in lying to Torvald, forging her father’s signature, and working hard to pay back her blackmailer. Although Torvald has had his defenders, most discussions of the ending of the play focus only

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on Nora, and Østerud’s discussion of what Nora brings to Torvald is interesting. She is said to move him “out of the negative freedom of aesthetics and irony” into “fear and deadly earnestness,” and although I do not believe that “irony” made up much of Torvald’s world-view, it is true that Nora makes Torvald face his world as it is, not as he would like it to be. This does not quite mean, however, that “Nora’s cause is also Torvald’s cause,” for we cannot know whether Torvald will ever understand why Nora had to leave him.

In the same issue of *IS*, William Banks’ thin “Kierkegaard and Ibsen Revisited: The Dialectics of Despair in *Brand*” (58) (176-90) takes as its starting point the startlingly erroneous proposition that the general view of Ibsen’s relation to Kierke-

aard is that they are “in fundamental opposition to one another.” Clearly, Banks is unacquainted with the secondary literature on Ibsen and Kierkegaard; it would be impossible to make such a statement even if one had read only what Koht and Meyer have to say on the subject (much less a book like Brian Downs’ *Ibsen: the Intellectual Background*). I am not re-affirming the idea of Ibsen as “Kierkegaard’s poet,” but I am insisting that in Ibsen studies, the relation between the philosopher and the playwright is very far from one of simple opposition. Banks’ unfamiliarity with the scholarly terrain causes him to claim that Sverre Arestad’s identification of *Peer Gynt* and *Brand* as representations of the Kierkegaardian aesthetic, in an article written in 1960, is “widely accepted,” when this is not so. Banks also cites Bruce Shapiro’s book on *Peer Gynt* and Kierkegaard as representing conventional wisdom on that subject, when in fact, the book received highly critical reviews. Banks writes, “Two recent studies have done much to undermine the popular view of *Brand* as an explicit critique of Kierkegaard” (popular with whom?), and then spends three pages paraphrasing them. One of the two is Trausti Ólafsson’s essay (which I have reviewed above) and the other is a much deeper essay on *Brand* by Helge Sødal. Whatever the quality of these two essays, they cannot be used as stands-ins

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for work on Ibsen and Kierkegaard. Apart from his inadequate representation of the scholarship on Ibsen and Kierkegaard, Banks proposes that *Sickness unto Death* is a better model for *Brand* than *Fear and Trembling*, and spends several pages apply-

ing the despair of Anti-Climacus to the despair of Brand, arguing that what the former calls “defiant despair” is the kind that Brand feels. At the end he suggests that this application may make us feel pity for Brand, and not merely disgust or admiration, but no serious reader of *Brand* needs the help of Anti-Climacus—or anyone else—to feel pity for its benighted hero.

The lead article in this issue of *IS*, Daniel L. Plung’s “The Character Architecture of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*: Beyond the Fusion of Carpentry and Content” (59) (123-46), is even less informed than Banks’ article. Its first sentence declares that in the 125 years succeeding *A Doll House*, the play continues to be examined using one of two lines

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**“Plung then moves from the questionable to the obvious: Ibsen was interested in both ‘carpentry and content’.”**

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of thought: it is a Scribean well-made play or it is a “contribution to the social discourse.” I know of no Ibsen scholar who would take this false dichotomy seriously, and in fact in his next sentence, Plung writes that in the past ten years, much of *Doll House* criticism has been devoted to rescuing the play from this “dialectic.” I do not agree that “much” of the criticism has felt the need to do this, but Plung then moves from the questionable to the obvious: Ibsen was interested in both “carpentry and content.” Physicists would perhaps be surprised to read that they create “entirely new elements” by fusing existing materials, but this is said to be akin to what Ibsen was doing in *A Doll House* in his “innovative character architecture.” Plung makes the less than newsworthy declaration that understanding Ibsen’s relation to the well-made play is important, and then, going back to his faulty thesis, he makes Marvin Rosenberg’s 1969 essay, “Ibsen versus Ibsen or Two Versions of *A Doll’s House*” a stand-in for all writers on the play. He then gives us paraphrases of the well-known analyses of Tennant

and other scholars on Ibsen's uses of the contrivances of the well-made play. Nothing is new here. Nor is there anything new in Plung's account of the scandal of the play or the original Nora. Nor will anyone be surprised to learn that what interested Ibsen was character development. What is new, however, are a series of six designs of teepees, or "triads" illustrating Ibsen's structure, with Nora at the top of each, e.g., "Nora, Papa, and Torvald," "Nora, Dr. Rank, and Mrs. Linde," as well as a drawing of a hexagon with Nora in the middle and six other characters on the sides. In fact, Ibsen did not invent the "architecture of character" that Plung claims is his great contribution to the drama; all great drama is built up of relations between the protagonist and the other characters, and one could very easily draw triads, hexagons, octagons, and as many shapes as needed, of the "character architecture" of, to take random examples, *Oedipus Rex*, *Hamlet*, *Tartuffe*, and Ibsen's beloved *Jeppe of the Hill* and *Maria Magdalena*.

I now treat individual essays that appeared in 2004.

In "Creating Hedda" (60) (*Ibsen News and Comment*, vol. 23/24; 2-5), Robin Goodrin Nordli, a leading actor at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, describes her "unique journey" playing the protagonist in the company's 2003 production of *Hedda Gabler*. Having played Mrs. Linde and Rebecca West, Nordli was prepared both for the difficulties and the exhilaration of playing a great Ibsen role, and her essay is a thoughtful and fascinating account of experiencing Hedda "from the inside." Nordli wanted to avoid two potential problems: making Hedda into a villain, and making her suicide predictable from the beginning. In a boldly designed set, with "uncomfortable music" and intense lighting, and with a director, Bill Rauch, who had decided that Hedda would kill herself on stage, Nordli found that she would have to "externalize" Hedda's struggle more than she had thought. The ensemble company began with table work to establish the groundwork for the physical choices the actors would have to make in rehearsals. "Giving physical presence to intellectual

choices" is not always easy, Nordli reminds us, and she describes how for her, Hedda's piano became

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an important extension of herself; Nordli's Hedda hid her cigarettes, her guns, and the manuscript in it and it was on her piano that she performed "my last positive act of life." All the furniture in the house comes from Brack, and in act three, after the judge's departure, Hedda, shaken by his blackmail and desperate, set about smashing every piece of it. Because of the play's tempo, the "ping-pong" nature of the dialogue, the quickness with which everything happens, Nordli saw that "I didn't know I was going to kill myself until I did it," a realization that came to her in a rehearsal of the ending, after Brack's "We'll have fun, you and I," when she saw, spontaneously, that killing herself was the only option. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Nordli's experience playing Hedda was the profound sadness she always felt at the end of the play, from the first run-through to the final performance, a feeling she ascribes to the "conscious effort by Bill Rauch and myself to keep Hedda trying. Trying to maintain status, trying to make the best of the marriage, trying to suppress resentment, trying to figure out a way out. Always trying until suddenly, it's gone." Throughout, Nordli was always searching for a "deeper understanding" of Hedda, which led her to become "quite attached" and even "protective" of her, which is, she says, a common experience of actors. This leads to a feeling of being "exposed and vulnerable." It is this empathy, Nordli says, that makes actors not want to read reviews. Someday, however, she will read reviews

of the production, “when I do not carry Hedda so close to my heart.”

Arvid Næro’s “Destruction and Creation in *The Master Builder: An Observation on Art and Society*” (61) (*Scan* 43:1; 29-51) is often impos-

sible to understand. The author proposes an argument against a “personal moral critical analysis” (sic) of *The Master Builder* in favor of a “problematics concerned with artistic production and creation,” but then goes on to discuss Solness’ relations with Kaja, the Broviks, and Aline in personal and moral

terms, spending much time on the often discussed topic of Solness’ guilt toward his wife. That Solness’ work is “all but saturated in guilt” is said to raise a “meta-critical question about the aesthetic character of guilt,” but Næro fails to show how guilt is an aesthetic phenomenon. And that this guilt is bound up with a disaster that became a foundation for Solness’ development is a given. His notion that “the impossible” and “the terrible” frame the play’s critique of art and the artist sounds like a fruitful realm

to explore, but sentences like the following make this impossible: “What is isolated, subjectivized and alienated in the artistic position is also expressed in the drama as a question of acknowledgment—of making transparent and acquiring an insight into the ‘forces’ that control one.” Næro would make Ibsen into a theorist of modern art and the play into a meta-theatrical work whose conclusion has as its central theme “the question of form.” Ibsen has Solness fall to his death offstage because he wants to make the point that “the action which Solness was unable to perform as a symbolic action correspondingly proves to be incapable of being represented or symbolized here and now within the framework of the traditional naturalist stage area.” Since Ibsen

could, in fact, have used a doll (which would, of course, have been an inelegant solution and would have lessened considerably the suspenseful drama of Hilde’s and Ragnar’s conversation), it is difficult to grant Næro’s contention.

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Mordecai Roshwald’s “The Alienated Modernist in *An Enemy of the People*” (62) appeared in *Modern Age* (46:3; 227-33), which describes itself as the “leading quarterly of the intellectual Right.” Roshwald is of course not writing for Ibsen specialists, and his essay is composed of a long

plot summary cum analysis in which he tends to treat the play as a treatise in political science. But he writes accurately and intelligently about Dr. Stockmann’s notion of the tyranny of the majority, which forms part of the Bible of the intellectual Right, and is even-handed into the bargain: the notion that the majority is always wrong, he is careful to note, “is not adequately substantiated, or convincingly proved.” The interesting aspect of this article for Ibsen scholars is Roshwald’s use of Tocqueville as a gloss on Dr.

Stockmann’s view of the majority. “The authority of the majority [in the United States] is so absolute and so irresistible,” wrote the great Frenchman, “that a man must give up his rights as a citizen and almost abjure his quality as a human being, if he intends to stray from the track which is laid down.” It is very nice to see Ibsen given significant space in a non-academic journal.

In Denise Merkle’s “Intertextuality in Eleanor Marx-Aveling’s *A Doll House* and *Madame Bovary*” (63) (*Babel* 50:2; 97-113), “intertextuality” does not refer to the two works in the title, but to Marx-Aveling herself, who is “treated as an open text because she embodies a vast intertext made up of her inherited name and adopted name.” This

very general essay on Marx-Aveling's life adds nothing to the biographies or to our knowledge of her translations of Ibsen and Flaubert, nor does it adequately explain why Marx-Aveling believed that in translating Ibsen's play and Flaubert's novel, she was advancing the cause of socialism. Merkle makes some rather large gaffes; she claims that Marx-Aveling translated "some of Ibsen's short stories," and that Nora Helmer and Emma Bovary are "equally disruptive heroines," a contention impossible to support unless "disruptive" can mean, in the case of Bovary, "self-destructive."

Toril Moi's thesis in the four-and-a half-page work in progress, "Ibsen, Theatre, and the Ideology of Modernism" (64) (*Theatre Survey* 45:2; 247-52) is that "scholars" (which ones?) consider Ibsen "boring," a "fuddy-duddy" unworthy of interest, for which Moi blames "the ideology of modernism," with its insistence on aesthetic autonomy and its anti-theatrical and anti-realist prejudices. Such claims cannot be defended in four-and-a half pages.

I end this account of 2004, and this Survey, with Janet Garton's excellent "Translating Ibsen: from Page to Page – to Stage?" (65), which appeared in *Salzburg Studies in English Literature and Culture* 1 (ed. Sabine Coelsch-Foisner; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 89-98). Garton gives an account of the very different styles of the English Ibsen translators James McFarlane and Michael Meyer. McFarlane's work, which was done with readers, especially scholarly readers, in mind, is an intelligent, faithful rendition into English. Meyer's translations, on the other hand, were done for both actors and readers and became popular with British directors in the 1960s and 70s for their "speakability." Garton points out, however, that nothing dates as fast as slang, and describes her recent experiences working with director Lou Stein, whose actors complained that Meyer's lines like "I had to find some way to nark her" were "impossible" to say. Meyer was rewriting Ibsen to modernize him, but what he did, Garton shows, was to date him. Garton is also interested in showing how Meyer, unlike McFarlane, often ignores the "nuances of

register" in Ibsen's writing, and takes as her example the first scene of *Ghosts*. In Ibsen's text, Regina, who has plans to become a lady, rebukes her step-father for his swearing, but Meyer has her say "the devil's bloody rain, more like," when she

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merely says "the devil's own rain" as she picks up on Engstrand's hypocritical "God's own rain." Meyer has misrepresented both the tone of Regina's speech and her character. Garton points out one instance in which she believes that McFarlane and Meyer both err, in their translations of the last line of Hedda's soliloquy in front of the stove: "Nubrenner jeg barnet" (Now I'm burning the child). Both McFarlane and Meyer translate "barnet" (the child) as "your child" (both Fjelde and Paulson translate "the child"). Garton makes an interesting argument that "the child" is the correct translation because "barnet" refers not only to Thea's "child" but also to Hedda's unborn one as she turns her frustrated rage on herself. In another comparison between Meyer and McFarlane, Meyer, "for once," has the edge; Rosmer's unflattering marriage proposal to Rebecca, "Vil Du være min annen hustru?" (Will you be my second wife?) is translated straightforwardly by Meyer, while McFarlane, like most other translators, removes the offending adjective and translates: "Will you be my wife?" (Garton, who was the first person to notice the adjective, has written more fully of its importance in her essay in the *Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, as she notes). Garton then turns to directors who cannot resist "the temptation to haul the subtext up to the surface by making explicit what should be left implicit," a tendency she finds rife in both British and Norwegian productions. Among other examples, she notes a production of *The Lady from the Sea* at Oslo's National Theatre in which an introductory tableau featured Ellida and the Stranger

rolling naked in ocean waves [shades of Burt Lancaster and Deborah Kerr in *From Here to Eternity*], and, later on, an Arnholm who strips Bolette of her shirtwaist. Garton does not believe that Ibsen should be produced as though he were “set in as-

pic,” but “it was not because of lack of diligence that it took him two years to write each play,” and translators, adaptors, and directors need to pay attention in order “not to say more than Ibsen said.”

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