



The XVI International Ibsen Conference
Zurich – 25–27 June 2026



Ibsen's Topicality

Abstracts

Plenary Speakers

Keynote on Thursday, June 25 2026

Ellen Rees

The Popular Origins of Ibsen's Modern Drama

In this presentation I argue that Henrik Ibsen is best understood as a writer who combined tragedy with comedy in an unresolved tension that builds directly on his experiences as a theater practitioner at the beginning of his career. I first briefly present the first ever complete empirical analysis of the repertoire Ibsen staged during the years 1851–1864. I then discuss how Ibsen recycles themes, motifs, characters, settings, and plot elements taken from specific lightweight comedies from the popular repertoire in even his most acclaimed contemporary dramas, including *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*. I argue that this is an example of what Linda Hutcheon calls “modern” parody. My overarching claim is that Ibsen activates the satire that underlies the vaudeville genre, transforming it into a much more existential form of social criticism.

Bio

Ellen Rees is a professor of Scandinavian literature at the University of Oslo's Center for Ibsen Studies. She is the author of several Ibsen studies, including *The Popular Origins of Ibsen's Modern Drama* (forthcoming autumn 2026), *Den popkulturelle Ibsen: en studie i nyere norske resepsjon* (2023), and *Ibsen's Peer Gynt and the Production of Meaning* (2014). Currently, she serves as the principal investigator for “Norwegian Romantic Nationalism” (NORN), a European Research Council advanced grant (2023–2027).

Keynote on Friday, June 26 2026

Chengzhou He
Nanjing

Who's Afraid of Nora? The Intriguing Reception of A Doll's House Part 2 Across Cultures

A Doll's House Part 2, which was written by the American playwright Lucas Hnath and premiered at South Coast Repertory in California, the US, in April 2017, is an interesting contemporary sequel to Ibsen's A Doll's House, in which Nora is presented as questionable and controversial. Since then, this play has been staged in various places around the world, including the US (many times by different theatres until now), Canada, the UK, Australia, Singapore and China. In August 2024, a Chinese theatre production of A Doll's House 2: Nora Returns, faithfully based on Lucas Hnath's play, premiered in Beijing, and then travelled to Shanghai, Nanjing, Suzhou and other Chinese big cities. The play tells a story not so much about what happens to Nora after she leaves, but mainly about what happens to her after she returns home 15 years later, and in the end she is determined to leave again. The global performances of A Doll's House Part 2 become a testimony of dramatic changes in response to the feminist and gender issues in different social and cultural contexts recently. This speech will mainly address the following questions: What makes this new play A Doll's House Part 2 uniquely enthralling? How have the performances been received and perceived in different local contexts? Why have there been such dramatic changes in our responses to Nora's image as a feminist? What has caused such a dramatic turn or backlash in the feminist cause worldwide, for which Nora has long been regarded as the beacon of feminism? And in what ways, is Nora still relevant to us today and in the foreseeable future? As another sequel to the Ibsen play and a new world work, A Doll's House Part 2 provides us with an opportunity to rethink the roles and identities of women as well as gender politics in our times across different regions and cultures.

Bio

Chengzhou He (何成洲), Doctor of Arts of Oslo University, is Yangtze River Distinguished Professor of Drama and Theatre at Nanjing University Institute of Global Humanities. He is a Foreign Member of Academia Europaea (the Academy of Europe). His teaching and research focus on Ibsen and modern drama, performance and theatre studies, comparative literature and critical theory. He won the Ibsen Prize in 2002 and was former President of the International Ibsen Committee. His most recent articles include: "Garden Kun Opera and Cultural Tourism" (2024) and "Kunqu in Europe" (2024).

Keynote on Friday, June 26 2026

Sandro Zanetti
Zurich

The Murderer of His Own Creatures. Ibsen in Peter Szondi's Theory of the Modern Drama

Seventy years ago, the then 27-year-old Peter Szondi published his influential study *Theory of the Modern Drama* (1956) with Suhrkamp Verlag, a work he had written two years earlier as a doctoral dissertation at the University of Zurich under Emil Staiger. In this study, Ibsen appears as the first representative of a “crisis of drama,” characterized by Szondi as a shift in which action, dialogue and the present moment lose their status as the theatre’s primary reference points. Instead, the stage is dominated by a peculiar form of inaction, interiority and an obsession with the past. In Szondi’s analysis, Ibsen’s plays emerge as both paradigmatic and radical; Ibsen, Szondi argues, becomes the murderer of his own creatures. In memory of Szondi’s analysis—radical in its own right—this lecture reconstructs the approach Szondi took to Ibsen, in the hope that it may still prove productive today.

Bio

Sandro Zanetti is Professor of General and Comparative Literature at the University of Zurich. He studied German, History, and Philosophy in Basel, Freiburg im Breisgau and Tübingen and went on to pursue further research and teaching at Frankfurt am Main, Basel, Berlin, and Hildesheim. Since 2011, Zanetti has been the program director and head of the Department for Comparative Literature at the University of Zurich. His major recent publications include *Celans Lanzen. Entwürfe, Spitzen, Wortkörper* (Zürich: diaphanes, 2020), *Literarisches Schreiben. Grundlagen und Möglichkeiten* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2022), and *Was bleibt, was kommt? Die Zeit der Literatur* (Zürich: diaphanes, 2023).

Keynote on Saturday, June 27 2026

Barbara Weber and Simeon Meier

Staging Hedda Gabler – Conversation

We will talk with Barbara Weber and Simeon Meier about their production of Hedda Gabler, which was staged last year at the Theater Bern.

Bios

Barbara Weber is a freelance director, project manager, and curator. She studied directing at the Institute for Theater, Music Theater, and Film in Hamburg. Her “unplugged” format, through which she reexamined blockbusters and modern myths such as Michael Jackson, Mother Teresa, and the RAF, was a huge success throughout the German-speaking world. Both *Hollywood Unplugged* and *RAF Unplugged* were invited to Theater Impulse. RAF Unplugged won the Berlin Performing Arts Fund Award. She has worked at venues including HAU in Berlin, Theaterhaus Gessnerallee, Schauspiel Essen, Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin, Münchner Kammerspiele, and the Vienna Festival. From 2008 to 2013, she was co-director of Theater Neumarkt in Zurich.

Since 2013, she has been working as a freelance curator/director/producer. Barbara Weber conceives, develops, and directs projects in the fields of theater, art, science, digital media, politics, migration, and cultural participation, including for Theaterspektakel Zürich, the City of Zurich, the Canton of Zurich, Stapferhaus Lenzburg, Kunsthalle Zürich, Stattkino, Manifesta11, ETH Zurich, NGOs, cultural initiatives in the asylum sector, and Kaserne Basel.

<https://buehnenbern.ch/spielplan/programm/hedda-gabler/>

Simeon Meier was born in Zurich in 1972. His professional career began with an apprenticeship as a decoration designer at the traditional Zurich department store Jelmoli. After completing his training, he worked in décor and set construction and as a stage design assistant at the Schauspielhaus Zurich. Subsequently, Simeon Meier studied "stage space" at the Hamburg University of Fine Arts with Prof. R. Bauer. After completing his studies, he did his first freelance work at many German-speaking venues: the Thalia Theater Hamburg, the Theater Basel, the Schauspielhaus Zurich as well as the Deutsches Theater Berlin, the Theater Freiburg and the Schauspiel Dresden. He has worked with directors such as Rafael Sanchez, Stefan Bachmann, Heike Götze, Stefan Pucher, Tom Schneider, Simon Solberg, Christoph Frick, Sandra Strunz and the Rimini Protokoll collective. He won the Rolf Mares Prize for *Nostalgia 2075* with Rafael Sanchez, and his stage design for *Dirty Hands* was nominated for Stage Design of the Year.

<https://buehnenbern.ch/uber-uns/menschen/detail/simeon-meier-18157/>

WORK BASED STREAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 2026

11:30-13:00 KOL G 212	Panel 1.1: Rethinking <i>John Gabriel Borkman</i> Moderation: Klaus Müller-Wille
11:30-12:00	Lisbeth P. Wærp (Tromsø, Norway): Ibsen's Borkman
12:00-12:30	Lars Harald Storebø (Bodø, Norway): "It was an icy hand of ore, which took him to heart." An ecocritical reading focusing on the final scenes in <i>John Gabriel Borkman</i> (1896).
12:30-13:00	Farid Manouchehrian (Oslo, Norway): Bergman's <i>Saraband</i> as a Fragmented Adaptation of Ibsen's Plays
14:00-15:30 KOL G 212	Panel 2.1: <i>A Doll's House</i> on the Contemporary Stage Moderation: Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman
14:00-14:30	Hanna Rinderle (Berlin, Germany): From Nora to Niru. Retelling <i>A Doll's House</i> in a Postcolonial Context
14:30-15:00	Sumaiya Swati Udit (Bangladesh/Oslo): Negotiating Bangladeshi Women's Socio-political Struggles through <i>Ninaad</i> , a Bengali Adaptation of <i>A Doll's House</i>
15:00-15:30	Ye Rulan (Shanghai, China): Echoes of the Doll's House: Jon Fosse's Nora and the Timelessness of Ibsen's Legacy
16:00-17:30 KOL G 212	Panel 3.1: Nora's Legacies Moderation: Patrick Ledderose
16:00-16:30	Benedikte Berntzen (Oslo, Norway): Was Nora always alone? <i>A Doll's House's</i> Nora Helmer representing what has been named the sad reality of our time
16:30-17:00	Feng Duan (Shanghai, China): Breaking Through the Prison of the House?: Repercussions of <i>A Doll's House</i> in Contemporary China
17:00-17:30	Sotirios Mouzakis (Münster, Germany) & Clemens Räthel (Greifswald, Germany): Digesting Ibsen: On Sivan Ben Yishai's Nora Adaptation

FRIDAY, JUNE 26 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 212	Panel 4.1: Navigating <i>The Lady from the Sea</i> Moderation: Gianina Druta
10:10-10:40	Else Barratt-Due (Oslo, Norway): <i>The Lady from the Sea</i> – a key to the mysterious in our own lives?
10:40-11:10	Sabiha Huq (Bangladesh): The Sea is the Woman: A Blue Humanities Reading of <i>The Lady from the Sea</i>
11:10-11:40	Alexia Panagiotidis (Zurich, Switzerland/Odense): The Sea as Problem in Drama. The emergence of epic drama in Henrik Ibsen's <i>Fruen fra Havet</i> (1888) through the lens of Hans Christian Andersen's tragic tale <i>Den lille Havfrue</i> (1838)
12:00-13:30 KOL G 212	Panel 5.1: <i>An Enemy of the People</i> on the Contemporary Stage I Moderation: Heidi Leclaire-Karlsen
12:00-12:30	Burç İdem Dinçel (Dublin, Ireland): Thomas Ostermeier's <i>An Enemy of the People</i> Revisited: Dramaturgical Dialectics in Istanbul
12:30-13:00	Patrick Ledderose (München, Germany): Staging 'the many': Henrik Ibsen's <i>An Enemy of the People</i>
13:00-13:30	Ewa Partyga (Warsaw, Poland): Experimenting with <i>An Enemy of People</i> in Polish Political Landscape
16:00-17:30 KOL G 212	Panel 6.1: <i>An Enemy of the People</i> on the Contemporary Stage II Moderation: Anna Stavrakopoulou
16:00-16:30	Lada Čale Feldman (Zagreb, Croatia): On being outvoted: the topicality of Ibsen's <i>An Enemy of the People</i> for the attempt to define „deliberative dramaturgy“ as a subgenre
16:30-17:00	Victor Castellani (Denver, USA): The People and Its Enemies: Influencers and Targets in Ibsen—and Resisters
17:00-17:30	Subah Binte Ahsan (Exeter, Great Britain): Ephemerality and Afterlives of Performance: A Student Production of <i>An Enemy of the People</i> in Bangladesh

SATURDAY JUNE 27 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 212	Panel 7.1: Existential Challenges in <i>Ghosts</i> and <i>Emperor and Galilean</i> Moderation: Hans Kristian S. Rustad
10:10-10:40	Kamilla Aslaksen (Norway): Nihilism in <i>Ghosts</i> : Ibsen's engagement in a burning contemporary issue
10:40-11:10	Giuliano D'Amico (Oslo, Norway): Spectral Topicality in <i>Emperor and Galilean</i>
11:10-11:40	Christian Janss (Oslo, Norway): Friendship in H. Ibsen's <i>Emperor and Galilean</i> (1873)

Panel 1.1: Rethinking *John Gabriel Borkman* Moderation: Klaus Müller-Wille

Lisbeth P. Wærp
UiT–The Arctic University of Norway

Ibsen's Borkman

Keywords: *John Gabriel Borkman*, megalomania, capitalism, financial speculation, embezzlement, bank crash

John Gabriel Borkman is a portrait of a capitalist with strong relevance to our time with its major international financial crises – a bankrupt, megalomaniac capitalist and bank manager with no remorse for his actions. According to Franco Moretti, former bank manager John Gabriel Borkman is one of the few Ibsen protagonists who has actually committed a crime and not just moved in the grey area between the morally reprehensible and the crime. The megalomaniac nature of the Borkman character is often mentioned in readings of the drama. Nevertheless, crucial aspects of the extremity of Ibsen's portrait can be said to be under-emphasized in research, not least the enormous scale of Borkman's grandiose industrial development project, the size of the embezzlement and the catastrophic bank crash, as well as the fact that Borkman has no regrets at all, but on the contrary holds on to the significance of his large-scale project until he dies, and has only one wish in the drama's present: To be able to start all over again. It is the extremity of Ibsen's Borkman portrait that I will examine in this paper, as it appears in the text and as we can understand it in the light of the historical context – cases in Ibsen's own time.

Bio

Lisbeth P. Wærp is Professor of Scandinavian Literature, UiT–The Arctic University of Norway, Department of Language and Culture. Editor of *Edda* 2005-2010, President of the International Ibsen Committee 2018-2024. She has published four books, two on Ibsen; *Overgangens figurasjoner. En studie i Henrik Ibsens Kejser og Galilæer og Når vi døde vågner* (Figurations of transition. A study of Emperor and Galilean and When We Dead Awaken), 2002; and *Livet på likstrå. Henrik Ibsens Når vi døde vågner* (ed., anthology on *When We Dead Awaken*), 1999; as well as articles on Ibsen, Hamsun, Fosse, Vesaas, Arctic literature, adaptation of literature to film. She is currently writing a book about corruption in Ibsen's dramas. Most recent publication: «Disease, Corruption, and Contempt for Weakness: Rereading a *Doll's House*», *Ibsen Studies* 2024, 2.

Lars Harald Storebø
Nord University, Faculty of Teacher Education in Bodø

"It was an icy hand of ore, which took him to heart." An ecocritical reading focusing on the final scenes in *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896)

Keywords: John Gabriel Borkman, German Romanticism, death, mines, ecocriticism.

"I am a miner's son, you know," the former banker and businessman John Gabriel Borkman tells the young antagonist Frida Foldal in the Ibsen play from 1896, *John Gabriel Borkman*. The main character Borkman remembers visiting the mines with his father as a young child, and now "the bound ore sings, for it wants to rise into the light of day and serve mankind." What does this actually mean?

Scholars have argued that this bergmann motif, which also is central in his poem "Bergmanden", published in *Digte* from 1871, correlates to German Romanticism. The German legends and myths from the Romantic period express in different ways the power of nature over man. The American literary researcher Eva Maria Fleck relates a fairy tale by E.T.A Hoffmann, "Die Bergwerke zu Falun" to this play by Ibsen. The fairy tale is about a young Swedish sailor Elis who in a dream is split between a woman from the mines, an underground queen, who lures with big treasures, and threatens to drag him down to the underground world, and his mundane love, Ulla. He feels an ice cold hand grabbing his heart. The mines are later crushed, and fifty years later a dead body is found down there.

In the final scene in *John Gabriel Borkman* the main character is found dead in the snow. "It was an icy hand of ore, which took him to heart," the antagonist Ella Rentheim says. How does these "power of nature"-elements relate to later views on ecocriticism, presented by Cheryll Glotfelty and other scholars?

Bio

Lars Harald Storebø, b.1969. University lecturer in Bodø 2025-26. Publishing an post colonial reading of a novel by Kathrine Nedrejord in the journal Nordlit in nov./des. this year. He has also published articles on literature in the Norwegian journal Samtiden. Has taught in high school for over 20 years. He is also a singer-songwriter with three albums and singles published.

Farid Manouchehrian
Center for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo

Bergman's *Saraband* as a Fragmented Adaptation of Ibsen's Plays

While Ingmar Bergman's lifelong engagement with Henrik Ibsen has been established in the scholarship (see for instance Koskinen 2008, 21; Tapper 2021, 213), the influence of Ibsen's dramaturgy on Bergman's last TV production, *Saraband* (2003), has received little attention. This paper explores how Bergman reimagines Ibsen to create a pastiche that helps construct *Saraband's* structure. Accordingly, I propose that Bergman's film functions as a fragmented adaptation of *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896), with resonances of *Ghosts* (1881).

Employing Gérard Genette's concept of transposition — as “the most important of all hypertextual practices” (1997, 212) — I suggest that Bergman maintains Ibsen's central themes, including the memory of lost love, generational conflict, failed restitution, emotional inheritance, and eventually the liberation of the younger generation, while generating new meanings through diegetic and pragmatic shifts. The late nineteenth-century Norwegian bourgeois milieu of *John Gabriel Borkman* is transposed into early twenty-first-century Sweden, a shift that changes narrative structure and gender dynamics.

Drawing on Kamilla Elliott's theorizing of adaptation as both textual and contextual processes of fragmentation and recombination (see Elliott 2020, 92–93), the paper argues that *Saraband* adapts Ibsen not through close fidelity to his plays but through fragmentation and contextual transformation. Bergman's *Saraband* exemplifies a modernist practice of piecemeal reconstruction, in which fragments of prior texts are accommodated to a new narrative in a different context. Methodologically, the analysis combines close reading with comparative analysis, in which dramaturgy, narrative structure, dramatic conflicts, dramatic spaces, characterization, and thematic parallels are examined.

By reading *Saraband* as a fragmented adaptation of Ibsen's plays, this paper highlights the continued relevance of Ibsen's dramas and contributes to Ibsen studies, Bergman scholarship, and adaptation studies.

References

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- Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Palimpsest: Literature in the Second Degree*. Translated by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Koskinen, Maaret. 2008. “Out of the Past: *Saraband* and the Ingmar Bergman Archive.” In *Ingmar Bergman Revisited: Performance, Cinema and the Art*, edited by Maaret Koskinen, 19–34. London: Wallflower Press.
- Tapper, Michael. 2021. “Battlefield Family: Ingmar Bergman, Henrik Ibsen, and Television.” In *Ingmar Bergman: An Enduring Legacy*, edited by Erik Hedling, 211–223. Lund: Lund University Press.

Bio

Farid Manouchehrian is a PhD candidate at the Center for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo, who holds a double MA in Ibsen Studies and Screen Cultures (Media Studies). Research interests include literary theory, metamodernism, socio-economic approaches to drama, adaptation studies, and film and theatre studies. He is currently working on a PhD dissertation on Ibsen and Bergman.

Panel 2.1: *A Doll's House* on the Contemporary Stage

Moderation: Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman

Hanna Rinderle
Nordeuropa-Institut, HU Berlin

From Nora to Niru. Retelling *A Doll's House* in a Postcolonial Context

Keywords: *A Doll's House*, Tanika Gupta, Intertextuality, Colonial Discourse, Intersectional Feminism

In her 2019 adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, British playwright Tanika Gupta relocates the play's setting to Calcutta, colonial India in the year 1879. Tom Helmer becomes an "English lawyer in his early forties" who, defying the expectations of British colonial society, has married an Indian woman, Niru. For the most part, Gupta adheres to the structure and plot of Ibsen's original: Niru too secures a loan by forging a signature, she too is blackmailed, and ultimately, she leaves her family, stating: "I must educate myself and I must do this on my own terms."

While Ibsen's version primarily explores familial power dynamics and issues of class and gender, Gupta introduces an additional layer of complexity by incorporating the category of race. Tom Helmer is not only socially and economically dominant as a man, but also holds racial privilege as a member of the colonial elite. The intersection of class, race, and gender intensifies the structural inequality within the characters' relationship and invites fresh critical interpretations.

In my presentation, I would like to explore how the family dynamics shift when the narrative is relocated to a different geographical and political context. And in what ways does Gupta's transnational rewriting function both as a postcolonial critique and as a dialogic engagement with Ibsen's text? I argue that Gupta's *A Doll's House* should not be read merely as a postcolonial adaptation that critiques British imperialism. Rather, it engages in a complex intertextual dialogue with Ibsen's original – exposing its blind spots, updating its thematic core, and reimagining Nora through an intersectional lens as Niru, whose journey towards emancipation is both locally rooted and globally resonant.

Bio

Hanna Rinderle is a research assistant at the Nordeuropa-Institut at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. From 2017 to 2023, she was a research assistant at the Scandinavian Department and the German Department at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau. There she completed her doctorate in General and Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies with a thesis on Africa in German and Swedish migration and refugee literature. Her research focuses on colonial and postcolonial literature in Germany and Scandinavia, literary Africanism, travel literature and autobiographical and autofictional writing.

Sumaiya Swati Uditā
Bangladesh

Negotiating Bangladeshi Women’s Socio-political Struggles through *Ninaad*, a Bengali Adaptation of *A Doll’s House*

Keywords: Adaptation, *A Doll’s House*, Bangladeshi women, gender inequality, agency

This paper demonstrates how Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman’s Bengali stage production *Ninaad* (Roar) recontextualizes Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* to illuminate the persistent socio-political struggles faced by Bangladeshi women. While Ibsen’s nineteenth-century play exposed the constraints of patriarchal domesticity, *Ninaad* mobilizes its adaptive and translational potential to address contemporary issues of gendered inequality in Bangladesh. Through close analysis of the dance sequence and the reimagined final scene—where Nora refuses departure and instead asserts a voice that disrupts Helmer’s authority—the study argues that *Ninaad* transforms Ibsen’s original critique into a locally situated discourse on power, agency, and resistance. By situating the production within frameworks of translation and adaptation studies, the paper demonstrates how intercultural performance can extend the political life of canonical texts, revealing their capacity to articulate ongoing struggles across temporal and geographic boundaries.

Bio

Sumaiya Swati Uditā is a recipient of the prestigious NORSTIP Scholarship in 2025 to pursue a master’s at the Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo. She has obtained a degree of Bachelor of Arts in English from the Department of English and Humanities (DEH) at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB). She has been engaged in various co-curricular activities, which include her experience of working as a sub-editor of the magazine, *Mouthpiece of ULAB Students of English (MUSE)*.

Ye Rulan
Fudan University

Echoes of the Doll's House: Jon Fosse's *Nora* and the Timelessness of Ibsen's Legacy

Key Words: Henrik Ibsen, Jon Fosse, Nora, minimalism, existentialism, Byung-Chul Han

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* has endured as one of the most provocative theatrical meditations on autonomy, identity, and social illusion, with Nora Helmer's iconic departure from her husband and children remaining one of modern drama's most debated gestures. While often read as a historically situated feminist awakening, the play's resonance has extended far beyond its nineteenth-century bourgeois milieu. This study examines Jon Fosse's *Nora* – a musical adaptation of his play *Too Late* – as a radical reimagining of Ibsen's heroine within an existential and post-dramatic framework. Fosse's dramaturgy, marked by silence, repetition, fragmentation, and a haunting sense of temporality, displaces Nora from the social realism of Ibsen's text into a more elemental landscape of subjectivity and dissolution. By juxtaposing Ibsen's realist scaffolding with Fosse's minimalism and drawing upon the philosophical insights of Byung-Chul Han regarding freedom, fatigue, and the erosion of relationality in late modernity, the paper argues that Nora's predicament should not be understood solely as an act of historical liberation but as an enduring struggle between autonomy and exhaustion, individuality and relational entanglement. Nora functions as a timeless cipher through which shifting crises of identity, freedom, and intimacy are refracted. In this way, Fosse's adaptation does not simply echo Ibsen but amplifies his legacy, situating Nora in a continuum where her voice -- sometimes spoken, sometimes silenced -- remains a mirror for modern and postmodern anxieties of selfhood.

Bio

Ye Rulan is currently an associate professor in College of Foreign Languages and Literature at Fudan University, and a research member of Nordic Literature Research Center at Fudan. Her main research interests include Nordic literature and art, modern American literature, traditional and modern Chinese visual arts, cultural studies, and communication dynamics.

Panel 3.1: Nora's Legacies

Moderation: Patrick Ledderose

Benedikte Berntzen
National Library of Norway, Oslo

Was Nora always alone? *A Doll's House's* Nora Helmer representing what has been named the sad reality of our time

Keywords: Nora Helmer, tragedy, alienation, loneliness, social issues.

Everyone who knows Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* from 1879, will acknowledge that the drama has been part of both the literary scene and society's debate through its' time. It has challenged readers and audiences alike to consider their personal relations, experiences, and losses. In his preparatory notes, Ibsen wrote: "Notes on the contemporary tragedy. Sudden recurring anxiety and terror. Everything must be carried alone". How Ibsen used existential phrases like anxiety, loneliness and terror to give form to protagonist Nora Helmer in his starting point in 1878, is striking.

In his book *Tragedy* from 1969, British Literature professor Clifford Leech states how Ibsen helped develop the modern concept of tragedy by connecting the drama's conflict to everyday life. The tragedy of the 1800s is recognized by the experience of suffering when the modern human being breaks out from imposed patterns, when they so to speak "shed their skin". For Nora, this means a change of costume. When Nora leaves her home and family, she walks out alone, and states that she has to be alone, to get to know herself and "everything around me". But her exit is not connected to a closing door or a turning lock; I will argue that an experience of lack of connections trails the drama from beginning to the end (and before the plot if one considers Ibsen's first notes from 1878).

Loneliness and anxiety seems to be a focused field in current times, in Medicine, Psychology and in the greater community. Japan and the UK keep their own Ministers of Loneliness, and in 2024 the Norwegian Loneliness Party was established. An interdisciplinary reading of the play can hopefully place *A Doll's House's* plot among this pressing psychological issue, and mirror perspectives on what has been named the sad reality of our time.

Bio

Benedikte Berntzen (b. 1974) holds a M. Phil. in Ibsen Studies and is the research librarian of the Norwegian National Library's Theatre collections. She is a former editor Ibsen.nb.no and member of the Nordic Center for Theatre Documentation (NCTD). Berntzen has given many presentations on Henrik Ibsen's life and works in Norway and USA, India and China. In 2016 she curated the exhibition *NORA Across the World* at The National Library. Her publications include "Insisting on the truth: Arthur Miller's adaptation of *An Enemy of the People*", "Two Darling Daring Mothers. Nora Helmer and Joanna Kramer" and "He and She out into the world. Jon Fosse's private archives in The National Library".

Berntzen has a special interest for Ibsen's characters' sensitivity. She supports how Ibsen's dramatic art, expressed through realistic or visual form, express topicality as well as relating it to Ibsen's vision for a truthful interpretation of his plays.

Feng Duan
Peking University

Breaking Through the Prison of the House?: Repercussions of *A Doll's House* in Contemporary China

Keywords : *A Doll's House*; Gender Dynamics ; Chinese Adaptations

Ibsen's plays *A Doll's House*, as has long been acknowledged as promoting a socially involved literature and dealing with controversial topics as gender roles and sexual politics, plays a worldwide significance in provoking people to reconsider the patriarchal structure and women's circumstances. In China, the character Nora has become iconic, and the sound of her famous "slamming of the door" reverberates from the New Cultural Movement (1915) till today. What has led to the departure of Nora, what will become of her after she has slammed the door behind, is her behaviour endangering the existing social institute of marriage and family, such questions have intrigued later artists to devise their own reconstruction of Nora's rebellion. In view of this, this paper first surveys Chinese receptions of *A Doll's House*, and then zooms in to the three productions around the 2020s: two adaptations (Chinese National Theatre 2020, Shanghai Theatre Academy 2022), and the 2024 movie *Like A Rolling Stone* which is based on the true story of a Chinese social influencer and acclaimed as "the Chinese Version of *A Doll House*". The paper wants to demonstrate, important topics addressed by Ibsen, like the theatricalization of gender roles, the rebellion against the established matrimonial system, the dialectical relationship between individual selfhood and social roles, not only persist but become more problematic when involved with more complicated cultural and social realities. To address such topical questions proposed by Ibsen and Nora, and to avoid a simply dichotomized stance, is of crucial importance in our attitudes towards the social institute of family and gender dynamics

Bio

Feng DUAN (PhD. Peking University) is now Associate Professor of English Department, Fudan University (Shanghai, China). With her academic background in English Literature and narrative theories, she is the author of two monographs on the narrative form and relevant thematic concern of J.M Coetzee and has published on various narrative genres (graphic novels, short stories, detective fiction, literary fairy tales) in *Style*, *Neobelicon*, *Foreign Literature Review*, etc. She is now working on a research project concerning cross-media narratives and storytelling. Her means of Contact is duanfeng@fudan.edu.cn.

Sotirios Mouzakis

University of Münster, Department of Scandinavian Studies

Clemens Räthel

University of Greifswald, Department of Finnish and Scandinavian Studies

Digesting Ibsen: On Sivan Ben Yishai's *Nora* Adaptation

Henrik Ibsen is one of the most frequently performed playwrights worldwide. Time and again, theatre professionals find new angles to approach Ibsen's world. Parallel to the grand master's original oeuvre, which continues to be successfully staged around the world, there is a plethora of new interpretations of his works that find their way to the theatre. These adaptations are as versatile as Ibsen's oeuvre itself: some take Ibsen's endings as a starting point to explore what the characters do after the curtain has fallen; others re-imagine the plot or assume a perspective that shines new light on the established source material.

In our paper, we aim to focus on Sivan Ben Yishai's play *Nora, or How to Digest the Master's House*, which won the prestigious 'Mühlheimer Dramatikpreis' in 2024 and was performed to great critical acclaim. Using Yishai's text as a basis, we want to explore which otherwise neglected, peripheral dramatis personae are given centre stage, and how the playwright manages to connect today's (theatre) everyday reality with a historical setting. The motif of digestion is central to our analysis, as it allows us to conceptualise how Ibsen's works are continuously 'consumed,' metabolised, and transformed into new forms and meanings.

Bios

Sotirios Mouzakis is a postdoc researcher in the field of Scandinavian cultural and literary studies at the University of Münster. Their current research interests lie at the intersection of medical and pharmaceutical humanities, queer subcultures, gender studies, and sociology.

Clemens Räthel is a professor for modern Scandinavian literatures at the University of Greifswald. His current research topics include Scandinavian opera, queer voices in literature and theatre, cultures of the Baltic Sea region, as well as Jewish-Scandinavian relations.

Panel 4.1: Navigating *The Lady from the Sea* Moderation: Gianina Druta

Else Barratt-Due

The Lady from the Sea – a key to the mysterious in our own lives?

Keywords: *The Lady from the Sea*, *The Stranger*, the dreadful, freedom, self-recognition

In *The Lady from the Sea*, we are confronted with the way Ibsen employs both the figure of *The Stranger* and the very concept of *the strange* to weave his story around the dilemmas of the protagonist Ellida. She is drawn toward the strange, experiencing it as both dreadful and alluring. She is in despair, searching for a way to live in freedom. How are we to understand this story?

I have directed the play, and when I later wrote a novel about a director who encounters profound existential difficulties while staging the work, I became increasingly preoccupied with the continuing relevance of Ellida's struggles. What is it that unsettles and fascinates us? What is *the strange*, and what significance does it carry? What does it mean to "go out into the unknown," as the stepdaughter Bolette expresses it?

I look at both the practical experience of staging the play in theatre, film, and radio drama, and discuss different theoretical perspectives. Is it possible to grasp how these existential questions remain relevant and topical? Does Ibsen provide us with a key to approach the mysterious in our own lives? And are we ourselves willing to search for it? Or do we instead view the play through a more adventurous gaze—keeping our distance, perhaps even protecting ourselves from what it actually conveys?

Bio

Else Barratt-Due (b. 1954) is a director and dramaturg, educated in Norway and the USA. She worked for 30 years at NRK (the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation) as a director and dramaturg, and has taught at universities and held many lectures on Ibsen's plays. She runs her own company, *Tellthestory*, offering courses in presentation and communication, and published the book *On Stage in Your Own Life* (2011).

As a director, she has staged several of Henrik Ibsen's plays, including *The Wild Duck* and *The Lady from the Sea*. At the International Ibsen Conference in Brooklyn in 2006, she presented her production of *Love's Comedy* as a radio musical. In 2024, her novel *Out into the Unknown* was published, telling the story of a theatre director who, while working on *The Lady from the Sea*, is thrown into emotional turmoil when one of the lead actors questions the role of the Stranger. She works now as a freelancer.

Sabiha Huq
BRAC University Bangladesh

The Sea is the Woman: A Blue Humanities Reading of *The Lady from the Sea*

Keywords: blue humanities, sea, memory, anthropocene, myth, folklore

As a play that traces the “sinuous trails” of the sea in the memories of its female protagonist Ellida Wangel, Ibsen’s *The Lady from the Sea* (1888) bears out Toni Morrison’s words that “All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was.” The metaphorical vastness of the sea visibilizes itself both in terms of its textuality and visual appeal in Ellida, whose philosophical and spiritual mind-frames are drawn from the wide blue waters. The paper mainly focuses on such textualities and visual aspects of the Ibsen canon through the analysis of the text and its 1979 film version with Liv Ullmann playing the role of Ellida. Through her husband Edvard’s pejorative identification of Ellida as someone born with a ‘disease’ that made her part of the people who belonged to the sea, Ibsen basically problematizes human-sea relationship within the anthropocene. Nonetheless, the lens of blue humanities shows how the sea is a pervasive influence in the lives, mythic traditions and folkloristic imaginations of the small fjord town where the play is set. Ellida’s is a fit case for reading her cataclysmic and ‘ambivalent’ relationship with the sea, and such a reading can provide a new approach for evaluating the centrality of the sea in the thought processes of several Ibsenian female characters including Ellida. The visuals of the film when analysed in conjunction with the scenography of the text add to the theoretical perspectives of blue humanities and thereby provide deeper critical understandings of the anthropocene.

Bio

Professor Sabiha Huq, PhD, currently teaches at the Department of English and Humanities, BRAC University, Dhaka with a leave on lien from Khulna University. Her major areas of interest are modern and postcolonial literature, cultural studies and women’s writings. Her monograph *The Mughal Aviary* (Vernon, USA and UPL, Bangladesh, 2022) received the Literary Encyclopedia Book Prize in 2023. She jointly edited *Ibsen in the Decolonised South Asian Theatre* (Routledge 2024) which covers performances of Ibsen's plays across five countries of South Asia that have vibrant theatre cultures. She has numerous articles published in national and international journals and books to her credit. She edits and publishes *Dead Metaphor*, a literary magazine (ISSN: 2790-2536 Online and 2519-5557 Print). She is currently a member of the International Ibsen Committee and also serves as the Press and Publication Secretary of Association of Teachers of Literatures in English, Bangladesh (ATLEB).

Alexia Panagiotidis
University of Zurich

The Sea as Problem in Drama

The emergence of epic drama in Henrik Ibsen's *Fruen fra Havet* (1888) through the lens of Hans Christian Andersen's tragic tale *Den lille Havfrue* (1838)

Ellida, the main character of Henrik Ibsen's 1888 drama *Fruen fra Havet*, is often perceived as a mermaid descendant. She is caught between agoraphobia on land and a sort of thalassophobia during her daily swims in the fjords. This ambivalence stems not only from her personal history, but also from the genre. In classic literature, the sea belongs to the realm of epic genre. In drama, however, the sea is absent for good reason: it would violate the unity of space by being outside the plot taking place on land. In Hans Christian Andersen's tale *Den lille Havfrue*, the eponymous character undermines her sea origin by becoming human. The transgression follows a tragic structure, culminating in evaporation as an aerial being. In the analysis, I will examine *Fruen fra Havet* through the lens of *Den lille Havfrue*, focusing on the genre shift. Bearing in mind Peter Szondi's statement that Ibsen's drama is modern in its 'static' and 'epic' nature, I will demonstrate how the sea plays a major role in the emergence of epic drama foregrounded by the opposite tendency of the tragic epic tale.

Bio

Alexia Panagiotidis is a PhD-student at the university of Zurich. Currently she is writing her PhD-thesis on "HC Andersen and the concept of paramyth".

Panel 5.1: *An Enemy of the People* on the Contemporary Stage I Moderation: Heidi Leclaire-Karlsen

Burç İdem Dinçel

Trinity Centre for Beckett Studies, Trinity College Dublin

Thomas Ostermeier's *An Enemy of the People* Revisited: Dramaturgical Dialectics in Istanbul

Keywords: Ibsen, Ostermeier, dramaturgy, reception, politics

Located at the crossroads of aesthetics, politics, and socio-cultural dynamics governing theatrical occurrences, dramaturgy operates as a fertile *topos* whereby to scrutinise the enduring topicality of Henrik Ibsen's plays. The directorial praxis of Thomas Ostermeier stands out amongst a slew of Ibsen productions around the globe, due to the intrinsically dialectical nature of Schaubühne's dramaturgy. The director's reworking of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (2012) vindicates this point in more ways than one. Being aware of the transformative power of theatre, Ostermeier places a premium on the palpability of the *hic et nunc*. As his productions of the play travel around the world, the dramaturgical strategy must transfigure the performative space of theatre into a venue for each *demos* to voice their *pathos* under the pressures of global 'capitalist realism'. It is thanks to this directorial-cum-dramaturgical *ethos* that Ostermeier breathes new life into Ibsen both locally in Berlin, and across languages and cultures. It is, likewise, owing to this *ethos* that the Istanbul leg of the piece (2014) made a tremendous impact in Turkish theatrical circles. This paper revisits Ostermeier's *An Enemy of the People* in Istanbul by historicising the production more than a decade on. Highlighting the underlying socio-political tensions surrounding the production back then, the study sheds light on the ongoing reasons why Istanbul performances of Ostermeier's *An Enemy of the People* matter not merely in terms of resistance against the Turkish status quo, but more significantly, for the broad comprehension of Ibsen's unyielding topicality in the twenty-first century.

Bio

Burç İdem Dinçel is a research associate at the Trinity Centre for Beckett Studies, Trinity College Dublin. He has published extensively on Theatre and Translation Studies and is the author of *Last Tape on Stage in Translation: Unwinding Beckett's Spool in Turkey* (2012), *The Tragic Transformed: Attic Drama on the Contemporary Stage* (2024), as well as the co-editor of *Metamorphoses of Ancient Myths* (2017).

Patrick Ledderose
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

Staging ‘the many’: Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*

Key words: An Enemy of the people, the many, crowd scene, Thomas Ostermeier

From 2015 to 2025, *An Enemy of the People* has been Ibsen's second most frequently staged play, surpassed only by *A Doll's House*. There are several apparent reasons for its global success, such as the sharp political conflict it draws between truth and money/power, or its engagement with ecological concerns. In my talk, however, I will rather address a somewhat problematic aspect of the play: its portrayal of a figure that may well be viewed as the true protagonist of the drama – ‘the many’. Although ‘the many’ are a recurring subject of discussion throughout the play, they appear on stage only once, in a pivotal scene in the fourth act. This scene is remarkable in many respects, but it also poses a significant challenge to contemporary productions as it relies heavily on outdated dramatic conventions. Most notably, ‘the many’ are not depicted as a diverse, autonomous collective, nor – as the title of the play might suggest – as ‘the people’, but rather as a manipulable, irrational mass – an elitist perspective that, while not unusual in Ibsen's time, sits uneasily with contemporary notions of democratic representation.

Against this background, I will examine Ibsen's dramaturgical and discursive treatment of ‘the many’ in the play, using Thomas Ostermeier's now-canonical production as a key example of how this problematic act can be reimagined for modern audiences.

Bio

Patrick Ledderose is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Nordic Philology at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München. His research interests include Scandinavian drama and theater since 1900, literary conceptions of the parasitic, and representations of ‘the many’ in modern realist Scandinavian literature.

Ewa Partyga
Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences

Experimenting with *An Enemy of People* in Polish Political Landscape

Keywords: Ibsen in Poland, political dramaturgy, ecocritical theatre, interactive theatre, politics of aesthetics

In recent decades, Ibsen's plays have rarely remained in the repertoires of Polish theatres for extended periods. Against this backdrop, Jan Klata's production of *An Enemy of the People* at the National Old Theatre in Kraków represents a noteworthy exception. Premiering in 2015, it enjoyed several years of successful run on the Kraków stage and at theatre festivals. Revived in 2022, it continues to attract audiences today, appealing to the sensibilities of new generation of theatregoers. By contrast, Anna Augustynowicz's 2022 production of the same play at the Nowy Theatre in Poznań, failed to gain wide audience interest or win critical acclaim. Both directors experimented with the political potential of Ibsen's play, referencing current political issues in their interpretations, including the relationship between authoritarianism and populism, and the ecological crisis as a socio-political concern. This paper will adopt Jacques Rancière's concept of the politics of aesthetics to identify the factors that may have contributed to the success of Klata's production in Poland's rapidly changing political landscape over the past 10 years. By analysing the dramaturgical decisions employed in adapting the text (with Klata working alongside Michał Buszewicz and Augustynowicz with Michał Pabian), I will examine how the performative aspects of Ibsen's play were activated in both stagings. In comparing the radical yet distinct aesthetic approaches of those productions, I will focus on their effectiveness in defining the mode of reception and in engaging the spectators with Ibsen's play on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Bio

Ewa Partyga is Associate Professor of Theatre Studies at the Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences. She graduated from Jagiellonian University and University of Bergen. She received her PhD in theatre and literary studies from Jagiellonian University in Kraków, and her habilitation degree from Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences. Her research is focused on the cultural drama and theatre history (19th and 20th centuries) in comparative perspective.

Panel 6.1: *An Enemy of the People* on the Contemporary Stage II

Moderation: Anna Stavrakopoulou

Lada Čale Feldman
University of Zagreb

On being outvoted: the topicality of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* for the attempt to define „deliberative dramaturgy“ as a subgenre

Keywords: deliberative dramaturgy, contemporary „drama of ideas“, genre, democracy, *An Enemy of the People*

"Deliberative dramaturgy", which emerged at the intersection of sociology, political science and theatre and performance theory, is a syntagm that refers to the object of a particular research methodology that draws on the vocabulary of classics of „dramatism“ such as Erving Goffman (1959) and Kenneth Burke (1945) to analyse public deliberation in terms of its „scripting“, „setting“, „staging“, „audiences“ and „acting“ (cf. Ercan and Hendricks 2022), in the hope that awareness of these components can improve the standards of democratic decision-making in matters of public interest.

However, this approach in the social sciences has its parallel in the sphere of artistic production, for there are a number of recent plays that testify to a whole new „aesthetics of reflection and debate“ (Redling 2014), both in British and French dramaturgy, just as there are important plays in American verbatim theatre whose common denominator is to be found in their appeal to „deliberative democracy“ (cf. Claycomb 2023). So could „deliberative dramaturgy“ also be defined as a separate sub-genre of Western drama, with a respectable genealogy that leads from Aristophanes' *Knights* to the present day? The topicality of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* for such an attempt seems undeniable, not only because of the controversy it still triggers when it comes to its political legacy and impact (cf. Brustein 1991; Leck 2005; Gjesdal 2014), but also given its Socratic origins (cf. Tomljenovic 2019), which point to a metadramatic consideration of the inherent ambivalence of the very basis of democratic deliberation: the agents, means and modes of human communication.

Bio

Lada Čale Feldman is a full professor and chair of theatre studies at the Department of Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. Her research focuses on theatre and performance studies as well as feminist criticism. In addition to seven books she has authored and two she has co-authored in Croatian - the last one she wrote, *Hiniti i biti* (To Pretend or To Be), was published in 2023, and a book *Revisiting Molière* will be published in 2025 - she has also co-edited several special issues of journals and several collections, including in English (with I. Prica and R. Senjkovic), *Fear, Death and Resistance: Croatia 1991-92*, 1993. and (with M. Blazevic) *Misperformance: essays in shifting perspectives*, 2014. Together with M. Blazevic, she also wrote the entry „Misperformance“ for Bryan Reynolds' *Performance Studies: Key Words, Concepts, and Theories*, 2014. She has been honoured with five national and one international award.

Victor Castellani
University of Denver

“The People and Its Enemies: Influencers and Targets in Ibsen—and Resisters”

Key words: Public Sphere, Reputation, Journalism, Influencers, Resisters

Even in swinging, cynical Second Empire France public opinion was a mighty constraint. Offenbach-Halévy *Orfée aux Enfers* knows it, personifies it, and gives it a voice: L’Opinion Publique, stern mezzo-soprano who compels reluctant Orpheus to go to Hell to recover flighty soprano Eurydice from whom he was quite delighted to part. However, broken marriage notwithstanding, a Professor of Violin must keep up appearances.

Public scandal *or its threat*, censure in print or by word-of-mouth intimidates in Ibsen’s prose plays. In the very first, Consul Bernick sets the stage.

Admired “pillars of society” must watch their step. Convicted criminals can never remove social stigma (Krogstad, Old Ekdal, JG Borkman). Rehabilitation eludes the dissolute (Captain Alving posthumously, Ejler Løvborg).

Perception of religious nonconformity can devastate, fear of secular reprobation inhibit—or provoke defiance. Journalists (Krogstad!, Hovstad & Co, Mortensgård) and public figures (Schoolmasters Rørlund and Kroll; Pastor Manders, Mayor Stockman, Magistrate Brack, tycoon Werle) wield influence to exalt *or to ruin*.

Nevertheless, characters, among Ibsen’s most interesting, defy them. Dr.

Stockman, Dr. Rank, Halvard Solness, even Erik Brendel are examples, perhaps Dr. Relling, certainly uppity women “Nora,” Rebecca West, grown-up Hilde Wangel, and Fanny Wilton, none of whom cares ‘what people will say.’ Numerous others chronically fret about reputation (Hjalmar Ekdal, Banker Torvald Helmer, Dr. Jørgen Tesman; to whom add Dr. Wangel, Schoolmaster Arnholm, quietly Dr. Herdal; Solness’ and Borkman’s wives, late Beate Rosmer; perhaps late fru Werle). Johannes Rosmer, Hedda Tesman, *née* Gabler, and Solness confront that stifling force, liberated—and dead.

Bio

double BA Greek and Latin (Fordham, AD 1968).

PhD Classics (Princeton, 1971; diss. “House and Home in Euripides”) Instructor/Asst Prof/Assoc Prof/Prof (private U of Denver 1971-2024).

100+ publications chiefly on Greek and Latin lit, concentrations epic and theater-and-drama. Some on ancient and diachronic political, social, and cultural history, “myth” and religion, iconography; also on Dante and Ibsen.

450+ extramural university lectures in thirty lands abroad and conference papers demonstrating range of interest resembling Denver’s South Platte River before Europeans channeled it: “a mile wide and [on things like Beethoven’s *Leonores*, Scandinavian numismatics, and 20th century Fausts] an inch deep”.

Current projects on gods in “Homer” and related iconography of Athena till 400 BCE; diverse features of Sophocles’, Euripides’, and Aristophanes’ *œuvres*; Plato’s serio-comic dialogues before *Republic* Book 2; Roman law in Roman lit; evolving politicized Christianity East and West 3rd-5th centuries CE; Mel Brooks and Monty Python; contemporary US playwrights.

Subah Binte Ahsan
University of Exeter, UK

Ephemerality and Afterlives of Performance: A Student Production of An Enemy of the People in Bangladesh

This paper aims to explore how a child might receive a politically charged play and how its impact might persist and/or evolve after two decades. While watching a production of *An Enemy of the People* (*Ganashatru*) adapted and directed by Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman in Khulna University, Bangladesh as a barely six-year-old in 2006, what then felt like a betrayal from the very people one believes now feels like a well-orchestrated mob trial, which might as well have been a social media trial had it happened today. Using memory studies as my theoretical tool, I explore how the act of remembering itself becomes part of the performance's impact. By situating my personal narrative within the broader discourse of memory – its subjectivity, fluidity and performative dimensions – I argue that the impact of the production cannot be located solely in the moment of its staging but also in its afterlives within memory. Theatre's impact extends beyond the event itself, living on through memory in ways that complicate the boundaries between individual experience and collective cultural meaning.

Bio

Subah Binte Ahsan is a young researcher in the field of Education who is interested in theatre, performance studies, and music. She is currently pursuing her second master's in Special Education Needs at the University of Exeter, the United Kingdom. Previously she earned both her bachelor and master's degrees in Education from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Panel 7.1: Existential Challenges in *Ghosts* and *Emperor and Galilean*

Moderation: Hans Kristian S. Rustad

Kamilla Aslaksen, Associate Professor
University of Inland Norway

Nihilism in *Ghosts*: Ibsen's engagement in a burning contemporary issue

Key words: *Ghosts*; nihilism; reception; realism; 1880s

In a well-known letter to Sophus Schandorph, written in response to the criticism of *Ghosts*, Ibsen states:

It has also been said that [*Ghosts*] preaches nihilism. By no means. It makes no attempt to preach anything whatsoever. It only points out that nihilism is fermenting beneath the surface, at home as well as elsewhere.

Since few critics had directly associated the play with nihilism, Ibsen's reaction might seem somewhat exaggerated. At the same time, his reaction testifies to how charged the concept of nihilism was in the early 1880s. Also, he does not deny the presence of nihilism as a central topic of the play and locates it in the character Helene Alving: "A Pastor Manders will always provoke some Mrs. Alving or other."

Gustaf Ljunggren responded directly to Ibsen's claim. In his 1882 review, he argued that Mrs. Alving, with her "nihilistic brain", must be considered the play's mouthpiece and concluded that Ibsen had "put more of his own view of life into his play than he himself was aware of".

This paper will first give a historical account of how the concept "nihilism" was understood in Scandinavia around 1880–82 and why it had become such a sensitive and topical issue. It will then review different scholarly interpretations of the play's nihilistic elements before presenting my own analysis, which focuses on how the drama's formal features shape its treatment of nihilism.

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Bio

Aslaksen is Associate Professor in Scandinavian Studies with an MA in Scandinavian literature from University of Oslo and a PhD in Library and Information Studies from Oslomet. She is a former lecturer at University of Amsterdam and has published extensively on book history, archive, women's writing, free speech, Henrik Ibsen, Camilla Collett, and "The Modern Breakthrough" in Scandinavian literature.

Giuliano D'Amico
University of Oslo

Spectral Topicality in *Emperor and Galilean*

Keywords: *Emperor and Galilean* – ghosts – ambiguity – science – religion

Emperor and Galilean (1873), Henrik Ibsen's two-part drama centred on the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate, stands as one of his longest and most intricate works, and is arguably not one of his most studied plays. Within the existing literature, the so-called "symposium with the spirits" is frequently highlighted as a topical scene in the play. In this moment, found in the third act of the first part, Julian and his spiritual advisor, the mystic Maximus, engage in a dialogue with two spirits who reveal themselves to be Cain and Judas. Their counsel sets Julian on a path toward what Maximus designates as the "third empire," the political and spiritual vision of the pagan emperor.

In my paper, I aim to interrogate the centrality of this spirit symposium by examining the spectral qualities of Julian's interlocutors. Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology, I will argue that the intrinsic ambiguity of ghostly discourse can lead to new interpretations of this scene and the play as a whole. I will argue that Ibsen shifts away from the Theurgic and Mythic context of Julian's spirituality, instead engaging with a necromantical ritual that evokes a spiritualist séance of sorts. By navigating the intersection of antiquity and modernity, Ibsen invites to a more complex reading of these two spectral figures and the messages they convey to Julian. Rather than serving as spiritual guides who offer insights through omens and prophecies, they emerge as highly ambiguous entities who ultimately jeopardize Julian's ambitions.

Bio

Giuliano D'Amico is a Professor of Scandinavian literature and the Director of the Centre for Ibsen Studies at the University of Oslo. He has published widely on the reception of Nordic writers, Ibsen in particular, in England, France, Germany and Italy (see his 2013 monograph *Domesticating Ibsen for Italy. Enrico and Icilio Polese's Ibsen Campaign*). He is currently working on a book on ghosts in Ibsen's plays, preliminarily entitled *Ghostly Reading. Spectrality in the Works of Henrik Ibsen*, which will be published in 2028 by De Gruyter.

Christian Janss
University of Oslo

Friendship in H. Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* (1873)

Keywords: Henrik Ibsen; *Emperor and Galilean*; Friendship; Speech Acts; Performatives

Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* is a multifaceted work that encompasses, among other themes, the narrative and conflict of friendship. Julian's dialogues are rich with invitations and performative declarations of friendship, which, in my view, hold particular significance within this drama.

Why does the Prince – and later the Emperor – long for or need friends? Julian seeks companionship on at least two levels: intimate, personal friendships and strategic, political alliances. Key scenes depict his attempts to assert friendship, notably with Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus; however they often result in what speech act theory would call "infelicities" or "misfires" (J.L. Austin).

The formulas of friendship in Julian's lines connect to the kind of friendship he experienced as a young Christian. But where does he stand now? I would argue that he gradually finds himself in an in-between space that corresponds to the title of the drama – Emperor *and* Galilean. Between Roman *amicitia* and Greek *philia* – thereby highlighting the existential conflict between his imperial responsibilities and his yearning for authentic relations.

Bio

Christian Janss, born in 1966, is a professor of German literature at the University of Oslo. He served as the philological editor of *Henrik Ibsens skrifter* from 2002 to 2009. Janss is a co-author with Christian Refsum of *Lyrikkens lin. Innføring i diktlesning* (2003) and has also served as co-editor for various collections, including *Geschichte der Edition in Skandinavien* with Paula Henrikson (2013). His articles focus on the works of Goethe, Kleist, Rilke, J.P. Jacobsen, Ibsen, and Nelly Sachs.

THEMATIC STREAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 2026

11:30-13:00 KOL G 217	Panel 1.2: Ibsen's Families Moderation: Olivia Noble Gunn
11:30-12:00	Ethan Bjelland Hagberg (Seattle, USA): Orienting Hedvig in the Family Ideal: <i>Vildanden's</i> Queer Generations
12:00-12:30	Joachim Schiedermaier (München, Germany): Apotropaic Families. Ibsen's Inversion of Freud's Family Romance
12:30-13:00	ji
14:00-15:30 KOL G 217	Panel 2.2: Ibsen's Houses Moderation: Ellen Rees
14:00-14:30	Rixt Josefiën Bilker (Oslo, Norway): "This f*cking house!" Simon Stone's <i>Ibsen Huis</i> (2017) as a Pastiche of Ibsen's Uncanny Home
14:30-15:00	Eylem Ejder (Istanbul, Türkiye): Constructing a <i>Gecekondu</i> with Ibsen: Architectural Imaginations for New Dramatic Forms
15:00-15:30	Anar Rahimov (Baku, Azerbaijan) Timeless families in Ibsen's plays: A view to dynamics, structure and family relationships in his works
16:00-17:30 KOL G 217	Panel 3.2: Theater Historiography Moderation: Jens-Morten Hanssen
16:00-16:30	Gianina Druta (Oslo, Norway): Tragedy and expressionism in the German-speaking tradition of staging Henrik Ibsen's <i>Ghosts</i>
16:30-17:00	Keld Hyldig (Bergen, Norway): Ibsen's Archetypal Characters: Individuation and Theatrical Embodiment
17:00-17:30	Kayla Amity Hanson (Oslo, Norway): Radicalism, Ethnic Identity, and the premiere of Henrik Ibsen's <i>Ghosts</i> , 1882

SATURDAY JUNE 27 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 222	Panel 7.4: Ibsen – Old and New Media Moderation: Joachim Grage
10:10-10:40	Astrid Sæther (Oslo, Norway): Ibsen's Satirical Drawings
10:40-11:10	Liyang Xia (Oslo, Norway) & Julie Holledge (Adelaide, Australia): Activating Ibsen Research with VR technology
11:10-11:40	Xujia Zhou (Zurich, Switzerland): The Attic and the Algorithm: Ibsen's "Life-Lie" as a Precursor to the Modern Information Bubble

Panel 1.2: Ibsen's Families

Moderation: Olivia Noble Gunn

Ethan Bjelland Hagberg
University of Washington Seattle, WA USA

Orienting Hedvig in the Family Ideal: *Vildanden's* Queer Generations

Keywords: Queer Studies, *Vildanden*, Queer Kinship, Performance, Queer Phenomenology

“Gregers, I have no child!” (Act IV, *Vildanden*). With this line, Hjalmar Ekdal rejects Hedvig at the moment her uncertain parentage threatens his fatherhood to her. In Henrik Ibsen’s *Vildanden* (1884), family is less a given structure than a fragile performance stretched across generations. Hedvig’s death reveals the impossibility of sustaining and creating modern normative roles of father, mother, and child amongst the immediate and generational Ekdal family. It also forecloses opportunities for Hedvig’s self-discovery, as well as her sideways bond with the wild duck.

This essay reads *Vildanden* through the lenses of queer temporality and orientation. Hedvig is caught between her parents, her grandfather, Gregers’ demand of the ideal, and the doctor’s diagnosis—all of which orient her toward a future she cannot feasibly inhabit. Her orientation toward the duck, however, bends time and kinship askew, queering the generational order that claims her. Building on Olivia Gunn’s insights into Hedvig as a “scandalous similarity” to adults, and Kathryn Bond Stockton’s theory of “growing sideways,” I argue that the play stages a family whose temporality cannot move straight forward into reproduction and a new generation of the Ekdal family. Instead, the normative family structure collapses sideways into alternate forms of kinship.

By centering Hedvig and her attachments, this paper suggests that *Vildanden* does more than just depict bourgeois tragedy; it foresees the inadequacy of the family unit itself. Ibsen’s drama remains strikingly relevant because it performs the limits of truth, inheritance, and futurity—revealing how queer orientations emerge from the cracks of family life.

Bio

Ethan Bjelland Hagberg is a graduate student in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington, with interests in Queer Performance Studies, Performance Ethnography, Scandinavian Drama in Translation, and Theatre for Development. Their forthcoming thesis will explore generational queer performances of orientation and identity in the Norwegian Queer Archive, *Skeint arkiv*. Ethan has over fifteen years of experience working for various arts and culture nonprofit organizations, including serving as the Director of Communications for Norway House in Minneapolis, MN. As a theatre artist, they have translated and staged performances of works by Ibsen, Strindberg, and Holberg, as well as contemporary Scandinavian playwrights such as Jonas Hassen Khemiri.

Joachim Schiedermaier
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, München

Apotropaic Families. Ibsen's Inversion of Freud's Family Romance

Freud and Ibsen form a well-established pair. Even though Freud did not begin to develop psychoanalysis until 1900 with his *Interpretation of Dreams*, at a time when Ibsen had already stopped writing for a year, it is nevertheless Freud who usually provides the framework against which Ibsen's dramas are interpreted. This is not really appropriate, since Freud was inspired by Ibsen and not the other way around. The Austrian analyst of family constellations and the Norwegian author of family dramas should at least be understood as contemporaries who were preoccupied with the same problems.

Given this, it is striking that the deadly violence, which is initially bound apotropaically within the family, is discharged in opposite directions in Freud and Ibsen. If Freud's cultural theory of *Totem and Taboo* finds its fundamental narrative in the horde of brothers who kill their father and then deify him, in Ibsen, by contrast, the fathers drive their children to their deaths to subsequently elevate them to idols (most explicitly in *Vildanden / The Wild Duck*).

From this perspective, the paper aims to bring Ibsen's little-studied drama *Lille Eyolf* (1894; *Little Eyolf*) into dialogue with Freud's short text *Family Romances* (1909). It will become apparent that Ibsen - using the aesthetic means of drama - had already developed the dynamics of an anthropology that Freud later sought to conceptualise in the figures of displacement and condensation. Since these figures continue to play a decisive role in contemporary cultural theory (think of Marianne Hirsch's or Sigrud Weigel's trauma theories), Ibsen's dramatic inversion of Freud's family romance offers a model for reflecting on family sociality beyond gender roles.

Panel 2.2: Ibsen's Houses

Moderation: Ellen Rees

Rixt Josefien Bilker

Graduating student MA Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo

“This f*cking house!”

Simon Stone's *Ibsen Huis* (2017) as a Pastiche of Ibsen's Uncanny Home

Keywords: Performance, the uncanny, home, pastiche, intertextuality

This paper examines how *Ibsen Huis* (2017), directed by Simon Stone at International Theatre Amsterdam, functions as a pastiche of Ibsen's uncanny home. I argue that Stone reconfigures motifs around house and home from various prose plays as well as Ibsen's dramaturgical technique of the uncanny home to anchor Ibsen's themes and plays in contemporary postmodern society and theatre. Stone not only employs these motifs and techniques, but he reworks it through postmodern and temporal fragmentation. As such, Stone reveals how Ibsen's concerns of domesticity, privacy, and safety reflect current societal issues.

The study employs a comparative dramaturgical and scenographic approach, combining performance analysis of *Ibsen Huis* with close readings of several Ibsen's prose plays, in combination with theories from Sigmund Freud and Anthony Vidler on the uncanny and Richard Dyer and Linda Hutcheon on pastiche and intertextuality. Central to the analysis are the temporal structure of overlapping timelines (in contrast to Ibsen's linear retrospective storytelling) and the scenography of the rotating glass house; these literalise the critique of domesticity, visualise the opposition of interior-exterior, and expose imagined transparency. Stone's new strategies enhance the experience of Ibsen's uncanny home within a contemporary, postmodern context.

This paper challenges conventional adaptation approaches by introducing pastiche as a lens for understanding contemporary engagements with classical repertoire theater where artistic freedom and thematic exploration are valued over fidelity and comparison. It contributes to intertextual studies, theatre studies, and Ibsen studies. The paper also aligns how Ibsen's aesthetics and dramaturgy are revisited and reconfigured across performative, aesthetic, and philosophical registers.

Bio

Rixt Bilker is a dramaturg and theatre scholar from The Netherlands, where she was a bachelor and master's student at the University of Amsterdam. Bilker has recently graduated as a master's student in Ibsen Studies at the University of Oslo with a master's thesis on

Simon Stone's *Ibsen Huis*. As a dramaturg and scholar, her focus is on contemporary stagings and reinterpretations of canonical and/or modern repertoire plays. Bilker's research interests include performance analysis, intertextuality, adaptation theory, monodrama, theatre text analysis, contemporary approaches to and ongoing significance of repertoire works, and the dramaturgical and theatrical legacy of Ibsen in twenty-first century theatre.

Eylem Ejder
Department of Performing Arts at Istanbul Nişantaşı University

**Constructing a *Gecekondu* with Ibsen:
Architectural Imaginations for New Dramatic Forms**

Key words: Architectural metaphor and imagination, *Gecekondu* dramaturgy, Ibsen, hybrid text, autoethnography

In Henrik Ibsen’s plays, houses are not merely settings but constitutive elements of dramatic form. They concentrate social tensions, shape psychological conflict, and function as structuring devices within the formal logic of modern drama. As Mark Sandberg (2015) has argued, these “dramatic buildings” embody the contradictions of modernity, at once constructive and destabilizing. Ibsen’s dramaturgy reveals how architectural imagination underlies narrative organization: the interior becomes the site where structure, conflict, and resolution are spatially arranged.

Beginning from Ibsen’s foundational architectural imagination, the paper asks how lived experiences of dwelling shape dramaturgical thinking. If modern drama has often been aligned with the metaphor of the well-made building, what happens when form is imagined from vernacular architectural practices marked by improvisation, contingency, and deliberate incompleteness? Drawing on my writing and dramaturgical practice (autoethnographic, walking-based, and performative methods), I approach the house not as a finished design but as an ongoing process of making and remaking. From this perspective, I aim to extend Ibsen’s architectural metaphor toward what I call *gecekondu* dramaturgy—*gecekondu* referring to self-built houses that emerged in the urban peripheries of Turkey—where structures grow through addition, adaptation, and ongoing improvisation rather than prior design. Placing this spatial logic in dialogue with Ibsen’s carefully constructed interiors does not oppose his dramaturgy but reframes it. The paper proposes that different architectural imaginaries generate different narrative sensibilities and argues that a *gecekondu* dramaturgy pluralizes the dominant metaphor of the well-made play, reorienting dramaturgical thinking toward improvisational, hybrid, entangled, and open-ended forms.

Bio

Eylem Ejder holds a BA in Physics from Istanbul University and studied Theatre at Ankara University. She completed her PhD in Theatre with a dissertation titled “Recycling Dramaturgies”. During her doctoral research, she was a guest researcher at the Centre for Ibsen Studies (University of Oslo) and the Mellon School of Theatre and Performance Research at Harvard University. Since 2020, she has been developing autobiographical performances, public learning programs, workshops, and collaborative projects. Her artistic research blends interdisciplinary and hybrid texts, drawing on writing and urban and nature walks. Currently, she is a faculty member in the Department of Performing Arts at Istanbul Nişantaşı University.

Anar Rahimov

Baku, Azerbaijani University of Languages at the Center for Scandinavian studies

“Timeless families in Ibsen’s plays: A view to dynamics, structure and family relationships in his works”

Key words: Family dynamics, Gender relations, Genealogy, Relations

Henrik Ibsen's plays have long been distinguished for their incisive portrayal of family dynamics, gender relations, and genealogical structures. Be it father-daughter- husband-wife, mother- son relations. This paper examines the extent to which these themes remain relevant in contemporary society. I will try also to have some parallels with contemporary Azerbaijani families with the families that Ibsen describes in his plays. Through a critical analysis of Ibsen's works, such as "A Doll's House" and "Hedda Gabler," this study highlights the ways in which his exploration of family dynamics, gender roles, and the weight of legacy continue to resonate with modern audiences. The paper argues that Ibsen's plays offer a profound commentary on the human condition, one that transcends the societal norms and cultural context of his period. The complexities of family relationships, the struggle for individual autonomy, and the impact of patriarchal societies on women's lives are just a few of the themes that remain actual today. By examining the intersections of family, gender, and genealogy in Ibsen's plays, this study demonstrates the continued relevance of his work in understanding the intricacies of human relationships and the ways in which they shape our identities and experiences. Ultimately, this paper contends that Ibsen's plays offer a powerful lens through which to explore the complexities of human relationships and the enduring legacy of family dynamics both in his time and now.

Bio

My name is Anar Rahimov, was born in Baku, in 1984. Working at the Azerbaijani University of Languages, (Baku) at the Center for Scandinavian studies since 2013.

My position is senior lector and I teach Norwegian literature and language to first and second year students.

My educational background: I have graduated both from the Azerbaijani University of Languages and University of Oslo, Norway, Scandinavian Studies.

Apart from pedagogical work I am also engaged in translating Norwegian and Danish literature into Azerbaijani. Have so far translated some of Henrik Ibsen's plays (Wild Duck, The enemy of People, Dukkehjem

I have a great passion for Ibsen and his plays and I working to bring this great playwright to Azerbaijani readers on our mother tongue.

Panel 3.2: Theater Historiography

Moderation: Jens-Morten Hanssen

Gianina Druta

Faculty of Education and International Studies, Oslo Metropolitan University

Tragedy and expressionism in the German-speaking tradition of staging Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts*

Keywords: Tragedy, expressionism, German stage, *Ghosts*, Digital Humanities

This research addresses the German-speaking tradition of staging Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* by looking at the approach of tragedy through the expressionist acting and staging conventions. The starting point of the analysis is Germany as the country that most performed *Ghosts* in the world and German as the language most used to perform the play.

Methodologically and theoretically, the analysis relies on theatre historiography and Digital Humanities tools such as graphs, maps and networks based on the Ibsen Stage database. The paper explores several moments in the reception of the play by German theatre practitioners. For this purpose, it looks at the negotiation between the tragedy of the son Osvold and the tragedy of the mother Helene Alving, and at how the expressionist staging and acting conventions accompanied the development of the tragic form in the approach of *Ghosts*.

On the one hand, the early reception period of the play (1899-1928) is dominated by Deutsches Theater and reveals the expressionist tendencies and the strong focus on the star-actor and the tragedy of the son at the beginning of the 20th century with echoes reaching the *Ghosts* production of the Swiss theatre company Bühne 64 as late as in 1980. On the other hand, the contemporary reception of *Ghosts* experiments with the post-dramatic representation of the tragic form by mixing the realist conventions and the theatricalization tendencies of the expressionists, while blurring the boundaries between the tragedy of the mother and that of the son, as the *Ghosts* production of Markus&Markus staged in 2015-2016 demonstrates. Eventually, the German tradition of staging *Ghosts* as a tragedy reveals an expressionist common thread of aesthetic transmission which links the early theatre practice at the beginning of 20th century with the post-dramatic theatre practice of the 21st century.

Bio

Gianina Druță, born in 1992, is an associate professor of drama and theatre at the Faculty of Education and International Studies, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway. She took her PhD with a thesis on Ibsen's early performance history in the Romanian theatre. She graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, and has a BA-degree in Norwegian and Italian language and literature, and a MA-degree in comparative literature on the History of Images – History of Ideas. Since 2015 she has been responsible for the Romanian dataset in the performance database IbsenStage. Her research activity focuses on Scandinavian literature, theatre studies and Digital Humanities.

Keld Hyldig
University of Bergen, Norway

Ibsen's Archetypal Characters: Individuation and Theatrical Embodiment

Keywords: Nora, Hedda, archetypes, Individuation.

One important reason for Ibsen's enduring topicality is the versatile psychological features of the main characters in his plays. The individuality of the characters – together with the psychic energies and mechanisms that underpin it – not only reflects their social context as portrayed in the plays but also situates them within a universal, or even archetypal realm.

The self and its individual realization – which the psychiatrist Carl Jung describes as individuation – can be considered a primary human archetype within modernity. According to Jung, individuation is a process of self-recognition and understanding of one's status within social and collective spheres. He describes it as an interplay between consciousness and the unconscious – and between archetypal forces belonging to a collective unconscious: The Self, the Shadow, Persona and Anima/Animus. These archetypal forces can be identified in and around the main characters in Ibsen's plays.

In my paper, I will outline the archetypal features present in and around two of Ibsen's most well-known characters: Nora and Hedda. I will then provide examples of how they have been realized throughout Norwegian theatre history.

The so-called Ibsen tradition in the theatre can be seen as an ongoing realization and differentiation of Ibsen's main characters. However, when considered as archetypes, these characters seem more rooted in the contemporary and future of human identity development – both individual and collectively – than in archaic types and templates. Accordingly, both the individual embodiments of these characters in theatre performances and their archetypal significance, as generally conceived, are engaged in a continuous process of becoming and prospective evolution as cultural archetypes.

Bio

Keld Hyldig is Professor emeritus of Theatre Studies at the University of Bergen. Here he has taught Norwegian and European theatre history, dramaturgy, and theatre theory. Hyldig has published research articles and book chapters on Henrik Ibsen, Norwegian theatre history, dramaturgy, scenography, and theatre theory. In 2019, he published the book *Ibsen og norsk teater. Del 1: 1850-1930* and in 2024, *Ibsen og norsk teater. Del 2: 1930-2020 (Ibsen and Norwegian Theatre, part 1 and 2)*. He regularly writes theatre reviews for the journal *Norsk Shakespearetidsskrift*.

Kayla Amity Hanson
University of Oslo, Centre for Ibsen Studies

Radicalism, Ethnic Identity, and the premiere of Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts*, 1882

Keywords: Ghosts, Identity, Socialism, Immigration, United States

The historical overlap of Henrik Ibsen's rise as a global literary figure, the "great migration" of Norwegians to the United States, and its implications on identity have seldom been examined in scholarship. Using newly uncovered archival material, I examine how Norwegian immigrants in Chicago entangled Ibsen with their ethnic identity through the 1882 premiere of *Ghosts* and its relationship to the radical political movements of the era.

Using Susan Bennett's (1997) work in performance and audience-based reception theory, I consider the contextual and location-based factors of the event, as well as the performance itself. I analyze Aurora Turner Hall's significance in Chicago's socialist and labor movements, an anonymous review of the play in the immigrant newspaper *Verdens Gang*, a prologue given by Danish socialist agitator, Marius Jantzen, and portraits of President Garfield and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson used in the set. This paper uses new historical research in the field of Ibsen studies to consider how social themes of Ibsen's plays have been used in the reflexivity of immigrant communities in the US.

Bio

Kayla Amity Hanson holds a bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts from Portland State University and a Master of Philosophy in Ibsen Studies from the Centre for Ibsen Studies at the University of Oslo. She was a Norway-America Association (NORAM) fellow for 2024–25 and received a master's stipend from MAP to conduct archival research for her thesis, *Henrik Ibsen and Norwegian-American Identity, 1880–1950*.

Panel 7.4: Ibsen – Old and New Media

Moderation: Joachim Grage

Astrid Sæther
Center for Ibsen Studies, Oslo University

Ibsen's satirical drawings

As a young journalist and new as a playwright, Ibsen participated in a circle of young radical men in the 1850s who wanted a modern, democratic Norway with an international orientation. They were critics and provocateurs in the public debate and acted as watchdogs in the public sphere.

In 1851, he and two students started a small newspaper called *Manden* (The Man), which was continued in *Illustreret Nyhedsblad* (Illustrated News) (Chr. 1851 – 66). Here and in other newspapers Ibsen "illustrated" both his own and others' contributions. He also contributed as a political cartoonist for the revolutionary Marcus Thrane.

Few have analyzed Ibsen's journalistic writings, and even fewer have studied his satirical drawings. What characterizes Ibsen's satirical pen? A typical trait is that he thinks in terms of scenes and drama already as a cartoonist. As a young boy he made teasing drawings of a younger brother in Skien. In his topical satire he often illustrates his own and others' newspaper articles, attacking or exposing representatives of a political or religious system. He criticizes authorities and claims that time will see its own history in pictures.

My intention is to show how the young journalist HI used and developed his satirical pen that later becomes confronting dramatic writing.

Julie Holledge
Flinders University of South Australia
Liyang Xia
Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo

Activating Ibsen Research with VR technology

Key words: VR, Physical scores, Scenography, Theatre and technology, *The Wild Duck*

One could argue that Ibsen's topicality is tied to technological innovation. When considering the history of technological innovation in the performing arts since the beginning of the twentieth century, it is remarkable the frequency with which Ibsen's dramas have been used as content, particularly during the early adoption phases when artists were still experimenting with a new medium. This is true of silent film, radio, television drama, and twenty years ago, with the open platform YouTube, which pioneered the technology for anyone to create and share their own Ibsen videos.

In our presentation, we consider the uptake of virtual reality technology in Ibsen research, specifically the VR visual and acoustic reconstruction of Komediehuset in Bergen as it was in 1851 and after its reconfiguration in the 1870s. Our VR models of the theatre have allowed us to analyse the visual, physical, acoustic, and spatial performative elements in three of Ibsen's plays: *Olaf Liljekrans*, *The Wild Duck*, and *John Gabriel Borkman*. Rarely do we find these elements realised literally in contemporary performances, but their discursive significance remains alive in today's adaptations. We use *The Wild Duck* as an example to analyse the physical text in Ibsen's drama, informed by the physical environment in the VR model.

Our paper concludes with a very brief discussion of how we are activating our Ibsen VR research to engage a generation that is more literate in gaming than in theatre.

Bios

Julie Holledge is Professor Emerita at Flinders University of South Australia. She has published extensively on women's performance, the global production history of *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, and the application of digital techniques to theatre scholarship. She was a pioneer director of feminist theatre in the UK, has worked as a dramaturg with award-winning writers, and was director of the Australia Council's 'First Cultural Diversity Cluster'. She is a co-founder of AusStage, the Australian national performing arts database, and its clone IbsenStage. Her co-authored book *Visualising Lost Theatres* (<https://losttheatres.net>) (Cambridge University Press, 2022), with Joanne Tompkins, Jonathan Bollen and Liyang Xia, deals with virtual reconstructions of historic theatres. Using immersive virtual environments, avatars, and motion capture, she recently created the interactive digital content for a major public artwork attached to the Queen's Theatre, the oldest mainland theatre still in use in Australia.

Liyang Xia is Associate Professor at the Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo. Her research areas include the reception history of Ibsen's drama in Chinese and world theatre, Chinese traditional theatre and its practice both historically and today, and performance studies using digital approaches. Her latest publication is a book length study on Ibsen's performances in Chinese theatre (Manchester University Press, forthcoming). She is a co-author of the book *Visualising Lost Theatres: Virtual Praxis and the Recovery of Performance Spaces* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), which reality—five theatre venues around the world that no longer exist. She is also a translator. She has translated Ibsen's plays directly from Norwegian to Chinese.

Xujia Zhou
Zurich

The Attic and the Algorithm: Ibsen's "Life-Lie" as a Precursor to the Modern Information Bubble

Keywords: Information Bubble, Social Media, Life-Lie (livsløgnen), Social Media, Idealism, Constructed Reality

This paper argues that Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* (1884) serves as a powerful and prescient allegory for the modern digital information bubble. The Ekdal family's attic—a meticulously constructed fantasy world sheltering a wounded wild duck—functions as a physical manifestation of the "life-lie" (livsløgnen), the vital illusion necessary to sustain their fragile existence. This paper analyzes this construct not merely as a psychological defense mechanism, but as a 19th-century precursor to the algorithmically curated realities of the 21st century.

Just as the Ekdals selectively import elements to build a shared, artificial world, modern individuals construct personalized realities through curated social media feeds and filtered information streams. Gregers Werle's fanatical idealism and his insistence on imposing the "claim of the ideal" represents the disruptive force of an objective truth piercing this bubble. His actions, which he believes are righteous, ultimately lead to catastrophe, mirroring the societal and personal chaos that ensues when an individual's carefully constructed information bubble is violently burst.

By examining the tragic consequences of Gregers's idealism, this paper explores Ibsen's profound skepticism toward the fanatical pursuit of an idealized but constructed truth. Ultimately, *The Wild Duck* forces us to question whether our modern, technologically-reinforced "life-lies" are, like the Ekdals', a necessary fiction for survival in an otherwise unbearable world, and what dangers await when those illusions are shattered.

Bio

Xujia Zhou is a Senior Software Engineer at Snyk, a leader in the cybersecurity industry. Her professional path is uniquely interdisciplinary, bridging the worlds of literature and technology. She holds a Master's degree from the Center for Ibsen Studies at the University of Oslo (2010-2012), where she cultivated her expertise in Ibsen's dramas and Scandinavian literature. Driven by a passion for the technical world and cybersecurity, she later pursued a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science in Sweden. After completing her studies, she relocated to Switzerland and has since lived and worked as a software engineer in Zurich. This dual background gives her a distinct perspective on the themes presented in Ibsen's dramas.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY STREAM

FRIDAY, JUNE 26 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 217	Panel 4.2: Ibsen's Houses and other Dramatic Spaces Moderation: Rixt Josefine Bilker
10:10-10:40	Annette Winkelmann (Skien, Norway): Architecture in literature, literature in architecture
10:40-11:10	Jens-Morten Hanssen (Oslo, Norway): The Dichotomy of Indoor and Outdoor in Ibsen's Plays
11:10-11:40	Yang Jie (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia): Spatial Metaphor and Visual Transposition: The "Attic" and the "Depths of the Ocean" in the Modern Chinese Adaptation of <i>The Wild Duck</i>
12:00-13:30 KOL G 217	Panel 5.2: Ibsen in the South Asian Context Moderation: Anna Katharina Richter
12:00-12:30	B Ananthakrishnan (Kerala, India): Locating new Subjects for Playwriting in Malayalam: Ibsen as a Model
12:30-13:00	Venkata Naresh Burla (Jharkhand, India): Navigating Moral Conflicts and Cultural Translation: The Impact of Ibsen's Dramaturgy on Indian Adaptations
13:00-13:30	
16:00-17:30 KOL G 217	Panel 6.2: Cross-cultural Performative Events I Moderation: Kayla Amity Hanson
16:00-16:30	Ruth Schor (Tel Aviv, Israel/ Munich, Germany): Female bonding in the city space: Ibsen and Munich's female cultural figures
16:30-17:00	Helen T. Mariam Gebreamlak (London, Great Britain) & Natalie Schmidt (London, Great Britain): Staging <i>Hedda Gabler</i> in the Contemporary United States
17:00-17:30	Gaziza Omer Ali & Rezan Saleh (Oslo, Norway): Ibsen in Kurdish Context

SATURDAY, JUNE 27 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 217	Panel 7.2: Cross-cultural Performative Events II Moderation: Xiaomei Chen
10:10-10:40	Song Jia (Nanjing, China): Cross-cultural Performative Events: The Adaptation of Ibsen's Works in the New Century, the Aesthetic Transformation of Chinese Theaters, and Global Theatrical Culture
10:40-11:10	Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman (Dhaka, Bangladesh): Doing <i>Hedda Gabler</i> in Bangladesh
11:10-11:40	

Panel 4.2: Ibsen's Houses and other Dramatic Spaces

Moderation: Rixt Josefine Bilker

Annette Winkelmann
Sølvåren Ibsen dissemination center

Architecture in literature, literature in architecture

This paper examines how architecture in literature and literature in architecture may guide and enhance the general dissemination of Ibsen, exemplified through processes and results from the coming Ibsen Library ("Trekrone") in Skien.

Many scholars have emphasized the architectural aspect of Ibsen's writing. Astrid Sæter points out that this aspect can be understood on several levels, from how the plays and texts are constructed, to images of power structures and social conditions in Ibsen's own context. The architects behind "Trekrone" (Ibsen Library) are inspired by vertical and horizontal structures in Ibsen's writing. The dizzying height and dramatic fall in "Trekrone" may point to how many of Ibsen's characters undertake ambitious climbs and how they subsequently fall. The long curved horizontal glass facade on the ground floor challenges the boundaries between the buildings outside and inside. In Ibsen's writing, features like rain and sun are important stage directions, and in "Trekrone" they become an integral part of the experience. The lower floor of the building is dark and cramped, embodying mysteries and the secretive. Nine artistic audiovisual and tactile installations will be placed on different locations in "Trekrone", each to function as starting points for communicating/disseminating different works of Ibsen, either guided or alone. Sølvåren (Ibsen Library's outreach department) takes as its starting point the architects' interpretation of Ibsen's literary topography when installations inspired by plays like *The Wild Duck*, *Enemy of the people*, *Ghosts*, *Brand* among others, are placed physically in the building.

Bio

Annette Winkelmann, PhD cultural studies, project manager at Sølvåren Ibsen dissemination center.

Sølvåren Ibsen dissemination center is a newly established institution for general dissemination and education of the legacy of Ibsen's literary works. Sølvåren is affiliated with the Ibsen Library in Skien (opening in 2028).

Jens-Morten Hanssen
National Library and University of Oslo

The Dichotomy of Indoor and Outdoor in Ibsen

Keywords: Spatiality, interior and exterior space, dramaturgy, Peer Gynt, John Gabriel Borkman

The fictional world of Ibsen's works is characterized by a marked tension between interiority and exteriority. During his career, he transitioned from creating historical dramas, often set in outdoor landscapes, to writing domestic dramas that offered close-ups of family life within the late nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. This shift began with *The Pillars of Society*, the first of Ibsen's plays entirely set indoors. Here, and in the following play, *A Doll's House*, the illusion of a safe home – sheltering its residents from the dangers of the outside world – gradually collapses over the course of the action, exposing double standards and hypocrisy on the part of the male protagonists.

In this paper, I explore the dichotomy of interior and exterior scenes in selected plays outside the realist core of Ibsen's oeuvre. *Peer Gynt* and *John Gabriel Borkman*, for instance, appear to reveal contrasting patterns. The setting of the former spans continents, from the Gudbrandsdal valley and its surrounding mountains to the coast of Morocco, the Sahara Desert, and a lunatic asylum in Cairo. Although the play is mainly set outdoors, key scenes take place indoors: in the hall of the mountain king and the dying Mother Åse's cabin. The main action of *John Gabriel Borkman*, by contrast, unfolds in the Rentheim family residence. In the play's final act, however, Ibsen abandons strict realism and sets aside the Aristotelian principle of the unity of place, as John Gabriel and Ella Rentheim walk into a snow-covered landscape, where John Gabriel dies in a mythopoetic tableau.

Bio

Jens-Morten Hanssen is Senior Researcher at the National Library of Norway and Associate Professor II at the Department of Linguistics and Scandinavian Studies at the University of Oslo. He earned a PhD degree at the University of Oslo in 2018 with a doctoral thesis on the early reception of Henrik Ibsen on the German stage. He is the author of the book *Ibsen on the German Stage 1876–1918: A Quantitative Study* (2018) and co-editor of *The Hermeneutics of Bibliographic Data and Cultural Metadata* (2025). He has published widely in the field of literary and theatre studies, particularly on authors such as Henrik Ibsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and Jon Fosse.

Yang Jie

PhD student, Department of Drama, Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya

Spatial Metaphor and Visual Transposition: The “Attic” and the “Depths of the Ocean” in the Modern Chinese Adaptation of *The Wild Duck*

Keywords: literary geocriticism, spatial metaphor, *The Wild Duck*, theatrical adaptation, poetic introspection

Grounded in literary geocriticism, this study examines how spatial metaphors are translated into visual and theatrical language in the modern Chinese adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s *The Wild Duck*. Focusing on the symbolic spaces of the “attic” and the “depths of the ocean,” it adopts a comparative lens to consider how poetic introspection—as proposed by Wang Yuli—and spatial reconfiguration unfold across cultural and aesthetic contexts. In Ibsen’s original, these spaces serve as metaphysical projections of the self and the human condition; in Zhu Xian’s adaptation, they are reimagined through scenographic forms that emphasize visual symbolism, spatial fragmentation, and psychological contrast.

The paper appraises the aesthetic and conceptual shifts that occur in this adaptation, tracing how metaphorical spaces are reconstituted as embodied stage environments mediating between illusion and reality. It pays particular attention to the interplay of lighting, spatial composition, and symbolic props—such as black garbage bags—in shaping a visual vocabulary for existential uncertainty and inner conflict. The dispersal and isolation of characters within these spaces are read as expressions of modernist rupture and the erosion of coherent identity.

By engaging spatial theory alongside Ibsenian poetics, the study argues that metaphorical space, when transposed to the stage, becomes a vehicle for articulating local forms of modernist inquiry. Ultimately, it contends that spatial metaphor functions not only as a narrative device but also as an affective and cognitive framework through which intercultural adaptation negotiates meaning.

Bio

Jie Yang is a PhD student in the Department of Drama, Faculty of Creative Arts, Universiti Malaya. Originally from China, she received her master’s degree in English Translation from Fudan University in 2022. Her research interests include drama adaptation, translation studies, comparative study. She has published on translator behavior criticism and contributed to *An English-Chinese Dictionary of Contemporary English Foreignisms* (2021), reflecting her ongoing commitment to cross-cultural and interdisciplinary inquiry.

Panel 5.2: Ibsen in the South Asian Context

Moderation: Anna Katharina Richter

B Ananthkrishnan

Vice- Chancellor of Kerala Kalamandalam University for Art & Culture

Locating new Subjects for Playwriting in Malayalam: Ibsen as Model

The paper will be an effort to locate Ibsen in different contexts of Kerala's modernity focusing on Malayalam* drama and theatre. Translation of Ibsen's *Ghosts* in 1936 was part of literary modernity in Malayalam. Not only the translation, the introduction given to the translation made the new generation writers and literary activists embark on new journeys in terms of identifying new topics and structures similar to that of Ibsen's.

These journeys were to identify social and familial subjects of the then Kerala society which were culturally different from the Scandinavian contexts. At the same time the playwrights were fascinated by the dramatic structure instilled by Ibsen. So it was a process of assimilation of both the aspects of Ibsen. The domestic and social issues discussed in the Malayalam plays during the 30's and 40's are to be seen in the political backdrop of Kerala. The topics discussed in the *Dolls House* and *Enemy of the People* have been seen in two different contextual terrains and appropriated in the playwriting; one in the local cast dominated notions of family, the other in the local political practices/social hierarchies respectively. Precisely Ibsen's topics functioned as a viewfinder to new directions towards new topicality through which the local playwrights could identify the pertinent issues to be addressed in their plays. I could say, even though these issues were inherent in the society, Ibsen's plays only made them to realize that these can be subjects for the plays. The paper will be addressing this process in the Malayalam context along with Ibsen's presence in theatrical modernity.

*Malayalam, the mother tongue of nearly thirty million Malayalis, ninety percent of whom live in Kerala State in the south-west corner of India, belongs to the Dravidian family of languages.

Bio

B. Ananthkrishnan worked as a Professor of Theatre Arts at University of Hyderabad and currently the Vice- Chancellor of Kerala Kalamandalam University for Art & Culture. He has published articles on Indian theatre in journals such as Theatre India, Theatre Research International and Studies in Theatre and Performance and has contributed to different anthologies and encyclopedia such as the Encyclopedia of Asian Theatre (edited by Sam Leiter, Greenwood, Westport, 2007). He has been a fellow at the Interweaving performance Cultures-International Research Centre, Freie University, Berlin during 2016-17.

Venkata Naresh Burla

Theatre Arts Department of Performing Arts Central University of Jharkhand

Navigating Moral Conflicts and Cultural Translation: The Impact of Ibsen's Dramaturgy on Indian Adaptations

Keywords: Dramaturgy, Indian Theatre, Cultural Adaptation, Philosophical Conflict, Gender and Autonomy.

Henrik Ibsen's dramaturgy continues to have a profound impact on Indian theatre, transcending various linguistic and regional boundaries. His exploration of themes such as individual agency, societal morality, and existential struggle resonates deeply with Indian socio-cultural contexts, which have long grappled with similar issues. Ibsen's plays have been translated and adapted into many Indian languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, and Telugu. These adaptations often reinterpret his narratives to reflect local realities and cultural frameworks. In Bengali theatre, plays like *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* were staged in the early 20th century by groups such as the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA). Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar drew philosophical and dramaturgical inspiration from Ibsen, especially in his realist critique of social norms. In Malayalam adaptations, Ibsen's stories have been contextualized within matrilineal societies, offering fresh perspectives on issues of gender and power. Ibsen's emphasis on moral awakening parallels Indian philosophical discussions around *Svadharna* (one's duty) and *Atmadharma* (self-realization). Characters like Nora, who chooses autonomy over conformity, and Dr. Stockmann, who challenges the majority, mirror Indian concerns with truth, rebellion, and ethical duty. His realism also posed a challenge to traditional Indian theatre, which was rooted in stylized forms, and encouraged a shift toward psychological depth, emotional nuance, and naturalistic performance. Indian adaptations often blend Ibsen's modernist dramaturgy with local storytelling techniques, utilizing minimalistic sets and culturally significant symbols. As a result, Ibsen's plays transcend their European origins and become vital instruments for introspection and transformation. This paper employs qualitative textual and performance analysis, incorporating archival material, script comparisons, Indian philosophy, and cultural adaptation theory to examine Indian-language adaptations of Ibsen.

Bio

Dr. Venkata Naresh Burla has been serving as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Performing Arts at the Central University of Jharkhand in Ranchi, India, since June 2013. He is also a visiting faculty member in the Department of Theatre Arts at the S.N. School of Arts & Communication, University of Hyderabad. Dr. Burla earned his M.P.A. in Theatre Arts from the University of Hyderabad and his MAIPR (with an Erasmus Mundus Scholarship) from the University of Tampere in Finland and the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands. He holds a Ph.D. in Theatre Arts from the University of Hyderabad. Throughout his career, Dr. Burla has directed several plays and has contributed his design expertise to various productions. Some notable plays he has directed include *Gopal Ki Duniya*, *Macbeth*, *Hayavadana*, and *Othello*, all of which were staged both on the university campus and in other state theatre circuits. In addition to his creative work, he co-edited the book 'Essays on Performing Arts (2007)', coordinated academic programs on Cultural Creative Expressions in the Performing Arts, and wrote articles for several academic journals.

Panel 6.2: Cross-cultural Performative Events I

Moderation: Kayla Amity Hanson

Ruth Schor

Tel Aviv University/Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich

Female bonding in the city space: Ibsen and Munich's female cultural figures

Ibsen's period in Munich undeniably counts as an extremely significant stage of his career development. Anecdotal evidence from the Café Maximilian suggests a local celebrity status, as Munich's literati flocked there to meet their idol, hoping for insights on his newest plays. What is more, Ibsen's important relationship with Munich dates back to the early performance of *A Doll's House* at the Residenztheater, where Marie Conrad-Ramlo's unique performance allowed for the original ending to be performed - instead of the alternative of Nora staying home at the sight of her sleeping children.

But one aspect has received a little less attention: the fact that Ibsen's time in Munich coincides with a burgeoning period of female cultural figures claiming their space and becoming increasingly involved in the local women's rights movement. What is more, their involvement in the Ibsen reception - particularly through informal cultural settings - significantly shaped its development as well as their own artistic journey. Hence, this presentation introduces a number of case studies from the female-led Ibsen reception in Munich and reveals a fascinating, multi-faceted cultural environment.

Bio

Ruth Schor is assistant professor at Tel Aviv University as well as a guest professor at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. She was previously Associate Professor at the Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo and has published on the German Ibsen reception in a variety of forms.

Helen T. Mariam Gebreamlak & Natalie Schmidt
General Gabler's Theatre in Seattle

Staging *Hedda Gabler* in the Contemporary United States

Keywords: Hedda Gabler, Performative Perspectives, Carcerality, Contemporary Stagings, Gender

In 2023, Helen T. Mariam Gebreamlak and Natalie Schmidt teamed up to produce *Hedda Gabler* in Seattle.

As a director, Helen was inspired by the existential and material philosophical questions posed by her work as a prisoners' rights investigator at a law firm fighting to end solitary confinement. Confronted by accusations from prison staff that any and everything her clients said or did was either irrational impulsivity or master manipulation, and often inexplicably both at once, Helen immediately saw the parallels to the way that Hedda can be erroneously viewed. Helen felt compelled artistically to do for Hedda what she often couldn't do in the real world for her clients: she wanted to make audiences really listen to Hedda, understand her reasons, and be with her in the thick of it.

As an actor, Natalie was inspired by the work of Eva Le Gallienne, who championed Ibsen's work in mid-20th century America. However, Natalie discovered that while she and Le Gallienne were in agreement on the character relationships, their interpretations of Hedda herself were extremely different, indelibly shaped by 70 years of advances in feminist literary thought. These diverse interpretations are facilitated by Ibsen's text: Hedda's layers of social masks and gameplaying and her refusal to ever explain herself via monologue combine to create an artistic *tabula rasa* for the actor.

Using our production of *Hedda Gabler* as a case study, this presentation examines the philosophical, material, and performative challenges of staging Hedda Gabler in the contemporary United States.

Bios

Helen T. Mariam Gebreamlak is a London-based award-winning writer, theatre director, and filmmaker from Seattle. Helen holds an MA Advanced Theatre Practice from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and is pursuing an MFA Theatre Directing at Birkbeck, University of London. She is also the Co-Artistic Director of General Gabler's Theatre, which she founded with her wife, local actor Natalie Schmidt.

Natalie Schmidt is a U.S. American actor and voice coach currently based in London. She is a Designated Linklater Voice Teacher and is currently pursuing an MFA Voice Studies: Teaching and Coaching from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. Natalie is the Co-Artistic Director of General Gabler's Theatre, which she founded with her wife Helen T. Mariam.

Gaziza Omer Ali & Rezan Saleh

Adaptation of John Gabriel Borkman in Contemporary Kurdistan XVIth International

Keywords: Adaptations, Ibsen's Influence, Divorce, Gender Violence, Community Dialogue

This presentation critically examines Gaziza Omer's adaptation, *The Merging of Hearts* (2013), inspired by Henrik Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896). By reducing the original seven characters to four and assigning Kurdish names, Omer enhances cultural resonance and highlights complex family dynamics, notably the tensions between the "spiritual mother" and the "biological mother." The adaptation draws parallels with Brecht's *The Chalk Circle*, critiquing societal dysfunction while addressing challenges faced by youth in the Kurdish Region (KRG).

The play reflects contemporary socio-political, especially rising divorce rates, gender violence, and entrenched patriarchy. Recent statistics show fluctuations in divorce cases: Sulaimani experienced a decrease from 5,857 in 2023 to 3,878 in 2024, while Erbil saw an increase from 5,438 to 5,745 during the same period. These trends reflect increasing family instability of 34 years of self-governance, prompting critical examination of their impact on women's experiences and how Omer's adaptation challenges traditional gender roles.

Our discussion will highlight key questions regarding the cultural relevance of Omer's work concerning Ibsen's themes. By exploring parallels between Ibsen's historical context and contemporary challenges faced by women in the KRG, we aim to illuminate Ibsen's lasting influence on modern Kurdish theatre. We also emphasize theatre's role as a public and aesthetic medium for social criticism, addressing often-ignored issues in Kurdistan.

Ultimately, as both a playwright inspired by Ibsen and a researcher, we seek to foster dialogue about these critical issues, highlighting how adaptations like Omer's enrich the Kurdish stage and tackle societal challenges through a nuanced perspective.

Bios

Gaziza Omer Ali entered the world of theatre at the age of nine and performed in various artistic programs as a child.

Studied acting at the university of Baghdad. She currently serves as the Director General of Culture and Art, overseeing cultural initiatives and promoting artistic development. Gaziza is a member of notable organizations, including the International Organization of Women Playwrights. She heads the "Friends of Gaziza" Women Theatre Group.

Throughout her career, Gaziza has authored six books and written over 20 plays since 1989, including one television screenplay. She has directed 18 plays and acted in 30 productions, earning recognition with the Kurdish Script Award at the Amadou Festival in Saqqez Kurdistan in Iran. Additionally, she organised the *Gula Mexek* (Carnation Flower) International Women's Monodrama Theatre Festival. Teacher theatre in 14 years.

Gaziza has served as a jury member at numerous theatre and film festivals and actively participates in conferences focused on the arts and culture. Her theatrical works have gained acclaim and have been performed extensively in Kurdistan and internationally, contributing to the dialogue on art, culture, and the empowerment of women in the performing arts.

Rezan Saleh – Theatre scientist, multicultural concept developer, and international cultural researcher. Expert in theatre / culture studies, especially Iraq, Kurdistan and the broader Middle East.

Specialties: Promoting intercultural and intellectual dialogue between "East" and "West". Research interests: comparing cultural index, differences and similarity, within a historical, political, cultural, gender and philosophical context.

BA degree from Baghdad University and MA degrees in Theatre science from University of Oslo. Guest Researcher at the Centre for Ibsen studies at the University of Oslo in Norway.

Co-founder of AIDA, an international cultural association (NGO). Experienced in European and other inter-cultural projects, co-funded by EU and national funding bodies.

Panel 7.2: Cross-cultural Performative Events II

Moderation: Xiaomei Chen

Song Jia

Institute of Global Humanities, Nanjing University, China

Cross-cultural Performative Events: The Adaptation of Ibsen's Works in the New Century, the Aesthetic Transformation of Chinese Theaters, and Global Theatrical Culture

Keywords: Ibsen adaptation; cross-cultural performance; transformation of Chinese theater; performing culture; performing events

Since the new century, the cross-cultural rehearsal of Ibsen's plays by the Chinese Theater is undergoing innovation in aesthetic paradigms. During the century when the professional movement of modern performance continues to advance, the process of adapting the script of Norwegian playwright Ibsen has not only shown the aesthetic characteristics of broadening from realistic to physical performance, but also emerged three representative performance types: student drama, troupe drama and artist drama. Relying on their respective creative platforms and material resources, the three are influenced by the technology and cultural thoughts in the special period of social transformation. From the traditional text-centered framed stage creates realistic illusions through plots to the audience into the dramatic situation, to getting rid of the specific field of text Zai Osamu through the new sensory distribution of vision, hearing and smell in the live viewing relationship, a clear fact surfaced: in actively and timely cross-cultural dialogue with the practices and concepts of cutting-edge theaters in Europe, contemporary Chinese theaters consciously realize a modern aesthetic transformation from the inside out. At the same time, mainland China is in the context of the era of "construction of Chinese drama system". Ibsen's intervention in the cultural phenomenon of the development of Chinese society and stage art is a cross-cultural performative event with active intervention, interaction and creation, and participates in the process of promoting the globalization of contemporary Chinese society.

Bio

Song Jia, born in Taiyuan, Shanxi, China in August 1996, is a drama critic and drama composition, and a doctoral student at the Institute of Global Humanities, Nanjing University. She has been engaged in theater creation and academic research for a long time, with his main research directions: drama and film and television reviews, theater aesthetics, and performative theory.

Drama reviews and papers are published in: The 2022 National Art Fund Support Project of the Central Academy of Drama Institute of Drama published the bibliography "The Standard of Drama Review", "Sichuan Drama", "Guangdong Art", "Shanghai Drama", "Contemporary Drama", "Drama Movie Monthly", "Yingming Drama" (Germany), online self-media "Affair", Chinese Stage Art Society, etc.;

The theater practical works include: "Autumn Wind and Autumn Rain are so sad", "Ten Minutes of Deviation", "Are You Going into the Wine", "Little World", etc.

Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman
Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), Dhaka

Doing *Hedda Gabler* in Bangladesh

Keywords: Agency, Bangladesh, gendered violence, *Hedda Gabler*, performance.

In this paper, I will discuss the challenges we faced and the means we adopted to stage *Helen*—an adaptation of *Hedda Gabler*—at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) in Dhaka. Premiered on 13 December 2026, the performance directed by me was an attempt to contextualise Ibsen within contemporary Bangladeshi ideological landscape which continuously struggles with concerns for gendered violence, justice and social responsibility, and explore “themes of agency, identity, power, and the quiet battles fought behind closed doors” (Playbill). Performed in English, In IUB’s production, Helen confesses to and takes responsibility for the killing of Advocate Barek (Judge Brack), who wants to dominate her. In my understanding, this narrative shift transformed passive self-destruction into active confession and accountability, reframing female agency within ethical and legal discourse rather than tragic inevitability. The production went well and received substantial media coverage. However, doing *Helen* was not a cakewalk. While Bangladesh has witnessed the performances of all major works of Ibsen, the difficulties I faced as director may possibly explain why no local theatre groups performed this significant work before. Starting from making the performance text to the production, there had been occasions where dramaturgical choices were contradicted and negotiated afresh. The paper will highlight a few of the major challenges we encountered and the ways we chose to ease them with a view to producing *Helen*.

CULTURAL ANALYTIC STREAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 2026

11:30-13:00 KOL G 220	Panel 1.3: Philosophizing Ibsen: Moderation: Frode Helland
11:30-12:00	David Heckerl (Nova Scotia, Canada): Nora's Untold Want: A Fresh Reflection on Ibsen's Philosophical Currency
12:00-12:30	Anežka Matěnová (Prague, Czech Republic): Ibsen, Individualism and Vitalism
12:30-13:00	Ana Tomljenović (Zagreb, Croatia): Ironic existence: from Plato to Ibsen
14:00-15:30 KOL G 220	Panel 2.3: Enacting Law, Enacting Transgression Moderation: Giuliano D'Amico
14:00-14:30	Heidi Leclaire-Karlsen (Oslo, Norway): From <i>Pillars of Society</i> and Harald Thaulow's <i>Pillars of Society in Prose to An Enemy of the People</i> : The Emergence of an Early Whistleblower Figure
14:30-15:00	Dag Michalsen (Oslo, Norway): Law and Normative Transgressions in Ibsen's Dramas
15:00-15:30	
16:00-17:30 KOL G 220	Panel 3.3: Ibsen and the Anthropocene Moderation: Sabiha Huq
16:00-16:30	Andrea Romanzi (Milano, Italy): Networks of risk: Posthuman ecologies and environmental governance in Ibsen's drama
16:30-17:00	Marta Calogero (Venice, Italy): Ibsen's Animals in a More-than-anthropocentric Perspective: Stories of Adaptation
17:00-17:30	Mateusz Kucab (Krakow, Poland): Environmental Disobedience? Henry David Thoreau's and Henrik Ibsen's Anatomies of Ecological Resistance

FRIDAY, JUNE 26 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 220	Panel 4.3: The Political Ibsen Moderation: Dag Michalsen
10:10-10:40	Joachim Grage (Freiburg, Germany): Ibsen's politicians
10:40-11:10	Fredrik Engelstad (Oslo, Norway): Henrik Ibsen as a sociologist
11:10-11:40	Charles Kalish (Berkeley, USA): Anti-Pastoral and Social Critique in Ibsen's Problem Plays
12:00-13:30 KOL G 220	Panel 5.3: History in Ibsen's Plays Moderation: Lena Rohrbach
12:00-12:30	Solenne Guyot (Strasbourg, France): Medieval allusions and modern feuds: familial collapse in Ibsen's plays
12:30-13:00	Roland Lysell (Stockholm, Sweden): The Vikings at Helgeland – a draft?
13:00-13:30	Julia A. Walker (St. Louis, USA): Ibsen and the Legacy of the World-Historical Present
16:00-17:30 KOL G 220	Panel 6.3: Thinking Genre with Ibsen – Ibsen's Poetry Moderation: Thomas Austenfeld
16:00-16:30	Ralph Müller (Fribourg, Switzerland): Henrik Ibsen's poem <i>Ballonbrev til en svensk dame</i> , journalistic purposes and non-fictional elements
16:30-17:00	Kirsten Anne Stirling (Lausanne, Switzerland): "Jeg vandrer i mit eget Galleri": Ibsen's Madonnas and Poetic Form
17:00-17:30	Hans Kristian S. Rustad (Oslo, Norway): Ibsen's rework of poetic forms: sonnets and de-sonnetization

SATURDAY JUNE 27 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 220	Panel 7.3: Thinking Gender with Ibsen Moderation: Eliane Jaberg
10:10-11:40	Dörte Linke (Berlin, Germany): Handicrafts in Henrik Ibsen's Plays as Female Knowledge Discourse and a Field of Female Agency
10:40-11:10	Frode Helland (Oslo, Norway): "Useful through use" - <i>When We Dead Awaken</i> as realist drama
11:10-11:40	Yifan Zhang (Shanghai, China): Re-reading Ibsen's <i>Catiline</i> : Embodied Space, Femininity, and Liminality

Panel. 1.3: Philosophizing Ibsen: Moderation: Frode Helland

David Heckerl

Associate Professor, Department of English, Saint Mary's University, Nova Scotia, Canada

Nora's Untold Want: A Fresh Reflection on Ibsen's Philosophical Currency

Keywords: sentiment; unconditional; childhood; anxiety; Kierkegaard

Consideration of Ibsen's philosophical topicality often concerns *A Doll's House*, specifically the scene of Nora's departure. Toril Moi discerns the "key line of the play in Nora's claim to be 'first and foremost a human being,'" a judgment inspired by philosopher Stanley Cavell's pioneering meditations on Nora's humanness. Akin to Socrates, Nora's dawning sense of the 'examined life' issues in numerous questions: What is law? What is religion? What is moral duty? What is a child as opposed to an adult? What is a wife? A mother? What is marriage? Nora believes herself to be a human being but questions the meaning of humanness; perhaps I am *not yet* a human being? Nora, like Socrates, knows that she knows nothing. She intuits on her own the bewildering truth in Kierkegaard's remark that "To become human does not come that easily."

Kierkegaard's view of what constitutes humanness is crucial to my own perception of Nora's philosophical significance. In an 1850 autobiographical essay, Kierkegaard asserts "that a human being cannot in the deeper sense *live* without relating himself to the unconditional; he expires ... perhaps goes on living, but spiritlessly." That human aliveness depends on relating to an 'unconditional' informs Leonardo Lisi's appreciation of Nora's character (*apropos* Kierkegaard) in his remarkable book *Marginal Modernity* (2013). In Lisi's view, however, Nora doesn't merely relate to an unconditional *she is the unconditional*, analogous in Ibsen's play to the presence of God in medieval mystery plays. Though I disagree with Lisi's conception of Nora, I do want to preserve a *sense* of Nora's intimate relation to the unconditional. In my view, the unconditional names a sentiment of being that may or may not become transitive, i.e., invested in a determinate object or presence. Nora's sentiment is *intransitive* and as such restores to her what she most needs to begin again as a human being: a free experience of childhood. Nora has been a 'doll-child,' a father's plaything passed on to a husband, but never a child in her own right existing freely, creatively, in the unconditional experienced as limitless possibility. There is certainly anxiety in Nora's recovery of this sentiment, and Kierkegaard has much to say on this point. Other touchstones relevant to exploring Nora's sentiment of the unconditional are Rainer Maria Rilke's impressions of childhood; and, more recently, reflections blending psychological, literary, and philosophical perceptions by D. W. Winnicott, Adam Phillips, and Jonathan Lear. Walt Whitman's two-line poem, which explains my paper title, crystallizes the sentiment of the unconditional inspiring Nora's scene of departure: "The untold want by life and land ne'er granted/ Now voyager sail thou forth to seek and find."

Bio

David Heckerl is Associate Professor of English at Saint Mary's University in Nova Scotia, Canada. His teaching and research engage a broad range of interests at the intersection of literature and philosophy. He is currently working on a book titled *Quidam's Child: A Memoir of Life After Kierkegaard* inspired by a peculiar sentence spoken by David at the age of 4 to his mother and fatefully recorded by her. He is a recurrent Senior Research Fellow in the Kierkegaard Summer Institute convened annually at the Hong Kierkegaard Library, St. Olaf College, Minnesota, USA.

Anežka Matěnová
Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Ibsen, Individualism and Vitalism

Keywords: individualism, vitalism, egoism, modernity, self-fulfilment

We live in a society that is increasingly individualistic. In the Western world, the birth rate rapidly decreases, our beauty industry and the social media create a cult of eternal youth, and self-fulfilment is often put at the very top of human needs (e. g. according to Abraham Maslow). How are individualism and vitalism represented in Ibsen's last four plays? They are frequently the target of irony (for instance Erhart in *John Gabriel Borkman* and Ulfheim in *When We Dead Awaken*); yet contrastingly, Ibsen repeatedly depicts joyless homes where people gasp for life and where the lack of *joy de vivre* appears to be deadly. My presentation will analyse the last four dramas.

Bio

I am a PhD student, and my dissertation project focuses on irony in Henrik Ibsen's dramas. I studied Scandinavian Studies and Translation Studies (German–Czech). In my bachelor's thesis, I discussed unreliable narration in Martin A. Hansen's *The Liar*. For my master's thesis I chose a topic from the field of imagology and examined the image of Iceland and Icelanders in Danish Romantic writings.

Ana Tomljenović

**Department of Comparative Literature Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Zagreb**

Ironic existence: from Plato to Ibsen

Based on the concept of the ironist, as presented by Richard Rorty in his study "Contingency, Irony and Solidarity" (1989), Jonathan Lear (2011) examines ironic existence with recourse to psychoanalysis as an important theoretical interlocutor. According to Lear, the experience of irony implies a sense of existential disintegration, an experience that arises from the gap between individual ambitions and desires and the possibility of their realisation. Given the importance of irony in Ibsen's work, in this paper I would like to place his plays in the broader literary and philosophical context of Plato's dialogues and Kierkegaard's philosophical thought. Starting from an analysis of the generic instability of Ibsen's plays, in which we constantly move between the tragic and the comic form, between the serious and the ridiculous, in this paper I will propose a reading that reconsiders the "middle" position of ironic existence and the effects of irony in Ibsen's plays.

Bio

Ana Tomljenović is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb (Department of Comparative Literature). Her research interests include literary theory and history, intersections between literature and philosophy, psychoanalytic and feminist literary criticism. She is currently a team member of Horizon Europe project *The Cartography of the Political Novel in Europe*. She is the author of two books: *Introduction to Feminist Literary Criticism* (with Lada Čale Feldman, 2012) and *Ibsen's Other Scene* (2019). Together with Andrea Milanko and Ivan Majić, she edited the collection *Ranges of psychoanalysis: literature, performing arts, film and culture* (2015) and *Literature and Revolutions* (2024) with Zrinka Božić and Marina Protrka Štimec.

Panel 2.3: Enacting Law, Enacting Transgression Moderation: Giuliano D'Amico

Heidi Leclaire-Karlsen

Postdoctoral Fellow at the ERC project "Norwegian Romantic Nationalisms"

From Pillars of Society and Harald Thaulow's Pillars of Society in Prose to An Enemy of the People. The Emergence of an Early Whistleblower Figure

Keywords: An Enemy of the People; Pillars of Society; Whistleblowing; Intertextuality; Harald Thaulow

Ibsen anticipated a phenomenon that would be conceptualized as whistleblowing a century later. In *Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People*, characters raise concerns about problematic conditions within their professional spheres. In the former, shipyard foreman Aune warns his employer Karsten Bernick that the ship *Indian Girl* is unseaworthy. While this is one of several themes in *Pillars of Society*, in *An Enemy of the People*, Tomas

Stockmann's disclosure of contaminated water in the public bath for which he is medically responsible constitutes the core of the drama. Although *An Enemy of the People* is frequently mentioned in whistleblowing research, whistleblowing as a theme in and around Ibsen's oeuvre has not been examined in depth. This paper argues that the two plays are connected—through what we would today call a whistleblowing theme—by a non-fictional text published in 1880, *Samfundets Støtter i prosa (Pillars of Society in Prose)*, written by the pharmacist Harald Thaulow. Thaulow's text concerns the Steam Kitchen (*Christiania Dampkjøkken*), a foundation established to provide decent and healthy meals to the less wealthy inhabitants of the capital, which he had co-founded. His text formed part of a series of events in which he criticized the board and shareholders of Christiania Steam Kitchen for misconduct, including a much-discussed intervention at the institution's general assembly in 1881. Thaulow likely contributed to Ibsen's development of Stockmann. References to Thaulow as a model for the protagonist of *An Enemy of the People* in earlier scholarship have primarily emphasized this 1881 intervention, however, not the text that both echoes the title of Ibsen's earlier play and explicitly suggests that the Steam Kitchen conflict would lend itself to dramatic treatment by Ibsen. In this article, I analyze an articulation of a historical type in Thaulow's text: a "pillar of society" figure who "in the spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom" speaks out about misconduct within their professional sphere. I argue that this perspective offers insight into a historical whistleblowing context that binds together Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People*.

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Bio

Heidi Leclaire-Karlsen holds a PhD in Nordic literature. Her research interests include digital humanities and the intersections between literature and political and social change, with a focus on the public sphere, nation-building, gender and whistleblowing. She co-authored *Varslingens historie i Norge* (*The History of Whistleblowing in Norway*) with Kristian Alm in 2025.

Dag Michalsen
Faculty of Law, University of Oslo

Law and Normative Transgressions in Ibsen's Dramas

Keywords: *Legal and normative aspects in Ibsen's dramas, law and literature, law as historical and modern topic, interdisciplinary readings of Ibsen*

The omnipresence of legal and normative aspects in Ibsen's dramas is remarkable. In *John Gabriel Borkman* and *A Doll's House*, the financial crimes of Borkman and Nora Helmer are at the heart of the conflicts, in *The Wild Duck*, illegal forest harvesting caused the downfall of Old Ekdal, *An Enemy of the People* thematizes freedom of speech, and both *Little Eyolf* and *Brand* raise questions about child neglect – to mention a few examples. In many of the cases, the present seems to be haunted by normative transgressions that have taken place in the past.

The legal and normative aspects contribute to the persistent topicality of Ibsen's dramas. The omnipresence of law in the plays mirrors the omnipresence of law in real life: social fields such as the capitalist economy, family relations and political conflicts are embedded in a variety of legal and normative systems. Given the increased density of legal regulation today, this feature of Ibsen's dramas is perhaps even more relevant today than in the 19th century.

Taking all of this into account, it is equally remarkable how unexplored the legal and normative aspect of Ibsen's dramas are in the existing Ibsen literature. This calls for an interdisciplinary approach that combines legal, historical and dramatical perspectives. By looking at the role of law and normative transgressions in Ibsen's dramas from this angle, new readings of the texts will arise.

Bio

Dag Michalsen is a Professor in legal history at the Faculty of Law, University of Oslo ([personal homepage](#)). Michalsen is head of *Law, Society and Historical Change* at the Faculty of Law in Oslo, an active research group consisting of several members and with a broad interdisciplinary approach and many inter-institutional connections ([homepage](#)). He is former dean at the Faculty of Law and has headed a number of external research projects. At the moment he is the Olof-Palme Professor for 2025 in Uppsala, appointed by the Swedish Research Council.

In May 2025, the research group entered an agreement with the publisher *Pax* in Oslo to develop a project called *Ibsens Rett 1828–2028 [Henrik Ibsen's Law]*. The aim is to produce a legal-historical commentary to all of Ibsen's plays, to be published in 2028. This has never been done before.

Panel 3.3: Ibsen and the Anthropocene

Moderation: Sabiha Huq

Andrea Romanzi
Università degli Studi di Milano (Italy)

Networks of risk: Posthuman ecologies and environmental governance in Ibsen's drama

Keywords: environmental risk; posthumanism; ecocriticism; performance; governance

This paper argues that Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* remains strikingly topical because it stages ecological crisis as a question of risk, governance, and distributed agency. At the centre of the play lies not merely a polluted bath but an entire network in which water, economy, and public health are tightly interwoven. Read through the lens of risk society theory (Beck) and actor-network theory (Latour), the drama anticipates contemporary debates on the fragile authority of science and the management of environmental risk.

Recent productions have underlined this aspect in powerful ways. Sam Gold's 2024 Broadway revival (in Amy Herzog's adaptation) transformed the town-hall meeting into an immersive event with the house lights raised, drawing the audience into the role of townspeople. When climate activists interrupted a preview, many spectators thought it part of the performance, an uncanny convergence between theatre and politics that shows the play's resonance in the age of climate crisis. Comparable dynamics appear in *The Wild Duck* and *Little Eyolf*, where animals and natural forces (the duck, the fjord) play decisive roles in shaping human destinies. These examples suggest that Ibsen's theatre consistently dramatises entanglements between human and nonhuman agents, long before the critical vocabulary of ecocriticism existed.

Where earlier interpretations often treated the baths as a metaphor for corruption or industrial modernity. My paper instead reads the mas active agents within a broader ecological assemblage, showing how Ibsen's drama continues to illuminate the politics of ecology and governance today.

Bio

Andrea Romanzi is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Milan (Statale), specialising in the Italian reception of Scandinavian theatre from 2000 to 2025. His research has been published in both Italian and international journals, with contributions to the fields of comparative literature, ecocriticism, and translation and translator studies. In addition to his scholarly work, he translates Norwegian and Danish literature into Italian.

Marta Calogero
Ca' Foscari University, Venice

Ibsen's Animals in a More-than-anthropocentric Perspective: Stories of Adaptation

Keywords: Ibsen's Animals; Human-animal Studies; Ecofeminism; More-than-anthropocentric Perspective; Adaptation

One of the main common traits of Ibsen's dramatic production – both in his early, Romantic plays and in his modern, realistic dramas – is the use of animal characters and animal metaphors to represent the thematic couples of opposites «Wilderness-Domestication» and «Captivity-Liberation», and the possibility to adapt from the one to the other. Most of the times, these animal characters/metaphors are associated to the heroines of his dramas. While Ibsen's bestiary has already been studied, in a large part, from a symbolic and metaphorical perspective, I would like to take the reasoning further by focusing on a selection of places in his work where we can find animals as actual characters in the flesh and studying the role of their physical presence in the plays (and on the stage). Taking inspiration from both ecocritical and ecofeminist discussions – and specifically from the work of Swedish scholar Ann-Sophie Lönngren – I would like to suggest a more-than-anthropocentric reading of Ibsen's animals, exploring the possibility that they have something more to tell us today, especially about adapting to both a globally increasing imbalance in the power dynamics and to an ever more endangered natural environment.

Bio

Marta Calogero is a PhD-student in Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

Mateusz Kucab
Jagiellonian University, Krakow

Environmental Disobedience? Henry David Thoreau's and Henrik Ibsen's Anatomies of Ecological Resistance

Keywords: ecology, ecocriticism, environment, marxism, society

One could easily locate both Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) within a broader scope of literary representations of disobedience. Whereas Ibsen looks at individual limitations of responsibility and social structures in his dramas (e.g. *The Doll's House*, *Ghosts*), Thoreau indicates how one's personal choices generate both environmental and social change (especially in his *Walden* and journals).

The aim of my paper is to juxtapose Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* (1882) and Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* (1866) I would like to show how the idea of personal resistance against the dictate of the majority and the government could interact with each other, and, importantly, how both texts could build an intersection between different theoretical frameworks of epistemology of rebellion. I am interested in how both Ibsen and Thoreau outlined an anatomy of ecological disobedience. Like Dr Stockman fighting for the truth regarding pollution and its consequences upon town's reputation and profit, Thoreau's disobedient citizen needs to define one's relationship with law and social norms. I argue that *An Enemy of the People* along with *Civil Disobedience* portray complexed ethical approach towards environmental protection and its potential threat to complacency of growth. Interestingly, both Ibsen and Thoreau denounce idealism and build the strategies of rebellion as complexed existential and ethical dilemmas, which are founded on problematic human condition, rather than universal precept.

In my paper I will read *An Enemy of the People* and *Civil Disobedience* through the methodological framework of ecocriticism (Buell, Garrard) and ecological marxism (Saito).

Bio

Mateusz Kucab is a doctoral student at the Jagiellonian University, and a 2023/2024 Fulbright Junior Researcher affiliated with Amherst College and a member of the American Studies Association of Norway. He is preparing a doctoral dissertation on Emily Dickinson and Polish women poets of the 20th century. He serves as a member of social initiative of the Museum of the HERstory of Art in Krakow, where he organizes creative space to recall women influence on literature and culture. His research on poetry and ecocriticism has been published in European and American journals.

Panel 4.3: The Political Ibsen

Moderation: Dag Michalsen

Joachim Grage
University of Freiburg

Ibsen's politicians

Keywords: politicians –democracy critic –politics as a vocation – staging of society – transfer to current political discourse

The enduring interest in Henrik Ibsen's plays is also due to the fact that he often puts politicians on stage and examines their behaviour. The ambivalent characters, whose intentions and methods are often dubious and who therefore often seem very contemporary, reflect the ambivalence of democratic societies towards their politicians: on the one hand, they are needed for a functioning community, but on the other hand, their power is viewed with suspicion. This basic constellation makes it possible to transfer the situations depicted in the plays to current events and to draw parallels to current political discourses in stage productions.

Based on Max Weber's key text *Politics as a Vocation (Politik als Beruf, 1919)* and with references to Jacques Rancière's *Hatred of Democracy (La Haine de la démocratie, 2005)*, several central figures who are themselves politically active or drawn into the sphere of politics will be analysed as examples: Consul Bernick (*Pillars of Society/Samfundets støtter*), Tomas and Peter Stockmann (*An Enemy of the People/ En folkefiende*) and Johannes Rosmer (*Rosmersholm*). The dramatic staging of their relationship to the society they represent and/or seek to win over to their ideas will also be examined. In specific cases, the question of the insights that can be gained from applying currently virulent terms and buzzwords (such as disruption, identity politics or populism) to Ibsen's texts will be explored. The key question will be how Ibsen can be subjected to an enlightened, democracy-critical reading.

Bio

Joachim Grage has been Professor of Modern Scandinavian Literature and Culture at the University of Freiburg since 2008. Prior to this, he was Junior Professor of Nordic Philology at the University of Göttingen from 2002 to 2008. From 2016 to 2024 he was part of the Collaborative Research Centre “Heroes - Heroisation - Heroisms”. Together with Thomas Mohnike (Strasbourg), he heads the German-French project “Aesthetics of Protestantism in Scandinavia from the 19th to the 21st Century”. Further current areas of research include the cultural transfer between the Nordic and German-speaking countries, the intermediality of literature and music as well as performativity and literary practise. He is co-editor of the German edition of Søren Kierkegaard's works.

Fredrik Engelstad
Institute for Social Research, Oslo

Henrik Ibsen as a sociologist

Keywords: Plays of the 1880s, Social change, Freedom, Impossible compromises

The 1880s was the decade when Ibsen was struggling most intensely with social and political conflicts and contradictions. In tandem with the emerging social sciences, he focused on the dramatic constellation of old and the new forms of social reality, while particularly emphasizing changes in social culture. To Max Weber, one of the founders of modern sociology, Ibsen became an inspiration.

Modes of social change are prominent elements in three of the plays of the 1880s: *Ghosts*, *Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler*. In the aftermath of *A doll's house*, these plays describe more drastic changes in power and gender relations, conceived as parts of ongoing social developments. A core theme in *Ghosts* is the emergence of modern worldviews and visionary ideas. *Rosmersholm* is centered more directly on desires to revolutionize the quality of politics and social relations. In *Hedda Gabler* what is at stake is a completely new social future.

Common to the three plays is the focus on the contradictions faced by the female protagonist in a society dominated by masculinity: their conceptions of liberation and freedom, combined with dependency on their male counterparts, whom they disparage. Simultaneously, the plays vary along a line of a gradual deterioration, from rather optimistic strivings in Helene Alving, over excessive visions of social change in Rebekka West, to deep destructiveness in Hedda Gabler.

The aim of the paper is interpreting the dynamics of these contradictions in the plays of the 1880s, by comparing the visions of the female protagonists and their relationships to their male counterparts, within their social context.

Bio

Fredrik Engelstad (1944). Professor emeritus, Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo. Director of Institute for Social Research 1986 – 2007. Member of the core group of the National Power and Democracy Study (1998 – 2003).

Publications on Ibsen: *Kjærlighetens irrganger*, *Sinn og samfunn i Bjørnsons og Ibsens diktning* (Engelstad, 1992). Several chapters on Ibsen in *Maktens uttrykk* (Engelstad, 2010).

Charles Kalish
Berkeley

Anti-Pastoral and Social Critique in Ibsen's Problem Plays

Keywords: Classical Tradition, Pastoral, Intertextuality, Modernity, Social Critique

Since classical antiquity, the interrupted idyll has appeared in countless iterations, establishing itself as one of the most durable tropes in Western literature and art. One such iteration which gained prominence in the 19th-century, wrote Leo Marx in his trailblazing book, *The Machine in the Garden*, was that of the forces of modernity figured in the machine intruding upon the peace of an idealized, preindustrial landscape. “Like the worldliness represented, in preindustrial versions of pastoral, by the royal court or the city,” wrote Marx,

“These new instruments of mechanized motive power—factories, steam engines, steamboats, railroads, especially the railroad—came to represent the complex world, a modern counterforce to the pastoral vision of natural simplicity (Marx, *Pastoral*, 214).

Counterintuitively, in Henrik Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* one encounters precisely this trope. The first of Ibsen's modern dramas, *Pillars of Society* is often framed as representing a decisive break from dramatic traditions. Yet the underlying presence of this classical literary structure—what Leo Marx call the pastoral design—suggests that one ought to read the play not so much as a departure from, but a modern engagement with, an inherited form.

In this essay, I demonstrate that this timeless literary structure is not limited to *Pillars of Society*, but repeats in Ibsen's other problem plays in ways that reflect the complex, evolving nature of his dramatic vision. Could the presence of this timeless literary structure help explain why Ibsen's problem plays have remain so enduringly topical?

Bio

After graduating from UC Santa Barbara in 2006 with BA in English, I studied Latin, Norwegian and Scandinavian literature at UC Berkeley from 2007-2008; and in 2008-2009, I had the privilege of spending a year as a visiting researcher at the University of Oslo's Center for Ibsen Studies as a U.S. Fulbright Scholar. The following year, I left academia to pursue other career options. However, during a sabbatical fifteen years later, I read Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* and had a eureka moment in which the vague notions I had circled around in 2008-2009 suddenly made sense. This paper condenses many of the insights of that larger, independent research project. I currently live in Berkeley, California.

Panel 5.3: History in Ibsen's Plays

Moderation: Lena Rohrbach

Solenne Guyot

PhD student in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Strasbourg

Medieval allusions and modern feuds: familial collapse in Ibsen's plays

My PhD thesis – to be submitted in 2026 – examines the role of medievalism in Ibsen's plays. My research hypothesis is that Ibsen did not abandon references to Icelandic sagas, Scandinavian ballads and European legends when he stopped writing historical dramas, while enthusiasm for Norwegian national romanticism faded from the 1870s onwards. I aim to show that allusions to the Middle Ages have not disappeared from Ibsen's last dramas written at the end of the century; they continue to appear, albeit in different forms. My dissertation seeks to identify the various functions attributable to the medievalism that runs through Ibsen's production. Medievalism in Ibsen is not merely a relic of national romantic aesthetics, but a topical device that is used by Ibsen, among other things, to highlight the power dynamics at stakes within the modern families of his time.

As my thesis is based on comparisons of the use of medieval allusions in Ibsen's early plays with later dramas, this paper will present a comparative study of *Fru Inger til Østråt* (1857) and *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896). Despite the forty years between their writing, the two plays reveal striking thematic and symbolic parallels. Both works draw on medieval imagery: *Fru Inger til Østråt* is firmly grounded in a late medieval context, while *John Gabriel Borkman* is pervaded by the motif of the danse macabre. In both plays, the characters inhabit houses that resemble Gothic tombs where they symbolically trapped their families. Haunted by ghosts or inherited narratives from a collective or personal past, the eponymous characters are weighed down by a sense of lost grandeur. The medieval allusions signal not only an historical decline but also a familial and personal one.

Bio

Solenne Guyot is a PhD student in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Strasbourg (France). Her thesis about medievalism in Ibsen's historical and contemporary dramas is co-supervised by Thomas Mohnike in Strasbourg and Giuliano D'Amico (Senter for Ibsen-studier, Oslo). She is currently teaching courses on cultural studies and Scandinavian literature (medieval; 19th century) at the University of Strasbourg. She published two articles:

“Contre vents et marées : de l'inaptitude à transmettre son savoir sur l'eau. Analyse en diptyque de la figure du savant incompris chez Ibsen et Strindberg” in *Water Cultures*, éd. Charlotte Ladevèze, Davide Martino, Eva Rothenberger and Corinne Fournier Kiss (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2025)

“L'eau rend malade et la forêt se venge. La nature maltraitée et maltraitante chez Ibsen” in *Recherches germaniques* hors-série n°20 (Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2025).

Institutional profile: <https://mgne.unistra.fr/membres/doctorant-e-s/solenne-guyot>

Roland Lysell
Stockholm University

The Vikings at Helgeland – a draft?

Key words: dramaturgy, Ibsen themes, female characters, Fate, Trolls

The Vikings at Helgeland (*Hærmændene paa Helgeland*) is Ibsen's seventh play. It was written during 1857 and first performed in Oslo in November 1858. The story takes place during the 10th century, a time in which Norwegian society was adjusting from the tradition of the old Norse Sagas to the new Christian ideology. There are also reminiscences of the Saga of Siegfried and Brünhilde and traces of French, Danish and German classical tragedy.

My concern is rather to look forwards. The play is certainly not Ibsen's greatest, but we find many crude kernels better developed in Ibsen's later plays and therefore aesthetically interesting. Earlier scholars have emphasized the parallels between the Viking woman Hjördis and Hedda Gabler. They both defend higher ideals in a prosaic society. The betrayal of Love in the relationship between Ella Rentheim and John Gabriel Borkman has a counterpart in *The Vikings* when Sigurd betrays Hjördis through resigning her to his friend Gunnar. A third theme is the relentlessness of Fate. Örnulf in *The Vikings* has killed the father of Hjördis and accepted her as a step daughter. This means that it is Hjördis's duty to revenge her father through killing her stepfather. The other characters try to compromise, but it is constantly impossible. The importance of Fate we find for example in *Ghosts*. The theme of suicide recurs in *Rosmersholm*. Hjördis, being guarded by a white bear, is the first and maybe the strongest of Ibsen's confined female characters who want a change they cannot realize by themselves. In *The Vikings* there are no flawless characters, not even the child. This can also be said about Ibsen's twelve social plays. The dramaturgy of *The Vikings* is partly well developed concerning the introduction of characters, but there are flaws which Ibsen later avoids. In one way or the other we always find traces both of the Christian God and the unreliable Trolls in Ibsen's plays.

Bio

Roland Lysell is Professor of Literature at Stockholm University. He has written books and articles about Erik Lindegren, Erik Johan Stagnelius, C J L Almqvist, P D A Atterbom, - August Strindberg and Vilhelm Ekelund. He is also a theatre critic and vice president of the Swedish Ibsen Society. He is at present working on a monograph about Ibsen's plays.

Julia A. Walker

Professor of English and Drama; Washington University in St. Louis

Ibsen and the Legacy of the World-Historical Present

Keywords: History/Historiography Dialectical Form, Arts of the Present, Devising Docudrama

This paper is part of a larger project entitled *Docudrama: Finding Fiction in Fact* that locates the origins of the contemporary docudrama in Ibsen's radical reformulation of the dramatic form. While history has provided fodder for the playwright's imagination since at least Shakespeare's time, the 19th century took a special interest in the history play, often paying extravagant attention to details of costume and scenery. By the end of the century, Henrik Ibsen had revolutionized dramatic form, representing Hegel's dialectic of history as not only a three- but a fully four-dimensional process that spilled over the footlights to envelop the audience. In his hands, modern drama represented the *present* as a world-historical moment. The conditions for the docudrama had been laid.

By tracing the developmental history of the docudrama, I propose to show that Ibsen's plays remain topical today as much for the aesthetic appeal of their formal design as for the contemporaneity of their themes. After demonstrating how Ibsen represents the historicity of the present in the formal design of modern drama, I go on to show how he influenced the developmental form of the docudrama, beginning with the journalistic reportage in the feminist plays of Susan Glaspell and Sophie Treadwell in the early 20th century, the autobiographical confessions of mid-to late-20th century playwrights such as Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Paula Vogel, and the early-21st-century devised work of companies such as Tectonic Theater Project that now bear the official moniker of "docudrama." Through this genealogy, I show why Ibsen's own plays remain topical today: they not only address social problems that have yet to be solved, but also formally invite audiences to participate in a shared moment of historical significance that feels fresh (despite period details and/or cultural dislocations) in which their lives, too, are very much at stake.

Bio

Julia A. Walker is Professor of English and Drama at Washington University in St. Louis, where she also serves as Chair of the Performing Arts Department. She is the author of *Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre: Bodies, Voices, Words* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), *Modernity & Performance: Enacting Change on the Globalizing Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2022), and numerous articles on modern drama and performance theory. She is currently working on a dramatic adaptation of a non-fiction book, a translation of a play from mid-20th century Brazil, and a scholarly monograph on the history of the docudrama form.

Panel 6.3: Thinking Genre with Ibsen – Ibsen’s Poetry

Moderation: Thomas Austenfeld

New perspectives on Henrik Ibsen’s lyric poetry.

Henrik Ibsen’s lyric poetry extends from his time in Grimstad until the mid-1870s, to “Et Rimbrev”, which was sent to the editor of the journal *Det nittende Aarhundrede* in June 1875, being one of his last poems published. As Vigdis Ystad points out regarding Ibsen’s late production, Ibsen wrote only a few texts in bound forms. Through these four papers stream, we offer new perspectives on Ibsen’s lyric poetry focusing on form and genres, immediate and historical contexts of his poems, and the form used to put forth his political views, reflections on forms, genres, art and aesthetics.

Ralph Müller

Professor, University of Fribourg

Henrik Ibsen’s poem *Ballonbrev til en svensk dame*, journalistic purposes and non-fictional elements

Henrik Ibsen’s poem *Ballonbrev til en svensk dame* illustrates how lyric poetry could serve journalistic purposes in the nineteenth century. Situated against the backdrop of the Franco-Prussian War and Egyptomania, the poem combines topical commentary with aesthetic experimentation. A mixture that evidently challenged the German translator Ludwig Passarge, who partly censored his own translation.

This proposal discusses the genre of Ibsen’s poem by looking into both its immediate and historical contexts, including the Franco-Prussian War and the contemporary fascination with Egypt, i.e. the ‘Egyptomania’. In this respect, the poem contains a remarkable number of non-fictional elements: its satirical references to Germany’s situation during the war align it with ‘verse journalism’ or ‘newspaper verse’, while the ‘travel poetry’ recalls Ibsen’s actual visit to Egypt for the inauguration of the Suez Canal in 1869. At the same time, the poem’s aesthetic and fictionalising strategies demand close attention. Among these is the playful evocation of the balloon as an ephemeral and difficult-to-control means of transport and communication. Whereas Ibsen himself sent the poem as a letter in a conventional way, the balloon had become, as demonstrated during the siege of Paris, the only means of contact for those cut off from the outside world. In this way, Ibsen overlays factual and biographical references with a heroic self-stylisation as an isolated figure within the German Reich. Furthermore, the imagery of decaying Egyptian monuments and tombs provides the backdrop for a reflection on transience and on the role of poetry itself.

Kirsten Anne Stirling
University of Lausanne

“Jeg vandrer i mit eget Galleri”: Ibsen’s Madonnas and Poetic Form

In this paper I propose to explore the paintings cited in Ibsen’s poem sequence “I Billedgalleriet” (“In the Picture Gallery”) and to ask in what ways these 16th and 17th century paintings of the Madonna (Corregio’s *Naivty*, Raphael’s *Sixtinische Madonna*, Murillo’s *Maria mit den Kind*) – and their counterpoint, Jan van Mieris’s portrait of a Dutchman - in the Dresden gallery simulate the poem’s reflections on poetic form. To what extent does Ibsen in this poem subscribe to the maxim *ut pictura poesis*?

Professor Hans Kristian S. Rustad
University of Oslo

Ibsen’s rework of poetic forms: sonnets and de-sonnet-ization

In a letter to the actress Lucie Wolf, Ibsen reveals that he finds drama written in verse outdated, and that versification might not correlate with ideas belonging to future writers.

“Den versificerede form vil neppe finde nogen nævneværdig anvendelse i den nærmeste fremtids drama; thi fremtidens digteriske intentioner vil sikkert ikke kunne forliges med den. Den vil derfor gå til grunde. Kunsuormerne dør jo ud lige så vel som urtidens urimelige dyreformer døde ud, da deres tid var omme.”

This quote is interesting for several reason. Most notably for this paper is how Ibsen compares the evolution of art forms with biological evolution. This view might even be relevant for other art forms than drama, such as Ibsen’s sonnets.

Ibsen’s lyrical poems reflect an interest for and persistence on fixed poetic forms. This also applies to the demanding poetic form, sonnets, of which there are many, 50 in number according to Vigdis Ystad. Ibsen’s production of sonnets, and other poetry, ceased in the 1870s. Ibsen’s last collection of poems, *Digte 1871 (Poems 1871)*, contains no sonnets. Ystad offers her explanation, arguing that “In 1871, Ibsen must have perceived it as out of date. When he includes the content of some of the original sonnets in the collection, the poems are heavily reworked and given a different form.”

In this paper, I will discuss a few of Ibsen’s sonnets and his de-sonnet-ization, focusing on the change of forms and the transformation of poems from sonnets to other poetic forms.

Panel 7.3: Thinking Gender with Ibsen

Moderation: Eliane Jaberg

Dr. Dörte Linke
Nordeuropa-Institut, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Handicrafts in Henrik Ibsen's Plays as Female Knowledge Discourse and a Field of Female Agency

Keywords: Handicrafts, Female Artistic Production, Knowledge Discourses, Gender Representations, Feminist Theory

The proposed presentation will investigate the representation and significance of handicrafts in Henrik Ibsen's plays. A notable observation is that handicrafts appear in almost every drama, often in passages that may initially seem marginal or inconspicuous. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes evident that Ibsen depicts these practices with considerable nuance and deploys them strategically to characterize figures and their relationships. I argue that an analysis of these passages offers new perspectives on the central issues of Ibsen's plays and deepens existing lines of scholarly inquiry.

Particular attention will be paid to the female-coded practices of needlework and textiles, which in Ibsen's work are associated with themes such as female artistic production, autonomy, and emancipation. These fundamental issues of the plays are reexamined from a female perspective and through a female-coded set of motifs, offering a different and more in-depth analysis. This specific engagement with female experiences and "hidden female discourses" also distinguishes Ibsen's dramas from those of other modernist writers, such as August Strindberg. Moreover, it can be connected with contemporary discourses in gender studies and feminist theory, addressing, for instance, the significance of female solidarity and networks, the intersections of motherhood and care work with artistic production, constructions of gender, and the contemporary interest and reevaluation of handicrafts. This is what lends both the plays and the investigation on handicrafts their enduring relevance and contemporary resonance.

The presentation will concentrate on selected plays — *Et dukkehjem* (1879), *Rosmersholm* (1886), *Fruen fra havet* (1888), and *Hedda Gabler* (1890) — in order to trace the development of these themes in Ibsen's plays.

Bio

Dörte Linke studied Scandinavian Studies, German Literature and Theology at Humboldt University in Berlin and at Uppsala University. She works as a research assistant in the Department of Nordic Studies at Humboldt University within the field of Scandinavian literature. One focus of her research is on concepts of nature in literature, particularly examining how literary texts negotiate narratives about nature in relation to human self-reflection. Her dissertation "Reflexionen und Verwebungen. Wechselwirkungen von ›Natur‹ und ›Mensch‹ in der deutschen und dänischen Gegenwartsliteratur" was published in 2021. The second focus of her research is the relationship between theology and literature. A third focus is the study of handicrafts in Scandinavian literature and culture.

Frode Helland
University of Oslo

«Useful through use» - *When We Dead Awaken* as realist drama

Ibsen's last play, his "Dramatic epilogue", is often understood as being a play about art, on at least three levels: Art in general, the art of drama, and specifically as a reflection on Ibsen's own art, his *oeuvre*. There are many reasons for this, some them good. Still, in this lecture I will put the metadramatic aspects of the play aside, at least initially, and focus on the realist aspects of the text.

As the other dramas of Ibsen's realist cycle *When We Dead Awaken* is about a married couple, and the play contains an analysis of how this marriage came to be, and it explicates why it is about to break down. Here the concepts of "use", "misuse" and "abuse" seem central. Rubek "uses" people around him, and his "use" is more often than not forms of "abuse".

The female protagonists, Maja and Irene, both seem to understand this in the play's present time, but they are scarred by being "used" by him in the past. This does not mean that "use" is necessarily negative: People can, and should, have "use value". Hence the play not only points to an important modern discussion of the distinctions between "use value" and "exchange value", but it entails and furthers a discussion of true universalism and enlightenment in the Kantian sense, as I hope to show.

Yifan Zhang
Fudan University

Re-reading Ibsen's *Catiline*: Embodied Space, Femininity, and Liminality

This paper revisits Ibsen's *Catiline* through a spatial and feminist lens, arguing that the play already anticipates questions about gender, perception, and agency that remain relevant to contemporary debates in gender studies. Drawing on theories of spatiality and embodied perception from Yi-Fu Tuan, Henri Lefebvre, and Paul Rodaway, the paper approaches dramatic space not merely as setting but as something produced through bodily experience. Particular attention is given to how different characters experience space through vision and voice, and how these sensory modes shape gendered relations to power. A spatial mapping of the play's settings shows a gendered distribution: male characters move across a wider range of public and outdoor spaces, while female characters appear largely within enclosed or domestic environments. However, this binary is destabilized by the figure of Furia. Although physically confined, Furia develops a form of auditory mobility. Through listening and voice, she transgresses spatial boundaries and produces a liminal space that is neither fully interior nor exterior, neither purely bodily nor entirely psychological. From a contemporary feminist perspective, this sensory transgression reveals how feminine agency in *Catiline* operates not through spatial mobility but through modes of perception. By foregrounding this embodied and auditory dimension, this paper reveals how Ibsen's early drama already contains structures that lend themselves to feminist re-reading today.

Bio

Yifan Zhang is a PhD candidate at the College of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Fudan University in Shanghai, China. She was a guest researcher at the Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo, Norway (Aug 2025-Feb 2026). She is conducting research for her doctoral dissertation, which examines sensory geographies and the performativity of space in Ibsen's plays.

ADAPTATION STREAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 2026

11:30-13:00 KOL G 222	Panel 1.4: The Pop-Cultural Ibsen Moderation: Clemens Räthel
11:30-12:00	Camilla Storskog (Milan, Italy): Of Doctors and Drawings. Strategies of Representation in Javi Rey's Graphic Novel Adaptation of <i>En Folkefiende</i>
12:00-12:30	Kwok-kan Tam (Hong Kong, China): Ibsenian Politics in the Chinese Popular Imaginary
12:30-13:00	Aleksandra Wilkus (Poznań, Poland): Ibsen in the Pop-cultural Mirror: Form and Figure in <i>Dom Lalki</i> (Poznań, 2012)
14:00-15:30 KOL G 222	Panel 2.4: Ibsen in Film History Moderation: Thor Holt
14:00-14:30	Helge Rønning (Oslo, Norway): Ibsen, du Maurier, and Hitchcock
14:30-15:00	Anna Stavrakopoulou (Thessaloniki, Greece): From the Periphery to the Center: Common Themes between Ibsen and Lanthimos
15:00-15:30	
16:00-17:30 KOL G 222	Panel 3.4: Unrealized Screen Adaptations Moderation: Farid Manouchehrian
16:00-16:30	Jan Balbierz (Krakow, Poland): Henrik Goes to Hollywood: Ingmar Bergman's American Screenplay of <i>A Doll's House</i>
16:30-17:00	Audun Engelstad (Lillehammer, Norway): <i>A Doll's House</i> through the lens of Ingmar Bergman
17:00-17:30	Thor Holt (Oslo, Norway): Dreyer's Unmade Adaptation of <i>Brand</i>

FRIDAY, JUNE 26 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 222	Panel 4.4: Ibsen and the Visual Arts Moderation: Camilla Storskog
10:10-10:40	Ana Barroso (Lisbon, Portugal): Unlikely resonances: Ibsen's Drama in Mathew Barney's Video Art
10:40-11:10	Kamaluddin Nilu (Oslo, Norway): Text to Image: Widerberg's <i>Peer Gynt</i> as Self-Reflexive Alchemy Within the Liminal Optic
11:10-11:40	Sara Paula Hoffman (Savannah, USA): Ibsen, Wild Duck, life lie, photo, memory, domestic realism
12:00-13:30 KOL G 222	Panel 5.4: Translating Ibsen Moderation: Nina Marie Evensen
12:00-12:30	Linnea E. Timmermann Buerskogen (Oslo, Norway): Impossible Stage Directions in <i>Når vi døde vågner</i> (1899)
12:30-13:00	Anna Wing Bo Tso (Hong Kong, China): A Comparative Analysis of Logos, Ethos, and Pathos in Ibsen's <i>An Enemy of the People</i> and Pan Jiaxun's Chinese Translation
13:00-13:30	Thomas Austenfeld (Fribourg, Switzerland): Lincoln's Assassination—Seen from Abroad
16:00-17:30 KOL G 222	Panel 6.4: Moving Boundaries in Contemporary Performance Moderation: Liyang Xia
16:00-16:30	Monica Emilie Herstad (Oslo, Norway): Movements of modernism at play
16:30-17:00	Lianna Torres (Seattle, USA): Dancing Ibsen: Exploring Silence and Topicality in Marit Moum Aune's Contemporary Ballet Trilogy
17:00-17:30	Irene Pérez Puyol (Madrid, Spain): Voting, Speaking, Witnessing: Spectatorship in Alex Rigola's Ibsen Adaptations

Panel 1.4: The Pop-Cultural Ibsen Moderation: Clemens Räthel

Camilla Storskog
Scandinavian Studies, University of Milan, Italy

Of Doctors and Drawings. Strategies of Representation in Javi Rey's Graphic Novel Adaptation of *En Folkefiende*

Key words: *En Folkefiende*, Javi Rey, adaptation studies, comics studies, literary representation of scientists

While Ibsen's work has inspired filmmakers for over a century, the rise of the 'graphic novel' has introduced yet another medium to the Norwegian playwright and opened up his legacy to a new readership. As Thor Holt has observed, remediation is indeed essential to our contemporary understanding of Ibsen, whose relevance is often emphasised by adapters highlighting aspects of his texts that resonate with their own historical contexts (Holt 2023). This is certainly true of recent transmediations of *En Folkefiende*, made to speak, in ecocritical terms, "to a stronger awareness of the Anthropocene and to a twenty-first-century climate change discourse" (Svelstad 2024). Accordingly, Per Esben Svelstad has interpreted Javi Rey's graphic novel adaptation of *En Folkefiende – Un Ennemi du peuple* (Rey 2022) – in terms of a mediation of the anthropocene. My contribution will instead focus on the changes the character of Dr Stockman undergoes in the adaptation process by drawing on Roslynn D. Haynes's study of the representation of scientists in Western literature (Haynes 1999). In addition, to demonstrate how Ibsen's play has been updated in the contemporary context of the graphic novel, this paper ultimately aims to discuss the artistic qualities of Rey's *Un Ennemi du peuple*. By focusing on formal and medium-specific aspects – such as braiding, reverse ekphrasis, and intericonic referencing – I will show how the graphic novel conveys meaning on multiple levels, not only within its covers, but also above and beyond.

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Bio

Camilla Storskog focuses on interdisciplinary research with special attention to crossovers between literature and the visual arts. Her first book-length study, *Literary impressionisms* (Ledizioni, 2018), examines the response to Impressionism in Swedish and Finland-Swedish literature. Her second book, *Afterlives* (Nordic Academic Press, 2023) is dedicated to comic art adaptations of Scandinavian classics such as H.C. Andersen, Zacharias Topelius, Henrik Ibsen, Karin Boye, Ingmar Bergman, and Jon Fosse. Her research interests also include literary modernism, travel writing, the representation of scientists in literature, autobiography, and the historical novel.

Kwok-kan Tam
Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Ibsenian Politics in the Chinese Popular Imaginary

Keywords: Selfhood, justice, women, national identity, theatre

Henrik Ibsen has become a pivotal figure in modern Chinese culture, largely due to his ideas surrounding individual selfhood, women's rights, and justice, which have significantly reshaped the cultural landscape of China and facilitated its evolution into a contemporary society. More than just a literary and theatrical icon, Ibsen is viewed as a social critic within the Chinese popular imagination, with representations found across various media, including television, film, children's picture books, comic series, and posters. He embodies the ideals of freedom, justice, and truth. In this paper, I will explore how the Chinese popular perception of Ibsen has been constructed and examine the films and TV dramas that contribute to this formation. Furthermore, I will analyze these Chinese representations through the framework of European theories of the imaginary, particularly those proposed by Sartre, and investigate the dynamics that have led to Ibsen's emergence as a manifestation of Lacanian psycho-social concepts in China. The Chinese popular imaginary is infused with the philosophical and political discourses articulated by Ibsen, which are aestheticized into performative visualizations. To fully grasp Ibsen's impact in China through the popular imaginary, it is essential to study how politics is aestheticized in performance and other visual forms. The interplay of literary, performative, and ideological elements collectively perpetuates the beliefs that shape the popular imagination surrounding Ibsen in China.

Bio

Kwok-kan Tam (KK Tam) is currently Dean of Humanities and Social Science and Chair Professor of English, Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. He received his PhD in Comparative Literature from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has held visiting professorships and research fellowships in American, European, Japanese and Singapore institutions, including the East-West Center, National University of Singapore, Sophia University, Stockholm University and Fridrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen- Nürnberg. He is the former Head of the International Ibsen Committee, University of Oslo and is a Fellow of the Hong Kong Academy of the Humanities. He has made significant contributions to the fields of Ibsen studies, Gao Xingjian studies and Englishization studies. In addition to his numerous journal articles and book chapters, he has authored the following books: *Ibsen, Power and the Self: Postsocialist Chinese Experimentations in Stage Performance and Film* (2019), *Chinese Ibsenism: Reinventions of Women, Class and Nation* (2019), *The Englishized Subject: Postcolonial Writings in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia* (2019), *Ibsen in China 1908–1997: A Critical-Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, Translation and Performance* (2001), *The Politics of Subject Construction in Modern Chinese Literature* (2000), and *New Chinese Cinema* (co-authored, 1998). He serves on the editorial boards of many journals and edits the Springer book series *Digital Culture and Humanities*.

Aleksandra Wilkus

Department of Scandinavian Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

Ibsen in the Pop-cultural Mirror: Form and Figure in *Dom Lalki* (Poznań, 2012)

Keywords: Ibsen; A Doll's House; appropriation; Polish theatre; performative transformation

“Ibsen on stage! That’s a major event, regardless of the outcome.” With these words, theatre critic Grażyna Antoniewicz captured the ongoing tension between Polish theatre and the legacy of Henrik Ibsen. Indeed, each new staging of his classic drama—especially outside Norway—invites reflection on the lasting impact of nineteenth-century moral conflicts and fosters a dialogue between Ibsen’s era and our own. But how much of Ibsen remains when the balance tips decidedly toward contemporary forms?

Dom Lalki (A Doll’s House), directed by Michał Siegoczyński at Teatr Nowy in Poznań (2012), radically reimagines Ibsen’s drama by placing the Helmers’ story in the realm of show business, transforming it into a visually stimulating, music-driven performance inspired by reality television. As the director notes, this is a free interpretation focused on an oppressed individual whose success proves to be illusory.

This paper centers on the character of Nora while also considering the formal structure and broader staging strategies of the production, approached as appropriation in Julie Sanders’ sense of the term. Drawing from Erika Fischer-Lichte’s theory of performative transformation, I explore how the aesthetics of pop culture and non-realist performance reshape the perception of core Ibsenian motifs. By analyzing how form and figure are transformed, the paper aims to illuminate how spectators can engage with the play as a new ethical and aesthetic experience and reflect on the extent to which Ibsen’s original drama resonates within this contemporary staging.

Bio

Aleksandra Wilkus is a Nordic studies scholar specializing in Norwegian literature. She works at the Department of Scandinavian Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. In 2018, she defended her Ph.D. in a joint program between Adam Mickiewicz University and the University of Agder. Her dissertation, published as *Forførelsen: Individuelle estetikk i gjendiktning: Wislawa Szymborska og Czesław Miłosz i norske overse-elser* (Peter Lang, 2019), focused on Norwegian translations of Polish poetry. In addition to modern Norwegian literature, her research interests include literary translation, memory studies, interdisciplinary literary theory (e.g., illness narratives), intermediality, and Polish-Norwegian cultural and literary relations.

Panel 2.4: Ibsen in Film History

Moderation: Thor Holt

Helge Rønning

Department of Media and Communication. University of Oslo

Ibsen, du Maurier, and Hitchcock.

Key words: Intertextuality. Adaptation drama, novel, film. Ibsen *Rosmersholm*. Du Maurier *Rebecca*. Hitchcock *Rebecca*.

In 1938 Daphne du Maurier published her famous novel *Rebecca*. Since its publication there have been many claims about the novel's debt to and similarities with and inspirations from other authors. Among others: Charlotte and Emily Brontë, as well as the Brazilian novelist Carolina Nabuco. There has, however, not as far as I know, been any analyses of how the novel shares thematic and structural and character parallels with Henrik Ibsen's play *Rosmersholm*. The name of Rebecca is one clue in this context. Despite that the characters with that name are different actants in the plot structure of the works the plots of the play and the novel have striking similarities.

In 1940 Alfred Hitchcock directed a film adapted from the novel with the same title. It is one of Hitchcock's best films, and follows the novel relatively closely, but manages to change the narrative character and gestaltung of the novel into filmatic mise-en-scene.

It should also be mentioned that in 2020 Ben Wheatly launched a remake of *Rebecca* for Netflix. Furthermore an interesting element in this context is that Du Maurier in 1939 adapted the novel into a play of the same title.

The paper aims at providing an intertextual analysis of the Ibsen play, the du Maurier novel and the Hitchcock film focusing on the problems around adaptation and the different mediatic features of drama, novel, and film.

Bio

Helge Rønning (1943) Professor emeritus in the Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo. A long series of public and private positions, including The Norwegian Government Commission for Freedom of Expression (1996 – 1997); Member of the National Ibsen Committee (2000 – 2006), Chair of the Board of The Ibsen Centre at the University of Oslo (1996 – 2009). Select publications: *Den umulige friheten. Henrik Ibsen og moderniteten*. (Impossible Freedom. Henrik Ibsen and Modernity) (2006).

Anna Stavrakopoulou
School of Drama – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

From the Periphery to the Center: Common Themes between Ibsen and Lanthimos

Yorgos Lanthimos (b. 1973) is a Greek film director, who started his career in experimental theatre in Athens, and broke into the international scene, when *Dogtooth* (2009) won the Un Certain Regard prize at the Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 2010. From 2015 to 2025, his work has gained international acclaim, with films like *The Lobster* (2015), *The Favourite* (2018), *Poor Things* (2023), *Kinds of Kindness* (2024) and *Bugonia* (2025), starring international actors, with Emma Stone as a stable collaborator, in the last four films.

In this paper, I will focus on career choices that Ibsen and Lanthimos have in common, that demanded a geographical relocation from the periphery of Europe (Norway, Greece), to cultural capitals of their respective industries (Italy and Germany, the UK and the USA), which also resulted to necessary shifts in the content of their works, from more local to clearly global perspectives, on perennial topics in theatre and cinema. Dysfunctional families, weak men and strong women, power dynamics within the couple, sociopolitical imbalances, as well as the endangered environment, are only a few of the invisible threads that connect the two visionary creators.

Panel 3.4: Unrealized Screen Adaptations

Moderation: Farid Manouchehrian

Jan Balbierz

Department of Scandinavian and German Studies; Jagiellonian University, Kraków

Henrik Goes Hollywood: Ingmar Bergman's American Screenplay of *A Doll's House*

Keywords: Ingmar Bergman, Scandinavian Modernism, Film and Theatre, Rewriting the Classics, Adaptation

Ingmar Bergman's theatrical dialogues with Henrik Ibsen are well known and extensively documented. Alongside Shakespeare, Molière, and Strindberg, Ibsen has been one of the most significant influences on the Swedish director's work. Already in the 1950s, Bergman astonished audiences at the Malmö City Theatre with a five-hour superproduction of *Peer Gynt*, featuring Max von Sydow in the title role. Later came productions of *Hedda Gabler* as a contemporary psychodrama and—at the end of his career—of *A Doll's House* at the Royal Dramatic Theatre (another version, titled *Nora*, had earlier been staged at the Residenztheater in Munich).

There is, however, a third—and rarely discussed—*Doll's House* in Bergman's oeuvre: a screenplay that never got made, written in 1948, just before the production of his film *Prison*. The script was commissioned by the American movie mogul David O. Selznick, best known as the producer of *Gone with the Wind*. Bergman's manuscript—an illuminating sign of Ibsen's global relevance and topicality—is a radical reworking of the play: for the cinematic medium, the Swedish director restructured scenes and even altered the ending.

The main objective of Bergman's adaptation of Ibsen appears to be the transformation of *A Doll's House* into a melodrama—a generic framework that Bergman employed in many of his early films. In the final scene, set at a train station, Torvald is shown kneeling on the platform as the train carrying Nora disappears into the early morning light.

In my paper, I will offer some reflections on Bergman's adaptation of Ibsen's most frequently performed play, focusing on the historical and cinematic context but also the media-dependent structural changes he introduced.

Bio

Jan Balbierz is a Professor of Swedish Literature at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. His research focuses on Scandinavian literature, culture, and film, and he has published extensively in these fields.

Audun Engelstad
Inland Norway University

A Doll's House through the lens of Ingmar Bergman

Keywords: performative perspectives, film script, scene descriptions, Ingmar Bergman, film adaptation

At the beginning of 1948, Ingmar Bergman signed a contract with Hollywood producer David O. Selznick to write a script based on *A Doll's House*, together with director Alf Sjöberg. At the time, 29-year-old Ingmar Bergman was a scriptwriter on the rise at Svensk Filmindustri, mostly writing adaptations of novels and plays. His directorial breakthrough was still years ahead.

Bergman's script is unmistakably recognizable as Bergmanian. This is particularly evident in the extensive expositional scene descriptions. Bergman's scripts are known to be a mixture of prose-poetry and film screenplay. His descriptions are filled with characterizations, indirect speech, metaphors, and detailed movements. This paper will offer a close reading of the opening and closing of Bergman's script – with an emphasis on the expositional scene descriptions – and discuss how Bergman envisioned *A Doll's House*. The scene descriptions offer a detailed portrayal of Nora and Torvald Helmer, providing insight into their emotions and inner battles.

Bergman's adaptation of *A Doll's House* was never produced. Selznick found the script unpromising and called it an amateur script. The script can be found in the Ingmar Berman Collection in Stockholm and in the David O. Selznick files at the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas. The film script is hardly ever mentioned in the wide literature on Bergman or Selznick.

Bio

Audun Engelstad is a professor in film and TV studies at Inland Norway University. He has extensive experience with story analysis and narrative theory. His publication includes a book on film narratology and several journal articles and book chapters on film genres and TV drama. Currently, he is embarking on an extensive research project on Ibsen and cinema.

Thor Holt
University of Oslo

Dreyer's Unmade Adaptation of *Brand*

Keywords: film, adaptation, intertextuality, intermediality, unproduction studies

Expecting to find Danish film director Carl Th. Dreyer's manuscript for a planned film adaptation of *Brand* (1866) in the Danish Film Institute's archives, I was initially disappointed to find a slightly annotated version of Ibsen's play instead. What was hidden in two boxes related to this unrealized film project, however, was astonishing: dozens of handwritten, carefully organized envelopes containing clippings that the director must have found relevant in the adaptation process—notes on Ibsen's drama, references to other writers and visual artists, excerpts from travel magazines and fashion magazines, and reviews from newspapers and trade journals. While it is obvious that adaptation processes are more complex than simply transferring a whole work from one medium to another, it is rare to come across such detailed evidence of the creative process. This paper argues that Dreyer's archive challenges prevailing models of adaptation by inviting broader perspectives of intertextuality and intermediality. It also illustrates how Ibsen is intertwined in production cultures in more subtle ways and suggests that the unmade adaptation of *Brand* reads as a continuation of Dreyer's classic film *Ordet* (1955) and an anticipation of *Gertrud* (1964).

Bio

Thor Holt is associate professor at the Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo. He specializes on screen versions of Ibsen's works and is currently revising his PhD dissertation on Ibsen in the Third Reich into the monograph *From Peer Gynt to Hitler: Nordicness in Nazi cinema*.

Panel 4.4: Ibsen and the Visual Arts

Moderation: Camilla Storskog

Ana Barroso
CEAUL, University of Lisbon

**Unlikely resonances: Ibsen's Drama in Mathew Barney's Video Art.
Corporeality, metamorphosis and individual agency – Performances of Becoming**

Keywords: bodily transformation, identity construction, resistance, performance, becoming

“Rien n'est plus troublant que les mouvements incessants de ce qui semble immobile.” Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations* 1972-1990

“NORA dances more and more wildly.” Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

Apart from more than a century, Ibsen primarily a playwright, and Barney, a multi-disciplinary artist, create artistic works that are vastly different in medium and aesthetics, but that share a conceptual approach concerning themes such as bodily transformation, spatial confinement, and the theatricality of identity construction (Butler).

The dramatically charged and sculptural spaces operate both as a stage and a creative performance laboratory where characters undergo psychological metamorphoses (Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*), as well as bodily transformation (Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*, *Drawing Restraint 9*) as the performer's body becomes both subject and medium, constructing an identity of resistance that resonates the social and biological constraints explored in Ibsen's domestic dramas.

In their works the traditional narrative structure dissolves into pure transformation and open to the forces of *becoming* (Deleuze) to explore the boundaries of fixed identities and self-representation and recognize the human subject as fundamentally unstable and in an ongoing disruption process of fixed notions of human essence to embrace forces and possibilities and test the limits of the self. If Ibsen constructs a ceremonial of destruction of social masks (Nora's tarantella and Hedda's burning manuscripts), Barney creates a ritualized physical ordeal to confront physical and institutional constraints.

Ibsen's psychological realism anticipates Barney's post-human aesthetics and the playwright's interest in hereditary, biological and social determinism finds its contemporary echo in Barney's performative acts of resistance explored in his video installations, where the creative force that drives embryonic development becomes a powerful metaphor for artistic creativity (Bergson).

Bio

Ana Barroso is a researcher at CEAUL/ULICES (University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies), working in the fields of arts, cinema and literature. She regularly participates in international conferences and publishes her articles in international academic journals, magazines and books. She is also a video artist, and her works have been screened in art galleries, museums and film festivals worldwide.

Kamaluddin Nilu

Text to Image: Widerberg's *Peer Gynt* as Self-Reflexive Alchemy Within the Liminal Optic

Keywords: Self-reflexive transformation, Alchemical metamorphosis, Liminal optic, Poetic inquiry, Intermedial dialogue

I have found images in the text that I sense can express my own feelings.

This presentation examines Frans Widerberg's lithographs inspired by Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* as a self-reflexive, alchemical transformation in which the poetic text becomes a visionary image. Rather than illustrating Ibsen's drama in a literal or narrative manner, Widerberg's lithographic practice unfolds within a liminal optic; a threshold where figuration dissolves into symbolic intensity and the textual source functions as a catalyst for metamorphic visual thinking. Through radiant colour fields, elongated bodies, and hovering dream-figures, Widerberg reimagines Peer's existential journey as an inward, transmutational process. His images do not simply depict scenes from Ibsen; they enact a parallel poetics in which the lithographic medium becomes a site of alchemy, turning language into light, myth into gesture, and psychological states into chromatic atmosphere. Read in this way, Widerberg's *Peer Gynt* series articulates a distinctive mode of artistic adaptation, one that privileges resonance over representation. The viewer is drawn into a shifting, liminal zone where text dissolves into image and image becomes a form of poetic inquiry, allowing psychological and metaphysical layers to be externalized and made perceptible. Widerberg's work thus reveals an intermedial dialogue grounded in self-reflexive transformation, in which the boundaries between reading, seeing, and sensing are continually reconfigured.

SaraPaula Hoffman
Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD)

Ibsen, Wild Duck, life lie, photo, memory, domestic realism

Sara Paula Hoffmans new series engages with *The Wild Duck* and its central theme: the “life lie” (livsløgnen). As Martin Puchner notes, “a certain amount of self-deception is necessary to bear life on this earth.” Hoffman extends this inquiry by layering materials, images, and personal ephemera into 12 x 12” oil and mixed media paintings that evoke psychological interiors—at once intimate and mythic.

Informed by Puchner’s reading of Ibsen’s limited realism—“a space in which wild fantasies may dwell”—this work reimagines the family photograph, the object in situ, and the echo of unspoken histories. These new pieces invite viewers backstage, tracing the visual ghosts of Paula’s personal history into broader cultural reflections on inheritance, grief, and the fictions we live by.

This exhibition proposes a preview of “livsløgnen”, with select works shown alongside a visual essay on process and source. In offering these painted spaces of concealment and revelation, Hoffman proposes a performative painter’s response to Ibsen’s most haunting question: What must we keep hidden to survive?

Bio

An accomplished artist, Sara Paula Hoffman has explored themes from Ibsen’s *A Doll House* and *Ghosts* for more than twenty years. Her small-format paintings layer narrative, memory, and domestic symbolism to investigate identity and the tension between what is revealed and what remains hidden. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including multiple International Ibsen Conferences.

Panel 5.4: Translating Ibsen

Moderation: Nina Marie Evensen

Linnea E. Timmermann Buerskogen
Ph.D. student at Centre for Ibsen studies, University of Oslo

Impossible Stage Directions in *Når vi døde vågner* (1899)

Ibsen's stage directions have been extensively studied since the debut of his plays, revealing a nuanced layer of meaning that enhances our understanding of his work. Ibsen crafted his late dramas with the dual purpose of publication and performance, which is reflected in the intricate details of his stage directions. These directions encompass not only the emotional states and interactions of characters but also vital information about staging. This paper focuses on "impossible stage directions"—those that are unperformable when taken literally due to constraints of time, space, science, and human physicality (Rowen 2021, 193). I will compare the translations of two prominent Ibsen translators, William Archer and Peter Watts, to reveal how they interpret these stage directions and convey them into English versions of Ibsen's work. A particular focus will be on *When We Dead Awaken* (1899), considered by many to be one of Ibsen's most abstract plays. One example of an impossible stage direction is found in the character Rubek's dialogue: "*sér ligesom tilbage i sig selv*", translated by Peter Watts as "as though looking back into himself". By analyzing such examples, this paper seeks to uncover the information embedded within these impossible stage directions and their implications for contemporary interpretations of Ibsen's plays.

Ultimately, I argue that these directions not only enrich our understanding of Ibsen's dramatic intent but also invite new readings and performances in today's cultural landscape.

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Bio

I am in the last year of my dissertation on the English translations of Henrik Ibsen's late dramas. In my dissertation, I am comparing several translator's interpretations of both stage directions and dialogue, with a focus on how affect has been translated over a period of 100 years of translating Ibsen.

Keywords: Ibsen, translation, stage directions, comparative reading, cultural translation studies.

Anna Wing Bo Tso
The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

A Comparative Analysis of Logos, Ethos, and Pathos in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and Pan Jiaxun's Chinese Translation

Keywords: Logos, ethos, pathos, logical fallacies, Chinese translation

This paper analyzes Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, focusing on the rhetorical strategies of logos, ethos, and pathos, while also comparing Pan Jiaxun's Chinese translation of the play. The study examines how these elements interact to shape the characters' arguments and influence public opinion. Dr. Stockmann relies on logical reasoning (logos) to assert the truth about the contaminated water, using scientific evidence to advocate for public health. However, he faces logical fallacies, such as ad hominem attacks from the mayor and community members, who dismiss his claims by undermining his character rather than addressing the evidence. This manipulation of ethos reveals the power dynamics at play, as authority figures attempt to discredit Stockmann's moral integrity to maintain the status quo. The mayor and other characters evoke fear and anxiety about potential economic repercussions, appealing to the community's emotions to sway public opinion against Stockmann. In contrast, Pan Jiaxun's translation may alter certain rhetorical nuances, affecting how ethos and pathos are conveyed to a Chinese audience. This comparative analysis not only highlights the fragility of individual conviction in the face of communal pressure but also underscores the broader societal implications of rhetoric in shaping public discourse, providing insight into Ibsen's critique of truth and morality within a community, particularly in the context of its Chinese translation.

Bio

Anna Wing Bo TSO, Head and Associate Professor of English at The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, obtained her PhD in Applied Linguistics from The University of Birmingham. Interested in children's literature, Shakespeare, and applied linguistics, she has a publication record which includes 9 funded research projects with successful completions, 6 edited volumes, 4 special issues, and a substantial number of refereed book chapters and journal articles in leading journals such as *The International Journal of Early Childhood* (SJR-Q1 in Education), *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal* (SJR-Q1 in Social Sciences), and *Prism: Theory and Modern Chinese Literature* (AHCI & SJR-Q1 in Literature and Literary Theory).

Thomas Austenfeld
University of Fribourg

Lincoln's Assassination—Seen from Abroad

Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth on April 14, 1865 and died the following morning. Five days before, on April 9, the American Civil War had ended with the surrender of the Confederate Army under General R.E. Lee to the Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House. As a scholar of American literature, I am used to thinking of Lincoln's death as an *American* event—one of the final salvos in the Civil War. Walt Whitman's elegiac masterpiece, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," became the standard poetical expression of national mourning over Lincoln's death.

Henrik Ibsen wrote an 81-line poem on the occasion of Lincoln's death, using it to pin blame on warring *European* commercial interests. Ibsen draws a wide arc of European imperialism conducted by nation-states, from the British attack on Copenhagen in 1807 via the disappearance of Poland from maps of Europe in 1795 all the way to Denmark's defeat by Prussia at the Düppeler Schanzen in 1864. In later political poems—not discussed in this paper—Ibsen revealed his political ambivalence towards Bismarck, and towards Prussia more generally, evoking both the Battle of Königgrätz (or Sadowa, 1866, Prussian-Austrian War) and of Sedan (Franco-Prussian War 1870).

In this paper, I will examine the echoes of Lincoln's death in the translations of Ibsen's poem into different European languages—English, German, and probably Polish. As Ibsen compiles a list of lies, deception, and broken promises in European politics, he advocates for a re-ordering of the European political order after 1848, especially for Northern Europe. The translators, it appears, carefully chose political images for their respective audiences and their separate patriotic convictions. Finally, I want to look at the **form** used by Ibsen to put forth his political views: a rare 9-line stanza (a "nonet") with an ababcdccd rhyme scheme (used in both English and German translations). I will return to Whitman in the final paragraph as he eulogizes the "drooping star in the West."

Panel 6.4: Moving Boundaries in Contemporary Performance

Moderation: Liyang Xia

Monica Emilie Herstad
Guest Research, Centre for Ibsen Studies, UiO

Movements of modernism at play

Keywords: Movements, Modernism, Performance, Flow, Consciousness

From a modernist approach by the reading of interwar drama, such as Virginia Woolf's literature. Seen through a perspective of her key concept 'stream of consciousness', movements of my own art research, includes studies upon certain Henrik Ibsen's protagonists vs post-modern movement directing. Creating unique movement interpretations with passages from several Ibsen plays touring internationally, where the style and method would be choreography from a set of worldwide inspiration. This current presentation, gives examples upon what can lead to an awareness, which sheds light upon how to re-read Ibsen's drama - like an ongoing flow, or stream, of subsequent information of our times. Like in a film.

Where current ideas, waves of conflicts, contradictions, emotions over past and present presence dynamics, offers a study of individuals, gender roles, families, at any continent, in a world where environmental and societal challenges, crisis, new authoritarianism, AI, change, progress, sets in, in a flow beyond siecles.

Today's movement semiotics, with ref. to Merleau-Ponty, is most frequently emphasized through AI and social media representation, representing late capitalism's simplified promotion of complex concepts of modern love, identity, looks, and other, that again informs the art field. How to discuss the distant readings of "A room of ones own", (Woolf, 1929), in comparison to Henrik Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" (1891), or his "A Dolls House" (1879), stressing the importance of how an individual certainly needs her space and income, in order to create independently, being an artist, a research, an author, in order to improve the worldsociety, towards The International Ibsen Jubilee in 2028.

Bio

Monica Emilie Herstad is a choreographer, dancer, art research, working world wide since being a dancer in Japan, after dance studies in Paris and Oslo, earning Statens Kunstnerstipend for Yngre Kunstnere from Kulturdirektoratet, as a motivational beginning.

Touring Stockholm, NY, Bergen, Oslo, Berlin, Tokyo, LA, to mention some, before entering the Henrik Ibsen field, and further, internationally.

Being a Guest Research at Centre for Ibsen Studies, UiO, from 2005 to 2009, and now, from 2026.

Serving as a critic in several art magazines, and as board member in a number of dance- and theater organisations, being a student representative for the student union, upon times. Receiving great reviews, basically.

Lianna Torres
PhD Student, University of Washington

Dancing Ibsen: Exploring Silence and Topicality in Marit Moum Aune's Contemporary Ballet Trilogy

Key words: Ballet, dance, silence, adaptation, topicality

How does removing literary dialogue illuminate Ibsen's performative topicality? This is precisely what Marit Moum Aune begs to ask in her trilogy at the Norwegian National Ballet—*Ghosts* (2014), *Hedda Gabler* (2017), and *The Wild Duck* (2024). I argue that dance accentuates the theme of silence, a driving force in Ibsen's texts, and simultaneously exposes how adaptations' palimpsestuous nature illuminates his topicality.

According to the IbsenStage, over 60% of dance events are documented after 2000. This increase in dance adaptations encourages discussion on dance as a creative choice. Such adaptations situate Ibsen's works into new performative modes. Furthermore, contemporary theoretical approaches have expanded our understanding of adaptation, exploring its many academic and creative possibilities beyond simply comparing text to paratext.

Implicit silences in Ibsen's texts become more apparent when adapted into dance, an inherently silent medium. Price (2006), Vardoulakis (2009), and Moi (2013) have explored the vital role of silence in Ibsen's text. However, these dynamics take on a new force in dance. Contemporary productions utilize dance as a medium to depict drama through visual imagery rather than dialogue. Building on Holledge et al. (2016) and Helland's (2015) foundational studies on Ibsen and dance, as well as my master's research (2021), this study analyzes two of Aune's adaptations I experienced firsthand—*Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler*—to highlight significant themes, illuminate the possibilities of adaptation, and demonstrate how Ibsen's works retain their topical strength through silence.

Bio

Lianna Torres is has completed her second year as a Ph.D. student in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Washington. She holds an M.Phil. in Ibsen Studies from the University of Oslo and a B.A. in Nordic Studies from Luther College. Her academic interests revolve around Norwegian language, literature, theatre, and culture, with research focus on adaptation studies (especially Ibsen and dance), performance studies, theatre historiography, and literary analysis. Alongside her studies, Lianna has taught Norwegian language courses at institutions including Vesterheim Folk Art School, Luther College, and currently serves as a Predoctoral Teaching Associate at the University of Washington.

Irene Pérez Puyol
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Voting, Speaking, Witnessing: Spectatorship in Àlex Rigola's Ibsen Adaptations

Keywords: Spectatorship, performative strategies, theatre adaptation, Spanish contemporary theatre, politics.

This presentation addresses the role of the spectator in two adaptations of Henrik Ibsen directed by Àlex Rigola, the former artistic director of the theatre section at the Venice Biennale between 2010 and 2016.

Drawing on Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* (2008), as well as other works on spectatorship and participation by Anxo Abuín and Claire Bishop, the analysis focuses on how Rigola, in *An Enemy of the People (Agora)* (2018) and *Hedda Gabler* (2023), employs theatrical devices that challenge the traditional spectator model, placing the spectator as a central element of the theatrical event. In *An Enemy of the People (Agora)*, spectators assume the role of citizens in a kind of public square, where they have the ability to intervene and vote. In *Hedda Gabler*, by contrast, they are invited into an intimate, enclosed space—a small wooden box—where their presence is intensified. Both productions question the boundaries between actor and spectator, as well as between fiction and reality. They propose a spectator who participates through various performative strategies, moving beyond the active/passive binary.

This presentation examines the role of the spectator in these two adaptations, relating the theatrical strategies to the social and political contexts in which the works were produced. These productions demonstrate how spectators have become essential to understanding contemporary theater practices and how Ibsen's works remain relevant due to their themes and theatrical possibilities.

Bio

Irene Pérez Puyol is a PhD Candidate at the Complutense University of Madrid. In her doctoral thesis she examines several adaptations of Henrik Ibsen's works in Spain in film and theater between 2011 and 2020. She is part of the research group LEETHI (European and Spanish Literatures from Texts to Hypermedia) and the international network ReOTI (Rethinking the Order of Time). From August 2024 to June 2025 she is a guest researcher at the Centre for Ibsen Studies at the University of Oslo.

Her research interests include the reception of Norwegian literature in Spain, cultural recycling, adaptation, and the relationship between film and theater. Additionally, she has worked as a playwright and scriptwriter on several productions in Spain.

INTERTEXTUAL STREAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 2026

11:30-13:00 KOL G 203	Panel 1.5: Ibsen as intertext I: The C20 Drama Moderation: Linnea E. Timmermann Buerskogen
11:30-12:00	Chen Liang (Shanghai, China): Performative Interpretation and Adaptation of Ibsenism in <i>Thunderstorm</i>
12:00-12:30	Carmen Vind Jensen (Copenhagen, Denmark): Hans Henny Jahnn on Norwegianness and Ibsen's Legacy
12:30-13:00	Benedikts Kalnačs (Riga, Latvia): Realism in Ibsen and Brecht: Between the Pillars of Society and the Good Person
14:00-15:30 KOL G 203	Panel 2.5: Ibsen as Intertext II Moderation: Alexia Panagiotidis
14:00-14:30	Asztalos Veronka Örsike (Târgu Mureș, Romania): The Hungarian followers of Ibsen and their authentic vision
14:30-15:00	Siva Prasad Tumu (Rajasthan, India): Topical Ibsen: Theatrical Realism and Social Reflection in Telugu and Indian Contexts
16:00-17:30 KOL G 203	Panel 3.5: Ibsen as Intertext III: Norwegian Literature Moderation: Christian Janss
16:00-16:30	Espen Børdahl (Frankfurt, Germany): A Distant Mirror: Solstad's Dialogue with Ibsen's <i>The Wild Duck</i>
16:30-17:00	Martin Humpál (Prague, Czech Republic): Idealism and Death in Ibsen's <i>The Wild Duck</i> and Ørstavik's <i>The Pastor</i>
17:00-17:30	Katarzyna Mackała (Gdansk/Wrocław, Poland): Ibsen's <i>Peer Gynt à rebours</i> in Finn Alnæs' <i>The Colossus</i>

FRIDAY, JUNE 26 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 203	Panel 4.5: Ibsen as Intertext IV: Nordic intertexts Moderation: Caroline Sørensen
10:10-10:40	Gábor Attila Csűr (Budapest, Hungary): The Myth of the Complete Ibsen/Hultberg – Henrik Ibsen's Dramas Behind Peer Hultberg's Stage Works and That Dark Matter
10:40-11:10	Anita Soós (Budapest, Hungary): Ibsen Reloaded: The Relevance of Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> in Merete Pryds Helle's novel <i>Nora</i>
11:10-11:40	Hanna Marrandi (Tartu, Estonia): The modernisation strategies in productions based on Henrik Ibsen's plays in contemporary Estonian theatre
12:00-13:00 KOL G 210	Panel 5.5: Ibsen in Dialogue with his Contemporaries Moderation: Keld Hyldig
12:00-12:30	Knut Ove Arntzen (Bergen, Norway): Henrik Ibsen and inspiration from the North: Emilie Zogbaum
12:30-13:00	Kirsten E. Shepherd (Oxford, Great Britain) & Tzen Sam (Oxford, Great Britain): Model v Artist: The Question of Artistic Responsibility in Three Plays by Henrik Ibsen and Laura Kieler

Panel 1.5: Ibsen as intertext I: The C20 Drama Moderation: Linnea E. Timmermann Buerskogen

Chen Liang
Fudan University, China

Performative Interpretation and Adaptation of Ibsenism in *Thunderstorm*

Key words: Ibsenism, Performativity, *Thunderstorm*, Adaptation , Cao Yu

Ibsenism is characterized by the core feature of "social problem play", focusing on the alienation of human nature caused by social systems and the dialectical relationship between "environment shaping character and character being trapped by environment". It provides a critical perspective for the modern adaptation of classic dramas. The 2004 version of *Thunderstorm* staged by Beijing People's Art Theatre, starring Pu Cunxin, is an important stage interpretation of Ibsenism.

This study proceeds from performative perspective and explores the concrete interpretation path of Ibsenism by analyzing three dimensions of this version: stage setting, physical design, and actors' images and costumes. Specifically, the stage setting responds to Ibsen-style environmental oppression through "construction of closed space"; the physical design practices Ibsen's concept of "action as language" by "visualizing inner conflicts"; and the images and costumes convey the issue of class oppression concerned by Ibsen through "strengthening class symbols". These form a corresponding interpretation framework of visual elements in representing the core of Ibsenism.

The study finds that this version does not stay in the family tragedy narrative of the original *Thunderstorm*. Instead, through the systematic reconstruction of visual elements, it integrates the social critical core of Ibsenism into the interpretation, realizing the thematic upgrading from "family tragedy" to "reflection on social issues". It not only retains the tragic spirit of Cao Yu's original work, but also returns *Thunderstorm* to the creative original intention of Ibsen's "social problem play", thus possessing cross-era realistic critical power.

Bio

Chen Liang is a professor, vice dean, and head of the English Department at the College of Foreign Languages and Literatures of Fudan University. He is also a Young Yangtze Scholar of the Chinese Ministry of Education, president of the Regional Culture Research Committee of the China Society for Comparative Studies of Languages and Cultures, member of the International Ibsen Committee, and deputy editor-in-chief of the *Fudan Foreign Languages and Literature Forum* (CSSCI). He has been a visiting scholar at Harvard University, Hamburg University, and the École Normale Supérieure. Research Areas: Nordic literature, Native American literature, and regional studies.

Carmen Vind Jensen
Ph.d.-stipendiat at the University of Copenhagen

Norwegianness and Ibsen's legacy

In 1934 the Norwegian literary scholar Harald Beyer (1891-1960) exchanged letters with the German playwright Hans Henny Jahnn (1894-1934). Among other things, they discuss whether Jahnn's play "*Armut, Reichtum, Mensch und Tier*" (1934) is inherently "Norwegian". Both Beyer and Jahnn use Ibsen's legacy as arguments, and my talk will investigate the different ways in which they do so.

Beyers uses literary terms like "Irony" and "Realism", two terms, that are associated with Ibsen, to argue that the play is not inherently "Norwegian". Thus, he argues that Ibsen's legacy is essentially a literary one.

Jahnn, on the other hand, uses his experience of living in Norway and the claim that the play uses folkloric material from a place he calls "Chien", which must be assumed to be "Skien", to argue that the play is inherently "Norwegian". He therefore claims that Ibsen's legacy can be found in Norway, not as a literary tradition, but in the Norwegian folkloristic landscape.

Bio

Carmen Vind Jensen is a Ph.d.-stipendiat at the University of Copenhagen.

Benedikts Kalnačs

Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia, Riga

Realism in Ibsen and Brecht: Between the Pillars of Society and the Good Person

Keywords: epic theatre, meta-theatricality, realism, political theatre, representation of social conflicts

Based on contemporary approaches to realism in literature seen as a performative construct in search of appropriate form that differs depending on various historical and aesthetic contexts but always presupposes links to external reality, in my paper I intend to discuss important similarities in Ibsen's and Brecht's realism, traditionally considered as opposites. I tackle the representation of social conflicts in Ibsen's *The Pillars of Society* and *An Enemy of the People*, on the one, and Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, on the other hand. Even if Brecht often comments critically on Ibsen's work, and juxtaposes his notion of epic theatre to the whole tradition of drama as a new version of realism, it is possible to argue that important scenes in Ibsen's drama with its inherent meta-theatricality already indicate the possibility of an active communication between the stage and the audience, going far beyond the creation of an illusion of external reality that is often attributed to late nineteenth-century drama. A discussion of relevant historical and contemporary stagings of Ibsen and Brecht will also be part of the paper, including controversies regarding interpretations of Brecht's dramas during and after the WWII in Zürich as well as in theatres in East and West Germany, and a discussion of a recent production of *An Enemy of the People* at The New Riga Theatre (directed by Alvis Hermanis) that tried to provoke political discussions with audience participation in the local election context, reminiscent of Brecht's aesthetic experiments of the 1920s.

Bio

I work as a senior researcher at the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art, University of Latvia. Currently, I am also a member of the Publications Committee (CHLEL) of the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA). Recent publications include "The Antinomies of Latvian Literary Realism" (*Primerjalna Književnost*, 2024), "Walking through the Text: The Representation of Mobility in Late 19th-Century Latvian Fiction" (*World Literature Studies*, 2023), and "Beauty, Truth and Form: Idealism and its Others in Nineteenth-Century Latvian Literary Debates" (*CompLit. Journal of European Literature, Arts and Society*, 2022). I have co-edited *The Politics of Literary History: Literary Historiography in Russia, Latvia, the Czech Republic and Finland after 1990* (London: Palgrave, 2024) with Liisa Steinby, Mikhail Oshukov, and Viole Parente-Čapková, *A New History of Latvian Literature: The Long Nineteenth Century* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2022) with Pauls Daija, and *Ibsen in Poland and the Baltic Nations* (Oslo: Centre for Ibsen Studies, 2006) with Knut Brynhildsvoll and Lech Sokół.

Panel 2.5: Ibsen as Intertext II

Moderation: Alexia Panagiotidis

Asztalos Veronka Örsike

University of Arts Târgu-Mureş Theatrical and Multimedia Research Institute

The Hungarian followers of Ibsen and their authentic vision

Keywords: modernism, cultural transfer, influence, woman protagonist

Marshall Berman says that Henrik Ibsen's voice among other „great modernists of the nineteenth century” is „ironic and contradictory, polyphonic and dialectical, denouncing modern life in the name of values that modernity itself has created, hoping—often against hope—that the modernities of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow will heal the wounds that wreck the modern men and women of today” (*All That Is Solid Melts Into Air. The Experience of Modernity*, 1988, 23). Despite these similarities, each famous author of this time is unique and their influence on other cultures are specific. Therefore, the literary works of Ibsen also had a major impact on the contemporary Hungarian authors, who felt that there is something very “authentic”, “real” and “true” in his works. Having this impulse, they tried to create their own stories: the young writer, Ede Kabos wrote the drama entitled *Éva* (‘Eve’) which was performed on 25th October 1889 in the National Theatre in Budapest, the same month when *A Doll's House* (with the title *Nora*) premiered in Hungarian. Ödön Gerő, another young writer in the 1890s also authored stories about a young woman who reminds the reader of Ibsen's mentioned protagonist. In my research, I argue that this cross-cultural transfer of thought is based on the topicality of Ibsen's dramas which allowed (and allows these days) modern individuals to feel familiar with the problems touched on by Ibsen. In addition, these Hungarian works can be interpreted in their depth only if we pay attention to these connections.

Bio

I did my BA at Babeş–Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (RO), Faculty of Letters, specializing in Hungarian language and literature – _Norwegian language and literature, which was followed by an MA in Hungarian linguistics and literature studies. I did my PhD studies at the Doctoral School of Literary Studies of the University of Szeged (HU) within the program of Hungarian Literature and Culture of the 19th century, and I defended my thesis in April 2025. Currently, I am a research assistant at the University of Arts Târgu-Mureş Theatrical and Multimedia Research Institute (RO). I am interested in how Norwegian literature influenced Hungarian literature, theatre, and culture at the end of the 19th century, and what we can learn about Hungarian literary modernism, press and media history and translation culture from this perspective.

Dr. Siva Prasad Tumu
University of Rajasthan Jaipur Rajasthan, India

Topical Ibsen: Theatrical Realism and Social Reflection in Telugu and Indian Contexts

Keywords: Cultural context, Conflict, Identity and Power, Gender and Society, Postcolonial Adaptation

Henrik Ibsen's plays, although rooted in 19th-century European bourgeois society, remain highly relevant in the Indian cultural context, particularly in theatre and cinema. His exploration of themes such as individual freedom, gender roles, societal hypocrisy, and middle-class moral dilemmas resonates strongly with contemporary Indian socio-cultural realities. In Telugu theatre, plays like "A Doll's House" and "Ghosts" have been adapted into "*Bommarillu*" and "*Chayaleni Chikati*," respectively. These adaptations highlight tensions within joint family systems, gender constraints, and the pressure to preserve family honour. By recontextualizing Ibsen's work with Indian settings, vernacular dialogues, and traditional aesthetics, these productions create meaningful connections with regional audiences. Ibsen's psychological realism has enabled Indian theatre practitioners to critically examine patriarchal values, institutional corruption, and social expectations. His influence also extends to Indian parallel cinema, as seen in films like Satyajit Ray's "*Charulata*" and Mani Ratnam's "*Kannathil Muthamittal*," which reflect Ibsenian themes of female agency, inner conflict, and resistance within rigid social structures. Moreover, Indian playwrights such as Vijay Tendulkar ("*Kamala*"), Mahesh Dattani ("*Dance Like a Man*"), and Gurucharan Das ("*Mira*") have furthered Ibsen's legacy through domestic realism and incisive social critique. These adaptations often blend Ibsen's naturalism with Indigenous performance traditions, utilizing household objects, regional dialects, and minimalist staging to create works that resonate culturally. These adaptations are not mere transplants but transformations, offering dynamic platforms for engaging with contemporary contradictions. This study engage qualitative analysis through textual comparison, performance review, and adaptation theory, supported by archival research, interviews, and critical frameworks from gender studies, postcolonial theory, and performance studies.

Bio

Dr. Siva Prasad Tumu is a theatre designer, director, and pedagogue currently serving as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Dramatics at the University of Rajasthan, a position he has held since 2013. He earned his M.P.A. in Theatre Arts and Ph.D. from the University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, and holds a P.G. Diploma from the National School of Drama, New Delhi. Dr. Tumu's extensive professional experience includes serving as a visiting faculty member for the various Theatre institutions across the country including National School of Drama's various centres. Notably, he has also contributed to international theatre education through his participation in the "Student Exchange Programme" at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in London and the UKEIRI project at Wimbledon College of Arts, London. He visited Chulalongkorn University, Thailand on a research project on "Asian Mesha Sangkranti Traditions".

Panel 3.5: Ibsen as Intertext III: Norwegian Literature

Moderation: Christian Janss

Espen Børdahl

Institut für Skandinavistik, J. W. Goethe-Universität Frankfurt

A Distant Mirror: Solstad's Dialogue with Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*

Keywords: The Wild Duck, Dag Solstad, Shyness and Dignity, Novel 11, Book 18, reception

In *The Wild Duck*, Ibsen explores the relationship between optics and truth, sowing doubt about almost everything that occurs before or during the play. This theme is underscored through metaphors of light and darkness, sight and blindness, photography and retouching. Much of what is presented as fact is not actually verified—such as Håkon Werle's involvement in illegal logging, his paternity of Hedvig, or the cause of Hedvig's death, suicide. Against this background, Ibsen's bluntness in establishing consensus about Gregers's lack of physical attractiveness, despite it seeming a matter of perception, is striking. This view, shared by Hjalmar, Gina, and Gregers himself, is presented as a key personality trait and driving force of Gregers's life plan, compelling him to interfere in the lives of others rather than creating a family of his own.

Optics and truth are also at the centre of Dag Solstad's novels *Novel 11*, *Book 18* and *Shyness and Dignity*. As notable examples of his deep engagement with Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*, these novels stand have been the subject of recent scholarly interest (Ystad 2005, Hansen 2011, Syéd 2022). Like many contemporary writers, Solstad portrays characters who, despite being modelled on figures of Ibsen's plays, are ironically unaware of how their own lives echo the themes addressed by Ibsen (Rees 2007). The shifting dynamics of gender, family, and love, and the role reversal surrounding Eva Linde's beauty in *Shyness and Dignity*, the protagonist's love interest, will be the focus of my analysis of Solstad's dialogue with *The Wild Duck*.

Bio

Espen Børdahl is Lecturer of Norwegian Language and Literature at the Department of Scandinavian Studies, J. W. Goethe University Frankfurt. His research focuses on contemporary Norwegian literature and Norwegian televised youth drama.

Martin Humpál
Charles University, Prague

Idealism and Death in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* and Ørstavik's *The Pastor*

Keywords: *The Wild Duck*, *The Pastor*, Hanne Ørstavik, idealism, ethics

In his plays, Henrik Ibsen dealt with several philosophical questions that have resonated in other dramatic and literary works until today. In *Vildanden* (1884, *The Wild Duck*), for example, he famously raised questions such as: is it good to reveal the truth at any cost? Is it not better to let some people live in a life-lie if it makes them happy? The idealist Gregers is convinced that it is necessary to uncover the untruth in which people live, and this effort of his leads to the death of the innocent girl Hedvig. A similar story and similar ethical questions can be found in the Norwegian writer Hanne Ørstavik's novel *Presten* (2004, *The Pastor*). The main character, also an idealist, points out to her friend Kristiane that she lives in a life-lie, and shortly thereafter Kristiane commits suicide. In my paper I will explore these parallels between the two works and show that Ibsen's ethical concerns in the *Wild Duck* are still a relevant theme for current writers.

Bio

Martin Humpál is Professor of Scandinavian Literature at the Department of Germanic Studies, Charles University, Czechia. In his research he focuses on literature of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries; his areas of specialization include Modernism, narrative theory and Knut Hamsun. He has written two books, one in English and one in Czech: *The Roots of Modernist Narrative: Knut Hamsun's Novels Hunger, Mysteries, and Pan* (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1998) and *Moderní skandinávské literatury 1870-2000* [Modern Scandinavian Literature 1870- 2000] (Prague: Karolinum, 2006, 2nd ed. 2013), the latter together with Helena Kadečková and Viola Parente-Čapková. Recently he co-edited the book *Migration and Identity in Nordic Literature* (Prague: Karolinum, 2022; together with Helena Březinová). He has also published numerous articles in scholarly books and journals.

Katarzyna Joanna Maćkała
The University of Gdańsk

Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* à rebours in Finn Alnæs' *The Colossus*.

Keywords: comparative, intertextuality, war, ethics, responsibility.

After both world wars, Ibsen was seen by many as a classic who did not have much to say to those who had been through the war. Such doubts about past literature were often answered through radical experiments, both in the form and substance of modernist writings. Any shift in literary trends raises questions about the universal value of a piece of literature and whether a text corresponds to readers' needs and problems. What does Ibsen say to us who are living in the shadow of a new 21st century war in Europe? What does Ibsen mean for those who grew out of the shadow of WWII? By comparing two allegedly very different pieces of literature from Norway, I point to the universal truths in Ibsen's oeuvre and show the impact he had on one of the greatest Norwegian novels of the 20th century.

Ibsen's 'Peer Gynt' premiered in 1867, Finn Alnæs' 'Koloss' was published in 1963. Ibsen was the most famous Norwegian writer, Alnæs, almost forgotten even in his homeland. 'Peer Gynt' is a five-act play that was inspired among other things by the second Schleswig War; Alnæs' novel was published almost exactly a hundred years later and is, to a large extent, focused on the meaning of WWII for human civilization. These two classic Norwegian texts might seem radically distant from each other at first sight, but I will try to prove otherwise and show their huge similarity in form as well as themes, but first and foremost, their similar understanding of historical, ethical, and existential problems with the critique of idealism in the foreground.

Bio

Dr. Katarzyna Mackala works at the University of Gdansk and Merito University of Wroclaw, Poland as an assistant professor. She studied in Poznan, Oslo, and Warsaw. She is the author of several articles on Scandinavian and Norwegian literature and culture as well as some literary texts. She has worked as a translator of Norwegian and English, among other things, translating drama plays. In her academic work, she has focused on the works of Henrik Ibsen, especially Ibsen's reception in Poland, which she wrote a book about. She recently published the first Polish anthology of Norwegian poetry (with a colleague). She is a devoted teacher of Norwegian language and literature.

Panel 4.5: Ibsen as Intertext IV: Nordic intertexts

Moderation: Caroline Sørensen

Gábor Attila Csúr

Department of Scandinavian Literatures and Languages, Eötvös Loránd University

The Myth of the Complete Ibsen/Hultberg – Henrik Ibsen’s Dramas Behind Peer Hultberg’s Stage Works and That Dark Matter

Keywords: Peer Hultberg, Henrik Ibsen, unpublished manuscripts, William Marx, dark matter of literature

In his posthumously published autobiography the Danish novelist and playwright Peer Hultberg (1935–2007) refers to Henrik Ibsen's complete œuvre as a major influence on his own style. He puts extra emphasis on the fact that it is *the complete Ibsen*, not just a single volume that he read as a schoolboy. But how should we understand the adjective and the proper name in this phrase? Does *Ibsen* designate the body of works associated with the historical person called Henrik Ibsen, or rather the thematic, compositional, generic, and figurative tools introduced by him and reused countless times in world literature? Does it mean only the published texts, or also drafts and alternative versions? And what, finally, *complete* imply—an assumption that Ibsen's œuvre forms an unbreakable unity, as if there was an intended concept that connects every item of an otherwise diverse *opera omnia*?

Hultberg's eight published plays undoubtedly evoke the style, language, themes, and structure of many of Ibsen's dramas. But what about the unpublished works that never reached print or the stage? Should they count as part of *the complete Hultberg* or do they constitute a curated selection? In my presentation, I shall investigate how the “third” and “fourth type of dark matter”, two figurative notions introduced by William Marx in *Libraries of the Mind* (2025), that is the hidden influence of transformed and unrealised manuscripts respectively shape our understanding of a complete œuvre.

Bio

Trained in Scandinavian studies in Hungary and Denmark, Gábor Attila Csúr is currently an assistant professor of Danish language and literature at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. In recent years, he has done extensive research on contemporary Scandinavian historical fiction, reception and translation history, and the two Danish authors Henrik Stangerup and Peer Hultberg.

Anita Soós
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Ibsen Reloaded: The Relevance of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in Merete Pryds Helle's novel *Nora*

Keywords: Merete Pryds Helle, literary adaptation, gender roles, narrative shift, female agency and constraint

Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) is one of the most debated and frequently performed dramas in world literature. Its central themes—female autonomy, societal norms, and chores associated with family roles—have by no means lost their relevance. These themes continue to inspire the reading and writing audience, not only in terms of theatrical performances but also in contemporary literary reinterpretations. A prominent example of this is Merete Pryds Helle's novel *Nora* (2019), written as part of the Nordic *IbsenNOR* project—a literary initiative in which three authors were invited to write a novel inspired by one of Ibsen's works, drawing on contemporary literary strategies and perspectives.

Pryds Helle's *Nora* is not merely a modernised rendition of Ibsen's play, it presents itself as a nuanced literary reworking that invites a new interpretative framework, especially with respect to the character of Nora. The transition from drama to novel entails a profound shift in narrative focus: the novel offers an intricate exploration of female identity, intimate relationships, and financial dependence. This paper examines how the character of Ibsen's Nora transforms from a symbol of female liberation into a psychologically and emotionally complex individual in Pryds Helle's version.

Through an intertextual reading of both texts, my presentation investigates how Ibsen's realistic dialogues and external character depiction are contrasted by the novel's introspective narrative and sensitive language. Pryds Helle reconfigures Nora as a psychological coming-of-age subject, tracing her development from the internalisation of gender roles in childhood to the claustrophobic psychological abuse within marriage, culminating in her escape from the family. This reinvention of Nora incorporates a heightened focus on corporeality and desire, positioning freedom as not only a legal or social issue, but as an existential and emotional challenge. On the one hand, the novel deconstructs the patriarchal structures portrayed in Ibsen's original drama, and, on the other hand, it also explores the ambivalence inherent in women's complicity within these structures, creating an ambivalent space for both liberation and resistance, characterised by inner conflicts, shame, doubt, and longings.

Bio

Anita Soós PhD, is Assistant Professor at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Her current research interests include modern Danish literature, with a particular emphasis on Scandinavian Romanticism, and Danish fantastic literature from the 19th and 20th centuries with a special focus on Karen Blixen, as well as translation theory and its practical application. Following up on her earlier research on pseudonymity in Søren Kierkegaard's writing she is especially interested in questions of self-presentation and self-narration. She has participated in the research network New Geographies in Scandinavian Studies (2019-2024), which examined how Scandinavian Studies and the position of Scandinavia have been reshaped by geopolitical shifts in Europe since the Cold War.

She is also an active literary translator, having translated several works from Danish into Hungarian, including novels by Kim Leine, Ida Jessen, and Anne Lise Marstrand-Jørgensen etc.

Hanna Marrandi
University of Tartu

The modernisation strategies in productions based on Henrik Ibsen's plays in contemporary Estonian theatre

Keywords: modernisation, contemporary Estonian theatre, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Master Builder*, *A Doll's House*.

This presentation is based on a master thesis written in spring 2025. The thesis explores the strategies used in professional contemporary Estonian theatre to modernise Henrik Ibsen's plays and explains how these strategies relate Ibsen's works to current societal processes and phenomena. The analysis is conducted by examining visual, auditory, and actor-related semiotic sign systems. This presentation examines modernisation strategies in three recent interpretations of Ibsen's plays in Estonian theatre. The analysed productions are *An Enemy of the People* (directed by Kertu Moppel, Estonian Drama Theatre, 2019), *The Master Builder* (Mehis Pihla, Estonian Drama Theatre, 2022), and *A Doll's House* (Laura Jaanhold, Endla Theatre, 2024).

The analysis of the modernisation implements literary scholar Gérard Genette's typology and terminology of textual transformations, which has been adapted to suit performance analysis. Genette's research covers a range of intertextual relations, out of which the paper employs the strategies of hypertextuality: diegetic and pragmatic transposition, transmotivation, and transvaluation. Diegetic transposition means the transfer of the spatiotemporal world. The use of pragmatic transposition implies changing the narrative and action. Transvaluation is observable if the attitudes, values, or tone of the text have been altered in comparison to the original text. Transmotivation means altered motivation behind characters' behaviour.

The presentation compares the three aforementioned productions, explaining the frequency and specific occurrences of the modernisation strategies. In support of the analysis, audiovisual examples from the productions are used. To conclude the presentation, possible purposes of the modernisation are formulated.

Bio

Hanna Marrandi is an Estonian theatre researcher graduating with a master's degree from the University of Tartu in June 2025. She has previously obtained a bachelor's degree in the same field, having studied Norwegian language and culture as a minor. This conference presentation is based on her master thesis, while her bachelor thesis analysed the occurrence of environmental topics in contemporary Estonian theatre. In 2022, she spent a semester in the University of Oslo and took courses in the department of Ibsen Studies. She is also a theatre critic, an avid volunteer at theatre festivals, and has worked as an Estonian language and literature teacher in a school. In addition to theatre, she is interested in cultural history, photography, and environmental protection.

Panel 5.5: Ibsen in Dialogue with his Contemporaries

Moderation: Keld Hyldig

Knut Ove Arntzen
Theatre Studies, University of Bergen

Henrik Ibsen and inspiration from the North: Emilie Zogbaum

Keywords: Arctic inspiration, Cultural Clashes, Emilie Zogbaum, Kristiania Norske Theater, Sámi People

Northern or arctic inspiration to Henrik Ibsen is a topic that has been touched on by some researchers also in the context of Ibsen Studies (Nygaard in Nordlit 2015, Torrrissen in Nordlit 2015), even if it has been also a topic in some drama and theatre studies. And it is correct that Ibsen did not go to the North until a trip to North Cape in 1891. Jon Nygaard and Wenche Torrrissen argues very well for influences from Northern Norway before this trip, and that he took inspiration from what he heard about the North and the Sámi and Kväni people. They do not mention the play by Emilie Zogbaum *Atten Aar efter*, which Ibsen staged in Kristiania Norske Theater in 1861, referring to the dramatist as Thorbjørn Bjelle, a pseudonym for Zogbaum from Horten who lived some years as a schoolteacher in Hammerfest, gateway to the Arctic. Her play is the first which thematizes Sámi people, and she is one of the first female playwrights in Norway. I would like to present Ibsen's staging of this play and see if it could have some significance for his Northern inspiration. I want to ask whether the contact with Zogbaum and the staging of her play by Ibsen himself can be utterly shedding light on his own dramatic writing and his attitude to the theatrical.

Bio

Knut Ove Arntzen, born 1950, is a professor emeritus of theatre studies at the University of Bergen, Norway, a theatre critic since 1976. Assistant and associate professor since 1984, 2010 full professor in Theatre Studies. He has published a series of essays and books in Norway and internationally. He has taken part in many symposia and conferences of both academic and in artistic research and has been a visiting professor to universities and theatre academies, such as in Antwerpen, Frankfurt am Main, Kaunas, Oslo, Helsinki, Yaoundé and Yokohama. Last international book publication: Arntzen, K.O. (co. edited J. Keefe), *Staging and Re-Cycling. Retrieving, Reflecting and Re-framing the Archive*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2020.

Kirsten E. Shepherd and Tzen Sam
Oxford University

Model v Artist: The Question of Artistic Responsibility in Three Plays by Henrik Ibsen and Laura Kieler

Key words: Laura Kieler, *A Doll's House*, *Men of Honour*, ethics of appropriation without consent, *When We Dead Awaken*

Laura Kieler (1849 – 1932) was a novelist, playwright and campaigner for social justice who published more than twenty works over the course of a long and prolific writing career. Nevertheless, she is best remembered as a footnote in Ibsen studies as the real-life model for Nora Helmer in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879). The tumultuous events in the early years of Kieler's marriage – from her husband's tuberculosis diagnosis to the secret loan she took out to finance a recuperative trip to Italy that saved his life – were made public by Ibsen in *A Doll's House* without her prior knowledge or consent. To the end of her life, the perpetual link in the public imagination between her and the character of Nora remained a source of deep distress. Kieler's struggle to set the record straight about how Ibsen used her life story as his raw material and capitalized on her anguish found expression in her play *Men of Honour* (written 1888, premiere 1890). This was a scathing intervention in the 'sexual purity debate' then raging in Scandinavia and also pointedly criticised writers who profited from the use of other people's personal circumstances for their artistic material. Kieler's powerfully subversive play invites renewed attention as a provocative challenge to the male-dominated literary establishment and a deeply moving meditation on artistic responsibility and the ethics of storytelling. The controversy excited by the publication and productions of *Men of Honour* in both Denmark and Norway forced old rumours about Kieler back into circulation; in 1891, this culminated in a pivotal confrontation between Kieler and Ibsen in his home, where they spoke for four hours – with Ibsen breaking down in tears. Though the two writers never saw each other again, there is strong evidence that this final meeting informs his last play, *When We Dead Awaken* (1899), in which the sculptor Arnold Rubek is confronted by Irene, the model for his early masterpiece which made his name and fortune, who seeks a final reckoning with him about his exploitation of her for his art. The story of Laura Kieler illuminates the dynamics of this last, elusive play of Ibsen's and, we argue, gives it new meaning when placed in this context. This paper presents the complex, ongoing dialogue between Ibsen and Kieler that was conducted over several decades and, intriguingly, through these three plays in which they speak to each other. The research on which this paper builds is culminating this year in a new Oxford World's Classics volume featuring these three plays—the two Ibsen plays in new translations, and Kieler's play for the first time in English translation, all by Gaye Kynoch—co-edited by Sam, Shepherd, and Kynoch. Our research is also generating a new devised play by Breach Theatre, funded in part by the University of Oxford through our collaboration and in part by an Ibsen Scope award. In addition, new research by Jorunn Hareide has helped raised awareness of Laura Kieler and her work. Altogether, we are helping to shine a spotlight, belatedly, on a woman writer who deserves wider attention not just for her role in Ibsen's life but in her own right, and for the compelling ways in which her life and her work speak to many issues we are dealing with today: the 'bad art friend' debates, the MeToo movement, the question of consent, and the ongoing recovery of neglected women writers.

Bios

Kirsten E. Shepherd is Professor of English and Theatre Studies at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of St Catherine's College, Oxford. Her scholarship on Ibsen includes *Ibsen and Early Modernist Theatre, 1890-1900* (1997), *Theatre and Evolution from Ibsen to Beckett* (2015), and numerous book chapters and articles, particularly on Ibsen's engagement with science and on the French translation and performance history of his plays.

Tzen Sam is a doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford. Under the supervision of Professor Kirsten Shepherd, she is completing her doctoral thesis on Henrik Ibsen's first female English translators, the women who played an important but largely unacknowledged role in the transmission and reception of Ibsen's plays in Britain. She serves as Research Assistant on the Laura Kieler project and is also co-editor, with Shepherd and Kynoch, of the Oxford World's Classics volume of Ibsen-Kieler plays mentioned above.

HEDDA STREAM

FRIDAY, JUNE 26 2026

12:00-13:30 KOL G 203	Panel 5.6: Troubling <i>Hedda Gabler</i> I Moderation: Lisbeth P. Wærp
12:00-12:30	Andy Cooper (London, Great Britain): Directing <i>Hedda Gabler</i> for the Royal Shakespeare Company
12:30-13:00	Ayla Bayram (Kayseri, Turkiye): Plastic Modernities: Mungan's A Woman Called Hedda Gabler as a Cross-Cultural Rewriting of Ibsen
13:00-13:30	Huang Fangling (Shanghai, China): Humanity from Disorientation to Awakening: A Cross-Media Theater Experiment in the Era of Technological Accelerationism. Huang Fangling's New Work <i>Anna Gabler</i> as a Contemporary Interpretation of Ibsen
16:00-17:30 KOL G 203	Panel 6.5: Troubling <i>Hedda Gabler</i> II Moderation: Solenne Guyot
16:00-16:30	Patrizia Huber (Zurich, Switzerland): Queering <i>Hedda Gabler</i> : A Transliterary Reading
16:30-17:00	Olivia Noble Gunn (Seattle, USA): "No, no you're wrong that's a dated idea ... of sexuality": Masochism and the Question of Progress in <i>Hedda Gabler</i> and <i>Babygirl</i>
17:00-17:30	Azadeh M. Isaksen (Oslo, Norway): Dog, Doll, Director: Ibsenian Echoes and the Paradox of Power in Halina Reijn's <i>Babygirl</i> (2024)

SATURDAY JUNE 27 2026

10:10-11:40 KOL G 203	Panel 7.5: Troubling <i>Hedda Gabler</i> III Moderation: Patrizia Huber
10:10-10:40	Rezan Saleh (Oslo, Norway): <i>Turtles Can Fly</i> film, and the Trajectory of Trapped Female Agency
10:40-11:10	Ágnes Teplán (Budapest, Hungary): The Abject in Henrik Ibsen's <i>Hedda Gabler</i>
11:10-11:40	Xiang Dingding (Shanghai, China): If the Child Were Ever Born: Motherhood Reconfigured in Recent Adaptations of <i>Hedda Gabler</i>

Panel 5.6: Troubling *Hedda Gabler* I

Moderation: Lisbeth P. Wærp

Andrew Cooper
London

Ibsen's Topicality - Directing "Hedda Gabler" For The Royal Shakespeare Company

This paper anticipates the 2026 London revival of my RSC production of "HEDDA GABLER" deconstructing Ibsen's groundbreaking realism into philosophy, history, mythology, religion and theatrical expertise; within a compelling narrative of genius, equality, love and power; framing the perennially topical question 'why are we here?'

I also reveal Ibsen's depiction of Norway to contain Nietzsche, Goethe, Poetics, Horace, Plato, folklore and Lutheranism; while again borrowing "Szondi's abyss" from Sophocles but in "HEDDA" backfilling it with further classical myth.

Alongside this I examine the topicality (then as now) of Hedda's heroic fight against marginalisation as a wife-lover-daughter, marrying for money; against the dramatic necessity of the audience "admiring" Hedda from the outset.

Additionally I explore Ibsen reinforcing his character-psychology via meticulous stage-directions and scenography; intensified in my production through actors' visualisation and body language to spotlight Ibsen's proto-Freudian insight.

Lastly I assess Hedda as a composite of:

- A. Ibsen;
- B. Suzannah;
- C. Magdalene Thoresen;
- D. Camilla Collett;
- E. Emilie Bardach
- F. Socratic rationalism - "THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY" [BoT];
- G. the Apollonian - BoT; and
- H. an aphorism from Nietzsche's "THE JOYOUS SCIENCE" (1882) echoing Wackenroder and Tieck (1799).

I'll therefore show Ibsen not only to be one of the most gifted Norwegians of his age and one of the most talented writers ever; but also an honorary German Romantic on a timeline from Goethe to Freud, with "HEDDA" his fully-developed answer to Nietzsche's BoT (first attempted in 1877), driven by the psychological power of Peter Szondi's "abyss", to still electrify audiences today.

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Ayla Bayram
Erciyes University

Plastic Modernities: Mungan's *A Woman Called Hedda Gabler* as a Cross-Cultural Rewriting of Ibsen

Keywords: Ibsen, Murathan Mungan, adaptation, gender, identity

This paper examines the lasting topicality of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* in Murathan Mungan's postmodern adaptation, *A Woman Called Hedda Gabler* (1998). Mungan's Hedda is a wandering ghostlike figure among the ruins of synthetic modernity, queer isolation, and capitalist excess in urban setting of late-20th-century Ankara. Unlike Ibsen's Hedda, who seeks control inside a bourgeois life, this Hedda wanders through a fragmented modern city with disappearing cultural scripts, negotiable relationships, and memories covered with "plastic", which is repeatedly used by Mungan to describe a meaningless world with surface appearances.

Mungan's Hedda becomes a symbol of melancholic rebellion while Mungan tells the story of the emotional and social collapse of a newly founded society. She does not take immediate action, but rather lives with the ghost of unresolved past experiences. This aligns with Peter Szondi's concept of temporal fragmentation in modern drama, where the past continually interferes with the present. Mungan reimagines Hedda in her new version, set in a different geopolitical and social context, exploring how Hedda's existential dilemma continues to echo in contemporary issues surrounding gender, alienation, and freedom.

The paper suggests that Hedda Gabler's character is adaptable across different settings because of its powerful features. Mungan's story shows that Ibsen's work still explores the questions of memory, desire, and identity through its adapted version. This cross-cultural study emphasizes Ibsen's flexibility as a playwright and his characters' enduring influence on today's world.

Bio

Ayla Bayram is a PhD candidate at the Department of English Language and Literature at Erciyes University in Kayseri, Türkiye. She is currently conducting research for her doctoral dissertation entitled "From Cosmos to Chaos: Ibsen's Women on the Bookshelf" through a scholarship funded by TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye) at University of Oslo, UiO, under the supervision of Prof. Behzad Ghaderi Sohi (Professor Emeritus in Dramatic Literature, University of Tehran; currently teaching at Erciyes University, Turkey). In addition to her academic work, she is employed as an English language instructor at the School of Foreign Languages, Erciyes University, although she is not currently teaching. Since 2020, she has been listed as a Special Issue Editor for ANGLISTICUM: *Journal of the Association-Institute for English Language and American Studies*.

Huang Fangling
Shanghai Dramatic ArtCenter

Humanity from Disorientation to Awakening: A Cross-Media Theater Experiment in the Era of Technological Accelerationism—Huang Fangling's New Work Anna Gabler as a Contemporary Interpretation of Ibsen

Keywords: Technological Acceleration Era; Cross-Media Theater Experiment; Spatio-Temporal Perception; Feminist Consciousness; Human Awakening

Premiered at Shanghai's Young Theatre in 2024, Huang Fangling's small theater drama Anna Gabler represents a new cross-media experiment in contemporary Chinese theater. Building upon the foundations of the classic works Anna Karenina and Hedda Gabler, the production reconfigures space, imagery, sound, and physicality. It seeks to explore the spiritual crisis and identity politics of humanity amidst the transformation brought by the era of technological acceleration as well as the psychological growth of the female individual within specific civilizational structures. During the transition from large-scale filmed imagery to small-theater live performance, the creators employ a formal logic of media compression, spatial nesting, and real-time surveillance/voyeurism to evoke genuine feelings of anxiety within the present audience. This aims to summon and reawaken the perceptual sensitivity that contemporary individuals have suppressed or forgotten. Simultaneously, the work focuses intensely on the complex, sensitive, and intelligent female characters Anna and Hedda. Through methods like gender switching, exaggerated burlesque, deconstructive satire, and multiple perspectives, the creators infuse the core thematic expression with their feminist consciousness, thereby initiating a dialogue with Ibsen and his era over a century later. Furthermore, adopting a stance of social critique, the work reflects on the fundamental artistic impulse akin to Ibsen's original intent of "depicting humanity"—in the post-pandemic societal shifts, individuals striving to change their life circumstances, much like Anna and Hedda, are undergoing a spiritual reconstruction from disorientation to awakening.

Bio

Ms. Huang Fangling Founder of a.f.art theatre Fangling, artist, director, and actress at Shanghai Dramatic ArtCenter. She holds degrees from Shanghai Theatre Academy, Central Academy of Fine Arts. And Tisch School of the Arts, NYU. In recent years, she has actively explored the integration of theatrical concepts into contemporary art practices. Under the name a.f.art theatre Fangling, her performance-based projects have been featured in major contemporary art institutions both in China and internationally, including the 22nd China Shanghai International Arts Festival and the 11th Shanghai Biennale. In 2024, she directed and produced a multimedia and interactive theatre production Anna Goble, which premiered at Shanghai YOUNG Theatre.

Panel 6.5: Troubling *Hedda Gabler* II

Moderation: Solenne Guyot

Patrizia Huber
University of Zurich

Queering *Hedda Gabler*: A Transliterary Reading

Keywords: transliterary criticism, resonance, transgender studies, queer reading, transtemporality

Hedda Gabler has challenged normative expectations of gender, sexuality and kinship since its first publication and performance. Hedda transgresses bourgeois femininity by refusing to acknowledge an implied pregnancy, rejecting familial and social obligations and manipulating the people around her. At the same time, the male characters complicate dominant models of nineteenth-century masculinity: Tesman's scholarly domesticity and Løvborg's unstable relation to self-mastery both depart from ideals of masculine authority. While these gendered constructions and transgressions have been studied extensively – including readings of Hedda's female masculinity (Björklund 2016) – a comprehensive transliterary analysis has yet to be undertaken.

This paper argues that *Hedda Gabler* remains topically relevant when read through the lens of transgender studies. Drawing on Alexander Eastwood's (2014) concept of transliterary criticism, which situates resonance at the heart of interpretation and emphasises the critical value of transtemporal reading practices, I examine how Hedda's estrangement from normative femininity can be read in terms of contemporary trans experience. At the same time, Jay Prosser's (1998) account of the materiality of transgender narrative highlights how literary representation, scientific discourse, and cultural narratives together shape what "trans" signifies in a given historical moment. The combination of Eastwood's emphasis on affective resonance with Prosser's focus on material and discursive conditions allows for a reading that avoids anachronism while nevertheless foregrounding how *Hedda Gabler* engages historical constructions of gender variance. By focusing on the play's latent trans resonances, the paper explores the critical potential of bringing Ibsen into dialogue with contemporary trans theory.

Bio

Patrizia Huber, Dr. phil, is a postdoctoral researcher in the Department of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Zurich. After studying Scandinavian Studies and German Literature in Zurich and Uppsala, they completed their PhD at the University of Zurich in 2024 with a dissertation on eighteenth-century Scandinavian epistolary prose (*Epistolary Narrative: The Letter as Stage and Laboratory*). Integrating gender and queer studies with narratology, their current projects focus on trans-narratological readings of Scandinavian literature from the Modern Breakthrough to the present.

Olivia Noble Gunn
University of Washington

“No, no you’re wrong that’s a dated idea ... of sexuality”: Masochism and the Question of Progress in *Hedda Gabler* and *Babygirl*

Keywords: Progress, adaptation, film, masochism, sexuality

This presentation uses the adaptive relationship between Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and the American movie *Babygirl* (2024) to explore the history of ideas surrounding masochism as a symbol and practice of suppression and/or liberation. Apple TV's Common Sense Seal labels *Babygirl* as suitable for viewers seventeen and older and describes the movie as a “May-December BDSM thriller.” The director, Halina Reijn, however, has insisted that the movie is not about sex, but about “someone who wants to destroy her life” in order to be “reborn” (Reijn paraphrased by Steve Newall).¹ This message or core meaning is supposed to emerge from what Reijn refers to as the film’s “easter egg”: the protagonist, Romy Mathis’s (Nicole Kidman) husband (Antonio Banderas) is a theater director currently staging a production of *Hedda Gabler*. In *Sensational Flesh* (2014), Amber Jamilla Musser refers to masochism as a “powerful diagnostic tool” and as a “site where bodies, power, and society come together in multiple ways,” “signal[ing] powerlessness, domination, or ambivalence depending on one’s point of view” (1).² Applying this tool to the adaptive pair, I ask: What kind of claims have scholars made about sexuality and pleasure in *Hedda Gabler*, and in the name of whose domination? How have discourses on the erotics of control and submission changed (or stayed the same) between 1891 and 2024, especially when it comes to questions of liberation and progress? In what ways do *Hedda Gabler* and *Babygirl* (mis)align with recent scholarship on the ethics of BDSM and its current best practices? Ultimately, I am interested in the extent to which masochism can help us to rethink or undo Ibsen’s liberal subject.

Bio

Olivia Noble Gunn is an associate professor and the Sverre Arestad Endowed Chair in Norwegian Studies at the University of Washington, Seattle. She is the author of *Empty Nurseries, Queer Occupants: Reproduction and the Future in Ibsen’s Late Plays* (Routledge, 2020) and the translator of Camara Lundestad Jooſ’s memoir, *I Talk about It All the Time* (Samlaget, 2018; U of Wisconsin P, 2024). Her current book project conjures claims on progress and histories of (in)justice from twenty-first century North American adaptations of Ibsen’s plays.

¹ “Babygirl director interview: Sex, orgasms, erotic thrillers and more.” 29 January 2025. Flicks. <https://www.flicks.co.uk/features/babygirl-director-interview-sex-orgasms-erotic-thrillers-and-more/>. Accessed 31 May 2025.

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Azadeh M. Isaksen

Dog, Doll, Director: Ibsenian Echoes and the Paradox of Power in Halina Reijn's *Babygirl* (2024)

Keywords: Feminist theory, intertextuality, metatheatres, gender performativity, gender dynamics.

This paper examines how Halina Reijn's *Babygirl* (2024) engages with Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* to explore contemporary tensions between female empowerment, erotic submission, and performative identity. Drawing on Toril Moi's existential and ethical approach to Ibsen's dramaturgy—particularly her focus on performance, subjectivity, and the paradox of agency under constraint—the paper analyzes how Ibsenian motifs are reactivated in a modern cinematic context.

The analysis centers on two registers of intertextuality: first, a direct metatheatrical engagement with *Hedda Gabler* through a stage production directed by the protagonist's husband; second, thematic echoes of *A Doll's House*—including references to Nora, a stylized Christmas setting, and a dance that recalls the tarantella. The protagonist, Romy, is a powerful figure in her professional life yet secretly enacts submissiveness in an intimate, morally ambivalent relationship with her intern. Her identity is mediated through a symbolic triad: dog (loyalty and submission), doll (objectification and infantilization), and director (a role both occupational and familial).

These layered performances evoke the paradox at the heart of Ibsen's female characters, who navigate tensions between personal agency and societal constraint, inner desire and external control. By extending Ibsen's performative dramaturgy into contemporary cinema, *Babygirl* resists the binary conclusions of emancipation or destruction. Instead, it dramatizes a feminist ambiguity in which power is not merely exercised or surrendered, but intricately staged, desired, and destabilized.

Bio

Azadeh M. Isaksen holds a PhD in Nordic literature with a specialization in Ibsen and film adaptation. Her research focuses on intermediality, feminist theory, and narrative studies, particularly the evolving representations of identity, power, and gender in visual culture across diverse cultural contexts. She currently works as a teacher and independent researcher in Norway.

Panel 7.5: Troubling Hedda Gabler III

Moderation: Patrizia Huber

Rezan Saleh

Guest researcher at Centre for Ibsen Studies

Turtles Can Fly film, and the Trajectory of Trapped Female Agency

Key words: *Hedda Gabler*, Trapped Female Agency, Cultroicide, Post Anfal Kurdistan, *Turtles Can Fly*.

This article places Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1890) in interhistorical and intermedial dialogue with Bahman Ghobadi's film *Turtles Can Fly* (2004) and the 1988 Anfal campaign in Kurdistan to theorize a Spectrum of Trapped Agency: *Aborted Subjectivity* (Hedda), *Negative Freedom* (protest suicide), and *Bare Life* (the Anfal victim and her cinematic successor, Agrin). It argues that Hedda's psychological confinement is not an isolated bourgeois drama but an early diagnostic of a patriarchal logic that, when fused with state violence, escalates into *cultroicide* the systematic destruction of a people through the annihilation of cultural continuity via rape, trafficking, and the political reduction of women to disposable bodies. Through this framework, the article reads Agrin's body as a living archive of war trauma and situates Kurdish women's protest suicides as occupying a tragic middle position between subjectivity and its erasure. The article contributes to Ibsen studies by repositioning *Hedda Gabler* as a critical lens for reading contemporary biopolitics and gendered violence beyond European modernity; to genocide studies by reframing Anfal as cultroicide; and to feminist theory by offering a philosophically grounded model of trapped agency linking domestic patriarchy, protest suicide, and genocidal rape.

Bio

Rezan Saleh in a few words: Theatre scientist, multicultural concept developer, and international cultural researcher. Expert in theatre / culture studies, especially Iraq, Kurdistan and the broader Middle East.

Specialties: Promoting intercultural and intellectual dialogue between "East" and "West". Research interests: comparing cultural index, differences and similarity, within a historical, political, cultural, gender and philosophical context.

BA degree from Baghdad University and MA degrees in Theatre science from University of Oslo.

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Ágnes Teplán

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The Abject in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*

Keywords: abject, female body, maternity, identity, crisis

Hedda Gabler (1890) is among the most frequently performed plays by Henrik Ibsen. The female character may be compared to the protagonist in August Strindberg's naturalistic play, *Miss Julie* (1888). Both plays focus on rejecting motherhood and traditional female roles in a patriarchal society. This presentation will examine how the concept of abject highlights the central issue of the crisis depicted in *Hedda Gabler*. The theory of abjection was introduced by the Bulgarian-French psychoanalyst and literary critic Julie Kristeva in her work, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980). In Kristeva's terms, the abject is that which "disturbs identity, system, order." (Kristeva 1980:4) The abject arises from the close bond between mother and child. As Kristeva writes in her essay: "Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A "something" that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non- existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. There, abject and abjection are my safe- guards. The primers of my culture." (Kristeva 1980:2)

Both *Hedda Gabler*'s pregnancy and *Miss Julie*'s fear of it depict the confrontation with the abject. In the late nineteenth century, motherhood was a defined role, and rejecting it was considered highly taboo. By highlighting the theme of abjection, both plays offer a critical analysis of the boundaries of individual freedom and female body within patriarchal society.

Bio

Ágnes Teplán is a senior lecturer of Scandinavian Studies at ELTE, Budapest, specialising in comparative literature and modern Scandinavian literature. Her current research focuses on representations of female identity and abjection in Swedish literature, drawing on Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection. She completed her PhD in Scandinavian Studies in 2011 and holds an MA in Comparative Literature from ELTE University, Budapest. She is currently engaged in teaching courses on Swedish Modernism, Swedish Language, Introduction to Literary Theory, Translation from Swedish, and Contemporary Literature. She has published a number of academic articles on Scandinavian Literature in peer-reviewed journals.

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If the Child Were Ever Born: Motherhood Reconfigured in Recent Adaptations of *Hedda Gabler*

Key words: *Hedda Gabler*, adaptation, motherhood, social-media feminism

The dangerously enigmatic *Hedda Gabler* has continued to attract top-caliber playwrights and theatre practitioners for adaptations across cultures down to our own day. With Henrik Ibsen, Hedda's unborn child symbolizes her rejection of late Victorian bourgeois womanhood and motherhood – a victimized status reflecting her thwarted aspiration for self-actualization. Recent adaptations, however, interpret the child and its symbolic meaning in motherhood differently. In *Hedda Gabler in a New Version* (2008) by Irish playwright Brian Friel, the child remains unborn, but Hedda's pregnancy transforms from a coyly hinted guess to an articulated fact, a dated expectation (4 months from due), and even a visual lump in her sexualized body. The ubiquitous gazes at her as a pregnant woman insinuate threat, hate, and politicization of motherhood during the birth-right citizenship dispute in Ireland which, in all its flamboyant clamor, led to a national referendum in 2004. In *Anna Gabler* (2024), a daring adaptation by Shanghai-based Chinese woman director/performance artist Huang Fangling, Hedda's story is staged ingeniously in juxtaposition with that of Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, from the perspective of Anna's 8-year-old son Seryozha. Hedda's child is thereby born, metamorphically. The play is staged with a cross-media live-plus-live-streaming format, absorbing elements — devices, props and catchy lines — from contemporary popular culture to simulate the sensual and sensational landscape of social media, aesthetically surreal yet essentially a lived experience in today's Chinese cosmopolises. This makes a dazzling site to examine social-media-feminism which has introduced twists and sometimes misunderstandings of feminism in general and motherhood in particular in contemporary China. The choreographed bond between the child and the mother speaks to a Charles Taylorian ethics of authenticity, a modern redemption for Hedda who has been historically trapped in her attempt to reject all the inauthentic imposed on her. The tragedy of Hedda continues, and motherhood, in successional waves of feminist contentions, evolves in constant reconfiguration.

Bio

Xiang Dingding is an associate professor at Fudan University in Shanghai, China. Her research interests include contemporary Irish and Nordic literatures. She recently published a monograph *The Evolving Landscape of Migration in Contemporary Irish Drama* (in Chinese, 2023), along with research articles and literary review essays.

