

Henrik Ibsen's

Hedda GABLER



By HENRIK IBSEN

ADAPTED BY JON ROBIN BAITZ

From a Translation by Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey

DIRECTED BY ANDREW D. RYDER

THU	FRI	SAT	APR
24	25	26	2014
May 1	2	3	7:30pm

2:00PM MATINEE: MAY 3

Adapted by Jon Robin Baitz

“People---don’t do such things” -
Judge Brack, page 77

UCOR 1000 Spring Quarter 2014

Andrew Ryder, Director

Nicole Song, Dramaturg

Tuesday, March 18, 2014

Concept: Tragedy and Realism

Hedda Gabler has to some extent defied audiences from its first performance. The play—and its title character—defy us to find something likable about her, something valuable about her, something that justifies her continued existence on this earth when she’s so “bored.” All of the characters surrounding her are shocked at her final act, even the world-weary and cosmopolitan Judge Brack. His practical mind cannot understand why she would give up on the opportunities right in front of her—including his offer of an affair or alliance of some kind.

And yet, Hedda and her play defy us in the opposite direction as well. How can we not, Ibsen seems to say, care what happens to this strong, damaged, determined, frightened, powerful, cowering woman/little girl? For she must, I believe, garner our sympathy. There are directors who make her completely unlikable, focusing primarily on the evils of the society which puts her in such an untenable position. I certainly agree that society is responsible for Hedda’s demise, but that is precisely why I feel for her. It’s not about guilt or blame, but about the structures of her world: a tantalizing mix of encouragements and dead ends.

Ibsen points the way forward here to Arthur Miller’s 20th-century tragedies of society, where the central character may be destroyed because “he had the wrong dream.” Ibsen’s social commentary is not quite so clear-cut. There is no social program to be started, no responsible party to be sacked. Each of us is caught in this tension between what we hope we might be able to do and what we find we can do within the strictures of our personal and societal limits. This is why Ibsen argued that this play was not written as a feminist tract, and that he did not consider himself a feminist.

Does the play support a feminist message? Of course. But Ibsen’s point was that Hedda was more than a Victorian woman caught in Christiania’s social net. She was a *human* character, reflecting Ibsen’s own feelings. He was drawn to a sense of his grand purpose as a writer, but carried guilt about the many ways in which his wife’s equally strong literary and artistic gifts were passed over as she took care of the domestic tasks his career required.

I believe the same can be said for this play as an example of Realism, or as a Tragedy. Both are fruitful avenues for discussion and analysis, ones I intend to pursue with my own UCOR students. But we will analyze the play for these elements in order to understand more about how the play works on its own terms, not to “prove” its status as one kind of play or another.

(By the way, if you are looking for an excellent short book on Tragedy, which includes treatment of Ibsen in his context, you can’t do much better than Rebecca Bushnell’s [Tragedy: A Short Introduction](#), published by Blackwell. I highly recommend it.)

Production Team

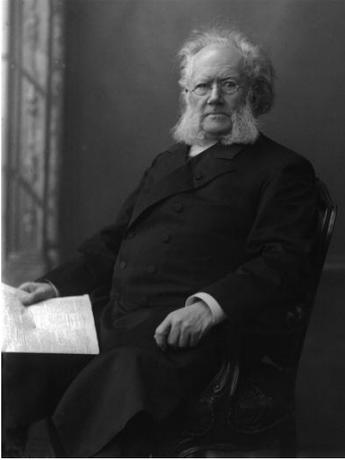
Director	Andrew Ryder
Scenery Designer	Don Yanik
Costume Designer	Sarah Mosher (alum/local professional)
Lighting Designer	Patty Mathieu (local professional)
Sound Designer	Joe Swartz (local professional)
Dramaturg	Nicole Song (theatre production major)

Cast

Hedda Tesman	Molly Warner
George Tesman	Joshua McBrayer
Mrs. Elvsted	Lauren Kelm
Aunt Julia	Miranda Boulden
Eilert Lovborg	Daniel Escobedo
Judge Brack.....	Zachary Christensen
Berta	Sarah Miller

The Playwright's Life as Context for *Hedda Gabler*

Henrik Ibsen was born at a time when Norway was ruled by Sweden, although they did have some local autonomy. There was no sense of Norwegian nationalism, culture, or language.



Norwegian language was mainly used by peasants while Norwegian art and literature was mainly in Danish. The same year that Ibsen was born, 1828, the historian Rudolf Kayser gave a “series of lectures maintaining that linguistic evidence showed that Norway had been populated by ‘Nordic’ tribes from the north” and not Danes or Swedes (Innes 5). Kayser’s lectures supported the desire for Norway to break its union with Sweden and become an independent nation with a distinct Norwegian culture. Later in 1848, the first Norwegian grammar was published and in 1850 a Norwegian dictionary. It was around this time that Norway experienced a national enthusiasm movement (Innes 6) that prompted an increased interest national Norwegian literature (Innes 7). In 1850, the first Norwegian national theatre was founded which Ibsen later

joined in 1851 (Innes 17). Ibsen was seen as a Norwegian cultural enthusiast, which is evident in some of his early works that have nationalistic themes.

Later, Ibsen began to distance himself from historical nationalistic dramas and Norway by embarking on a self-imposed exile from the motherland for twenty-seven years. In 1879, Ibsen wrote to Norwegian dramatist Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson that although it is said that Norway is an independent state the reality is far from it because if “the individuals are neither free nor independent” there is no value in this so-called independence (Innes 8). During his exile, Ibsen began to venture into the realm of naturalism and in order to establish an international audience Ibsen had his plays translated immediately into German (Innes 8). Although Ibsen’s more popular works later in life were far from historical tragedies, Ibsen talked about how important it was for a writer to know their history.

Because of Ibsen’s rebellious nature when it came to his writing, he was a pioneer in the naturalism movement. During the same time that Norwegian nationalism was brewing, it was a widely established rule that dramatic tragedies were written in verse while prose was acceptable for comedy. Ibsen is considered to be the first person to break this rule and “write a great tragedy in ordinary everyday prose” (Durbach 14) with *Ghosts* in 1881. Not only was *Ghosts* written in prose, it was also about ordinary people. Naturalism is considered to be the “aesthetic revolt against traditional styles of performance that had become outdated, and were no longer capable of representing social conditions” (Innes 12). *The Pretenders* is considered to be the first naturalistic play that Ibsen wrote because of its use of normal people in contemporary Norwegian society in 1863. Interestingly, Ibsen did not consider his naturalistic plays to be strictly social commentary or infused with a separate political agenda. In a speech given at the Festival for the Norwegian Women’s Rights League, he said that his “task has been the description of humanity” (Innes 11).

With Ibsen’s shift to naturalism, he “developed the art of prose dialogue to a degree of refinement which has never been surpassed” (Durbach 15) which was contrary to what was popular

during the mid-1800s. Ibsen was tired of having his characters speak “the language of the gods” (Durbach 22). His naturalistic plays have such depth when compared with seemingly ordinary, boring dialogue. They are full of subtext and rich meaning that supports the themes in his plays (Durbach 16). For example, the dialogue surrounding Hedda’s pregnancy seems benign but it emphasizes the chains of motherhood that Hedda feels obligated to wear.

While Ibsen and other naturalistic playwrights like Émile Zola and André Antoine were moving towards writing tragedies in prose with ordinary characters, there was another popular facet of theatre that was moving toward the “well-made play” structure (Innes 13) in the mid-1800s. Eugene Scribe had developed the “well-made play” where the entrances and exits of characters and dramatic situations were perfectly crafted to nicely resolve the conflict at the denouement of the play (Innes 13). With a new style of writing, a new style of acting also began to emerge. Using standard gestures to highlight intense emotions was no longer considered a sophisticated acting style. As characters began to take precedence over plot, the moral and intellectual motives of characters became the focus of acting styles during this time (Innes 14). Ibsen was a huge mover and shaker in theatre during his time and his plays still hold up today.

In 1889, Ibsen met an eighteen year old Emilie Bardach in Gossensass in the Tyrol on vacation (a location mentioned in *Hedda Gabler*). They fell in love, Bardach wanted to go away with Ibsen, and it seems that he wanted to as well. However, he chickened out when he returned to Munich back to Suzannah. It is easy to speculate as to why he might have back out on his plans with Bardach. Ibsen was forty-five years older than her and he might have been worried that he could not satisfy her. He might have felt guilty at the thought of leaving Suzannah, someone who had only been nothing but supportive of Ibsen and his career. He was probably concerned with scandal. He continued writing Bardach for four months and then ceased all communication. For many years after his affair with Bardach, Ibsen was convinced that he was not meant for romantic love (Durbach 24-25). Given that preface, the suggestion from Michael Meyer that *Hedda Gabler* could be “subtitled: Portrait of the Dramatist as a Young Woman” (Durbach 25) makes much more sense. It is said that there are many similarities between Hedda and Ibsen: their sexual desire and also fear of sex, their adherence to social class expectations like avoidance of scandal and upper-class snobbery (Durbach 25). You can also see a little bit of Ibsen’s wife, Suzannah, in Hedda in how Hedda completely supports and drives George’s career, how Suzannah was fully dependent on Ibsen, and how she was the more dominant person in their relationship (Durbach 19).

Timeline

(Adapted from Christopher Innes' "Chronology" and the National Library of Norway's "Chronological survey of Ibsen's life and works")

1828

- Henrik Johan Ibsen born on March 20th in Stockmannsgården in Skien, Norway to Marichen (née Altenburg) and Knud Ibsen, a merchant.

1835

- Father, Knud Ibsen, gave up his business. The properties are auctioned off. The family moves to Venstøp, a farm in Gjerpen. Lost most of their wealth. His father became bitter, argumentative, and disagreeable.

1843

- In November, Ibsen leaves home to work as an apothecary's apprentice in Grimstad, Norway at the age of 15.

1846

- At 18 years old, Ibsen fathered an illegitimate son with 29 year-old Else Sophie Birkedalen a housemaid in his employer's home.

1848

- Ibsen writes his first play *Catiline* which was in verse about Roman history. It was rejected by the Christiania Theater
- First Norwegian grammar published. Supported the increasing nationalism for an independent Norway and for Norwegian literature.

1850

- Ibsen moved to Christiania (Oslo, the capital) to take the university matriculation exams. He passed and entered the Christiania University intending to become a painter or a doctor.
- *Catiline* published under a pseudonym of Brynjolf Bjarme with the funds from a generous friend who gave Ibsen his entire inheritance to get *Catiline* published.
- Ibsen co-founds a political newspaper, *Andrimmer*, in Christiania
- Ibsen writes a one-act in verse called *The Burial Mound* under his pseudonym which was produced by the Christiania Theater on September 26th.

1851

- Ibsen failed his Greek and mathematics exams. He was fed up with the Swedish government's lack of support for Norwegian theatre, literature, and language so he accepted a position at the newly formed National Theatre in Bergen, Norway. He becomes involved in every aspect of production except acting.
- Sent by the Norwegian Theater to Copenhagen, Denmark and Dresden, Germany for three months to study theatre. In Copenhagen, Ibsen saw Shakespeare performed for the first time: *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *As You Like It*. He returned to Bergen renewed with the spirit of theatre and continued to write unsuccessful plays.

1853

- *St. John's Night*, a three-act comedy written in verse, is performed at the Norwegian Theater in Bergen

1854

- A revised version of *The Burial Mound* performed at the Norwegian Theater. It is not well received.
- Women receive the rights to equal inheritance in Norway.

1855

- *Lady Inger of Ostrat*, Ibsen's first play written in prose, is produced by the Norwegian Theater

- David E. Hughes invents the telegraph
- 1856
- *The Feast of Solhaug* produced by Norwegian Theater and directed by Ibsen
 - Ibsen meets Suzannah Thoreson at a literary salon owned by her stepmother. Engaged the same year.
- 1857
- *Olaf Liljekrans* produced by Norwegian Theater. Moved from Bergen to Christiania to become the artistic director of the Norwegian Theater in Christiania. It was a better salary and on paper seemed to be a great opportunity. His years at the Theater in Christiania ended up being worse than his time at the Theater in Bergen.
- 1858
- Ibsen writes *The Vikings at Helgeland* and it is published and produced by the Christiania Norwegian Theater
 - Ibsen marries Suzannah Thoreson on June 18.
- 1859
- His son Sigurd is born on December 23.
 - Darwin's *On the Origin on Species by Natural Selection* published
- 1860
- Ibsen writes "Svanhild" which is a draft for *Love's Comedy*
 - The board of the Christiania Norwegian Theater mounts a campaign against Ibsen alongside the newspapers.
 - Ibsen becomes an alcoholic.
- 1862
- Christiania Norwegian Theater goes bankrupt
 - Ibsen goes on a study tour to Gudbrandsdalen and to West Country to study folklore
 - *Love's Comedy*, Ibsen's first play set in contemporary Norway) is published (later performed at the Christiania Theater on November 24, 1873)
- 1863
- *The Pretenders*, an epic historical drama, is published. His first true success at the age of 36
 - Unmarried women are now given independence from male guardians in Norway
- 1864
- *The Pretenders* produced in Christiania and directed by Ibsen (the last play he ever directed)
 - Ibsen is given a grant from government to spend a year in Rome. Ends up staying there for four years, thus begins Ibsen's 27-year-long self-imposed exile from Norway
- 1865
- Ibsen finishes *Brand*, an epic religious tragedy
 - (Abraham Lincoln assassinated)
- 1866
- *Brand* is published in Copenhagen
 - Ibsen is given a lifetime pension of one hundred pounds for life which allowed him to live off of his writing without worry
 - Women granted the right to work in any trade profession in Norway
- 1867
- Writes and publishes *Peer Gynt* in Copenhagen (performed later by Christiania Theater on February 24, 1876)
- 1868
- Ibsen moves to Dresden, Germany with his family and settles there for seven years.
- 1869

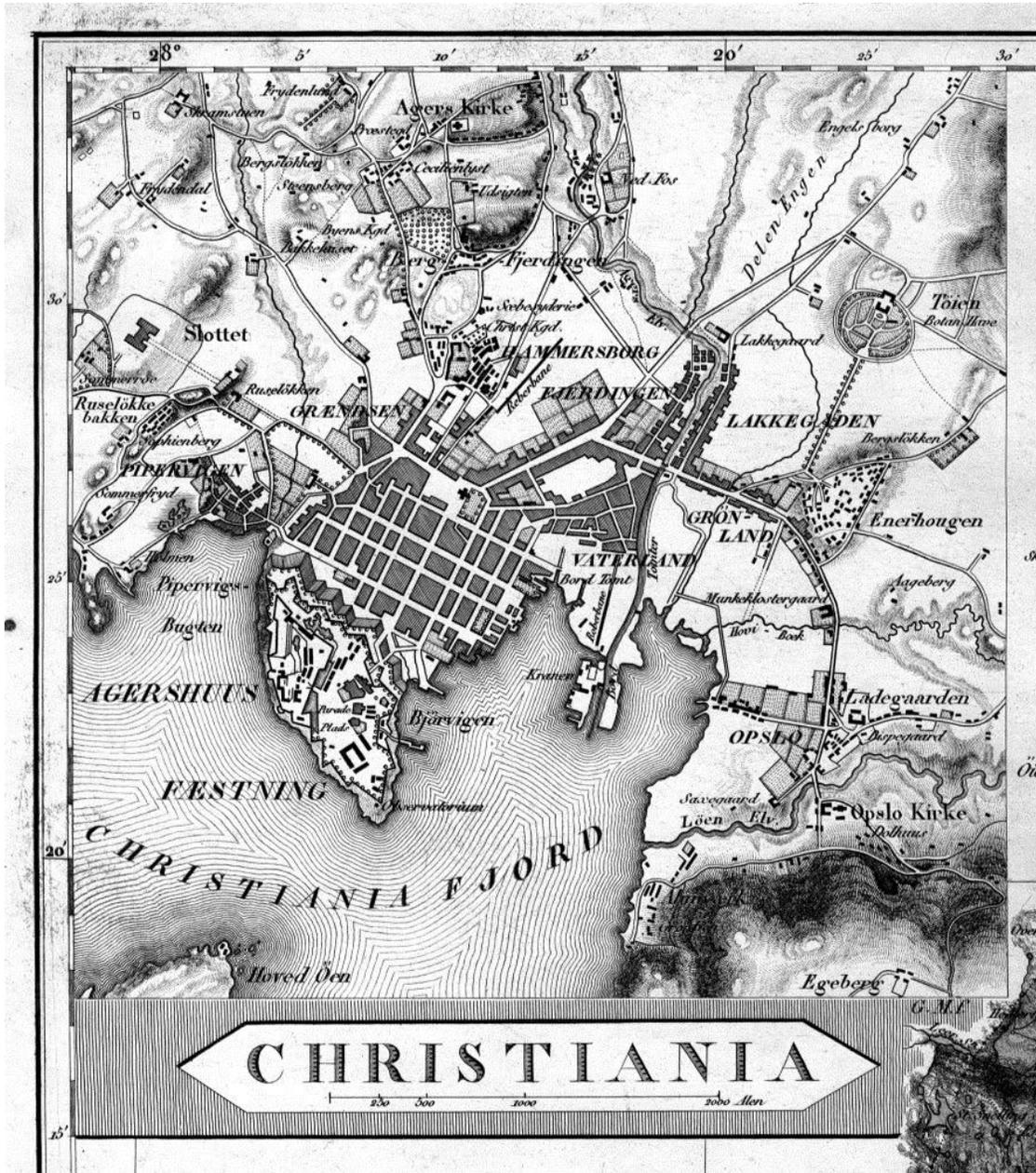
- Ibsen is invited to be Norway's representative at the opening of the Suez Canal in Egypt
 - *The League of Youth*, a political satire in colloquial language, is published
- 1870
- Married Women's Property Act in Britain gave married women the right to keep £200 of their own earnings (in 1870, £200 would be in £17,611.88 2014 which is \$29,411.84).
- 1871
- Ibsen published a collection of poems for the first and last time
- 1873
- Completes and publishes *Emperor and Galilean*
 - Awarded the Norwegian Knight's Order of St. Olaf
 - Émile Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* performed (French writer who was an important contributor to the theatre of naturalism movement)
- 1874
- The Saxe-Meiningen Players' first tour of Germany
 - Publishes *Lady Inger* in a newer version (Ibsen's first play written in prose that was performed in 1855)
- 1875
- Ibsen moves from Dresden to Munich (lived there for three years)
 - Visits Berlin to see the Saxe-Meiningen production of *The Pretenders*
- 1876
- *Emperor and Galilean* translated into English
 - *Peer Gynt* opens at the Christiania Theater on February 24
 - Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone
 - Wagner's theater, Bayreuth Festspielhaus in Germany, opens with *The Ring*
- 1877
- Ibsen's first Naturalistic play *Pillars of Society* published and first staged at Odense Theater in Odense, Denmark. *Pillars of Society* gave Ibsen an immediate popularity in Germany.
 - Awarded an honorary doctorate at the University of Uppsala in Sweden
 - Thomas Edison invents the phonograph
- 1878
- Moves back to Rome again (stays there for seven years)
- 1879
- Ibsen writes and published *A Doll's House* which is staged at the Det Kongelige Theater in Copenhagen which is the cause for Ibsen's immediate international fame as a social realist
- 1880
- *Quicksands*, an adaptation of *The Pillars of Society*, opens at the Gaiety Theatre in London which was the first Ibsen play to be performed in England
 - Émile Zola publishes *Naturalism in the Theatre*
- 1881
- *Ghosts* written and published. It was at once rejected by bookstores and theatres because of its immoral subjects of syphilis and incest
- 1882
- *An Enemy of the People* written and published which dramatized the conflict between an idealistic doctor and corrupt society
 - *The Child Wife*, an adaptation of *A Doll's House*, produced at the Grand Opera House in Milwaukee (the first Ibsen play to be performed in North America)
 - *Ghosts* staged at the Aurora Turner Hall in Chicago on May 20th
- 1883
- *Ghosts* staged in Sweden

- *An Enemy of the People* performed at Christiania Theater on January 13th and at the Royal theater in Stockholm
- Ibsen publishes *The Feast* at Solhoug in a new edition (first produced in 1856)
- 1884
 - Writes and publishes *The Wild Duck* (first staging at Den Nationale Scene in Bergen on January 9th 1885)
- 1885
 - Visits Norway after his 27 year-long exile
 - Moves to Munich
- 1886
 - Writes and publishes *Rosmersholm* which touched upon freethinking and free love. It was not well received. Ibsen was Freud's favorite playwright and later wrote an insightful essay on *Rosmersholm* in 1916 because it particularly fascinated him (Albrecht)
 - Ibsen attends Saxe-Meiningen production of *Ghosts* in Germany but the play is banned in Berlin
- 1887
 - *Rosmersholm* first staged at Den Nationale Scene in Bergen, Norway on January 17th
 - Strindberg's Naturalistic play *The Father* is produced
 - André Antoine founds the Théâtre Libre in Paris
- 1888
 - Writes and publishes *The Lady from the Sea* a look at the dark forces that control our lives and impel our actions
 - Strindberg's Naturalistic tragedy of sex and class, *Miss Julie*, performed
- 1889
 - *The Lady from the Sea* performed at Hoftheater in Weimar, Germany and at Christiania Theater on the same day, February 12th
 - First British production of *A Doll's House*
 - Strindberg's Scandinavian Experimental Theater is founded
 - Ibsen spends his last summer in Gossensass. Meets and gets to know Emilie Bardach
- 1890
 - Ibsen writes and publishes *Hedda Gabler*
 - *Ghosts* staged at Théâtre Libre in Paris
 - George Bernard Shaw lectures on Ibsen for the Fabian Society
- 1891
 - *Hedda Gabler* first performed at the Residenz Theater in Munich on January 31st with Marie Conrad-Ramlo playing Hedda
 - Returns to Norway and settles in Christiania. Meets Hildur Andersen.
 - Norwegian movement for independence from Sweden grows
- 1892
 - Writes and publishes *The Master Builder*
 - Sigurd Ibsen marries Bergliot Bjørnson, the son of Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson
- 1893
 - *The Master Builder* first performance at the Lessingtheater in Berlin on January 19th
- 1894
 - Writes and publishes *Little Eyolf*
- 1895
 - *Little Eyolf* first staged at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin on January 12th
 - Moves into the apartment on the corner of Arbiensgate and Drammensveien in Christiania and stays there for the rest of his life.

- 1896
- Ibsen writes and publishes *John Gabriel Borkman*
- 1897
- *John Gabriel Borkman* performed at both Det svenske (Swedish) and Det finske (Finnish) Teater in Helsingfors on January 10th
- 1898
- 70th birthday - large-scale celebrations in Christiania, Copenhagen and Stockholm.
- 1899
- Ibsen writes and publishes *When We Dead Awaken*
- 1900
- *When We Dead Awaken* first staged at the Hoftheater in Stuttgart on January 26th
 - Suffers his first stroke
- 1905
- Norway voted to break the union with Sweden (Burch)
- 1906
- Ibsen dies on May 23rd
- 1911
- Norwegian women given the right to vote (Sørfjordfjellet, Brit)
- 1914
- Suzannah Ibsen dies April 3
- 1920
- American women given the right to vote ("Joint Resolution of Congress proposing a constitutional amendment extending the right of suffrage to women")
- 1922
- First woman elected in to the Storting, Norwegian Parliament (Sørfjordfjellet, Brit)

Christiania

It was originally called Oslo in the Middle ages. In 1624, a massive fire struck the town and King Christian IV moved the capital and he changed the name to Christiania after himself. In 1925, it was changed back to Oslo. On May 17, 1814 Christiania got its official status as the capital of Norway. Then in 1825, the construction for the Royal Palace began and was completed in 1866. From 1850 and 1900, the population grew from 30,000 and 230,000. Oslo was and is a port city and full of life and business ("History of Oslo").



Description: Map of Christiania (south end, near the port and fjord) in 1827 (<http://www.skyscrapercity.com/>)

Education

The University of Oslo was founded in 1811. At the time when Ibsen wrote *Hedda Gabler* (1890) the University of Oslo was the only established university in Norway. King Frederick VI, the Danish monarch in 1811, allowed Norway to establish their own university. It was originally built in Kongsberg then it was moved to Oslo in 1812. When the school first started it only had six teachers and seventeen students. It only had four schools or colleges when it was first started: Law, Theology, Medicine, and Philosophy. Later in 1861, the Philosophy college was divided into Mathematics and Natural Science.

In 1832 the university grew to 500 students and 15 professors. The professors were paid in grain at the time by the storting (Parliament). Their facilities included a library, a philological seminary, a botanical garden, a cabinet of medals, a museum, an observatory, and a collection of minerals. In 1852, the number of students grew even more so that they had to expand their campus (Crichton and Wheaton).

I can just imagine George spending hours in the library and the philological seminary. In the original Norwegian script, George is “described as ‘stipendiat i kulturhistorie’—that is to say, the holder of a scholarship for purposes of research into the History of Civilisation” (Ibsen, Henrik, William Archer, and Edmund Gosser).

Judiciary System

In Ibsen’s first published script, Judge Brack is actually listed as Assessor Brack. Before 1927, people were given the title Assessor instead of judge if they were members of the collegiate court (“Assessor”). An assessor is someone who values property for tax purposes. There are many different kinds of judges in the Norwegian Judiciary System. In Norway, the Judiciary system is a separate branch of government from the Parliament. There are four levels of the court system: Supreme Court, which has the power of constitutional review and to interpret statute and custom law; the Appeals Committee of the Supreme Court; Courts of Appeal; and the District Courts. The primary goal of the courts is to solve disputes (“The Court System”). Supreme Court “judges are appointed by the King-in-council” for a lifetime but must retire at age 70 (“The Supreme Court of Norway”).

In the lower courts of general civil jurisdiction there is a single judge that is assisted by two lay assessors. Lay judges serve four years at a time and are selected by municipal councils. They participate in both criminal and civil cases.

The Adaptor

Jon Robin Baitz's plays include "Other Desert Cities", "The Film Society", "The Substance of Fire", "Three Hotels", "A Fair Country", "Ten Unknowns" "Mizlansky/Zilinsky", a new version of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" which was produced on Broadway in 2001, and "The Paris Letter". He is the creator of the hit ABC TV show "Brothers & Sisters," which he also executive produced for the first two seasons before leaving to come back to New York and return to playwriting full time. His PBS film version of "Three Hotels" won a Humanitas Award. Other screenplays include "The Substance of Fire" based on his play, and "People I know", which starred Al Pacino. He has also written episodes of "West Wing" and "Alias". He is a two-time Pulitzer finalist, an outer critic's circle award winner, Guggenheim and NEA fellow, and American Academy of Arts & Letters Award winner, as well as a founding member and a former artistic director of New York's Naked Angels theatre company. He is the Artistic Director of the BFA program in Dramatic Arts at the New School for Drama, where he teaches playwriting. He also teaches playwriting in the MFA program at Stonybrook Southampton.



<http://www.newschool.edu/drama/faculty-bios/jon-robin-baitz/>
<http://www.stonybrook.edu/southampton/mfa/theatre/faculty.html>
<http://nakedangels.com/>

Pronunciations

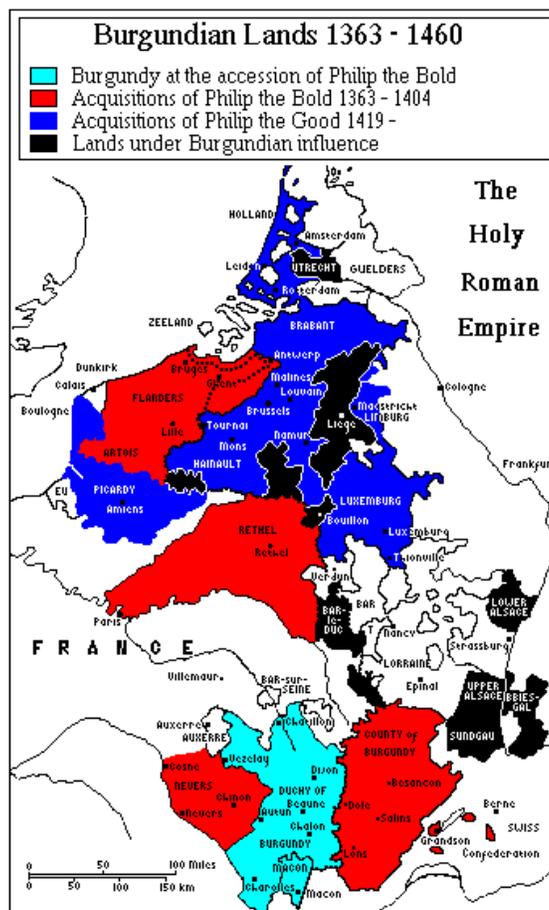
Visit <http://www.learn-norwegian.net/pronunciation/pronunciation.htm#current> for a pronunciation guide on the Norwegian alphabet.

- Brack: <http://www.forvo.com/word/brack/#de> (German)
- Brabant: <http://www.forvo.com/word/brabant/#fr> (Dutch)
- Madame Diana: Ma-DAHM dee-AHN-uh
- Jochum: also spelled Joachim in Norwegian: <http://www.forvo.com/word/joachim/>.
 - German pronunciation of Jochum: <http://www.forvo.com/word/jochum/#de>
- Eilert Lovborg: AY-lehrt LUHVE-boorg OR LUHVE-burg ("Pronunciation")
 - Eilert: e – e as in **air**.
 - *Løvborg*: ø – as in u in "burn"
 - o – as in ú in Spanish "música" OR o – as in "hot"

Glossary and Unknown References

- *C'est la guerre* (Ibsen and Baitz 28) – French. Such is war
- *Memento mori* (Ibsen and Baitz 36) – Latin, n. an object meant to remind one of the inevitability of death
- Coffee klatch (Ibsen and Baitz 57) – n. a social gathering of people for coffee and conversation. “Coffee klatsch’ comes from German Kaffeeklatsch meaning ‘coffee chat.’” (Brians)
- Fjord (Ibsen and Baitz 62) – Norwegian, n. a long, narrow arm of the sea bordered by steep cliffs: usually formed by glacial erosion
- “domestic handicrafts of Brabant during the Middle Ages” (Ibsen and Baitz 13)

Brabant was a part of the Holy Roman Empire. Also known as the Duchy of Brabant, Brabant, was established in 1183 as a part of the Lower Countries by the Emperor Frederick I. It was inherited by Burgundy of the Netherlands in 1430 and came under rule of Philip the Good of Burgundy. In 1477, it was then under House of the Habsburg by dowry of Mary of Burgundy. Burgundy refers to the Kingdom of Burgundy that expanded its power and rule in Western Europe in the Middle Ages (“Duchy of Brabant”).



(<http://freespace.virgin.net/sheldon.stevens/burgundy.gif>)

- “the Tyrol” (Ibsen and Baitz 42)
Mountains that are shared by Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and Austria. It is a bureaucratic nightmare but they are beautiful! There are many ski resorts there (Orkin).



(www.theguardian.com)

- “the Ortler Alps” (Ibsen and Baitz 42)
Part of the Eastern Alps, these mountains are located in Northern Italy, south of the Otztals and west of the Dolomites. This is a high, glaciated range that offers excellent snow and ice climbing, particularly in the Dello Stelvio National Park, just west of the city of Bolzano (“Ortler Alps”).



(www.walkingholidayinfo.co.uk)

Random

Epidemic diseases in Røra, Norway in the second half of the 19th century were scarlet fever and typhoid fever. Aunt Rina was probably dying of scarlet or typhoid fever (Gustavsson).

Interpretation

- **Acting style.** I mentioned Realism above. This historical artistic movement grew up in writing, acting, and stagecraft at more or less the same time, late in the 19th century, and as we know, has dominated mainstream dramatic art ever since. However, in contemporary productions, including this one, we tend to stick with the realistic “Stanislavskian” acting style but abstract other elements. In this case, I really wanted to keep the focus on the performers rather than the details of the room. And I didn’t want the few transitions to be taken up with lots of moving of furniture and props, though there will be some. Don Yanik will say more about the design of the scenery, but I want to be clear here that the acting style should be recognizable as psychologically motivated human behavior, taking place in realistic costumes, but in a somewhat abstracted space.
- **Parenting.** Hedda and George are would-be parents. Eilert and Thea consider themselves “parents” to Eilert’s masterpiece, and Thea has been governess and stepmother to her husband’s children. Julia and Rina were “mother and father” to George, and Berta was also a kind of parent to him. Consider the many kinds of parent-child relationships and metaphors in this play. Is there any positive model? What reasons might there be for Hedda to be so fearful about motherhood? How might this compare or contrast with our students’ perspectives?
- **The Play in the Theatre.** It is essential to think of this play as a performed piece of theatre. Work in class which has students participate in the processes which lead from script to performance (rehearsing scenes for performance; making design choices; blocking a scene...) may help them understand the potential for variety in production choices, the scholarship of theater performance, and the clues in the script which anticipate performance on stage. For this particular show, it may be useful to read sections of the play aloud to hear and feel the tension between the characters. Even staging a short scene (and there are many scenes between 2 or 3 characters) can reveal the potential dynamic between them quite powerfully.

Identity Questions about HEDDA GABLER

- **How are the characters defined in terms of Facts, Action, Faith, Ideas, and Relationships?** Hedda defines herself in relation to society, in relation to her family and friends, and in relation to an ideal she imagines but can't reach. Others define themselves by their relationships (Thea) or by their work (George, Julia, Berta). Because of the social context of the play, it could be fruitful with this play to explore how each character's identity is socially constructed, and how our own and our students' identities are too. Heredity is also a key motivator in realistic dramas, and Hedda's father has a very real presence onstage. Consider the importance of family relationships, and how these differ across the cast of characters.
- **Faith and Identity.** Ibsen's Victorian drawing room is a world without faith, with some small exceptions in offhand comments by Aunt Julia. And yet each of these characters does at least try to believe in something or someone. Most of these aspirations are crushed, but the intentions are very powerful, and motivate much of the action and conflict. Seeking out, identifying, and comparing/contrasting these can be quiet illuminating.
- **What would I do?** Can you think of any parallels between your life and those of the characters in the play? In Hedda's place, how might you find balance and peace? In George's place, would you do anything differently? Eilert's? Thea's? Consider other options each character had within the play, and then see how that may illuminate the choices each *does* make.

General Identity Discussion Questions for UCOR 1000

Who am I?

This is the “big question” of this course. It refers to the persons and characters we will meet through our study of and interaction with our primary texts, as they discover and refine their identities, and to ourselves as we strive to understand our own identities relative to these and other persons and characters.

How we are defined by others:

- Gender
- Skin Color / Race / Ethnicity
- Language
- Nation

How we define ourselves:

- What we do: ACTION. This is theatre’s answer for defining characters, which are defined almost entirely by what they do. (Think of the word “actor.”) This includes our tendency to define ourselves by our professions, also referring to this as “what we DO.”
- What we believe: FAITH. This gets at ultimate questions about eternity but also raises questions about who we are in relationship to others of the same and different faiths. It is important to remember that FAITH must be connected with ACTION, belief with practice, in defining who we are. In Protestant Christianity, there is a strong emphasis on individual belief as the distinguishing characteristic—do you believe, do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ..., where some other faiths emphasize the community more strongly (think about ASHER LEV and his Hasidic Brooklyn community).
- What we think: IDEAS. Feminist, Democrat, Republican, Green, Libertarian, Socialist, Communist... For some it is necessary to hold consistently to a particular set of ideas. This is similar to the emphasis on individual belief in American Protestantism, and is an essential part of “American” identity.
- Who we know: RELATIONSHIPS. As Christians, our primary identity is with Christ, who calls us to love God and neighbor. These relationships include family (which we don’t choose) and friends, associates, etc. which we do choose. Relationships also develop in reference to the categories above: because of our ideas, actions, and faith, we will develop relationships with other people who share those ideas, actions, and faith. Relationships are a primary way though which we define and understand identity. The relationship between the individual and her/his community or group is essential in many of our texts and performances.

Some examples of character and personal identity:

- Hedda's ultimate choice is powerful and disturbing. It ultimately defines her; we associate her exclusively with her father's pistols. Other characters are defined mainly by their relationship to her (at least from her perspective). Her actions come out of who she is.
- A student's choice to study at SPU might have been a conscious decision to define who they are relative to others (family, friends, high school classmates, etc); either to be more like them or to be different from them.
- Asher Lev faces the difficult choice between the community of his childhood (which includes his ethnic, cultural, and religious identity) and his personal artistic talent and ambition.

Thoughts on Engaging the Culture

This play wrestles directly with questions of suicide, of family struggle, of mental illness, and of extreme social pressures. It could be fruitful to gently introduce these ideas in their own contexts and experiences, always ready to refer students who need additional help to the Counseling Center or other campus resources.

It can be useful to challenge students to consider what they can take away from this play that can create more hope in the world, rather than less. Does Hedda's gunshot mark an ending, or a new beginning for us and our students? How can we face up to the kinds of darkness which engulfed her and work together to find the light within?

Ibsen's legacy

Ibsen's legacy is vast and inconceivable; he was pioneer in so many ways and an astute observer of human nature. When Ibsen's last play *When We Dead Awaken* premiered, an eighteen-year-old student named James Joyce wrote a review in *Fortnightly Review* on the play. It was widely popular and caught Ibsen's attention all the way in Norway. Later, in 1901, Joyce wrote Ibsen a sincere fan-letter that beautifully illustrates the depth of Ibsen's legacy upon the younger generations. The letter can be found in an article "I Can't Help Envyng You': Famous Authors' Fan Letters to Other Authors" by Emily Temple in *The Atlantic*:

Honoured Sir,

...I can hardly tell you how moved I was by your message. I am a young, a very young man, and perhaps the telling of such tricks of the nerves will make you smile. But I am sure if you go back along your own life to the time when you were an undergraduate at the University as I am, and if you think what it would have meant to you to have earned a word from one who held so high a place in your esteem as you hold in mine, you will understand my feeling. One thing only I regret, namely, that an immature and hasty article should have met your eye, rather than something better and worthier of your praise. There may not have been any wilful stupidity in it, but truly I can say no more. It may annoy you to have your work at the mercy of striplings but I am sure you would prefer even hotheadedness to nerveless and 'cultured' paradoxes.

What shall I say more? I have sounded your name defiantly through a college where it was either unknown or known faintly and darkly. I have claimed for you your rightful place in the history of the drama. [*Ed: Ha! What an ego! 18 years old!*] I have shown what, as it seemed to me, was your highest excellence — your lofty impersonal power. Your minor claims — your satire, your technique and orchestral harmony — these, too, I advanced. Do not think me a hero-worshipper. I am not so. And when I spoke of you, in debating-societies, and so forth, I enforced attention by no futile ranting.

But we always keep the dearest things to ourselves. I did not tell them what bound me closest to you. I did not say how what I could discern dimly of your life was my pride to see, how your battles inspired me — not the obvious material battles but those that were fought and won behind your forehead — how your wilful resolution to wrest the secret from life gave me heart, and how in your absolute indifference to public canons of art, friends and shibboleths you walked in the light of inward heroism. And this is what I write to you of now.

Your work on earth draws to a close and you are near the silence. It is growing dark for you. Many write of such things, but they do not know. You have only opened the way — though you have gone as far as you could upon it — to the end of 'John Gabriel Borkman' and its spiritual truth — for your last play stands, I take it, apart. But I am sure that higher and holier enlightenment lies — onward.

As one of the young generation for whom you have spoken I give you greeting — not humbly, because I am obscure and you in the glare, not sadly because you are an old man and I a young man, not presumptuously, nor sentimentally — but joyfully, with hope and with love, I give you greeting.

Faithfully yours,
James A. Joyce

Where to Find Out More

There is an overwhelming amount of information available on Ibsen, his writing, his life and his time. We have not attempted to include more than a representation of it. There is plenty for you to explore, and much of it is even in English!

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