

Modern dramatic elements in three plays by Henrik Ibsen
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INTRODUCTION

A thing that has always interested me about literary art is how I am supposed to read and interpret it, not to mention questions such as: is the way I feel about a work of art similar to the one the author himself had in mind when he created it, or am I missing the essential part of it which is supposed to be the author's hidden message, and so on and so forth. My dilemmas were to a certain extent cleared after I had read the correspondence of a famous and very influential Balkan writer with his friend. There he says that all his writings were exclusively a reflection of his need to free himself of his own burdens, of the accumulated weight, in order to get it off his chest! He didn't care, he adds, about literary movements and schools, and even less about the critics and literary education! It made him very sad, he emphasizes, that his plays were too often targeted in literary debates and that hundreds of pages of literary criticism had been written about them, imbuing his work with meanings that had never been there at all, thus laying grounds for the future critics, historians and others to build up on it in their modest paper about this or that novel or play... And many of those he couldn't care less about "wrestled" to prove and explain why he used this or that method, how systematical he was in introducing modern dramatic techniques, etc., etc.!

All that affected me a lot and made me think very thoroughly about the whole issue. What would Henrik Ibsen, one of those authors who have been targeted more often than others, say today to the people acquainted with his work? How many theories would he have denied and questioned had he been able to read them? And the crucial question is: does this mean that one should abandon any idea of interpreting and dealing with him or literature as such? However, if we leave the author himself aside, everything can be seen in a different light, just as Wimsatt suggested that "the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (1954, 3).

Therefore, let us stick to his texts alone. Ibsen's works have left a significant trace marking an important period in the development of playwriting. He influenced many of his followers as writers and, finally, affected the lives of many individuals. Drama, one of the oldest and most stable genres in terms of its persistence throughout history, calls for a definition of Ibsen's work within its own development, just as his work is unavoidable in literary debates because of its significance and influence on the literary works of modern writers and readers as individuals, not only in his own time but, maybe even more importantly, in our own time also. Yet, burdened with all the hesitations and prejudices, I feel

I should attempt a general overview of literature itself and define, as much as possible, the concepts to be used in this literary analysis.

The field of literary, i.e. artistic creativity in general, is so wide and complex because it reflects, or rather contains the history of the entire human kind, man's way of life and thinking from the ancient times up to this very day. By creating, man expressed his own fears, as it was the case at the beginning, but slowly moved his focus to his thoughts, feelings, and experiences... With the development of civilization and society itself, man's interests kept changing and never stopped developing, thus changing the very subject matter of literary art. Exploring the relationship between literature and society, their interdependence and mutual influence, could lead us into a very complex sociological study, which would only take us away from the essence of literary creativity and its purpose.

There are so many questions and dilemmas about the field of creative work, starting from the question of its purpose and purport, role and objectives, links with other fields of human existence, to, in the end, attempts to turn it into a well-structured system. "A system" in this context applies to the well established scientific disciplines attempting to define literary movements, elements of a literary work, place and significance of certain movements and authors in the development of literary art in general, and finally those dealing with the relationship between a literary work and its recipient, i.e. with the esthetic aspect in general. In his work *Literary Theory*, Jonathan Culler deals with issues such as definition and purpose of literature. What are our chances to succeed after his assertion: "This is a difficult question. Theorists have wrestled it, but without notable success" (1997, 20). Yet, the goal is worth the attempts. Literary theories, history, criticism, esthetics, as scientific disciplines, make questions, give answers, set the criteria, and define various phenomena.

A lot has been done to provide for a scientific framing of one of the most sophisticated fields of human activity and develop it as a system functioning according to certain rules. At this point one must bear in mind Culler's words referring to all possible answers and proofs: "In this game the answer must meet certain conditions: it cannot be obvious, for instance; it must be speculative" (1997, 64). Although I am personally skeptical about the scientific "evidence" as far as arts are concerned, and against definitions of closed type, I do believe that there are some constants, some eternal values that serve as etalons for our criteria, that Aristotle's *Poetics* should be the basis of any serious scientific consideration of literature, and that ancient art, primarily dramatic, is the classics with which we compare the literary accomplishments of all other epochs in the history of literature.

Then again, over and above everything established and defined so far, we are still preoccupied with the same issues in an attempt to redefine what has already been defined, to find some new aspects and offer new interpretations, hoping to be able to contest or at least challenge or reopen, to debate the assertions and statements made by the literary theoreticians and historians ever since the science of literature emerged. But where does that need to re-examine and supplement some of the theories, spring from? In a certain way, each literary movement is a negation of the preceding one, tearing apart the poetic postulates of the previous stylistic formations and embracing an entirely new view of the world and its phenomena. Just an insight into the literary movements and schools of the late 19th and early 20th Century (Symbolism, Dadaism, Zenithism, Cubism...) reveals that each of them incorporated a certain destructive dimension and tendency to demolish the tradition in order to build something completely new and original on that wreckage. This review of that unique principle incorporated in each literary movement is in fact meant to be a parallel with the theoretical considerations about literature and the principles underlying them, as well as a possible answer to the above question.

What is the reason underlying the changes of the theory of literature? Basically, it is the change of human perception of some concepts concerning creative work in literature. This does not imply a complete change of everything written before; rather, it means that the same phenomena, seen from a different angle, can get a somewhat altered dimension. Such assertions are always seen as risky and one may assert that anyone, and literally anyone, can interpret literary creations as he/she may please and contest the established theories under the umbrella of the universal right to see things in this or that way. Here I must cite Culler who says that if "a literary work is conceived as a succession of actions upon the understanding of a reader, then an interpretation of the work can be of that encounter, with its ups and downs...To interpret a work is to tell a story of reading" (1997, 63). So, anyone has a right to have his/her own attitude, but if we deal with literature in a serious way, including scientific grounds, we must have, as a necessary prerequisite, literary education, culture and awareness of certain criteria and permanent values that should serve as guidelines in the procedure. My objective here is to examine the modern dramatic techniques through several, or to be more precise, four Ibsen's plays and to show why those four, out of so many others, have been selected as emblematic as far as the beginnings of the modern drama is concerned. This analysis will hopefully help me to define Ibsen's place in the development of the modern drama.

When dealing with, let's say, a play, as it is the case in this study on celebrated and esteemed Henrik Ibsen, we must bear in mind the principles underlying the creation of a play, the elements that a dramatic work embraces, the principles of building drama characters or conflicts. These are some of the constants applying to drama as a literary genre. However, even such fairly established systems like drama genre, offer many different opportunities for speculations and discussions. From the earliest days of drama up to the present day, drama, just as literature itself, has changed its attire, as well as some of its essential elements. When I say this, I imply both the form and the content. If we follow the development of drama from the ancient times to the Renaissance and Baroque drama, to the contemporary anti-drama or drama of the absurd, the changes can be followed at several levels of literary structure. What is particularly interesting is that the line of development of Ibsen's plays largely corresponds to the development of drama in general, which is something that I want to prove here:

- the unity of time, setting and plot get reduced and finally completely broken in the 20th Century drama. It is interesting to follow Ibsen's works from this particular aspect, because in a certain way its line of development corresponds to that applying to 20th Century drama in general – from that of *Catiline* which very much resembles the ancient drama up to the last Ibsen's play *When We Dead Awaken* where space and time have an entirely different function as compared to the classical drama;

- at the level of characters, we witness a change of types on the stage – gods, half-gods, and heroes are substituted by the awakened renaissance man prone to pleasures and material values who is, again, substituted by the man from the edges of the society, the ordinary man tortured by existential fears and questions concerning the meaning of his existence, who is finally substituted by the entire absence of drama characters in the sense of Eugene Ionesco's plays where faces or even breath itself completely substitute characters. A similar phenomena is noticeable in Ibsen's works: at first there are heroes, then national leaders, then people from lower social layers, and finally murderers and people who are lost, disorientated, suicidal or simply killers;

- the dramatic conflict as a basis and essence of each play is gradually shifted from external to internal, from physical and verbal to that taking place in man himself, the conflict of the ego and the alter-ego. Again, a parallel with Ibsen is possible, as in his later plays" the drama arises through a conflict of unsettled ideas rather than through vulgar attachments, rapacities, generosities, resentments...The conflict is not between clear right and wrong..." (Shaw, 1913,

139). This point will be discussed later within a more concrete analysis of the literary elements of Ibsen's works and principles of character building, as well as of their strivings to attain meaning.

There are many levels at which the development of the drama genre and its growing apart from the basic postulates of dramatic work can be followed. The dialogue, monologue, and language in general move from explicit to elliptical forms, from open and external to internal dialogue, which is a natural consequence of the shift towards the internal problems of a human being and that being's alienation and ambivalence. The form follows the essence, so the modern man in modern plays expresses himself in a different way than the ancient hero; his language is full of symbols, hidden meanings, and the reader must read between the lines and must engage contemplatively, emotionally and intuitively.

From this point of view, the language of Ibsen's plays is very interesting and requires special attention and analysis. Nygaard says that the scenic instructions in Ibsen's later plays" are given more and more importance as the dialogue is reduced. The action and the dialogue of his earlier plays are replaced by the silent symbols in the latest plays" (1997, 96). And exactly these "silent symbols" and everything that had replaced the reduced plot are of high importance for this study. Yet, a serious shortcoming typical for the numerous analysts of Ibsen and his work outside Norway stems from the fact that translations and original editions can never be completely the same. It is true that some people studying some author would learn the language originally used by him in order to get as close as possible to both the author and his work from the linguistic point. It is interesting to mention that great Goethe actually ventured into learning Serbian because of one single folk ballade he saw as a literary pearl of not only the Balkans but also of world literature. To quote Ibsen in Norwegian or in some other language is obviously not the same thing, yet this study is much more focused on the characters and modern techniques used by the author in his plays. Therefore in spite of the fact that language is one of the important elements of conveying meaning, we must accept this shortcoming and focus our attention on the advantages we as interpreters and analysts of Ibsen's work outside Norway have, aware as we are of language handicap.

I would refer here to a concept of modernism and the overall impression about Ibsen as an author that differ depending on whether one belongs to Ibsen's own society or to any other part of Europe or the world, yet I believe that such differences in culture, literary education or in the milieu in which one was brought up can only enrich an already rich library on Ibsen. Even the individual differences, and the differences concerning the mental frameworks of all

the people involved in studying Ibsen's work can only enrich the ideas about his literary opus and offer some new, perhaps yet undiscovered aspects of his work. An insight into the observations on Ibsen through history and the various interpretations of his work, the opposing attitudes about his influence on the liberation of women and their emancipation, on the liberation of individuals, on the social and individual ethos, can be more than discouraging and make us give up before we have ever started dealing with the issue. Only reading of everything so far written about him is a huge task, not to mention its systematization and searching for a single universal truth about him. However, if we limit ourselves to one single field, put aside the contradictory interpretations and find a way to avoid all other possible traps, the attempt will always be worth any efforts.

It is very often a case that the same play is seen by different analysts of Ibsen's work in different light, once as purely realistic, and then as radically modern or as an example of anti-theatre. What I distaste about such specifications, with all due respect for the authors of such literary analyses, is categorization and their single-sidedness. The above mentioned Lyons' assertion is not such; quite on the contrary, it leaves enough space for speculations about Ibsen's plays and for finding the elements of different literary poetics. My intention is to point to the modern elements of some of Ibsen's later plays, irrespective of my personal response to them or the significance they had in their own time or later, but primarily in the light of the techniques Ibsen uses to build the dramatic conflict and his characters, and some of above mentioned dramatic elements. Such a task opens some other issues, but I will try to limit my analysis to the tasks I set.

However, there is one more very interesting issue I cannot resist touching upon, and that is Ibsen's relation to women (as it inevitably imposes a question if Ibsen was a defender of women, their liberator, critic or God knows what...), Ibsen's deep knowledge of women's psyche which cannot be doubted. I believe that dealing with this phenomenon is not in collision with the basic problem treated in this study; moreover, it rather enriches it in a way because Ibsen's width and, however problematic it may sound, modernity can be shown exceptionally well on the example of his female characters. The problems may occur in trying to find the answers to each question. It could be problematic to find and include reliable sources for I think Ibsen was not examined in the light of modernism in the way it is described in the literary theory in the culture I come from. But the new aspect of a well known topic could be the contribution to the examination of Ibsen's art.

The course of analysis can be planned, followed, but at the same time can be unpredictable, due to the very nature of the analyzed material, and one must count on it.

During the analysis of a literary work of art, new ideas are being born, and writing becomes the result not only of a plan, but also of a spontaneous experience, which is not always possible to envisage. Thus, in my opinion, although our interpretation of a work of art is plan-bound, it is also bound by ideas that we give birth to during the very act of creation. Nevertheless, it is of utmost importance that we define a course of writing and be aware of the original motivation that kindled a spark in our beings. The most important thing is to determine a goal, that is, to set a task and define the ways to arrive at the goal. I want to emphasize that it is hard to be completely original with Ibsen; hence, originality is not my goal. My study can only be a result of deliberate effort and true devotion in exploring the topic.

The only novelty regarding writing on Ibsen could be said to be the way of observing his plays. Finding new aspects of observation of Ibsen's literary creativity is the honor that the future students of his work should be entitled to. I believe that education, cultural background, the milieu where one is brought up are important factors influencing one's way of looking at the world and literature for that matter. It is a matter of course that a reader from the south of Europe will cite and interpret Ibsen differently from a reader from the north of the same continent, let alone from a reader from, say, Asia. In a way, our differences become our advantages when it comes to giving a novel interpretation to a work of art of Ibsen's.

It is very important to define the methods that are to be applied if we want to attain a certain goal. The objective study of a literary work of art and the artistic creation of an author require carefully picked methods and approaches. Each approach to a literary work has good and bad sides. However, I think that the good thing to do would be to use the internal approach and consider a work of art as an independent making living its life apart from its maker. Even so, it is possible to analyze author's actions, for he is in a way always present in his creation. In such a situation, the use of combined methods could yield the most plausible results, since the use of only one method reduces the possibility of broad observation and interpretation of events by drawing on different aspects.

The methods I will use in my research would be the combination of the psychological, semiotic and in a way formalistic approach. Even though I consider formalism disadvantageous in a way, the form is inseparable from the context. The form of a literary work of art can be studied alone, but only when it is brought in connection with the content can the study be regarded as complete.

Prior to all issues, it is important to base a discussion upon good reference material. The outcome of a discussion and conclusions are a matter of personal attitude in regard to the

discussion. In order for the exploration of characters to be objective, we should start from the elements which are in the drama itself. - analyze the conduct of characters, their lines, their movement on the scene, their manner of interaction with other characters. This does not mean the exclusion of the author. It is on the contrary, for all the elements are the product of his ideas.

What I have been meaning to say is that the author's intention (a very complicated issue indeed) should be sought in the text, not outside it, in his personal writings, or statements that he was giving on certain occasions. Once we have recognized the elements in the very drama, defined the problem, that is, formulated the questions pertaining to the characters, we proceed to quoting the critical literature and the students of Ibsen. Many of them have been dealing with Ibsen's modern dramas, especially lately, and found him to be one of the first modernists, perhaps even the founder of modern drama. The texts of those people who studied Ibsen's dramas offer many answers to different questions, or, at least, many trials to answer them. It is certain that many attitudes are controversial. This is, surely, true because we are not dealing here with a marginal poetic figure, but about with an exceptional poetic dignitary. I believe that each and everyone's attitude contains a grain of truth. My attitude is my truth about Ibsen. I do think that observations and conclusions based on our critical thinking are of a greater significance than repeating someone else's notions in other words. We need other claims only to support our ones or maybe to fight against them. The final word should be ours and that would be a great contribution to studies on Ibsen's work.

We can deal with the modern dramatic techniques and universal motives present in Ibsen's works by studying his entire dramatic opus because in each and every one of them one can surely find some proof of his modernity. Still, I will stay focused on three of them which I see as representative and resourceful in his sense:

- *A Doll's House*;
- *The Wild Duck*;
- *When We Dead Awaken*.

One of the things common to the above mentioned dramas is a human attitude towards ideals, and a devotion to a single vital idea. What inspired me to think and write about these dramas are the essential questions which Ibsen raises in them. Each of these life stories is imbued with great truths about life and man. While I was reading the dramas, I was fascinated by the characters, their thoughts, words, deeds. I was impressed as well by the way in which Ibsen portrays women, their complex nature, needs and urges, and so were the scholars I have

mentioned. Furthermore, my intention is to locate and define the principles of Ibsen's artistic creation pertaining to the dramatic characters. When I say principles of creation I mean the way in which the writer built dramatic conflicts and shaped the characters as carriers of meaning and essence of a literary work.

In other words, my intention is to explore the application of modern artistic treatments in Ibsen's works. These are: dreams, symbols, music, expressive lexicon, stage design. Stage design is especially interesting because it offers great amount of material for exploration. Objects used on the stage, space decoration, light, natural surroundings (when the action takes place outdoors), prevailing colors, all of them are the means that a playwright uses, the carriers of sense and significance. The choice of the means and the way in which they are used is what I consider interesting and worthy of study. All of these artistic means are in function of building characters, which in turn produce meaning. I will explain why I want this research focused on these four dramas. I chose them because I think that, being Ibsen's later, mellower accomplishments, they give the clearest picture about the author and the art.

They burst with symbols, hidden meanings, interesting questions, problematic attitudes, a spectrum of new techniques or, in other words, with so many elements that give rise to debates or call for deep consideration. With no intention to neglect any of the values of Ibsen's plays, I will focus on the most significant ones and will deal with them in this study. In my opinion, the most significant issues are the ones that follow, each of them serving at the same time as a guideline in the analysis of each play:

(1)The Doll's House

- relationship between man and woman (issue of idealism)
- question of gender
- psychological elements in the play-Nora's role
- aesthetic and psychological function of means of expression

(2)The Wild Duck

- everyday and idealism in the play
- symbolism in the play (the wild duck and the loft)
- subtext and metatext

(3)When We Dead Awaken

- love as creative inspiration
- question of artistic creation
- motif of death
- the function of stage space

A Doll's House

It could be said that this is the most famous play by Henrik Ibsen, the play that brought him fame all over the world. The same goes for the Balkans, where the play is very popular, read a lot, and watched in theatres even more. I encountered Ibsen first exactly through this play; my first impression about Ibsen is formed through the story of a woman who abandons the cliché, ruins the established norms of behavior. It is interesting to mention that a reader from this region, from the Balkans, is not quite familiar with the cultural circumstances in Scandinavia, let alone the mentality of people from the north. I am not suggesting that there are enormous differences, they are much less than those between, for instance, a European and an African; however, they do exist and can be crucial in understanding some particular ideas in the literary work.

Speaking about the differences in the way of life and mentality of people, do we have to know them in order to read, understand, and experience *A Doll's House*? Indeed, it helps being familiar with the historical and cultural context, but it is not necessary. Why am I mentioning it in the first place? It is because of my personal experience concerning Ibsen and the first impression about him, and that is also the impression of many people I know: knowing nothing about Ibsen, his life, social circumstances in Norway, and the moral norms of the time when the play was written, yet, having the vast reading experience, I understood Ibsen's play as a work that deals with the omnipresent issues of male–female relationships, female psychology, revealing the true identity of oneself, and the quest for the same. In other words this is a play that presents the problems and issues of a modern human, no matter the time and space in it. Among other qualities, this is the one that confirms Ibsen's modernity and universality of his work.

What also contributes its universality is the fact that it has been performed in theatres from the very beginning up to now; then, the fact that Nora's action still surprises the readers; that every generation discovers its beauty and value, although we are far away in time from the historical moment and circumstances this work is created in. Another interesting thing

concerning this play is the different opinions and debates it provoked and provokes even today among the contemporary readers and critics. Of course, it is about the play's ending, about Nora leaving, abandoning her family, an action that was discussed on endless pages in critical literature. At the time the play was created and started to be performed in theatre, it was inconceivable that a woman can do anything without her husband's permission, let alone leaving her home and her children. Norms and patterns of behavior were strictly established and respected by most members of a social community. It is true that those who did not follow them and dared to disobey them were taken for the renegades of the society, highly immoral people. And it is that kind of people, that is, that kind of a woman that is presented by Ibsen on the stage, that kind of a woman is a heroine of a literary work.

A rather shocking theme Ibsen is dealing with in this play is problematic, is taboo even today in many cultures. Ibsen's play does not seem to lose interest among readers and critics. It is clear that social situation influences literary creation and determine the theme of literary works; the opposite direction – the influence of literary works on the society and collective consciousness – exists as well, but that influence is somewhat weaker and, I would say slower, concerning the changes it causes in the society. That influence, in this particular play, was the reason for many debates about it, the reason for playing it in some countries under the condition of changing its problematic ending. The public moral concerns were above respecting the creative and artistic freedom and Ibsen's idea of a woman and her role in the society. All of this made the play even more popular; with every criticism, even the negative, the play gained significance.

Beside Nora's action, Ibsen's attitude was also discussed, concerning relationships between men and women, him judging or justifying the action of his character; concerning his idea, his message. He was often defined as a defender of women, and the creator of the idea of women's emancipation. Ibsen negated such statements and explained himself simply as an artist, someone who writes what he sees and feels, without the tendency and pretension to cause a revolution in male–female relationships. The speculations about his intentions nevertheless continued, and could be found in the contemporary works on Ibsen. Joan Templeton, for instance, speculates the feminist issue in the play and believes that it is not about feminism, but that Ibsen had this idea while creating the play, but I will return to that later in this paper.

A Doll's House certainly has some non-artistic values, most of all sociological and cultural, but we are interested in those artistic, literary elements that form a play. Indeed, the recognition of the values and actuality of the play could be found in the above mentioned

facts concerning its reception and its influence, but the true recognition of modernity and universality of the play should be searched for in the facts inside it, the elements of dramatic structures itself and the writer's artistic techniques. In that sense, one should distance himself/herself from all the outside factors: the context of its creation, actual social norms, the writer's idea and intention, critical evaluation, and contradicted attitudes, because that all influences our understanding of the play. It is difficult to completely isolate the play from all the given facts, but it is possible if we focus on the literary text and seek our answers there. Analyzing the text itself, and the writer's artistic actions, we find many elements of inner and outer conflicts, through symbols, metaphors, and scene design, to the language tools the writer uses. It appears that the writer is focused on the characters and their psychological condition, as well as their interactions which influence that condition.

Using various means – dialogue, monologue, most often symbols on the stage, Ibsen manages completely to visualize the atmosphere, to introduce us to the problem of both relationships and individuality. Having in mind the subject of the play and motifs, we could say that the play has universal, timeless dimensions; as such, it is present on the stages worldwide nowadays for it is equally interesting for the reader or spectator today. No matter that the social circumstances were different when Ibsen was writing his play, the relationship between a man and a woman remained the same, just like her need to find her own identity, separate from her husband and family. Although it may seem that a contemporary woman can not find herself in Nora's situation, and that Nora's actions are not judged by the modern society, in other words, that a woman and Ibsen's heroine have nothing in common, they do have something in common: they need love, respect, they have to find their true self. The play's theme is both universal and modern, because it concerns the contemporary people. "With Ibsen's work, we take a large step towards understanding an evolving conception of modern drama" (1985, 114), claims Quingley, thus classifying Ibsen as one of the founders of modern drama. *A Doll's House* is one of his plays that can be called modern psychological drama for many reasons, and I will try to investigate that later in the paper.

Relationship between man and woman (the issue of idealism)

The issue of the male–female relationship, the relationship in marriage, appears in many Ibsen’s plays, but it appears to me that this particular play is the one most focused upon the relationship in marriage, while other issues are either inferior, or related to it. What is specific is that the social moment has the key role in the relationship, in other words, the relationship between a man and a woman is shown through social norms and established conventions concerning the roles a woman and a man have in both family and society.

We can not avoid the impression that Ibsen wanted to bring down the foundations of family life at the time, to strike a model of a family, and first of all, of a relationship, thus questioning something that is understood and that no one ever questions. Ibsen’s tendency to reconsider the ideals and to play with them in a way is best shown in this play, so the reaction of his contemporaries to this work and the disapproval writer experienced are quite expected. The sensationalism that the play implied when it appeared marked it as a work out of its time, not suitable for that time. Toril Moi understands this work as the first modern work of Ibsen containing criticism of idealism, a work in which writer represents marriage relationships and relationships in general in a very radical, but realistic way. Beside the criticism of the ruling ideals, the play also contains, according to Moi, “preoccupation with the conditions of love in modernity“ (2006, 226). So, this is a play that specifically deals with the period of modernism which, beside the changes in the social structure, brings the changes in both family structure and of individual.

Like everything else at that time, love relationships are also influenced by the changes that took place in modernism and that is, in Moi’s opinion, Ibsen’s preoccupation in this play. Global changes in the society require some changes in people’s perception of the world. If every revolution was based on bringing down the ideals of the previous social system, then the changes in interpersonal relationships also require reconsidering and bringing down the ideals the relationships are based upon. That would mean that the play is dealing with both social and individual issues at the same time, and that those two moments can not be separated, having in mind that they are mutually conditioned. Moi also thinks that there are both sociological and psychological aspects of love and relationships in the play, and she believes that “the result is a play that calls for a radical transformation (forvandling), not just, or not even primarily, of laws and institutions, but of human beings and their ideas of love“

(2006, 226). By claiming so, Moi actually emphasizes the tendentious dimension of the play and the writer's idea to use it to influence male–female relationships, that is, the role of a woman in society. Idea about changes which Ibsen expresses in different ways in the play is where Ibsen's modernism and revolutionary spirit lie. Unni Langaas perceives the play in the same way, and says: "With its critique of patriarchal society and its radical scope, it has rightly been understood as a major contribution to the cause of women's emancipation" (2005, 165). There is some truth in these claims, however, they are more related to the effects the play had, to its practical, pragmatic side, if we can put it like that. By dealing with that we refer to the ideological aspect of the work and it is a kind of alienation from the work itself.

I think that it is very difficult to define the main idea of the play, and decide whether it primarily concerns social or individual issues, and whether it suggests the necessary changes in one way or another. I personally believe that the stress is on the individual and the personal quest for one's own individuality, but social conventions are inevitable because they influence the shaping of relationships and individuals in that society.

If we focus on the idea of love and relationship of Nora and Helmer, we can not help noticing the change happening in their relationship. Let us have a look at their relationship at the beginning: an ideal image of family love not by chance placed in holiday atmosphere. Ibsen places his characters in a Christmas atmosphere so he could emphasize, or overemphasize the perfect atmosphere in that home. This is very effective, as it can be seen later on, because it stresses the theatricality and performance concerning Nora and Torvald. They both play their roles, unintentionally and artificially – this is the result of being raised and growing up in the society of that time. Their house looks like a decorated stage where there are performances every day, and everything functions almost perfectly. Torvald Helmer is a husband-protector, a dominant figure of a romantic hero, while Nora is fragile, helpless woman who needs protection and enjoys that protection. Moi emphasizes Helmer's idealism, that is, the fact that he carries the idealism of the play, and she says about his and Nora's relationship: "Helmer's idealism and Nora's unthinking echoing of it make them theatricalize both themselves and each other, most strikingly by taking themselves to be starring in various idealist scenarios of female sacrifice and male rescue" (2006, 226). This understanding shows well their relationship, and even better the principles of that relationship.

However, the question is: why does it stop, what happens to that perfect mechanism? Of course, those are the circumstances in which they found themselves, Nora's initiative to help her husband, the signature forgery, and all that followed from that. Yet, that is the action; those are the motives, but not the core reasons for the change in the relationship. The cause is

that the relationship does not function on a normal basis: free choice, self-awareness, and sincerity. The absence of these values in a marriage, in love, can lead to two outcomes: one is that people continue to live playing their roles, beneath the masks, the other is that the stage crumbles down, the masks fall off, and that the relationship begins to be rebuilt on a new basis.

In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen offers us another possibility for the outcome, using the situation of breaking the law and Nora's recklessness, so that the characters could show their true faces and love be put on a test. Does it mean that Ibsen is against love and marriage? No, I do not think so. It is confirmed by Nora saying that they could be together one day when they discover their true selves. Ibsen just breaks one false ideal and the notion of love where people lack free will; they are rather slaves to prejudices and social norms. Besides being the social criticism, this is even more the criticism of people complying with the ideals of love and marriage of that time.

Although it seems that Nora is criticized more than others in the play, Helmer's idealism is also criticized by Ibsen, not directly, but concealed, very subtly. Helmer is shown as a man obsessed with the beautiful and the ideals of beauty; everything that is ugly, that can ruin Nora's beauty, is forbidden. He does not deal with jobs that are not 'nice', even Nora is not allowed to do something practical and not sophisticated. Moi gives some of the characteristics that follow from his attitudes and define him as an aesthetician and an idealist. She believes that his claims show his social status, because he thinks that "knitting is ugly because it is useful, embroidery is beautiful because it is a pastime for leisured ladies" (2006, 230).

I agree that this Helmer's perception defines his position in the society, actually, his attitude towards the social stratum, but I would add another idea that could be read between lines: everything that has its pragmatic side cannot be truly beautiful, can not be art. This Helmer's attitude shows more his tendency towards idealism than his opinion about the social position he has. I cannot help noticing the idea of "art for art's sake" in this Helmer's attitude that art is not art if it serves for anything, not being the goal for itself. Helmer is an idealist who does not deal with essence and sense, but only with appearance and image: "Helmer speaks like a painter, or perhaps even like a painter of theater decor: all he can think of is surface effects" (Moi, 2006, 231).

Concerning Helmer's notion of love, which reflects a lot on Nora and her notion the idea how the relationship in marriage should be, we could discuss idealism again. He shows through both his actions and his body language that bad things should not be talked about,

that problems should not be mentioned; love should be showing positive feelings, and hiding those bad, love is a sort of game for him, the dance in which one hides his/her weakness with a smile. As an idealist, he could probably play his role until the end, even after the letter affair and disappointment with Nora, if only she had wanted to continue playing hers. Ibsen constructs the character of Helmer using contrasts: a man that show himself as a dominant figure, a protector and a hero is, at the same time, a man who can not stand anything difficult, a man who is not capable to deal with problems and face the truth. It is confirmed by Moi's observation that "Helmer's refinement cannot deal with death and pain" (2006, 231). Her observation refers to the illness of Dr. Rank which Helmer is refusing to accept, and the same applies to any problematic situation Helmer is in. Unlike that, Nora, who is constantly playing the role of a tender, vulnerable woman, even childish sometimes, shows at the end the strength and determination of a man, and somehow takes over Helmer's role. In the last scene of the play we are given a reverse situation: a fragile helpless husband, and a determined brave wife who now takes control of the situation. Ibsen places his characters in a completely different position then one at the beginning, which, among other things, suggests the idea of relativity in life.

Speaking about Nora, in relation to idealism and to ideal love, to how their love appears at the beginning, the fact is that Nora behaves like Helmer and is rather superficial in understanding life and relationships. The question is, however, how much it is a part of her personality, and how much a product of upbringing and life, first in her father's house, then with Helmer. I see Nora as a woman who is a product of her environment and people that surround her, who accept her husband's idealistic point of view. This is how Moi perceives this problem: "Both Nora and Helmer spend most of the play theatricalizing themselves by acting out their own clichéd idealist scripts. Nora's fantasies are variations on the idealist figure of the noble and pure woman who sacrifices all for love" (2006, 232). According to her understanding, and that is also my perception of their relationship, both Nora and Helmer play the roles to satisfy one another, but also their needs, because idealism has become a part of their personalities, their point of view. Nora bases her self-respect and self-esteem on the fact that she did something great for her husband, saved a life. Even the illegal act she participates becomes idealized in her mind and reinforces her sacrifice, and thus her self-respect as well. However, that self-respect becomes quite shaken, and the idealism questioned when Nora faces the reality of that act and Helmer's disappointment and rage. Logically, the ideals not based on true beliefs and free choices give way to a complete void and senselessness. Nora's

life and her being are becoming senseless as well as all the roles she had played – the roles of a mother, a wife, a daughter.

We get the impression that it is not about love anymore, and that the whole play does not deal with love actually; this is not a tragic love story where somebody leaves somebody because of the lack of love; it is about the search for the personal identity, and a tragic ending of a relationship not based on truth. In such sense, we could say that Nora and Helmer are not individuals, but representatives of a typical, very frequent relationship between spouses at Ibsen's time, where the governing norms determined roles of a man/a woman in both family and society. Theatricality, present in homes, inevitable in relationships, is a result of the existing prejudices at the time, and the cause for losing identity and for tragic destinies. Considered like this, it could be said that the writer's idea was to realistically show the consequences of the relationship, of not facing the truth, and to show what position a woman should take to prevent a family catastrophe. This presupposition is supported by Moi's claim that "by showing us their theatrical marriage, Ibsen did not mean to turn these two decent people into villains, but to make us think about the way we theatricalize ourselves and others in everyday life" (2006, 234). In his other plays Ibsen also confronts theatricality with everyday life; he actually shows what happens when theatricality becomes a part of everyday life, as in e.g. *The Wild Duck* and *Rosmersholm*. All these plays deal with human ideals and existential issues that troubled people of Ibsen's time, but also modern people, and that is what makes them both modern and universal.

Question of gender

Besides the motifs of love and human ideals I have been discussing up to now, a very important question, actually a problem in the play is the question of gender. No matter how much it was not Ibsen's intention to provoke the questions of women's rights and feminism; those questions do appear and follow from many elements of the play. Concerning this question, there developed a controversy about Ibsen in literature, and mixed opinions still exist among the readers and of Ibsen's scholars. Those questions mainly concern the writer's attitude, and because the attitude is hard to determine, hence the controversy. Langaas, in her analysis of Nora's actions *What did Nora do?*, thinks that Ibsen shows ambivalence in his attitude, because on one hand he believes that the differences exist, they are biological, and consequently social, emotional in nature; on the other hand "the liberal thinker Ibsen was influenced by upcoming thoughts of the time, which claimed a larger degree of equal rights for women and men in society" (2005, 151). Even if Ibsen was in a dilemma, and that it could be seen in the play itself, it appears to me as important not to reveal the author's intention, or motivation, but show how the male-female relationships functions, stressing the male/female roles in society or family. I think it could be generally discussed, in both present and past, because although social circumstances changed, there is still the gender distinction and is a result of natural, biological differences.

Unni Langaas argues in her study the problem of gender in *A Doll's House* and defines this as the predominant theme/problem of the play: "My overall view is that this drama is not so much about Nora's struggle to find herself as a human being, as it is about her shocking experience of being treated as a woman because of the acts she performs" (2005, 148.) She further defines the play as a work showing the effects of a system with a clear distinction between gender and which makes a man much superior to a woman in any sense-economical, social, political, etc. It is something, according to Langaas, that "must be understood as a sign of modernity of Ibsen's play, as well as an intrinsic quality of the dramatic genre as such" (2005, 149). I perceive the idea in a similar way: concerning the social differences and problem of gender, the play raises the most individual questions and has the profoundness of a real psychological drama.

The outer conflict, the conflict of gender, gradually reflects on the inner conflicts which are characteristic to modern literary works. I believe that Ibsen's focus is actually on these conflicts and psychological moments, rather than the social aspect of gender and differences

between men and women, because, in that case, the play would be much less modern and universal. That is the point where my perception differs from that of Unni Langaas. Dealing with this question requires a definition of the gender issue first, having in mind the historical context of the play, because the position of men and women has changed, nevertheless. In the 19th Century the differences between men and women were considered as an act of God, and thus highly respected, if not exaggerated. At one moment in the play, when Nora shows her resolution to leave her home, Helmer calls upon religion and a woman's duties, yet Nora does not react, clearly bringing down a set of norms and an ideology. In addition, she is not presented as a sinner, because her intentions are to discover her true self so she could be a good mother and a wife one day. Langaas perceives Nora, i.e. the woman in *A Doll's house* as a powerful, strong woman:

There is no doubt that both Ibsen and his play are marked by notions of woman's pure, nature-bound and authentic and thus uniquely gifted for those critical tasks which were the author's lifelong intention with his dramas. But the impact of *A Doll's House* lies rather in its new and modern way of staging a gender conflict (2005, 152).

Indeed, the fact is that Ibsen's play brings innovation in perceiving and understanding gender, but what exactly is new and original in the play? I would say that innovations are the limits Ibsen reaches in the conflict, in other words, in the culmination of the conflict through bringing down family as a community supreme sociologically and religiously. Hardly anyone would dare to take as a heroine a woman going against the law, people, even God. Another innovation concerning the conflict is the existence of transformation in Nora's character, or rather her behavior.

There are two images present in the play: one, where men and women act in accordance with society and beliefs, where a woman respects the role she is imposed, but about which she does not think; the other, where a woman abandons the role and acts as a human being, which disturbs the balance and brings about the gender conflict. Therefore, the deviation from the way gender functions actually leads to a disaster. There are two possible conclusions that follow: first, that Nora should have never acted as a man, and that bringing down the gender norms actually leads to a catastrophe on both relationship and individual level; second, that the mentioned norms do not have a basis in what men and women truly are, and that they are based on prejudices.

I think Nora should be regarded from two aspects – Nora that respects, and Nora that thinks, because there lies the key for understanding her actions and understanding her as a

woman, or even better, a human. Nora from the beginning of the play is an obeying wife, faithful, womanly and dear, being always there for her husband, to cheer him up, make him smile, admire him and feed his ego. She acts as a woman should, according to Helmer and her surroundings. Ibsen, it seems to me, even overemphasizes, exaggerates with Nora's character, showing her as childish, immature, all with the purpose of emphasizing her theatricality and thus giving significance to changes that will occur within her. Nora, acting as a woman, looks more like an ornament than a human being, she is more of an entertainer than a human of flash and bone who thinks and feels. This Ibsen's act in building Nora's character serves the idea of theatricality in everyday life and its negative consequences. Langaas perceives Nora as a woman who is not her true self throughout the play, but rather "a child, a liar, a dancer, a doll, a narcissist, a flirt, a seductress, and so on, and she clearly acts out her different roles" (2005, 162). I think that every role she plays has some of her character, but the problem is that she has not yet discovered who she really is, that is why she gets lost in every role she plays. Moreover, doesn't Nora represent every woman who seeks her identity through different ways of behavior, those imposed and those of her free choice? Isn't that the modernity of the play?

I believe that the writer's literary techniques in building the character of Nora, and in realizing certain ideas are very original compared to the ways that women were represented in earlier literary works, and that they are a feature of a sophisticated writer and a connoisseur of human psyche. It is interesting, for instance, how Ibsen offers two aspect of one and the same thing, and multiplies the perspectives. Nora that acts as a woman (I mean, a woman according the standards of a woman's behavior in society) is loved and adored by everyone, by other characters and readers, while she considers herself unacceptable like that. Langaas discusses her role of a woman from the aspect of gender:

Nora's behavior, on the other hand, is more smoothly accepted when she is acting like a woman. Her femininity is a forceful and divulging demonstration of how gender is performed; in Nora various historic versions of womanliness are collected and expose (2005, 162).

I can not help but notice the generalizing of Nora's character and the universal dimension that Langaas thus ascribes to the entire play. So, according to this interpretation of Unni Langaas, and my personal interpretation, I could say that the writer consolidated many roles and patterns of behavior in the character of Nora, showing her through different ways, from different angles, making her an everywoman – a woman of the 19th Century, a woman of our time, a woman from Norway, China, or any part of the world. This perception of her character does not negate her individuality, but simply, if we perceive a literary character as a

structure composed of various elements, one of those elements gives the character the feature of universality. Nora's behavior reflects how gender functioned in the 19th Century, but also how gender relationships function at any place, at any time. In that sense, Ibsen can be regarded as a painter of the Norwegian society at one time, yet the popularity of his plays and his artistic techniques make him a modern playwright. The perception of Ibsen's work changed through time, and moved towards ever greater recognition of his modernity. Moi, for example, supports the attitude that most critics perceive Nora rather one-sidedly, defining her exclusively as a representative of women and not a human in general. She perceives such critics as sexists and claims:

Such critics refuse to admit that a woman can represent the universal (the human) just as much or just as well as a man. They are prisoners of a picture of sex or gender in which the woman, the female, the feminine is always the particular, always the relative, never the general, never the norm. That Ibsen himself never once opposes Nora's humanity to her femininity is evidence of his political radicalism as well as his greatness as a writer (2006, 244).

Moi is right not perceiving Nora only as a woman, but a human who brings down some patterns of behavior, and tries to find her way in the society. Regarding Nora just as a female representative means regarding the play just as an image of male-female relationship at a certain period of history. Concerning one single social milieu and one moment, the play would not have the universal values that its readers can also see, and are recognized by the analysts of Ibsen's works. The problem of gender is indeed present, and predominant in many segments of the play, but it surpasses Ibsen's time and social conditions of the time, so this problem can be discussed more generally. Nora is not a feminist fighting for her rights; her actions are just a result of a reverse system of values. Through Nora, the author shows "how the culturally constructed norms of the time produce notions of femaleness and govern her life as a woman" (Langaas, 2005, 166).

I would now return to the aspects from which we can observe Nora's actions. Up to now, I spoke of Nora that acts typically for a female, which is acceptable for her surroundings, yet she can not stand it anymore. Langaas discusses her actions that are untypical for a woman, calling that phenomenon "acting like a man". She mentions two of Nora's actions through which she brings down the norms of existence, and that are a complete deviation from the role of a woman. It is the money she borrows without her husband knowledge, and her leaving the house. I think that these two actions are the most apparent to anyone as actions typical for a man, but certainly not for a woman, especially for a woman as

fragile and womanly as Nora presents herself. What happens when a woman ceases to play the role imposed by society, and acts according to her conscience and her understandings? Her behavior is unacceptable according to some people and the society, and she alone is condemned.

It is very interesting that Ibsen, in addition to all the roles, gives his heroine another one – the role of a man. In that way, the readers can more clearly see two different standards that apply for both men and women. Langaas says about it:

Nora's experience in a culture with two set of norms, one for men and one for women, makes her rethink the conditions of being a woman. Her concluding act is to leave a situation where her actions are not appreciated, but condemned, exactly because she has tried to act like a man while being a woman (2005, 161).

Certainly, there is something true in this observation, the truth is that Nora reconsiders her position and how the environment treats her. However, I would not say that Nora leaves her home just because, or primarily because she is not treated just like a man. In that sense, her departure could be equalized with the started fight for women's rights. From the observation of Langaas, one could get the impression that Nora wishes that men and women should be treated equally, and that she reflects the feminist idea. Having in mind the well-known fact that Ibsen negated the existence of feminist ideas in his play, as well as his intention to defend women, it would not be wise to observe *A Doll's House* only from that perspective. To go back to the quoted observation, the reason for Nora leaving is more, if not primarily, because she understands that she does not know herself; that her life is not her choice – she has to meet her true self and feel the freedom of decision and choice. That does not mean that she will never return to Helmer and their children, on the contrary, she suggests that possibility.

I have an impression that Nora, after a series of unfortunate events, does not blame anyone for the failure of her life; that she is not much concerned for her position as a woman in family and society. Her reasons are personal, although some may oppose this perception, because it can be said that all that happens to Nora is a product of a system that supports and creates distinctions between men and women.

Exactly as such, as a multilevel drama about gender differences, Langaas interprets this Ibsen's work: "Ibsen challenges the notion of gender as a sort of natural thing, inevitably tied to our bodies, while showing the political and emotional effects of how we are physically shaped" (2005, 166). I agree that Ibsen provokes certain norms, social norms, stressing the

individual at the same time. It is highly typical for Ibsen to show the social through the individual and vice-versa. That is the reason for some of his plays being interpreted as both social and psychological, in other words, they are classified among both realism and modern literature.

Concerning *A Doll's House*, it could be said that its author consolidates the social problematic and individual tensions of a human showing how they are interrelated and mutually conditioned. To paraphrase it, Ibsen places personal problems of his characters into a social framework. Just because he does so, the play can be interpreted on two levels; I believe that the complete interpretation is that of all the elements together, because it offers us the complete insight into the ideological sphere of the work. Langaas claims that *A Doll's House* "demonstrates how gender operates on the level of spoken and performed acts. This manifestation is a basic value of the dramatic genre as such, but not least a true indication of the modernity of Ibsen's play" (2005, 166). It is exactly the way in which the writer pervades social and psychological elements in the play, i.e. how he very subtly realizes the idea of gender through characters' movements and words that indicates his modern artistic expression. Gender conditions the relationships between Nora and Helmer, and the shaping of their personality in general, while on the other hand, Nora's awakened individuality influences their relationship and established norms of behavior. Indeed, she is a woman, but she is also a human being who does not want to live the life imposed by the environment. In that sense, this is a drama through which the ideals of a system are torn down for the sake of a human and his or her personal freedom. Tearing down the idealism, according to Moi, is exactly the condition for Ibsen's "revolutionary analysis of gender in modernity" (2006, 226).

Psychological elements in the play-Nora's role

Although psychological elements in the play are imbued with social and cultural elements, in this part of the paper, I will focus only on them, as much as it is possible, of course, with the intention to show how well Ibsen knew and how good he was at analyzing the human psyche and thus how modern a playwright he was. All the characters in a play are important when it comes to artistic procedures in building dramatic characters, but by all means, the most dominant of all is the character of Nora Helmer. I would like to mention here that the Serbian translation of the title of this play has two variants: the literal one, and the one simply translated *Nora*. I do not think that this a proper translation, because there is a very important symbolism in the Ibsen's original title, I would just like to show how much certain translators and critics of his work place emphasis on the character of Nora in the structure of the whole play, by titling it *Nora*.

Ibsen gives multiple perspective to this character: we can see how other characters see her, how she sees herself, we find out about her through her relationship with her husband, as well as with the other male characters in the play, through her relationship with Mrs. Linde, with her children, etc. All the faces of Nora we see on the stage give this character certain complexity, and to the reader, they give the possibility to interpret her in many ways, each one to an extent true. There is something everyone would agree with, and that is that Nora is a woman who brakes prejudices and rules, that is to say, that the originality and revolutionary spirit of her character cannot be disputed.

I would say that in the specter of roles Nora plays, Nora- the Little Girl, and Nora-the Woman are standing out. The first Nora, from the beginning of the play, has not been the subject of psychoanalysis, as much as the second one, who thinks with her head and makes decisions about her life. That sort of behavior is the logical consequence of her life of a doll and of a little girl she led in her father's home and with her husband. Exactly that kind of behavior is the subject of condemnation and criticism. Very often Nora's words and her leaving home have been criticized, without finding the causes for that, or even if the causes were looked for, they were not considered to be justifications for such actions. Joan Templeton repeats herself, as her defender in a way, by noticing that "the most popular way to render Nora inconsequential has been to attack her morality; whatever the vocabulary used, the arguments have remained much the same for over a Century" (1989, 29). Such arguments mostly refer to her leaving home. I agree that that sort of action should be discussed, but not

from the point of view of religion or morality, because that interpretation is clear and one-sided. Psychological aspect is something that should be analyzed with greater detail, that is to say the causes and reasons for such an act.

Ibsen shows how well he knows the psychology of a man, that is, a woman, and the mechanisms by which human consciousness functions. Precisely because of that he creates situations of crisis, because that is where human true identity reveals itself and a number of prejudices that rule the human mind are broken. At the peak of dramatic conflicts, a semi-conscious and then conscious conflict begins within Nora herself. Griffin emphasizes inner conflicts over the outer, which is a characteristic of modern psychological dramas, by claiming that "the real conflict at the heart of *A Doll's House* is not between Nora and Torvald, but inside Nora's consciousness" (1988, 68). Griffin points out the importance of Nora's internal conflict, which can be explained by his rejection of external factors as the causes of inner problems. That a certain influence of the environment on Nora's consciousness exists is obvious at the very beginning of the play, because we can clearly see her desire and her obligation for her husband to always smile, be ready for fun, for guests, etc.

It is obvious that Helmer's wishes are projected into Nora's view of events and that they become a part of her character. But not completely, which can be seen at the end of the play. Torvald Helmer is here the representative of the existing norms of behavior, and his role is, in a way, to show how those norms influence Nora's view of the world. In addition to individual characteristics, Helmer's character has typological features: he is a protector, a head of the family, a man who sees a wife more as a decoration of a house than as a life companion. In my opinion, he cannot be blamed for Nora's misfortune either, because they are both products of a society and an upbringing. That can be a point of view of an objective observer, but the writer also gives us Nora's point of view on the problem of guilt. She blames the society, but it seems to me, she blames her father and her husband more- them who made her dependent and miserable: "Nora seeks to blame her father and her husband not just for the ways in which they wanted her to please them, but also for the fact that she wanted to please them" (Quingley, 1985, 102).

Nora thus places all the guilt upon them, for the thing she has done, as well as for the thing she has become. Quingley interprets this attitude of hers as "abdication of responsibility for her own actions" (1985, 102). I must say that in one moment this Quingley's observation seems to me to be completely true, that is, that Nora is really not being objective blaming all the others except herself. But if we take a look on the other side of the coin, she is to blame for playing the role society or her father and her husband imposed upon her. In that sense,

those who made her what she is are to blame. Depending what position we take and what perspective we look from, we can find the truth in both interpretations. The intention of the writer is hard to discover, but the fact is that Ibsen suggests two possibilities - the one in which Nora is the product of her time and social conditions, and the other in which she herself took part in the play in both her homes, in which she was the part of the performance. What is more important, in my opinion, is to follow the manifestations of her states of being, and her transformation from the daughter to the woman. I would quote Ann Shapiro here, who interprets Nora's change of behavior in the following way:

There is ample evidence that Nora does not change in the course of the play, but rather comes to understand who she is. The masquerade costume that Nora wears metaphorically represents her role as doll wife, and when she removes it in the final scene she finally steps out of her submissive self (2003, 99).

I would not completely agree with this interpretation of Ann Shapiro. Nora's behavior from the beginning of the play and from the end is not the same. It is not just about her behavior, but also about Nora's look on the things that surround her. The change in her perception of the surroundings and herself within it implies that something inside Nora has changed. I do not speak of some radical change which includes self-consciousness and maturation, but I speak of the initial transformation of this character. Also, I would not agree with the observation that Nora finds out who she really is, because that includes time and the long process of self-study. Nora, as I understand it, finds out what she's not, what life and the people made of her; she is leaving exactly because she does not know who she is.

At the end of the play, Nora emphasizes a few times, that she was a daughter, a wife, a mother, but never a human being, a woman. She is leaving to find out what she wants from herself and from her life. Her act at the end of the play shows her view of herself and of all the factors (including the people around her) that led to such state of events. Griffin describes her last act in the following way: "When Ibsen's Nora walks out in the last scene of *A Doll's House*, she is expressing in a physical gesture this response to her realization that her very way of seeing herself has been defined by a social institution-in this case the bourgeois family..." (1988, 68). Griffin notices that Nora finally understands something, but that is just the beginning of the process of self-awareness. That process includes the rejection of the institutions the rules, in this case, the institution of family. Ibsen, however, ends his play in a way that the reader gets the impression that it is not the final ending, not only because of

Nora's words that they might be together again, but also because of Nora's psychological process, which has to go on.

If we take a look at the character of Nora at the beginning and at the end of the play, we could see that Nora is a dominant character, the character which develops, although it does not seem so for a long time. Ibsen experiments in a way with her character throughout the play, gives her the role of frivolous, superficial woman and turns around the whole image of Nora at the end. Again we have the principle of contrast, on the level of character, as well as on the level of ideas. On the example of this character, Ibsen shows that he is not only a good psychologist, but a dramatist as well, the creator of a modern literary text with the complex structure.

Another indicator that this is the case of a modern procedure of building a dramatic character is that the character of Nora is not circled, meaning that her psychological development is not finished at the end of the play. If we look at this character only, we get the impression that the play continues, not in relationships between characters or in the plot, but in the character itself. Ibsen uses this procedure in order to leave the reader questioning and confused, because the end is not really the end. The reader did not get the answers to all the questions, but the questions seem to pile up; instead of the ending, the reader gets indications of what is going to happen, and it is most probable that the answers to all the questions are right there. With this procedure, Ibsen makes the reader's intuitive interest continue, even after the fall of the curtain. That curtain represents the ending of one part of Nora's life, but behind it a new play starts. I will speak later about that procedure and its symbolism a little bit later.

What happens after the play is over? Will Nora find what she is looking for, will she ever come back? Those are some of the questions that the readers as well as critics ask themselves, but the questions that are impossible to answer. Some would say that the contemplation about Nora's further psychological development is based on nothing more than personal speculations which do not have grounds in the play, however the signs that the writer gives through the character of Nora provide the basis for such speculations. The moral aspect of the play is, in a way, hidden in such assumptions. Here is what one of the critics says about whether Nora can fight her existential problems: "A Nora who strikes us as being not only honest but also struggling hard with herself until she reaches her decision will suggest that she will manage, whereas a Nora who appears childish, superficial, or high-strung even toward the end of the play will indicate that she will not" (Tornqvist, 1994, 9).

My opinion concerning this question, as well as the comment on the previously quoted interpretation, is the following: Nora's childish behavior should be taken into consideration when analyzing her maturity and ability to find her own identity; however, what should be taken into consideration even more is awakening and the readiness to continue her life alone, completely unprotected, with a great sense of responsibility for leaving her children. I do not speak about the moral aspect of that action, but about indications of the outcome of Nora's struggle. Had Ibsen left his awakened heroine in the Helmer's home, we could discuss the outcome of the process, but since he threw her into the world completely unknown to her, I think that his indication of Nora's readiness is very clear.

Here is another opinion on this issue: "Ibsen's play underscores the centrality in modern drama of the issue of saying 'no' to the forces which can shape our lives against our wills. But it does not explore the implications of what this denial means for the people who attempt to undertake it" (Griffin, 1988, 70). I agree that in the play we cannot find anything about the effects and consequences of Nora's rejection of life shaped by the institutions and the people around her, against her will. There is no evidence to support the correctness of her action or to prove it completely senseless and wrong. Something about that can be found in-between the lines- of the text, or in the personal characteristics the writer presents us with. I believe the writer gives us hints about the outcome; he gives signs which, again, we can interpret as we like. I also believe that the play would not be as modern as it is, if the story were circled, and if all the answers were given. One of the characteristics of the modern dramatic and literary texts in general, is this openness towards the reader and the possibility for various interpretations.

An opinion is imposed that the writer is much less interested in the outcome of the events, the success or failure of Nora's as well as of the other characters. What is much more important is the process within a man, his psychological condition. That is what the modern artist is interested in, person's thoughts, aspirations, inner conflicts, not finishing the story, give everyone what they deserved and thus provide the balance between good and evil. Here I must mention the last Ibsen's play *When We Dead Awaken*, whose ending can be interpreted in exactly such a way, but I will speak later about that ending and the play in general.

In a modern drama, there are no sensational endings, happy end in a traditional sense of the word, or tragic ending which has itself as a goal. In *A Doll's House* Ibsen avoided the ending which gives answers and explanations – exactly the opposite, the ending produces within the reader new dilemmas and confusions. In such a manner, the writer I think diminishes the importance of the further events, and emphasizes the universality of Nora's

character and human relations, even the relatedness and mutual influence of social circumstances and private life. The universal dimension of the main character can be discussed on various levels, on the level of a male-female relationship, then inner conflicts, on the level of aspirations and feelings... Nora represents the woman in general, who is not satisfied with her life, but has the courage to admit that and stop such an illusion that her life is.

The question discussed in literature which is related to the universality of the characters, is: does Nora represent a woman or a human being, can this character go outside the notion of gender, or is it impossible? If Nora can be a representative of men as well, then the whole gender conflict loses its importance. Templeton says about that: "*A Doll's House* is not about Everybody's struggle to find him-or herself but, according to its author, about Everywoman's struggle against Everyman" (1989, 36). She represents the author's intention to show the relation, that is, the conflict between a man and a woman in a given social moment, which, together with other factors, forms such conflicts. Her personal attitude differs from the quoted, and that attitude is that "Nora's humanity keeps her from representing woman but not, magically, from representing people-namely men, and women to the extent that what happens to them can happen to men as well" (1989, 36).

I agree with this Templeton's opinion. Not every segment of Nora's character can be applied to men, however much of what is happening to Nora can happen to a man: a man's life can be determined and shaped by his blind love for a woman or a certain idea connected to a woman; his life can greatly be determined by prejudices and social norms of behavior. Every human being can realize that he or she has been living in an illusion and that he or she should start going down the lane of finding his or her own identity. In that sense, even if there were certain feminist ideas in the text and even if the play were about the gender conflict, it is impossible to deny the universality of Nora's character as well as that of the entire text.

Aesthetic and psychological function of means of expression

Ibsen is present in critical literature for many reasons: because of the topics he was dealing with, the questions and dilemmas he raised, the influence he had on readers. The interpretations of the mentioned phenomena differ, often being contradictory. However, there is another reason for critics and theoreticians of literature to be concerned with Ibsen, and that is his art, artistic techniques he used in building his characters, dramatic conflicts, plots, in creating a meaning. Concerning his artistic skill, the opinions are less mixed, and most come down to the conclusion that the writer is a modern playwright. By applying some of the techniques, Ibsen was ahead of his time, and it can be rightfully claimed that he is a forerunner of the modern understanding of dramatic creation. What I am personally fascinated by, and what I consider to be a feature of modern artistic expression, is the way Ibsen uses symbols. Through the symbols he expresses the psychological state of his characters, the ideas and the moral aspect of the play.

A Doll's House is a play with a great number of symbols and with a symbolic expression, from the title to the ending. Using the title, which is most often a metaphor, or has a hidden meaning, Ibsen tends to attract the reader's attention, whether confusing or surprising him or her. According to Moi, "the figure of doll is the most important metaphor in *A Doll's House*" (2006, 235). That would mean that the key for the entire play should be sought in the meaning of the metaphor, i.e. in the character of Nora. Let us have a look of how the title can appear 'from close and from far', to put it like that. What kind of impression does a reader get from the title? One could get an impression that it is a breezy play, with idyllic atmosphere such as it actually is at the beginning. The title does correspond to the atmosphere of the play, but only at the beginning. Nora would be, according to that interpretation, a doll in a home where everything is in order, where songs and dance are a part of everyday life.

However, as the play goes on, and the conflicts – both inner and outer – get sharper, it becomes clear that the title does not refer to the atmosphere in Nora and Helmer's home, on the contrary, even the meaning of the metaphor in the title has no positive connotations. Nora's psychological state and her understanding of her own life reveal the meaning of 'a doll's house'. All the life she has lived is the house where everything was according to some rules; all of her life was a well-trained game, and Nora herself was a doll, an ornament in one, then another home, a being without thoughts, heart and soul. Soon enough, the idea of a doll's house has no more hint of something nice and idyllic, but of something artificial and void.

Thus the reader, lead by the plot and characters, gets a completely different idea than the idea he or she had at the beginning, and begins to differently perceive something that he or she has always perceived as beautiful and ideal. In other words, the symbolism of certain objects, a doll in this case, gets spread, and the meanings multiply. Moi interprets the writer's usage of this object, stressing the negative meanings of a doll: "The imagery of automata, robots, dolls- and in modern science fiction aliens-gives voice to a fundamental philosophical question: how do I know that another human being is another human being? That he or she thinks and feels as a human being?" (2006, 235). A doll could indeed have come across Ibsen's mind for the given reasons, or the similar, but it is undeniable that his sophisticated artistic nature chose the most suitable symbol, i.e. with the most suitable meaning. A doll suggests lifelessness, alienation, coldness.

If the interpersonal relationships concerning this symbol are discussed, it is clear that those are very shallow relationships, relationships which may appear as good, but with no fundamental connection. Discussing the meaning of the metaphor, Moi emphasizes its negative meaning, even the morbid one, stressing that for the mentioned reasons a doll becomes "a figure of horror" (2006, 235). Much later, in the art of film, a doll was actually used as a symbol of something horrible and morbid, thus suggesting its inhumanity and soullessness. In Ibsen's play, a doll gets a similar meaning in Nora's perception of herself; in horror, she finds out how she was treated. A vision of a doll not moving by her own will, lead by somebody's hand, magnifies that horror.

That this metaphor was not random is proven by Ibsen's heroin from his last play, Irene. Moi also finds the similarity between the two characters, and I would add that the idea of a woman as a human being is similar in the two plays. She finds a deeper meaning in Irene's character "In Ibsen's own works, the uncanny character of Irene in *When We Dead Awaken*, who is half woman, half statue, also evokes the Gothic and the uncanny" (2006, 235). I can not help but notice in this Ibsen's act or idea remarkable modernity and intuitiveness. If we consider the alienation and dehumanization of an individual and society – the phenomena very frequent in 20th Century literature (with Camus, Kafka, Beckett, etc.) – it is clear that Ibsen was ahead of his time when using symbols and metaphors, all serving his ideas. A doll, as a symbol, with its aesthetic and psychological function, predominates in this play and its notional sphere.

Another means of expression, very modern and important for the play, is dance, in fact, Nora's dance. It was discussed a lot in the literature about Ibsen's plays, many things about it already mentioned, and it is hard to be completely original and find some new meanings of

this literary technique. The only thing that could be done in relation to that is to show and prove Ibsen's modernity and nimbleness. I personally believe that the most expressive means concerning Nora is the famous tarantella. No monologue of hers or of other characters can express the state of the main character as strongly and profoundly as body movements i.e. dance. Langaas discusses body language in the play, stressing its independent meaning "Speech is necessarily produced bodily, whereas body language represents a meaning of its own" (2005, 154). That would mean that the stage movement could be regarded separately from other elements in the play; however, only experiencing all the elements together can offer the complete picture. We could analyze Nora's tarantella separately from other events, and it will have some meaning, but only together with the other elements (plot, characters, relationships, backgrounds, events...) does her dance get the complete meaning.

Almost all who study the play think that tarantella is much more than fun here; it has the psychological function, besides the aesthetic. Langaas observes: "For Nora, however, the dance has much broader significance" (2005, 163). She stresses the expressiveness of body language as opposed to words when concerning Nora: "The tarantella is a dramatic climax and a last feast before catastrophe. In this scene, Nora uses her body as a sign for a crisis that cannot be verbally represented" (2005, 163). Either Nora is not capable to express her state in some other way, or movement is more effective than words. I would rather say that this claim of Unni Langaas refers to the impossibility for Nora to express herself through words at the moment, not that music is more expressive than words. I believe that Ibsen chose a means of expression which visualizes the state of a human being in the best possible way, because I think he created a grotesque atmosphere full of contrasts – the beauty of dance on one hand, and the feverish state of Nora on the other. By combining the opposites, the writer manages to emphasize the important, to realize the meaning, and advance the conflict, this time the inner. Although Nora does not mention her feelings then, her moves speak of the pressure she is under. On the level of character's psychology, dance becomes an expression; on the level of dramatic conflict, dance is a means for increasing tension. Thus tarantella has multiple functions in the play, one of the most important being the psychological function, as it has already been mentioned.

To go back to Nora's state and motivation concerning the famous dance. If we consider the dance itself, I would say that there are two phases in it: the first being the initial phase where Nora has a clear intention to get attention; the second being the half-conscious expression of her fears and feelings in general. Moi similarly perceives the scene of dance: "Given all the melodramatic elements of the tarantella, it would be easy to conclude that it

simply shows Nora theatricalizing her own body, that she deliberately turns herself into a spectacle in order to divert Helmer's attention from the mailbox, thus acquiescing in her own status as a doll " (2006, 237). Here, she shows a single situation, i.e. the function of the dance, which is primary in relation to Nora's intention. Her dance has much deeper meaning; according to her, it becomes an expression of her soul, the principal means of expression.

In such a way, this scene escapes one-sided and shallow interpretations that dance is present for dance's sake, and that music just completes the atmosphere. I agree with her interpretation, because it implies observing the scene from many aspects and with other elements of dramatic structure. That is the only way to understand the function of a certain artistic means, in this case, the dance. In her analysis of Nora's tarantella, Moi is also concerned with those opinions according to which it is absurd to talk about body movement as an expression of soul.

Advocates of materialism will argue that body is not an expression of anything else; it could be a part of the play, the stage, but only as a purpose of its own, not serving anything. Moi calls them skeptics, and believes that "to think of it (the body) as a thing or pure materiality is to de-soul it, to render it inhuman" (2006, 239). That is what, it appears to me, that Helmer and dr. Rank do in the given scene; they do not see Nora's suffering and fear, they see a game, the preparation for a ball, while Mrs. Linde is able to see the background of the dance. Their materialism opposes the sensitivity and spirituality these women have at the given moment. Then, what does the audience see? I think than Ibsen shows us the mastery of a great artist, because he offers the audience a multiple perspective: readers can see Nora with their own eyes, but what the men and Mrs. Linde see can also have different perceptions of the dance.

Anyway, readers have the opportunity to realize the true meaning of the dance to Nora, to experience her fear, if they are open to all the perspectives the writer offers. The famous tarantella is perhaps the most expressive and powerful scene in the play, besides the last one, because it is charged in its meaning and expressiveness, because, as Moi claims, "Nora's body expresses the state of her soul. Nothing could be more authentic" (2006, 239). According to her, perhaps no other monologue, no other body movement can express the state of her soul as tarantella can. The authenticity of Nora's dance is the same after so many years; it is a remarkable scene full of expressiveness and metaphors. According to such scenes and means of expression Ibsen is a unique playwright. He expresses the spiritual through the material; he gives body movements much deeper sense, so it is not enough to watch the play, i.e. visualize what is read; it is also good to look beneath the surface, read between the lines.

There are also several other interesting symbols in the play, whose meaning refers to the characters and ideas, and which should be interpreted in such context, too. I have already mentioned the holiday atmosphere in the house, and the scenic decorations which show what relationships dominate in the house, but also show the attitude of Nora and Helmer towards life, towards the beautiful. In that sense, the scene serves the idealistic ideas Ibsen deals with in the play, and which he toys with, in my opinion. The Christmas tree, as a part of those holiday decorations, has its symbolism, and belongs to the show taking place in the house. It represents a brighter side of life, arranged and decorated life, but that is not real life; just as the Christmas tree will be stripped of its decorations and removed, so does life show its back, not bright at all.

The tree is, in a way, a symbol of the relationship of Nora and Helmer based on lies they shut their eyes to. Quingley relates the tree to Nora's dress: "The Christmas tree, we should note, is dressed and then stripped-which links it with the later fancy-dress ball and the costume Nora first dons and later discards" (1985, 99). Of course, there is no direct link between the tree and the dress, yet a link can be found because both objects represent the notion of beautification and embellishment, which can be metaphorically interpreted as hiding the faults, that is, idealizing reality. I believe that Quingley is right when speaking about the connection of the details in the play and their symbolism: "This is a fascinating network of interrelated verbal and visual images, and the network's seemingly autonomous components are so subtly interwoven that one can start from almost any part and make one's way to all of the others" (1985, 100). I think there is no better recognition of Ibsen's modernism than this observation of the interaction of all elements of dramatic structure and the possibilities of relating and interpreting.

Speaking about visual images and their meaning, it is good to mention the famous door Nora shuts behind her. Doors appear many times throughout the play, and their symbolism can be followed through the entire plot. "Conversations or actions are interrupted repeatedly by the doorbell ringing or someone knocking..." (1985, 92), notices Quingley in the analysis of artistic techniques in Ibsen's play, actually, in the analysis of visual elements and their function in the play. Even after having read the observations of this author, and before as well, I wondered if the door had any specific meaning and whether anything was behind them. I believe that in Ibsen's plays these elements are not merely a part of the scene, but are engaged in the production of meaning, together with other elements of dramatic structure.

The door open, that is, reveal a world, and can be interpreted as a border between the outside world and a family and all the relationships in that family. However, I believe that the

play does not concern the relationship between Nora and Helmer on one hand, and the outside world on the other, thus the door do not have that function of a link, or a border. The door, I would say, concern Nora entering the world where she is treated like a doll, and her leaving that world. Even the constant entering and leaving through the door reminds me of a child playing by repeatedly opening and closing the doors on a doll's house, moving dolls to-and-fro, without a particular purpose. Nora's movement through the house and passing through the doors reminds me most of that purposeless, naive child's play. Only her last passing through the entrance door and slamming them draws our attention to this part of the house and its possible deeper meaning. As Quingley notices, the last action of Nora, and her slamming the door attracts everyone's attention, of both readers and critics, while "the initial action of the play, Nora entering through the same series of doors, seems not to have attracted so much attention or provoked such detailed discussion" (1985, 92).

The last mention of the door is far more effective and concerning the psychological state of the character, but we should not neglect the artistic function of this scenic detail throughout the entire play. Ibsen does not use this detail by chance, he relates it to what is going on in the play at the moment; so, when somebody enters or leaves through the door, something is revealed, or somebody tries to hide something. So the doors serve for hiding and revealing, endings or beginnings. Slamming the door at the end of the play, Nora shuts a part of her life behind her, ends a stage. However, behind that door opens a world, a new, different life. It appears for the first time in the play, that the doors are a true border between two worlds, an ending and a new beginning. This claim is supported by Quingley's notion: "What must be overlooked, once the pattern of entrances and exits is observed, is that Nora's exit at the end of the play is not only an ending of one element of the play's action, it is a continuation of another" (1985, 93).

It suffices just to watch the ending of the play, and say that it was unusual for Ibsen's time, that according to its characteristics, it distances itself from realistic drama, social drama with particular psychological elements, and that gets ever closer to modern psychological drama of the new age. Ibsen's tendency towards psychology and picturing the deepest human problems and inner conflicts made him modern and universal. But not just that: the way he presented us with the states, how he constructed the conflicts and meaning, make him even more modern, contemporary. *A Doll's House* is a very good example of his 'modernity'; it deals with inner conflicts, the psychology of people and relationships, it is full of symbolic meaning, of the metaphors of expressiveness.

Another, very important distinctiveness in the play, and at the same time a feature of modern plays, is the open ending, which can be an introduction into a new play, or, at least, a challenge for readers' intuitiveness. A modern literary work engages at the same time a reader's mind, emotion, and ability to predict from; and that is exactly what this play does, from the very beginning, and more and more intensely towards the ending, so the ending would leave its reader with a big question mark and the task to experience or continue the rest all by himself/herself. Ibsen does not offer answers in the play, he raises questions, every question raising a new one; he indicates some solution, but it can be said that he also brings further dilemmas by doing so. In other words, he forces readers to be engaged, to interact while interpreting the play, and that is a skill that only great artist possess.

The Wild Duck

The Wild Duck belongs to Ibsen's later plays, and according to Moi, the play is, after much discussion and disagreement, "generally acknowledged as one of Ibsen's greatest plays" (2006, 249). Therefore I would say that it belongs in the category of Ibsen's much modern plays. When I say 'modern', I refer to those plays that require readers' total engagement, i.e. require interpretation, reading between the lines, and deciphering the symbols. In my opinion, this play requires all mentioned from the readers, and keeps their attention from the very title until the end. I will deal with the title later on, just as with the specific dramatic expression in *The Wild Duck*. What I would mention first concerning the play is the impression it left me with. I can not recall if any other Ibsen's play made me wonder, made me think, like this play did. That thinking comes down to two topics – truth and delusion, and their place in human life.

The seemingly simple question, i.e. the answer to what should constitute the basis of human existence, is actually a very complex issue, if we consider various changes that can be caused in human life. The more I was thinking, the more it was clear to me that the play deals with the fundamental question concerning human existence, a universal issue, which is, after all, like all the issues Ibsen deals with in his last plays. Should a blind, but happy man open his eyes, if we know it would make him anxious? Should we insist on truth that ruins family happiness and people's lives? These are just some of the questions the play deals with, and which the writer suggests through his characters and the plot in the play. These are the question that the readers of Ibsen's time, but modern readers as well, ask themselves and seek the answers to.

These questions further develop into one even more general, but by no means less important question, and that is: is it worth fighting for ideals in life, for truth as an ideal? Although it sounds shallow, at one moment I imagined how Hjalmar Ekdal's life would have been decent, even fulfilled, if he had not discovered the truth; how there would have been no tragedy if his family had continued living under the delusion of things being like they are not; and how even the writer's message could be that one should not face the truth in the first place if it hurts. Of course, it is not the case; it is just human empathy emerging within me for tragic human fates in the play. If we turn to ideas, rather than emotional states of characters, it is clear that the play contains the idea about life without lies and illusions, even if it lasted

short. We will see in *When We Dead Awaken* that a single moment of sense is worth like an entire life, it is worth dying after it. Although the ideas of the two plays can not be compared at the same level, the common thing for them is that they both concern the sense of human life, and that they are both universal in that way.

Why have I mentioned first the ideas in the play that refer to people and their life dilemmas, instead of social issues in the play? It is simply because I believe that the social elements of the play are below other happenings in the play when it comes to meaning and importance, and that they have a particular role in the play. As in the previously analyzed play, *A Doll's House*, social elements are important only if they are regarded as a cause of some state, and as something leading to a problem, but the writer's focus is on the issues themselves and the effects of a certain social system. Of course it does matter what caused the relationships that exist in the play; however, if it had not been for that, something else would have happened that would influence interpersonal relationships, thus the subject of both writer's and our interest, much more than the social situation in the play. In critical literature on Ibsen's plays, i.e. this particular play, there can be found other interpretations that emphasize exactly the social issue.

Bredsdorff, for example, is in a dilemma of whether the play is fundamentally about idealism, or about the desire to rule, to have power. He perceives the protagonists as representatives of social classes, and perceives one of them, Gregers, as a representative of the higher class who plays double role, in a way: "By virtue of heredity and opportunities he belongs to the ruling class. By choice he allies himself to the oppressed. But thanks to the methods he chooses, he becomes an even worse oppressor of his allies than was his father" (1988, 170). He ignores the ideological background of Gregers' actions, and thus of the play in general. This interpretation comes down to speculations about economic and social power, and the conclusion that "power is nothing in itself. It is only a superficial symptom of a hierarchy of strength which is founded in economics..." (1988, 170).

If we consider just one aspect of the play, we can say that Bredsdorff has a point, and that Gregers is indeed the proof that the powerful manage the fates of the economically weak. However, stressing this aspect implies dealing with almost irrelevant facts in the play. In other words, to say that this is a social drama, it would mean that we would have to overlook the plenty of ideas in the play, and neglect the obvious universal dimension it has. Another proof of the universality of the play is that although social situation today has changed from what it used to be at Ibsen's time, people still face the same dilemmas. That is at the same time the proof of Ibsen's universality concerning the theme of a play.

I would mention another interpretation, that is to say, a definition of the theme of this play, which appears to me to be simple, just like the last one. Killingmo perceives the play as “play about crime and punishment” (1994, 157). He emphasizes that aspect of the play, i.e. of its characters, and by interpreting the play according to that idea, he finds the proofs of his claim. I would say that this interpretation is to some extent shaped by ancient drama, the tragedy from ancient times. The motifs from ancient Greek tragedies are present in dramatic genre throughout the entire history of creating plays, but they are just motifs, not the defining feature of drama. I would not agree with the observation that the only thing characters do in the play is to get revenge and to punish, because there is much deeper sense of their actions than the affective desire for vengeance. I consider Killingmo’s attitude that “unconscious hatred and revenge are the deepest moving forces of the play” (1994, 157). partly correct, because Gregers, for example, who sets the action in motion, is not prompted by hatred and his revenge on his father solely, but by the idea and true conviction that life can not be lived in lies and delusion. I will discuss that somewhat later, when I deal with the ideas and idealism in *The Wild Duck*.

There are some other motifs in the play, besides social and psychological, that are worth of attention, but are not in the foreground. One of them is the motif of fatherhood, which can be interpreted as autobiographical, but we shall leave those positivistic opinions aside. Moi perceives this motif and its role in the play as the following: “Given that the question of paternity is surrounded by doubt in *The Wild Duck*, Ibsen’s play also contains a reflection on the meaning of fatherhood. “ (2006, 248). In my opinion, although the relationship between Hjalmar and Hedvig can be interpreted through the fatherhood issue, this problem can be much deeply observed through the issues of love and sacrifice, while even neglecting their father–daughter relationship. It appears that the crucial issue here is the issue of sacrificing for love, i.e. the recognition of love through tragedy; proving fatherhood is less important. The play consists of reflections on various topics, and I will deal with the most relevant, and at the same time, the most universal issues in it.

Concerning the formal side of the play, expression and style, there are many elements on the basis of which we can discuss the modernity of the play. Those are elements that place Ibsen under the category of playwrights whose style and expression is ahead of the period they wrote in. If Ibsen is a founder, or a father of the modern drama, it is certainly owing to the dramatic techniques he used, and modern elements such as expressivity, symbolism, psychological elements, and other, which shall be discussed later in this paper.

Everyday and idealism in the play

The question of the relationship between realism and idealism, i.e. these two opposite points of view appear as a typical theme for Ibsen's time, both in literature and philosophy. Having in mind that in 19th Century literature there is a shift from the romantic experience of the world to the realistic perception of reality, it is clear why that conflict between the romantic individuality and the realistic standpoint. However, this does not diminish the universality of this issue, and does not bind Ibsen's drama to 19th Century, on the contrary. Even if the writer's motivation concerned the conflict, the final result is way above it. As I have mentioned on introductory pages, the questions of truth and ideals are a topic to be considered, and they are of interest to people even today. Ibsen deals with the issue in a specific way, contrasting idealism with everyday life, transferring conflicts from the outer to the inner level, i.e. confronting people both one with another and with the ideas within themselves.

In *The Doll's House* we could also see how the conflict manifests itself between Helmer's idealism and real life, and which is caused by theatricality in everyday life. When plans are spoiled, and borders erased between illusions and reality, the consequences are devastating. In his plays Ibsen somehow plays with reality and illusions, with human perception of the world, and all with the purpose of finding the right road that one should walk. He also uses language means, the stage, and symbols, among other things, in order to visualize the conflict, and my impression is that *The Wild Duck* is the leading play when it comes to that, i.e. it is most vivid in the sense of using the stage and symbols in visualizing the conflict.

To begin with the characters in the play who are representatives of the ideas of idealism, that is, of opposite ideas. It is not difficult to notice the homely atmosphere where people clean, put things in order, discuss family budget. Even Gina practicing photography, i.e. art, serves to getting money for basic family needs. In a way, that engagement in art is made banal, because it is not for its sake, but as a means of profiting. And not just because of that; Gina and Hedvig practice it in the same room where they eat or prepare food. This kind of atmosphere in the play is realistic, in contrast with idealism embodied in Gregers, even in Hjalmar. Moi observes how Ibsen "contrasts Gina's housework with Gregers' total lack of practical sense" (2006, 252). The scene where Gregers heats the stove, which incidentally the reader finds out about indirectly, shows this man as a man of idea, and by no means of action.

He is the one who brings innovation to this lethargic environment, the one who will bring either much good or much bad to life of the Ekdals'.

As the play goes on, it is clearer that he carries the spirit that will shake, and perhaps even bring down the foundations of one family and many lives. It is also clearer that he does not take Hjalmar under his control, nor he seduces him with his ideas, but only awakens what already exists in Hjalmar, only in a bit different form. Hjalmar is a man more oriented to himself, while Gregers is oriented to ideals and enlightening others. He would be, in a way, a counterpart of a priest or some missionary according to his activity, or his fatalism, if I may say so. "Turning his back on the ordinary and everyday, Gregers looks for ideals to worship. His fatal mistake is to take Hjalmar to be that ideal" (Moi, 2006, 254). In one point I do not agree with this observation – that Gregers' fatal mistake was worshipping Hjalmar. If he had not chosen Hjalmar, he would have chosen somebody else, and the shot would have been heard in some other loft. I believe that Gregers actually is expected to be engaged with other lives, rather than his own, because his mission is to open other people's eyes, which we find out at the beginning of act three, during the conversation at the table at the Ekdals' place. It appears to me even that the reader is not concerned with his behavior and the righteousness of his actions as much as with their effect. I do not consider Gregers responsible for Hjalmar's fate. Ultimately, Hjalmar already has within himself the idea that he is different, special, and that he must rise above such life.

Moi also notices this feature of his personality and says that "Hjalmar is convinced that he is extraordinary, certainly too extraordinary to do any actual work" (2006, 254). So, Gregers is just a motivator, a trigger, yet not the cause of what happened. We noticed in Ibsen's plays that the truth can not be hidden, and that dark secrets from past always emerge. This play is not actually about revealing the truth as much as it is about ideals and the struggle to achieve them. Having mentioned individuality and specialty, I can not help but notice highly stressed individuality of Hjalmar Ekdal. He stands out of the atmosphere present in the house; he is not concerned with ordinary, everyday things, housework, not the finances. He has an aspiration towards art, reciting lines. Through these seemingly irrelevant details, Ibsen builds the character of Hjalmar, a man who is a prototype of a Romantic, who hardly fits in the dullness of everyday, and reaches to what is beautiful and sophisticated. His Romantic nature is pressed by his hard life, but his spirit does not surrender under that pressure. The character of Gina is given as a contrast, because she is everything but an idealist, an artistic soul, and a dreamer. The opposites, the two of them, do function, but there is no true and basic happiness between them. There are two reasons for that: first, that they can not

completely understand each other, and so they can not enjoy the same; second, that their relationship is based on a lies, deceit; it is on a noxious basis.

A similar situation is that of Helmer and Nora, and in a way, of Rubek and Maja: what rests on noxious bases is doomed to failure. It appears that in all these plays Ibsen deals with the ideal of truth, the only difference is in how the truth is reached, and how it is accepted. In this play the messenger of the truth, its creditor, as Relling call him, is Gregers. If Gina is in contrast with Hjalmar, his opposite, then Gregers is the motivator, the one who instigates passions in Hjalmar, supports the romantic within him. Gregers himself is very strange with his interest and the system of values that guides him through life. I would say that the purpose of his existence is to help other people, as he perceives it, and to reveal the truth on whose foundations one can build something more beautiful and sublime. Both of them pursue the sublime, they differ from other protagonists in their enthusiasm (although in such sense we could discuss old Ekdal, yet a bit differently, but it shall be discussed later) and their commitment to achieving it.

Moi observes that “there is in both of them a strong romantic streak, a faith in the power of the exceptional person, the prophet, the seer, the savior“ (2006, 255). This kind of characterization points to strong romantic individuals, people who believe they are heaven-sent to succeed or accomplish a task. She further says: “They, the chosen ones, the exceptional ones, cling to the belief that they are different (superior) in kind to the rest of humanity. This is how they endow themselves with an identity“ (255). This notion reveals another aspect of their personalities, and that is the lack of self-awareness and identity in their original form because of which they assume certain roles to give sense to their existence and fulfill their lives. It could be said that Moi is absolutely right, taking into account the fact that out of the established goals their lives have no sense, and are equal to nothingness. Connected by chance, or perhaps even with some purpose, they inspire each other in their aspirations.

The noticeable question is whether they cause misfortune by doing so, or they are closer to their goals. The answer should be sought in the last scene of the play, when Gregers’ mission ends in a way, at least when it comes to the Ekdals. The end, as typical of Ibsen, has an ambivalent dimension, so it can be either understood as completely tragic, or the tragedy can be perceived as the price for reaching the ideals. If Gina and Hjalmar became purified, and experienced the catharsis through the death of their daughter, then her sacrifice is not pointless; her tragic death is the recognition and proof of love which will continue to exist through the two of them. It somehow does appear to be the case, that the two of them realize the true sense of love, real love. Yet, if the agony Hjalmar is in persists, this play can be

understood as a tragic ending drama. What exactly is the case is in the domain of a personal experience, but also in the further course of events the reader is, of course, unfamiliar with. The fact is, however, that Ibsen's plays do not end when the curtain falls; they go on in the reader's mind. That is exactly Ibsen's specialty and the skillfulness of a modern writer.

Let us return to the ideas of individuality and ideals, because they are the essence of the play. I mentioned the romantic feature in the characters of Gregers and Hjalmar. It seems to me that it is important to say that Ibsen's writing was not influenced by Romanticism, i.e. that his characters must not be interpreted through Romanticism. Enthusiasm is not only Romantic feature. Human life is based on it, we can call it the idea, the sense, and the essence of human existence, but it is a human characteristic at any place, at any time. I would say that it is a universal issue, not just an issue of Romantic ideals. Incidentally, it is the issue Ibsen deals with in many of his plays, and the theme of human and life ideals is particularly present in his last plays.

I believe that through the characters in his last plays, and especially through the characters of Hjalmar and Gregers, Ibsen is concerned with what occupies people most, and that is the purpose of our existence. It could be said that the issues in this play are too general, so I would more specifically define the scope of Ibsen's interest in the play. Ibsen is concerned with the system of values in human life, and one of them is most certainly truth as the basis of all other values. How much truth makes life better, or makes it worse, is what the writer illustrates through his characters in the play. The reader can follow the effects of a system of values – of Gregers, i.e. the effects that emerge when Gregers begins to apply that system to Hjalmar's life. It is somewhat contradictory that Gregers is engaged in truth, at the same time distancing himself from the reality he lives in; and not without having noticed and by chance, he turns his back on reality. It could be argued that he tries to make something worth of attention out of boring, monotonous reality, to create a show out of ordinary life. Even if one could say that this idea has something constructive within itself, one must be careful, nevertheless, when choosing the material for that creation: life can not be converted into art, nor reality into an ideal one could live in.

I think that the effects of Gregers' attempt to achieve an ideal, and the consequences of the attempt hide the criticism of the idealism, at least of the idealism he represents, to restrict it, and that is the unconditioned idealism which knows nothing of exceptions and conditions. Here is how Moi perceives the attitude of two main male characters in the play towards the everyday, and their idealism. "Both Gregers' metaphysical skepticism and Hjalmar's narcissistic and self-pitying theatricality are forms of rejection of the everyday. In the

character of Gregers, the connection between idealism and theatricality is strongly stressed. Gregers' metaphysical absolutism drives him towards melodrama in the most ordinary sense of the word..." (2006, 254). She stresses his fatalism as the only mode of his behavior. Moi interprets Gregers' obsession with ideals as a tendency towards theatricality and melodrama, which is true, indeed. In his character, as she observes, idealism and theatricality are completely equalized, or closely linked, although it is not necessarily so in real life.

I personally think that Ibsen does not criticize idealism, but the abuse of it, in a way, the abuse of ideals in favor of theatricality, which is indeed the subject of the criticism. I would even say that the main problem is not with idealism, but with the Romantic perception of reality and refusing the reality like such. Yet, in the play, one could find certain confirmations of Ibsen's critical attitude towards the Romantic notion of the world and reality. Let us only take a look of Ibsen's mentioned characters, Gregers and Hjalmar. The two of them are enthusiasts, each of them in his own way, but basically, they are romantics; they cause pain, it is pain that makes them act, makes them change; they would like to change reality, people around them, they hardly accept what is true, they are not ready to compromise. Fatalism is in their nature, and that also relates them to romantics.

If we considered the two characters from this angle, we could say that if Ibsen had been highly oriented towards Romanticism and criticizing the same, the play would have lost much of its universality. As it is certain that Ibsen was a good expert of human psyche, an analyst, and a man with a wide and far perspective, it is difficult to believe that his writings, particularly those from the last stage of his work, refer only to certain people and a certain time. My opinion is that this play has some elements which could be related to Romanticism as an ideology, yet it goes beyond those frameworks, and has much universal meaning.

Discussing reality, I think that the writer manages skillfully to integrate various elements in the play – reality and ideals, the everyday and theatricality – much expressively than he does in *A Doll's House*, and much specifically than in *When We Dead Awaken*. In this play, Ibsen presents characters with different notions of life, different goals – some of them, e.g. Gina, are real, keep both feet on the ground, are characterized by practicality and mindfulness; while others, like Gregers, follow the idea of the sublime, it could be said that they are dreamers and romantics. Ibsen confronts two different ideas not only on the level of characters, but on other levels, as well. As in contrast to Romanticism, the writer introduces some elements through which he achieves the realistic atmosphere, i.e. the realistic images in the play, and those are images of food being prepared and served, of house being tidied, or people earning a living. Housework gives the play some of the realistic tone, which only

further emphasizes the idealism on the opposite side. Ibsen, confronting different images, stresses one over another, evaluates them, criticizes or supports them, but does all of that very subtly, so virtually nowhere could we prove his intention, only sense it. That is indeed his skill – his voice not being heard anywhere, yet the play is full with ideas and the conflicts of those ideas.

Analyzing the role of the everyday in the play, Moi finds in some realistic scenes the writer's poetic attitude about what a play should look like, and to which genre it should belong. I find interesting the following observation: "Ibsen's deliberate foregrounding of cooking and cleaning is not just a critique of Gregers' idealism. It is also a metatheatrical statement, which tells us that the last thing Ibsen wants to write is grand tragedy, whether classical or romantic" (2006, 253). In the scenes of cleaning, Moi finds much more than a contrast to idealism, there she can see the writer's attitude towards his own play, towards literary creation. It appears to me (though there may be some truth in her statement) that her claim is pretentious, exaggerated. If we take that point of view, we could find metatextual messages almost in every scene, and we could perceive the entire play as a manifesto of one genre, one literary movement. If the last thing Ibsen would have wanted is to write a tragedy, why does Hedvig tragically die at the end of the play? In that case, this 'detail' in the play can be perceived as the writer's intention to integrate the tone of ancient, classical tragedies into his play.

But, if we deal a bit with those scenes of everyday housework, we must admit that there are many of them in the play, and that they somehow follow everything else that happens in the play. It could be argued that the reader does not expect to find so much housework in a play that concerns human ideals, yet it happens, and it has its reason. It is as if the writer tried to make a balance between 'sophisticated' themes and discussions on the one hand, and those 'lowly' on the other hand. That balance must have some meaning, and I think it concerns the writer's attitudes about life, inevitable everyday problems, and human aspiration. In such scenes I would not look for secret messages concerning the dramatic genre; I would rather focus on the level of ideas, and the way the writer establishes the conflict of ideas, creates some meaning, and opens up many possibilities for interpretation. That is what I was concerned with in this play on idealism and the everyday – the very ideas and the way they manifest themselves through characters, relationships, and situations.

Symbolism in the play (the wild duck and the loft)

If we observe the titles of some Ibsen's plays, we can conclude that they carry some particular meaning, which is, of course, related to the meaning of the entire play. The title is what attracts the reader, and makes him have certain expectations about the play. In this play, interpreting the title means interpreting one of the most important symbols, at that is as simple as it may appear at first. This title tells us that it is a very important symbol, and that it perhaps hides the meaning of the entire play. That is why this symbol requires close analysis and interpretation that is related to all other elements in the play.

Reading the articles by many authors on this play, I found different interpretations and perceptions, and each of them with its own basis, appearing as possible. Another interesting thing is that the critics agree that it is difficult to interpret the meaning of the symbols the way the writer imagined it. In that sense, this dramatic text has features of closed text, which is a characteristic of the text from the late 20th Century. Ibsen's specialty and modernity is, among other things, in him making various interpretations possible, and his play not being easy to read and understand. Using symbols, particularly those that can have multiple meaning is a modern dramatic (artistic) technique, and very common for Ibsen.

While some critics tried to decipher the messages and the meaning of this symbol, and at the same time the title of the play, others wrote on the obvious symbolism of the title, and listed the meanings the writer 'had wanted' to indicate. Crompton, for instance, in the wild duck he perceives a clear, obvious meaning and a direct relation to Hjalmar. According to him, it should represent Hjalmar, if we abandon the assumption that it should mean a lot more. He finds the support for his claim in many elements in the play, one of them being how Hedvig regards both Hjalmar and the duck: "Hedvig's almost maternal solicitude for Hjalmar's comfort is paralleled by her concern for the duck..." (1959, 103). And when we are pointed out some opinion, it appears to be precisely so, that the key to interpretation is in that.

To some extent it is true that some similarity can be established between Hjalmar and the bird, but to draw the absolute parallel – it seems exaggerated. Hedvig is that kind of a person – tender, fragile, caring, that is how she behaves with everyone, not just with her father and the duck, except that with she expresses that care somewhat differently with the two. However, if she regards her father and the duck in the same manner, that does not mean that Hjalmar could be identified with the duck, actually that does not necessarily mean a thing. Compton still observes that: "this analogy serves to point up the unflattering reality of

Hjalmar's life as a domestic parasite..." (1959, 103). The same goes for this claim, one can find some similarity, yet not argue that it is the single and absolute meaning of the wild duck as a symbol. By no means could the wild duck be called a parasite, because it is in the loft against its own will, it could be said, it is plucked out of its water and forced to the loft. I would characterize the duck as dependent, caged bird that is a victim of somebody's anger and violence, by no means as a parasite. Concerning Hjalmar, it could be discussed whether he contributes something to the house, or he is just a parasite living on his wife's and daughter's work. He works much less than they do, objectively speaking, yet he wants to create something impressive, an invention that would make them rise above, and save them from the life they lead. In one sense, he is passive, but he has an idea and is active in accomplishing it. Therefore I would say that this comparison is not appropriate.

I believe that Crompton himself was partly aware of this, because in the bird he also found some 'greater' idea, a meaning that concerns life in general: "The real bird, significantly, remains invisible and remote throughout the play, like some precious household totem...Despite the poignancy of the drama enacted around it the wild duck remains at the end of the play unscathed. Ibsen seems to be saying that man's illusions are invulnerable, no matter how roundly shaken" (1959, 103).

In this observation I see a more serious approach to the symbolism of the wild duck, and much wider interpretation than ascribing the duck the features of one of the characters of the play. It is interesting that many things change in the play, people suffer misfortune, yet the duck, being in some kind of danger itself, remains unharmed. Besides the fact that the duck was many times at death's door, it stays alive. The same could be said about human dreams, aspirations, and illusions, as Crompton calls them. The only thing I consider a bit problematic with Crompton is him calling his interpretation the writer's message, because by doing so he enters a field that opens up discussions. It is much simpler to say that this idea is evident, that it follows from certain symbolism. That is how we avoid the trap concerning the writer's intention, and we are free to interpret symbols the way we perceive them and feel about them ourselves.

In her study on Ibsen's modernity, Moi provides some of the critical opinions about the meaning of the wild duck, which all come down to showing that it is impossible to understand the meaning of this symbol, that it is confusing and misleading, that possibly even the author can not tell what this animal stands for and what its purpose is. She is not as much concerned with the interpretation of the symbol and trying to finally discover its secret meaning as she is concerned with the critical treatment of the symbol and the play in general, and how its critics

exceeded in giving meanings to the symbol. I personally believe that one must not search for the meaning of the entire play in a single symbol, just as one must not see the entire meaning in the title of *A Doll's House*. The wild duck is indeed an important symbol; it can stand for a lot of things, so I will offer some interpretations concerning the ideas in the play which I was concerned with in the previous chapter.

The symbolism of a bird is rather clear and relates to freedom, reaching high, and in such context it is possible to establish a link between this symbol and idealism as the idea reflected through some of the characters in the play. However, since it is not about any bird, but a duck, the meaning must be somehow different, i.e. deeper. An interesting thing about the duck is that it, after being shot, does not come out to surface. Of course, that can be interpreted through human tendency towards pessimism and nihilism, not as a feature of humankind, but rather as a feature defining some people. In that sense, we may perceive the duck as old Ekdal whose life is like in a swamp, in darkness. Just like the duck, neither did he stand up after a strike; he was never able to regain his pride and dignity raising his head above the water surface. But it appears to me to be a matter of choice with old Ekdal, because people can always choose one of the ways before them.

Nevertheless, the hapless bird and the old man have much in common; their lives are charades, lives in unnatural conditions and artificially made environment. If we move one step further, the duck can symbolize human adaptability to circumstances, accepting fate, and passiveness. This bird is passive indeed; it lives though being stripped of its natural surroundings. Just like people in the play and in general, whose lives come down to accepting what life gives them and much more - a calm acceptance that life takes away from us. The interpretation of the symbol can develop further and in much deeply; and from a single assumption that it represents a human, there can be established much similarity between the characters of the play and people in general on one the hand, and the wild duck on the other hand.

A similarity can be established between Hedvig and the wild duck in tenderness, fragility, and especially in their isolation from the rest of the world. Hedvig is particularly emotionally related to this bird, and through her relation to it, she reflects her relation people and life. This gains in meaning even more, and the degree of its mystification rises at the same time, with the fact that sacrificing the duck could restore order to the relationships between the Ekdals. This means that the duck must symbolize much more than what has been mentioned. Our interpretation of the symbol is certainly influenced, as Moi observes, by Gregers stressing that the wild duck can not just be a metaphor for a human, that there has to

be a deeper sense. This corresponds to his attitude that “ordinary life and everyday people, things and activities, are worthless unless they can be invested with some great metaphysical drama of sacrifice and forgiveness” (Moi, 2006, 250). If this attitude of Gregers’ is a starting point for our interpretation, we will never find the meaning of this symbol that will satisfy us; that is why we have to distance ourselves from such tendentious messages.

In order to avoid traps and misinterpretation, we have to resist the temptation to perceive symbols through characters’ eyes, as Moi believes. She stresses that “the most important question in *The Wild Duck* is not at all what the eponymous wild duck means (and certainly not what it means in a *deep* sense), but whether it is possible to hang on to meaning at all in a world full of self-theatricalizing cynics, skeptics, and narcissists, who all do their best to empty words of meaning” (2006, 250). I certainly agree with this claim that it is useless to be concerned with only one symbol as the key that unlocks the sense of the play. Even if the writer’s intention was to assign some deeper meaning to the duck, and that meaning escapes us, there is a plenty of other obvious meanings in the play and questions that encourage us to think, so I am quite sure that the meaning of the play will not escape us.

If we take a look of the play’s scenery, we could find a lot of elements with their own meaning, sense, and the relation to some other elements in the structure of the play. The symbolism of space is something that makes Ibsen’s play certainly special, and makes him a nimble and skilful writer. In both *A Doll’s House* and *When We Dead Awaken*, one could notice that the action and ideas in the play correspond to the space, movement in the play. While in many plays action takes place at one or many places, but at the same spatial plane, in *When We Dead Awaken*, as we will see, the action moves upwards, as if the stage together with the actors moved towards the sky. I am personally fascinated by the artist who uses spatial symbolism and visually present their ideas. In that sense, the meanings that should be discovered become more striking and clear. Of course, we have to be open and read between the lines, that is, to observe what can not be seen on the stage, to put it like that.

In this play, Ibsen uses space to point to some of the ideas, to lead to conclusions, and to awaken readers’ intuition. As if he played with space, or even better, experimented by introducing an unusual space to the play, and that is the loft. Usually action takes place in rooms, gardens, at seaside... It appears that either the writer is fed up with all of that ‘regular’, everyday space, or that its meanings are exhausted; so, Ibsen brings innovations to dramatic structure. Even an inexperienced reader can not help but notice the question: why does the writer use the loft in the first place, and what should it represent? This space by itself is associated with something mysterious, old, attractive and horrible at the same time. It is

rather unusual to place a part of action in such a space. It is even more unusual to place living beings there, instead of old, unusable things. Ibsen brings to the loft nature, forest, animals. In that way, through connecting the open space with the closed, merging them into one, he achieves the effect of limits human being is surrounded with. What follows from that are many meanings concerning human attitude towards life, ideal, oneself and other people. My impression, as I was reading the play, was that it seems as if a part of nature was literally trapped inside that small dark space, and as if it had been sacrificed for some meaning to be found. The wild duck itself is also the victim – first, of human need to kill; second, of human inability to overcome his or her own fears.

The loft, just as the entire space in Ibsen's plays, has its function, both psychological and aesthetic, and is related to time, characters, ideas, and conflicts in a play. For that reason, all the dramatic elements should be studied, and in their relations and functions one could find recognition that Ibsen uses modern techniques in building dramatic structure. Everything can be a symbol in a play, everything can have a hidden meaning, but when considering the space in *The Wild Duck*, the symbolism is obvious. Concerning the symbolism of the loft, one should notice first what Moi also notices, and it is that "the invisible floor is not just a haphazard detail: a godsend to producers, it ensures that the wild duck and the other members of the menagerie will never actually be seen by the audience" (2006, 251).

Moi claims that it is not irrelevant that the loft is not seen during the action in the play, or that it is discerned in few situations. On the contrary, such choice of space is a detail one should pay attention to, and find its function in the entire sense of the play. She discusses the meaning of a scene set this way, emphasizing the writer's idea that a scene should hide more than it should show. She establishes a relation between the choice of space in this play and the space in Ibsen's other plays; and she finds something in common for the plays, something peculiar to Ibsen: the doors and walls separating worlds and hiding them at the same time. However, the question is: what is hiding behind those doors and walls? One interpretation is that the dark, hidden loft space represents the dark side of human nature, the unknown areas in human being itself.

In the play we can see characters that have something mysterious within them, people attracted to something unknown, distant, which can be called ideals. In relation to that, another possible interpretation emerges: it is possible that by hiding the space, the writer indicates human habit or feature to shut eyes to what is happening, to hide the truth from oneself, because it brings misfortune. That the loft does relate to hiding is reflected through its comparison to the bottom of the sea Moi also refers to in her analysis, as a comparison very

important and full of meaning. The bottom of the sea and therefore the loft, are symbols of something unknown, mysterious, and in that context could represent the unknown areas of human psyche. They can also refer to dark forces people willingly surrender to, like old Ekdal did, sinking deeper and deeper.

I will try to link the symbolism of space with characters and ideas they reflect. Let us observe Gregers. Throughout the entire play, Gregers fights against darkness and concealment of the important, he fights for the idea that family happiness and other forms of happiness are based on truth and sincerity. As opposed to him, Relling thinks that people should be presented with a lie about life in order to be happy, that a lie should be even invented if it does not exist, and if someone is already living in a lie, that lie must not be disturbed by any means. The two characters are representatives of completely opposite ideas. If we consider the level of space now, we could notice two predominant spaces: the first being the room where the Ekdals live most often; the second being the loft readers can only discern. The first space is their everyday life, the space where they earn a living, and that is the real space. The second space is actually an illusion about something, the artificially made forest, and it can represent an illusion not only Ekdal has, but the rest of the family as well. It appears that the life of the family is also split, double: in the room they are who they are; in the loft they are living their dreams, living in imagination. Since it is not possible to maintain the forest and animals in the loft and hunt there, it is consequently impossible to sustain the illusion and live in a lie throughout entire life.

If we want, we could find various symbolisms in the loft, we could relate this space to any character in the play, and analyze what it represents for each. In her analysis of the scenery and its meaning, Moi offers the possible meanings of the loft in relation to every character in the play, yet at the same time she stresses that it is not important to find the true meaning, and to look for its evidence by all means. At the end, she concludes: "What, then, does the loft mean? As with the image of the wild duck, we should beware of concluding that the loft must have *one*, preferably deep meaning." (2006, 251). Moi distances herself, in a way, from the idea that every single thing must have some significant and deeper meaning. In her opinion, and I would rather agree, not every dramatic element does have the meaning we attribute to it, not every character does carry the action. Who knows what the writer's idea was when he integrated the loft into the space of the play, and placed a wild duck in it?! What would be if he had placed there some other bird or animal instead? We would again search for the play's sense in it, falling into traps of our own expectations. For that reason, the reader

freed to expectations and pretensions could experience the elements in the play exactly in their original meaning, perhaps even how the writer wanted them to mean.

In modern literary works, symbols can have much broader meaning, in other words, different interpretations are possible. According to that, everyone can interpret symbolism as he or she wants, even if there is clear and obvious symbolism, i.e. the writer's intention. Just like Moi suggests, we should set ourselves free from expectations and commitment. I would say that we must find one single deep, great meaning, and that is how we will see what some particular symbols truly represent, even if they represented different things for every one of us. I am not trying to discover the symbolism of the space and of the duck. What I am trying to do is to indicate that it exists, that it is skilfully integrated into dramatic structure and linked to the ideas. How we shall interpret those ideas, and what conclusions we shall bring, is a matter of our sensibility and does not concern dramatic technique as much as it concerns the impression. Modern dramatic art is reflected through using metaphors, symbols, space, time, language, and other means to indicate meanings, ideas, and most of all, to raise some questions. A modern literary work does not offer answers and solutions; it is open to the reader. It contains many symbols, meanings, and elements that pervade, and that is what makes its dramatic structure complex and stratified. This play has all the given characteristics, and can be rightfully called a modern work of literature.

I would also mention something that, in my opinion, relates to the problem of interpretation, i.e. the writer's intentions concerning space. It is about my impression concerning the space in the play. It is interesting that my experience of the play did not change a bit when I stepped into the place considered as Ibsen's inspiration for the play. Namely, the loft of the country house where Ibsen played as a child might as well be just like I imagined it, but that does not influence my experience of the play's sense at all. For me, the loft in *The Wild Duck* is a place of secrets and illusions, and not the loft I know to be the loft of Ibsen's childhood. In other words, the loft is not particular and real, it is a visualized notion of human psyche and mind, it is an idea. When an artist achieves to represent an idea through something material, and when we touch and feel that something, yet in our mind it is still an idea, it means that the artist's intention is realized, and that he or she achieved to express the idea. If we discuss the way of achieving that – the technique – then discuss the modern literary technique that is a feature of 20th Century literary works. Ibsen was in many ways, also by using special symbolism as we have seen, ahead of his time.

The Wild Duck - subtext and metatext

Before the analysis of the text begins, in order to show the presence of subtext and metatext within it, it is necessary first to explain what the terms refer to. Concerning subtext, it could be said that this is the layer existing below text, that is hidden, and that must be read between the lines or looking beneath the surface. It can be said that all works of literature contain hidden messages and meanings, and that subtext can be discussed not as a feature of modern literature, but of all literature. However, this is not really the case. In the text from the period of realism, for example, there is some hidden meaning, but not much; there are details that have hidden meanings, while the text is realistic, explicit, and clear. As literature develops, from realism to expressionism, symbolism, and other literary movements, subtext and layers can be discussed more. Ibsen's plays are in that sense much closer to modern literature than the literature of the period when he was creating. In this play, *The Wild Duck*, the title itself leads to the conclusion that it is necessary to look beneath the surface, and that meanings and ideas can be found right there.

Metatextuality, on the other hand, refers to the ideas in a literary text that concern with the poetics of the literary work, with genres, distinctiveness of literary creation, etc. The ideas are implicitly given in a dramatic text, in certain dramatic elements or in their combinations: in characters, dialogues, space, time, etc. According to those ideas that we find in a closely analyzed text, we discuss the writer's idea that concern literary creation itself, i.e. his attitudes concerning literary creation in general. Some may oppose this explanation and say that we must not discuss the writer if we deal with the text itself, i.e. that we must not relate our conclusions to the writer's intentions. To some extent it is so; yet, if we find an idea in the text that concerns distinctiveness of a literary genre or movement, whose idea can it be but the writer's?!

However, the main question is: should we deal with it in the first place, and is there really some metatext in a literary work, or it is us who create it? If we look back to Ibsen's play, we can find a plenty of ideas that are not on the surface itself, if I may say so; but if one observes beneath the surface, i.e. beneath the text, there are many things attracting attention there. When I say attention, I refer to the attention of the analysts of Ibsen's play, rather than of the readers, because a common reader would see symbols and metaphors, but would not be concerned with metatext and such messages. Some of the analysts of Ibsen's plays found in them the variety of ideas I have mentioned, and within them they found features of modernity,

both of Ibsen and his plays. Let us try to see what is beneath the visible in Ibsen's plays. Ibsen's drama is stratified: it contains elements of the social and psychological drama, conflicts on more levels, inner and outer, polysemy and metaphor. For that reason, we could say that what we read is not the only thing there is in the play. As Ibsen developed as a writer, his plays required much closer reading and analysis. In *The Wild Duck*, we can find many layers and read the play on many levels.

One of Ibsen's analysts, Bredsdorff, is concerned with the text and subtext in Ibsen's drama, constantly stressing that Ibsen always wants to say more than he actually says. Therefore his play should be read and interpreted differently; it is always necessary to wonder about what is behind the writer's words. Here is what Bredsdorff says at the beginning of his analysis: "As with the majority of Ibsen's most durable plays, there are many layers and many ways into the text..." (1988, 159). He interprets the play as a drama about power, being concerned with who is in whose power, and how that power converts to a weakness. Apart from his interpretation, I consider correct the claim that the play can be approached and interpreted in many ways. And that is possible owing to what exists 'beneath the text', i.e. the subtextuality in the play.

In his analysis, Bredsdorff interprets every scene, and there he finds what the writer actually wants his readers to understand. In one of the scenes at the beginning, for example, in the conversation between two protagonists of the play, Hjalmar and Gregers, he perceives much more than just a chat between old friends; he perceives the already defined further development, i.e. Gregers' resolution to bring a change to the life of Hjalmar's family, which somehow determines the fate of some in the play. He observes "beneath the formal apparent co-operation, the fundamental isolation of the subtext" (1988, 161). In a way, he is right: it is already then, at the beginning, from the conversation of the two characters, that we discover a lie that Hjalmar's life is based on, we sense old Werle's intentions and the relationship between the characters in the play. How is that possible if the writer does not offer all the information about it? It is because there is a subtext with all the information beneath the surface layer of the text. How can it be achieved? It is achieved by the writer giving some information through certain elements, in fact, by giving some extra information.

In the dialogues, language expressions, stage directions, and movement of characters on stage, we find signs that tell us more than what can be seen or heard at stage. Bredsdorff believes that the subtext can be clearly seen beneath the text, and almost in any scene of the play. He closely analyses some particular scenes and finds the proof of the existence of the subtext in the movement of characters on stage, gestures, and stage directions that the writer

gives in brackets. In such attempts, he actually shows and proves Ibsen's remarkable dramatic skill to create beneath the text a parallel subtext that functions together with the literary text and makes the play complex and modern.

In proving Ibsen's modernity and advancement, it appears to me that the extreme approach was of Moi who even discusses Ibsen's anti-theatrical aesthetics, while some still discuss his realism! In her debates like such, she uses the following expressions referring to Ibsen as "first modern playwright", "Ibsen's theatrical revolution"... (2006, 31). For Moi, there is no question of whether Ibsen is or is not a modern playwright; there are just different proofs for that. In one of her studies, she deals with the metatextuality in Ibsen's drama, and metatextuality is one of the indicators that Ibsen is a creator of modern plays. Through some elements of dramatic structure, Ibsen shows his attitudes that concern dramatic genre and what it should or should not look like. Through close reading and interpreting scenes in a play is how we discover the writer's attitude towards tragedies, towards the features of the romantic and realistic drama, towards characters and their role, etc.

All those poetic attitudes of the writer crystallize, become clearer, and thus the intention becomes clearer concerning the play we read. We will interpret differently some of the situations in the play if we are able to understand the writer's attitude hiding somewhere beneath 'the real' text. I have already mentioned how Moi – through the scenes concerning housework – shows her intention to provide us with the objective image of life, at the same time showing her attitude towards 'sophisticated' themes and tragedies that are exclusively concern them, with no banal scenes. In such, seemingly simple details, with no serious background, she reveals the writer's attitudes about drama and its poetics.

If we go further, we will find more metatextual messages in *The Wild Duck*. Moi discovers something rather interesting about Hedvig's death: she does not die on stage, as it is usual in tragedies, but behind stage, in the loft which is actually the anti-theatrical space. If he had intended to create a great tragedy, Hedvig would have committed suicide in front of the audience. However, according to Moi, Ibsen has no pretension to take his readers' breath away and horrify them with scenes of suicide. That suicide serves some greater idea in the play, and happens behind the closed door in order to avoid theatricality and pathos quite common to tragedies and romantic literary works. By exactly doing so, Ibsen shows his attitude towards theatricality often present in the romantic drama, but also in the drama of other periods. In my opinion, this is how Ibsen shows his critical attitude towards classic theatre, also showing his orientation towards a different, modern dramatic creation. Like Moi,

I also find in metatextual messages of Ibsen's play the author's attempt to create a different drama, different than what has been considered a drama up to then.

It is the same with Hjalmar. In his character, movement, and words, there is some theatricality present, even exaggeration and pathetic features. This is how Moi regards it: "Hjalmar represents the horrors of theatricality. His appallingly self-serving and self-centred invocation of God just after Hedvig's death is explicitly described in highly pictorial and melodramatic terms..." (2001, 45). In such behavior of Hjalmar's, Moi exactly perceives the criticism of melodrama and theatricality. Hjalmar does not inspire pity and sympathy with the readers; he can even inspire disgust and condemnation because of such a theatrical behaviour that leads Hedvig to death. Discussing theatricality, we can also discuss Gregers who resembles a romantic rebel, an idealist who gives himself the role of a missionary. Even some of his actions are shown as melodramatic and pathetic.

In Gregers' idealism, Ibsen shows his negative attitude towards the romantic period and its features concerning the dramatic genre. In this and many other ways, the writer shows his attitude towards theatricality both in life and theatre. "Ibsen is trying to tell us, I think, that this kind of hollow theatricality is all we're ever going to get in old style theatre. In its implacable critique of Hjalmar's theatricality, this is an intensely anti-theatrical scene" (2001, 45), concludes Moi, referring to the scene right after the discovery of Hedvig's death. In the scene she perceives Ibsen's fierce criticism of old style theatre, and his orientation towards the new drama that should deal with the essence, rather than form. I believe that Ibsen simply mocks the exaggerated theatricality and shows how it can be hollow. The essential for a play is to show human conflicts, states, and ideas, because that is fundamental, unlike stressing the ways characters show the same. The way Hjalmar shows his feelings he inspires the opposite of empathy. In that way even the deepest feelings may appear affected. The scene at the end of the play is exceptionally anti-theatrical, and indicates Ibsen's change from classic theatre to a different, more contemporary drama.

Moi concludes her debate with the words: "*The Wild Duck* is incandescent with anti-theatrical passion. In this extraordinary play Ibsen's formal anti-theatricality is fused with the deepest philosophical and human insight" (2001, 47). She is enthusiastic with Ibsen's capacity to subtly show his notion of old style theatre, and what the new theatre should look like. The only thing I could object concerning her attitudes is that she notices the proof of Ibsen's modernity in almost everything, given that she tries by all means to prove that Ibsen is the founder of modern theatre. For this reason some of her attitudes might be rather subjective, but again, isn't every attitude influenced by subjectivity?! It is quite possible that the writer

intended to enrich his text with his attitudes about theatre and poetics of modern drama, but it is even more possible that it was not his basic and only intention while writing the play. Basically, this is a drama about human ideals and the search for the sense of existence, about freedom and slavery; only after that can it be a drama containing metatextual messages and reflections about theatre and modern drama.

When We Dead Awaken

This Ibsen's play is, in my opinion, one of the most interesting to read and analyse, perhaps because "it is not a play that yields easily to interpretation" (David, 1979, 1). It might be the case because it is his very last work. Any author's last work is usually seen in a slightly different way than the others as it is commonly believed that it contains the message which cannot be found in the previous works, and that it is the crown of everything that had been written before, something like a full stop at the end of a sentence. I have an impression that this play is a great finale in which he scores a decisive point in the series of his dramatic works about man's aspirations and tragic fate. Talking about the meta-aesthetics of this work, Toril Moi quotes Ibsen's words about his last work: "When asked whether this meant that his new play would be his last, Ibsen vigorously denied it. He intended the play, he said in December 1899, to be the "epilogue to the series of my dramatic works that begins with *A Doll's House* and now comes to an end with *When We Dead Awaken*" (2006, 321).

Hence, Ibsen embarked on this literary challenge with awareness that it was meant to be some kind of a climax, but only of one series of his plays, not of his entire work. Any interpretation of the text should be based on an attempt to find a balance between personal impressions on the one side and the author's statements and previous interpretations on the other. It is useful to take into account all that has been read about Ibsen, even his own words, yet our position should be independent of any of them. I personally doubt that any author could ever be aware that at one point he/she was writing the last pages of his/her lifetime book. I also doubt that Ibsen, as he was writing this play, was making a conscious effort to build into it all that he had not managed to say in his previous works, i.e. to make a summation. I will try to deal with this play in an objective manner, taking no account of the fact that it is his last play and, as such, the pinnacle of Ibsen's literary work.

I must mention my first impressions of this work, as they affected my interest for the further study of Ibsen as an author of modern drama. I must admit that the very title of the play, intriguing as it is, confused me, as it is different from the titles of his previous works. What is different and new about it? Putting of complete opposites together, relating of two irreconcilable states do invigorate the reader's interest and give rise to questions... Life and death, constant and ever topical motifs in the literary art from the Sumerian-Babylonian epics to the modern literary texts, are the questions which have never stopped stirring man's interest

ever since the ancient times, the questions which have never been fully answered. And it is not the choice of these motifs what makes Ibsen sensational and innovative. The key to Ibsen's or any artist's originality does not lie in the motifs themselves, but in the way they are presented and dealt with, i.e. in the manner in which artistic methods are employed.

Ibsen achieves such originality by using the oxymoron, by associating death and awaking in a linguistic game in the very title of this work which opens a whole new dimension in which awaking and permanent ending of life exist side by side, even conditioning each other! Another interesting thing about the title is that the idea contained in it is left unfinished. What happens, what is going to happen when man dead awakens? It seems to me that by doing so Ibsen lets fly an arrow into the vast air, with no target, or may be with a target, whatever the case might be, thus setting something in motion, with no intention to carry it to an end, or setting off on a journey and stopping all of a sudden...To make it more clear, my comments are strictly targeting the title, i.e. what the reader can feel after reading the first few words. Surely, Ibsen must have had a very clear idea behind this specific composition of the title. I have no intention to equate the idea with the intention, and I do not talk about the author-reader relation in which the work is a code, but about the author-work relation in which the attainment of ideas rest on the employment of stylistic methods. By such a title, Ibsen puts his idea, unfathomable as it is, in a specific form which then elicits different ideas in the reader's head.

In other words, the title suggests that in this work Ibsen deals, though in an unusual and new way, with the universal questions of life and death and their interrelations. Here is a question Gerland asks himself: "Does one emphasise the "dead" in *When We Dead Awaken* or the idea of "awakening"?" (1995, 459). It is a dilemma everyone could be in. I would say the answer is in a domain of personal impression and attitude towards the life. Interpretation surely involves the problem of subjectivity and personal understanding of originality and modernity, which generally applies to all other elements in the work as well; yet one must count on at least minimum subjectivity even in precise scientific analyses. After all, this "problem" should not necessarily be viewed as a problem; it can also be seen as an advantage and contribution to the study of Ibsen's work. Our interpretation will always depend on our refinement and education, as well as on the overall social milieu in which we were brought up. However, regardless of all possible theoretical positions and cultural differences, there are some constants, something universal for all the people, always and everywhere. And it is exactly these constants that we find in the last Ibsen's play.

The questions of human existence and survival, the questions of meaning and relations make up the core of the author's concern in this play. If we consider the statement made by David who asserts that "thematically the play explores the polarized opposites of sin and expiation, life and death, death and resurrection: structurally it relies on classical pattern of the mass" (1979, 2), we might get an impression that there is actually nothing unusual in this work. As far as these motifs are concerned, talking about modernity is in a way problematic because, from that particular point of view any work is modern. We can only talk about universality and topicality because the very same questions can be found in ancient art, as well as in the oral vernacular literature of all nations or in contemporary literature. In this sense, all Ibsen's works, including *When We Dead Awaken*, are universal and timeless. I cannot agree more with Joyce who says: "It may be questioned whether any man has held so firm an empire over the thinking world in modern times" (1900, 575). His interest is all-embracing, and touches upon all the spheres of human existence. However, my interest is not limited to Ibsen's topics but involves the ways in which he explores them, the specificities of his artistic expression, which is exactly what makes him the forerunner, i.e. the father of the modern drama.

Moi, who sees Ibsen as the founder of the modern drama, is surprised, or rather insulted by the fact that "intellectuals started to experience Ibsen's plays as increasingly unexciting, old-fashioned, and boring after World war II" (2006, 18). That is what confuses me, too, about the literature about Ibsen: we can read that Ibsen is modern and original, but we can also find the qualifications describing him as old-fashioned and uninteresting to modern readers. Such opposing assessments can be found not only in the literature about him, but also in the opinions of our own acquaintances, friends or in the discussions after a theatrical performance. Moi, however, asserts that "Ibsen is more modern than ever. To see Ibsen as the fresh, radical, modern playwright he actually is, we need to start by examining the aesthetic ideology that makes him look dead and boring" (2006, 19).

Although I agree with the assertion that Ibsen is fresh and original, I believe that there are simpler ways to show that Ibsen is not old-fashioned than examining different ideologies in the history of perception of literary works. In this play Ibsen deals with universal questions, with the people who are unusual in terms of the life paths they choose, but at the same time, with the people who we feel as close, if we plunge deeper into our selves. The reader is familiar with their words and their sorrow. That is, perhaps, one of the reasons for viewing Ibsen as old-fashioned because "Ibsen does not hesitate to represent real people engaged in ordinary conversations onstage" (Moi, 2006, 32). The people on the stage are often ordinary

people, or rather people with everyday problems who suffer and cannot find themselves in life and society. If anyone sees Ibsen as boring and dead, I am afraid that we can hardly find anyone new and alive among the esteemed world writers!

This play, regarded separately from other Ibsen's plays or from the time and space from which it originated, or in a word from all external factors, is a play which is interesting from the point of view of both its contents and its form, a play with many elements of modern artistic creation, and it is these elements that I intend to deal with in the course of this work.

The modern methods and procedures used in this play can be discussed at several levels. Hence, we can talk about the levels of building up of the dramatic conflict or of the characters, creation of meaning, stage design, symbolism, language and expressivity, music as one of the means of expression, etc.

In the analysis of the modern methods and procedures overlapping of the mentioned levels are inescapable, as well as their merging because creation of meaning involves simultaneous partaking of several factors. Let us, for example, focus on one scene from *When We Dead Awaken* in which Rubek and Irene talk about their past and the famous work of art which had a decisive influence upon their life paths. What factors are involved in the creation of meaning in this particular scene? First of all, the characters themselves with their specific mental make-up, the vocabulary they use, the symbolic meanings of the mentioned work of art, the space where their discussion takes place and all the meanings stemming from the stage design, overlapping of time dimensions, etc. At one single moment, the reader perceives all these elements producing a specific meaning. The scene requires the reader's total contemplative, emotional and intuitive engagement, an active relation to the literary text which is considerably greater as compared to other literary works from the periods of baroque or realism. There are numerous elements which can be analysed in this play, and which give it a dimension of universality and modernity. Some of them, which I intend to use in order to present Ibsen as the founder of modern drama, are the following:

- love as creative inspiration
- question of artistic creation
- motif of death
- the function of stage space (and other modernistic features)

Love as creative inspiration

Love is a primary driving force, a prime power setting the world in motion. It is present in all Ibsen's dramas, from *Catiline*, and *Peer Gynt*, or *Hedda Gabler*, to his very last play. Interestingly, in Ibsen's dramas love often manifests itself as a demolishing force, acquiring a destructive dimension, with a disturbing effect on his characters. One may legitimately ask: if so destructive, is it really love or some other force? It is often a case that some obsessive needs and egoistic aspirations are called love. Yet, rather than analyzing this problem, I am going to focus on the problems burdening the characters' relations, especially their love relations, sticking to the common realm of meaning of this term. Ibsen's play is about love, about woman and her understanding of what love is. He goes fully into women's psyche depicting her deepest fears and longings. Joyce notices the same: "Ibsen's knowledge of humanity is nowhere more obvious than in his portrayal of woman. He amazes one by his painful introspections; he seems to know them better than they know themselves" (1900, 64).

Woman and her understanding of love are presented in a very interesting way in the work. Ibsen had already proven himself as a connoisseur of the women's psyche in his previous works; he was even granted the title of women's defender and ideological founder of the women's rights movement. In his letters or discussions with his friends Ibsen negated his involvement in the issue, emphasizing that he was merely describing things as they really were, however neither he himself nor anyone else could ever deny that he was one of the artists who knew women to the bone. The idea of woman, at least in this play, includes the motif of self-sacrifice, i.e. woman's sacrifice for love. Although woman is a sexual being, a flesh-and-blood creature, the act of self-sacrifice makes her a more divine-like creature, the embodiment of spirituality. It is impossible to separate her sexual nature and divine purity. From Olivia Leonora's point, who views woman's self-sacrifice from the religious point of view, the bigger her sacrifice, the greater the woman's value:" Woman's value increases because her death, literal or symbolic, is treated as a self-sacrifice" (1991, 51).

Such a concept we find in Irene's character whose body is, at one point, only the object of lust, and at another, the inspiration for the most spiritual work of art. If this idea is viewed from the viewpoint of idealism, Ibsen, in a way, approaches the antique or romantic idea of woman. Moi comments on this concept taking into account the romantic vision of human materialistic nature and sexuality:" The representation of human sexuality *requires* idealization, or it will be vulgar. In order to become properly poetic, sex must be sublimated,

ennobled, and beautified, that is to say that it must be turned into highly idealized love” (2006, 78). I believe that Ibsen’s task was not to present idealized love, nor was love, in my opinion, the central motif in the play. Love is the relation through which the author brings together Irene and Rubek, in order to use it to display a myriad of ideas, from love to art and life in general.

As Moi sees it, Ibsen portrays woman, i.e. man-woman relation as a romanticist: Irene must take the road of suffering in order for her body and soul to purify; she travels the road of an abandoned, exasperated woman indulging in bodily pleasures, ending up her journey as a woman who takes the road of self-sacrifice accompanied by a nun. Her self-sacrifice is rewarded by the ideal love that joins her with Rubek. She is an example” that pure woman prove her purity by being ready to sacrifice her life for love” (Moi, 2006, 79). Such an idealistic concept can be found in ancient tragedies, in the Renaissance, Romanticism, and in that sense, Ibsen’s idealism is the evidence of his modernism.

However, I cannot agree that love in *When We Dead Awaken* is a simple idealistic pattern that is its own goal. The relationship between Irene and Rubek has a deeper meaning and is not merely limited to man-woman relationship. Love is here tightly connected with inspiration and artistic creation. Irene is not only a woman, nor is she merely a woman-victim; she is the driving force of Rubek’s creativity, i.e. of his life. She is the epitome of artistic creativity, in a way, a work of art itself: ”The white-clad woman reminds us of a walking statue” (Østerud, 2005, 78). For Rubek, Irene is not a woman but artist’s inspiration, motivation, embodiment of something divine, of primordial beauty. Reading this section, I had an impression that it was not about love and rejoining of two people who used to love each other, but an encounter of a person with himself/herself, confrontation with one’s own fears and waking up after a long time sleep. The two of them are there in order to reach beauty and at least for a moment uncover the meaning of existence.

Such an interpretation stemming from a very complex relationship between these two characters which is not only a subjective impression, speaks in favour of Ibsen’s ability to see through, of his width, and finally of his modernity. The motif of love is present in almost all Ibsen’s plays, however it cannot be separated from other elements in the work; it is always connected with other motifs, with social, cultural, historical, etc. From that point of view, the story underlying *When We Dead Awaken* and the love conflict have, so to say, a polysemic quality as they introduce us into a much more complex story, i.e. into a more complex conflict.

The relationship between Maja and Rubek is the source of various ideas resulting from the conflict between the artist's eccentric nature and the nature of a "common" person: the two of them experience life in different ways, aspire towards different kinds of life, but are still together, dissatisfied and imprisoned in their own dissatisfaction. Rubek's inspiration had run dry, died out and the life with Maja only deadens his wish for a change, for life more and more. Their life is static, a complete surrender to dissatisfaction. This relationship embodies the artist's merging into the environment which has no understanding for his needs and his complete surrender to nothingness. Hence, this is not merely a story about two people who do not understand and do not love each other, although many people will identify themselves with their story; there is a lot more stored in its background. The relationship between the two of them is a typical or, it is better to say, frequent relationship between a man and a woman – a relationship devoid of understanding and love. They are the prisoners caught between their desires and reality, dreams and potentials. The focus of the author's interest thus shifts from the relationship between two people to man himself and his internal struggle. The interest for the unfathomable human depths and models of behaviour make Ibsen a modern playwright.

The love conflict and love relations between Rubek and Irene on the one hand and Maja and Ulfhejm on the other are as important as their internal conflicts, clashes and existential issues burdening them. In a way, all these relations and conflicts are but a screen, a foil, a way to show something deeper and more serious. By using such artistic methods Ibsen departs from the 19th Century realistic and naturalistic drama, setting the patterns of modern artistic creation. Of course, this refers to the play *When We Dead Awaken*, but the same applies to the plays *Rosmersholm*, *A Doll's House*, *Master Builder*, *Hedda Gabler* and some others as well in which external conflicts are but a basis of internal, much more important conflicts, indicating the shift of the author's interest from social to individual issues. I believe that Moi is completely right when she says:

In the 1850s Ibsen wrote romantic tragedy and national romantic drama; by the 1890s he had become Europe's most famous avant-garde playwright, hailed by the emerging modernist generation as their leader and lodestar. To trace Ibsen's aesthetic transformations is to trace the birth of European modernism (2006, 32).

Let us focus for a while on another love relation in the play. The relation between Rubek and Irene resembles, but only at the first sight, the tragic and exciting love history of these two people who break apart, undergo existential sufferings and, thanks to some miraculous circumstances, meet again to remain united for ever more. Such an interpretation is rather

superficial. Although this story has many elements of fatal and dramatic romantic love, the question of artistic creation which runs through the play and actually conditions its course, gives it a much deeper meaning and function. Through this relation Ibsen expresses his attitudes on creative inspiration and process, on the meaning and purpose of artistic creation. I do not want to assert that these Ibsen's attitudes, either explicitly or implicitly expressed, are actually his messages to the reader. The author very often expresses the attitudes opposite from his own, thus checking them, provoking, merely playing with a very delicate issue. If we talk about the ideas, words or actions expressed or taken by the characters, we actually talk only about the ideas from the text itself, not about those from the author's head nor about his intentions.

If we analyse this relationship, we will find many elements characteristic for the modern dramatic methods, i.e. methods typical for the 20th Century modern drama. Let us examine Irene's appearance and the function of her character in the plot of the entire play. Irene's appearance brings together two dimensions: the past and the present. This is a typical Ibsen's artistic method – bringing two time dimensions together. The combination of time flows, as well as plot fragmentation caused by intertwining of the past are modern artistic methods that Ibsen applies in this as well as in other plays of his later artistic period. Let us now go back to the love relations and their artistic function in the play. As the plot advances, it becomes obvious that love is no longer at issue (or at least not *only* love), nor that the reuniting taking place is between the two people who used to be in love; rather, it is an encounter of man with himself, confrontation with one's own fears and awakening after a years long sleep. The two of them are there to reach beauty and, at least for a moment, unveil the meaning of man's existence. Rubek's entire life is aspiration towards beauty, reaching for the heights that cannot be reached even through creativity alone, nor with a woman beside him; is the only woman with whom he can do that Irene in whose character human and divine, physical and spiritual, life and art merge.

I am even prone to believe that the artistic, inspirational component of her appearance is much more dominant and more important in the play, as it is coming from her as a woman, a human creature. My impression about Irene is that she is much more than an ordinary woman. Joyce is also amazed by this character: "She is, moreover, an intensely spiritual creation-in the truest and widest sense of that" (1900, 65). I completely agree with him. She is an inspiration, embodiment of beauty, purity, a vision more than a real woman, a symbol more than a human being. Johansen sees her in the same way: "Irene's part in the creative process is essential. First, she is an embodiment of Rubek's visions" (1993, 40). Ibsen built

the character of this heroine in a very interesting way: on the one hand, her appearance is associated with the appearance of an angel, of a swan, which, again, bears manifold symbolism and serves as an inspiration for artistic creation; on the other hand, she is a woman made of flesh and blood, much livelier than other women, a woman who exposes her body to people's gazes, who gives herself to men, all of which gives her character a touch of naturalness, even bizarreness. Although *attitudes* (artistic performances, popular in the 19th Century) were an inspiration for Irene's character (2006, Moi, 122), she is a completely original character in dramatic art, a character built using modern dramatic techniques.

As far as the love between Maja and Ulfhejm is concerned, the two of them are not only the protagonists of a bit different love story, but also a contrast to mysticism, art, their presence demystifies life and simplifies it. By putting these two couples against each other, the author contrasts two life philosophies – aestheticism and vitalism, art and nature. The representatives of the world of art end up at the foot of an avalanche, while Maja sings a joyful song of freedom. Is there a message? What side should be our choice? It is not the most important to know the answer to this question. It is important to see these two contrasted couples, these two ideas which clash, but coexist. As for the end, it can be understood in two possible ways: perhaps Irene and Rubek managed to reach their ultimate aspirations and Maja and Ulfhejm simply cannot ever feel the beauty of creation in the way an artist can. If we deal with the message at all, whether we agree or not, if we analyse the techniques Ibsen applies in building up the conflict and presenting his ideas, we must admit one thing: that the artistic methods he uses are innovative and original.

Question of artistic creation

One of the characteristics of the modern literary texts is that they, among other things, deal with the issue of art and everything else pertaining to it. The themes and motifs kept changing and developing in literary art so much that it is almost impossible to list them all, a bit easier to group them as social, psychological, cultural, mythological, etc. Each epoch, i.e. the artists representing it, had their favourite themes and problems, dilemmas they tried to solve. The question of artistic creation is typical for the recent literary history, although it can be found, to a lesser or greater extent, in the previous literary epochs as well. Ibsen's interest for this issue and the method he uses to deal with it give him the epithet of a modern, up-to-date, but, most of all, a fresh writer. The motif of artistic creation is traceable in several of his plays such as *Hedda Gabler*, *Rosmersholm*, *Lady from the Sea*...

When We Dead Awaken is a work which is almost completely dedicated to this motif. Nowhere is Ibsen so deeply involved in the problem of art, debating all the instances of this line of human activity. In this work, distinctions between art and life are abolished, and art is not regarded merely as a part of life. In a way, all the protagonists in this work make an attempt to be artists, to turn their lives into something valuable, to create their own world coexisting with the "ordinary" world. Shifting of the plot of the play from lower to higher regions, from the planes towards the mountain peaks metaphorically denotes man's aspirations towards heights, i.e. the artist's craving for exaltation and beauty.

In this work, Ibsen does not only deal with one artist's ideal, but also with the creative process, inspiration and finally with the very purpose and meaning of art. The attitudes on these issues, traceable in the work through the characters of Rubek and Irene, as I have already mentioned, need not necessarily be Ibsen's attitudes too. In his study Sverre deals with the modern dramatic elements in Ibsen's last play and emphasizes that: "what ever bitterness may be expressed in *When We Dead Awaken*, is Rubek's bitterness, not Ibsen's (1958, 129). I completely agree with this assertion because such an attitude sets one free from the possible traps while analysing the ideas presented in the work. The ideas can be ascribed to Rubek, but by no means to the author, just as Ibsen does it. Another Sverre's statement is completely accurate, if it refers to Rubek's attitude and his own realization of truth: "So, the artist who seeks significance for his efforts through recognition is but a slave to his art. The artist achieves freedom only when he accepts the fact that creativity is its own excuse for being" (1958, 129). However, it seems to me that Sverre here interprets Ibsen, not Rubek and

that he actually deals with Ibsen's message to the reader. I would say that these are Ibsen's speculations, by no means his message or, in the end, the interpreter's speculations.

One of the recurrent problems in the work with which Ibsen deals with the skill of the master, is the question of inspiration. This motif is tightly connected with the motif of love, i.e. woman. I have already written that the woman represented in the character of Irene, is not merely a woman, but something much greater, a precondition of artistic creativity. In that way, the author brings together two dimensions – material and spiritual – thus taking the plot of the play to a higher level. The ideological sphere of the work is interwoven in the relationship between Irene and Rubek and their love story. After Irene's departure, Rubek cannot find anything to wake him up from his lethargy; his creative powers wither away and even become destructive. Without his woman, i.e. without whatever she stood for in his life, creation is no longer possible.

Follows Sverre's interpretation of Rubek's life or rather his human condition after Irene's departure: "Rubek has killed Irene's soul, as a price of creativity, and now he models his image in remorse, in self-accusation" (1958, 125). I only wonder how conscious Rubek was of his doings, i.e. of the things he had done to Irene and how that awareness affected his conscious being. My impression is that whatever he does after Irene is a result of his half-conscious being. It also seems to me that Rubek is not very much concerned with his guilt until the moment of his reunion with Irene. After that reunion, their ideals, failures, desires are suddenly revealed... Their dialogues from that point on simply burst with reflections on the theme of artistic creativity, inspiration, and, finally, the meaning of art. That part of the play is almost devoid of action and is packed with dialogues and monologues containing the ideological sphere of the work.

The absence of action on account of reflexivity is a feature of the modern dramatic concept. Follows a Joyce's remarks referring to the majority of Ibsen's plays: "Ibsen's plays do not depend for their interest on the action, or on the incidents. Even the characters, faultlessly drawn though they be, are not the first thing in his plays. But the naked drama...this is what primarily rivets our attention" (1900, 587). Joyce is not talking about the absence of action, but underlines that action is in the background, and that the dramatic conflicts are built up using other methods. Whatever the case might be, his comment refers to the features of modern drama.

The character of a typical artist and his relation towards life is shaped through a remarkably static action and through the dialogue which often resembles two monologues. On the other hand we have Ulfheim who is a contrast character (a method of protagonists'

characterization present in the ancient literature) whose perception of the world is completely different from Rubek's. However, these two male protagonists have something in common: they are both creators in some way. In this respect, the interesting element which connects Ulfhejm and Rubek, as far as creative process is concerned, is the destructive moment. Both of them create out of nothing, or it is better to say, their creation involves prior destruction. Be it an animal or a stone, the creative process involves demolition and destruction. Ulfhejm's life seemingly unfolds in a parallel dimension, in a completely different world. In spite of the fact that he is presented as bizarre, cruel and brutal, he radiates pure life energy, healthy powers setting man in motion. He is a representative of vitalism and an opposite of aestheticism that guide Rubek's and Irene's life. His inspiration lies in nature, in his wish to tame and conquer nature, while Rubek dreams of capturing beauty. Ulfhejm is a completely original character, crude and natural, about whom Joyce enthusiastically says: "What a novel creation is Ulfhejm! He is a kind a surprise-packet!" (1900, 587). In the character of Ulfhejm Joyce, for example, sees the evidence of Ibsen's freshness as a writer, his originality and modernism.

By contrasting these two characters, the author opposes art to life and that is, actually, the most dominant opposition in the play.

On the one hand the author places speculations about art and its significance, and on the other the real life of Maja and Ulfhejm. This opposition can be interpreted in different ways, in favour of one or the other philosophy – art or life. In my opinion, these two spheres cannot be separated from each other although each of them has its own modus of existence. In his own very special way, Ibsen sets balance between life and death, life and art, a song and a cry. Here's how Bermel comments the end of the play: "Rubek fails, but the Nun's "Pax Vobiscum" is Ibsen's blessing on that failure" (1973, 286). I personally do not agree with such a one-sided interpretation that Rubek fails and that Ibsen rejoices at the sight of his failure as an artist. Instead of trying to answer the question if Ibsen punishes Rubek by such an end or simply allows him die in beauty and for beauty, I want to say that by ending the play in such a way, the author suggests the ambivalence of human fate and life in general.

Moi takes a stand that the end contains the ideas concerning the concept of idealism in art: "At the end of *When We Dead Awaken* Ibsen bids a characteristically unsentimental farewell to idealism and its ecstatic celebration of art and artists. Idealism took it for granted that art could justify life...Ibsen saw that without idealism, it is hard to feel *that* sanguine about a life spent in the service of art" (2006, 324). This remark, in a way, confirms my assumption that in this particular play Ibsen re-examines the attitudes and ideas about art,

experimenting with the life of an artist, with one possible apprehension of life. In a very refined way, in the manner of a modern dramatic artist, Ibsen deals with the problems of the modern man – alienation, dehumanization – whether they come about as a personal choice or as an imposed system. In the relationship between Rubek and Irene there are many things that are essentially opposed to life, to real love. There is a lot of coldness in that relationship, although it has a fatal dimension. Here I want to quote Toril Moi who says: “By refusing to love her, and - even more damaging to Irene - by refusing to acknowledge that *she* loved him - he de-souled her, and turned her into a statue. Rubek’s sin, one might say, is not that he couldn’t distinguish between the woman and the sculpture, but that he preferred the sculpture” (2006, 322). Sculpture is a natural choice of an artist, and in this sense Rubek is more of an artist and less of a man – one-sided, closed for life, and consequently for love. His relation towards the sculpture reflects his relation towards life.

This symbol can be assigned some other meanings as well. In my opinion, by introducing the sculpture, a work of art, into his life, i.e. into the dramatic action, work turns into the polyphony of meanings and symbolism. Ibsen introduces the alive-non-alive opposition thus emphasizing the other opposition in the play between life and art, or rather between life and illusion. Putting an equation mark between art and illusion only deepens the problem of the meaning of artistic creativity. “At the end of his writing life, Ibsen left us with a question we have not finished with: what is the value of theatre, and art, and literature, in our own terrifying modernity?” (Moi, 2006, 324). More than a hundred years ago, Ibsen asks the very same question that burdens the present-day artists, the question which has not been answered yet.

Through the metaphor and symbolism of an artistic creation, Ibsen explores the motif of the masterpiece and its meaning in the artist’s life. Rubek’s life is oriented towards the creation of one single work, *The Resurrection Day*. That work is the embodiment of his vision, the purpose of his existence. Ibsen gives the artistic creation the prerogatives of a child, thus emphasizing its significance. Both Irene and Rubek breathe the soul and life to their child.

Through Rubek’s work Ibsen portrays the aspirations of each and every artist to create something unique and unrepeatable, a work through which he will surpass himself. But what happens after the artist has finally created his masterpiece, if such a thing is possible at all? It starts living its own life, like a child which at one point gets separated from his/her parents, while the artist remains empty. The way in which the writer plays with the statue is very interesting and, above all, original. We see it standing between two people, joining them

together and separating them at the same time, very much like a child; Irene's appearance in the work is associated with a statue – analysing her first appearance in the play, Moi says that the motif was taken over from the famous painting *The Island of the Dead* and adds that "the theme of the living dead is fundamental to the play" (2006, 137); after Rubek's departure, Irene is a living dead, cold like a statue; Rubek's life is a life of a soulless man, of a petrified person. By using the artistic work of this kind, Ibsen actualizes some ideas concerning the life-art relationship. Symbolism, associativity, polysemy, these are all the features of this play and modern artistic methods.

Motif of death

Generally present motif in literary creation, motif of death, is more or less present in all Ibsen's dramas. But in this last one motif of death reaches its culmination, the drama is entitled with death and with death it ends. It is generally present throughout the whole drama, but not literary, yet hidden as a shadow leaning over the characters and their lives. It is actually the last scene when the death is real. How does Ibsen achieve the presence of this motif through his work? What actions does he use to achieve a desired effect? Firstly, the title of this work, directs us to the presence of death and to the fact that it is a prerequisite to the wakening and knowledge.

Now, let us go back to the title of the work... There are two dimensions present in the title, the death and awakening. These two open an important opposition within the work and create the atmosphere of conflicts at the metaphysical level. Although the title may be presented as a Christian vision of life after death, of life that gets its real value after the physical destruction, it can also be seen as a author's personal experience of human death and the things the death carries along with itself. I think that the title is actually about the two main characters whose life is presented here, not because those words are said by Irene, yet because their relation towards life. Their life is nothing but a mere presence, not the life in its genuine sense.

The absence of ideals, wishes or both, even more, the failure to achieve these things makes the life look like a countdown of the remaining days, like usefulness for a famous sculptor and Irene. Ibsen highlights the meaningless of their lives by introducing a counter pair of characters – Maja and Ulfhejm, even more, making combinations among them. The opposition between the aesthetism and vitalism, the art and nature, slowly goes from the opposition between the life and death and culminates in the last scene. Ibsen strenghtens the tension in drama, sharpening the conflict towards the ideal plan confronting the characters within the drama.

If we look at the drama atmosphere from the beginning to the end, a peaceful, almost idillic picture of the resort from the beginning is totally contradicted to the apocalyptic scene of death at the very end. Why does Ibsen prefers such dramatical death scenes in his works? He is fond of quickness, theatricalness, exaggeration in some way. Here we can find romantic and melodramatic elements questioning though Ibsen's modernity. But such scenes carry a kind of naturality, rawness, bizzariness, and those are elements found in a modern dramatic

expression. The last scene is actually the scene of death in *When We Dead Awaken* and is followed by a song which gives it a note of grotesque. The motif of death in the last scene reaches its culmination, but it is not the last thing we hear and see. Again, Ibsen builds the contrast, or makes the balance between the two different life philosophies with Maja's song of freedom and happiness. While the avalanche is roaring down upon the two lovers, Maja finds the freedom and sings cheerfully. I have an impression that all the characters reached their liberation and found the right paths, either towards life or towards death, in other words towards a different form of existence.

Strongly emphasized, the motive of death recurs in Ibsen's later plays as a key moment in which conflicts, both external and internal, get resolved. Ibsen's heroes and heroines see death as their only way to attain their ideals and aspirations. For Irene and Rubek death is the only choice, as Johansen sees it: "And their last attempt to revive and fulfil their love and desire ends, as so often in Ibsen, in death" (1993, 35). It seems that Ibsen sees no opportunity for them to fulfil their needs in life. Their ideals, strange as they may seem to ordinary people, transcend the real and the possible and find their fulfilment in the world beyond ordinary life, in the realm of extra-terrestrial. It seems to me that their death in the play does not evoke sadness in the reader. On the contrary, their death is a moment which the reader actually expects. Their ponderous, grim dialogues, their sombre lives, and the nun, who follows them, among other things, lead them logically to such an end.

In which way does Ibsen create the presence of the death throughout the whole work, which action does he use? The symbolic of a sculpture is very effective in this drama. No matter to the importance that it has on Rubek and Irene, and what it represents in their lives, the sculpture itself was cut out of the context carrying within itself coldness and lifelessness. Association provoked and symbolism felt are not there by chance. The stone standing between Irene and Rubek is not there by chance either. It can be a symbol of eternity, but the absence of warmth and liveliness, too. With this gesture the author achieves the impression of statics in drama, the impression that the reader gets while reading the drama.

On the other hand, the famous statue ripped away all the creative power from Rubek; it, too, took Irene's love away. It can be said that those two people invested all their energy and love for beauty into *The Resurrection Day*, all their love for each other and that it was the price that had to be paid for making a master piece. Afterwards, two of them are dead in life. The statue is a symbol of their death. Then the interpretation goes further in the following direction: art takes everything from one, leaving one empty, not giving anything in return, and bringing to light the fact that the artistic creation, as such, has no sense at all. I would say that

there are different ideas and author's suggestions on the topic within the drama and that each of them carries a grain of truth.

The way in which the author introduces Irene into the drama is rather specific. She looks sophisticated and mystical at the same time. She resembles a creature from the 'other side'. Her appearance is unreal, mystic, giving an impression that she floats all the time between life and death, and it is only a question of time when she will cross to the other side taking Rubek along. There is glimpse of death in the dialogues between Irene and Rubek. Their lives are everything but life and there is a question arising: how tragic their death at the end really is? Relativity of death as the end of everything is an important question at the end of the drama. As this drama does not end completely in a way, in the same way Maja's song can be interpreted as an uncompleted final sentence meaning that life may not be over when the avalanche goes down. Life and death are confronted, connected, and, I would say even intertwined and rather relative. Ibsen creates conflicts between life and death in numerous ways in the drama – through the characters, language, symbols, scene design which requests a detailed literary analysis.

The function of stage space

The importance of a stage design in modern drama is rather immense and it implies the characters, relationships, and ideas presented. The scene is not a décor and not the background in Ibsen's plays. Moreover, "if any plays demand a stage they are the plays of Ibsen" (Joyce, 1900, 589). Why does Joyce say so? The fact that Ibsen's plays need the stage does not mean that they can be achieved only through the stage and that drama has no significant, meaningful background itself. This observation refers to the richness of symbols and metaphors revealed through the stage space. With different visual elements on the stage Ibsen characterizes characters, reveals their psychological profile, their inner fears, conflicts suggests ideas... The space in Ibsen's plays moves from closed rooms, half opened verandas to the widely opened spaces near the sea shore or somewhere in the mountains. Each of these different specimens has its own function in the play and is connected with other elements of the play. Let's look at the scene characteristics of *When We Dead Awaken*.

As far as space is concerned, it is possible to talk about the opposition closed-open space, although "closed" should be understood only conditionally, because the plot actually takes place in nature. The dialogues between Rubek and Maja in the first scene and between Rubek and Irene later in the play, smack of the atmosphere of closed art studios, galleries with sculptures, dark rooms in which they were making their "child" while destroying themselves in order to endow it with life. On the other hand, there are the scenes of forests, mountains, vast green areas, bursting with life. In his last play Ibsen locates the plot of the play outside, breaking down the walls that bring about inhibitions and limitations. According to Joyce as well, "one cannot but observe in Ibsen's later works a tendency to get out of closed rooms." (1900, 66) This procedure moves the plot from a closed to an open space, and shifts the focus from the social milieu to human and his/her internal problems. Ibsen's interest for human develops through his creative opus and triumphs in his last plays.

This interest and focus upon a human's inner problems are followed by a change in scene image, so it could be said that the wider and more open the space, the deeper the getting into man's psyche. The next Bermel's observation deals with the action movement in Ibsen's dramas from the closed to the opened: "Ibsen places the action of his last play in the open, as if dealing a hand of cards face upward. He lets his characters outside the enclosures of his earlier art: the drawing rooms, the prissy little scandal-prone communities" (1973, 269). I would not totally agree with the fact that the open stage means the openness in the drama, too,

and that the author plays his cards open in that way. There are far too many hidden meanings in each scene of this drama, although there are no doors, windows, fences, and ceilings, specific for Ibsen's earlier dramas.

As Bermel read it, his characters emerge from the gloomy, dark, closed rooms presenting the picture of their and their community mentality. In his last drama Ibsen breaks all the connections between the character and the environment, for they are not the representatives of the community, or specific type of people, they are individuals and the only thing they do represent properly is actually the idea, the way of living. Then, how are we supposed to interpret the drama space and the characters within it?

At the very beginning the space alludes to their openness towards life, liberation of social chains and rules, even uniqueness with the nature. But through the plot of drama the fact that the characters are not so free is revealed directing the readers to think and realize how the characters themselves are, actually, not free and how they feel trapped in their own environment. Maja and Rubek talk about the trip and the cruising in the first scene. They wish to go even further, to travel, directing their wishes towards even wider, more open space. The imagined space in the scene has its function and it speaks about the characters and their unfulfilled desires. Ibsen's choice of open space can be interpreted as a method of contrast in which the author, placing his characters into the open, emphasizes their inhibitions, closeness and disharmony existing between them and the nature. For, all of them feel bad, they are all trapped, and the only person feeling free ally is Ulfhejm. Maja, too, finds her place somewhere in the space and her cheerful nature fits in the existing picture.

I would now try to analyze character of sculptor Rubek in order to highlight author's methods of characterization and his artistic techniques as well. This character is a very good example of how Ibsen connects stage design to both character's state of mind and reflexions on art. In my opinion he does not fit in the picture, he belongs to the nature least of all. He seems as if he lost his breath the moment he left his studio, as if the open space chokes him. Ibsen takes his character out of the studio where the life is being lived, letting him struggle for his own place under the sun. Bermel observes that " professor Arnold Rubek never goes between walls or under a roof. For almost the entire three acts he remains onstage, a shifting figure on the Norwegian landscape" (1973, 269).

Bermel sees Rubek as a different compared to Ibsen's earlier dramas' characters, and the fact that Rubek is always somewhere in the country has a great importance. The surrounding he is in speaks of his spiritual condition, describes him in a specific way. Rubek is somehow ripped away from the surroundings in which he creates his work of art, and then

put into a natural environment where he is no longer an artist but a mere man that should be searching his sense of existence. It is possible that Ibsen placed his character at the exact point, out of his studio, out of his walls, in order to find the sense of life, out of his art. Although these are nothing but mere speculations, it is quite obvious that Ibsen does not want to put Rubek between the walls and limit him by doing so. Instead he takes him out into the fresh air. If we deal with Ibsen's reasons to do so regarding Rubek, we will have to deal with the author's intention that cannot be confirmed. We can only discuss the impressions that Rubek, constantly present in the open stage, has upon the reader. We should just deal with the meanings coming from the author's actions in the play. Rubek is a central figure – he is always around, he is an artist always in the centre of others' attention; he has no inspiration, that's why he is outside his studio; he has to find the sense of his life in love, in other things apart from art, that's why he is in nature.

There are quite different possibilities of interpretation of Rubek's character, the connection between him and the surrounding, and may be those numerous possibilities speak about Ibsen as of modern dramatist sending no clear message, but leaving the reader to get involved in the problem both intellectually and intuitively. In his own analysis of a scenic design, Bermel says: "Ibsen has so fashioned his play that its action and its three outdoor settings are symbolic way of drawing the character of Rubek" (1973, 270). Bermel turns to professor Rubek most while analyzing the stage space. I completely agree with Bermel that Ibsen uses the symbolic characterization, and symbols in general. Character of Rubek bursts with the ideas connected to art and creation. These ideas are central in the drama therefore making Rubek the central figure on the stage.

Yet other characters are not to be neglected since they provide the Rubek picture becomes clearer, and the ideas more important. Even if the other characters are not that important in the play and that Rubek is in the centre of the play, I think that Rubek actually represents the ideas and a way of life, which is much more important than the character itself. If Rubek is seen in that way, as the bearer of the ideas the author deals with throughout the drama, it can be said that everything else in the drama (the plot, other characters, symbols...), every single visual characteristic, is the way to describe his character, even though then such interpretation has a dimension of narrowness.

Surely, there must be certain reasons for the plot taking place in the nature, in the mountains, far away from the city, from the society. In my opinion, stage design can be interpreted as the absence of every historical, national and time mark. Those characters are not representatives of the society, not of Norwegian, not of any other; they are a paradigm for

a man's search for meaning. It's not just the selection of the scene that is symbolic, but the movements of the characters towards the higher areas have their own symbolism. Later on in the play, Ibsen places his characters in higher areas, closer to the sky. This very action is directly connected to the conflicts on both external and internal level of the play.

In Ibsen's earlier dramas scenic characteristics had a very important function within the drama itself and spoke about the characters and everything about them. A very specific example for this is a scene at the beginning of *The Pillars of Society* talking about Bernik's family relation towards the environment, society and the upcoming changes. The glass and the fence represent the boundary this family has set towards everything coming from the outside, therefore the fear of the changes. Space symbolism we can discuss in each of Ibsen's plays, somewhere more, somewhere less, but here, in *When We Dead Awaken* it is quite obvious. The process of symbolization, as a modern artistic technique, is more and more present in Ibsen's dramas. From romantic techniques in his earliest dramas, through the realistic picture of society in its middle phase, we come to symbolic part representing the end of Ibsen's opus, and yet the beginning of modern drama in European literature.

Innovations in the last drama are very obvious regarding the previous Ibsen's dramas, as well as regarding the European drama in general. Even not so experienced reader spots something new, unusual within the drama, within the space in which the action takes place. The plot itself doesn't attract so much attention, there are not many breath-taking sensations, but the atmosphere is something that intrigues the reader. One could simply feel fresh, sharp, mountain air and hear the water murmuring. If the conversation between Irene and Rubeck takes the reader to the other side, into the room full of darkness and sculptures, he or she would like to go out of there as soon as possible, back onto the nature where he or she can see deeper and wider.

Ibsen is a master of creating an atmosphere, opposing the worlds, placing one on the stage and giving other through the shapes and forms, words, sounds, thoughts. The landscapes the plot takes place in, or even better where the characters move around, are real, touchable, regarding the relativity of 'real' in literature texts (even in theatrical performing of the text the reality is relative). On the other hand, the world of the closed rooms in which Rubek and Irene's drama had been taking place long time ago, is fictive, too, almost unreal, metaphysical space. And here I am not referring to the time and space in the technical sense of the word; I am referring to the symbolism of those dimensions.

Here is what Bermel says about this Ibsen's technique:" The play itself is crammed with innovations. It tries to break out of Ibsen's old limitations, to get into open country, to climb

an artistic mountain. It comments on itself in the making and constitutes a vivid example of theatrical self-consciousness” (1973, 271). The thing I especially like in this statement, something I have not noticed in the other ones, is the fact that Bermel comments on the drama as on totally independent, autonomous world existing for itself, self-defining and self-estimating. Bermel turns to earlier Ibsen’s dramas in order to emphasize the innovation characterizing *When We Dead Awaken*, specifying this drama as a breakthrough in an artistic sense, as the pulling the boundaries down. He emphasizes self-consciousness of a drama text, something that earlier Ibsen’s texts do not possess, or do possess to a far less extent. Movements towards the higher areas in the drama are not connected with the ideas only, but with the artistic development of Ibsen’s drama, with the poetics of drama in general. In this way the space in the drama is not connected only to ideas, but to the artistic development of Ibsen’s drama as well. Firstly, symbolism refers to the ideas within the work, it does not leave the frame of the work; secondly it refers to the dramatic techniques and development of dramatic genre.

Now, let us compare the movements on the stage to the development of the dramatic plot, then the development of conflicts, the outer ones, as well as the inner ones, and finally to the universal ideas of life and existence. The first few scenes in the drama take place nearby a peaceful resort hotel. The whole atmosphere is of peace, silence, even dullness. Maja and Rubek are sitting and talking peacefully, superficial and this scene perfectly matches the existing picture, the surrounding area. Their conversation about their life together brings in the tension, still not making it the real drama conflict. With the bringing in the characters of Irene and Ulfhejm there are glimpses of the real conflict, at the outer, but inner level, too. When other characters were introduced within the plot, Ibsen moved them all together to a higher level –one of the sea and one of meaning. We get the impression that the plot moves towards those higher areas, but towards the innerness of the more dangerous areas. ”This increasing evaluation matches an increasing ”penetration” of the landscape: the settings also goes inland (or inward) so that the mountain hut of Act III is doubly remote from the hotel of Act I in both height and ”inwardness”” (Bermel, 1973, 270).

This claim stated by Bermel, is actually, describing deepening into the psychological condition of the characters, into their sub consciousness. In this way, it seems that the author wants to endanger them with the troubles that can reach them there, hoping that actually all that is inside them will get revealed. All of them want to climb higher and higher in order to discover the landscape, but also to discover their own personality. By climbing the mountain, they are actually revealing the truths about each others, the life, the environment. It is not an

easy process, but a very hard and painful way to be passed, just like the walk through the forest full of wild beasts. While Maja and Ulfhejm are eagerly looking for the danger, walking through the unknown, it seems that Irene and Rubek are being carried by some force, by God's hand in order to reach themselves, their inner selves. They are guided by the idea that somewhere, into the heights, they will find that something all the artist are heading to, the beauty, for the beauty must be very high placed, far away from the society and the people. The space in the last act has the dimension of almost unreal, mystic, dark. The reader feels that something terrible, but marvellous must happen there. The avalanche, already familiar from Ibsen's earlier creations, can symbolically represent the evil that crashed upon the two lovers as a punishment for their game with the people and life. It can also be a problem and a warning to those looking at life as these two. Technically, it can be seen as the author's tendency towards theatricality and exaggeration. However, symbolism exists and gives the opportunity of different interpretations.

Bermel claims the following about the scene characteristics of the drama and I think it refers to the last scene most: "This is a landscape in which myth predominates over reality. What Ibsen describes here is not a literal but a spiritual landscape, a visual correlative for mythical experience" (1973, 4). And, that is true, that is what the reader experiences, starting from the title itself to the very end. How does Ibsen achieves the atmosphere of myth, spiritual? He does that with the scene effect that can be defined as theatricality, even sensation. Ibsen goes away from the picture of reality and brings himself closer to spiritual, metaphysical. The whole drama takes place in an unreal space, but in such time, too, because the myth refers much more to a time, than to a space dimension. If the drama scene is visual component of one mythological experience, then the whole story is, actually, a paradigm for a human search for the meaning and essence of existing.

What do a mountain and its peaks suggest? It is rather obvious that in the writer's choice, there is a hidden idea, a message. Ibsen writes about human, his and her need to create something out of nothing, to feel the beauty, to give the sense to the existence. Many characters in his dramas are bounded to the art, being the artists, themselves, or being fascinated by it. Let us remember *Master Builder*. There is no life without creation, no sense without the beauty, and this would be the leading thought of these characters. Could not that be the leading idea in *When We Dead Awaken*? Ibsen points, makes his idea final with this drama. Stage design gives his idea a visual expression, material form. The movement of the characters towards the mountain peak metaphorically represents the man's desire to go higher in a metaphorical sense of the word. Another meaning this metaphoric picture could have is

the man's desire for the unknown, mystic, which does not have negative connotation. Through the stage design the whole ideological background of the drama can be seen. It is definitely the sign of modernization and innovation in a drama genre.

The everlasting conflict of life and death, and the dimension of ambivalence, Ibsen achieves by using different symbols. Life and death confront, making the balance on this planet. Some of those symbolic elements are found in the replicas of the characters, some exist in the stage, some are given through the writer's instructions about the scene and the space in which the action takes place. Some of them: "children playing", "rippling water", were taken out by Berner as the symbols of life, or even giving birth. Yet not everything in this drama is turned towards death and destruction. Maja and Ulfhejm are turned towards life, discovering, seeing life as a challenge, as a possibility to improve themselves. In other words, they are turned to nature, to the ancient and to the natural. This dimension is present through the mentioned symbols.

In metaphysical space of drama, the circle of life is achieved, circle that is the foundation of everything. "Air, earth and water are part of a circle of element symbolism in the play. Water stands in opposition to air and earth. The water is internal movement" (Østerud, 2005, 87). The above mentioned symbols have archaic meaning and are standing upwards above the definite time and space in the drama. They could be observed on the levels of mythological, universal, and general. One of characteristics of modern work of art is the liberation of all the limits, penetrating into the essence of existence. In modern art there are not any definite time and space, and if there are, they are just an expression, form, not the essence. In *When We Dead Awaken* the space is not a geographical area, but metaphysical. The time is not the XIX Century, but mythological. The characters are not specific people, representatives of the idealism, philosophy, aestheticism, vitalism... Their conflicts are not just theirs, but of mankind. All these make the drama universal, modern in its essence, but in its form, as well.

Through this drama Ibsen expresses some facts about the man, asks questions, which may never be answered. Along with the universal questions, the author deals with the questions about life of an artist, questions of inspiration, master pieces, unrealized desires, betrayed ideals, expectations and attempts... All these questions demand, along with the symbols and live word, dialogues and monologues. Here too, there are some innovations in Ibsen's drama, exceptions of a classical model of dramatic genre. Sverre observes the following characteristic regarding the linguistic expression of the characters: "In several of Ibsen's last plays, moreover, the dialogue between two characters often consists of two

monologues intertwined as dialogue, or in other instances, of a monologue interrupted by a single word or a gesture” (1958, 121). This is tightly connected with ideas that the writer expresses within the work, connected with the psychological characteristics of the figures. It is a modern literary technique, a modern procedure serving the characterization of the characters and producing of the meaning within the work.

Conversations between Maja and Rubek can hardly be real dialogues, but expressing their own needs and wishes. They speak each for oneself, sometimes react upon a replica of the other one, but even then it is something that they use more to throw out something of themselves, than to reach the other one. The way the writer actually builds the dialogue between these two clearly suggests that in that marriage they are two separate worlds, two figures at the same stage, barely touching each other. Their talks are quiet, passionless, emotionless, even when they are arguing, they are blaming the other one. Why is that so? Because they exist in two worlds, they are the characters on two different intellectual and emotional levels, if I may say so. Maja is in the clouds, somewhere higher, she sings, chats, while Rubek is in the world of art, but not in his creative ecstasy, but at the bottom, so close to the senselessness. So placed apart, at the opposite ends, with different visions of life they are incapable of communication. Even technically the dialogue between them is not possible and that affects their communication in the play. The form of their communication reflects the essence of their relationship.

In this way Ibsen matches the levels of a form and essence in the play, language and psychology. It is the same with the dialogues between Irene and Rubek. Their dialogues are more compact, they communicate at the same level. But the passion they have within themselves is expressed through the bits of sentences, unclear statements, broken dialogue. Dimensions of the past and present collide and they affect communication between characters. Their dialogues look more like a cruel game played in order to achieve the goal. Thomas sees two masters in a game of words in them:” Both of them (Irene and Rubek) are virtuosi in the manipulation of sub textual meanings, especially those used as a means of self-preservation or attack” (1979, 8). Such linguistic expression, full of hidden meanings is used by the writer in order to paint a mental structure of these two characters, fatal dimension of their relationship, and I would say another dimension of the art and the artist. By breaking of the dialogues Ibsen paints their psychological condition and a complex relationship. Linguistic expression shows the relation of a conflict on one side and ideas on the other in this Ibsen’s play.

As in dialogue, there are also digressions in the plot of the play and those digressions make the play static in a way. I have already mentioned Joyce’s statement that the plot in

Ibsen's works is not the thing that attracts and defines the quality, that his plays are not interesting because of their stories. He, like Chekhov, does not deal with the sensations, scandals in this play. If we would retell the plot, only a few sentences would be enough. What makes this play interesting is the idea. Sverre finds this drama very peculiar, interesting, but difficult:" *When We Dead Awaken* is one of the most difficult of all Ibsen's play to read" (1958, 121). Sverre analyzes how Ibsen was perceived by scholars and how his artistic skills were seen, too: "The mood of the play has been described as cynical, badgering...and even cruel. Many agree that the play lacks dramatic quality, that it is weakly constructed, and that it is obviously the work of a worn-out man" (1958, 119). After such claim I cannot avoid asking myself: is Ibsen supposed to be defended of such critics, is there a point in taking such an action? If drama criteria are those stated in Aristotle's Poetic, if the main criteria is a good structured, unique plot, it is clear that *When We Dead Awaken* is not the best example of a drama.

But, Ibsen's play, this particular one as well as the others, has other artistic values that make it modern, universal. All the complexity and dark atmosphere of the drama could be explained in two ways: firstly, Ibsen's age and his mental state affected his artistic capabilities as a dramatist; secondly, this work is a precursor of a modern drama which lacks traditional characteristics of drama, but which has other qualities. So, I would finish with a Joyce's sentence: "By the power of his genius, and the indisputable skill which he brings to all his efforts, Ibsen has, for many years, engrossed the attention of the civilised world" (1900, 587).

Conclusion

Now, I would conclude my discussion with a presumption that I have partly managed to prove Ibsen's modernity in these three plays. When I say modernity, I mainly refer to modern techniques being used in a work of art and to timelessness of his topics. Those two characteristics of Ibsen's plays are surely the 'evidences' of his modern literary creation. There are different ways of proving that and I have offered some in this study. There is another interesting way to show how modern Ibsen was and that is the following comparison. If we observe the development of drama genre in general on one side and developing line that could be followed in Ibsen's plays on the other, we will be able to notice modern phase in Ibsen's opus. Once involved in reviewing and comparing the evolution of drama in general and that of Ibsen's plays, one should not forget to touch upon the issue of protagonists' characterization. Verbal characterization was the most frequent type of characterization in the earliest plays and it persisted for quite some time. This means that we learn about the characters from their own statements or from other characters' statements about them, and this trend is present in Ibsen's early plays as well as in those which, according to numerous theoreticians, belong to realism (*Enemy of the People, Pillars of Society...*). Such a "simple" and direct way of characterization was later substituted by metaphysical, and then by symbolical characterization. Words became unnecessary for insights into the character's psyche – their deeds, dreams, clothes, movements, the space where they live, the details surrounding them, became much more illustrative than words themselves.

Ibsen restored to that way of characterization much earlier than others, offering his readers or spectators the opportunity to have an insight into the mental and spiritual state of his protagonists through the details that only at first glance were not consistent with the developments on the stage itself. It seems to me that Ibsen's sophistication and mastery of characterization is particularly highlighted when it comes to his female characters, i.e. to the way he uses the scenic design, specific details, movements and gestures to "paint" women's nature, their tempests and turmoil, their deepest impulses... A protector of women or merely a painter, neutral spectator and photographer, as it was speculated about him in literature, he was a masterful artist who managed to accomplish the goal pursued by all artists – to express man's deepest and most sincere plights.

The stage space, i.e. the background of the plot, has its purpose and more than one function in Ibsen's plays. Although this assumption may be contested, the stage design of

Ibsen's earliest plays serves decorative purposes much more than in his later accomplishments. After all, the function of space and stage has also undergone changes in the development of the world drama. At first, the stage and everything contained within it were merely a background, a "décor" meant to follow the plot of the play. Later, the scenic space started to acquire an additional dimension and was no longer a mere "décor". The more reduced the plot, the greater the role of the stage in conveying meaning. It becomes a resort providing us with indications, traces, hidden meanings or even answers to some very important questions. An attentive and curious spectator interweaves all the elements, everything heard or seen, even that which remains unseen or undetected by the senses. Bredsdorff sees Ibsen's scene in a similar way:" Ibsen must surely be unique among dramatists in the assured way in which he links the stage directions to the subtext. They do deal with the externals, with the arrangements of 'business', but they always refer also to the internal dimension. It is as if they say 'Nota bene: now something is happening which you cannot hear!'" (1988, 160). And it is exactly those minus-symbols, the things we cannot hear or see, that play such a significant role in Ibsen's plays and in our response to his works.

The stage design in Ibsen's works varies from closed rooms and attics, to seashores and streets, sloping grounds and avalanches that consume everything in front of them. Both closed and open space, serve their purpose and are closely related to both the plot itself and the characters on the scene, as I was trying to describe in my study. I have an impression that there is something universal in the meaning conveyed by the stage design of Ibsen's plays. Readers feel that the scenes of the open sea conceal man's cravings for freedom, just as the depth of the sea bespeak man's fear of the unknown, the immeasurable depths of our own mind whereas closed and stuffy rooms reveal man's restraints and inability to accept something new and unknown. Leaving the author's intentions aside, we can rightfully assert that space has a universal dimension in Ibsen's plays, revealing the author as a connoisseur of the human psyche, which automatically classifies him as the author of modern dramas. The term "modern" is fairly disputable and opens debates even among the people of letters, but this aspect will be discussed later in this study.

I have no intention to get involved in the analysis of time dimensions in Ibsen's plays or drama in general now. At the end, I want to mention certain changes affecting this particular element of literary structure. The prospective time flow was at one point substituted by retrospective in the classical sense of the word, or by mingling of time dimensions, i.e. by introducing the past into the current scenic developments which gave them a new dimension and changed the purport of the things said or seen. This modern technique gradually gains

ground in the works of the Norwegian playwright. Intermingling of time dimensions and experiments in this field indicate growing apart from the classical dramatic techniques and turning towards some more modern forms of expression. In this and other above mentioned elements we may find evidence of Ibsen's modernism and, in comparison with other playwrights, the proofs that Ibsen was the founder of the modern drama and modern drama techniques. Toril Moi really had a point when she stated that: "Ibsen is generally acknowledged to be the father of modern theater...Before Ibsen the theatre was dominated by classical or Romantic tragedy and comedy, and comic or sentimental melodrama" (2001, 30).

At the same time, I believe that the same author's assertion qualifying Ibsen's plays after *The Pillars of Society* as "fundamentally *anti-theatrical*" (2001, 29) because they contain the elements of the classic drama is an exaggeration. And, essentially, the question if Ibsen is or is not an anti-theatrical writer is not at all a topic in this study. Let us limit ourselves to the fact that Ibsen is the founder of the literary modernism. A question which still remains rather problematic is which of his plays actually mark the beginning of modernism, i.e. which of them still belong to the body of the social or romantic drama, and that is precisely the main focus of this study. I find the following Lyons's assertion very true and reliable: "While certain of Ibsen's popular dramas continued to service the demand for realism, their intense focus upon the subjectivity of the protagonist also made them susceptible to the emerging symbolism that constituted the next stage of the avant-garde art theater" (1994, 185).

In my opinion, this assertion eliminates many dilemmas because, as underlined by the author himself, although Ibsen's plays continued to deal with the social phenomena, their focus on the subjectivity and psychological dimension outgrew the framework of the realism and opened the fields of symbolism and modernism. Hopefully, I have managed to show this very quality of Ibsen's literary creation. Defining modern elements in the works of this author is still widely debated in literary circles. Where does this need to dispute things that have already been asserted and in a way proven stem from? Why would anyone want to shed a different light on this issue? The key is in man's eternal need to search, to discover, to be ever dissatisfied with the present body of knowledge. In spite of the fact that such an explanation is too general and probably better applicable to natural sciences and some other fields of human activity, the principle is basically the same. A literary achievement seen as modern and highly distinguished at a certain point in time, will soon, basically due to the development of society and man's awareness of theory literary theory, become just another link in the chain: a stylistic epoch to be remembered for bringing something new, but also as a forerunner of something even more modern which is to come at some later point in time. The awareness of

the existence of various stylistic movements actually plays the key role in the study of stylistic movements. I think that the example of the French 19th Century novelists Stendhal and Balzac novels is quite relevant and comparable to Ibsen's plays. From the viewpoint of the theory and history of literature, the famous realists were seen and addressed to as great romanticists only because of the lack of awareness of realism as a movement and appropriate realistic literary techniques.

The Ibsen seen by his contemporaries or immediate followers is not different from the Ibsen seen by our eyes, yet we should be aware that the future analysts of his art may deny those theories about him which are presently seen as fundamental for any study of his work and a starting point for any interpretation. Being that we started dealing with the factors that influence opposing attitudes and debates, it should be pointed out that one of them is the author's significance, i.e. his role in the development of literature in general. Great names, eccentric artists, those who never managed to adjust to the prevailing system of values are usually targeted by literary debates more than others. The very fact that they were accepted in a different way in their own time and later, is obviously the reason why they will never stop being targeted in endless literary debates and treated with opposing judgments and attitudes in the literary theory.

Ibsen's way of life, his attitudes about the Norwegian society, i.e. about society in general, and his preoccupation with taboo issues in his own time ensured him a significant place in such debates as well as generating ever opposing attitudes towards his work. Being that his literary opus embraces different types of plays and that at different points he bore the labels of a romanticist, realist and modernist, it is high time to define him in terms of the literary movement he actually belongs to. It seems to me that a mission of the kind is simply impossible and that the very attempt to do so is, in one way or another, condemned to failure. To make things worse, as I already mentioned, it seems that it is impossible to draw a clear boundary line marking the end of his realistic phase and the beginning of the modern phase, just as it is impossible with any literary movement. What is problematic within the issue of modernity is what is actually considered to be modern.

From what I have read so far about Ibsen's art (and from what I have heard on seminars as well), I can say that the term "modern" has been differently applied to this writer, depending mostly on the theoretical background of the scholars (and by the "theoretical background" I mean a part of the world they come from). Norwegian concept of modern drama or modernity in general is different in a way from the same concept established within a literary theory in the South European countries, or to limit my observation, in the country I

come from. This discrepancy is influenced by a number of facts and is a product of different development of literature, culture and way of thinking in different parts of the world. With no intention to go deeper into the reasons of such differences, I would just remark the significance of different opinions. They can be used as arguments for a good discussion or “fight of ideas”. One can even neglect one concept on the basis of another and by doing so emphasize one theory on account of another.

The divergence of attitudes is there to make us think and question what we already know about certain subject. For example, in Scandinavian theoretical thought Ibsen’s plays from his realistic period are considered to be modern (*The Pillars of Society* could be a good example). There is no doubt that there are elements of “modern” in those plays. One cannot question the modernity of certain elements in his earlier plays, even if they are considered as romantic. But through the scope of opposite literary theory, these plays are only the introduction to what is called modern.

The modernity in such theory is defined in terms of which new techniques are being used in a work of art. It is difficult to state when the modern literature came into being but it is not so when we are to define modern techniques. Just to repeat, in his last plays, Ibsen uses certain methods that serve the purpose of revealing the deepest fears and problems of human beings. He finds new ways to express the essence of human existence and the difficulties humans are faced with. So, not only his topics are modern and contemporary, his art is so as well. At the beginning I emphasized a need to systematize all concepts, including Ibsen’s opus, and to fit them into specific frames. This seems possible only up to a certain extent, being that in this case the subject matter is art itself, art which contains that very specific ingredient which always resists scientific precision, not to mention that sometimes no one can give a better account about art than art itself can do. Isn’t it true that Ibsen’s 19th Century heroes ask the very same questions that the modern man asks too?

I would now conclude my analysis by underlining one more issue discussed in this study that points to the modernity of Ibsen’s plays: aren’t the problems of Ibsen’s heroines the same problems burdening the women living today? Existential problems and man’s craving for love are common to the people of all times and all spaces. I highlight this in order to emphasize the universal dimension of Ibsen’s work and the all-embracing value of his writings, which is exactly a point supported by the author of a study on Ibsen and Joyce:” Ibsen’s dramas were a shock, but in the main a shock of recognition rather than of revelation” (Farrel, 1982, 40). His works do not help us reveal our lives but make us recognize our own lives. That is why we respect Ibsen and admire him truly even nowadays.

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