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Ibsen's Female Characters in Captivity: An Exploration of Literature and Performance

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Abstract

In Henrik Ibsen's plays, A Doll's House, The Wild Duck, The Lady from the Sea, and Hedda Gabler, the theme of captivity is demonstrated in the female protagonists Nora, Hedvig, Ellida, and Hedda. The theme of captivity also serves as a performance guide for the portrayal of these characters. Ibsen's female protagonists are in bondage to an object or person that manipulates the character's mental and emotional senses. The character's inner captivity reaches a climax where a decision must be made to abolish the chains of captivity or forever remain enslaved. Since the nineteenth century, the actor has greatly benefitted from Ibsen's electrifying work that established the new acting style of Realism. The contemporary actor can apply the theme of captivity to performance by thoroughly reading the text, understanding Realism, creating a character separate from self, and training the voice and body.

Ibsen's Female Characters in Captivity: An Exploration of Literature and Performance

The words of the great Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), reverberate across the centuries, exclaiming words of poetry and prose, passion and purpose. Henrik Ibsen has written many influential plays that have forever changed western society, dramatic literature, and theatre performance. Henrik Ibsen's notable female characters continue to illuminate the role of the woman in performance. With the creation of these characters and situations, Ibsen fashions a new style of realistic playwriting and in-depth characterization. In Ibsen's plays, the female characters often encounter the issues of incest, hopelessness, unjust laws, unrequited love, and suicide. The theme of captivity is also prevalent in Ibsen's work, encapsulating the female characters in a myriad of bonds. Henrik Ibsen's scripts A Doll's House, The Wild Duck, The Lady from the Sea, and Hedda Gabler, demonstrate the theme of captivity as a literary tool for the development of the female protagonist and as a performance guide for the portrayal of the female protagonist.

The Theme of Captivity as a Literary Tool

for the Development of the Female Protagonist

An Introduction to Captivity

The term "captivity" connotes images of caged animals, slaves in bondage, and prisoners behind bars. Captivity in relation to the literary development of the female protagonist, and the performance portrayal of the female protagonist, includes all forms of mental and emotional (non-physical) bondage to an outside entity. The theme of captivity as the dominant idea of a literary work, explores the imprisonment of a character's inner being. Captors using non-physical imprisonment impair the character's

normal judgment and passion, forcing the character into mental or emotional subjection. Non-physical captivities attack reason and feelings, claiming control over a character's interaction with this outside entity. Ibsen's female characters are victims of mental and emotional captivity to objects, attitudes, and people. Captivity can begin as a voluntary act of submission, but it is not a true form of bondage till the individual is no longer in full control of his or her mental or emotional faculties. A character in captivity has a misconstrued identity leading to a lack of understanding or belief in self. In Ibsen's work, a second and sometimes third captor also enslaves the character in increasing levels of captivity. The deep oppression of an imprisoned identity forces these characters to make decisions for life or death.

The theme of captivity has several applications in the areas of literature and performance. Through an understanding of the literary theme of captivity, the reader will be able to more profoundly connect with the struggles of Ibsen's female protagonists, and unite this theme of non-physical captivity to the realm of human nature. The actor can also benefit from an increased understanding of the textual theme of captivity in Ibsen's plays, and portray the character's mental and emotional bondage through a realistic acting style. The literary idea of non-physical captivity is integral to a significant understanding of Ibsen's characters, and a meaningful representation of these characters. The theme of captivity begins as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist through the genius of playwright, Henrik Ibsen.

Ibsen's Life and Times

The theme of captivity as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist comes from a life of bleak circumstances and paramount curiosity: the life of

playwright Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen was born in 1828 and grew up in abject poverty as a result of his father's bankruptcy. Ibsen's mother suffered many hardships and serves as a model for later female characters (Hardwick 33). In early work, Ibsen uses poetry with mythological themes, but switches to a realistic style with the play The Pillars of Society (Durbach 4). This realistic style was a break from the fanciful operas and stock characters of the time as Ibsen became a detailed observer of true human life. In the book Performing Women: Female Characters, Male Playwrights, and the Modern Stage, Gay Gibson Cima states that Ibsen's work treats real-life issues in an almost journalistic manner (229).

Nineteenth-century Norway dealt with a large array of dangerous and concerting social problems, often glossed over in polite conversation. Ibsen's realistic writing style and contemporary subject matter echoed to the heart of many pressing issues. Author Einar Haugen, in the book Ibsen's Drama: Author to Audience, explains the importance of Ibsen's work in nineteenth-century western culture as a way of enlarging social understanding on the topics of, "divorce, incest, paresis, political corruption, suicide... arson, murder, seduction, child neglect, and financial swindles" (50). Ibsen's work includes controversial subject matter which serves as a tool for education and enlightenment. In the nineteenth century, authors began to recognize the importance of educating and informing the reader (47). Through the inclusion of informative and revealing subject matter, Ibsen rejects the literary tradition of idealism and emphasizes the nature of reality. George Bernard Shaw, a contemporary of Ibsen, defines the thought process of rejecting idealism for reality as "Ibsenism" (Durbach 37). Ibsen's realistic ideology changes the course of dramatic literature and performance. Henrik Ibsen's

contributions in the area of realistic drama also include the betterment of women. The theme of captivity is born from the actual situation of nineteenth-century women.

The literary theme of captivity in the work of Henrik Ibsen is based on the social captivity of nineteenth-century women. Ibsen recognized many problems facing the women of his day, including a masculine biased judicial system (Farfan 1). Ibsen explores this issue in the play A Doll's House through Nora's experience with a counterfeit loan and the ensuing consequences. Women held a minority status in nineteenth-century western culture, similar to other underprivileged groups such as the ethnically different, the physically challenged, and the poor. Ibsen recognized the rights of these unheard and powerless people groups, and believed the underprivileged should join together to fight for improvement (Mcfarlane 89). Ibsen grapples with the social problem of poverty in The Wild Duck. The Ekdal family endures biting poverty that affects living conditions and available food. Ibsen also recognized the debilitating relationship of poverty and womanhood. A poor woman in the nineteenth century lacked resources to fashion an agreeable life, and often felt enslaved in a marriage of convenience. Women of the nineteenth century had narrow possibilities and were always looking for a way out (Hardwick 74). Ibsen's personal experiences and knowledge of nineteenth-century western culture create a foundation of insight into the creation of memorable and challenging female characters.

Ibsen's Female Characterization

Henrik Ibsen's female characters provide a compelling portrait of the theme of female captivity in society. This theme of captivity, as a tool in the development of the female protagonist, begins with Ibsen's great interest in what it means to be a woman.

Hardwick notes that Ibsen presents women as complex riddles with a deep musing and curiosity (34, 36). Ibsen recognized the confusion of portraying women in literature, which was often over-simplified by other male playwrights of Ibsen's time. These playwrights constructed victimized female characters or a universal female character lacking individuality (Cima 15). In contrast, Ibsen created characters that transcend the bonds of a mere acting role and portray humanity. The human beings in Ibsen's plays struggle with many diverse difficulties, but retain an insatiable fighting desire. Ibsen's female characters are further expanded through relationship.

In Ibsen's characters, the theme of female captivity is often observed through relationship. Ibsen creates a large number of father-daughter relationships with the daughter as a replica of the father. The daughter is often held captive to the memory, expectation, or person of the father. Ibsen's character of Hedda Gabler is deeply influenced by the memory of her father, General Gabler. Farfan observes that Hedda's father leaves a domineering and multifaceted legacy (3). Ibsen's character of Nora is also influenced by a paternal relationship. Nora feels transferred from the home of her father into marriage. Nora exclaims to husband Torvald: "I mean, then I went from Papa's hands into yours . . . it's a great sin what you and Papa did to me" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume 1 109). The character of Hedvig in The Wild Duck is also a victim of an overly domineering father figure that defines this character's captivity. Ibsen's use of the strong father adds to the female character's struggle with captivity. Ibsen's daughter characters face a climactic choice of forsaking or dying to the captivities of their fathers. Ibsen characters are dynamic and innovative portrayals of human beings that have transcended tradition and reshaped literary trends. The theme of female captivity further

layers these characters, providing another element to the intricate and organic struggle.

Henrik Ibsen's characters mirror reality and deal with a multitude of problems, including the captivity of the female protagonist.

Nora in A Doll's House

Captivity to money. The theme of captivity as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist is seen in Ibsen's play A Doll's House. The theme of captivity directly affects the development and decisions of the character Nora Helmer. This character's perilous journey to self-enlightenment begins with the captivity to money. Hardwick comments that the play A Doll's House is about the power of money (38). Nora is enthralled by the power and freedom of money available only to men. The captivity to money begins as a tasting of the freedom of this world. The importance of money is seen in Nora's first line of the play: "How much? (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume 1 43). Nora decorates for the Christmas holiday and lavishly purchases decorations, gifts, and a Christmas tree. Nora even gives the Christmas tree delivery boy the extra change, enhancing a bountiful image of plenty. This image is brought into focus upon meeting the character Torvald Helmer, Nora's husband. This character questions Nora's use of money: "Bought, you say? All that there? Has the little spendthrift been out throwing money around again?" (44). The couple is immediately at odds in regards to financial matters. Nora feels a great freedom to spend money due to Torvald's anticipated salary raise: "Torvald, we can squander a little now. Can't we? Just a tiny wee bit. Now that you've got a big salary and are going to make piles and piles of money?" (44). Torvald dislikes spending and borrowing money and is particularly wary of spending extra money from the anticipated raise.

The theme of Nora's bondage to money is further enhanced by the couple's discussion of monetary loans. Nora offhandedly mentions the nature of borrowing money to which Torvald responds aghast: "Nora, you know what I think about that. No debts! Never borrow! Something of freedom's lost-and something of beauty, too-from a home that's founded on borrowing and debt" (44). Ibsen creates this early protestation against debt to set the tone for financial issues throughout the play. Despite Torvald's heated objections to debt and frivolous spending, he generously supplies Nora with forty extra dollars for household expenses. Nora quickly rejuvenates and asks for a Christmas present of money: "You could give me money, Torvald. No more than you think you can spare; then one of these days I'll buy something with it" (45). Nora becomes ensnared by an obsession for money through which she hopes to gain a sense of freedom. Torvald looks disapprovingly at Nora's habits calling her a "spendthrift [bird]" that uses up "a frightful amount of money," but Ibsen soon reveals that the motivation of Nora's monetary obsession stems from a time of poverty (46). The couple lived through a period of financial burden in which Nora had to make homemade Christmas decorations and presents. This picture is juxtaposed with the current Christmas season of plenty.

Ibsen gives further depth to Nora's monetary conviction with the arrival of Nora's old friend, Kristine Linde. Nora immediately discusses the Helmer family successes despite an absence of ten years. Nora exclaims: "My husband's been made manager in the bank, just think! From now on we can live quite differently- just as we want . . . Won't it be lovely to have stacks of money and not a care in the world?" (49). Nora has begun to surrender her will and identity to the comfort and freedom of money. Ibsen carefully layers Nora's jubilant monetary reactions to portray the illusion of a carefree

and almost foolish woman. This illusion is soon broken by Nora's revelation of the source of her monetary obsession, a secret loan of four thousand, eight hundred crowns to provide for a trip to Italy to save Torvald's life. Nora is very proud of these successful efforts of saving Torvald's life, despite her illegal actions of borrowing money. Hardwick comments: "[Nora] has got herself into a mess on behalf of those she loves and she is proud of her steady, if unconventional efforts to extricate herself" (40). Nora is profoundly satisfied with her quiet work of sacrifice, but this is nevertheless an illegal action. Women in Ibsen's day were not permitted to borrow money without a husband's approval, and the consequences of such actions were dire. Nora does not initially understand the ramifications of the law and the true state of her mental and emotional captivity to money.

The captivity of money deceptively provides Nora with a sense of freedom in the world of men. Nora finds clever ways of utilizing the household allowance from Torvald, as well as stealthily working on copying jobs. Nora does not view this plight as captivity to money and comments: "It was wonderful fun, sitting and working like that, earning money. It was almost like being a man" (55). Nora is blind to her initial captivity to money, but slowly feels the pressure and tension of repaying the loan. Torvald's future salary raise will provide the additional funds necessary to repay the loan, and Nora happily exclaims: "Now I'm free. Oh, how lovely to think of that Kristine! Carefree! To know you're carefree, utterly carefree . . . it is so marvelous to live and be happy!" (56). Nora's apparent obsession with money is a truly elated rejoicing at the near freedom from the captivity of the loan. Unfortunately, this freedom does not bloom to fruition as Nora

sinks deeper into monetary captivity and a secondary captivity to the demands of male society.

Captivity to male society. Nora is a captive to male society through the secret loan provided by Nils Krogstad. This money lender reveals that Nora has forged her father's signature and committed a crime: "If I introduce this paper [the loan document] in court, you'll be judged according to the law" (67). Krogstad uses Nora's forgery as blackmail, entrenching this female protagonist in a second layer of captivity to the rules set by male society. Hardwick remarks that Krogstad is in control of Nora's fate (43). Nora begins to understand the ramifications of this legal transgression and works to appease Krogstad by trying to convince Torvald to retain the money lender's position at the bank. Nora's secondary level of captivity becomes exceedingly provoked when, despite Nora's pleadings, Torvald sends Krogstad's notice.

Torvald, a member of male society further encapsulates Nora in captivity to male society by enforcing his will. Nora exclaims: "Call [the notice] back Torvald! There's still time. Oh Torvald, call it back! Do it for my sake- for your sake, for the children's sake! Do you hear, Torvald; do it! You don't know how this can harm us" (79). Nora is in danger of undergoing serious legal action that would affect her relationship with Torvald and the children. The captivity to male society proves to be a more difficult burden than monetary captivity. In the article, "The Female Jouissance: An Analysis of Ibsen's *Et Dukkehjem*," Rekdal notes: "Nora slowly recognizes and becomes conscious of her transgression of the law. Just as sky-lark is her father's and [Torvald's] image of [Nora], so the image of her as a law-breaker is also created by [Torvald]" (162). Torvald, a member of male society, sets a firm opinion against borrowing loans in the beginning of

A Doll's House, and makes a stiff declaration against the moral aptitude of a law breaker. Nora's captivity expands into a tertiary level of bondage to Torvald's patronizing and moralistic attitude.

Captivity to Torvald. Torvald's patronizing and moralistic attitude serves as a third snare of captivity for the character of Nora. Torvald is constantly christening Nora with pet names, and views his wife as a child and a toy. When reprimanding Nora, Torvald croons: "My little songbird must never do that again. A songbird needs a clean beak to warble with. No false notes" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume 1 68). Nora is continually petted and treated like a child in the marriage to Torvald. Allphin-Hoggatt mentions that Nora begins as a doll-child to her father and is then transferred to the role of doll-wife to Torvald. Both men are barriers to Nora's growth as a responsible individual (39). Torvald further cements Nora's role as a doll-wife by often requiring performances of song and dance. Nora mentions to Mrs. Linde the viable danger of Torvald tiring of her appearance or habitual play-acting. The theme of captivity is present in Torvald's possessive and selfish treatment of Nora. Durbach states that Nora derives power from the only possible source: sexual manipulation (45). Nora cannot directly communicate with Torvald about the loan as this would not be fitting for a doll-wife. Nora is a captive to the patronizing expectations of Torvald, as well as the moralistic expectations.

Torvald holds to a high level of morality regarding money, business and family. Torvald harshly condemns Krogstad for a lack of morals and for poisoning posterity: "Every breath the children take in is filled with the germs of something degenerate" (70). Torvald's moralistic tirade further enslaves Nora in a life of confusion, doubt, and self-

loathing. Nora is captured by Torvald's moralistic view and is terrified about her influence as a mother. Nora refuses to interact with her children based on Torvald's views. Nora passionately states: "No, no, no, don't let [the children] in to me! [Could I] hurt my children-! Poison my home?" (71). Nora is a captive to the tertiary bondage of Torvald's patronizing and moralistic expectations.

Nora's three levels of captivity to money, to male society and to Torvald's patronizing and moralistic expectations prove to be an unbearable burden. Nora is desperately seeking release from captivity and seductively turns to Dr. Rank in a veiled cry for help. Nora uses flirtatious language and a pair of silk stockings with the intention of seducing Dr. Rank into giving money. Nora promises Dr. Rank: "Tomorrow you'll see how beautifully I'll dance; and you can imagine that I'm dancing only for you" (82). Nora's desperation at the third level of captivity is observed in the sexual treatment of Dr. Rank. Durbach recognizes that Nora distastefully seduces Dr. Rank, whom she knows is dying of an inherited disease in a final attempt to rescue herself for the strangling levels of captivity (46-47). Nora's deep concern over each of the three levels of captivity: the loan, Krogstad's retaliation, and Torvald's response, forces her tauntingly to seduce Dr. Rank. Rekdal notes: "Nora's fear of death and madness [is paralleled with] her unrestrained erotic games with Dr. Rank" (163). Nora's behavior causes Dr. Rank to make a daring confession of love since he has misunderstood Nora's sexual advances as a sign of true affection. The levels of captivity continue to pressure Nora as she grapples for relief from the burden.

Nora contemplates suicide as a respite from the three levels of captivity. Krogstad further threatens to ruin Nora's name after suicide: "Are you forgetting that I'll be in

control then over your final reputation?" (88). Nora's death would not save the Helmer family from the severity of Krogstad's accusations. Nora recognizes her utter powerlessness and pours all of her fears and anxieties into a performance of the tarantella dance. This is a dance of death, and Nora dances to postpone death as the result of captivity (Rekdal 167-168). Nora recognizes that her comfortable livelihood is coming to an end and hopes for a miracle--the climax of captivity.

The climax of captivity. The climax of Nora's three levels of captivity: to the loan, to male society, and to Torvald, is reached when Torvald reads a letter of explanation from Krogstad. Torvald finally faces the details of Nora's loan and the forged signature, and reacts abominably. Rekdal comments that Torvald exerts ridiculous dominance and behaves in the manner of an interrogator (173). Torvald spews villainous words at a woman who was just his "little lark" and "dearest possession" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume 1 100). Nora says very little as she endures this tirade of selfish comments and accusations which quickly turns to a torrent of jubilation with the returned loan from Krogstad. Torvald happily forgives Nora and reinstates her position as doll-wife. Torvald croons: "For a man there's something indescribably sweet and satisfying in knowing he's forgiven his wife . . . It's as if she belongs to him in two ways now: in a sense he's given her fresh into the world again, and she's become his wife and his child as well" (108). Torvald's refusal to take the blame for his wife leads Nora to the climax of captivity where she decides to leave her marriage, children, and livelihood. Nora exclaims: "I have to stand completely alone, if I'm every going to discover myself and the world out there. So I can't go on living with you" (110). Nora makes the decision to break out of the final chains of captivity and leave Torvald.

The final stage directions of A Doll's House read: "From below, the sound of a door slamming shut" (114). Nora discards the chains of captivity for an independent existence. Allphin-Hoggatt remarks that Nora's decision impacts her own development: "Nora has been a robot caring for her children physically, enjoying their daily romps and dances, really being a child with them. That fateful door-slamming night she ceased being a child and assumed the maturity of an adult" (32). The theme of captivity changes the development of Nora Helmer, and is broken asunder with the decision for independence. The mental and emotional pull of captivity also affects the development of the character Hedvig in The Wild Duck.

Hedvig in The Wild Duck

Captivity to Hjalmar. The theme of captivity as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist is prevalent in the character of Hedvig in The Wild Duck. Hedvig blindly adores her father Hjalmar, and is held captive to his selfish moods and unrealistic ideology. At age fourteen, Hedvig is blissfully content to live in a simplistic world of imagination. Hedvig also has the opportunity of playing in the family's attic that is filled with various live birds. The Ekdal family created an indoor forest for enjoyment that is home to Hedvig's wild duck. Hedvig's childlike imagination is formed by playing with this wild duck. In the article, "The Wild Duck and Critical Cliché," Hallett recognizes Hedvig's vast imagination. This female protagonist spends her whole life in fantasy and make-believe (61). Hedvig's life of fantasy is encouraged by her parents and grandfather. In the book, Ibsen's Women, Templeton observes that Hedvig seems much younger than her fourteen years because she has been encouraged to remain young (175).

Hedvig has the mannerism of a child due to Hjalmar's selfish treatment. Andreas-Salomé remarks: "With trustful respect she looks up to Hjalmar's great phrases because deception and lies are completely alien to her" (73). Hedvig is a captive to Hjalmar's egotistical treatment and is continually trying to please her father, which considerably boosts Hjalmar's egotism. Templeton notes: "Hjalmar believes, and makes Hedvig share a mutual love in a special relationship- a father-and-daughter couple . . . but the truth is that for Hjalmar, Hedvig is principally a subject for self-serving sentimentalizing" (173). Hedvig is enslaved by Hjalmar's egotistical attitude, and longs for mere scraps of affection. On one occasion, Hedvig excitedly anticipates a treat from Hjalmar's dinner party, and is disappointed when he carelessly forgets. Hjalmar launches into a verbal tirade after seeing Hedvig's disappointed face, which Hedvig patiently endures. Hjalmar's negligence and harsh words are met with adolescent adoration and Hedvig is overjoyed by a sudden apologetic hug. Templeton notes: "Hedvig feels toward Hjalmar the mixture of physical and emotional longing characteristic of the pubescent girl whose father is the only man in her life" (173). The captivity to Hjalmar causes Hedvig contentedly to work for her father and when asked about future goals, she resolutely states her plans to remain at home. Hedvig comments: "I'm going to stay at home always and help Daddy and Mother" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 163). Hedvig's paternal affection is visible in the usage of the term "daddy" and her desire to stay at home. Andreas-Salomé notes that Hedvig's greatest desire is to forever remain at home and she does not desire to free herself from her family (77). This peaceful existence is threatened with a revelation from Hedvig's mother of the child's potential illegitimacy.

Climax of captivity. The climax of Hedvig's captivity to Hjalmar is reached in his violent response to the news of Hedvig's true paternity. Andreas-Salomé notes that Hedvig's world darkens with Hjalmar's reaction to this news (75). After learning of Hedvig's true biological father, Hjalmar exclaims: "Don't come near me, Hedvig! Keep away. I can't bear seeing you" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 196). Hedvig is traumatized by Hjalmar's treatment and looks for means of restitution. After another harsh dismissal, Hedvig stands, "frozen by fear and bewilderment, biting her lips to keep the tears back; then she clenches her fists convulsively" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 207). But despite Hjalmar's incredibly harsh treatment, Hedvig desperately longs to please her father. From the depths of her soul, Hedvig sobs: "I think I'll die from all this. What did I do to him?" (196). Hedvig is entrenched in captivity to Hjalmar that continually serves his selfish moods and ideologies with the hope of small sign of affection.

In Hjalmar's treatment of Hedvig, this father has manipulated his daughter's mind and emotions forcing Hedvig to work for his love. When Gregers Werle, Hjalmar's friend, suggests that Hedvig sacrifice her prized wild duck to demonstrate the extent of her love, Hedvig is adamant: "I'll ask Grandpa to shoot the wild duck for me" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 198). Hedvig's captivity to Hjalmar causes her to sacrifice a most prized possession for reconciliation. In the article, "The Hidden Architecture in Ibsen's Rosmersholm," Greenberg comments on the extent of Hedvig's sacrifice for her father and her connection to the wild duck: "When [Hedvig] is cruelly rejected by Hjalmar, Gregers suggests that she sacrifice her wild duck for her father...she knows that Gregers is referring to the wild duck, but on the unconscious level she interprets his

words as an exhortation to sacrifice her own life” (146). In the midst of captivity, Hedvig makes the climatic decision to give up her own life in a final love offering to Hjalmar.

Andreas-Salomé notes that Hedvig’s sacrificial suicide represents a trend in Ibsen’s female protagonists of giving one’s self for freedom. (83). Hedvig’s response of suicide as a love offering leaves the dichotomous result of dying with captivity as well as becoming physically free from this captivity through death. Ibsen’s next female protagonist, Ellida Wangel in The Lady from the Sea also struggles under the power of bondage in captivity to mental illusions.

Ellida Wangel in The Lady from the Sea

Captivity to mental illusions. The theme of captivity as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist is evident in the development of the character Ellida Wangel in The Lady from the Sea. Ellida is a captive to her own mental illusions and is wracked with mental fantasies regarding a former lover, the Stranger. Ellida also becomes obsessed with the world of the Stranger- the sea. This obsession to the sea is apparent to family and friends and the character Arnholm states: “Mrs. Wangel [it seems] . . . you have a particular tie to the sea and everything connected with it” (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 238). The title of the play, The Lady from the Sea, also connects this character to the sea. Ellida is often called “the lady from the sea” and the “mermaid” (237). Ellida takes a daily swim and is enchanted with stories about “the spell of the sea” (245). Ellida’s mental captivity to the Stranger is manifested in an obsession with the sea and a life of fantasy. Andreas-Salomé discerns that Ellida’s captivity to mental fantasies of the Stranger cause his power to grow limitless and completely dominating (104). Ellida’s mental captivity to the Stranger is a growing force affecting her marriage to

Wangel. In reference to the Stranger, Wangel comments on the man's unearthly hold over Ellida (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 262). Ellida's mental captivity to the Stranger threatens her marriage and family.

Ellida's mental captivity forces her to resent her marriage to Wangel since it comes after a symbolic marriage to the Stranger. Ellida's mental fantasies cause her to view her marriage to Wangel as "involuntary imprisonment" (Andreas-Salomé 116). Ellida is consumed by the captivity of the mind and condemns her marriage to Wangel: "the plain, simple truth is that you came out there and- bought me...I see that this life we're living with each other-is really no marriage at all" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 297). Through Ellida's mental captivity, she fantasizes a captivity of marriage to Wangel and becomes alienated from her stepdaughters. Allphin-Hoggatt further comments that Ellida acts indifferent to her husband and children and retreats into the captivity of the mind (33). This captivity of the mind hinders Ellida's role as mother, and she comments: "I've been so completely without roots in this house, Wangel. I have no place with the children- in their hearts, I mean. I never have" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 306). Ellida's obsession with fantasies also clouds her judgment in regards to Wangel and the true nature of their marriage. Andreas-Salomé perceives: "[Ellida] takes no notice of Wangel's deep attachment to her . . . she turns to her husband but only as would a sick patient turn to her doctor who might possibly bring relief from pain" (115). The mental captivity of fantasies has hindered Ellida's view of Wangel's affection. Ellida's mental captivity also inhibits her from participating in intimate relations with Wangel who asks: "Why, then, in all this time, have you not wanted to live with me as my wife?" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 263). Ellida is not able to participate in

sexual relations with Wangel due to the strangling mental captivity of fantasies about the Stranger. Ellida believes the Stranger took over Wangel's body to father her child who soon died. Ellida confides to Wangel: "The child had the stranger's eyes . . . now you can understand why I never again want- why I never again dare to live with you as your wife" (266). Ellida's captivity of the mind prevents intimacy between husband and wife.

Templeton maintains: "Ellida suffers from a mysterious depression that began when her baby died. She no longer has sexual relations with her husband, and is experiencing an emotional and mental anguish" (197). Through the captivity of the mind, Ellida believes her dead child possessed the Stranger's eyes as proof of the Stranger's controlling power. Ellida longs for freedom from her supposed physical captivity of marriage as well as her deep mental captivity consisting of fantasies of the Stranger. Andreas-Salomé detects that Ellida is not a physical prisoner to anything and chooses to remain in the sick conditions of her mind (117). The climax of captivity is reached when Ellida must choose between the Stranger and Wangel.

Climax of captivity. The theme of captivity reaches a climax in Ellida's decision between the Stranger and Wangel. Ellida longs to break out of the bonds of captivity and make an independent choice. Ellida resolutely comments: "I have to talk to [the Stranger] myself. It's the only way I can make a free choice" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 305). Ellida can shatter the shackles of mental captivity through the freedom of choice. It is recognized: "Since the Stranger only represents for Ellida her own imperfect understanding of what she wants from life, it only takes a final maturity of will to break his power and let him sink into nothingness" (Andreas-Salomé 107). Ellida is given the power to conquer the demon of mental captivity through Wangel's sacrifice. Wangel

abolishes Ellida's false image of marital captivity, to enable her to conquer the actual mental captivity to the Stranger. Wangel notes: "Now you can choose your own path- in full freedom . . . because I love you so much" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 319). Wangel's gift of free choice enables Ellida to vanquish the demon of mental captivity by refusing the Stranger. Ellida victoriously dismisses the Stranger: "Your will hasn't a shred of power over me now. To me you've become a dead man who came up out of the sea- and who's drifting back down again. There's no terror in you now. And no attraction" (320). Ellida destroys the hold of mental captivity to the Stranger by exerting her own free will. Andreas-Salomé comments that the Stranger's return is necessary in order to free Ellida's mind from captivity (115). Ellida's successfully removes her mental captivity to the Stranger and sees with fresh eyes the beauty of Wangel's love. The theme of captivity also affects the inward life of another Ibsen protagonist: Hedda Gabler.

Hedda Tesman in Hedda Gabler

Captivity to the attitude of selfishness. The theme of captivity as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist is observed in the character Hedda in Hedda Gabler. This character is a captive to the attitude of selfishness, and lacks of courage to live differently. Hardwick notes that Hedda is egotistically in love with self and incapable of caring for others or having true joy (54). Hedda is captured by a constant inner focus that makes no time for anyone else, including her new husband. Hedda's captivity to selfishness directly affects her marriage to George Tesman.

As a new bride, Hedda is completely uninterested in husband, Tesman's affairs. It has been noted: "Hedda has used [Tesman] as her provider, and will have little to do with him as a human being" (qtd. in He 448). Hedda does not feel any love or interest

towards her new husband, and chooses to concentrate solely on her own interests. When Tesman asks if Hedda has been worried about him, she responds: “No, that never occurred to me” (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 276). Hedda shows no interest in the life of her husband and withholds affection. Hedda responds to Tesman’s use of the word love with the curt statement: “Don’t use that syrupy word” (250). In another instance, Hedda exclaims to Tesman: “Love? You are absurd!” (264). Hedda’s captivity to selfness rejects any element of love toward Tesman. Hedda also denies any connection to the new family and responds to Tesman’s statement of, “now that you belong to the family,” with a sharp, “I really don’t know” (232). Hedda’s captivity to self is also evident in the play’s title. Ibsen’s titling of the play: “Hedda Gabler,” reflects Hedda’s identity of self over husband. Hedda’s married name is Hedda Tesman, but the play’s title uses Hedda’s maiden name enhancing this character’s identity apart from marriage. In the article, “Hedda and Bailu: Portraits of Two ‘Bored’ women,” author C. He comments: “The use of Hedda’s maiden name (Gabler) for the title...[suggests] the difficulties Hedda has in adjusting to the middle-class environment of the Tesmans- to become, in a real sense, Hedda Tesman” (447-448). Hedda refuses to merge her life with Tesman’s or enjoy the company of his family by showing great disinterest and rudeness. Hardwick mentions that Hedda refuses to like anyone and is continually hurtful with insults of bored pricks or calculated piercings (51). Hedda deliberately insults Tesman’s aunt who has greatly sacrificed to provide extra money for the new couple. Upon seeing Juliana Tesman’s hat, Hedda scoffs: “[The maid] let her old hat lying out on the chair” (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 230). Hedda intentionally hurts the caring aunt in the despondent bondage of selfness. It is difficult to understand Hedda’s motivation for her dark

behavior, but in explanation of her hurtful treatment of Juliana Tesman, Hedda suggests: “These things come over me, just like that, suddenly. And I can’t hold back” (254).

Hedda is entrenched in captivity to selfness, and has been recognized as, “one of the meanest Romantics in literature” (Hardwick 49). Hedda’s captive attitude of selfishness is also exhibited in biting jealousy.

Hedda’s obsession with self arouses an inane jealousy of others. Hedda is greatly jealous of the character Thea Elvsted, and remarks: “[She is] the one with the irritating hair that she was always showing off” (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 133). Hedda’s selfishness results in feelings of jealousy over the appearance of Thea Elvsted. Hardwick notes: “Ibsen’s stage instructions describe Hedda as having hair of an agreeable ‘medium brown but not particularly abundant,’ Thea’s hair is [the opposite]...this is the envy and emptiness of a narrow vulgar world” (64). Hedda’s captive attitude of selfishness leads to an obsession with Thea’s hair as she is often touching Thea’s hair and threatening to burn the hair. Hedda asserts: “I think I’ll burn your hair off, after all!” (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 272). Hedda’s jealousy over Thea’s appearance stems from captivity to selfishness and boredom with life.

Hedda is bored and restless; her captivity to selfness has deepened to a blasé view of daily life. C. He comments: “the boredom in [Hedda’s life] is deadening” (449). Hedda’s captivity to selfishness has removed any excitement and joy from life. Hedda notes that she has one talent, to bore herself to death (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 257). Hedda is captured by an obsession with self that threatens her very existence. C. He further perceives that Hedda yearns for an escape from the ennui, but is afraid of the inherent dangers of freedom and the possibility of a scandal (454). Hedda longs to escape

the bonds of languor but is unwilling to dismiss the egotistical bend to put self above everything else. Scholars have commented that Hedda's ideal is to live beautifully, but she is unwilling to change her self-protective nature (Cardullo 23; Hardwick 63). Hedda's captivity and obsession with self is in direct contrast to the courageous drive of character, Eilert Løvborg. Hedda desires this same boldness and quest for life but is, "too much afraid of scandal" and "a terrible coward" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 266). Løvborg encourages Hedda to break out of the bonds of captivity and follow her, "hunger for life" (266). Hedda longs for the same courage as Løvborg to live beautifully. When Løvborg desires to commit suicide, Hedda passionately asks him to die beautifully in a selfish attempt at finding vicarious satisfaction. Hedda's captivity to self and habitual boredom provides the means for Løvborg's death. Hedda happily comments: "[It is] liberating to know that there can still actually be a free and courageous action in this world. Something that shimmers with spontaneous beauty" (298). Hedda views Løvborg's death as a worthy escape from the monotony of life, but soon learns the truth of his death in the climax of captivity.

Climax of captivity. The climax of captivity is reached when Hedda learns that Løvborg's death is not intentional and far from beautiful. With Løvborg's failure to die courageously, Hedda feels the growing sense of hopelessness amidst the captivity of self. Hedda bemoans: "what is it, this-this curse-that everything I touch turns ridiculous and vile?" (299). Hedda's captivity to self is a dark trap of depression and gloom. Hedda's bounds of captivity also grow tighter with the realization that Judge Brack could reveal her connection to Løvborg's death resulting in scandal. Hedda comments with growing hopelessness: "So I'm in your power judge, you have your hold over me from now

on...I'm in your power. Tied to your will and desire. Not free. Not free, then! No- I can't bear the thought of it. Never!" (302). Hedda faces a new captivity, this time to an individual, which is in direct contrast to Hedda's captivity to selfness. Hedda decides to commit suicide, dying in the throes of one form of captivity to prevent another. C. He observes: "Ironically, Hedda, who has had the desire and ambition to manipulate the fate of others, ends up living under someone else's control. It is the reversed pattern of life she [and she] cannot submit" (450). The captivity and obsession with self prevents Hedda from loving, interacting without jealousy, overcoming the ennui, and trying to live each day courageously. Hardwick discerns that Hedda began life with passion and ends a failure (51). Hedda aimlessly dies in the captivity of selfishness. The theme of captivity as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist is marked through the mental or emotional manipulation of an object or person. The theme of captivity also serves as a performance guide for the portrayal of the female protagonist, providing the actor with a powerful foundation of character development and understanding.

The Theme of Captivity as a Performance Guide for the Portrayal of the Female Protagonist

The theme of captivity in the works of Henrik Ibsen serves as a performance guide for the portrayal of the female protagonist. Mason observes that Ibsen wrote plays to be performed on the stage (1). Ibsen's female protagonists were written as dynamic characters for the stage and have forever changed the history of acting style and performance.

History of Performing Ibsen

Acting styles prior to Ibsen. The pre-Ibsen acting style was derived from the material of melodramas and well-made plays. Early melodramas are very different from Ibsen plays, containing a clear depiction of good and evil. Mason notes: “The melodramatic protagonist, usually in conflict with external forces rather than divided against the self, struggles to win a battle while the antagonist tries to block the action. The play usually moves toward an idealized, simplified truth” (31). The melodrama contrasts with Ibsen’s complex plot, characterizations, and the varying themes of captivity. For the actor of Ibsen’s day, early scripts contained sparse material for analysis. Cima recognizes that the material of nineteenth-century melodramas and French well-made plays required a small amount of analysis in comparison to the in-depth plots of Ibsen (24). The early actor did not need to analyze a character for performance and was accustomed to a skeleton-like script (25). The actor considered the script to be a mere template for performance and had great freedom to make revisions and omissions at will. Early nineteenth-century acting also placed a large emphasis on the personality of the actor. Cima notes: “The attitude toward acting in the pre-Ibsen era . . . encouraged the audience to derive pleasure from being swept away by the hero-star’s mastery. In direct contrast, the audience attending Ibsen premiers [were] curious about the plays themselves. The play was the thing” (58). Ibsen’s writing changed understanding of characterization and acting style. The Henrik Ibsen’s plays exploded onto the theatre scene, uprooting customs and forging a new acting style.

A new style of acting: realism. The work of Henrik Ibsen created a new style of acting based on the multi-dimensional characterizations and serious societal issues. This

compelling subject, strengthened by layers of captivity, forced actors to develop a new way of creating characters and delivering lines. Cima recognizes: “Acting styles reflect, enforce and critique cultural models of behavior. New styles...can suddenly make visible the out-datedness of certain notions of performance- not only in the theatre but also in daily life” (1). Ibsen’s work served as a catalyst for the creation of a realistic acting style for the theatre. Nineteenth-century acting theorists were also prominent contributors to Realism in acting. The renowned theorist Constantin Stanislavsky developed an acting methodology that strongly upheld the words of the playwright, enhancing the work of Ibsen and the style of realism (25).

In the study of acting, the question of what determines reality is paramount. Realistic acting is often a confusing term for theatre scholars, and as a culture changes, the acting style must reflect the transformation of new mores. Ibsen’s electrifying works included startling cultural issues such as feminine bondage to the male legal system and a mother’s desertion of her children. The new acting style developed out of the necessity of realistically portraying Ibsen characters, and in this regard Ibsen’s enhanced the importance of the playwright. Mason conveys: “The late nineteenth century saw the emergence of a relatively new phenomenon, acting styles named for playwrights instead of actors or directors . . . critics began to speak . . . of ‘Ibsen actors,’ even in productions not directed by Ibsen” (3). This phenomenon of naming an acting style for the playwright placed the script in a prominent position empowering the playwright to express the realities of his or her society (Cima 25).

The work of playwright Henrik Ibsen caused actors to analyze an entire script and esteem the playwright’s words. This new style of acting was built on a foundation of

textual analysis that consisted of creating character based on clues provided by the playwright in the text and stage directions. The theme of captivity presents a starkly realistic view of a female's captivity to family, society or self. Ibsen's plays changed the style and perception of acting to one of character research and understanding. Audience members began to appreciate this new style of complex characterization that presented compelling and often mysterious characters. Mason comments: "Public attention turned from the fashions and morals of the acting company to the morality of Nora . . . and Hedda" (iv). Audience members showed interest in the plot of the play rather than the stardom of an individual. Actors were now held at a high standard of acting with truth and reality. Ibsen's "fourth wall realism" as described by Coldewey and Streitberger, demanded an acting style that appeared true to nature and layered with the character's bondage (577). The performance of Ibsen's characters provided an unparalleled challenge that included a unique and revolutionary form of character development. Cima remarks that Ibsen's plays gave actors the opportunity to utilize a new acting style and distinguish their work (21). Henrik Ibsen's scripts, consisting of the daring theme of female captivity, forever revolutionized the field of acting by defining a new style of acting. This acting style requires a thorough understanding of the character's psychology to, "unlock the past" and "discover the playwright's 'master-keys' to the characters' present concerns" (28). The new Ibsen acting style transformed the conventions of the theatre and amended the role of the nineteenth-century actress.

The role of the nineteenth-century actress in Ibsen's new style. The theme of captivity in the works of Henrik Ibsen expanded the role of the nineteenth-century actress. Ibsen's work greatly influenced the acting profession for both male and female

performers, but for the first time women were given substantial acting roles. With Ibsen's characters, actresses were finally able to portray realistic and multidimensional women (Cima 26). Ibsen's multi-layered theme of captivity expanded the role of the female protagonist, directly affecting the actress. In Ibsen and the Actress, Robins remarks: "No dramatist has ever meant so much to the women of the stage as Henrik Ibsen" (55). Ibsen expanded the material and opportunity of nineteenth-century actresses by intricately layering female characters in levels of captivity. For the first time, actresses of Ibsen's day were able to develop characters rich with depth and psychology. Cima recognizes that female actors were about to develop psychologically real acting through Ibsen (35). Ibsen's creation of in-depth female characters, who struggle through numerous layers of captivity, enhanced the actress' opportunity fully to experience the craft of acting. Cima further comments: "[Female actors] were eager for a chance to transform themselves, to make the audience conscious of a new way of performing, particularly a new way of performing womanhood" (21). For the first time, a female performer could accurately portray the thoughts, feelings, and captivities of women. Elizabeth Robins, a nineteenth-century actress, exclaims: "To those of use who were given a share in shaping for the stage some of Ibsen's characters, it is an unfading glory of memory . . . when, led by him, we 'mounted right to the top'-and heard harps in the air" (56). Ibsen's characters provide actresses with a strong voice in the performance of women.

Ibsen's female characterization radically altered the development of the nineteenth-century actress by providing female characters rich with possibility that mirrored life. A turn-of-the-century American actress, Minnie Maddern Fiske, radically changed her development of character through the works of Ibsen. Fiske comments: "In

the study of Ibsen, I had to devise what was . . . for me, a new method. To learn what [the character] was I had to imagine all that she had ever been” (qtd. in Cima 27). Fiske’s new method of characterization consisted of studying the script to discover the desires of the character, and imagining the character’s past history. Through complex character development, Ibsen provided the actress with the opportunity to dig deeply into the fertile soil of characterization. Another early Ibsen actress, Alla Nazimona, spent a large amount of time in the study of Ibsen’s characters and appeared to change physically for each character. Bryan notes: “A small woman, Nazimova seemed to dominate the other characters in Hedda Gabler when she later played Nora Helmer, Nazimova seemed smaller than her normal five-feet-three . . . Nazimova said, ‘I make myself taller or shorter by thinking I am taller or shorter’” (267). Nazimova was able to change her physical portrayal of Ibsen’s characters through in-depth study of the script translated into performance. Nineteenth-century actresses greatly enhanced the craft of acting through character research. The actress Eleonora Duse was complimented by George Bernard Shaw for extensive character analysis. Shaw comments: “Duse knew Nora more intimately than Nora herself did” (qtd. in Bryan 81-82).

Ibsen’s plays, deep with character history and situation, served as a catalyst for the advancement of the role of the nineteenth-century actress. In the style of realism, voracious research became a trademark of the Ibsen actress. The notable British actress, Janet Achurch was complimented for dedicating her whole self to the portrayal of Nora (Bryan 5-6). Actresses trained in Ibsen’s new style of realism were completely dedicated to the development of character. Understanding an Ibsen character became a long and careful process of peeling back the multiple layers of psychology and bondage. Alla

Nazimova spent four years developing the role of Hedda Gabler, and Minnie Fiske recommended a solid three years of preparation for an Ibsen role (Cima 41). As a result of Ibsen's characterization, nineteenth-century actresses developed an acting style firmly founded with research, generating performances of life-like naturalism. Janet Achurch's aforementioned performance as Nora in A Doll's House was also praised for realistic acting. Robbins notes: "[The performance seemed] less like a play and more like a personal meeting- with people and issues that seized us and held us, and wouldn't let go" (11). Henrik Ibsen's psychologically deep female protagonists, encumbered with complex themes of captivity, served as a tool to enhance the role of the nineteenth-century actress. Actresses of Ibsen's time were presented with the eternal gift of vividly penned female protagonists that continues to influence contemporary theatre.

Contemporary Ibsen Performance

Influence on modern-day actors. The plays of Henrik Ibsen influence modern-day actors in the performance of the female protagonist. Ibsen has been said to give actors the opportunity to, "do the deep and delicate thing . . . to paint with a fine brush . . . our plastic humanity" (Cima 1993). The plays of Ibsen, with the multi-layered theme of captivity, continue to provide actors with deep material for characterization. Ibsen's work has been considered, "glorious actable stuff," a legacy present in modern-day performance (Robins 31). Ibsen's plays, founded in the acting style of Realism, have strengthened every area of theatre. Mason notes: "Even for actresses who have never played Ibsen, the parts they have played in modern drama would never have been written but for Ibsen" (5). Henrik Ibsen's complex female characters and the challenging theme of captivity have set a precedent for the creation and development of ensuing roles for

women. These characters still offer a great appeal to modern-day actresses because of the level of complexity (Mason v-vi). Ibsen's realistic style of playwriting has illuminated the path of character development to the present. Finney observes Ibsen's timeless appeal and influence: "The power of his female roles has continued to attract [top-caliber] performers down to our own day, as evident in the homage paid him by Julie Harris, Jane Fonda, Liv Ullmann, Glenda Jackson, and others" (93). Ibsen's roles and the theme of captivity in the performance of the female protagonist have set a standard of performance accessible to contemporary actors.

Portraying Ibsen characters. The modern-day actor can incorporate the multifaceted theme of captivity in the performance of Ibsen's work. It is necessary for the Ibsen actor to do a thorough first reading of the play feeling for rhythms, plot texture and characterization. The actor must also read a second time, concentrating on plot structure and climax (Harrop and Epstein 199). The text is the actor's first source of insight into Ibsen characters. Cima comments that Ibsen provides the actor with many clues for unraveling the plot (26). In the early readings of A Doll's House, the actor will begin to recognize Nora's tensions to money, male society and Torvald. Each additional reading will provide the actor with more clues to Nora's reaction to and treatment of each level of captivity. Robins remarks: "By the power of [Ibsen's] truth and the magic of his poetry he does something to the imagination that not only gives the actors an impetus, but an impetus in a right direction" (54). The longevity of Ibsen's work and applicability to contemporary acting is a result of a profound writing style. Harrop and Epstein triumph the wealth of material available in an Ibsen text: "Actors will find a lot of information in the text about environmental influences, childhood backgrounds, education, social

interests . . . professions, class and economic level. All of these may be used to add dimensions [as if] to give colors and shadings to the [character]" (190). The actor will greatly benefit from a thorough reading of an Ibsen play that builds an understanding of character background. It is important for the actor to avidly consult Ibsen's copious stage directions for character insight. Harrop and Epstein further recognize Ibsen's contributions to Realism in acting through the detailed use of stage directions. This technique was use to describe the character's outer experiences and reveal the inner workings of those characters (177). The actor can gain insightful character knowledge through Ibsen's stage directions. In the play The Lady from the Sea, Ibsen provides helpful stage directions to expose Ellida's inner thoughts at her climax of captivity. Ellida's emotions are described as, "a rising tumult of feeling," and her voice as, "soft and tremulous" (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 319). As Ellida faces the climax of her captivity to the Stranger, the stage directions read: "[Ellida] stares at him briefly as if struck dumb . . . [she strikes] her hands together" (319). These actions within the stage directions enhance the text to solidify Ellida's freedom from captivity. The reading of Ibsen's plays provides a basis for character study that is enhanced through the study of modern Realism.

As noted earlier, the acting style of Realism begins with the landmark works of Henrik Ibsen. The contemporary actor is faced with many twentieth- and twenty-first century theatrical works that deal with more familiar pictures of reality. The modern-day actor must also recognize the early tenets of realism in the pages of Ibsen's work. Harrop and Epstein note: "For the actor dealing with the spectrum of realism from Ibsen [to contemporary playwrights], the task is not an adjustment of technique as it would be from

Shakespeare to Ibsen, but an acceptance of [the truth of] a particular society” (176-177). The actor must adopt the realities of nineteenth-century life from clothing to mannerisms. Harrop and Epstein further comment that the actor needs to find the reality of nineteenth-century costume and set dressing (167-168). Despite the affluence of the character, the actor must also remember to portray the character’s humanness. It is noted: “In Realism, the actors’ task is to create the dynamics of this ‘individual’ who has . . . to resemble the ‘person next door,’ with all the economic and social problems that impinge upon an individual within the particular context of his or her time” (168). The contemporary Ibsen actor must achieve a level of reality congruent with his or her character. The Ibsen actor must also divorce self from the performance of Ibsen’s protagonists.

An Ibsen actor has an enormous responsibility of preserving the legacy of the great playwright’s words while creating a dynamic and unique character. The actor must be careful to play the character and not self. Harrop and Epstein refer to this phenomenon as a fallacy and remind actors to serve the needs of the character and not the feelings of the actor (178). Robbins also warns: “Make no mistake, you must let Ibsen play you, rather than insist on [you] playing Ibsen” (56). The actor is in grave danger of causing private emotional pain and ruining the true essence of the character when including personal information in the characterization process. The Ibsen actor must never base the tumultuous father-daughter relationship in A Wild Duck, off of a personal relationship. Harrop and Epstein further observe: “Character is still a mask created by choice and selectivity, it is not the simple revelation of the actor’s self . . . the truth of realism is still the truth of the dramatic action written by the playwright” (189). The Ibsen actor is building a character mask that should be based in reality, but not the personal reality of

the actor. In preparing for an Ibsen role, the actor must also be free from judgments of the character's morality. Cima notes that actor does not have to accept the morality or responses of a character, but the actor must understand the character's choices (42). The actor must separate his or her own sense of morality from that of the characters. A nineteenth-century German actress, Hedwig Niemann-Raabe could not accept Nora's decision to abandon her children in the final scene of A Doll's House, and refused to act this material. Bryan relates: "Popular German actress Hedwig Niemann-Raabe strongly objected to the ending of Ibsen's drama [A Doll's House] on the irrelevant pretext that in similar circumstances she would not desert her children" (268). Niemann-Raabe's decision to ignore the truths of Ibsen's character, forced Ibsen to pen an alternate ending which the playwright considered, "a barbaric outrage to be used only in emergencies" (qtd. in Durbach 14). Ibsen actors must not allow personal convictions to change the characters' decision. An actress who cannot understand why Nora leaves Torvald or why Hedda commits suicide should not play either character (42). Ibsen's female protagonists struggle through a myriad of captivities that are pivotal to the central thrust of each play. The Ibsen actor will face a complexity of morality issues within the theme of captivity. The character of Nora makes the decision to leave her husband as a response to the captivities of money, male society and husband Torvald. The character of Hedvig takes her own life in a sacrificial love offering amidst the throes of captivity to her father Hjalmar. The character of Ellida is an extremely weak captive to the fantasies of her mind. The character of Hedda leads an acerbic existence that responds to the captivity of selfishness with a suicidal gun shot. Ibsen's women undergo a myriad of situations that must be respected, researched, and adopted in the actor's portrayal of these characters.

The early twentieth-century actress, Elizabeth Robins, set an example in separating self from performance: “I had the best of reasons for not trying to mitigate Hedda’s corrosive qualities. It was precisely the corrosive action of those qualities on a woman in Hedda’s circumstances that made her the great acting opportunity she was” (21). The development of Ibsen’s female protagonists requires in-depth research to stay true to the character’s reality and leads to dynamic performances.

The study of the theme of captivity in development of Ibsen’s female protagonists should be a long and diligent process with the goal of a smooth transition to performance. The actor must apply the extensive research to an effortless performance on the stage. The actor’s voice is an integral element to the performance of an Ibsen text. Harrop and Epstein recognize that the actor must be heard at all times, even a stage whisper should carry to the back of the house (188). This basic acting function is necessary to ensure a good portrayal of Ibsen’s female protagonists. An early twentieth century newspaper critic recognized this problem of voice in an Ibsen performance by actress Hilda Englund: “[The actress], who has had considerable experience in the works of the master, found difficulty in adapting her voice to the auditorium, with consequent distraction from her reading” (qtd. in Bryan 106). The Ibsen actor must project the voice to provide the audience with a complete picture of character nuisances within the levels of captivity. The actor’s voice must also reflect the cultural tone of the time period. Harrop and Epstein remark that the actor must find the character’s natural vocal manner, which encompasses vocal mannerisms and accent (178). The actor playing Ibsen must recognize a character’s natural speech patterns through the text. The character of Hedvig, in The Wild Duck is a child with vocal patterns reflecting age and innocence. This character

refers to her father as “daddy,” and frequently uses the adjective “lovely” (“lovely food,” “lovely cold beer”) (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume I 139, 145). The actor must adopt a vocal pattern consistent with Ibsen’s textual clues. The actor can also find insight into the formality of voice in the set and costume designs. Harrop and Epstein further note that the formality of speech should equal the formality in costume and sets (177). The actor’s voice should enhance the image of a time and place. The body is another crucial element in the performance of Ibsen.

The performance of Ibsen’s female protagonists is not complete without attention given to the actor’s body. Textual clues and character development begin the process of actively engaging the body in the performance of Ibsen and the theme of captivity. Harrop and Epstein observe that an audience can further understand a character through physical activity (189). The character’s physical responses clarify meaning for the actor and audience, so the Ibsen actor should develop a bodily point of feeling for each character. The actor must determine the location of the character’s energy center to direct movement. Harrop and Epstein clarify this concept: “Our outlook on life is very often indicated by the way in which we physically approach life. Chest and shoulder thrusting can suggest aggressiveness . . . stomach predominance can suggest softness [and] sensuality” (189-190). To physicalize an aggressive character like Hedda in Hedda Gabler the actor should develop a center of movement in the upper parts of the body.

The Ibsen actor needs to also be aware of gesturing when adding physical dimensions to performance. Acting in Realism demands natural movement and gestures that are appropriate for the character’s environment and emotional state (186). The earlier mention of Ibsen’s stage directions during the character Ellida’s climax of captivity in

The Lady from the Sea, also provides material for physical gesturing. Ibsen prescribes many movements for this character such as “hands to her head,” and “flinging herself,” that can provide insight into the actor’s use of gestures (Ibsen, Four Major Plays: Volume II 319). In the genre of Realism, the use of body movement and appropriate gesturing is encompassed the need for activity. The contemporary actor has adopted stage busyness to occupy the character’s body on stage, which has become a trademark of acting Realism (185). In portrayal of Ibsen characters, the actor may be blocked to complete a variety of physical activities during conversation such as the interaction with a photo album in Hedda Gabler, or the business with the silk stockings in A Doll’s House. The Ibsen actor must be able to bodily engage in the physical demands of the script without distracting from Ibsen’s intent. Harrop and Epstein observe: “One of the traps . . . of realistic acting is that the actor will fall into an overly busy mannered way of performing that can become distracting to the audience and this obscure depth of character creation with surface mannerisms” (186). The performance of Ibsen’s female protagonists in captivity is enhanced through the use of the body.

The plays of Henrik Ibsen, A Doll’s House, The Wild Duck, The Lady from the Sea, and Hedda Gabler, demonstrate the theme of captivity as a literary tool in the development of the female protagonist through bonds of captivity, the climax of the character, and then the character’s response. Nora’s is a captive to the tertiary bonds of money, male society, and Torvald, and responds these chains of captivity by leaving. Hedvig is a captive to Hjalmar and sacrifices her life as a love offering. Ellida is a captive to mental fantasies and is freed by the gift of free choice. Hedda is a captive to selfness and stays ensnared in captivity with suicide. The theme of captivity also serves as a

performance guide to the performance of the female protagonist through the creation of the distinct Ibsen acting style. This acting style of Realism broke down the walls of nineteenth-century cultural captivity by enlarging the role of the actress and continues to affect contemporary performance. The modern-day Ibsen actor applies the theme of captivity to performance through a through reading of the script, understanding of Realism, removal of personal motivations from the work, and use of voice and body. The theme of captivity in the work of Henrik Ibsen provides a fresh literary reading and a tool for creating dynamic characterization for performance.

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