Henrik Ibsen’s drama is the most prominent and lasting contribution of the cultural surge seen in Scandinavian literature in the later nineteenth century. When he made his debut in Norway in 1850, the nation’s literary presence was negligible, yet by 1890 Ibsen had become one of Europe’s most famous authors. Contrary to the standard narrative of his move from restrictive provincial origins to liberating European exile, Narve Fulsås and Tore Rem show how Ibsen’s trajectory was preconditioned on his continued embeddedness in Scandinavian society and culture, and that he experienced great success in his home markets. *Ibsen, Scandinavia and the Making of a World Drama* traces how Ibsen’s works first travelled outside Scandinavia and studies the mechanisms of his appropriation in Germany, Britain and France. Engaging with theories of book dissemination and world literature, and re-assessing the emergence of ‘peripheral’ literary nations, this book provides new perspectives on the work of this major figure of European literature and theatre.

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IBSEN, SCANDINAVIA AND THE MAKING OF A WORLD DRAMA

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I. Ibsen at Karl Johan’s street in 1891, with the Parliament building (Stortinget) in the background. Source: Coloured cardboard card. Artist: Gustav Lærum. Courtesy of Erik Henning Edvardsen.


7.3 ‘Today, at 11.35 am, Henrik Ibsen brought his manuscript to the post office’. Source: Blæksprutten, Christmas issue 1892. Artist: Carsten Ravn. Courtesy of The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

8.2 Illustration to ‘The Wild Duck’. Source: F. Anstey

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A.1 Sources of Ibsen’s income, 1870–1900. (Kroner) Sources: Henrik Ibsen: Regnskapsbøker [Account books] 1870–1901, 2 vols., NLN, Ms fol 3222.


A.3 Ibsen’s first seasons at Christiania Theater, 1855–1897. (Season: 1 September–31 August.). Source: Øyvind Anker, Christiania Theater’s repertoire 1827–99 (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1956).

A.4 Sources of Ibsen’s extra-Nordic income, 1890–1900. (Kroner) Source: Henrik Ibsen, Regnskapsbok (Account book) 1890–1901, NLN, Ms fol 3222.
Acknowledgements

The end of the nineteenth century experienced what may be called a Scandinavian moment in world literature. This moment’s most prominent feature and lasting contribution were the plays of Henrik Ibsen. When Ibsen made his literary debut in Norway in 1850, the nation’s literature was negligible. By 1890, he had become one of the most famous authors of Europe and made Nordic literature a marketing brand. How was such an extraordinary trajectory possible?

Our contribution to answering that question has emerged from our involvements in two large publishing projects, namely the new critical edition of Ibsen’s complete works, Henrik Ibsens skrifter (HIS) and the new Penguin Classics Ibsen edition. It has been completed within the research project ‘The Scandinavian Moment in World Literature’, supported by the Norwegian Research Council and UiT The Arctic University of Norway, and is, more generally, indebted to our long-time work within reception studies, book history, intellectual history and world literature and drama.


The starting point for our collaboration was HIS, and we would like to thank its main editor, Vigdis Ystad, as well as Christian Janss, Ståle Dingstad and Aina Nøding. Many people have contributed comments and input on a number of different occasions. We would also like to thank all those who have either hosted us or participated in our own seminars in the course of this process. We would like to express our gratitude to our PhD students Maria Purtoft and Henning Hansen for helping to create a stimulating research environment.
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Note on the Text

Quoting Ibsen in English necessarily involves the use of a number of different editions. For Ibsen’s plays, two editions have been particularly important. For Ibsen’s early plays, we have (mostly) used The Oxford Ibsen (1960–77), edited by James W. McFarlane. For Ibsen’s contemporary plays, we have, where available, quoted the New Penguin Classics edition (3 vols., 2014–), edited by Tore Rem. We have also adopted the Penguin edition’s new English title Pillars of the Community for the play usually called The Pillars of Society, unless the reference is to an English translation or production with that last title.

Of Ibsen’s letters, just a small selection of those considered most important are translated. When a letter already exists in English translation, we have quoted it from the two main editions: Letters and Speeches, trans. Evert Sprinchorn (1965) and Letters of Henrik Ibsen, trans. John Nilsen Laurvik and Mary Morison (1908). Otherwise, the footnotes will only give the addressee and date of the letter, and often having ‘with comment(s)’ added, referring to the critical and commented edition of Ibsen’s letters in Henrik Ibsen’s skrifter vols. 12–15, ed. Narve Fulsås (2005–10), digital edition: www.ibsen.uio.no/brev. In these cases, translations are ours. To those able to navigate Norwegian, the comments will provide additional references to those listed in the bibliography.

Other translations into English are also ours, unless otherwise stated.

In the nineteenth century the name of the Norwegian capital was ‘Christiania’, gradually replaced by ‘Kristiania’ from the 1870s before becoming Oslo in 1925. We have opted for consistently using Kristiania for the capital while alternating according to the institutions’ own practices for institutional names, like Christiania Theater, where the old spelling was preserved until the theatre was closed down in 1899 and replaced by Nationaltheatret.
Chronology

1828–1843: Skien
1828, 20 March: Born

1843–1850: Grimstad
1850, 26 September: The Burial Mound (Kjæmpehøien) performed (published January–February 1854)
1851, 1 and 8 June: Norma, or: The Love of a Politician (Norma eller en Politikers Kjærlighed) published

1851–1857: Bergen
1853, 2 January: St John’s Night (Sancthansnatten) performed (published 1909)
1855, 2 January: Lady Inger (Fru Inger til Østeraad) performed (published May–August 1857)
1856, 2 January: The Feast at Solbøg (Gildet paa Solbøg) performed (published 19 March 1856)
1857, 2 January: Olaf Liljekrans performed (published 1902)

1857–1864: Kristiania (Oslo)
1858, 25 April: The Vikings at Helgeland (Hærmendene paa Helgeland) published
1860, January: The poem ‘On the Heights’ (‘Paa Vidderne’) published
1862, 23 February: The poem ‘Terje Vigen’ published
1862, 31 December: Love’s Comedy (Kjærlighedens Komedie) published
1863, October: The Pretenders (Kongs-Emnerne) published
Chronology

1864–1868: Rome
1866, 15 March: Brand published
1867, 14 November: Peer Gynt published

1868–1875: Dresden
1869, 31 September: The League of Youth (De unges Forbund) published
1871, 3 May: Poems (Digte) published
1873, 17 October: Emperor and Galilean (Keiser og Galileer) published

1875–1878: Munich
1877, 11 October: Pillars of the Community (Samfundets støtter) published

1878–1879: Rome and Amalfi
1879–1880: Munich
1879, 4 December: A Doll’s House (Et dukkehjem) published

1880–1885: Rome
1881, 13 December: Ghosts (Gengangere) published
1882, 28 November: An Enemy of the People (En folkefiende) published
1884, 11 November: The Wild Duck (Vildanden) published

1885–1891: Munich
1886, 23 November: Rosmersholm published
1888, 28 November: The Lady from the Sea (Fruen fra havet) published
1890, 16 December: Hedda Gabler published

1891–1906: Kristiania (Oslo)
1892, 12 December: The Master Builder (Bygmester Solness) published
1894, 11 December: Little Eyolf (Lille Eyolf) published
1896, 15 December: John Gabriel Borkman published
1899, 19 December: When We Dead Awaken (Når vi døde vågner) published
1898–1900: Collected works (Samlede værker) vols. 1–9 published
1906, 23 May: Dies

Abbreviations

BL: British Library, London
NLN: National Library of Norway [Nasjonalbiblioteket], Oslo
NLS: National Library of Sweden [Kungliga biblioteket], Stockholm
PRO: Public Record Office, London
RDL: The Royal Danish Library [Det Kongelige Bibliotek], Copenhagen
VAM: Victoria and Albert Museum, London