Eine alltägliche Tätigkeit: Performing the Everyday in the Avant-Garde Theatre Scene of Late Nineteenth-Century Berlin

A dissertation by

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Die Menschen, die immerfort “warum” fragen, sind wie die Touristen, die, im Baedeker lesend, vor einem Gebäude stehen und durch das Lesen der Enstehungsgeschichte etc. etc. daran gehindert werden, das Gebäude zu *sehen.*

– Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*

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Short Abstract

***Eine alltägliche Tätigkeit*: Performing the Everyday in the Avant-Garde Theatre Scene of Late Nineteenth-Century Berlin**
A dissertation by Ruth Schor, Wolfson College, University of Oxford
In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the subject of Modern Languages, Hilary Term 2016

This dissertation situates late nineteenth-century Berlin's reception of naturalist drama in contemporary discourse about European modernism, which to date has disregarded the significant impact of this cultural environment. Examining the Berlin avant-garde's demand for "truth" and "authenticity," this study highlights its legacy of promoting more honest and dynamic forms of human interaction.

Sketching the historical background, Chapter 1 demonstrates how the reception of Henrik Ibsen in Berlin fuelled creative strategies for a more honest approach to theatre. From literary matinees to more egalitarian ways of directing theatre, this moment in cultural history significantly shaped people's understanding of theatre as a tool for social criticism and as a means of creating a sense of intimacy. Two important figures are highlighted here: literary critic and theatre director Otto Brahm, central to the promotion of naturalism, and his more prominent protégé Max Reinhardt, who developed Brahm's legacy.

Situating these developments in a theoretical framework, Chapter 2 draws on the concept of "the everyday" as set out by Toril Moi, Stanley Cavell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein to link the role of the ordinary on stage to the avant-garde's search for authenticity and truthfulness. Through this framework, Ibsen's social dramas from *A Doll's House* to *Hedda Gabler* (Chapter 3) can be seen perfectly to exemplify this shift in perspective from the 1880s through the 1890s, revealing the complexity of truthfulness in communications.

Tracing these themes in other dramatic works, innovative readings of Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei* (Chapter 4) and Rainer Maria Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben* (Chapter 5) shed new light on these two fin-de-siècle authors. By highlighting these authors' previously unrecognised connections with Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene and their dramatic exploration of interpersonal connection, this study shows both how theatre functioned as a tool to examine human relationships and to what extent twentieth-century literature was grounded in this way of thinking.

Long Abstract

Eine alltägliche Tätigkeit: Performing the Everyday in the Avant-Garde Theatre Scene of Late Nineteenth-Century Berlin

In 1878, theatre critic Otto Brahm witnessed a performance of Henrik Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* and proclaimed the beginning of a new theatre era in the German-speaking world. Finally, he writes, "truth" entered Berlin's theatre scene, as Ibsen presented Germany's emerging avant-garde – disgruntled with an environment of commercial complacency – with "human beings" on stage one can finally "believe in." Witnessing a performance of *Ghosts* ten years later, Brahm would declare Ibsen's social drama the "gateway to modernity," and he subsequently became a leading figure in reshaping Berlin's theatre landscape. In order to facilitate the performance of Ibsen's plays – be it due to censorship or economic constraints – Brahm and his contemporaries developed creative strategies to introduce Ibsen into Berlin's theatre domain. Affordable publications such as Reclam, literary matinees at the Residenztheater, or private membership clubs such as the Freie Bühne all helped open a space for a new theatre-going public for whom truth and artistic integrity were the new ideal.

On the basis of this early "Ibsen-effect," theatre-makers such as Otto Brahm and publishers such as Samuel Fischer facilitated an avant-garde theatre scene lasting well into the twentieth century that allowed playwrights such as Arthur Schnitzler and theatre-makers such as Max Reinhardt to imprint themselves on the Berlin theatre landscape. At the core of this scene, Otto Brahm and his contemporaries sought a theatre of human beings they could connect with, and found in Ibsen's characters and subject matter an authenticity making that possible. As director of the

Deutsches Theater (1894–1904) and later the Lessingtheater (1904–1912), Brahm translated this urge into acting and directing techniques that would focus on psychological nuance and refined characters. All the while, he continued to promote an egalitarian theatre practice, and thereby stood at the forefront of an avant-garde movement spreading all over Europe.

Historically speaking, the significance of Otto Brahm and his contemporaries has been well recognised since they introduced naturalism to the Berlin stage. Yet this work is often merely regarded as having initiated the avant-garde, whereas Max Reinhardt and his early twentieth-century theatre empire are thought of as instigating the actual "theatre revolution" towards modern theatre, as described by Erika Fischer-Lichte and others. Naturalism, on the other hand, was soon declassified as outdated social realism, and, together with Otto Brahm, confined to history.

In this thesis, I argue that the reason the cultural impact of Brahm and his contemporaries has often been overlooked (and, moreover, surprisingly under-researched) may be that his theatre work is mostly associated with the introduction of naturalism – which by the 1890s had already been declared outdated. While these things are strictly true, the research tends to disregard the fact that Brahm's legacy spreads beyond the promotion of naturalism, or, rather, tends not to recognise the significance of his particular understanding of naturalism. This thesis proposes an alternative reading of the avant-garde theatre scene that developed around the figure of Otto Brahm, and aims to re-establish the significance of the late nineteenth-century reception of naturalism in the contemporary discourse on modernism. I argue that prevalent historical conceptions tend to disregard the decisive cultural shift that Brahm's work brought about, namely making honest and dynamic forms of human interaction a new focus of modern theatre. This rather wide and complex concept has

already been thoroughly clarified by Toril Moi's study *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, in which she argues that Ibsen's work encompasses the "problems of establishing relationships in the modern world."

I argue that the reason why Ibsen's plays following *A Doll's House* so particularly appealed to this avant-garde can be found in the multiple ways in which these plays facilitated a shared communal experience between audience and performers, creating a space to experience intimacy anew. This is not only evident in the distinct sense of community that infiltrated all the avant-garde's scenes of cultural engagement, from private membership clubs to literary matinees, but also in the exceptionally strong and egalitarian ensemble mentality Brahm promoted, and in acting and directing styles that specifically prioritised a strong interpersonal connection between audience and performer. Naturalism's desire to be truthful thus reveals itself as an urge to find ways to reconnect in an increasingly modernising world, specifically the urban environment of Berlin.

I intend to prove my hypothesis on two levels. The first shows that intimacy and togetherness were key elements in the theatre practice that dominated Berlin's avant-garde in late nineteenth-century Berlin. To do this, I re-establish a historical record of this avant-garde, going from literary salons to the Deutsches Theater, and illustrating just how much this avant-garde emphasised creating a strong sense of togetherness and a group identity. By demonstrating the extent to which Max Reinhardt's more prominent theatre work in the early twentieth century can be regarded as a continuation of this development, I conclude that the elements of interpersonal connection Brahm introduced can be regarded as the more significant legacy of the 1880s' avant-garde theatre scene.

The second level of my investigation develops a dramatic criticism framework that allows us integrate these aspects into an analysis of the plays that were relevant at the time. I base this theoretical framework on that of "the everyday," more particularly the distinct version of the everyday Moi has observed as a central element of Ibsen's modernism. To gain a more refined model of the everyday for drama, however, I turn to Wittgenstein, whose ordinary language philosophy as manifested in the *Philosophical Investigations* pairs elegantly with his views on theatre as manifested in *Culture and Value*. Combining a philosophy of togetherness, of communication, with an understanding of drama and complementing it with Stanley Cavell's application of Wittgenstein's philosophy to the analysis of Shakespearean drama, I am able to translate this philosophy into a framework that incorporates theatre as a means of experiencing togetherness. This enables me to analyse the plays that played seminal roles in the formation of this avant-garde, such as Henrik Ibsen's social dramas from *A Doll's House* to *Hedda Gabler* or Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei,* and examine how exactly these works portray the complexities of human relationships while simultaneously enhancing a connection between audience and performer. Furthermore, by introducing the case study of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben*, I demonstrate both how this important literary figure of the early twentieth century was profoundly impacted by the avant-garde theatre scene of the late nineteenth century, and how he used naturalism to explore the difficulties in establishing meaningful relationships. This project thus not only offers an important contribution to the history of theatre in Berlin, but it also provides valuable material through which contemporary drama can be assessed anew.

The dissertation breaks down as follows:

Chapter 1: The "Ibsen-effect": avant-garde culture and social emancipation in late nineteenth-century Berlin
This chapter provides a historical overview of the avant-garde theatre scene in Berlin, particularly around the figure of Otto Brahm and the "Ibsen-effect." It shows how Berlin's Ibsenism infiltrated the entire theatre-going culture in Germany and how themes like authenticity, honesty and interpersonal connection played important roles in both theatre making and audience reception. In the process, this historical analysis offers a model of modernism that integrates the city as a platform reconceiving the everyday as a space for connection through theatre. By studying the scene's different models of artistic integrity, such as combining economic necessity with truthful art, it is revealed to have fundamentally reconceptualised theatre's role in society. I also demonstrate how notions of space and proximity play a particular role in this urban context, both as a concrete necessity and as indicators for shifting notions of intimacy and (inter-) personal space. Throughout this chapter, I argue that Brahm's legacy is evident in Reinhardt's focus on truthfulness and authenticity in acting, as well as in his new theatrical spaces such as the Kleines Theater or the Kammerspiele. Ultimately, I re-orient the focus of study regarding this chapter of German theatre history towards notions of community and togetherness.

Chapter 2: The everyday as a space for togetherness

In order to enable a dramatic criticism that suitably reflects the questions raised on my historical overview, I develop a theoretical framework of "the everyday" based on Toril Moi's argument as set out in *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*. As Moi relies powerfully on Wittgenstein, I flesh out her framework through a reading of his *Philosophische Untersuchungen* in combination with his observations on theatre collected by Georg von Wright in *Culture and Value*. To connect these back to the everyday, I turn to Stanley Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein and theatre, which further draws out the element of disconnection as a feature of the everyday, particularly the way the language of the theatre can illuminate the struggle and the complexity of human intimacy. Focusing on the role of the everyday thus enables a theatre criticism that acknowledges the importance of human intimacy, not just as a thematic focus when analysing plays, but also to better understand theatre practice and analyse the interpersonal dynamics between audience and performer.

Chapter 3: Just say it! Performing the revelation of truth in Ibsen's social dramas
This chapter identifies the "Ibsen-effect" by observing how the development of Berlin's theatre avant-garde can be marked through Ibsen's plays: *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts, The Wild Duck, Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler*. By looking at Ibsen's rhetoric of revealing the truth, this chapter investigates how his characters perform authenticity and the ways the relationships between the characters on stage – as well as the one between audience and performer – develop in these moments of truth. I demonstrate how Ibsen skilfully deploys a number of stage devices such as speech, costume, set, and lighting to reveal confrontations with the truth as moments of negotiating human intimacy and interpersonal connection. Ibsen's staging of the everyday thus specifically addresses the complexity of revealing the truth,

highlighting these moments as attempts to be more truthful with one another. By looking at both the early flagships of naturalism (*A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*) and the plays where Ibsen took a more critical stand towards truth (*The Wild Duck, Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler*), I will show how this complexity continues throughout Ibsen's plays and exposes the everyday as a space for authentic (dis-) connection while highlighting the tension between authenticity and artificiality that the theatre space offers.

Chapter 4: Go home: the everyday as a space for connection in Schnitzler's *Liebelei*

This chapter offers a reading of Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei* as a play truly encompassing the turn from the naturalism of the 1880s towards modernism. *Liebelei* marked the beginning of Otto Brahm's relationship with Schnitzler, subsequently establishing him as one of the main authors of Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene. Despite its "outdated" naturalism, *Liebelei* was a remarkable success in both Vienna and Berlin, from the grandiose Burgtheater to Max Reinhardt's intimate Kammerspiele. As a significant continuation of the Ibsen-effect in the mid-1890s, *Liebelei* explores the issues of voice and personal space, becoming an arena of connections and exposing the everyday as a space to "live with yourself." A closer reading of the relationship between the characters Christine and Fritz particularly shows how the play's use of naturalism and images of the everyday such as street life and living rooms evoke authenticity and thereby highlight the complexity of human intimacy.

Chapter 5: The Drama of Everyday Life: Rainer Maria Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben*

The final chapter presents a more unusual case study, namely Rainer Maria Rilke's largely unknown play *Das tägliche Leben*. While plays such as *Ghosts* and *Liebelei* had central roles in the development of the avant-garde theatre scene, this play mattered in so far as it triggered a significantly negative reaction. Staged as a literary matinee at the Residenztheater, the play was discontinued after only three performances in 1902 due to the vehement criticism it received. Precisely because of the strong reaction it provoked the play serves as an exemplary case study for this avant-garde theatre scene. This reading of *Das tägliche Leben*, a play directly inspired by Ibsen and Schnitzler's *Liebelei*, illustrates how the reception of naturalism in late nineteenth-century Berlin had shaped people's understanding of human relationships and thus had become a vehicle for thinking through the difficulties of how to establish genuine intimacy in the early twentieth century.

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Introduction

With this thesis, I aim to re-establish the role of the reception of naturalism in late-nineteenth Berlin in current academic discourse, arguing that its cultural impact went way beyond what has been previously recognised. In particular, I argue that the reception of Henrik Ibsen in 1880s Berlin profoundly re-shaped notions of what theatre can be, and how it can affect our understanding of human relationships.

Even though the significance of the German Ibsen reception has been well documented,[1] the existing research has not gone much beyond acknowledging it as an important moment in time.[2] Furthermore, as Tobias Boes notes in *The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism*, the Weimar period still remains the main reference point for German modernism, particularly in the English-speaking world.[3] Naturalism, on the other hand, though recognised for its groundbreaking capacity, is seen as already outdated by the 1890s.[4] As David George and Toril Moi point out, scholarly interpretations of naturalism, particularly Ibsen's naturalism, have been quite restrictive in this regard, failing to look beyond its social realism.[5] I argue that it was not only Ibsen's drama whose role has not yet been sufficiently studied and acknowledged, but the theatre-going culture that emerged from this drama is just as

[1] David George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland: Rezeption und Revision*, trans. Heinz Ludwig Arnold and Bernd Glasenapp (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,1968); Pasche, Wolfgang, *Skandinavische Dramatik in Deutschland: Björnstjerne Björnson, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg auf der deutschen Bühne 1867 – 1932* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn Verlag, 1979); Marc Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster"* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 1989).
[2] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters* (Stuttgart: UTB, 1993), 236-243; Günther Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945: Seine Ereignisse – seine Menschen* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2007), 48-49.
[3] Tobias Boes, "Germany," in *The Cambridge Companion to European Modernism*, ed. Pericles Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 34.
[4] As declared by Hermann Bahr in 1891. In Hermann Bahr, *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus,* vol. 2 of *Kritische Schriften in Einzelausgaben*, ed. Claus Pias (Weimar: VDG, 2004).
[5] George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland*, 28-44. Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theater, Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 24.

important, as are the ways in which the reception of Ibsen in late nineteenth-century Berlin affected the ways people engaged with theatre. Instead of looking at naturalism as a short-lived dramatic form, I thus intend to demonstrate the wider impact this time had on Berlin's theatre-going culture and cultural conceptions overall.

One way to set out what this thesis aims to achieve is by explaining why Gerhart Hauptmann is not an important figure in the argument. Looking at naturalism in 1880-90s Berlin, Hauptmann's name is one of the first that comes to mind. His plays *Vor Sonnenaufgang* and *Die Weber* are considered early instances of properly modern theatre in Germany.[6] Nonetheless, naturalism – and the reception of naturalism in Berlin – had a much wider impact on artistic developments in the early twentieth century than has previously been recognised, reaching beyond Hauptmann and Germany overall. For that reason, I have specifically chosen to look at three writers of naturalistic theatre – Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Schnitzler and Rainer Maria Rilke - who may not have been Germans, but still became important literary figures of the German-speaking world for early twentieth century modernism. I thus aim to illustrate both the wider impact of naturalism and the pluralistic ways in which it can be understood and interpreted. That being said, all this does not mean that the ideas presented in this thesis could not also contribute valuable insights to an understanding of Hauptmann's work, particularly flagships of naturalism such as *Vor Sonnenaufgang*.

To understand the impact of Ibsen's naturalism is to look beyond interpretations of naturalism as mere social realism. As Peter Jelavich has argued,

[6] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 242-243; Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*, 48-49.

naturalism was a movement favouring aesthetic pluralism and liberal policy.[7] Though famous for theatrically presenting phenomena previously held to be too scandalous for the stage, such as incest and disease, a closer look at the debates surrounding naturalism shows that there was one main reason it conquered German stages: artists wanted to confront the audience with "the truth" and thus engage with art more honestly. Above all, it was a means to generate a fruitful discussion about art and fight for artistic integrity in the name of truth.

And it is this movement, and this way of thinking, to which I intend to draw attention and which I hope to re-establish in academic discourse. To do so, it is necessary to look at the beginning of naturalism on the Berlin stage, specifically a decisive moment in German theatre history, namely the reception of Henrik Ibsen – and particularly the key role in the promotion of naturalism in Berlin by Otto Brahm.

For Otto Brahm, staging naturalism was explicitly part of a social movement promoting inclusivity, equality, and above all, artistic integrity. Early on, when he was a literary critic, Brahm championed Ibsen's work, and, following the censorship of the play *Ghosts*, he actively fought for the play's performance. Through private members' clubs such as the Freie Bühne, Brahm became part of a social movement that found creative solutions to circulate more experimental plays and opened up an inclusive space for different members of society. By, for instance, allowing single women to attend theatre matinees without an escort or by distributing affordable publications such as Reclam or Fischer, the cultural innovations of the 1880s made plays more accessible, making this moment of cultural history stand out as one where theatre was rediscovered as a way to effect social change.

[7] Peter Jelavich, "How 'Jewish' was Theatre in Imperial Berlin?", in *Jews and the Making of Modern German Theatre*, ed. Jeanette Malkin and Freddie Rokem (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2010), 42-43.

To Otto Brahm and his contemporaries, staging "truth" was more than just a commitment to social realism or replicating reality through minute stage directions. When Berlin's intellectuals responded to the works of Henrik Ibsen in the 1880s, they looked for ways of facilitating an honest and dynamic form of human interaction. This not only shows in the culture of theatre making they developed, but above all in the newfound psychological profundity that they found in Ibsen's work. Characters ought to be fully explored, they felt, and every minutia of their performance should build up a nuanced performance of the character's motivating intentions. This, according to Otto Brahm, would facilitate a stronger connection between audience and performers, and thus create a world where we (better) understand each other. Ibsen, he claimed, finally gave them "Menschen, an die wir glauben konnten."[8]

I argue that, though exposing "the truth" was a central element of the reception of naturalism, interpretations of what constitutes this truth have changed over time. Throughout the different stages of the naturalist reception of the 1880s, and even through the 1890s to the fin-de-siècle, however, theatre-makers' desire to confront the truth was always accompanied by explorations of more honest forms of human interaction.

This element comes out most strongly in the avant-garde theatre in the late nineteenth century and remained an important driver of theatre making in the early twentieth century, above all through the work of Max Reinhardt. A student of Otto Brahm's, Reinhardt soon distinguished himself by explicitly rejecting naturalism. The ways in which he implemented intimacy and collective identity into his theatre work, however, for example through the private members' club Schall und Rauch or the intimate venue of the Kammerspiele, shows to what extent these elements had

[8] Otto Brahm, *Kritische Schriften über Drama und Theater,* ed. Paul Schlenther (S.Fischer: Berlin, 1913), 448.

become integral parts of theatre making. This way, the different ways theatre-makers dealt with "the truth" actually reveal that they were interested in developing different forms of togetherness.

Instead of looking at a prominent figure of German naturalism such as Gerhardt Hauptmann, I would like to show that naturalism was much more than a short-lived dramatic form. By showing the significance of Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene, I intend to resituate this development in the current debates about modernism. As a theoretical basis for my study, I draw on Toril Moi's main argument in her work *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, in which she claims that it is Ibsen who should be regarded as the beginning of modernism in theatre.[9] Moi claims that Ibsen's work has been wrongly classified as a "boring realism," and argues that the most decisive elements of Ibsen's works following *A Doll's House* are actually to be found in the dynamics (and failures of) communication. Accordingly, she claims, even during his most naturalist phase Ibsen has always thematised the problem of how to establish meaningful relationships in the modern world.

In late nineteenth-century Berlin, I argue, people responded to Ibsen's work for precisely that reason, believing him to be as invested in creating a network to facilitate more honest and dynamic forms of human interaction. By persistently questioning truth and authenticity, modernism in (Northern) European theatre can thus be understood as being born of a search for more truthful forms of human communication, more genuine forms of interpersonal connection.

In relation to naturalism and its promotion of truth and authenticity, one particular aspect of Moi's argument stands out, namely "the everyday." A prominent concept in early twentieth-century academic discourse, "the everyday" has come to

[9] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*.

denote authenticity and simplicity, a positive evaluation of the ordinary. In recent studies, the concept of the everyday has further been recognised as playing a major role in late nineteenth-century literary currents.[10] Yet the term can also be used to capture that desire for truth and authenticity to which naturalism in theatre responded.

Moi demonstrates that the urge to expose "the truth" was rooted in a desire to re-establish a sense of connection between human beings. To Moi, the everyday thus represented an alternative to what she calls "skepticism," based on Stanley Cavell's model of regarding language skepticism as a form of avoiding intimacy. A focus on the everyday, for Moi and Cavell, would help establish a form of communication and human interaction that recognises people for who they are and facilitates a form of engagement enabling real and genuine relationships.

By grounding my study of late nineteenth-century theatre making in Moi's conceptualisation of the everyday, I can specifically home in on the ways this avant-garde theatre scene confronted the sense of disconnection it perceived between people, their environment, and their community.

While the historical background provides the basis for my argument, my case studies will show how different dramatists used naturalism, or rather elements of naturalism, to study the dynamics of communications. First and foremost, I examine how the works of Ibsen addressed such matters, as this will help me to ground Moi's theoretical concept even further but also uncover the role of Ibsen's plays in sparking the cultural dynamics of the avant-garde theatre scene in Berlin. To the latter end, I add a reading of *Ghosts* – a play Moi chose to leave out, since she focuses on

[10] Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 29; Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael Sayeau, *Against the Event: The Everyday and the Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

romantic relationships – as this play was so fundamentally relevant to the avant-garde theatre scene.

In addition, looking at Ibsen's plays between *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, I focus on how Ibsen presents the subject of truth, particularly studying what revelations of truth do to the characters on stage. This helps me to show that, though this period in Ibsen's career certainly evinces a change towards more subtle and refined character studies, his tendency to have characters constantly exposing the truth also meant they are negotiating intimacy, making themselves heard, and above all, affecting their relationships to the other characters.

Broadening my focus beyond Ibsen in order to reflect other key players of this cultural environment, I then present two case studies that both elicited strong reactions, one from the 1890s and one from the fin-de-siècle: Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei* and Rainer Maria Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben*. These two case studies not only mark the different stages of the avant-garde theatre scene, but they also represent two important cultural figures whose connections to Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene deserve further attention.

My reading of Schnitzler's *Liebelei* analyses the ways the play tackles failures of communication, particularly examining the different relationship models it distinguishes and the different ways these couples are in touch with the everyday. In the process, I thus resituate the play in current discourse as one that, though certainly to be considered as an important document of Viennese fin-de-siècle culture, also shows how Schnitzler incorporated the same themes of miscommunication Moi observes in Ibsen. To speak in Moi's terms, *Liebelei* can thus join the modernist theatre canon because of the way it presents the everyday as an antidote to skepticism. Interestingly, the play also strongly appealed to Otto Brahm, initiating a strong

working relationship between the two artists and introducing Schnitzler to Berlin's theatre landscape.

Precisely because Rilke's career as a playwright is not particularly well known, nor particularly successful, my last case study, Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben*, represents a slightly different phenomenon. I hope to show how important this brief phase was for his development as an artist and how strongly his struggle resonated in the local landscape. Though Rilke went through a phase of strict naturalism, he next turned to writing plays, amongst them *Das tägliche Leben*, that question how to turn a "Nebeneinander" into a "Miteinander." While the play itself turned out to be a failure, it serves as a useful document of an artist using naturalism to think through issues of interpersonal relationships in the twentieth century.

My thesis is divided into three parts. In the first part, I set out my historical background through a detailed study of the different cultures of theatre making that infiltrated the avant-garde theatre scene. By looking at the reception of *A Doll's House* in Berlin's literary salons, Reclam's low-cost publications, and the literary matinees at the Residenztheater, my aim is to provide an overview of the multiple ways in which these artists fundamentally rethought what theatre could be by turning it into a way of strengthening the community and exploring human interaction.

By focussing on Otto Brahm's work as a theatre critic, the history of the Freie Bühne, and Brahm's directing techniques at the Deutsches Theater, I will illustrate how the reception of Henrik Ibsen became a forum for democratising the theatre landscape and developing creative solutions that would change anything from modern acting techniques to ticketing culture. A comparison with the theatre works of Max Reinhardt – who rebelled against naturalism – will then reveal just how much

Brahm's legacy, particularly his aims of achieving a more truthful human interaction and strengthening the community, remained a strong feature of Reinhardt's work.

Responding to the questions raised in the historical analysis, I set up the theoretical framework for my thesis, which is built on the concept of "the everyday" as deployed by Toril Moi, in the second part. In order to clarify the definition of the everyday I will be working with, I first situate Moi's argument in the wider academic field of everyday studies. Then, in order to further strengthen the theoretical definition of Moi's everyday, I thoroughly examine the basis of her argument: Ludwig Wittgenstein's definition of the everyday as set out in his *Philosophische Untersuchungen* and the way Stanley Cavell has interpreted that definition for the stage. Cavell has shown both how the value of interpersonal connection can be said to constitute a philosophy for the stage (in his reading of Shakespearian tragedy), and how theatre can actually facilitate more honest and dynamic forms of human interaction. Building on Cavell's Wittgensteinian approach to theatre, I cross-reference the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* with Wittgenstein's thoughts on theatre in *Culture and Value* to extract a stronger understanding of how the everyday can be regarded as a forum for establishing meaningful relationships. I hope thereby to develop a definition of the everyday that is suitable for theatre criticism.

In the third part, I present my case studies – Ibsen's social dramas in Chapter 3, Schnitzler's *Liebelei* in Chapter 4, and Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben* in Chapter 5 – showing how each of these address questions of intimacy and their characters' relationship with the everyday.

By the end of this thesis, I hope to have shown how the naturalism movement of the 1880s – or, more generally, the legacy of naturalism – had a much more profound impact than most studies grant it, significantly affecting the way people

thought about human relationships through theatre. Furthermore, I hope to re-establish this avant-garde theatre scene as crucial to certain cultural innovations, forming a defining moment in the development of modern acting and directing techniques, theatre-going culture, and the role of the written play, and redefining the theatre space and the role of theatre within an urban setting overall.

Challenging some established scholarship, my aim is for this era to be recognised for its importance in breeding a group of artists, cultural critics, and theatre-makers who saw theatre as a way to implement a more egalitarian and inclusive spirit into society, and who in fact regarded it as a form of social empowerment through culture. My study of the reception of Ibsen as a defining moment for modernism in the German-speaking world constitutes another contribution to the established literature. Though some scholars, such as Günther Rühle, define the performance of *Ghosts* at the Residenztheater in Berlin as the beginning of modern theatre in Germany, the Wiener Moderne and the Weimar Republic still dominate popular conceptions of German-speaking modernism. I aim to reintroduce the late nineteenth-century cultural environment as not only a significant moment in time, but a crucial development in what would become modernist discourse.

From the perspective of German-Jewish history, this study also supplies additional historical evidence for Peter Jelavich and Anat Feinberg's reading of Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene as a forum for Jewish emancipation; an area which, according to Marvin Carlson, has been surprisingly neglected.[11]

[11] Jelavich, "How 'Jewish' was Theatre in Imperial Berlin?", 39-58; Anat Feinberg, "Stagestruck: Jewish Attitudes to the Theatre in Wilhelmine Germany," in *Jews and the Making of Modern German Theatre*, 59-76; Malkin and Rokem, eds., *Jews and the Making of Modern German Theatre*, back cover.

My study of "German" modernism, meanwhile, mostly focuses on cultural developments in the fast-growing metropolis of Berlin, the urban centre from which this avant-garde emerged. Yet any discussion of the avant-garde theatre scene in Berlin also has to honour the substantial influence of actors, theatre-makers, and critics from Vienna on that scene (and vice versa). My study thus also recognises the scene's impact and transnational exchange beyond Berlin, making this another reason why I chose to look at theatre-makers who had a strong relationship to the avant-garde but nonetheless came from cultural environments outside of Germany.

This thesis deploys the term "avant-garde" to describe the artistic movement that spread throughout Europe in the late nineteenth century, particularly as a form of promoting the works of Henrik Ibsen and naturalistic theatre in general. As Toril Moi notes, the term both relates to movements that emerged in the late nineteenth century to facilitate performances of Ibsen's *Ghosts* – preceded by the Théâtre Libre in Paris and succeeded by the Independent Theatre Society in London – but it has also been defined as a distinct aspect of modernism.[12] I argue that the term suitably acknowledges the distinct cultural innovations that Otto Brahm and his contemporaries achieved by reconceiving the role of theatre in the community and by rethinking cultures of theatre-making. As Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane argue, the naturalism movement falls within the scope of the avant-garde, and therefore modernism, due to its role as a movement to implement a more pluralistic theatre landscape: "the movement principle was an essential constituent of modernism."[13] In their reading of Renato Poggioli's *The Theory of the Avant Garde*, they explain how:

[12] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 67-68.
[13] Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "Movements, Magazines and Manifestos: The Succession from Naturalism," in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 192.

> One of the distinguishing features of the modern arts, he [Poggioli] suggests, is to be found in the milieu and life-style from which they are generated – the *avant-garde* life-style in which the artist functions as a kind of aesthetic guerrilla […] given to distinctive mannerisms, outrageous social display, withdrawal from bourgeois norms, and manifestations of group cohesion and solidarity.[14]

In light of these reflections, my thesis considers the naturalism movement around Otto Brahm as avant-garde since it was a cultural movement dedicated to staging experimental theatre for the purposes of innovation, solidarity and a more pluralistic theatre landscape. Max Reinhardt's theatre work during the early twentieth century maintained those principles, and therefore continued the avant-garde tradition.

In the wider context of the study of European modernism, I hope to strengthen existing arguments that aim to overturn the hitherto underdeveloped and under-acknowledged role of theatre in modernism. Though this is increasingly being addressed by scholars such as Toril Moi, Katherine Kelly, Penny Farfan, and Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, the scholarly debates seeking to reconstruct the narrative of European modernism's cultural roots have consistently undervalued the role of theatre and drama.[15] This study contributes to this issue by (re)directing the focus onto the role of theatre in European modernism and by including the socio-cultural role of engagement within theatre and theatre criticism.

Finally, this project also introduces theatre into the established field of everyday life studies, which has very recently discovered the importance of late nineteenth-century artistic currents for the increasing academic interest in everyday life in the twentieth century. [16] As the link between modernism and the everyday has

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[14] Ibid., 193.
[15] Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, "Modernism and Theatrical Performance," *Modernist Cultures* 1 no.1 (2005): 59–68; Penny Farfan and Katherine E. Kelly, "Staging Modernism: Introduction," *South Central Review* 25 no.1 (2008): 1-11.
[16] Bryony Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 29; Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009);

heretofore mainly been investigated in English literature, this thesis hopes to be a valuable addition to the existing debate by extending the link between the everyday and European modernism to the discipline of modern languages and the study of theatre.

Michael Sayeau, *Against the Event: The Everyday and the Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Chapter 1 – The "Ibsen-effect": avant-garde culture and social emancipation in late nineteenth century Berlin

Introduction

The moment Henrik Ibsen's plays reached the Berlin theatre scene in the late nineteenth century has been widely recognised as a significant milestone for modern theatre in Germany. From the success of *Pillars of Society* in 1878, "Ibsenism" had reached the German theatre scene, particularly in Berlin, as Ibsen's plays functioned as flagships for confronting *real* issues on stage and abolishing hypocrisy and pretence. In the 1880s, the naturalism of Ibsen's social dramas became the performance style of choice for young German cultural critics looking to see a *truthful* representation of contemporary society on stage. Amongst them was Otto Brahm, a theatre critic and subsequently a theatre director who actively promoted the work on Henrik Ibsen – in particular the publicly censored *Ghosts* – and thereby inspired a cultural shift towards an avant-garde theatre culture. Despite being recognised as an important moment in theatre history, the wider impact of this "Ibsen-effect"[1] on Berlin's modern theatre culture has not always been fully acknowledged. This may have to do with the fact that Brahm and his contemporaries primarily promoted naturalism, which by the 1890s had already been declared stilted and outdated.[2] More prominent contemporary theatre-makers such as Max Reinhardt are known for their

[1] Inga-Stina Ewbank used this term as a translation of Theodor Fontane's expression "Die Ibsen-Wirkung" in his review of *The Lady from the Sea*. Theodor Fontane, "Theater, Musik, Konzerte," *Königlich priviligierte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen (Vossische Zeitung)*, 6 March 1889, reproduced for The National Library of Norway, last modified 30 June 2011, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11202407.0. Inga-Stina Ewbank, "Hedda Gabler, Effi Briest and 'The Ibsen Effect'," vol. 1 of *Theodor Fontane and the European Context: Literature, Culture and Society in Prussia and Europe,* ed. Patricia Howe and Helen Chambers, 95-104 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).
[2] Martin Esslin, "Modernist Drama: Wedekind to Brecht," in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 527.

rejection of naturalism. This historical perspective suggests that naturalism – and thus its promotion in the 1880s – may have served the purpose of breaking down social barriers, but its moment had passed. Yet this argument neither does justice to Ibsen's legacy, nor does it recognise the different cultural innovations happening in theatre at the time.

In this first chapter, I will argue that the cultural scene that emerged from the reception of Ibsen's work in the 1880s profoundly influenced people's understanding of how to engage with theatre, and continues to do so in the present day. Headed by Otto Brahm, the process of bringing Ibsen to the Berlin stage significantly shaped modern acting and directing techniques, paving the way for more prominent theatre-makers such as Max Reinhardt and Erwin Piscator in the early twentieth century.

Otto Brahm was one of the best-known figures of this emerging theatre avant-garde who was involved in both cultural reception and production. He started out as a theatre critic and thus offered a public voice of Ibsen admiration that soon gained many followers. Devoted to promoting naturalism, and opening the space for a more egalitarian and pluralistic theatre landscape, Brahm then got actively involved the practical theatre world. First as artistic director of the Freie Bühne, later the Deutsches Theater and, finally, the Lessingtheater, Brahm further promoted Ibsen's plays in Berlin's theatre landscape directly. But Brahm was not alone, critics such as Paul Schlenther, publishers such as Samuel Fischer or Residenztheater director Anton Anno all supported the circulation of Ibsen's plays and were dedicated to maximising the exposure of the plays that were not allowed to be performed. While Otto Brahm may have been an important figure for the advancement of modern theatre in Berlin, the avant-garde theatre scene cannot be reduced to any one person. It was a unique collaboration between different people passionate about authenticity and artistic

integrity in an increasingly commercialised theatre metropolis. In order to bring Ibsen to the theatre scene of Berlin, there were many forces developing tactics to circumvent public censorship and maintain a high standard of "literary theatre." Reclam, publisher of affordable paperbacks, organisers of literary matinees, initiators and members of the private members' club Freie Bühne all contributed to a theatre culture of public engagement rather than "mere" entertainment. It is therefore, I argue, the distinct sense of close collaboration and togetherness that constitutes the legacy of this Ibsen-effect and marked the beginning of an avant-garde culture in Berlin.

Brahm's involvement in the making of this theatre culture demonstrates to what extent this moment redefined the role of togetherness in the theatrical milieu. As a cultural critic, Brahm actively promoted a discussion about how truthfulness and authenticity can come to define both a performance technique and a desired audience experience. Brahm repeatedly acknowledged Ibsen's powerful ability to create "real people" on stage, as Ibsen's nuanced, psychologically complex character studies allowed audiences to recognise the characters on stage as believable human beings, thus opening a space for self-reflection.[3] He recognised identification with the characters on stage as an important aim of the theatre experience, for which he believed realistic staging provided a necessary tool. As a theatre director, Brahm later focused on creating a strong ensemble that could incorporate such psychological profundity by strengthening the collaboration between ensemble members. Eschewing 'lead' roles, Brahm was known for his distinctly democratic direction that regarded each actor as equal and each play as an ensemble piece.[4] As he directed his actors to thoroughly study their characters, those actors (Max Reinhardt among them) would

[3] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 107 and 448.
[4] Horst Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), 85.

later become famous exactly for their complex character studies, even after they had abandoned Brahm's brand of naturalism.

Throughout this chapter I propose a reading of the Ibsen-effect that looks beyond social realism, and actually considers the socio-cultural awareness that it triggered. By drawing attention to the ways Ibsen's reception has placed human relationships centre stage for the plays themselves, the making of theatre and the theatregoing experience, I show how intimacy and togetherness are key factors for the emergence of modern theatre in Berlin. The figure of Max Reinhardt, introduced in the final section of this chapter, is key in this regard. Due to his very explicit rejection of naturalism, Reinhardt has often been regarded as an opponent of Brahm, even though it was actually Brahm who brought Reinhardt to Berlin to act at the Deutsches Theater.[5] A careful look at Max Reinhardt's theatre will reveal to what extent Reinhardt incorporated Brahm's legacy, as his work is marked by a constant desire to break down the barriers between audience and performer, and thus create an intimate connection between them.

This chapter's first part begins by providing a short overview of the figure of Otto Brahm and how his work as a theatre critic offered a voice to those social currents that were bubbling up in Germany at the time. In order to situate Brahm's critical work in his contemporary socio-cultural atmosphere, I will briefly compare different historical accounts that have tried to explain the German urge for "truth" and "authenticity" in the second half of the nineteenth century. I then argue that, for Brahm, the *Menschendarstellung* – achieving a form of psychological depth and an emotional theatre experience – was what was essential to staging Ibsen, not just Ibsen's social realism. For Brahm, a particular level of psychological depth enhanced

[5] Alexander Weigel, "Das Berliner Theater und seine Wiener Einflüsse," in *Vienna Meets Berlin: Cultural Interaction 1918-1933*, ed. John Warren and Ulrike Zitzlsperger (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 65 – 66.

the experience between the people gathered in the theatre space (both actors and audience). I conclude by showing that Brahm regarded intimacy as an essential element of the theatre experience, one he tried to promote, and that his urge to see something real and authentic was actually grounded in a desire to identify with characters as fellow human beings. Accordingly, Brahm's brand of realism rather functions as a tool to further identification with the people and the stories on stage. Transitioning to Brahm's work as a theatre director, I will then illustrate how Brahm translated togetherness into a way of working with actors as an ensemble.

The second part presents the different new tactics that were used to circumvent the dominant theatre order (above all the censors), thereby showing how the urge to promote naturalistic plays – above all the ones by Ibsen – was instrumental in developing and stimulating an avant-garde theatre-going culture. I demonstrate that Brahm may have been the main player of the avant-garde theatre scene, but he was by no means the first or only one. Instead, I argue, the making of this avant-garde was a collaborative effort between passionate individuals who shared an urge for change. This section begins with a tribute to the Reclam publishing house to show how "literary theatre" and artistic integrity were promoted. Made possible by these affordable Reclam booklets, a new theatre-reading culture had formed, which would enable written plays to be present in the salons, publications and discussions of the time, thus launching a new culture of informed criticism, as plays would actually be *read*.

Following on from that, I proceed to analyse the early stages of Berlin's Ibsen-effect as a theatregoing culture. Starting off with the tumultuous Residenztheater performance of *A Doll's House*, I then examine what proved to be a decisive moment for the beginning of Ibsenism in Germany: the *Wohltätigkeitsmatinee* of *Ghosts* at the

Residenztheater. As the play was banned under public censorship, this legendary performance stands out as a moment of socio-cultural engagement. As a creative strategy to circumvent public order restrictions, this performance provides an exemplary case study for the passionate theatre-going public, searching for a public form of expression for "the truth."

Consequently, I introduce the Residenztheater, a theatre that has been much neglected in scholarly discourse. Looking at the direction of Anton Anno and later Sigmund Lautenburg, I will demonstrate how this theatre was a significant venue promoting Ibsen and developing a form of critical engagement with his work. Furthermore, I will show how this theatre contributed to challenging the institutional set-up of commercial theatre by introducing literary matinees in addition to a "regular" theatre schedule.

Finally, I look at the Freie Bühne, the private members' club created to circumvent public censorship. By looking at its institutional set-up, I will explore how this organisation became a hub for inclusivity and togetherness, as well as a forum for social emancipation.

In the third section, I question the impact of the Ibsen-effect on modern theatre in the early twentieth century. To do this, I propose a reading of Max Reinhardt's work that recognises Brahm's influence, showing how Reinhardt incorporated several of Brahm's principles and that these principles are exactly what defines this new modern engagement with theatre: developing a theatre that creates characters that feel like real human beings on stage, and strong connections among a small, thoroughly trained ensemble. Furthermore, Reinhardt's aim to create an intimate connection between audience and performers shows how the elements of togetherness and interpersonal connection continued, the legacy of the Ibsen-effect.

The story of this avant-garde theatre scene is above all a story of group effort, of a kind of togetherness that inspired an entirely new, modern theatre. This not only comes out in the joint efforts to facilitate the staging of Ibsen's plays, but also in the continuing controversies and disagreements about the representation of "authenticity" and "truth." To be avant-garde became a constant desire to think and reconsider, even once the avant-garde had moved beyond naturalism. In this chapter I (also) argue that the community spirit of creating theatre together was one of the most decisive legacies that came out of the naturalism movement in Berlin.

I further argue that this type of togetherness actually goes far beyond just wanting to be together as a community, but actually speaks to a desire to strengthen interpersonal relationships through the theatre space, to develop a connection that would allow people to understand each other and to connect to one another. Against the background of the rapidly urbanising environment of Berlin's theatre metropolis, togetherness and intimacy become important subject matters in trying to negotiate life in the modern city. This chapter, then, also ultimately functions as a framework to present a reading of modernism in Germany as a modernism that interrogates the different ways of being together in the modern world.

I. Be real: the rise and fall of Otto Brahm's naturalism

The reception of Henrik Ibsen is crucial to understanding the development of modern theatre in Germany, and thus German modernism in general. In a movement that was headed by critic (and later director) Otto Brahm, Ibsen's plays became the platform for sociocultural debates, stimulating evolution in acting techniques, new theatre spaces, and other forms of reconceiving engagement with theatre. Following the

general avant-garde wave infiltrating Europe, the emerging scene around Otto Brahm declared war on public censorship and economic dependency, and demanded that the stage honestly confront contemporary social issues.[6] In concrete terms that meant Ibsen's plays thematically confronted social issues, and they were subject to censorship by the Prussian *Zensurbehörde*. Brahm's creative tactics for avoiding this censorship would in itself constitute a kind of social revolution.

For Ibsen himself, the cultural environment of Germany not only mattered because he intermittently lived in Dresden and Munich, and regularly visited Berlin.[7] The German reception of Ibsen's social dramas represents a unique moment in cultural history. Although *The Pretenders*, performed in Germany in 1876, was the first Ibsen play to be seen in that country, Germany's "Ibsenism" truly took off with *Pillars of Society*, which was performed in 23 theatres all over Germany in 1878.[8] Interestingly, this wave began in Berlin, where between 25 January and 6 February 1878 *Pillars of Society* premiered in no less than five theatres.[9] Upon witnessing one such Berlin performance of *Pillars of Society*, Otto Brahm would declare the beginning of Ibsenism in Germany. Reflecting back a few years later on 10 May 1904, Brahm would call this moment decisive in beginning a new era of theatre:

> Sogleich empfingen wir die erste Ahnung einer neuen poetischen Welt, wir fühlten uns ein erstes Mal, vor Menschen unserer Tage gestellt, an die wir glauben konnten, und aus einer allumfassenden sozialen Kritik der Gegenwart sahen wir die Ideale der Freiheit und der Wahrheit, als die *Stützen der Gesellschaft*, siegreich emporsteigen. Von Stund an gehörten wir dieser neuen Wirklichkeitskunst, und unser ästhetisches Leben hatte seinen Inhalt empfangen.[10]

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[6] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 236.
[7] Boes, "Germany," 35.
[8] Ibsen repertoire database of the National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/2953.0?result=true&stype=.
[9] Belle-Alliance-Theater (25 January 1878); Stadt-Theater Berlin (2 February 1878); National-Theater Berlin (3 February 1878); Ostend-Theater (6 February 1878); Reuniontheater (6 February 1878) in Ibid.
[10] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 447-448.

Brahm's observation clearly illustrates the particular cultural revelation that would soon infiltrate Berlin's theatre scene. He saw in Ibsen a tool of cultural criticism and a way of transforming the "Ideale der Freiheit und Wahrhaftigkeit" into cultural activism. With imagery such as "siegreich" and "Freiheit", Brahm's vocabulary resonates with connotations of social revolution. The extent to which social activism and theatre are intertwined in this statement confirms the peculiar social role that this emerging theatre movement was about to take, as well as, furthermore, how deeply it was to enter social awareness. To Otto Brahm, those aspects would come to capture the essence of modern theatre and modernity itself. When he witnessed the first production of *Ghosts* at the Residenztheater in 1887, he concluded:

> Mit der ersten Aufführung eines Ibsen-Dramas setzt das jüngste Jahrzehnt unserer dramatischen Entwicklung ein: als im Januar 1887 die "Gespenster" über das Berliner Residenztheater schritten, sprang die Pforte zur deutschen Moderne auf.[11]

Ibsen was viewed as the first author to capture the German Zeitgeist and to find a theatrical form for presenting social issues on stage in an accurate and above all, *truthful* manner. Otto Brahm's quotation encompasses the two matters this new form of thinking began to address. One is the particular sense of a social movement that confronts contemporary issues and exposes the false pretences of bourgeois society. But interestingly, Brahm also speaks of "Menschen unserer Tage, an die wir glauben konnten," thereby referring to people who are "believable" or, rather, who "we could believe in." His statement addresses a desire to believe in the characters as people and to discover truthfulness and authenticity in relation to other people. Ibsen's psychological nuances would therefore appeal to artists looking to create characters that were believable as human beings and allowed audiences to connect with them.

[11] Otto Brahm in the magazine *Freie Bühne* in 1898, quoted in Philipp Stein, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner Dichtungen* (Elsner: Berlin, 1901), 12.

From the reception of Ibsen in Germany and the avant-garde theatre movement that followed onwards, "authenticity" became a decisive benchmark. "Wahrheit" and "Wahrhaftigkeit" were thus converted into defining indicators of artistic sophistication, which translated into both an entirely new performance style and a new claim for artistic integrity. The cultural scene that developed out of this Ibsen-effect at the beginning of the 1880s moved beyond the reception of one author into an entire re-conception of how truthfulness can be incorporated into theatre making.

After actively promoting Ibsen as a theatre critic, Otto Brahm became the principal founder of the legendary members' club Freie Bühne and thereby established cooperations with theatres such as the Residenztheater and the Lessingtheater.[12] In 1894, Brahm took over the Deutsches Theater until 1903 – where he established his core ensemble of "Brahm" actors like Max Reinhardt, Louise Dumont, Agnes Sorma, and Emanuel Reicher – and in 1903 he led the Lessingtheater until his death in 1912. Apart from his promotion of Ibsen as the flagship of German naturalism, Brahm established Gerhart Hauptmann as a prominent native naturalist playwright, particularly with *Vor Sonnenaufgang* in 1889 and *Die Weber* in the 1893. His commission of *Liebelei* for the Deutsches Theater in 1895 sparked a fruitful working relationship with Arthur Schnitzler, so that Brahm became one of Schnitzler's principal directors – Schnitzler's "Einakterzyklus" *Lebendige Stunden*, for instance, premiered in Berlin, not in Vienna.[13]

Brahm also maintained a close friendship with Henrik Ibsen, for whom Brahm was the one director in Berlin who truly incorporated his vision,[14] or, as Ibsen writes in a letter to Julius Elias from 16 July 1894, "mein Freund Brahm [kennt] meine

[12] Ruth Freydank, "Die Freie Bühne: Bürgerliche Opposition und künstlerische Alternative," in Ruth Freydank, ed., *Theater als Geschäft: Berlin und seine Privattheater um die Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich 1995), 134-143.
[13] Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*, 1195.
[14] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 101.

Werke bis ins kleinste."[15] Brahm first encountered Ibsen during his years as a theatre critic.[16] Danish[17] scholar Julius Hoffory shared his Ibsen enthusiasm at a regular pub meeting for German literary scholars,[18] but Brahm's exchange with Danish critic George Brandes also fuelled his passion for the Norwegian writer.[19] His regular exchange with people from Berlin's literary scene and friendships with the likes of critics Paul Schlenther and Theodor Fontane ensured Brahm a prominent position in Berlin's cultural life, which was decisive in his work as Berlin's theatre critic for the *Vossische Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and *Die Nation*.[20] With a background in literary criticism,[21] Brahm applied his careful reading skills to introducing Germany to a new kind of literary theatre that would devote special attention to the literary text and its author's intentions.[22] As he transitioned to being a theatre director, Brahm began to incorporate a new performance style which would translate Ibsen's "Menschen unserer Tage, an die wir glauben konnten" into an acting style of what he regarded to be the appropriate psychological depth. Brahm's own career thus mirrors the journey of literary theatre in the city of Berlin. It is here where a general urge for truthfulness translated into a new theatre tradition of breaking with tradition, a tradition that requires constant innovation.

To continue my argument, it is useful to gain a general sense of the sociocultural conditions that facilitated Berlin's radical Ibsenism at the end of the nineteenth century. Against the background of the emerging capital city of Berlin,

[15] Ibid.
[16] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*,13-14.
[17] Hoffory later gave up his Danish citizenship for a German one. Ibid., 11-12.
[18] Ibid..
[19] Ibid., 12.
[20] Ibid., 13-14.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 2-4 and 10-11.

Brahm's relentless activism to promote the work of Henrik Ibsen in Germany responded to a general desire for truthfulness and authenticity in art.

1) True and new: Ibsen and the birth of "German" modernism

In his analysis of the reception of Ibsen in Germany, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland*, David George explains Ibsen's success in Germany in the latter years of the nineteenth century with a specifically German desire to break with old pretences and search for a way to *be real*.[23] Under the name of naturalism, Ibsen's plays became the flagships of a movement advocating authenticity.[24] According to George, this movement was rooted in a much larger shift of social awareness, incorporating a new ideology of truthfulness over aesthetic principle.[25] George identifies it as the expression of a new German generation seeking a reflection of the socio-political *Aufbruch-/Umbruchstimmung* in art and literature.[26] He argues that, following the events of 1870-71, young Germans were disappointed that, instead of suitably reflecting the general revolutionary spirit, the "Gewerbefreiheit" of 1869 had transformed Berlin's theatre landscape into one of shallow entertainment and commercialisation.[27] Furthermore, George argues that as rising wealth and prosperity had actually fulfilled the wishes of the formerly progressive middle class, these same people had turned conservative, reverting to the enjoyment of beauty and entertainment without any urge for further change.[28] Above all, the desire for "Wahrhaftigkeit" represented a countermovement stemming from a desire amongst

[23] George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland,* in particular 9-43; Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 236-259, in particular 250-251.
[24] Ibid.
[25] George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland*, 23.
[26] Ibid., 20-21.
[27] Ibid., 21.
[28] Ibid., 20.

young Germans to distance themselves from previous generations.[29] George explains this movement in Germany as a broader reaction to post-1870/71 confidence, a consequence of *Reichsgründung* and industrial growth. Truth and the abolition of pretence and hypocrisy would give this generation a form of social agency:

> Wahrhaftigkeit war nach dem naturalistischen Programm nicht nur ein Maßstab für die Form, sondern auch für die Themen, die für die Wahrheit und gegen die Heuchelei und Konventionalismus aufrufen sollten.[30]

Tobias Boes similarly argues that the 1870s' political and economic imbalances – resulting in a shift away from liberalism towards conservatism in 1879 – and the effects of rapid industrialisation required an artistic outlet.[31] Boes also claims that the extreme changes to Berlin's urban landscape, as its population almost tripled and the city developed slums, called for a response in the form of a social realism addressing "real" issues such as disease or prostitution.[32] As a result, a younger generation of German writers emerged seeking their own form of rebellion through naturalism.[33] Renato Poggioli regards the turn towards naturalism as a reaction to the increasing sense of disconnection due to modernisation:

> In Germany, that ephemeral movement, "new objectivity," had similar aspirations; the aim was to give classical rigor and naturalistic solidarity to a fluid fleeting modernity.[34]

For Poggioli, the naturalist movement represents an emerging "modernist" avant-garde, a reaction to the challenges posed by the modern world. James McFarlane

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[29] Ibid., 24.
[30] Ibid., 23.
[31] Boes, "Germany," 34.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Made public in Wilhelm Arent, *Moderne Dichtercharaktere* (Berlin, 1885), accessed 12 April 2016, https://ia902602.us.archive.org/3/items/bub_gb_d2ldAAAAIAAJ/bub_gb_d2ldAAAAIAAJ.pdf; George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland*, 22; Boes, "Germany," 34.
[34] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 229.

writes that the debates surrounding naturalism triggered a cultural exchange that could be characterised as Berlin's first wave of modernism:

> With writers endlessly issuing manifestos, founding movements, forming coteries, establishing theatre groups, publishing periodicals, pronouncing, protesting, declaring, associating and dissociating and again reassociating, politicking, polemicizing, manoeuvering, enthusing and abusing, the city had generated an intense cultural excitement.[35]

Together with Malcolm Bradbury, McFarlane further argues that naturalism distinguishes itself as a movement desiring "to *be* modern" and "out of which a body of new programmes begins to develop."[36] From the perspective of cultural theory, they claim, the naturalist movement can thus be considered to be the beginning of modernism.[37]

The desire to be modern was expressed by the historian Eugen Wolff who gave a lecture titled "Die Moderne" for Berlin's literary association Durch! [38] in 1886 advocating an authentic representation of the present in literature:

> Im übrigen sei die modernste Poesie eine Abschilderung aller Strömungen des modernsten Lebens. Diese modernen Ideen, diese modernsten Kämpfe sind die Seele der modernsten Dichtung; keine Epigonen der grossen Vergangenheit sollen mehr sein, sondern Progonen einer grossen Zukunft.[39]

With Ibsen, the artistic transition from "aesthetic" to "truthful" had found a voice on the late nineteenth-century German stage, and the canon of German drama would be complemented by a suitable reflection of contemporary social issues. Hence, this concern with the present and an authentic representation of the present generated a general culture of social awareness.

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[35] James McFarlane, "Berlin and the Rise of Modernism 1886-1896," in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, 105.
[36] Bradbury and McFarlane, "Movements, Magazines and Manifestos," 195.
[37] Ibid., 195.
[38] Gotthart Wunberg and Stephan Dietrich, eds., *Die literarische Moderne: Dokumente zum Selbstverständnis der Literatur um die Jahrhundertwende* (Freiburg: Rombach, 1998), 1.
[39] Eugen Wolff "Die Moderne," accessed 12 April 2016, https://www.uni-due.de/lyriktheorie/texte/1886_wolff.html.

Otto Brahm did not completely reject the tradition of German drama, but he did express the need for an additional, modern canon:

> Aber so dankbar wir alle diese unvergänglichen Schöpfungen wieder und wieder empfangen werden — von den Schätzen der Vergangenheit kann kein Theater auf die Dauer zehren. Es bedarf des frischen, jungen, unverbrauchten Blutes, und der Hauch des gegenwärtigen Lebens muß es treffen.[40]

Ibsen fulfilled the role of a contemporary author who suitably captured the "gegenwärtiges Leben." According to Otto Brahm, Ibsen's plays achieved what he called: "poetisches neues Land dem Leben abzugewinnen."[41] Furthermore, he specifies what he considers the essential innovation of Ibsen's craft, namely the accurate depiction of human character:

> Aber was ist das Neue, Entscheidende an diesem Werke? Es ist die unbedingte Wahrheit, die unbarmherzige, grelle Wahrheit, wenn man will, in der Schilderung menschlicher Charaktere. Menschen stellt der Dichter vor uns him, wirkliche, leibhaftige Menschen, […]. [42]

For Brahm, gaining a more honest understanding of human nature was directly connected to presenting contemporary issues on stage. He believed that revealing "the truth" meant confronting people with *the way they really are*.

This desire to be new, to be distinguished from previous generations and find an art form that engages with the present, marks the onset of a modern way of thinking. But whether naturalism falls under the umbrella of modernism has remained a subject of debate, not in the least because modernism is often viewed as a rejection of realism.[43] It is therefore necessary to distinguish what definition of naturalism this thesis engages with.

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[40] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 35. (29 September 1883)
[41] Ibid., 107. (12 January 1887)
[42] Ibid.
[43] Bradbury and McFarlane, "Movements, Magazines and Manifestos," 192 and 195; Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 23.

Defining naturalism – whether in literature or on the theatre stage – proves to be a difficult task. In very simple terms, naturalism has been regarded as a stricter version of realism that not only aims to present the world realistically, but uses *nature* as the benchmark of what is realistic.[44] Thereby, theories of naturalism (in Germany most prominently propagated by Arno Holz[45]) emphasise a human being's dependence on *natural* circumstances, inheritance, and the social circumstances they have been subjected to.

The common mission of literary works subsumed under naturalism is to expose "the truth," yet, in contrast to previous literary movements, that truth is determined by nature. Toril Moi argues that the difference between idealist and naturalist aesthetics is that the first regards truth as beauty while the second views truth as presenting what is most natural and authentic.[46] With the arrival of naturalism, authenticity replaces beauty as the prime aesthetic value. Hence, presenting life in its most ordinary forms responds to these naturalist aesthetics.[47]

As David George demonstrates, Ibsen's plays following *Pillars of Society* particularly responded to this naturalist German desire for honesty and authenticity.[48] For the naturalists, exposing the truth meant abolishing false pretences and confronting society *the way it really is*. Ibsen's tales of disease and social decay or Hauptmann's "Milieustudien" fulfilled this task. Furthermore, stylistic elements such as unity of time and space, a turn from verse to prose, regional dialects, and domestic settings were all meant to contribute to this sense of authenticity.[49]

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[44] Reiner Poppe, *Vor Sonnenaufgang, Die Weber, Der Biberpelz: Soziales Engagement und politisches Theater* (Hollfeld: Joachim Beyer Verlag, 2010), 9; Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 89-90.
[45] Arno Holz, *Die Kunst: Ihr Wesen und die Gesetze* (Berlin: W. Issleib, 1892).
[46] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 89-91 and 94.
[47] James McFarlane, "Intimate Theatre: Maeterlinck to Strindberg," in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, 517; Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 89.
[48] George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland*, 18-23.
[49] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 243-252.

By the early 1890s, however, a depiction of reality that aspired to being a miniature copy of external circumstances would soon be regarded as restrictive, and movements such as symbolism and, later, expressionism challenged this presumption.[50] Because these movements focus on human psychology and the interior, the 1890s have often been regarded as a site of modernism, putting the human being and the complexity of human psychology at the centre.[51] Naturalism, on the other hand, appears to fall on the edge of what is considered modernism, and it is not immediately clear whether modernism rejects naturalism, or whether naturalism actually represents the beginning of modernism, as Moi would suggest.

One of the main reasons why modernism has often been regarded as a rejection of realism (and therefore, naturalism) is that naturalists seem to assume reality is objectively presentable, whereas modernists specifically address the difficulties of doing so by focusing on the internal.[52] I argue that this interpretation tends to disregard one of the lasting legacies of naturalism, which came in the form of another level of psychological profundity, and laid the ground-work for what would later be identified as the "intimate theatre" of Maurice Maeterlinck and August Strindberg.[53]

Apart from its aims towards social realism, naturalism wanted to show people *the way they really are*. An important innovation of naturalist theatre was to achieve a certain psychological depth, aiming to show human *nature* as accurately as possible. As I will illustrate in greater detail, this aspect appears very strongly in the reception of naturalism in Berlin, much more so than has previously been recognised. Furthermore, I argue that, by showing people as they really are, Ibsen laid the

[50] Bradbury and McFarlane, "Movements, Magazines and Manifestos," 195-196.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 23.
[53] McFarlane, "Intimate Theatre: Maeterlinck to Strindberg," 514-526.

foundation for a new tradition in theatre: a theatre that highlights the complexities of human character and the difficulties of interpersonal engagement.

Similarly, the "intimate theatre" has generally been associated with Maurice Maeterlinck as a clear sign of the end of naturalism.[54] McFarlane speaks of the "dissolution of naturalism" as summed up by Maeterlinck's *L'Interieur* (1894) when his character The Old Man says: "You can't look into the soul as you can look into a room." [55] But McFarlane also acknowledges that naturalism was particularly preoccupied with exposing the *interior* by "removing the fourth wall," to look into people's personal space.[56] I would further argue that the stage device of looking into someone's private space to see people as they really are, even just as a replication of external realities, marks a turn towards a theatre that aims to create a stronger sense of intimacy and interpersonal connection between audience and performer. Furthermore, as Moi demonstrates in her reading of Ibsen, naturalism deploys what are considered faithful copies of reality, such as housework or everyday language, to highlight the complexity of establishing meaningful relationships and acknowledging the difficulty of finding one's voice. Her analysis focuses on the difficulties human beings face when trying to acknowledge each other for who they really are.

My reading of naturalism thus acknowledges it as a movement aiming to strengthen human relationships and interpersonal engagement, both on stage and through the cultural environment it created. Throughout this chapter I will illustrate how these themes were at the heart of the *authentic* theatre Otto Brahm and his contemporaries sought to create.

[54] McFarlane, "Movements, Magazines and Manifestos," 195-196.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.

2) Let's be honest: psychological authenticity and togetherness in Brahm's naturalism

A central aim of naturalism is to illustrate human *nature* in a manner as "accurate" as possible.[57] For Otto Brahm, the claim to "psychology" distinguished the modern playwright from those of previous traditions. He claims that by carefully dismantling "seelische Vorgänge" the modern playwright should achieve a kind of detailed observation of the soul and its workings to which even the likes of Shakespeare never devoted sufficient attention:

> Das Mittel des modernen Dramatikers gegenüber dem alten ist die Psychologie. Wir vertiefen uns in seelische Vorgänge, zerlegen und zerkleinern sie, und wo Shakespeare und Lope in großen und selbst groben Zügen arbeiteten, steigen wir mit der verfeinerten Anschauung einer neuen Zeit zu den geheimen leisen Regungen der Menschenbrust hinab.[58]

Brahm's observation highlights naturalism's specific aim to provide very detailed, almost "scientific" illustrations of character – the idea being that characters seem more *real* when an audience can thoroughly *understand* them.

Erika Fischer-Lichte views the naturalistic interpretation of characters as psychological case studies, and actor's tools such as speech and movement as "evidence" to determine and thus truthfully demonstrate human nature.[59] Naturalistic plays thus attempt to display both how human beings interact with their environment, and how the interplay of circumstance and psychological mechanisms determines their actions.

Through meticulous stage directions, an exact representation of the situation, as well as the characters' internal lives, can be achieved. Furthermore, verbal and non-verbal behaviour are allocated equal importance, since it is precisely the dichotomy

[57] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 244-245.
[58] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 208. (13 October 1888).
[59] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 244-245.

between verbal language and physical reactions that offers clues about a character's psychological state.[60] Fischer-Lichte views the colloquial language used in naturalistic plays, the "Dia-, Sozio-, Psycholekt," essential to determining someone's character, thus revealing the performance of language as another step towards the exposition of "truth."[61] Here, replacing verse with prose enhances the notion of reality by using an "everyday language." The presented social issues would be underlined by their authentic presentation through use of the "realistische Alltagssprache," a language which most authentically was meant to mirror the way people *really* speak.[62]

Furthermore, verbal devices (such as pauses) and minute gestures became powerful tools to allude to unspoken truths.[63] Brahm's admiration for Charlotte Frohn's performance of Rebekka in *Rosmersholm* offers an example of how minute gestures would translate into the required truthfulness:

> das Dämonische, das auf der Gestalt ruht, den ahnungsvollen Hintergrund dieser Schicksale und Taten deutet sie mit einem Blick, einer Geste bewunderungswürdig an.[64]

Above all, a character should be believable and recognisable, their motivations evident and complex at the same time. Ibsen himself stressed the importance of believable characters since they provide the audience with a sense of reality, of reflecting "real life." In his introduction to the play *Ghosts*, Ibsen emphasises the reasons why an everyday language is important:

> Die Sprache muss natürlich klingen und für alle Personen im Stück charakteristisch sein. […] Die Wirkung des Stückes hängt zum großen Teil davon ab, daß der Zuschauer etwas zu sehen und zu hören meint, was sich im wirklichen Leben abspielt.[65]

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[60] Ibid., 246.
[61] Ibid., 245.
[62] Ibid., 238.
[63] Ibid., 245-246 and 248.
[64] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 136. (*Die Nation* 14 May 1887).
[65] Ibsen on *Ghosts*, quoted in Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 243.

With this aim of *recognising* something from real life, Ibsen calls for an art form playing on the mechanisms of identification and recognition. Ibsen's plays address this aim through the use of everyday language, meticulous documentation of psychological states with explanatory stage directions, verbal and non-verbal reactions, and, finally, detailed stage settings that draw the audience into a "real-life" situation. All in all, Ibsen's comment shows how much the characters and the believability of characters are at the centre of the truth he aims to present.

2.1 Menschendarstellung beyond realism

Realistic stagings using everyday language and costumes, and setting characters in everyday environments such as living rooms and kitchens were surely an important stylistic innovation that Otto Brahm promoted through the work of Henrik Ibsen. Nonetheless, looking at Brahm's critical response to naturalism, realistic staging seems to have been more of a tool instead of the central aim. [66]

Already in his early days as a critic, Brahm actually demonstrated a preference for emotional experience over realistic performance. About the performance of the actor Ludwig Barnay he writes on 7 October 1883:

> In der Darstellung […] vermochte der Schauspieler die geforderte tiefere seelische Empfindung nicht auszusprechen; es fehlt dem stark realistischen Künstler die Fähigkeit, das Dämmernde, Ahnungsvolle, Visionäre anzudeuten, […].[67]

And Brahm certainly seems to have maintained this sentiment, as his review of *Rosmersholm* at the Residenztheater from 4 May 1887 indicates:

> Nicht nur daß das Temperament des Dichters […] auch die Gestalt seiner Heldin wächst, so entschieden sie in der Wahrheit des Lebens gegründet ist, über das Maß der bloß realistischen Kunst hinaus[68]

[66] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 84.
[67] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 448. (*Vossische Zeitung* 7 October 1883).
[68] Ibid., 132-133. Review of Rosmersholm (4 May 1887).

Brahm's view of the "Wahrheit des Lebens" sums up the essence of the theatre he aimed to promote. "Truth" to Brahm meant a certain psychological depth that is deeply rooted in the realistic and believable presentation of a character's circumstances but can also go beyond "realistic art" into a deeper "seelische Empfindung." Writing about the performance of *Ghosts* at the Residenztheater, Brahm illustrates the the deep emotional impact on the audience he was looking for:

> Ein erschütterndes Seelendrama hat er geschaffen, dessen Wirkung lange nachhallen wird; […] und uns, da er uns entläßt, bewegt im tiefsten.[69]

Brahm's vision of finally being confronted with "Menschen, an die wir glauben konnten" was achieved by creating an interpersonal connection between audience and performers. An audience member can recognise the characters on stage as human beings and therefore "believe in them." Brahm's vocabulary consistently evokes the notion of strong emotions as a way of entering the depth of the soul. With identifying and *feeling* with the characters on stage comes a sense of intimacy that can only be achieved through an intuitive, physical *understanding* of the people on stage.[70]

For Brahm, a strong interpersonal connection in the theatre was an important means to create a sense of truthfulness. His subsequent work as a theatre-maker shows how much he considered collective identity to be a decisive element of the entire theatre experience. From the Freie Bühne of the 1880s to the Deutsches Theater and the Lessingtheater of the 1890s, Brahm demonstrated how creating a strong ensemble would not only enable the characters, but also the relationships on stage to be believable. Brahm persistently encouraged his actors to truly internalise their characters' psychological depth and create a connection – between characters,

[69] Ibid., 109. (*Frankfurter Zeitung* 12 January 1887).
[70] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 250-251.

between actors and their characters, and between fellow actors – that would make their relationships believable.[71]

When Brahm began his work with the Freie Bühne, he was dependent on "borrowing" actors from other theatres until the Residenztheater was able to offer him a contract that gave him access to a more regular ensemble.[72] This moment was an important milestone for creating the kind of group mentality Brahm desired. He regarded a strong ensemble as the key to achieving the level of psychological depth and interpersonal connection he aimed for. On his reasons for taking over the Deutsches Theater, Brahm writes:

> die Revolutionierung des deutschen Theaters und Dramas, den Zusammenbruch der Konvention und die Wende zur Wahrheit. Das konnte nur einem Theater mit einem festen Stamm von Schauspielern […] gelingen.[73]

For Brahm, ensemble work also meant forging a strong connection between his actors by strengthening the actors as a group rather than looking for individual stars. Without placing himself at the centre, Brahm was skilled at guiding an ensemble and creating a productive and creative ensemble spirit.[74] He was known for maintaining an egalitarian and democratic approach to ensemble work in which every task was equally important.[75] This was manifested in his reluctance to emphasise stardom, as he chose to print all the actors' names in equal size on the programme and regularly gave small parts to bigger stars.[76] This particular kind of egalitarian community was at

[71] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 77; Bärbel Reissmann, "Otto Brahm: Die Erneuerung der Bühne," in *Theater als Geschäft: Berlin und seine Privattheater um die Jahrhundertwende*, 147.
[72] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 21 and 79; Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 42.
[73] Otto Brahm on 16 September 1901. Quoted in Reissmann, "Otto Brahm: Die Erneuerung der Bühne," 144.
[74] Ibid., 147.
[75] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 85.
[76] Ibid., 85.

the time recognised as the unique strength of Brahm's work.[77] Several records indicate to what extent communal collaboration and ensemble work contributed to achieving the "Brahmstil."[78] In 1906, Siegfried Jacobsohn acknowledges Brahm's legacy as the creation of a unique ensemble:

> Was er [Brahm] für die Schauspielkunst getan hat, ist unvergänglich. Das Ensemble ist […] noch heute das beste der Welt und erschüttert selbst in kleineren Dichtungen durch seine Seelen- und Nervenkunst tiefer als irgend ein anderes Ensemble in den stärksten Dramen der Klassiker.[79]

Siegfried Jacobsohn also recognised how Brahm's particular kind of togetherness culminated in artistic strength:

> Im Zusammenwirken aller Kräfte liegt der Zauber. Aus der Stimmung des räumlichen und gesellschaftlichen Milieus wachsen Menschen und Vorgänge heraus. Durch fugendichte Geschlossenheit, durch Abrundung in der Darstellung wird das Bühnenbild vollendet.[80]

Up until the present day Brahm's legacy as a theatre director has been recognised due to the ensemble mentality he was able to create. Following his extensive research on the performance history of *Ghosts*, Marc Boettcher concludes:

> Berlins Ruhm, die erste Theaterstadt Deutschlands zu sein, wurde vor allem durch Brahms mustergültige Schauspielergarde gefestigt. Doch nicht mehr die einzelnen großen Darsteller hatten dies zuwege gebracht, sondern ein aufeinander abgestimmtes, harmonisches Ensemble, in dem die Leistungen der einzelnen nur noch Mittel zum Zweck und nicht mehr Selbstzweck sein durfte. Wie kein anderer Theaterleiter hatte Otto Brahm die Bühnenkunst auf das ganze Ensemble eingestellt und angepasst.[81]

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[77] Ibid., 76 and 85.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Siegfried Jacobsohn, "Brahm" in Die Schaubühne 2, no.1 (1906): 191-192, accessed 12 April 2016, https://ia600303.us.archive.org/25/items/DieSchaubuehne2-1906-1/DieSchaubuehne2-1906-1.pdf
[80] Ibid., 192.
[81] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster," 103.*

2.2 Togetherness and the beginning of modern theatre

The principles of strengthening the communal ensemble mentality and refining psychological nuance in performance constitute decisive elements of Brahm's legacy. Even though naturalism itself would soon be considered tedious and outdated, the actors who trained with Brahm stayed loyal to those principles.[82] Several actors, such as Josef Kainz, Agnes Sorma, Max Reinhardt, or Louise Dumont, would seek alternative pathways of artistic expression and leave Brahm's ensemble at the Deutsches Theater at the beginning of the twentieth century.[83] Yet even though these actors left, they stuck together and maintained their unique ensemble spirit by collectively exploring new arenas of theatre in both Berlin and Vienna.[84] From a legendary guest performance on New Years Eve in Vienna, to the informal cabaret Die Brille or the Schall und Rauch GmbH, Otto Brahm can be credited with the unique team spirit and fruitful collaboration between his actors that led to their theatrical success (see III).

While naturalistic staging followed a particular kind of aesthetic and social realism, Brahm's work emphasised creating psychological depth and a strong emotional connection between performers and audience. The 1880s in Berlin can certainly be described as a crucial time for the establishment of modern acting and directing techniques. The focus on connection, psychological understanding and empathy shows how being together in the theatre space had been re-invented through this new kind of theatre.

Brahm's policy of togetherness further translated into the creation of an ensemble spirit and a general "democratisation" of the theatre world. Much of this community spirit translated into new forms of engaging with the theatre and

[82] See section III.
[83] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 76-81.
[84] Ibid., 90-91.

responded to a strong group identity amongst the avant-garde. But the artists at work in the theatre were not the only ones strengthening their ensemble mentality and group identity. In the following sections, I intend to illustrate the different modes through which community had been defined in the modern city space of Berlin with the help of an emerging avant-garde.

II. How to raise an avant-garde: tactics of non-conforming

1) Learning how to read (a play): Reclam and the evolution of literary theatre

Both as a theatre critic and a theatre director Otto Brahm promoted Ibsenism to develop a more profound acting style and a strong ensemble identity. But in the fast-paced environment of Berlin Ibsen's plays took on dynamics of their own. Ibsen's plays spread throughout the cultural metropolis of Berlin. They literally began to travel through the city space in the form of a cheap paperback by the name of Reclam. In his essay "Henrik Ibsen's Nora," the novelist and literary theorist Friedrich Spielhagen describes how the Reclam edition of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* entered Berlin's literary salons:

> Wohin man kam — in jedem der Kunst und Literatur holden Salon — überall fand man mitten zwischen den illustrierten Prachtbänden jenes unscheinbare gelbe, "für zwanzig Pfennige einzeln käufliche" Heftchen No. 1257 der Reclam'schen Universalbibliothek mit dem Titel: Nora: ein Schauspiel in drei Aufzügen von Henrik Ibsen und man konnte mit ziemlich sicherer Chance des Gewinnens eine Wette darauf eingehen, es werde innerhalb der nächsten Viertelstunde von irgend einer schönen oder nicht schönen Lippe der klangvolle Name der Heldin des Schauspiels ausgesprochen werden und sich daran sofort eine lebhafte Diskussion knüpfen, deren Ende nicht leicht abzusehen war.[85]

[85] Friedrich Spielhagen, "Henrik Ibsens Nora," in *Westermann's illustrierte deutsche Monatshefte* no.49 (1880-1881): 665-675, reproduced for The National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11212785.0.

Spielhagen describes the impact of Reclam's publication of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.[86] With the book widely available for "20 Pfennig," the Reclam publication appeared on tables all around the city and became the subject of intense debates with the book in hand. Through Reclam, the play was easily accessible and present in literary discussions even before it had been performed. People read the play and thus formed a thorough opinion on the subject matter, which they could integrate into discussions at literary salons.

The Reclam publishing house specialised in the publication of plays, starting out by breaking down the collected works of Shakespeare into single editions and then focusing on contemporary naturalist writers.[87] Between 1877 and 1893, 17 Ibsen dramas, partly in their first German editions, were published by Reclam, starting with Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*.[88] Reclam's promotion of naturalist writers was later also adopted by Samuel Fischer with the 1886 initiation of the Fischer Verlag, a publishing house that maintained close working relationship with Arthur Schnitzler.[89]

Publishers such as Reclam contributed to the distribution of experimental plays that were less likely to receive permission to be performed by the censors, and furthermore allowed people to prepare and know a play well before attending a performance.

Otto Brahm considered reading Ibsen essential for understanding the plays. As a fervent literary critic, Brahm always read plays before he went to see them and his reviews often "checked" whether a staging did justice to the literary text.[90] Yet the role of the written text would not just allow people to form an opinion, reading the

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[86] Ibid.
[87] Frank R. Max, *Der Reclam Verlag: Eine kurze Chronik* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co. KG, 2012), 9.
[88] Ibid., 15.
[89] Oskar Seidlin, ed., *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1975), 163.
[90] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 10.

Ibsen plays sparked a collective identity of its own. Otto Brahm describes the public reaction to the Reclam publication as the beginning of a new theatre-reading culture:

> Es ist zu Zeiten ganz vergriffen gewesen, immer neue Sendungen mußten sich von Leipzig nach Berlin durch Schneeverwehungen und Sturm den Weg bahnen, [...]: ein Erfolg, der auf diesem Gebiete ein völlig ungewohnter ist. Denn wer hat in unseren Tagen außerhalb der engeren literarischen Kreise die Neigung, ein Drama zu lesen?[91]

As Otto Brahm himself describes it, the publication of *Ghosts* – a play which had been banned from public performance – led to an unusual widening public interest in reading drama. Furthermore, it sparked a collective urge amongst the avant-garde to read the play.[92] In reference to *The Wild Duck*, published by the Fischer Verlag in 1887, Otto Brahm describes how this new reading culture had infiltrated the theatregoing public:

> Die "Wildente," Ibsen's zweitjüngstes Stück, liegt in der vortrefflichen Übersetzung der Frau *von Borch* seit einem Jahre bereits den deutschen Lesern vor, und schon durch die Lektüre hat es zahlreiche Bewunderer gefunden.[93]

The Ibsen-reading tradition can be traced back to the first play of his to be performed in Germany, *Pillars of Society*. Paul Schlenther describes this exceptional moment as a revelation amidst all the glorified idealism and sparkling façade of contemporary theatre:

> Über all dem blinkenden und schillernden Plunder gingen uns damals die jungen Augen auf. […].
> Wir gingen immer wieder ins Theater, tagsüber lasen wir in Wilhelm Lange's scheußlichem Deutsch das Stück. Weder die poesielose, papierene Übersetzung noch die bretternen Seelen der Vorstadtschauspieler konnten gegen die Gewalten dieser Dichtung an.[94]

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[91] Brahm, "Ibsen's Gespenster in Berlin," in *Kritische Schriften*, 105.
[92] Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887-1945*, 19.
[93] Brahm, "*Die Wildente* am Residenz-Theater in Berlin."
[94] Paul Schlenther et al., eds., *Henrik Ibsen: Sämtliche Werke in deutscher Sprache*, vol. 6 (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1904), xvii.

While Schlenther recognises that neither the local actors' style of acting nor the German translator Wilhelm Lange could convey the meaning of Ibsen's poetry, this early record of reading Ibsen illustrates the emergence of a collective identity, a sort of collective routine. Schlenther's use of "wir" already hints at the strong audience identity that was developing.

W.E. Yates identified the circulation of drama into the public domain through cheap paperbacks such as Reclam as a contributing factor to the creation of a culturally aspirational middle class in both Vienna[95] and Berlin:

> Other signs of change in the nature of the potential public include flourishing series of play-texts; like the cheap paperbacks of the classics available in Reclam's "Universal-Bibliothek,"[…], these reflected the growth of a middle-brow public. [96]

As in the city's Austrian counterpart, Yates observes in Berlin an emerging culture of cultural engagement and informed criticism based on the circulation of Reclam plays. Reclam paperbacks would be carried around, exchanged, exported. They were affordable and available independent of performance. As more people would gain access to plays, Reclam also contributed to a form of public emancipation and democratisation.

In the context of social emancipation, Spielhagen's comment about the "mehr oder weniger schöne Lippe" merits further attention. Spielhagen reminds us that women played an important role in Berlin's literary salons, a tradition that "temporarily raised the barriers separating aristocrats from commoners, men from

[95] Yates mentions Wallishausser's Wiener *Theater-Repertoir* and L. Rosner's *Neues Wiener Theater* in Vienna and compares it to the Reclam phenomenon in Berlin. W. E. Yates, *Theatre in Vienna: A Critical History 1776–1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 161.
[96] Ibid.

women, Gentiles from Jews."[97] Given the theme of female emancipation in *A Doll's House*, it is important that these literary gatherings would facilitate female input on the matter. Similar to the case of literary matinees, the availability of Reclam editions would also allow women to engage with a play without having to attend a performance with a male escort.

2) Not-for-profit! Public emancipation and the *Wohltätigkeitsmatinee* of *Ghosts*

The written play was not the only way to circulate more radical thoughts into the public domain. The social movement around Ibsen and his plays extended far beyond. Against the background of the concurrent introduction of privately owned theatres and a subsequent overall democratisation of the theatre landscape in Berlin, the record of early Ibsen performances reveals a unique atmosphere of collective criticism among audience members. Friedrich Spielhagen describes the atmosphere at the performance of *A Doll's House* at the Residenztheater as follows:

> Es ist das schwer zu beschreiben. Man muß es eben selbst erlebt, an seinen eigenen Nerven durchgemacht und sympathisch durchgelitten haben: diese sonderbare Unruhe, welche, erst ganz vereinzelt, ganz leise, hier und da in dem Hause entstehend, aus dem Hause aufsteigend, sich nur dem feineren, argwöhnischeren Ohre bemerklich macht, dann größere Kreise ergreift, wieder zu entschlummern scheint, um plötzlich in dem ganzen Publikum auf einmal zu erwachen — aber nun nicht mehr als schüchterner individueller Zweifel, dem Nachbar flüsternd mitgetheiltes Bedenken, sondern als souveräne, mißbilligende, verurtheilende *vox populi*.[98]

Spielhagen describes a unique atmosphere in which individual reactions convert into a collective audience dynamic. In itself that may not be unique to Berlin or a particular reception of Ibsen, but the city's consistent record of public uproar hints at a unique

[97] Ritchie Robertson, *'The Jewish Question' in German Literature, 1749-1939: Emancipation and its Discontents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 66.
[98] Spielhagen, "Henrik Ibsen's Nora."

audience dynamic amongst this emerging avant-garde. For the performance of *A Doll's House* at the Residenztheater, loud vocal disagreement became part of its performance history. At the request of Ibsen's German translator Wilhelm Lange and Nora actress Hedwig Niemann-Raabe, Ibsen reluctantly agreed to alter the play, replacing the original ending with a melodramatic alternative.[99] In this version, Nora actually decides against leaving to stay with her children and her husband.[100] The *vox populi* present at the Residenztheater performance had been credited with restoring the original ending to preserve the play's essence:

> The production was performed in Hamburg, Hannover and Berlin, but was not a success. At the Residenztheater in Berlin there were even protest demonstrations against the distortion of the play. The troupe succumbed to the pressure and decided to perform the play with the original ending.[101]

Spielhagen's essay links the Reclam-fuelled salon debates to the collective protest culture at the actual performance, highlighting an observable development of a protest culture amongst an emancipated, prepared and increasingly independent audience.

While the "protest demonstrations" at the performance of *A Doll's House* already signalled the beginning of an emancipated theatregoing public that would not let public authorities dictate the subject of debates, the performances of *Ghosts* marked the official introduction of this new scene. Both in Norway and in Germany, *Ghosts* remained one of Ibsen's more controversial plays.[102] As it was banned by public censorship, performing *Ghosts* would require creative performance solutions.

The first performance of *Ghosts* took place as a dress rehearsal of the *Augsburger Stadttheater*, however the dress rehearsal never culminated in a

[99] "The alternative ending of A Doll's House," The National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11111794.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 41.

premiere.[103] Despite a record of the amateur performance at the Berliner Dramatische Gesellschaft on 2 January 1887, the "Wohltätigkeitsmatinee" at the Residenztheater on 9 January 1887 had been widely regarded as the first performance of the play in Berlin.[104] It was a single performance for selected guests and therefore permitted by public authorities as an exception.[105] As *Ghosts* was publicly banned, the police gave permission to perform one "charity" matinee for a selection of guests, among them Otto Brahm, Friedrich Spielhagen, Oscar Blumenthal, Theodor Fontane, Karl Frenzel, Isidor Landau, Paul Lindau, Julius Rodenberg, Paul Schlenther and a young Gerhart Hauptmann.[106] Residenztheater director Anton Anno directed the play under Franz Wallner. Wallner – until then known as a comedy actor – also took on the part of Osvald, as Joseph Kainz declined the part.[107] This performance became a social event that numerous authors wrote about. Otto Brahm, as we have seen, experienced it as the beginning of a new theatre era:

> Mit der ersten Aufführung eines Ibsen-Dramas setzt das jüngste Jahrzehnt unserer dramatischen Entwicklung ein: als im Januar 1887 die "Gespenster" über das Berliner Residenztheater schritten sprang die Pforte zur deutschen Moderne auf.[108]

This matinee would also prove to be a formative experience for Brahm because it was his first encounter with the practical theatre world.[109] Anno consulted him and his friend Paul Schlenther as advisors during the rehearsal process.[110] Brahm particularly

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[103] Ibsen repertoire database of the National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/81538. The next performance was also a closed performance by the infamous Meininger on 21 and 28 January 1886, Ibsen repertoire database of the National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/6535.2
[104] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 23; Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*,19.
[105] Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*, 19-21; Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 65.
[106] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 67-74.
[107] In Philip Stein, *Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner Dichtungen* (Berlin: O. Elsner, 1901), 16.
[108] Otto Brahm in the magazine *Freie Bühne* in 1898, quoted in Stein, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner Dichtungen*, 12.
[109] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 12-13 and 14-15; Brahm, "Henrik Ibsen in Berlin," *Kritische Schriften*, 452.
[110] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 12-13 and 14-15.

remembers being given the honour to ask Ibsen whether he would be willing to take a curtain call, to which Ibsen famously replied: "Wenn so etwas passieren sollte, wenn so etwas passieren sollte…"[111] Brahm illustrates the outcome as follows:

> Und in der Tat, es passierte: am ersten Aktschluß, […], brach das bis dahin in tiefstes Aufmerken gebannte Publikum in einen Beifallssturm aus, so spontan und gewaltig, bis Ibsen wohl ein dutzendmal vor der Rampe erschien. Wir hatten das Gefühl: jetzt ist gewonnen.[112]

Brahm could not have described the "Wir-Gefühl," the sense of a social revolution and a collective identity, more clearly than with that last sentence. "Wir hatten das Gefühl: jetzt ist gewonnen" both reveals a sense of victory and describes an audience that "feels" collectively. Brahm here describes an audience that thinks, reacts, is spontaneous and strong together, and has developed a solid audience dynamic.

Brahm not only acknowledged the significance of this performance in nostalgic retrospect. His article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* from three days after the performance, 12 January 1887, shows the immediacy of this sentiment:

> Der Erfolg, um es mit einem Worte zu sagen, war überwältigend; ganz einmütig nach dem ersten Akte, welcher die stärksten dramatischen Effekte bringt und einen nicht endenden Beifall entfesselte, wie wir ihn in diesen Räumen noch nicht gehört hatten.[113]

The *Wohltätigkeitsmatinee* of *Ghosts* remained a unique event in the collective memory. Forty years later, Franz Wallner reminisces about this day, which he identifies as one of the most exciting of his career:

> Es sind nun schon über 40 Jahre verflossen, seit die erste Gespenster-Aufführung im Berliner Residenz-Theater am 9. Januar 1887 stattgefunden, doch hat sich dieser Tag frisch in meinem Gedächtnis erhalten — zählte er doch zu den ereignisreichsten meiner Bühnenlaufbahn […].

[111] Brahm, "Henrik Ibsen in Berlin," in *Kritische Schriften*, 452.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Brahm, "Ibsen's Gespenster in Berlin," in *Kritische Schriften*, 105.

> Der Bann war gehoben. Alles Wutknirschen, die Gehässigkeiten der Zeitungskämpfe — alles konnte nicht verhindern, daß von dieser einen Aufführung ein breiter tiefer Strom der Wirkung durch die deutschen Lande ging. Nicht nur für Deutschland — für Europa ward Ibsen an diesem Januarmittag neu entdeckt.[114]

As illustrated by Wallner and others, collective identity formation made this matinee an unforgettable, key moment for the development of modern theatre in Berlin. Yet this performance was primarily remembered because of the strong controversy it provoked among Berlin's theatre critics. Their main point of disagreement was what would count as an acceptable aesthetic for "truth" on stage. A poignant example is the review by Brahm's close friend and "ally" Paul Schlenther for the *Vossische Zeitung*. The review clearly justifies Ibsen's radically "ugly" presentation of a family tragedy as a fight for the revelation of truth:

> Henrik Ibsen kämpft Zeit seines Lebens gegen Ideale, die so falsch sind, wie das Ideal, das Oswald in seinem Vater zu verehren gewöhnt wurde. Und diese falschen Ideale sind es, welche Frau Alving Gespenster nennt. Henrik Ibsen hat den Kampf gegen solchen Gespensterglauben in die Literatur eingeführt.[115]

Just below the review, the editorial board has added a remark distinctly distancing itself from Schlenther's opinion:

> Wir haben unserem Herrn Referenten zur Beurteilung des Ibsen'schen Stückes, dessen Aufführung als das sensationellste Ereigniß dieser Theatersaison zu betrachten ist, gern das Wort gegeben, können uns seinem Urteil jedoch nicht anschließen. [...] ein Kunstwerk soll uns Genuß, Freude, Erhebung bereiten, nicht Entsetzen, Qual und, was noch schlimmer ist, hoffnungslose Verzweiflung — auch dann nicht, wenn, was wir dem Ibsen'schen Stücke bestreiten, die Handlung auf Wahrheit beruht.[116]

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[114] "Franz Wallners Erinnerungen zur Inszenierung von *Gespenster* am Residenz-Theater Berlin," in: *Die Deutsche Bühne*, 20 (1928): 62-64, reproduced for The National Library of Norway, last modified 28 May 2010, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11190579.

[115] Paul Schlenther, "Gespenster am Residenztheater Berlin" *Königlich priviligierte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen (Vossische Zeitung)*, 10 January 1887, reproduced for The National Library of Norway, last modified 16 April 2010, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11188729.

[116] Ibid.

This controversy between Schlenther and his own editorial board highlights the intellectual "battlefield" the matinee had become.[117] Though it disagrees with its reviewer on some counts, the editorial board even recognises the importance of this performance as a theatrical sensation. Furthermore, as both sides of the disagreement had been published, a space for a productive form of controversy had been opened.

Another interesting negative review comes from the Lessingtheater director Oskar Blumenthal, which criticises a misconception that "ugliness" and "disgust" become the bearers of truth in stage representation:

> Es hat von jeher kritische Wirrköpfe gegeben, welche in jeder Darstellung des Häßlichen einen Triumph der Kühnheit und in jeder Schilderung des Ekeln einen Sieg der Wahrheit erblickten. [...]. So hat man denn auch Ibsens "Gespenster" als eine Schöpfung von revolutionärer Ehrlichkeit gefeiert.[118]

Blumenthal advocates an exposition of "the truth," though he does not agree that "disgust" and "ugly" serve as its valid representations. He criticises the belief that suffering and disease make a performance more truthful but nonetheless restates the importance of"truth."[119]

Tensions, disagreements and regular changes of heart all contributed to a fruitful creative tension of constant re-interpreting and challenging what truth means on stage. Gerhard Muhle credits the controversy and discussions – in other words, the intense disagreements – with the significance of this performance for ensuring a strong culture of critical engagement with theatre:

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[117] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 67-74.
[118] Oskar Blumenthal, "Henrik Ibsen's ‚Gespenster'" in *Berliner Tageblatt*, 10 Januar 1887, reproduced for The National Library of Norway, last modified 24 October 2011, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11188728.0.
[119] He would substantially revise his opinion, however, when he offered the Lessingtheater venue to Otto Brahm for the 1889 performance of *Ghosts*, inaugurating the Freie Bühne. Blumenthal supported the private members' club established to evade the censors, and gave *Ghosts* a platform by offering his theatre for this "private" performance. After a falling-out between Brahm and Blumenthal in 1890, Blumenthal then competitively hosted a public performance of *Ghosts* at the Lessingtheater on the same night Brahm held the first public performance of *Ghosts* at the Deutsches Theater on 27 November 1894. In Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster"*, 100-101.

> die sich ergebenden Zeitungsfehden und Diskussionen, die verschiedenartigen Interpretationen der Aufführung rufen in Berlin, wenn nicht in Deutschland […] eine neue Richtung auf, die später in diesem Hause, dem Residenztheater noch manche Anerkennung finden sollte. [120]

While the reception of this performance contributed to a culture of intellectual exchange and thereby to the emergence of an avant-garde culture, it was the preparation leading up to it that already shows how a few people, including Otto Brahm, fervently fought for artistic integrity. [121] Philip Stein describes the extreme dedication that made this unique performance possible:

> Da die Alltagsgeschäfte nicht Zeit genug ließen zur intimeren Durchdringung der Aufgabe, nahmen Anno, seine Gattin Frau Anno-Frohn und Wallner zu gemeinsamem Studium die Nachtstunden zu Hilfe.[122]

In Stein's description, Wallner and the Annos were willing to offer their time outside of the "Alltag," here referring to the daily tasks of economic necessity, in order to dedicate themselves more thoroughly, more "intimately" to the performance. Using their evening hours, these theatre-makers reversed the structures of the commercial theatre establishment for the purpose of artistic integrity: working in the evening and performing during the day. By subverting the conventional theatre "schedule," they developed a creative performance solution that would enable Brahm to eventually say: "wir haben gewonnen."

Taking all these different observations into account, we can observe the passion and commitment that went into the performance of Ibsen's plays. This is evidenced by the fervent discussions about how to present "the truth" on stage, something everyone seemed to care about. With this united cause, a new kind of

[120] Muhle, "Die Geschichte des Residenztheaters in Berlin von 1871-1887," 64.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Stein, *Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner Dichtungen*, 16.

group identity emerged, a *Streitkultur* of people clearly well acquainted with each other. Furthermore, another aspect seems worth noticing, namely the distinct sense of "intimacy" that reappears from literary salons to the rehearsal room. In relation to the communal spirit that led up to this performance, the concept of "intimacy" shows up time and time again. As Franz Wallner remembers:

> Es war aber auch eine Aufführung, wie man sie kaum wieder sehen wird; jeder Nerv war angespannt, jeder gab sein Bestes — sein Herzblut. Die intime Wirkung des Anno'schen Zusammenspiels ist wohl niemals wieder erreicht. [123]

Thus, both in the actual staging of the play as in the play itself, intimacy and togetherness reveal themselves as essential elements of this promotion of truth.

But it was this performance, above all, that made Otto Brahm realise one thing: that a cultural revolution, the promotion of literary theatre, could only be achieved in an actual theatre, one directly situated in Berlin's practical theatre world.

> Theater ist mir nicht nur das Theater, es ist auch ein Vehikel literarischer Agitation, das stärkste, das es gibt; nicht das heißeste kritische Bemühen, nicht der glänzendst geschriebene Essay kann wirken, was ein echter Erfolg der Szene wirkt. Eine einzige Aufführung der „Gespenster", vor 600 Menschen, im Berliner Residenztheater einst unternommen, hat durch die weithintragende Kraft der Bühne erreicht, was alle literarische Anregung nicht erreichte.[124]

With the support of the Residenztheater, Brahm's first contact with the practical theatre world at this Wohltätigkeitsmatinee marked the beginning of his directorial journey: Freie Bühne – Deutsches Theater – Lessingtheater.

[123] "Franz Wallners Erinnerungen zur Inszenierung von *Gespenster* am Residenz-Theater Berlin."
[124] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 273 (*Die Nation* 23 02 1889).

3) Sustainable protest: the Residenztheater and its literary matinees

One of the first venues to restructure the theatre within the general theatregoing culture was the Residenztheater in Berlin, where the Wohltätigkeitsmatinee of *Ghosts* took place. Through the Wohltätigkeitsmatinee, theatre engagement had reached a new level and the avant-garde began to "take place" in Berlin. Naturally, theatre is always dependent on venues and the Residenztheater deserves credit for facilitating the staging of experimental plays and contributing to new forms of theatre engagement.

Since the avant-garde is so closely associated with the work of Otto Brahm as a director, the Deutsches Theater and the Lessingtheater have often been regarded as the central theatres of the avant-garde.[125] After all, it was here where Brahm actually worked as a director. Nonetheless, the Residenztheater was one of the main venues to actually develop "tactics" for staging Ibsen within the constraints of censorship and economic necessity.

The Residenztheater was very dependent on commercial success, as one of the first privately owned theatres within the rapidly expanding theatre landscape of Berlin.[126] Nevertheless, the theatre's director Anton Anno (1884-1887) and his successor Sigmund Lautenburg (1887-1904) maintained the theatre's financial stability while simultaneously devoting themselves to the promotion of literary theatre.

Anton Anno was a passionate director of Ibsen. In 1887, he directed *Ghosts* and *Rosmersholm* at the Residenztheater, later continued this work at the Königliche Schauspielhaus with *A Lady from the Sea* (1889) and finally at the Lessingtheater

[125] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*; Werner Buth "Das Lessingtheater in Berlin unter der Direktion von Otto Brahm: Eine Untersuchung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der zeitgenössischen Kritik" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1965).
[126] Hans-Rüdiger Merten, *Vergessene Theater im alten Berlin: Eine Spurensuche* (Berlin: Trafo, 2006), 25.

with *An Enemy of the People* (1890), *Hedda Gabler* (1891) and *Rosmersholm* (1893).[127] In the 1880s, Anno thus raised the name of the Residenztheater to a central space for the performance of Ibsen. As Philipp Stein wrote in 1901:

> Das Publikum hatte sich gewöhnt, das Residenztheater Annos als die eigentliche Ibsenbühne zu betrachten.[128]

With "tricks" like the Wohltätigkeitsmatinee, the Residenztheater introduced experimental theatre while maintaining economic stability.[129] Gerhard Muhle describes this development under the direction of Anton Anno as follows:

> Hier bildet sich das zweite Prinzip dieses Theater heraus: Aus den Einnahmen, die die Pariser Schwänke und dramatischen Effektstücke bringen, bezahlt man literarische Experimente.[130]

Generally, however, Sigmund Lautenburg's direction between 1887 and 1904 is viewed as the peak of commercial and theatrical success at the Residenztheater.[131] Lautenburg maintained an entertainment repertory in the evening and was extremely successful with it.[132] But following Otto Brahm's example, Lautenburg turned the concept of the charity matinee into a regular slot, named the "literary matinee," in order to also introduce literary theatre and maintain the balance between high literary standards and commercial success.[133] The German dramatist Max Halbe described Lautenburg's transition to literary theatre as follows:

> Aber der Ehrgeiz des unternehmungslustigen Mannes hatte sich an solchen Kassentriumphen auf die Dauer nicht genügen lassen. Sein Sinn stand ihm höher; er trachtete nach literarischen Lorbeeren, nach

[127] Ibsen repertoire database of the National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/2953.0?result=true&stype=
[128] Philip Stein, *Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner Dichtungen* (Berlin: O. Elsner, 1901), 20.
[129] Gerhard Muhle, "Die Geschichte des Residenztheaters in Berlin von 1871-1887" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1955), 24-25.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Lothar Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg: dargestellt aus det Publizistik der Zeit" (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 1960), 5.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 68-69. Muhle, "Die Geschichte des Residenztheaters in Berlin von 1871-1887," 62-63.

> der Palme des literarischen Entdeckers, des Pfadfinders, des Bahnbrechers. Der junge Ruhm von Brahms »Freier Bühne« ließ ihn nicht schlafen, spornte zur Nacheiferung, zum Wettlauf an. Schon 1888 hatte er mit Ibsens »Wildente« einen ersten Versuch auf diesem Wege gemacht, der die Augen der literarischen Welt auf den neuen »Mann im Osten« gelenkt hatte.[134]

The German premiere of *The Wild Duck* in 1888 was a decisive moment for Lautenburg's direction. In his review of the performance, Otto Brahm considered it another step in the direction of *Menschendarstellung*:

> Im Ganzen zeigte auch diese Aufführung, wie anregend für die Schauspieler es wird, Menschen, nicht Schablonen und Puppen darzustellen, und wie die besseren unter ihnen mit ihren höheren Zwecken wachsen.[135]

With this performance, Brahm had become a theatre-maker. At the *Ghosts* matinee Otto Brahm and Paul Schlenther were allowed backstage,[136] but at Lautenburg's matinee of *The Wild Duck* they had been officially promoted to artistic advisors, and actively participated in this production.[137] Brahm remembers it as a decisive moment that launched his career as a "Theatermann":

> Lebhaft erinnere ich mich noch dieser Proben zur „Wildente", bei denen Schlenther und ich hinzugezogen waren, und an denen wir beide künftigen Theatermänner wohl zum erstenmal in das innere Arbeitswerk der Bühne ganz hineinblickten, mitratend und mittatend.[138]

Following the success of *The Wild Duck*, and with the Residenztheater's reputation as the main Ibsen venue firmly established, the author personally offered *A Lady from*

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[134] Max Halbe, *Scholle und Schicksal* (Salzburg: Das Bergland-Buch, 1940), accessed 12 April 2016, http://gutenberg.spiegel.de/buch/scholle-und-schicksal-8270/10.
[135] Otto Brahm, "*Die Wildente* am Residenz-Theater in Berlin" in *Frankfurter Zeitung,* 6 March 1888, reproduced for The National Library of Norway, last modified 13 January 2012, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11210658.0.
[136] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 12-13; Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 451-452.
[137] Brahm, *Kritische Schriften*, 452.
[138] Ibid.

the Sea to Sigmund Lautenburg, even though it ended up being directed by Anno at the Königliche Schauspielhaus instead.[139]

Of course the Residenztheater was not the only theatre by far to perform Ibsen's plays, but it has a distinct record of implementing Brahm's revolutionary spirit. At the Residenztheater, Brahm presented the second season of the members' club Freie Bühne in 1890.[140] Sigmund Lautenburg was the first to offer him a contractual agreement to create an Ibsen ensemble so that Brahm could draw from a regular cast for a series of Sunday matinees.[141] As illustrated earlier, Brahm considered a strong ensemble essential for the development of his particular theatre style. Out of his work at the Residenztheater came notable actors such as Emanuel Reicher.[142] The work of Wallner, Anno and Lautenburg at the Residenztheater should thus be recognised as important contributions to a "theatre revolution"[143] that lasted well into the twentieth century (see III).

Having directed the Wohltätigkeitsmatinee, Anno was active right next to Brahm at his "Pforte zur Moderne." Lautenburg, on the other hand, was at the time considered to be more of a competent businessman than an original or innovative director, at least in contemporary reviews.[144] Even though Brahm was given the opportunity to participate in the production of *The Wild Duck*, he ridiculed Lautenburg for lacking in originality by staging it as a matinee:

> Nach dem Vorbild der "Gespenster"-Vorstellung vom vorigen Jahre hatte Herr Direktor Lautenburg die Form einer Matinée gewählt, für welche ein zwingender Grund nicht vorlag; […] und es bedurfte, nachdem das

[139] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 17.
[140] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 42.
[141] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 21 and 79; Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 42.
[142] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 82-83.
[143] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 263-300.
[144] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, 92, 128, 339.

> Interesse für Ibsen's Schöpfungen im literarischen Publikum Berlins ein so lebhaftes geworden ist, dieses künstlich erzeugten Kuriositätsreizes durchaus nicht, um das Haus in allen Reihen zu füllen.[145]

In the years that followed, Lautenburg's "Stilblüten" would often be ridiculed by Otto Brahm and others.[146] Max Halbe's slight sarcasm at Lautenburg's literary ambitions also exposes the Residenztheater director as someone who was not taken too seriously by the avant-garde. Nonetheless, it has to be recognised that Lautenburg's business mind significantly helped strengthen the emerging avant-garde; it ensured Brahm was able to work with a regular ensemble and literary matinee became a fixed slot for a literary gathering on a Sunday afternoon. As Halbe notes about the successful premiere of his play *Jugend* as one such matinee:

> Die Anziehungskraft der Lautenburgschen Matineen hatte sich auch diesmal bewährt. Das ganze literarische Berlin war versammelt.[147]

Between Anton Anno and Sigmund Lautenburg, the Residenztheater became an important physical space for the avant-garde. Even though it was not the first and certainly not the only Ibsen venue, it stands out as a space for cultural exchange and critical audience reception. Among the performances of *A Doll's House* in Germany, the one at the Residenztheater was credited for restoring the original ending after the public uproar over the alternative ending.[148]

Moreover, as the example of the public dismissal of Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben* in 1902 shows (Chapter 6), the literary matinee at the Residenztheater upheld the tradition of what Spielhagen had twenty years earlier described as the *vox populi*. A strong reaction – positive or negative – is indicative of an audience united through critical exchange and collective protest. As Brahm's ambivalent relationship with

[145] Brahm, "Ibsen's Wildente," in *Kritische Schriften*, 159.
[146] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, 92, 128, 339.
[147] Max Halbe, *Scholle und Schicksal.*
[148] "The alternative ending of A Doll's House."

Lautenburg also confirms, the tension coming out of these conflicts and disagreements had become an essential part of both the avant-garde's creative energy and its sense of togetherness. People may have disagreed, even fought and ridiculed each other, but they certainly all cared enough about literary theatre and the promotion of "truth" to do so.

4) Rethinking togetherness through cultural liberation: the "exclusive" Freie Bühne

Otto Brahm's observation that the *Ghosts* matinee performance marked the opening of the "Pforte zur Moderne des deutschen Theaters" already indicated what was about to follow. And on 29 September 1889 Brahm inaugurated the Freie Bühne with another performance of *Ghosts*, this time at the Lessingtheater.[149]

The Freie Bühne was allegedly established as a private membership club in Berlin's Kempinski restaurant on 4 April 1889 by Otto Brahm and nine other founding members, even though Brahm remained the artistic director.[150] Among them was the publisher Samuel Fischer, who, as the treasurer, also took it upon himself to promote the organisation.[151]

Following the example of André Antoine's Théâtre Libre in Paris, the organisation functioned as a membership club, which would thereby not be subject to censorship. Every audience member had to join by signing a membership declaration and paying the membership fee. In the first season, Otto Brahm primarily "borrowed" actors from other ensembles and performed at the Lessingtheater.[152] For practical

[149] Ibsen repertoire database of the National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11150328.
[150] Reissmann, "Otto Brahm: Die Erneuerung der Bühne," in *Theater als Geschäft: Berlin und seine Privattheater um die Jahrhundertwende*, 134-135.
[151] Freydank, "Die Freie Bühne: Bürgerliche Opposition und künstlerische Alternative," 134.
[152] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 39; Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 20-21.

reasons, the Freie Bühne followed the organisational innovations of the Residenztheater. In the beginning it would only do Sunday matinees so that the actors could appear in other performances in the evenings.[153] After the inauguration with *Ghosts*, Brahm notably staged a scandalous performance of Hauptmann's *Vor Sonnenaufgang*. [154] After falling out with Oscar Blumenthal at the Lessingtheater, he then established a contractual agreement with the Residenztheater for the Freie Bühne's second season.[155]

The Freie Bühne did not stay on Berlin's theatre landscape for long. Even though the organisation formally existed until 1901, its influence waned after 1894, when Otto Brahm declared that its mission had been accomplished and naturalistic plays had been incorporated into official performance repertory.[156] Nonetheless, the legacy and mentality that the Freie Bühne planted in Berlin's theatre landscape – sparked by the urge to stage Ibsen's *Ghosts* – was crucial to the development of an avant-garde.

Other developments related to the Freie Bühne had a longer life. A year after founding the Freie Bühne Fischer and Brahm founded a magazine titled *Freie Bühne für ein Modernes Leben*, which later became the *Neue Deutsche Rundschau*.[157] The Freie Bühne was subsequently followed by the Freie Volksbühne, which until the present day follows the principle, "Die Kunst dem Volke."[158] Again it was Otto Brahm (together with Bruno Wille) who was responsible for it.[159]

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[153] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 78.
[154] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 238.
[155] Claus, *The Theatre Director Otto Brahm*, 41-42.
[156] Birgit Kulhoff, "Bürgerliche Selbstbehauptung im Spiegel der Kunst. Untersuchungen zur Kulturpublizistik der Rundschauzeitschriften im Kaiserreich 1871-1914" (PhD diss., Ruhr-Universität Bochum, 1990), 134.
[157] Kulhoff, "Bürgerliche Selbstbehauptung im Spiegel der Kunst," 150.
[158] The motto "Die Kunst dem Volke" remains the motto engraved at the Volksbühne Theatre at the Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz.
[159] Birgit Kulhoff, "Bürgerliche Selbstbehauptung im Spiegel der Kunst," 140.

As Philip Stein observes, the "battles" over Ibsen can be regarded as a central motivator behind the establishment of the Freie Bühne:

> Die "Freie Bühne," aus den Kämpfen um Ibsen erstanden und erstarkt, hatte ihre erste Vorstellung gegeben, die "Gespenster."[160]

United by the cause of performing Ibsen's *Ghosts* and other plays banned from public censorship, the Freie Bühne influenced Berlin's theatre-going culture both from organisational as well as ideological perspectives. In terms of group identity, the social-movement mentality based on a united and well-prepared audience in a sense became the defining feature of the Freie Bühne. Erika Fischer-Lichte concludes:

> Der Skandal blieb in der ersten Spielzeit das Markenzeichen der Freien Bühne. Immer wieder ist in den Rezensionen von "und Klatschen, Geschrei und Beifallsgejohle" die Rede, die "aus dem Theatersaal den richtigen Circus" machten.[161]

The Freie Bühne essentially defined itself as a culture of protest, a culture of informed criticism. After all, Stein calls the Freie Bühne a product of "den Kämpfen um Ibsen"[162]:

> Der Beifall war langsam erloschen und ein energisches, ästhetisches fanatisches Zischen gewann für Sekunden die bald wieder bestrittene Herrschaft im Hause.[163]

Stein's observation confirms the consistent sense of collective criticism that carries through from the early Ibsen performances. Stein presents the "energisches, ästhetisches, fanatisches Zischen" as a status quo for the Freie Bühne, a constant vocal battlefield between audience members who were thereby in constant dialogue with each other. The audience's *vox populi* had become part of the Freie Bühne

[160] Stein, *Henrik Ibsen: Zür Bühnengeschichte seiner Dichtungen*, 12.
[161] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 240.
[162] Stein, *Henrik Ibsen: Zür Bühnengeschichte seiner Dichtungen*, 12.
[163] Ibid.

experience. And in fact this community mentality had been set out clearly in its mission statement:

> Uns vereinigt der Zweck, unabhängig von dem Betriebe der bestehenden Theater und ohne mit diesen in einen Wettkampf einzutreten, eine Bühne zu begründen, welche FREI ist von den Rücksichten auf Theatercensur und Gelderwerb.
>
> Es sollen während des Theaterjahres, beginnend vom Herbst 1889, in einem der ersten Berliner Schauspielhäuser etwa zehn Aufführungen moderner Dramen von hervorragendem Interesse stattfinden, welche den ständigen Bühnen ihrem Wesen nach schwerer zugänglich sind.
>
> Sowohl in der Auswahl der dramatischen Werke, als auch in ihrer schauspielerischen Darstellung sollen die Ziele einer der Schablone und dem Virtuosenthum abgewandten, lebendigen Kunst angestrebt werden.
>
> In dieser Absicht ist der Verein >FREIE BÜHNE< gestiftet worden, dessen Aufführungen nur den Mitgliedern des Vereins zugänglich, sein werden. Sollten Sie geneigt sein, das Unternehmen zu stützen, so ersuchen wir Sie, die inliegende Beitrittserklärung zu vollziehen und uns baldmöglichst, jedenfalls bis zum 30. d. M. zugehen zu lassen.
>
> Verein >FREIE BÜHNE<. Otto Brahm, Vorsitzender. Paul Jonas, Rechtsbeistand.
>
> S. Fischer, Schatzmeister. Verlagsbuchhändler [164]

Already the formal "Vereinsgründung" brings out an element of united force and group mentality: "uns vereinigt der Zweck." While such phrases may be inherent to the nature of setting up a membership club, these words here also convey how the formal development of the avant-garde mirrors that sense of togetherness. Similarly, though the phrase "nur den Mitgliedern des Vereins zugänglich" is a legal "trick" to avoid censorship, it does convey the peculiar balance between inclusivity and exclusivity necessary for the formation of a collective identity (after all, membership creates a collective identity by definition). An egalitarian setting in itself, this private club is a space protected from public authorities. As its aim is to make theatre more

[164] Ruth Freydank, "Die Freie Bühne: Bürgerliche Opposition und künstlerische Alternative," in *Theater als Geschäft*, 137.

accessible, it is an exclusive club that any audience member is invited to join. The Freie Bühne thereby was inclusive and exclusive at the same time. Its exclusivity was reminiscent of literary salons in Berlin, egalitarian but exclusive and intimate gatherings.

Karl Kraus observes the peculiar nature of intimacy and togetherness when he ridicules the ways in which the Viennese Bildungsbürgertum aimed to establish a Freie Bühne of its own. In one of his earliest editions of *Die Fackel*, Kraus observes the following phenomenon:

> In Berlin hatte eine freie Volksbühne längst die Freie Bühne an lebendiger Wirksamkeit übertroffen, — bei uns begann man von einem »Intimen Theater« zu phantasieren,[…]. So intim sollte dies Theater sein, dass noch auf der letzten Gallerie die Winzigkeit der Geister, die es schufen und belebten, erfasst werden könnte. Auch damit wurde es nichts, und es verblieb, bei der intimen Kaffeehausnische.[165]

In criticising the Viennese Bildungsbürgertum for its laissez-faire in comparison to the fast-paced, productive avant-garde in Berlin, Kraus brings out a number of interesting aspects that characterise this avant-garde as a socio-cultural phenomenon that took place in Berlin but certainly affected cultural life in other metropolitan centres as well.[166] In Vienna, Kraus claims, people fantasise about an "intimate theatre," highlighting to what extent "intimacy" was such a defining indicator of this Berlin avant-garde, as were the nuances – the "Winzigkeit der Geister" – that made it alive and worthwhile. The expression "Winzigkeit der Geister" refers to what Kraus perceived as the small-mindedness of the Viennese Bildungsbürgertum, and may also allude to Ibsen's *Ghosts*. In addition, Kraus references the "intime Kaffeehausnische" as places where fantasies remain nothing but coffee-house chatter. He creates an associative link between the intimacy of the exclusive literary gatherings in coffee

[165] Karl Kraus, "Eine Freie Bühne," in *Die Fackel* 1, no. 23 (1899), 21.
[166] On the lack of theatre infrastructure in Berlin and the reasons why several avant-garde Viennese theatre-makers moved to Vienna: Yates, *Theatre in Vienna*, 177.

houses, such as the literary group Jung Wien, and the intimacy of this new theatre. As a public space, the coffee house was recognised as a third space accessible to everyone, yet certain literary circles remained highly exclusive.[167] The "letzte Gallerie" is reminiscent of the "Vierte Gallerie," the cheapest seating category of the Viennese Burgtheater, which was recognised for its unique group atmosphere.[168] In his sarcastic criticism of the Viennese Bildungsbürgertum, Kraus implicitly recognises the distinct sense of intimacy and togetherness that developed through the Freie Bühne and the Freie Volksbühne in the cultural scene of Berlin. Hence, Kraus – who frequently held readings in Berlin – noted the distinct intellectual nuance that had developed in Berlin, in contrast to the "Winzigkeit der Geister" in Vienna who aimed (but failed) to imitate it.

As laid out in its mission statement, the Freie Bühne devoted itself to "freeing" modern plays from dependency on established theatres. Its primary aim was to ensure accessibility and artistic integrity. Through an authentic "lebendige Kunst" of *real* people Brahm sought to establish the connection between audience and performer. At the same time, the practical elements of establishing this avant-garde contributed to a strong group identity and enhanced their sense of togetherness.

The membership lists of the Freie Bühne additionally reveal a trend towards social heterogeneity amongst the avant-garde. The first membership list from 30 June 1889 states that up to a third of the members were women (104 out of 354), another third of whom (29) were registered without a partner.[169] The emancipation of women plays a role in the shaping of the avant-garde theatre scene, even though it may not

[167] For a thorough overview of fin-de-siecle coffee house culture: Charlotte Ashby, Tag Gronberg, and Simon Shaw-Miller, *The Viennese Cafe and Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).
[168] Henry Kahane, "Arthur Kahane, Reinhardt's Dramaturge," *Theatre Research International* 4 (1978): 61, accessed 13 April 2016, doi:10.1017/S030788330000170X. Arthur Kahane, *Tagebuch des Dramaturgen* (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1928; repr., Hamburg: Tredition, 2013), 83. Citations refer to the Tredition edition.
[169] Kulhoff, "Bürgerliche Selbstbehauptung im Spiegel der Kunst," 143-144.

have been an explicitly declared aim. The matinee enabled women to attend performances without a male escort, since it took place during the day. Birgit Kulhoff argues that the Freie Bühne thereby ensured it was a respectable establishment for single women.[170] Similarly, the Freie Bühne became a Sunday afternoon activity for Berlin's growing intelligentsia.[171] As Kulhoff observes, the Freie Bühne thereby demonstrated openness and an egalitarian spirit.

In addition to a significant number of non-married women, the membership record of the Freie Bühne lists several Jewish surnames.[172] Peter Jelavich actually estimates up to 80% of the membership consisted of people with a Jewish background.[173] This phenomenon extends to the entire avant-garde, both audience and theatre-makers, before and after the Freie Bühne. Otto Brahm[174], Samuel Fischer, Sigmund Lautenburg, Oscar Blumenthal and later Max Reinhardt, Martin Zickel, Arthur Kahane were all of Jewish descent.[175] Emily Bilski identifies the role of theatre for Jews in late nineteenth century Berlin as representing one of the "less organised alternative public spheres that characterise urban life" in which culture offered a forum for social empowerment.[176] Peter Jelavich similarly argues that Berlin's avant-garde theatre provided a space for participation, as Jews would largely be excluded from the established imperial theatre institutions in Berlin.[177] This meant it represented, Jelavich claims, among other things, an opportunity for Jews to mark

[170] Ibid., 144-145.
[171] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 78.
[172] Jelavich, "How 'Jewish' was Theatre in Imperial Berlin?", 41.
[173] Jelavich, "How 'Jewish' was Theatre in Imperial Berlin?", 39-58.
[174] See the recently published Jeannette Malkin, "Der Theatermann Otto Brahm: ein widerwilliger Jude," *Aschkenas* 24, no. 2 (2014): 215–242, accessed 13 April 2016, doi: 10.1515/asch-2014-0020.
[175] In current research, the presence of Jewish theatre-makers in Imperial Berlin has become a topic of increasing interest. A thorough analysis has been provided by Peter Jelavich, "How 'Jewish' was Theatre in Imperial Berlin?", 39-58.
[176] Emily Bilski, *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 5.
[177] Jelavich, "How 'Jewish' was Theatre in Imperial Berlin?", 44.

their influence on the public space in Berlin's social and intellectual landscape.[178] Jelavich emphasises that there was nothing distinctly "Jewish" about the Freie Bühne, since, he argues, it specifically promoted inclusivity.[179] Nonetheless, it did provide another alternative space for socio-cultural empowerment in the growing city space.

Overall, though female or Jewish emancipation could just be by-products of the Freie Bühne spirit and the currents of social emancipation at the time, it does show how the avant-garde translated into not only a progressive mindset of inclusivity, equality and artistic integrity, but also as an opposition to aspects of the dominant social order.

III. Spass braucht keine: Max Reinhardt and togetherness without naturalism

1) Naturalism meets Burgtheater: the Reinhardt phenomenon

While Brahm's work marked the beginning of a modern theatrical avant-garde, the question remains which actual elements had a lasting impact on Berlin's theatre landscape and on modern theatre overall. After all, naturalism had already been declared passé by the 1890s. Answers can be found by looking at the one name that defines early twentieth-century theatre in Berlin: Max Reinhardt.

Reinhardt's career in Berlin began in 1894, shortly before Brahm took over the direction of the Deutsches Theater. After auditioning the 21-year-old Reinhardt at the Hotel Sacher in Vienna, Brahm had convinced him to join the Brahm-ensemble.[180] Reinhardt had earned early acting experiences at Vienna's *Vorstadtbühnen*, at that

[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Alexander Weigel, "Das Berliner Theater und seine Wiener Einflüsse," in *Vienna Meets Berlin: Cultural Interaction 1918-1933*, ed. John Warren and Ulrike Zitzlsperger (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 66.

point holding an engagement in Salzburg.[181] Through his engagement at the Deutsches Theater, Reinhardt would become one of Brahm's most celebrated actors, starting with the role of Jacob Engstrand for the January 1895 production of *Ghosts*.[182]

Despite Brahm's revolutionary achievements some of his actors had grown tired of social realism. In the summer of 1899, a group of Brahm-actors –Reinhardt among them – gave a guest performance at the Raimundtheater in Vienna and found a temporary escape from Brahm's naturalistic stagings.[183] Reinhardt's future dramaturg Arthur Kahane remembers this moment as follows:

> Hier erholten sie sich von Milieu und Gesellschaftskritik und tobten sich zum erstenmal […] nach Herzenslust aus. Zu dieser Herzenslust stellte Wien, die unnaturalistischste aller Städte, den zauberhaftesten Hintergrund, und die jungen Norddeutschen fühlten sich (honni soit!) sauwohl und quietschvergnügt.[184]

Kahane's observation illustrates the sense of liberation many actors felt once they were able to go beyond the constraints of what they perceived as dogmatic social realism. But Brahm's actors were successful due to the invaluable acting training he had provided them with, even if they used this training to move beyond his model of theatre. As Anton Linder points out in his review of the performance, the success of these actors was largely credited to their "realistic" performances of psychological nuance; a "'theatergeschichtlich und theaterpädagogisch revolutionäre That' für die Bühnenkultur der Stadt Wien," as he calls it.[185] Despite Brahm's relentless support for

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[181] Ibid.
[182] Boettcher, *Henrik Ibsen: Zur Bühnengeschichte seiner "Gespenster,"* 110; Ibsen repertoire database of the National Library of Norway, accessed 12 April 2016, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/54146.
[183] Reissmann, Bärbel, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," in *Theater als Geschäft*, 157.
[184] Kahane, *Tagebuch des Dramaturgen*, 84.
[185] Anton Lindner in *Bühne und Welt* 2 no. 2 (1899/1900): 962, quoted in Reissmann, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 157.

his actors, several of them desired some alternative outlet for their creative energies, a way to finally "have some fun." And this "fun" brought the legacy of naturalism into the twentieth century.

After a few years following Brahm's strict naturalism, Reinhardt and some of his colleagues at the Deutsches Theater began to gather in the Café Monopol, where they more and more often performed impromptu cabarets under the name of "Die Brille."[186] Its main purpose was to ridicule contemporary theatre productions and thus reintroduce "Spass" into their lives as actors.[187] Spontaneous improvisation and parody provided much-needed outlets for their frustration against "tedious" naturalism.[188] Die Brille's core members were Max Reinhardt, Martin Zickel, Friedrich Kayssler, Joseph Kainz and Christian Morgenstern.[189]

What started as a *Stammtisch* at the Café Monopol soon gained momentum, and from there on, the Brahm actors became Reinhardt actors.[190] On 23 January 1901, the Schall und Rauch cabaret organised by Max Reinhardt, Martin Zickel and Friedrich Kayssler first performed at the Künstlerhaus in der Bellevuestrasse in Berlin,[191] and on 19 July that same year, Schall und Rauch was officially registered as a "G.m.b.H." and became a functioning theatre company (*Theaterbetrieb*).[192] In October 1901, a former dancehall in the Schloßhotel Unter den Linden was converted into an "intimate" performance space and Schall und Rauch began its daily

[186] Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 64.
[187] Ibid.; Reinhardt, *Schall und Rauch*, 9.
[188] Peter Sprengel, ed., *Schall und Rauch: Erlaubtes und Verbotenes. Spieltexte des ersten Max-Reinhardt-Kabaretts (Berlin 1901/02)* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1991), 26.
[189] Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 64.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid., 65.
[192] Reissmann, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 157.

repertory.[193] About a year later – on 8 December 1902 – the Schall und Rauch G.m.b.H. finally became the Kleines Theater Unter den Linden.[194]

Kahane regards this development as a linear development of creative performance solutions:

> In Berlin entwickelte sich aus diesen Spielen, im losen Vereine mit einigen jungen Schriftstellern und Malern, gleichgesinnten Deserteuren des Naturalismus, jene berühmte »Brille«, aus der »Brille« wurde »Schall und Rauch«, aus »Schall und Rauch« das Kleine Theater unter der Führung von Max Reinhardt.[195]

As a "Deserteur des Naturalismus," Reinhardt consequently terminated his contract with Brahm at the Deutsches Theater and officially became an independent theatre-maker on the first day of 1903.[196] Three years later would see Reinhardt return to the Deutsches Theater, only this time as a theatre entrepreneur. And, about a year after Brahm had switched to the Lessingtheater,[197] Reinhardt purchased the Deutsches Theater, becoming its sole owner as of 1 January 1906.[198] Next to the Deutsches Theater, Reinhardt built a small alternative 300-seat entertainment venue named the Kammerspiele,[199] which he inaugurated with a celebrated production of Ibsen's *Ghosts* on 8 November 1906.[200] Reinhardt maintained the Deutsches Theater until he was forced to leave Germany in the early 1930s.[201]

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[193] *Schall und Rauch: Erlaubtes und Verbotenes*, 26.
[194] Reissmann, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 161.
[195] Kahane, *Tagebuch des Dramaturgen*, 85.
[196] Reissmann, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 161.
[197] Brahm's final performance at the Deutsches Theater (*Rose Bernd*) took place on 30 June 1904. In Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*, 1196. Reinhardt purchased the Deutsches Theater on 24 November 1905. Reissmann, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 170.
[198] Reissmann, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 170.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Siegfried Melchinger, *Max Reinhardt, sein Theater in Bildern* (Vienna: Friedrich Verlag, 1968), 78; Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 265. On 20 November 1906, Reinhardt also presented the premier of Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen*. Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*, 1109.
[201] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 292.

In the early twentieth century, Reinhardt's theatre would be known for colourful spectacles with a lot of movement, so that the audience would enjoy themselves and temporarily escape their daily lives.[202] He further staged grand spectacles that went far beyond Berlin's conventional theatre spaces, for example staging Hugo von Hoffmansthal's *Jedermann* on the Salzburger Domplatz, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Seidlpark in Murnau, and staging his performance of *Merchant of Venice* at the Campo di San Trovaso, a little Venetian square by the Church of San Trovaso.[203] Through these performances, Reinhardt contributed to the innovation of "immersive theatre" by staging large-scale events at the centre of community life, becoming one of the most well-known theatre-makers of the early twentieth century in the process.

2) Man sollte sich nie Zwillinge einbrocken: Max Reinhardt and Otto Brahm

Though both were influential figures who shaped Berlin's theatre landscape, the relationship between Otto Brahm and Max Reinhardt was conflicted. Reinhardt clearly distanced himself from Brahm and did not tire of openly mocking what he perceived as Brahm's dullness. In fact, Reinhardt's work as a theatre-maker began with a parody of Brahm's theatre concepts, as the *Don Carlos* spoof *Karle. Eine Diebskomödie* demonstrates:

> Ein einfaches, graues, trüberleuchtetes Zimmer. Hinten und rechts vorne je ein Thüre. Links ein altes, wurmstichiges, rostbraunes Bettgestell mit zerrissenen Strohsäcken. Darauf die Mutter, mit einem braunrot karierten Laken bedeckt. Davor ein windschiefer Wandschirm, welcher verstellbar ist. Rechts ein wackelner Tisch mit drei Rollstühlen, deren Geflecht zum Teil durchlöchtert ist. An der Wand, welche feuchte Flecke aufweist,

[202] Quoted in Weigel, "Das Berliner Theater und seine Wiener Einflüsse," 67.
[203] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 277-278.

> hängen verschiedene Öldrucke und eine billige Uhr, die stets nachgeht. Unter dem Bette befindet sich ein Stiefelknecht und Sonstiges. [204]

Schall und Rauch here ridiculed naturalism's tendency to endlessly elaborate on "suffering" in the stage directions, and tediously over-emphasise misery in every detail of the set. But in particular, Reinhardt and the Schall und Rauch crew ridiculed the naturalistic acting style:

> Es entsteht eine starke stimmungsvolle Pause. Sämtliche Darsteller kehren dem Publikum den Rücken zu und drücken moderne Standpunkte aus.[205]

In this stage direction, Schall und Rauch sarcastically comments on how the label of being "modern" somehow justifies not addressing the audience or making any overtly expressive gestures. After all, such is the "modern point of view."

While Brahm was surprisingly supportive of Schall und Rauch, he did not appreciate Reinhardt's "betrayal" and increasing competition, especially when Reinhardt, on officially leaving the Deutsches Theater in 1903, deprived Brahm of important actors from the Brahm ensemble [206] Brahm regarded Reinhardt's independent work as a betrayal of the principles of literary theatre, dismissing his grand spectacles as distractions from the essence of the text and, thus, from the "truthfulness" of the performance.[207] But just like Brahm, Reinhardt aimed for authenticity and truthfulness in performance; only he did not consider social realism a necessary component of that truthfulness. For Reinhardt, plays such as Ibsen's *Ghosts* captured a profound truth, as his production at the Kammerspiele shows in the ways it

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[204] Reinhardt, *Schall und Rauch*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1901), 73, accessed 13 April 2016, https://archive.org/stream/schallundrauch01reinuoft#page/72/mode/2up/search/graues https://archive.org/stream/schallundrauch01reinuoft#page/72/mode/2up/search/graues
[205] Ibid., 103.
[206] Renate Wagner, *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzlers mit Max Reinhardt und dessen Mitarbeitern* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1971), 16.
[207] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, 27 and *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzlers mit Max Reinhardt und dessen Mitarbeitern,* 16.

facilitates honest and dynamic forms of human interaction (Chapter 3). Furthermore, the similarities between the two theatre-makers reveal themselves in relation to the works of Arthur Schnitzler.

By the time Brahm had become director of the Lessingtheater and Reinhardt was about to take over the Deutsches Theater, Reinhardt and Brahm had become fierce competitors. Their rivalry manifested itself in a continuous struggle over the performance rights for Arthur Schnitzler's plays. Schnitzler's correspondence illustrates this on-going competition in numerous letters, painting a vivid image of the peculiar Brahm-Reinhardt case.[208]

Since the Berlin premiere of *Liebelei* at the Deutsches Theater, Brahm became Schnitzler's principal director in Berlin.[209] Together with publisher Samuel Fischer, Brahm established Berlin as an important base for the promotion of Schnitzler's theatre.[210] Hence Brahm begrudgingly observed the increasing correspondence between Reinhardt and Schnitzler. In order to reassure Brahm of his loyalty, Schnitzler writes: "es [ist] keineswegs Reinhardt […], den ich mehr liebe als Sie, sondern höchstens mich selbst."[211] Not completely reassured, Brahm writes an urgent telegram to Schnitzler about the performance rights of the play *Zwischenspiel*:

> Bitte nichts nach anderer Seite [Reinhardt] unternehmen, bevor ich Ihren heutigen Brief beantwortet habe. Herzlich grüßend, Brahm[212]

In his reply two days later, Schnitzler carefully reveals his growing interest in Reinhardt's innovative theatre style, which he tries to convey without causing too much resentment:

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[208] For a thorough overview: *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzlers mit Max Reinhardt und dessen Mitarbeitern*, 14-26.
[209] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, xxiii.
[210] Ibid., xxiii and 163.
[211] Ibid., 181. Letter from 28 July 1905
[212] Ibid., 191. Letter from 31 August 1905

> Ich kann nun nicht, wie Sie ohne weiteres einsehen werden, Reinhardt (der sich schon so lange um was Neues von mir bemüht und dessen Theater mir ja nicht ausschließlich ein Konkurrenzinstitut des Lessingtheaters,[213] sondern auch bei allen mir höchst unverborgenen Mängeln ein interessantes künstlerisches Unternehmen bedeutet) [die Komödie] nicht einfach wieder wegnehmen […].
> Was lieber Freund ist's nun mit uns, wenn sich die Reinhardtsache realisiert? [214]

Schnitzler's diplomatic language reads like that of a mediator in a very personal matter.[215] The intensity of the on-going tension between Brahm and Reinhardt makes these two theatre-makers quintessential representatives of that Berlin avant-garde mentality we already found in the 1880s. On the intense but complex relationship between Otto Brahm and Max Reinhardt, Schnitzler resigns himself to concluding: "Man sollte sich nie Zwillinge einbrocken."[216]

Despite all their differences, a closer look at the early stages of Reinhardt's theatre work reveals the extent to which it was influenced by Brahm's legacy, even though Reinhardt's work was based on a rejection of naturalism. Schnitzler saw these two theatre-makers as two of the same kind, but Reinhardt moved Brahm's teachings into the twentieth century.

3) Together forever: Schall und Rauch and the Freie Bühne spirit

It needs to be emphasised to what extent Brahm facilitated Reinhardt's success story by bringing him to the Deutsches Theater. The Schall und Rauch actors were not only trained in the Brahmstil, but they also maintained the particular collective spirit that Brahm had worked so hard to instil in his ensemble. Brahm should be credited with

[213] Brahm had taken over direction at the Lessingtheater in September 1904. Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*, 120.
[214] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, 193-194.
[215] Even though Schnitzler's correspondence with Reinhardt never culminated in a continuous working relationship, Schnitzler expressed some resentment about this missed opportunity due to his loyalty to Brahm. *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzlers mit Max Reinhardt und dessen Mitarbeitern*, 25.
[216] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, 193-194.

facilitating their sense of solidarity, group spirit and togetherness, even if it may have ironically converted into a communal rebellion against naturalism. Furthermore, Brahm initially supported the creation of Schall und Rauch, even allowing the troupe to perform an afternoon performance at the Deutsches Theater on 22 May 1901.[217]

Overall, there are some striking similarities between this cabaret troupe and the Freie Bühne generation in their general sense of togetherness and community spirit. Die Brille effectively functioned as a sort of membership club. People who wanted to join the troupe underwent an initiation ritual that would symbolically rid them of the restricted vision caused by bourgeois "glasses."[218] These intimate gatherings – which, given the actors' work schedules, took place around midnight – would become notorious for their distinct atmosphere of spontaneity and artistic freedom. They were described as providing a unique insight into how, among themselves, the Deutsches Theater actors had an infectious energy:

> Es war uns da ein Mal gegönnt, die Mitglieder der vornehmsten deutschen Privatbühne unter sich, in den Ausbrüchen ihrer übersprudelnden Künstlerlaune zu sehen.[219]

The solidarity and communal strength among these actors stand out as decisive elements of their success. Furthermore, their professional work began as an act of collegial support: the first "commercial" performance of Schall und Rauch was a means of raising funds for Christian Morgenstern's medical bills after he contracted tuberculosis.[220]

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[217] *Schall und Rauch: Erlaubtes und Verbotenes,* 20.
[218] Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 64.
[219] *Berliner Börsen-Courier*, 10 October 1901, quoted in *Schall und Rauch: Erlaubtes und Verbotenes,* 27.
[220] Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 64.

Schall und Rauch had a clear mission, summed up in the "Vorrede" of the script for their first performance: "Spass braucht keine."[221] For the performance troupe, fun was an aim in itself that did not require any explanation. When Schall und Rauch became an actual theatre company on 9 October 1902, it was agreed that the conventional theatre schedule of daily evening performances did not carry the same "Brille-spirit." [222] In many ways this was reminiscent of the early days of Wohltätigkeitsmatinee and the Freie Bühne. And like its predecessors, the Schall und Rauch G.m.b.H was among the most censored organisations in Berlin at the beginning of the twentieth century.[223] As a response, Schall and Rauch overloaded the censorship bureau by sending in so many texts that it effectively exhausted the bureau's capacity.[224]

Even though it would relentlessly ridicule naturalism and even the concept of the "intimate theatre" as such,[225] Schall und Rauch G.m.b.H.'s declared mission bears striking similarities to the ideals fought for by the Freie Bühne. In a letter to the *Königliche Polizei-Präsidium* from 15 April 1902, Hans Oberländer – the interim director of the Schall und Rauch G.m.b.H. while Reinhardt was still engaged at the Deutsches Theater – argued that Schall und Rauch had become a proper "Theater" through its innovative approach to literary theatre:

> Unsere Absicht geht dahin, die nächste Saison von vornherein mit einem Repertoire zu beginnen, das eine streng literarische Tendenz an den Tag legt.[226]

Schall und Rauch thus incorporated the concept of "literary theatre" Brahm and his contemporaries had previously fought for as a by now standard quality measure.

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[221] Reinhardt, *Schall und Rauch*, 9.
[222] *Schall und Rauch: Erlaubtes und Verbotenes,* 26.
[223] Ibid., 19-20.
[224] Ibid., 19-20.
[225] Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret*, 65. "L'Interieur" in Reinhardt, *Schall und Rauch*, 207-215.
[226] Quoted in Reissmann, Bärbel, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 160.

Schall und Rauch was to function as an "Einakterbühne," performing one-act plays such as those by Arthur Schnitzler.[227] Max Reinhardt and Friedrich Kayssler had closely encountered these one-acters when they performed[228] in Schnitzler's "Einakterzyklus" *Lebendige Stunden* premiered and directed by Otto Brahm. [229]

Again, similarly to the Freie Bühne, Schall und Rauch started out as a private organisation functioning outside the "conventional" set-up of the theatre that increasingly moved into the mainstream theatre landscape. From their informal gatherings in the public social spaces of urbanising Berlin – the Kempinski wine bar for Brahm and the Café Metropol for Reinhardt – to the Deutsches Theater, Reinhardt had incorporated the Brahm school by maintaining the sense of togetherness in order to rebel against him. Reinhardt's rebellion and his desire to constantly reinvent the theatre experience while bringing people closer together is, if anything, a confirmation of Brahm's "parenting skills." As Peter Jelavich concludes:

> Though Reinhardt consciously rebelled against Brahm's naturalism, he continues the spirit that had informed the Freie Bühne. By employing a much greater diversity of style, he widened the cultural space that had been opened by Brahm.[230]

4) Menschen without social realism: Reinhardt's version of authenticity

As he created his own ensemble at the Deutsches Theater, Reinhardt maintained the sense of intimacy and togetherness he adopted from Brahm. In his diary, Reinhardt's dramaturg Arthur Kahane recalls a 1902 conversation in which Reinhardt explains his theatre vision:

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[227] Reissmann, Bärbel, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 161. Schall und Rauch performed Schnitzler's *Abschiedssouper* on 21 February 1902.
[228] Reinhardt played Anton Hausdorfer in *Lebendige Stunden* and Karl Rademacher in *Die letzten Masken* while Friedrich Kayssler played Leonhard in *Die Frau mit dem Dolche*. In *Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzlers mit Max Reinhardt und dessen Mitarbeitern,*10 and 40.
[229] On 04 January 1901 *Lebendige Stunden* premiered at the Deutsches Theater. In Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887 – 1945*, 1195.
[230] Jelavich, "How 'Jewish' is theatre in Berlin?", 46.

> Ich denke mir ein kleines Ensemble der besten Schauspieler. Intime Stücke, deren Qualität sich von selbst versteht, von guten Schauspielern gut gespielt; bis in die kleinste Rolle nicht mit einem guten, sondern mit dem dafür besten Schauspieler besetzt und so sorgfältig einstudiert, daß die stärksten und auseinanderstrebendsten Individualitäten wie in einem Akkord zusammenklingen. Das ist es, was ich mir zum Ziel gesetzt habe.[231]

As Brahm did in previous decades, Reinhardt stresses the importance of the community spirit permeating the ensemble's work. His work combines individual psychological depth and communal strength in order to achieve an effect he compares to the different voices that make up an orchestra. The distinct constellation of actors allows for close connection and collaboration between them. In his conversation with Kahane, Reinhardt mapped out his theatre dream:

> Was mir vorschwebt, ist ein Theater, das den Menschen wieder Freude gibt. Das sie aus der grauen Alltagsmisere über sich selbst hinausführt, in eine heitere und reine Luft der Schönheit.[232]

Max Reinhardt's primary aim, then, was to maintain this ideology by lifting the audience from what he considers the miseries of everyday life and reintroducing beauty and entertainment into Berlin's avant-garde. Nonetheless, he emphasises that his theatre vision could only be implemented if the acting style of maintains the core principles of naturalism's truthfulness:

> Das heißt nicht, daß ich auf die großen Errungenschaften der naturalistischen Schauspielkunst, auf die nie vorher erreichte Wahrheit und Echtheit verzichten will! Das könnte ich nicht, auch wenn ich wollte. Ich bin durch diese Schule durchgegangen und bin dankbar, daß ich es durfte.[233]

In as much as Reinhardt aspired to a theatre that would allow an escape from the "Alltagsmisere" through a return to principles of beauty and entertainment, he

[231] Kahane, *Tagebuch des Dramaturgen*, 87.
[232] Ibid., 85.
[233] Ibid., 86.

recognised the achievements of the naturalistic acting techniques from the 1880s. Furthermore, Reinhardt acknowledged that Brahm's directorial approach taught him the performance techniques of *Wahrheit* and *Echtheit*, concluding that he will maintain the *Schauspielkunst* but reject the idea that truthfulness comes from a sort of social realism that suggests hardship and misery. To him, authenticity and truthfulness can only be achieved through psychological depth and humanity:

> Die strenge Erziehung zu unerbittlicher Wahrheit ist aus der Entwicklung nicht mehr wegzudenken, und es gibt keine, die an ihr vorübergehen kann. Aber ich möchte ihre Entwicklung weiterführen, sie auf anderes anwenden als auf Zustands- und Umweltschilderung, über Armeleutgeruch und die Probleme der Gesellschaftskritik hinaus, möchte denselben höchsten Grad von Wahrheit und Echtheit an das rein Menschliche wenden, in einer tiefen und verfeinerten Seelenkunst, und möchte das Leben auch von seiner anderen Seite zeigen als der pessimistischer Verneinung, aber ebenso wahr und echt auch im Heitern und erfüllt von Farbe und Licht.[234]

Reinhardt clearly states how important Brahm's performance technique was for the theatre he aims to achieve. To him, "das rein Menschliche" and the "tiefe, verfeinerte Seelenkunst" are the pillars Brahm's achievements rest upon. "Mit der ganzen Intimität moderner Seelenkunst zu spielen"[235] remained the mantra of modern theatre as it transitioned into the next century. As Oskar Seidlin writes:

> Über diesen bisweilen ausbrechenden "Spektakel"-Zügen darf nicht vergessen werden, daß Reinhardt der vollendete Meister intimster und innerlichster Regiekunst sein konnte […], daß er eine ganze Generation unvergleichlicher Schauspieler herangezogen und dem deutschen Theater mit Recht zu Weltruf verholfen hat.[236]

As Reinhardt's subsequent work also revolved around intensifying the experience between audience and performer while creating a community spirit, it is evident to

[234] Ibid.
[235] Ibid., 89.
[236] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, 27

what extent Brahm's groundwork defined the modern theatre of the early twentieth century. It was Reinhardt who maintained Brahm's principles of constantly questioning and redefining how authenticity manifests in the theatre space.

5) From the Kleines Theater to the Kammerspiele: intimacy as a matter of physical space

Reinhardt's development of the programme initiated by Otto Brahm included a re-thinking of the physical space of the theatre. He created an architecture that would facilitate a closer connection between audience and performers by building smaller venues, and physically bringing them closer together.

Reinhardt's creation of a physical architecture of intimacy and togetherness began with the Kleines Theater and the plan Reinhardt and Kayssler developed to convert the former dancehall of the Schloßhotel Unter den Linden into the Kleines Theater Unter den Linden. In accordance with Reinhardt's and Kayssler's plans, architect Peter Behrens built a noticeably more crowded space with 400 seats in close proximity to each other.[237] In a letter from 31 August 1902 to Arthur Schnitzler, Reinhardt presents his vision of widening the "intimate theatre" concept by altering the physical theatre space:

> Ich brauche Ihnen wohl nicht erst zu sagen, daß ich bei diesem schweren Schritt ganz und gar von der Hoffnung erfüllt bin, ein rein künstlerisches Unternehmen auf die Beine zu stellen und so die Traditionen des Deutschen Theaters fortzupflanzen und sie auch in einer jüngeren Welt mit jüngeren Idealen lebendig zu erhalten. Ich glaube, daß unser beispiellos intimes Theater der Boden für neue Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten des Theaters ist […] umsomehr als durch den Umbau unserer Bühne ein Apparat geschaffen wurde, der die feinsten, subtilsten und neuesten Wirkungen ermöglicht.[238]

[237] Reissmann, "Max Reinhardt: ein erfolgreiches Theaterexperiment," 158-159.
[238] Der *Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzlers mit Max Reinhardt und dessen Mitarbeitern,* 41. Letter from 31 August 1902.

Reinhardt's version of enhancing physical togetherness by redeveloping theatre spaces thus represents an adjustment of the Freie Bühne spirit and the Ibsen-effect to the twentieth century. In the process, Reinhardt claims to develop and thereby strengthen the role of intimacy in theatre. In other words, Reinhardt translates Brahm's emotional togetherness into a concrete physical sense of crowdedness.

Besides maintaining the Freie Bühne spirit, there were very practical reasons for this decision, as Reinhardt presents the economical benefits of the Kleines Theater:

> An engen Sitzen ist noch nie ein Theater zugrunde gegangen, wohl aber an zu teuren Plätzen und an zu wenig Plätzen….
> Unser Änderungsvorschlag ist billig, äußerst charakeristisch und wird einen ganz neuen höchst eigenartigen und sehr stimmungsvollen Raum schaffen.[239]

While intimacy and togetherness may have become an ideology, they also functioned as a survival method in the complex commercial theatre world of Berlin. Cynically speaking, the "intimacy" mantra may have been used to cover up the "cheap trick" of cramming more paying customers into the same space. However, it is the combination between artistic integrity and practical reasoning that reveals the Kleines Theater as a theatre of the avant-garde. Reinhardt developed a creative and sustainable solution enabling him to introduce his version of an intimate theatre into the general theatre landscape.

When he built the Kammerspiele in 1906, Reinhardt brought this architecture of intimacy to another level. After the 400 seats of the Kleines Theater, the Kammerspiele held only 300 seats.[240] Furthermore, the auditorium would have the same width as the stage and there would be no separation between audience and

[239] Hugo Fetting, ed., *Max Reinhardt: Schriften, Aufzeichnungen, Briefe, Reden Interviews, Gespräche, Auszüge aus den Regiebüchern* (Berlin: Henschelverlag 1974), 71.
[240] Melchinger, *Max Reinhardt, sein Theater in Bildern*, 78.

performer through an orchestra pit or a prompt box.[241] Even when there was no longer any pressing economic necessity Reinhardt thus physically "forced" audience and performer into a community. Henry Kahane – son of Arthur Kahane – mentions the Kammerspiele as a decisive innovation of the theatre experience through this physical sense of togetherness:

> The destruction of the traditional stage frame, which separates actor and audience, makes way for a most desirable immediacy between them.[242]

Max Reinhardt implemented his vision of bringing audience and performer together by creating a physical proximity between them, a new type of theatre space originally born out of a concrete necessity of surviving in the fast-growing metropolis of Berlin and adjusting to the new urban environment. Reinhardt thereby continued Brahm's legacy of developing creative solutions to combine artistic vision with economic necessity and generate intimacy in the public space. Like Brahm's work, Reinhardt's Kleines Theater and the Kammerspiele became cultural spaces within the city that were intimate but inclusive and publicly accessible at the same time.

6) Togetherness in the twentieth century: everyday life

Reinhardt not only created a new theatre architecture that would incorporate such ideas as placing audience and performers on one level, he continued to reinvent what theatre could be. In the early twentieth century, Reinhardt re-conceived the way theatre could be mapped within the city space.[243]

Ironically, by escaping conventional theatre spaces and moving theatre into the everyday, Reinhardt aimed to escape the dull reality of the "everyday." From circus spaces to schools and churchyards, Reinhardt converted his performances into

[241] Ibid.
[242] Henry Kahane, "Arthur Kahane, Reinhardt's Dramaturge," 62.
[243] Compare Melchinger, *Max Reinhardt: Sein Theater in Bildern.*

mass events at the centre of communal life.[244] In the process, he brought theatre back to the city and released it from the confinements of exclusivity. Otto Brahm's creative approach to circumventing the dominant theatre order may have changed shape as it develops in Reinhardt's work, but his structural legacy is evident. Maintaining the urge for psychological depth and authenticity, Reinhardt found a variety of ways to explore the boundaries between the special occasion of the event and people's everyday lives.

In 1902, Reinhardt emphasises that the "moderne Seelenkunst" could also extend to the performance of classic texts and large-scale performances:

> Und weil es in manchen Fällen notwendig sein wird, […] gewisse klassische Werke mit der ganzen Intimität moderner Seelenkunst zu spielen.[245]

Thus, Reinhardt aimed to integrate the subtleties of multi-layered character study – of what he called *Echtheit* and *Wahrhaftigkeit* – into large-scale performances. Yet Reinhardt's open-air performances also created an additional layer of Echtheit, as Heinrich Hart observes concerning the performance of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* on Venice's Campo di San Trovaso:

> Eine Steigerung ins "Echte," ins Lokal- und Historischtreue, eine Steigerung zur Wirklichkeitsillusion, die künftig schwer zu überbieten sein wird.[246]

Erika Fischer-Lichte argues that the particular combination between psychological character study and communal areas of city life allowed for an innovative exploration of the boundaries between fiction and reality.[247] She further analyses Reinhardt's

[244] Ibid., 104-135.
[245] Kahane, *Tagebuch des Dramaturgen*, 89.
[246] Heinrich Hart, *Der Tag*, 11 November 1905, quoted in Koberg, Roland, Bernd Stegemann and Henrike von Thomsen, eds. *Max Reinhardt und das Deutsche Theater Texte und Bilder aus Anlass des 100-jährigen Jubiläums seiner Direktion (*Leipzig: Henschel Verlag, 2005), 104.
[247] Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters*, 277-278.

open-air performances as a technique to create a sense of "Wirklichkeit" by situating theatre in the "real" centres of community life.[248] Fischer-Lichte concludes that the atmosphere at these events affected the entire city, simultaneously recreating the physical sensation of city life.[249] *Real* interruptions such as church bells, pigeons or even rain enhanced the sense of reality, while the colourful staging provided an escape from reality.[250]

The sense of togetherness that came from gathering for a mass event combines city life and community with the legacy of the intimate theatre. The experience of physical proximity was already present in the Kleines Theater and the Kammerspiele as a means to bring people closer together, but it also mirrors the physical experience of living in the crowded and rapidly expanding cultural metropolis Berlin. Furthermore, situating theatre in the audience's everyday environment enhances the sensation of being part of the story on stage.[251]

When analysing Reinhardt's theatre work as a continuation of Brahm's legacy, the "spirit" of this modernism comes through. Reinhardt maintained "Echtheit" and profound character study while seeking liberation from previous burdens, in this case the social realism of Brahm's naturalistic style. Reinhardt's approach prioritised artistic integrity, focusing his understanding of literary theatre on the actor instead of only the text itself.[252] He thought that theatre should directly interact with the urban environment where it *takes place* and thereby function as a socio-cultural innovation. As with Brahm, this meant challenging the institutional status quo of theatre in the city space and re-conceptualising how engagement with the theatre can manifest itself in this urban environment. Finally, Reinhardt's insistence on breaking down the

[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] Kahane, *Tagebuch des Dramaturgen*, 86-87.

barriers between audience and performer and creating a sense of intimacy in the theatre continues Brahm's work in a number of ways. Not only does Reinhardt's theatre focus on creating a sense of togetherness, intimacy and interpersonal connection in the theatre space, he continues to explore the boundaries between the artificial and the real in theatre as a constant re-interpretation of authenticity and truthfulness on (and off) stage

Conclusion

In the course of this chapter I have tried to demonstrate how Henrik Ibsen's reception in 1880s Berlin by Otto Brahm and his contemporaries marked the early stages of modernism in the guise of an urban theatre culture. To begin with, I illustrated to what extent Brahm's admiration for Ibsen was not exclusively grounded in Ibsen's social realism but also in Brahm's urge to develop believable characters on stage. His record of cultural criticism reveals just how he believed the creation of *authentic* characters allowed the audience to identify with the human beings on stage, furthering a deeper emotional experience in the process. As Brahm wanted to promote a theatre that makes people think about each other, the characters and stories presented on stage needed to be authentic, believable and "true."

For Brahm, togetherness was an important element of theatre making, as his work as a theatre director demonstrates. By implementing a unique group spirit and collaboration, Brahm strengthened his ensemble at the Deutsches Theater, and his contribution to German *Schauspielkunst* was to be considered invaluable. Contemporary voices such as the influential theatre critic Siegfried Jacobsohn regarded Brahm's success as testament to his entire ensemble, not its individual stars, but Brahm's legacy as a director is most decisively validated by the developing

careers of his actors, such as Max Reinhardt, Friedrich Kayssler or Agnes Sorma, especially *after* they "abandoned" him. Even though these actors had come to reject Brahm's interpretation of naturalism on stage, which, they believed, regarded misery as the only interpretation of truth, they had incorporated Brahm's community spirit, and his interest in forms of theatrical intimacy and profound level of character study. Working closely together, these actors would later impress early twentieth-century audiences with their degree of innovation, intimate connection and psychological nuance. Max Reinhardt's inauguration of the Kammerspiele with Ibsen's *Ghosts* further suggests that it was not Ibsen he rejected, but, if anything, a restrictive interpretation of Ibsen as pure social realism.

In the second part of the chapter, I approached the subject of togetherness in this avant-garde theatre scene from a different angle, introducing the various people and institutions that contributed to making Ibsen's plays more accessible. I demonstrated how united efforts to circumvent performance restrictions resulted in an avant-garde culture of social engagement and cultural criticism. By presenting the case of the affordable Reclam booklet, I first examined the growing culture of reading plays in late nineteenth-century Berlin and how this contributed to the city's cultural debate. Reading Ibsen reappeared as a theme when we saw the ways critics described the impact of Ibsen's work, helping me to conclude that the reading culture facilitated by Reclam (and later Fischer) actively contributed to critical engagement with Ibsen's work.

Looking at this chapter as a whole, the question arises whether the avant-garde theatre scene was a phenomenon brought about by Ibsen's social dramas or whether Ibsen merely responded to socio-cultural currents that were already present. I would suggest that though Ibsen's plays provided a necessary catalyst for existing

socio-cultural currents, they did spark a passion and devotion that took on a dynamic wholly its own. Early tendencies of this can already be observed in the critical reception of *A Doll's House*, but with the Wohltätigkeitsmatinee of *Ghosts* at the Residenztheater on 9 January 1887 one cannot escape the fact that an avant-garde had emerged. Comparing different records of the audience's reception of this charity matinee performance, as well as retrospective accounts reflecting on it, I concluded that this moment was significant in the public memory due both to the unique atmosphere during the performance and to the controversy it sparked in the media. Referring to Brahm's writings, both from immediately after the performance and twenty years later, I then concluded that this unique atmosphere can partly be attributed to the sense of collective protest and opposition to the dominant public order. Born out of the communal effort to bring Ibsen to the stage, a collective identity was beginning to take shape, and the avant-garde spirit had arisen.

In order to situate the Wohltätigkeitsmatinee in Berlin's theatre landscape, I sketched the history of the venue where it was performed: the Residenztheater. An investigation of the history of this theatre under the direction of Anton Anno (1884-1887) and later Sigmund Lautenburg (1887-1904) reveals that the venue offered a space for the growing avant-garde by contributing to the creative tactics required to stage Ibsen's *Ghosts*, thereby aiding the development of a new theatregoing culture. The literary matinee became an important legacy of the Residenztheater and so did providing the Freie Bühne with a venue and a fixed ensemble. The record of collective protest and informed theatre criticism in connection with Residenztheater performances can be attributed to its role as the "eigentliche Ibsen-Bühne," as Philip Stein describes it, a space for people to engage critically with the works of Ibsen. The second section ends with an analysis of the Freie Bühne, particularly focusing on its

mission statement to demonstrate the collective identity and social activism that emerged out of the collective purpose to stage naturalistic plays. Consequently, I determined that the Freie Bühne furthered a sense of collective identity, both through its functioning as a membership club and by explicitly promoting the ideal of seeing "real people" on stage. Looking at the membership record of the Freie Bühne, I could determine that this members' club also functioned as a forum for social emancipation, as it became an acceptable space for women to visit without an escort. Furthermore, considering the notable number of Jewish members on the Freie Bühne membership list, I could conclude that the Freie Bühne, and the avant-garde in general, provided a middle-class emancipatory forum for those excluded from more established institution.

The third section then strengthened my argument that the reception of Ibsen's works, particularly *Ghosts* responded to a growing desire for intimacy and togetherness amongst Berlin's aspiring middle-class, a desire that was embedded in a longing for truth, authenticity and the abolishing of pretence. Looking at Max Reinhardt and his theatre-work reveals that, even as an opponent of naturalism, Reinhardt had internalised Brahm's emphasis on *Menschendarstellung* and furthermore maintained his old director's unique ensemble spirit with the colleagues he "stole" from Brahm. By looking at Reinhardt's correspondence with other prominent theatre-makers and his use of smaller venues, I tried to demonstrate how Reinhardt's work, despite being known for grand spectacles, always also tried to create an intimate atmosphere between audience and performers. With venues such as the Kleines Theater or the Kammerspiele, Reinhardt translated this idea into physically breaking down barriers between audience and performers, creating a physical proximity between them. Finally, I showed how even Reinhardt's grand spectacles created a further form of togetherness. By placing the audience directly in

the centres of their everyday life, such as public squares, Reinhardt blurred the lines between their own lives and the exceptional experience of the spectacle. And by staging mass gatherings in the very centres of community life, these large-scale events thus created a sense of community themselves.

Through the communal purpose of bringing Ibsen – notably his *Ghosts* – to Berlin's cultural life, an avant-garde theatre scene emerged that substantially influenced modern acting and directing techniques, and also significantly impacted the urban theatre landscape. By offering creative solutions for sustaining artistic integrity amidst censorship and commercialism, Otto Brahm and his contemporaries showed how theatre could be a form of social engagement. Embedded in this social activism was a continuous aim to bring people closer together, both on the individual level of recognising and identifying *with* real human beings on stage, and on the socio-cultural level of furthering collective identity and ensemble spirit.

With this final observation, I will transition to the second chapter, which deploys the theoretical framework of "the everyday" to analyse how the moment that theatre-makers started looking for ways to establish more honest forms of human interaction can be regarded as the beginning of modernism in theatre. By looking at how Toril Moi reads Ibsen as the beginning of modernism due to his challenging questions concerning intimacy and interpersonal connection, I will argue that these observations can not only be applied to the works of Henrik Ibsen, but also to the Ibsen-effect in general.

Chapter 2 – The everyday as a space for togetherness

Introduction

In this chapter, I will outline my theoretical framework, which is based on Toril Moi's *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*. In that book, Moi demonstrates the usefulness of a theoretical approach that draws on the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* by Ludwig Wittgenstein and the works of Stanley Cavell to illuminate the development of modernism in general and the theatre of Henrik Ibsen in the latter part of the nineteenth century in particular. My work builds on and expands Moi's work, as I apply her approach not just to the works of Henrik Ibsen, but to the "Ibsen-effect" at large in late nineteenth-century Berlin. Though Ibsen has often been misclassified as a "boring realist" whose work mainly has historical significance, Moi shows that his work should be reconsidered according to its modernist credentials, particularly the way he exposes skepticism and other challenges standing in the way of establishing meaningful relationships. "The everyday," she claims, is presented in these plays as an antidote to skepticism, and it takes the guise of domesticity, honesty, and other forms of displaying authenticity and truthfulness. Moi thus offers an interesting theoretical framework that can show how the concern for "truth" at the time could be understood as a concern for establishing meaningful connections between people. In addition, the concept of "the everyday" resonates profoundly with the urge to find authenticity and truthfulness professed by Otto Brahm and his contemporaries in late nineteenth-century Berlin theatre. The concept has also come to represent an integral part of the academic discourse around modernism, and thus is helpful in gauging the newfound

appreciation of the ordinary that is also typical of naturalism and modern theatre overall.

But Moi's approach to modernism – explaining it through the lens of the everyday – is not without its definitional traps. She never actually specifies her own understanding of "everydayness", merely describing the everyday as a conceptual space for establishing meaningful relationships. While at first glance this assumed connection between the everyday and relationships might seem a little far-fetched, she reveals how a longing for the ordinary and the authentic that infiltrates the late nineteenth century, at least in (Northern) European culture, manifests itself both in human relationships and in the way people thought about human relationships. She therefore recognises the significance of the ordinary, but also shows how a concern with the everyday affects our understanding of human relationships. As a result, Moi demonstrates in what specific ways Ibsen's work addressed people's anxiety about how to be together at a time when the sense of community had to be redefined.

In this chapter, I look at just how Moi uses the concept of the everyday to gain an understanding of Ibsen's modernism, noting her different examples of ways people can be "in touch with the everyday." Yet, since Moi never actually specifies what she means by the everyday and seems to take an understanding of the term for granted, I also look at how the concept has been explored in twentieth-century discourse. Since Moi is not commonly associated with the established field of everyday-life studies, this step is necessary to situate her argument in a wider academic context. To trace her own context and strengthen my own definition of the term, I also look at the theoretical work on which she bases her argument, namely Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* and Stanley Cavell's interpretation of Wittgenstein's work. Altogether, this provides us with a better understanding of how what is

commonly understood to be a philosophy of language can actually help understand cultural currents of late nineteenth-century Europe.

The first section of this chapter introduces how Moi uses the expression "the everyday" to establish her theory of modernism. She uses a reading of what she considers Ibsen's modernist plays – namely those following *A Doll's House* – to illustrate how, for her, communication and self-expression are important elements of the everyday (just as they are in Ibsen's presentation of the everyday). This section thus presents Moi's general framework of the everyday as a space for interpersonal connection, in order to then be able to zoom in those particular elements that require further clarification.

In order to situate Moi's argument in a wider academic debate about the everyday, the section after that provides an overview of everyday-life studies as they emerged in the twentieth century. So far, as we will see, there has been neither a consensus about what the everyday actually is, nor any comprehensive framework that encompasses its multidisciplinary nature. My particular approach will also not attempt a general redefinition of the term, but instead use a theatre-specific version (based on Moi's) that I deem most suitable and productive for use in the specific context of modern theatre and cultural currents like Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene.

To strengthen Moi's conceptualisation of the everyday, this chapter's third section then introduces Wittgenstein's version of the everyday as presented in his *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. A reading of Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy reveals that he believes language is at its root a form of engagement between people. His criticism of philosophers who ignore this crucial interpersonal connection that language enables provides a useful insight into the way what we can call "everyday language" can function as a space to create meaning.

In order to bridge the gap between Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy and a study of modern theatre, I next introduce an analogy that I found in Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value*. In this analogy, he suggests that observing a person unawares in their everyday life would make for a kind of theatre that offers a space for interpersonal connection between the observer and the observee. Since Wittgenstein repeatedly uses the expression "sehen", both in this analogy and elsewhere, I will take a closer look at the role sight plays in Wittgenstein's understanding of the everyday and show how, based on his definition of everydayness in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, the everyday for Wittgenstein always appears as a dialectic between seeing and not seeing. Stanley Cavell's essay "The Avoidance of Love," which tackles these aspects of Wittgenstein's work, will provide a useful clarification of this dialectic in relation to the theatre, allowing me to zoom in on how vision and concealment on stage can demonstrate both human intimacy and the psychological mechanisms that make people avoid this intimacy.

From the role of vision and concealment, I then move on to why the notion of home in Wittgenstein's everyday – whether as a domestic space in his "everyday theatre" or as a conceptual space to which language should return – appears and what significance this image might have. Moi and Cavell both regard domesticity, such as housework or family life, as the primary way the everyday is evoked on stage. Combining Wittgenstein with Moi and Cavell allows me to show just how the depictions of domesticity on stage reflect the relationships that are being presented.

I then turn to the final aspect of viewing the everyday as a space for establishing intimacy, namely the transformative effect of getting in touch with the everyday. Applying this framework to the stages of late nineteenth-century Berlin helps us understand the avant-garde theatre scene because confronting people with

"the truth" was precisely what these artists were trying to do, creating exceptional moments of transformation that would allow people to reflect on society and gain a more intimate understanding of each other.

The chapter concludes by explaining how this more general model of the everyday allows us to not just understand Ibsen's dramas, but also get at the roots of what the avant-garde scene saw in them. After all, Wittgenstein's thinking not only recognises the significance of ordinary life, but also suggests how we can derive meaning from it.

Apart from the fact that Wittgenstein, Cavell, and Moi refer to theatre as a means of illustrating (issues of) human intimacy, this everyday makes sense for the analysis of drama. Drama, after all, consists of a script that gains meaning in the moment of performance due to the connection between the human beings (actors and audience) present in the theatre space. Otto Brahm and his contemporaries sought a new theatre that would allow them to experience real human beings with whom they could connect, and further re-establish a sense of community through theatre. My reading of Wittgenstein's everyday offers an interpretation of what this longing for truth and authenticity in the theatre stood for: finding a way to get closer to the self and to one another.

I. In touch with the everyday: Toril Moi's version of modernism

In *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, Toril Moi develops an argument that establishes Ibsen as a hitherto overlooked figure of modernism. She hypothesises that Ibsen has been wrongly classified as a "boring realist" whose works, if anything,

merely preceded and inspired truly modernist writers such as James Joyce.[1] Instead, she argues that, despite what one might think, modernism actually represents a counter-movement to idealism (rather than to realism). Ibsen's social dramas from *A Doll's House* onwards, she claims, can be regarded as some of the earliest examples of modernism in theatre.[2] On a similar note, she believes naturalism actually represents one of the first symptoms of modernism overall.[3] Yet she does not draw a clear line between naturalism and realism, nor does she develop a close definition of either term, instead she argues that modernism can better be defined as what it is *not*, namely idealism.[4]

To Moi, the reception of *Ghosts* in both Norway and Germany is emblematic of a conflict between aesthetic norms, which led to the general rejection of idealism by the 1890s.[5] With its radical representation of disease and family secrets on stage *Ghosts* polarised between those wanting to see "the truth" on stage, and those who considered it an aesthetic impertinence. Moi argues that naturalism may have represented the grounds on which artists and critics fought against idealism and for "freedom" and "truth," but it would soon be regarded as outdated.[6] Nonetheless, she claims, there are aspects of Ibsen's naturalist plays that make them modernist beyond exposing objective, verifiable truths, namely exposing the challenges of how to establish meaningful relationships. Just as we have observed for the theatre work of Otto Brahm, Moi's reading of Ibsen suggests that Ibsen's naturalism deserves more recognition than previously granted, on account of his subtle portrayal of these

[1] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 24.
[2] Ibid., 225. While Moi mentions *A Doll's House* as the "first full-blown example of Ibsen's modernism," she regards *Emperor and Galilean* as the key work that marks the transition towards Ibsen's modernism.
[3] Ibid., 90 and 94.
[4] Ibid., 3.
[5] Ibid., 91-94.
[6] Ibid., 94.

complexities. She aims to undo this historical injustice by arguing that Ibsen's plays following *A Doll's House* – with the transition to modernism having started with *Emperor and Galilean* in 1873 – can be classified as modernist.[7]

A central term that reappears in her analysis of Ibsen's work is "the everyday," an expression commonly known to refer to "the ordinary." She indicates that the desire for "truth" in the 1880s was actually a desire for authenticity and argues that recognising and appreciating "the everyday" was a way to find this authenticity.[8] Hence, her argument suggests that modernist thinking recognises the importance of the ordinary and does not – as she suggests idealist thinking would – regard the ordinary as something that art needs to overcome.[9] Instead, she claims, modernist thinking suggests that appreciating the authenticity of everyday life allows people to live a more meaningful life.[10]

In her reading of Ibsen's particular brand of modernism, Moi does not only show how modernists regarded ordinariness and the everyday as a source of meaning. She specifies that ordinary life is where people learn how to be together:

> Ibsen turns to the ordinary and the everyday, not as something that has to be overcome, exaggerated, or idealised, but as a sphere where we have to take on the task of building meaningful relationships.[11]

At first, it seems difficult to understand what Moi means by "ordinary" and "everyday." How could something conventionally thought of as ordinary, like doing laundry or running errands be a "sphere" for establishing meaningful relationships? How could walking down the street be a "task" to connect with others? Moi's understanding of the everyday is not necessarily what we might commonly think of

[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.,10.
[9] Ibid., 89.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.

when we refer to "everyday life." While we might often think of the everyday as the necessary day-to-day activities and struggles that holidays and other exceptional moments provide an escape from, she understands the everyday as a conceptual space where we can connect with ourselves and others, by learning to recognise and appreciate each other the way we really are. Her argument focuses on the idea that Ibsen presents the everyday as a solution against people's disconnection, rather than defining the everyday as a specific set of activities.

Moi's analysis focuses on modes of communication that expose people's willingness to connect with each other. In Nora's final monologue in *A Doll's House*, Nora gets in touch with herself – and thus the everyday – by performing a very calm and practically oriented speech about her decision to leave Helmer.[12] In *The Lady from the Sea*, Ellida and Dr. Wangel reconnect by simply communicating and Ellida sharing "the truth."[13] Rosmer and Rebekka in *Rosmersholm* "lose touch with the everyday" as they fail to reach a common language.[14] Hedvig in *The Wild Duck* despairs of her relationship with Hjalmar, her father, when she cannot take his promises seriously and therefore "loses touch with the everyday."[15] Tracing the everyday in verbal communication, Moi argues that in Ibsen a use of simple everyday language and a distinct tone of clarity and calmness represent an authentic willingness to connect, whereas melodramatic, heightened language indicates a character's narcissistic tendency to disconnect from the people around them.[16] Focusing on the role of voice, her analysis of language stresses the importance of having a voice as a

[12] Ibid., 248.
[13] Ibid., 296-297 and 308-310.
[14] Ibid., 269.
[15] Ibid., 252-253.
[16] E.g. Torvald Helmer in *A Doll's House* Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 232-233 or Hjalmar Ekdal in *The Wild Duck* Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 254.

means to "affirm one's existence."[17] Nora's exit thus marks such a moment of her finding her own voice and therefore of "language making sense."[18] Other characters such as Gina or Rebekka are not able to find their own voice, which Moi traces back to the recurring images of suffocation in *Rosmersholm*.[19] To her, ordinary language simply *makes sense*, as it allows us to affirm our own existence by developing a voice and asking to be heard. When language fails in its task of expression, people feel disconnected. Concerns about the limitations of human expression thus come out in the way people use language and the way dialogue is conducted on stage.

Moi's reading of Ibsen's 1880s plays centres on human relationships, particularly the institutionalised relationship of marriage, which, she argues, often represents a "figure for the everyday."[20] Family relationships also appear in her analysis, but she claims to focus on romantic relationships instead, and this is her main reason for leaving out the, according to her own account, quintessentially modernist play *Ghosts*.[21]

Another decisive element Moi discovered in Ibsen, is that she reinterprets his "ordinary" domestic staging, showing that both costume and domesticity indicate people's ability to genuinely connect with themselves, and thus with others. When Nora enters the living room to confront Helmer, she changes into her "everyday dress" (*hverdagskjole*), as if to perform her reconnection with the everyday.[22] Gina constantly doing housework in *The Wild Duck* illustrates her connection with the everyday.[23]

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[17] Ibid., 265.
[18] Ibid., 248.
[19] Ibid., 269.
[20] Ibid., 10 and 89.
[21] Ibid., 16.
[22] Ibid., 234 and 248.
[23] Ibid., 252-253.

In short, Moi recognises that Ibsen's staging of "the ordinary" distinctly illustrates and underlines the characters' level of connection with themselves and others. Of course, her observation could be expanded much further, as the domestic setting of Ibsen's social dramas can be regarded as illustrations of the characters' "everyday lives," namely their personal and family space. Or, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter, small physical gestures on stage, such as sitting down, can also serve as distinct illustrations of the "state of the everyday." But through domesticity, people appear grounded, down-to-earth, and thus honest with themselves and each other.

To conclude, Moi refers to "the everyday" as an indicator of Ibsen's modernism. But instead of focusing on the minutiae of daily existence, she creates a theoretical concept that regards the everyday as a conceptual space for how to connect. Through her version of the everyday, the desire for truth and authenticity in the reception of Ibsen amongst Berlin's growing avant-garde can be understood as a desire for intimacy. Looking at the everyday as a conceptual space that challenges questions of interpersonal connection and intimacy allows us to introduce "togetherness" as a decisive element of modernism, or at least of modernism in theatre. Thus, it becomes a key theoretical term for understanding the Ibsen-effect on Berlin's avant-garde and its quest for truthfulness.

As the term "everyday" has been subject to an extensive range of academic interpretations, I will first provide a quick overview of the how the everyday has been conceptualised. This will help ground Moi's argument in scholarly discourse and gain more of a sense why the everyday continues to remain a relevant subject matter, even if (or because) it is impossible to define. But more importantly, it will demonstrate how Moi's everyday remains the most productive theoretical framework for this study.

II. Modernism and the everyday

At its core, "the everyday" is a modern research topic as it reflects a response to the modern world, or rather the modes of interaction and personal development made possible by new forms of public engagement. In the early twentieth century, the urban environment provided a background for thinking in "everyday life" terms, a shift that has been attributed to Georg Simmel and his essay *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben.*[24] Simmel's analysis of how the urban environment affects the modern individual was pivotal in recognising ordinary street life as a source of meaning and relevant aspect in understanding modern life and modern relationships. His students Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer have continued to view the world through city-life minutiae and thereby capture a *modern* sense of experience.[25] While the city often provided the background setting for thinking about the minutiae of daily lives, the record of people thinking about everyday life goes much beyond urban sociology. From Sigmund Freud's *Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*, Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* or Ludwig Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy thinking about the everyday appeared in a vast range of disciplines and conceptual angles, all of which draw attention to a dimension of life they believed had been previously neglected.[26] From there on, there have been several generations of "everyday life scholars" throughout the twentieth century interpreting and reinterpreting the question of how to value "the ordinary." The Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre and his three-volume

[24] Georg Simmel, *Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006), originally published in 1903.
[25] Siegfried Kracauer, *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag: 2009), originally published in 1964; Walter Benjamin, *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert: Fassung letzter Hand (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag*, 2010), originally published in 1987; Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955), originally published in 1928; Walter Benjamin, *Passagenwerk*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982).
[26] Sigmund Freud, *Zur Psychopathologie des Alltagslebens*, in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Anna *Freud,* vol. 4 (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1947), originally published in 1901; Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19th ed. (Tübingen, Niemeyer 2006), originally published in 1927.

Critiques of Everyday Life (1947-1982) turned Everyday Life Studies into a recognised field of research, followed by Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984).[27] These social theorists endeavoured to acknowledge and appreciate insignificant automated actions such as walking down the street or doing laundry and thus to honour the people who perform them. The strand of Marxist sociology had been taken up by Michael Gardiner's *Critiques of Everyday Life* (2000), Ben Highmore's *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* (2002), and Michael Sheringham's monumental work *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (2006).[28] But in addition to those who call their subject "everyday life" several other branches of scholarly research have been associated with this general field, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer due to their critique of consumerism, Merleau-Ponty due to his study of perception, Dorothy E. Smith in her feminist critique of the everyday world or Erving Goffman's work titled *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, on the basis of which Richard Schechner adopted the term "everyday life" for the field of Performance Studies.[29] In short, from its appearance at the beginning of the twentieth century, the concept of the everyday has infiltrated a variety of scholarly disciplines, each of which have their own take on it.

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[27] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, trans. John Moore and Gregory Elliot, 3 vols. (London: Verso, 1991–2005); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[28] Michael E. Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2000); Ben Highmore, *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002); Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[29] Horkheimer, Max und Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1969), originally published in 1947; Maurice Merleau-Ponty trans. Donald Landes. *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 2012), originally published in 1945; Dorothy E. Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959); Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002).

In her recently published review about the history of Everyday Life Studies Liesl Olson has identified the multiple pan-disciplinary views on the everyday, as its main weakness: "This is the everyday's Achilles heel: its definitional capaciousness."[30] In the even more recently published *Foundations of the Everyday: Shock, Deferral, Repetition* Eran Dorfman quotes Michael Sheringham saying "One of the pleasures of working on everyday life is that everyone has a view on the matter."[31] only to respond by arguing that "everyone has a view on the matter" is precisely the problem with the everyday.[32] By registering this universal relevance of the quotidian, Sheringham thus hints at the complexity of the everyday as a concept. It is an idea to which everyone can relate, but on which everyone also has a *different* view. Per definition, the everyday is something common to all, and yet it is at the same time also a highly specialised area of research.

Over and above this problematic multiplicity of views, there is the more pressing paradox involved in discussing something that is meant, by its very ordinariness, to be above, below or beyond discussion: the self-evidence of the things we take for granted. The everyday has become a key term within philosophical debates of the twenty-first century even though the discussion attempts to draw attention to the realm outside specialised categorisation. This tension is expressed in the constant challenges that one theorist makes to the next as to their choice of what should (or should not) count as everyday. The claim that there can be some objective definition of everyday life has thus itself become a subject of debate. In *Critiques of Everyday Life*, Michael Gardiner criticises scholars such as Erving Goffman for their claim to "objectivity," and Adorno and Horkheimer for their "elitist" view on

[30] Liesl Olson, "Everyday Life Studies: A Review." *Modernism/modernity* 18 no.1 (2011): 178, accessed 13 April 2016, doi: 10.1353/mod.2011.0012.
[31] Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, vii.
[32] Eran Dorfman, *Foundations of the Everyday: Shock, Deferral, Repetition* (Rowman and Littlefield International: London, 2014), vii.

consumer culture.[33] These scholars, Gardiner implicitly argues, cannot comprehend the everyday since they lack the appropriate "everydayness" to look at it. In short, much of his criticism revolves around how to approach, how to even begin to think about the everyday.

On a similar note Michael Sheringham questions the paradox of researching the everyday: "Is it characteristic of such [research] works to depict the everyday, or do they work on us in ways that train attention on our own experience?"[34] Sheringham thereby asks whether research should provide us with a definition of *what the everyday actually is* or whether everyday life studies can simply redirect the focus towards appreciating the ordinary. Both approaches open up a further set of paradoxes. Sheringham himself recognises this complication when he tries to create an "inventory of the everyday":

> Does the 'everyday' refer to an objective 'content', defined by a particular kind of (daily) activity, or is it best thought of in terms of rhythm, repetition, festivity, ordinariness, non-cumulation, seriality, the generic, the obvious, the given?[35]

Sheringham leads us back to the one question contemporary research about the everyday fails to master: what *are* we actually talking about? Urban city life? The daily routine? Work? The household? Family life? Or are we talking about those invisible activities that sustain our lives, such as transport, shopping, or laundry? If work, does it have to be a specific type of work with a regular pattern, such as routine-like factory work? And what if someone's work is designed to be irregular (a question raised by Bryony Randall using the example of the American president[36])? Does an artist have or have to have an everyday? If everyday life simply follows a

[33] Michael E. Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, 4 and 86.
[34] Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, 25.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Bryony Randall, "Modernist Literature and the Everyday," *Literature Compass* 7 no.9 (2010): 825, accessed 13 April 2016, doi: 10.1111/j.1741-4113.2010.00742.x.

general pattern of regularity, why is it so intrinsically linked to urbanity and the study of city life? Or are we simply meant to look at the entity of *the day*, as Bryony Randall suggests, since one thing we all have in common is getting up and going to sleep?[37] And finally, are there specific modes of perception, such as boredom or calmness that distinguish this everyday? On a more structural level, the tension between repetition and exception is consistently brought up as a defining and inherent feature of everyday life. For Eran Dorfman, everyday life actually balances between regularity and interruption, and a successful management of these two poles of the everyday is what defines modern life.[38] But here again, a study of the everyday becomes a critique of modernity, and thus once again, leads back to the specific case of studying city life.

In short, the central problem of the everyday (despite everyone having a view on it) remains defining what it *actually* is – or possibly what it is *not*, for example the public order or special, life-altering experiences. A closer look at the emergence of everyday life studies reveals this pan-disciplinary concept as an endless attempt to capture something that cannot – and, per its own definition, should not – be captured. After all, the entire premise of looking at everyday life is to acknowledge the importance of life's elusive, nondescript dimensions.[39] According to Lefebvre, something about the everyday inevitably will always remain "obscure."[40] Despite this paradox, the increasing interest in everyday life still functions as a useful illustration of modernist concerns, and theorists' notable effort to define and re-define co-existential living in the most authentic way possible. This, Sheringham argues, is the reason why everyday-life scholars are: "finding ways of teasing out the complex

[37] Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday Life*, 29.
[38] Dorfman, *Foundations of the Everyday: Shock, Deferral.*
[39] See de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* on "tactics."
[40] Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, 2.; Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1984), 120-121.

imbrication of the positive and the negative, alienation and freedom, within the weave of everyday life itself."[41] Turning to the everyday may simply be a reflection of those intellectual currents dealing with the simultaneously liberating and alienating effects of life in the modern world.

Furthermore, previous to an emerging theoretical interest in everyday life, art and literature of the late nineteenth century reveals similar tendencies of appreciating the ordinary and the authentic. Recent developments in the field of English literature have more explicitly acknowledged the parallels between modernism and the everyday. Bryony Randall's *Modernism, Daily Experience and the Everyday* (2007), Liesl Olson's *Modernism and the Ordinary* (2009), and Michael Sayeau's *Against the Event: The Everyday and the Evolution of Modernist Narrative* (2013) all demonstrate a shift towards recognising late nineteenth century literature as the groundwork for a theoretical interest in everyday life.[42] Bryony Randall identifies the theorisation of everyday life as a reaction to late-nineteenth-century literary depictions of modern life, particularly those set in increasingly urbanising environments:

> There is a connection from birth between the fields we now call 'modernist literature' and 'everyday life studies,' because most current critical models now date their emergence around the same time, towards the nineteenth century.[43]

Randall's argument implies that late-nineteenth-century art can illustrate the intellectual currents and the atmosphere that inspired the research topic of "everyday life." Even though Randall's analysis focuses on modernist literature in the English-speaking context, her connection between theory and art makes this angle worthy of use in Berlin as well. After all, as Randall recognises herself, the "pioneers" of

[41] Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, 11-12.
[42] Randall, *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday Life*; Liesl Olson, *Modernism and the Ordinary*; Michael Sayeau, *Against the Event: The Everyday and the Evolution of Modernist Narrative*.
[43] Randall, "Modernist Literature and the Everyday," 826.

everyday life studies Simmel, Benjamin and Kracauer responded to the urban environment of Berlin.[44] Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene housed the literary drama that recognised and appreciated the value of the ordinary, and also represents a reaction to the rapidly modernising environment of Berlin.

In conclusion, theories of the everyday have been developed to address the challenges posed by the modernising world. Yet there is an intrinsic complexity to studying the everyday that theoretical approaches seem unable to overcome. In recent years, studying the everyday has been discovered as a suitable approach for studying modernism in the field of literary studies but has not gone much beyond English literature, nor has the turn to literary studies helped to overcome the definitional elusiveness of the everyday. Therefore, neither of these theoretical approaches provide a comprehensive framework for an analysis of the avant-garde theatre scene in Berlin. Moi's approach to modernism – on the other hand – represents a productive framework for this study, as she both establishes a model of modernism for theatre and focuses on the question of interpersonal connection that comes out as an essential concern in the establishment of Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene. Hence, Moi's theoretical basis – Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* and Stanley Cavell's interpretation thereof – remains the framework I deem most suitable for this study.

In line with everyday life studies, this project does not attempt to define the everyday more accurately but rather embraces a tradition of thinking that prioritises the ordinary. But in addition to previous applications of the everyday, my aim is to develop a criticism that approaches themes of the modern world through theatre. This approach suggests that the fact that there are so many definitions of everyday life

[44] Ibid., 824, Often cited are Kracauer, *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo*; Benjamin, *Einbahnstraße* and *Berliner Kindheit um neunzehnhundert*.

makes it necessary to develop a theoretical definition of the everyday in accordance with the specific medium that is being studied. Liesl Olson made a similar suggestion in her review of everyday life studies when she argues that: "the linkage between a particular genre and a feature of the everyday produces an illuminating analysis of aesthetic form, but the cumulative effect of these studies seems to have obscured the everyday's definition."[45] Toril Moi is not a central figure of everyday life studies, she is not even part of the classical canon of everyday life studies. But her particular approach to studying modern theatre through the prism of the everyday functions as a helpful model to analyse the role of the everyday for modern theatre. And through her theoretical approach, this study will situate Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene within the ongoing debate about modernism.

III. (Re-)Reading Wittgenstein: the everyday as a space for intimacy (and togetherness)

Following our focus on the role of interpersonal connection, I will show how the everyday can be viewed as a space where intimacy and togetherness are being negotiated and practiced. For that Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* provides an indispensable tool.[46] In this reading of Wittgenstein, I will demonstrate how the everyday becomes a space for connection through language and thus a tool for making truth *together*.

1) Everyday language as a mode of interaction

Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy advocates an approach to language that acknowledges meaning as usage: "Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in

[45] Olson, *Everyday Life Studies: A Review*, 180.
[46] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, ed. Joachim Schulte (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003). The paragraphs in parentheses refer to this work unless explicitly stated otherwise.

der Sprache.“ (§43) In order to illustrate the role of usage, Wittgenstein introduces the concept of language games to show what we “do” with language: “Ich werde auch das Ganze: der Sprache und der Tätigkeiten, mit denen sie verwoben ist, das ‘Sprachspiel’ nennen.” (§7) In reaction to the picture theory of language that he articulated in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein demonstrates how meaning should be derived from communication. In a lecture recorded in *The Brown Book*, he demonstrates how an understanding between people makes communication a language complete in itself:

> We are not […] regarding the language games which we describe as incomplete parts of a language, but as languages complete in themselves, as complete systems of human communication.[47]

Since language functions as a complete system of communication in itself, Wittgenstein regards the quest for some kind of transcending absolute knowledge, and thereby a sort of absolute knowledge of other minds, as the actual problem of the branch of philosophy he is attacking. One of his key statements that address what he regards a misplacement of focus in (Western) philosophy is the following: “Denn die philosophischen Probleme entstehen, wenn die Sprache feiert.” (§38) A language that “feiert” becomes a sort of celebratory state of self-indulgence that disregards how language is actually a means of interaction. This paragraph also chimes with Wittgenstein criticism of philosophical language as an “ideal language” In §81, he claims that the term “ideal” wrongly suggests such a language is somehow superior to the “Umgangssprache”:

> Denn so kann es scheinen, als redeten wir in der Logik von einer *idealen* Sprache […]. Aber hier wäre das Wort “ideal” irreführend, denn das klingt als wären diese Sprachen besser und vollkommener, als unsere

[47] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 80.

> Umgangssprache; und als brauchte es den Logiker, damit er den Menschen endlich zeigt, wie ein richtiger Satz ausschaut.[48]

Wittgenstein here asserts that the *Umgangssprache* deserves the same respect as the carefully constructed logical argument within the discipline of philosophy. The Umgang – sprache refers to language as it is used ordinarily. As the language of "Umgang" (which could be translated as contact or dealings), it further represents the basis of our engagement with each other. Wittgenstein's translator, Elizabeth Anscombe – particularly attuned to the nuances of his formulations due to her extensive years of Wittgenstein scholarship – translates Umgangssprache as "everyday language."[49] According to her understanding of Wittgenstein, the language of the everyday is the language of interaction.

In contrast to everyday language, Wittgenstein concludes that the "ideal language" has been falsely classified as especially meaningful. It actually disconnects people from each other. Here, ideal language is the opposite of everyday language. It is not the language used to communicate and interact but a space where language "goes on holiday" [Anscombe translation] and does not do its job of connecting people.

From ordinary language to interpersonal connection, can we really argue that Wittgenstein is concerned with bringing people closer together? In §116, he tells to us to unite and actively lead words back to their everyday usage:

> Wenn die Philosophen ein Wort gebrauchen, […] muß man sich denn immer fragen: Wird denn dieses Wort in der Sprache, in der es seine Heimat hat, je tatsächlich so gebraucht? – *Wir* führen die Wörter von ihrer metaphysischen wieder auf ihre alltägliche Verwendung zurück.[50]

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[48] Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 67.
[49] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 38.
[50] Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 82.

Wittgenstein suggests that *we* should bring words back to the way we use it in action (*tatsächlich*). The italicised "*Wir*" can be read as a specific encouragement to (re-) unite and generate meaning *together*. As Gordon Baker claims in his analysis of this paragraph, the "*Wir*" primarily distinguishes between Wittgensteinian ordinary language philosophers and those who still misguidedly aim to reach an "ideal language."[51] Nonetheless, it is an emphasis on the second person plural, the communal, united force of a collective identity. Another relevant aspect in this paragraph is the notion of returning home, and everyday language being a journey back from metaphysical usage to where language *actually* belongs. In this paragraph, the language game is the "Heimat" of a language and that home is a system of communication. Thus, *we* need to make an active effort to treat language as a mode of interaction and thereby acknowledge communication as its essential purpose. Embedded in his philosophy of language, Wittgenstein's appreciation of the ordinary is also a vindication of togetherness. The "alltägliche Verwendung" that *we* lead language back to is a process of (re-) connection with what is most important, namely to communicate.

With his recognition of the ordinary, Wittgenstein fits into the twentieth-century "everyday life" canon that advocates simplicity. Furthermore, he considers the ordinary important because it recognises in the question of how to be together a much more relevant philosophical issue than reaching an "ideal language." Building a community and establishing interpersonal relationships comes out as an implicit message of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. An attitude to language that does not value the importance of personal interaction further disconnects one from the self and from others.

[51] Gordon Baker, "Wittgenstein on Metaphysical/Everyday Use" *The Philosophical Quarterly* 52 no. 205 (2002): 290, accessed 13 April 2016, doi:10.1111/1467-9213.00269.

The failure to connect is what Cavell extracts as the essential message from Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy, as a fundamental proof of people's fear of intimacy. It is at this point that the concept of "language skepticism" comes in.

2) Language skepticism

Stanley Cavell regards language skepticism as both an important element of Wittgenstein's teaching, as well as a core theme in literature and drama in general.[52] He interprets Wittgenstein's encouragement to "return to the everyday" as an indication that human beings generally avoid the everyday.[53] For Cavell, people avoid genuinely communicating because they have been disillusioned by what they consider the limitations of language, and have consequently developed a fundamental disbelief of ever being able to know other minds. The resulting collection of attitudes Cavell calls language skepticism.

Under the umbrella of language skepticism, Cavell collects all of those internal mechanisms – be they shame or jealousy – that prevent people from establishing meaningful relationships, or empathising and connecting with one another.[54] Following Wittgenstein, Cavell regards the quest for knowledge of the other mind as a misplacement of focus in the study of human connection, which should be redirected to regarding language as a way of generating meaning together.

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[52] *The Claim of Reason* has been considered Cavell's central work on the theory of language skepticism, but the question spans Cavell's writing over several decades. Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean what We Say? A Book of Essays by Stanley Cavell*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, originally published in 1969; Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Stanley Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Stanley Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Scepticism and Romanticism* (Chicago University Press, 1988).

[53] Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Scepticism and Romanticism*, 53 and 170.

[54] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," 278; Cavell, *Disowning Knowledge: In Six Plays of Shakespeare*, 125-126.

However, going beyond Wittgenstein's scope of reasoning, Cavell identifies skepticism as an essential, structural problem of the human condition.[55]

Naturally, the leap "from epistemology to romance"[56] – as Richard Rorty would have it – which renders skepticism the explanation for mankind's core dilemmas is problematic. According to Rorty, Cavell takes problems that do not normally matter beyond a 1st-year philosophy course and turns them into an explanation of everything.[57] But even if one does not wholly accept Cavell's claim that skepticism underlies the entirety of human psychology, his reading of dramatic language – particularly that of Shakespearean tragedy – offers a necessary and useful addition to understanding the everyday as a space for interpersonal connection.

In Cavellian terms, the everyday is the antidote to skepticism: "the answer to skepticism must take the form not of philosophical construction but of the reconstruction or resettlement of the everyday." [58] Cavell thus presents the everyday as a cure to what he considers a fundamental flaw of the human condition. To him, ordinary language philosophy addresses this issue by constructing an alternative model for communication. Cavell links ordinary language philosophy to literary theory by depicting literary images of the everyday as representations of intimacy:

> It stands to reason that if some image of human intimacy, call it marriage, or domestication, is the fictional equivalent of what the philosophers of ordinary language understand as the ordinary, call this the image of the everyday as the domestic, then the threat to the ordinary that philosophy names skepticism should show up in fiction's favorite threats to forms of marriage, namely, in forms of melodrama and tragedy.[59]

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[55] Cavell, Stanley *The Claim of Reason,* 241.
[56] Richard Rorty, "From Epistemology to Romance: Cavell on Skepticism,"*The Review of Metaphysics* 34 no. 4 (1981): 759-774.
[57] Ibid., 759.
[58] Cavell, "The Uncanniness of the Ordinary," in *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Scepticism and Romanticism*, 176.
[59] Ibid.

According to Cavell, marriage and domestication function as "fictional equivalents" of the everyday, and consequently as the image for human intimacy. As in Moi's analysis of Ibsen, marriage and the domestic play an important role as parameters of a successful connection with the everyday. Skepticism translated into fictional terms becomes melodrama and tragedy, an idea thoroughly investigated in Cavell's essay on *King Lear*, "The Avoidance of Love."[60] Cavell's key statement in that paragraph just quoted is that in art the everyday appears in the guise of human intimacy. He thus makes it possible to read ordinary language as a form of intimacy, and introduces the idea that it is important to create meaning through language jointly in order to learn how to be together. By referencing Shakespeare's tragic heroes as suitable examples, Cavell implicitly recognizes drama as an art form that poignantly illustrates skepticism and the everyday, and therefore paves the way for a Wittgensteinian model of the everyday in theatre.[61]

IV. Getting in touch with the everyday: the transformative mode of togetherness

1) *Seeing* the ordinary: Wittgenstein, theatre and the everyday

On the connection between theatre and the everyday both Moi and Cavell offer an insightful interpretation of Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy, showing how *Philosophische Untersuchungen* can function as a useful theoretical framework for the analysis of theatre. In addition, *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, a collection of Wittgenstein's notes published in a bilingual version named *Culture and Value*,

[60] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of King Lear," in *Must We Mean what We Say?*, 267-354.
[61] Cavell, "The Uncanniness of the Ordinary," 155.

reveals the extent of Wittgenstein's own intellectual engagement with the theatre.[62] Considering his upbringing in fin-de-siècle Vienna, theatre surely was an important element of any intellectual discussions.[63] Not only does Wittgenstein directly reflect on theatre in *Culture and Value,* these reflections help attribute his theoretical work to his cultural background.

In his preface to *Culture and Value*, editor Georg Henrik von Wright emphasizes how the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* and *Culture and Value* mutually benefit from an understanding of each other, especially since the chronology of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* coincides with several of the collected notes von Wright was able to find.[64] Accordingly, von Wright argues that the notes in *Culture and Value* can only be properly understood against the background of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* but more importantly, these notes actually represent an important contribution to Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy.[65] In "Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture," Cavell argues that *Culture and Value* should not stand alone as a philosophy of culture, but actually, if anything, further an understanding of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*.[66] Wittgenstein's comments on theatre in *Culture and Value* illustrate the productive interrelations between the two texts.

The record of Wittgenstein's engagement with the theatre reveals that Wittgenstein saw the connection with authentic characters on stage as an important aspect of the theatre experience. Like Brahm a century earlier in Berlin, Wittgenstein

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[62] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G.H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. Peter Winch. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).
[63] Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).
[64] G.H. von Wright, introduction to *Culture and Value,* ii.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Stanley Cavell, "Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture," in *Inquiry* 31 (1988): 254.

also describes how characters should be experienced as "Menschen," as this 1941 commentary on Goethe's *Faust* shows:

> Die Personen eines Dramas erregen unsere Teilnahme, sie sind uns wie Bekannte, oft wie Menschen, die wir lieben oder hassen: Die Personen im zweiten Teil des "Fausts" erregen unsere Teilnahme gar nicht! Wir haben nie die Empfindung, als kennten wir sie. Sie ziehen an uns vorüber, wie Gedanken nicht wie Menschen.[67]

This statement reveals Wittgenstein's preference for *Menschendarstellung* and a connection between audience and performer. Wittgenstein emphasises the importance of connecting with those fictional characters on an intuitive level, as "Menschen," not the conceptual level of "Gedanken." Theatre thus functions as a mirror for the process of interpersonal connection. With his demands to feel like you know the people on stage, Wittgenstein recognises the theatre experience as a forum for exploring the dynamics of human interaction.[68] One could say that Wittgenstein here establishes a conceptual link between the everyday (as a forum for interpersonal connection) and the theatre space. And in an earlier comment, dated to 1930, Wittgenstein actually imagines a theatre in which an "everyday activity" becomes an illuminating theatre experience. In a model, which I will from now on call "everyday theatre," Wittgenstein uses the theatre space as a metaphor for an authentic artistic experience and the process of interpersonal connection:

> Es könnte nichts merkwürdiger sein, als einen Menschen bei irgendeiner ganz einfachen alltäglichen Tätigkeit, wenn er sich unbeobachtet glaubt, zu sehen. Denken wir uns ein Theater, der

[67] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 41.

[68] At this point, I chose not to go into the discussion of Wittgenstein's view on Shakespeare as that might divert the topic in a different direction. Wittgenstein repeatedly reflected on Shakespeare. His view seems to fluctuate between an admiration for Shakespeare's craft and a lack of connection with his characters ("Ich könnte Shakespeare nur anstaunen; nie etwas mit ihm anfangen." in Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 84.). Overall, Wittgenstein's criticism focuses more on Shakespeare's admirers and critics, rather than the work itself. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 36, 48-48, 83-86. For an overview of the debates on Wittgenstein's view on Shakespeare, see: Wolfgang Huemer, "Misreadings: Steiner and Lewis on Wittgenstein and Shakespeare," *Philosophy and Literature* 36, 1 (2012) 229-237 or Erin Sullivan, "Anti-Bardolatry through the Ages – or, why Voltaire, Tolstoy, Shaw and Wittgenstein Didn't Like Shakespeare," *Opticon 1826* 2 (2007): 1-9.

> Vorhang ginge auf und wir sähen einen Menschen allein in seinem Zimmer auf und abgehen, sich eine Zigarette anzünden, sich niedersetzen u.s.f., so, daß wir plötzlich von außen einen Menschen sähen, wie man sich sonst nie sehen kann; wenn wir quasi ein Kapitel einer Biographie mit eigenen Augen sähen,- das müßte unheimlich und wunderbar zugleich sein.[69]

In this fictional scene, the audience gains an insight into a person's life, and the stage functions as a sort of keyhole to that person's private living area. Observing someone in their usual "alltägliche Tätigkeit," the audience sees the person on stage "as they really are." In this paragraph, Wittgenstein reminds us how exciting it can be to spy on a person in their own private space, "unheimlich und wunderbar zugleich," as he calls it. But by overlaying images of everyday activity and the theatre, Wittgenstein actually suggests how theatre can create a space of intimacy: by showing the everyday.

Seeing someone in their everyday space, the audience gains an insight into their "biography," their personal life story. Wittgenstein uses the word "sehen" eight times in this paragraph, and this seems significant: *Observing* someone when they feel unnoticed and therefore not adopting a social persona allows us to *see* them from a particular perspective. It allows us to see them a way we could never see ourselves: "wie man sich sonst nicht sehen kann."

To understand the full implications of this formulation it is helpful to compare it with Cavell's discussion of comparable issues. In "The Avoidance of Love," Stanley Cavell recognises "sight" as an important literary trope to convey intimacy. [70] For Cavell, the mutual recognition of "seeing" and "being seen" represents the baseline of establishing a meaningful relationship.[71] The imagery of sight functions as a "fictional equivalent" of connecting with another person and oneself. With this

[69] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 4. This section does not represent the entire paragraph, which I quote further on.
[70] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," especially 272-289.
[71] Ibid.

Cavellian interpretation in mind, Wittgenstein's "everyday theatre" he describes above would not only allow us a glimpse into someone else's biography, seeing how someone else lives when they do not realise they are being watched, but it would also reveal something about being seen. Though we are looking at other people in a theatre space, that same space also shows us ourselves, unseen.

Cavell devotes much attention to not wanting to be seen in "The Avoidance of Love."[72] After all, it is the threatening aspect of intimacy – of genuine connection – that Cavell seeks to demonstrate:

> But if the failure to recognise others is a failure to let others recognise you, a fear of what is revealed to them, an avoidance of their eyes, then it is exactly shame, which is the cause of this withholding of recognition.[73]

Cavell argues that *seeing* and *recognising* others means allowing them to *see* and *recognise* yourself, a state we structurally seek to avoid as it renders us vulnerable.[74] Shame therefore functions as an expression of this avoidance mechanism and the "everyday" is revealed to be a space where such mechanisms are voided.

Cavell hints at the reciprocal implications of recognising others, suggesting it involves an openness in which you can recognise yourself. Observing someone "as they really are," when they are not putting on a social persona, furthers a willingness to expose ourselves and be seen in return. Enabling something generally avoided in "real life," theatre can thus facilitate an eye-opening experience. As a true "Schau-spiel," theatre offers a unique space to experience *seeing* and *being seen* in a non-threatening environment, outside of "real life," and to reconnect with the everyday.[75]

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," 278.
[74] Moi takes up this observation in her reading of *The Wild Duck* and Hjalmar's inability to "see" Hedvig. Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 266.
[75] The multiple connotations of the *Schau-spiel* as the playful experience of watching other lives comes out strongly in Freud's "Psychopathische Personen auf der Bühne." Sigmund Freud, "Psychopathische

Vision and concealment thus have multiple connotations for both the space of the everyday and the theatre. They reappear as metaphors to explain the mechanism of how human intimacy develops.

2) *Durch Alltäglichkeit verborgen:* vision and concealment as the dialectic of the everyday

The juxtaposition of concealment and vision represents a constant theme in Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein's everyday. In §129 of the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, the imagery of sight returns when he shows "Alltäglichkeit" as that which is right in front of our eyes:

> Die für uns wichtigsten Aspekte der Dinge sind durch ihre Einfachheit und Alltäglichkeit verborgen. (Man kann es nicht bemerken, – weil man es immer vor Augen hat.) Die eigentlichen Grundlagen seiner Forschung fallen dem Menschen gar nicht auf. Es sei denn, daß ihm *dies* einmal aufgefallen ist. – Und das heißt: das, was, einmal gesehen, das Auffallendste und Stärkste ist, fällt uns nicht auf.[76]

For Wittgenstein, "Alltäglichkeit" and "Einfachheit" are the two qualities that simultaneously distinguish and hide what is most important. The paragraph begins with speaking of the "wichtigste Aspekte" which are "verborgen" due to their "Alltäglichkeit." The reason why these aspects are hidden by their "Alltäglichkeit" is that "man" fails to see what it is in front of his eyes ("vor Augen").

For Wittgenstein, then, the ordinary should be *recognised* as an essential source of meaning but it is only meaningful *because* it underlines the fact that our lives are mostly lived unnoticed. Translated into what we have so far gathered about the role of the ordinary and the everyday as a space for interpersonal connection, this observation could enhance our understanding of the everyday in the following way:.

Personen auf der Bühne," in: *Gesammelte Werke*, *Nachtragsband*. *Texte aus den Jahren 1885-1938*, ed. Angela Richards (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1987), 655 – 661.

[76] Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 86.

regarding sight as a confrontation with the self and others, as the "gateway" to human intimacy, would lead to the conclusion that Wittgenstein views how we function together and connect with each other as something we shouldn't constantly confront – it is too close to home – but simply recognise as a source of meaning. So how can we simultaneously appreciate the ordinary and not *see* it? Isn't *seeing* and *recognising* that which we are meant to do to establish an interpersonal connection?

Bringing words back to their everyday usage means remembering what we do with words, namely to connect. The idea of returning to the everyday thus increasingly reveals itself as some sort of realisation, as a transformative moment when we go through the process of bringing words home. We can understand this process of bringing words home as distinct separate forms of getting in touch with the everyday, such as an intimate conversation or an artistic experience.

In *Wittgenstein's Forms of Life*, David Kishik also suggests that Wittgenstein's passage about "everyday theatre" can be understood as a response to the statement that "Die für uns wichtigsten Aspekte der Dinge sind durch ihre Einfachheit und Alltäglichkeit verborgen."[77] According to Kishik, Wittgenstein reveals "our everyday lives as a world saturated with meaning and importance."[78] He argues that such a theatre simply ought to make us "*understand* that things are already in plain view" (even though they are normally hidden) and it is that aspects which this "everyday theatre" helps recognise.[79] For this recognition is the means of "getting in touch with the everyday." To understand what Wittgenstein's theatre analogy actually stands for, namely to understand how we could imagine those transformative "moments of truth," we need to look at the rest of the paragraph when Wittgenstein specifies what he means by "unheimlich und wunderbar zugleich":

[77] David Kishik, *Wittgenstein's Forms of Life*, (New York: Continuum, 2008), 64-65.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

> Wunderbarer als irgendetwas, was irgendein Dichter auf der Bühne spielen oder sprechen lassen könnte, wir würden das Leben selbst sehen. – Aber das sehen wir ja alle Tage, und es macht uns nicht den mindesten Eindruck! Ja, aber wir sehen es nicht in *der* Perspektive.[80]

For Wittgenstein, theatre functions as a useful metaphor to illustrate how we might recognise and value the ordinary. Everyday life is the sphere of the ordinary and the unnoticed, but it requires exceptional modes of reflection through art to draw attention to it. Applying "*die* Perspektive" of the theatre momentarily shifts our gaze and highlights that which is normally hidden. According to Wittgenstein, what is normally hidden is "the way we really are," the way we are in our "eigenes Zimmer" when no one is watching. As he encourages us to connect by bringing words back to their everyday usage *together*, valuing the ordinary reveals itself as a shared experience within those exceptional moments of transformation.

3) Touch base: the everyday as a space for transformation

From this theatre analogy, we can then return to the question what these "moments of truth" are. How are we meant to *see* something we are not meant to see? It seems the answer lies in the particular dialectic between realisation and automated behavior. In §129 Wittgenstein offers a model of human perception that says we are meant to recognise that "die wichtigsten Aspekte der Dinge" are hidden but already there. This recognition in itself can have transformative power, which explains Wittgenstein's peculiar emphasis on *leading* words back (*zurückführen*) to their everyday usage (Something Moi and Cavell illustrate with expressions such as "resettlement," "reconstruction" or "getting back in touch" in relation to the everyday.). Getting in touch with the everyday is work. It is an active effort, a moment of realisation that follows being struck ("*einmal* gesehen") by what we never noticed before but was

[80] Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 4.

there all along. Something needs to have become "normal" and "unnoticed" in order to be noticed as fundamental *once*, to then be classified as the previously "unnoticeable" – and therefore meaningful – everyday. As suggested by Wittgenstein's "everyday theatre," art – particularly theatre – functions as a unique space of self-reflection on this exceptional moment of attention and realisation.

Following this dialectic of the everyday, such an understanding of meaningful relationships recognises the balance between moments of truth and sharing an "ordinary" everyday life. In her reading of Ibsen, Toril Moi further shows how this balancing act between the transformation and everyday life can manifest itself in human relationships through an honest, intimate conversation and appreciating what we already have. According to Moi, the everyday is something that people need to make a conscious effort to return to in order to connect with each other.[81] As her readings of *A Doll's House* or *The Lady from the Sea* indicate, Moi presents Ibsen's use of the everyday as a moment of confrontation with "the truth" (*forvandling*).[82] For Moi and Cavell, a reconnection with the everyday always involves a unique "moment of truth" that counters the skepticism that defines our daily existence. Hence, the everyday reveals itself as a dialectic between realising and not noticing, between exception and routine, between experience and repetition, between attention and automated behavior.

4) *Im eigenen Zimmer*: the everyday as a conceptual home

We briefly touched on the idea that the everyday can be regarded as a "home," as a place where words belong. Taking these different observations about seeing and not seeing and the "everyday theatre" into consideration we can therefore translate

[81] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 19.
[82] Ibid., 225.

something Wittgenstein grounds in language into a more general idea about the everyday, ordinary life and the domestic as forums for establishing togetherness. Ordinary language can be seen as the space for creating a "home" with another. But apart from speaking of "Heimat" encouraging us to bring words home, Wittgenstein also speaks of "unheimlich" when introducing the idea of observing someone in their own intimate space in his "everyday theatre." Thus, Wittgenstein's idea of "home" is twofold and reflects both the necessity to connect with each other, as well as the difficulties of doing so.

In Freud's essay on the uncanny, "Das Unheimliche," he draws attention to the seemingly contradictory connotations of the term, as "heimlich" can both refer to "secretly" or "hidden" and "homely."[83] For Freud, the "Unheimliche" reveals itself as something that hits "too close to home," which therefore normally remains hidden – or in Freudian terms "repressed." Stanley Cavell recognised the peculiar connection between the everyday and the *Unheimliche* in his lecture "The Uncanniness of the Ordinary."[84] For Cavell, language skepticism is a form of being displaced from the self due to the uncanny nature of human intimacy. It is a frightening prospect because it means *being seen.* Cavell speaks of skepticism's "own uncanny homeliness," which can only be disarmed by a "reconstruction of the everyday" not by a philosophical argument.[85] For Cavell, the everyday is "home," a place for creating a sense of belonging through mutually generated truth. In "Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture," Cavell starts his essay under the heading "The Everyday as Home" and draws attention to Wittgenstein's use of the term "Heimat" in §116.[86] He

[83] Sigmund Freud, *"Das Unheimliche*," in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Anna *Freud,* vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1947), 227-268. The translation "homely" does not refer to the newer North-American sense of "ugly" though but rather as "intimate" or "homelike."
[84] Cavell, "The Uncanniness of the Ordinary," 153-178.
[85] Ibid., 176.
[86] Cavell, "Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture," 254.

claims that bringing words home should be understood as an active effort to "lead" or "shepherd" them out of "exile."[87] Hence, the exceptional modes of reflection, such as an honest conversation or artistic experience, help us actively question whether we are speaking the same language with the other, and then constantly aim to do so.

In theatre terms, returning to the everyday means seeing someone on a stage in their "eigenes Zimmer" performing an "alltägliche Tätigkeit." In Moi's version, it could mean watching someone perform housework on stage, such as Gina in *The Wild Duck*.[88] For Cavell, domestication in itself is the image of human intimacy.[89] That is where we can observe people "the way they really are" and finally see "real people." Hence, (as recognised by Otto Brahm and his contemporaries) *we* need to see real people: to open a space for *being seen* as we really are.

Overall, we can observe a recurring notion that the everyday conceptually functions as a "home" that represents the core of human interaction, which clarifies the recurring references by Wittgenstein, Cavell and Moi to the everyday as the "domestic" in drama. Yet Cavell also hints at the difficulty of returning to this home, as it requires intimacy and interpersonal connection, which is what makes it *unheimlich* in every sense of the word.

Wittgenstein's everyday can be read as a model of togetherness that actively requires a communal effort to use language authentically and develop meaning together. The everyday is further presented as a dialectic between exceptional moments of realisation and the unnoticed routine that contributes to living a more meaningful life. Understanding the everyday as a conceptual home, we can look at the everyday as a space for "touching base" through which we can (re-)connect with ourselves and others. Thus, (in line with contemporary debates about the everyday)

[87] Cavell, "Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture," 254
[88] Chapter 8 "Housework and the Everyday." In Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 253-254.
[89] Cavell, "The Uncanniness of the Ordinary," 176.

Wittgenstein presents the everyday as offering a perspective on life that values "the ordinary." This approach promotes a reorientation of focus and exposes the language that "feiert" as a language that effectively disconnects people from each other. In creating a conceptual space for people "shepherding" language back to their home, Wittgenstein encourages the communal effort of making meaning *together*. Cavell interprets Wittgenstein's ordinary language philosophy as a proof of people's fundamental fear of intimacy and connection, and Toril Moi argues that thematising such problems became a distinguishing feature of modernism, most notably in Ibsen. In their reading of Wittgenstein, both Cavell and Moi show how drama can serve as a space for reflection about the everyday, and thus also as a return to the everyday. But they also reflect on the obstacles to this process and how theatre highlights these difficulties.

V. The everyday on stage: theatre as a space for resettlement of the everyday

Finally, I would like to draw attention to why Moi and Cavell regard theatre as a particularly useful medium to explore questions of human intimacy. She claims that theatre allows us to reflect on ourselves, as it confronts us with other human beings on stage and further shows us how difficult it is to reveal ourselves, by playing out the dynamics of seeing and not seeing (for instance, through the use of hiding on stage or meta-theatrically commenting on theatricality).[90]

When Wittgenstein presents us with his "everyday theatre" as a space for reflection about the everyday, of the uncanny miraculousness about *seeing* people as they really are in their natural habitat, the question arises whether theatre is

[90] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 214 and 270. For Moi, theatre thus most poignantly draws attention to our own finitude due to the visible separation between human beings in the theatre space.

particularly suitable for reflecting on these questions of interpersonal connection and intimacy. Combining a reading of the everyday as presented in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen* together with Wittgenstein's observations about an "everyday theatre," theatre can be seen as a space enabling both realisation and self-reflection. Wittgenstein regards seeing human beings on stage as extremely fascinating, especially because the stage offers a space for those moments of truth. Thus, we can argue that theatre as an art form itself serves as a space for connecting with the everyday.

In theatre, the communal aspect plays a decisive role. It is a gathering between people to collectively create meaning based on words that have been previously written but attain their meaning on stage "in action." The theatre space itself presents a concrete physical proximity, a direct connection with the characters on stage who are also actual human beings. Furthermore, as drama consists of scripted dialogue this naturally makes it suitable for an analysis of verbal communication, but drama can also be read through the non-verbal elements of performance language (to show an "alltägliche Tätigkeit"). As Moi suggest in her analysis of *A Doll's House*, physicality plays an important role when analysing Ibsen's plays, since it recognises the physical being of the actor on stage.[91] By citing Nora's statement in her final monologue, "I am first and foremost a human being," in the title of her chapter on *A Doll's House*, she draws attention to this argument.[92] Nora may be a fictional character but there is a living human being on stage embodying that character. Moi's claim of meta-theatricality thus measures characters' and actors' ability to create a human being on stage, the audience member – at least in Wittgenstein's view – can *play* interpersonal connection with. Cavell suggests that analysing characters in a drama as if they were

[91] Ibid., 236-242.
[92] Ibid.,223-247.

real human beings would facilitate a theatre criticism that actually considers the character's psychological depth, which is often overlooked. As Cavell notes in his introductory paragraph to "The Avoidance of Love," theatre criticism which incorporates the "ordinary" of ordinary language philosophy shall do so by

> placing words and experiences [...] in alignment with human beings in particular circumstances who can be *imagined* to be having those experiences and saying and meaning those words.[93] (emphasis added)

Cavell encourages us not only to analyse characters according to the truth they convey but also by imagining them as people, which means imagining characters as real human beings who we could imagine uttering those words, and who we could imagine connecting with. As I will illustrate in Chapter 3, Ibsen's characters should not only be *read* according to "the truth" they convey but also according to "the truth of the moment." In other words, what is happening between people when they reveal "the truth" to each other?

These reflections help us understand how plays that were about revealing "the truth" also had another dimension. "The truth" is a means for characters to connect, and a means for the audience to connect with the characters (and the human beings) on stage. The record of Wittgenstein's engagement with the theatre shows how he regarded connecting with the characters on stage as an important aspect of the theatre experience. Otto Brahm also envisioned a theatre that would allow us to see real human beings on stage. In naturalism, he found psychological nuance and "echte Menschen, an die wir glauben konnten." In the following chapters, I will show how a number of the plays that were relevant for the avant-garde in one way or another, from naturalism that fervently promotes "the truth," to new interpretation always was

[93] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," 270.

aiming at getting to know people better, creating intimacy, and thus allow people to function in an increasingly modernising world.

Looking at Moi's and Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein's everyday, we have developed a useful model for a theatre criticism that allows us to explain what it is Brahm and his contemporaries were looking for in "truth," "authenticity" or "the ordinary." Wittgenstein's model of the everyday shows how a search for the ordinary can be understood as a search for more honest and dynamic forms of human interaction. By combining theatre and the everyday, Wittgenstein creates a conceptual space where we can reflect on ourselves and remember that words are there for us to connect with each other.

Conclusion

Over the course of this chapter, I have aimed to develop a theoretical model of the everyday that would help explain why authenticity and togetherness appealed so strongly to Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene in the late nineteenth century. I chose to follow Toril Moi's lead and her argument regarding the everyday as a space to create meaningful relationships. Moi argues that Ibsen's plays mark the beginning of a modernist tradition in theatre because they emphasise the difficulty of establishing human relationships. His drama thus captured a decisive concern of the late nineteenth century, which deemed idealism a failure due to our increasingly complicated modern life. A closer look at her case studies from *A Doll's House* to *The Lady from the Sea* illustrates how she regards the everyday as the space where people can genuinely connect, while the problem of disconnection – which comes out as a prevalent concern Moi identifies as language skepticism – represents a central theme.

Before looking at Moi's intellectual sources, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Stanley Cavell, I first chose to clarify what the concept of the everyday means in an academic context and why it has been increasingly relevant throughout the twentieth century. After discovering the complexity and paradoxes everyday life scholars have encountered trying to define the everyday, I chose to follow Liesl Olson's suggestion to define the everyday for a specific genre, rather than joining the impossible mission of concocting a single definition.

Furthermore, I discovered that, as very recent scholarship in the field of English literature suggests, the theoretical concern with everyday life canon was preceded by an artistic shift of perspective in the late nineteenth century. Combining this realisation with the established historical notion that the "Ibsen-effect" marks the beginning of modernism in the German theatre landscape, the everyday becomes an extremely useful framework to situate the urge for authenticity and truthfulness desired by Otto Brahm and his contemporaries in an analytical scholarly framework.

Even though Moi is not a prominent scholar in the everyday canon, nor is her work typically associated with everyday life studies, I argue that her analysis offers the most helpful model of the everyday for the specific medium of theatre and further, directly looks at those late nineteenth-century currents that led to an interest in everyday life.

She claims that Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* offers the most illuminating theoretical basis for studying the role of the everyday in late nineteenth-century modernism. Looking at the paragraphs within this text that specifically address everydayness and its importance for the use of language, it becomes clear how a return to everyday language can be a means to connect people. Self-evident as that may seem, Wittgenstein also found that language can actually

disconnect people when used in a "non-everyday" manner. Consequently, Wittgenstein's view of everyday language encourages us to reconnect.

Strengthening this argument, Stanley Cavell offers a useful clarification, as Cavell's theory of language skepticism not only interprets Wittgenstein's theory as a criticism of other philosophers but also as a fundamental understanding of the human psyche. He argues that Wittgenstein's theory brings out a fundamental problem of the human condition, namely people's fear of intimacy, and suggests that people avoid intimate human relationships because of a disbelief in the power of language. While this latter explanation appears to be problematic, Cavell's actual theatre criticism – specifically in "The Avoidance of Love" – poignantly shows how theatre and philosophy come together in the concept of the everyday. In order to how this combination is already present in Wittgenstein's own work, I took a look at the record of his engagement with the theatre in *Culture and Value*. As pointed out by a number of scholars, these notes qualify as additional reference points for interpreting the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Here, Wittgenstein mentions how important it is to experience the characters on stage as believable human beings, thereby echoing the revelation Otto Brahm was confronted with upon witnessing the work of Henrik Ibsen. Though they were not exact contemporaries, Wittgenstein's views on theatre chime with Brahm's and thus allow us to apply his ordinary language philosophy with a clear conscience.

But the decisive piece of the puzzle comes from Wittgenstein's analogy that uses theatre as a metaphor for interpersonal connection through the everyday. In an illustration of what I named his "everyday theatre," Wittgenstein claims that observing a person unawares perform an everyday activity in their own domestic space would be one of the most "unheimlich und wunderbar zugleich" experiences. In

normal life such an experience would not deserve much attention but the particular perspective gained from an audience's point of view makes it illuminating. As Wittgenstein claims, we would gain the opportunity to observe a human being the way we "can never observe ourselves."

Comparing this analogy with Cavell's reading of *King Lear* in "The Avoidance of Love," I discovered that the imagery of sight Wittgenstein repeatedly uses in this paragraph reflects an important understanding of the everyday as a space for human intimacy. Wittgenstein's analogy clearly resonates with Cavell's argument that the imagery of sight on stage illustrates the complexity of interpersonal connection. Accordingly, people – in his reading of the character Lear – avoid other people's eyes not to *see*, and thus recognise, them as human beings. Or in simpler terms: since being seen as we really are is a frightening prospect, we prefer not to see others; or, being loved comes with the expectation of having to love back, something Lear finds difficult to do.

Apart from the recurring image of sight in Wittgenstein's understanding of the everyday, the term "Heimat," appearing in §116 as the everyday arena we are meant to return words to, also deserves closer attention. Noting Wittgenstein's use of "Heimat" in his description of everyday theatre as "unheimlich," one can conclude that the everyday can be regarded as a conceptual home that is often difficult to confront due to its uncanny familiarity. This perspective qualifies Cavell and Moi's suggestion that, on stage, domestic matters – be they in the form of marriage or housework – represent a space to connect with the everyday. Combining these two notions, it becomes clear how the concept of the everyday enables us to look at theatre as showing us how to connect in a way that recognises others as human beings and, in the process, overcomes the uncanniness of "home."

The last decisive element of Wittgenstein's everyday relevant to this study is the notion of the everyday as a space for transformation, as highlighted by Moi. Wittgenstein's dialectics between vision and concealment, between "Heimat" and "unheimlich," convey an understanding of human intimacy as a balancing act between exceptional moments of ordinary life and realisation. Getting in touch with the everyday – leading words back to their everyday usage – can have a transformative effect and establish meaningful relationships. However, since ordinary life is only meaningful when it remains ordinary, Wittgenstein presents us with the complex task of valuing the ordinary – and thereby reconnecting with ourselves and others – while keeping it ordinary. In order to understand this complex task, he creates an imaginary theatre space where we can appreciate the ordinary and thereby connect with others and ourselves. Hence, he supports the notion that theatre can function as a space to "reconnect with the everyday" and further our ability to establish meaningful relationships.

In the final section, I posed the more general question of whether Wittgenstein's version of the everyday really is helpful in studying modern theatre, given the complexity of the term and its multiple genre-specific applications. It is not difficult to demonstrate that "ordinary language criticism" – as Moi calls it – has proven particularly suitable for the medium of theatre, since it acknowledges how direct speech can illustrate the problem of interpersonal connection. But perhaps more poignantly, it recognises that drama is just a script; its meaning only comes out in the concrete interpersonal connection that it facilitates between different human beings in a confined space during performances. As Moi suggests, theatre most poignantly teaches us how to connect with the everyday, as it allows us to see characters as

separate physical human beings, the way we can never see ourselves.[94] Using the theoretical model of Wittgenstein's everyday, drama can thus also be appreciated based on its ability to create *real* human beings in the concrete theatre space.

Having established this theoretical framework of the everyday, I now move on to an analysis of three plays, each of which elicited a strong reaction amongst Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene. This analysis will show just how these plays challenged questions of intimacy and togetherness through the devices that the art of theatre offers.

[94] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 207.

Chapter 3 – Just say it! Performing the revelation of truth in Ibsen's social dramas

Introduction

The question of truth haunted Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene from the moment when Otto Brahm first fought to see "real people" on stage. As the reviews from the *Wohltätgkeitsmatinee* of *Ghosts* poignantly reveal, discussions about how to present the truth on stage were crucial to the people trying to establish a new theatre-going culture. As Brahm's principles of *Echtheit* and *Wahrhaftigkeit* made their way through to Reinhardt's distinctly non-naturalistic staging, it becomes clear that to Brahm, Reinhardt, and other members of Berlin's avant-garde truth meant truthfulness or, rather, achieving an authenticity of feeling and interpersonal connection.

Since I have classified these respective developments as the Ibsen-effect, it is necessary to find out whether truth plays a similar role in Ibsen's actual plays, exposing the complexities of intimacy and interpersonal connection, or whether that was just the interpretation of a cultural scene that desperately needed these things to matter. Ibsen scholarship from the English-speaking world – from Ibsen's contemporary William Archer to James McFarlane and, of course, Toril Moi – observes a divide in the way Ibsen deals with the question of truth.[1] Generally, this can be traced back to the shift people observe in Ibsen's work from the promotion of

[1] Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts; An Enemy of The People; The Wild Duck*, vol. 2 of *Ibsen's Prose Dramas*, ed. William Archer, trans. William Archer, E. Marx-Aveling, and F. E. Archer (London: Walter Scott, 1908), iii-iv; Henrik Ibsen, *Volume VI: An Enemy of the People; The Wild Duck; Rosmersholm*, trans. and ed. James McFarlane. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 1; Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 95.

principles to individual character studies.[2] Accordingly, plays such as *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* specifically embed socio-cultural criticism against idealisations and false pretences, while the plays following *The Wild Duck* have been classified as profound individual character studies.[3] Though Moi notes that *A Doll's House* or *Ghosts* have a significance beyond social realism, she also differentiates between Ibsen's naturalist phase (*Pillars of Society*, *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, and *An Enemy of the People*) and the phase from *The Wild Duck* onwards, when Ibsen seemed to believe truth was no longer something to strive for.[4]

Hence there is a striking similarity between the reception of naturalism in late nineteenth-century Berlin and the general reception of Ibsen's plays. In late nineteenth-century Berlin, how best to present the truth became a central subject of socio-cultural debate. At the same time there was an artistic development from Otto Brahm's work to that of Max Reinhardt that moved from naturalism to expressionism, though both maintained the same sense of truthfulness and focus on human intimacy originally achieved by naturalism. On top of that, in 1906, Reinhardt reinterpreted *Ghosts*, previously the flagship of German naturalism, to suit the intimate setting of his Kammerspiele, after having done something similar with *Rosmersholm* at the Kleines Theater the year before.[5] Praised for his powerful evocation of the play's mood – be it through the characters' profundity or Edvard Munch's set design, which paid specific attention to lighting and colour – Reinhardt enhanced what a critic from

[2] Brandes, *Henrik Ibsen: Critical Studies*, trans. Mary Morison and Jessie Muir (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 99; McFarlane, *An Enemy of the People; The Wild Duck; Rosmersholm*, 1.
[3] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 95.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887-1945,* 138 and 1106.

the Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung called a "dauerndes Fluidum zwischen Bühne und Publikum."[6]

I argue that the consistent focus on human intimacy within these fluctuating interpretations of what constitutes truth is also present in Ibsen's work. Even during what has been considered his most pro-truth phase, Ibsen consistently presents moments when the truth is revealed as moments of human intimacy. Along the same lines, earlier plays such as *A Doll's House* show that when characters reveal the truth, what they are actually *doing* is attempting to be more truthful with themselves and others. Consequently, even within flagships of German naturalism like *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House* Ibsen shows that (making) truth is something people deploy to confront each other.

Since *Ghosts* was central to Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene, it is evident why this chapter focuses on this particular play. As illustrated in Chapter 1, the subject of truth was a central element of the debates around *Ghosts*. While people agreed that truth was a suitable mission, how exactly truth should be translated into a stage language still remained controversial. The play itself revolves around one key truth being revealed: the fact that the deceased Mr Alving – father to Osvald (and, as is revealed later on, Regine) – was not the man that his public honours and his son's idealisations made him out to be. The entire play consists of an endless stream of revelations related to this truth, eventually supported by the medical evidence of Mr Alving's syphilis, and shows that the consequence of this truth is that Osvald has inherited his father's disease. By showing how Ibsen stages the revelations of this truth, I draw attention to the complexity of human relationships he conveys.

[6]"Gespenster an den Kammerspielen Berlin," *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, 10 January 1887, reproduced for The National Library of Norway, last modified 09 December 2011, http://ibsen.nb.no/id/11208538.0.

Hence, this chapter begins with the infamous confrontation between Pastor Manders and Helene Alving, which Ibsen scholarship has regarded as a staging of battling principles (truth versus ideals) at the expense of nuanced character study.[7] Taking another look at this confrontation, I draw attention to the fact that, aside from clearly staging two opposing principles, this exchange can also be understood as a scene involving two people who actually have another truth in common: the complex history of their stymied love.

This everyday interpretation sheds a different light on the play, undermining the critics who regard this moment as merely conveying a general message while lacking psychological nuance. In the next step, I address how science and facts are actually used in the play and suggest that, though objective evidence may indeed be deployed to enhance the truthfulness of the performance, this is predominantly the case when characters want to make themselves heard and see their existence affirmed.

To strengthen this argument, I will refer back to *Ghosts'* predecessor, *A Doll's House*, which features a different revelation of truth. This play is built around a concrete secret (Nora having forged her father's signature and being financially indebted to Krogstad) and a general sense of denial (undone at the end when Nora presents herself as a human being rather than a "doll" passed on from her father to her husband). Nora performs the truth in the final scene by leaving Helmer but not admitting to the factual evidence against her. Instead, she affirms herself as a human being and confronts the truth of their relationship. I thus hope to show that even *A Doll's House*, a play essential to Berlin's Ibsen-effect, illustrates how Ibsen regards the performance of revealing the truth as a moment for interpersonal connection.

[7] *Ghosts*, 124. The translation used in this book is that of James McFarlane, due to his expertise on modernism, as well as its recognition. However, in some cases William Archer's or Toril Moi's translation offered some insights that are overlooked in McFarlane's version. For the rest of the chapter the plays will be quoted from the McFarlane translation unless explicitly stated otherwise.

The next section of the chapter provides a point of comparison for how Ibsen portrays such revelations of truth, especially after he abandoned the need for an objective truth and claimed: "I believe that none of us can do anything other or anything better than realise ourselves in truth and in spirit."[8] As mentioned earlier, Moi identifies the plays after *The Wild Duck* as transitioning away from naturalism in that they show Ibsen moving away from the subject of truth. Though these plays can certainly be described that way, I will illustrate that Ibsen still makes the performance of revealing the truth a recurrent theme.

This section begins with a reading of *Rosmersholm* that argues that this play most poignantly draws out the complex dichotomy between the revelation and concealment of human intimacy. The play focuses on the relationship between Johannes Rosmer and Rebekka West – an unmarried couple sharing a household haunted by the suicide of Rosmer's late wife Beata. Like *A Doll's House*, the play leads up to a final revelation, in which Rebekka exposes her true self to Rosmer by sharing her history of passions and desires with him. At the same time, Ibsen builds up suspense, constantly misleading the audience and its expectations about which secret is about to get revealed.

Similarly to what happens in *Ghosts*, Rebekka repeatedly reveals versions of the truth in acts 3 and 4, versions that become increasingly subjective and more evidently about revealing herself rather than any other secret. The play adds an additional layer by bringing out the complexity of human intimacy and constantly emphasising images of hiding and secrecy – such as Rebekka hiding behind the curtain or peeking through the window at the mill-race offstage.

[8] Letter to Theodor Caspari, 27 June 1884, quoted by McFarlane, *An Enemy of the People; The Wild Duck; Rosmersholm*, 17.

In order to highlight how Ibsen incorporated the word "truth" into his plays from the 1880s, I show how Ibsen uses the term in *The Wild Duck* and *Hedda Gabler*. These two plays have characters – in this case Gregers and Hedda – who specifically use the term "truth" to manipulate and destroy other people's relationships. Not only does Ibsen show these characters have wrongly idealistic notions of truth, it is actually revealed to be a very destructive character trait. I argue that these examples represent Ibsen's criticism about how people can use notions of truth, exposing that revealing the truth is yet another tool for communication, one which can be destructive or conducive to building a relationship.

In the final section, I illustrate how Ibsen embeds questions of intimacy in his domestic settings and show that what has often been discarded as dull realism actually highlights the interpersonal dynamics present. To that end, I return to *Ghosts*, showing how the arrangement of the space includes a skilful interplay between the on- and the offstage, and thereby enhances the sense of the uncanny, the home lurking behind the door. Ibsen thus makes us witness this "everyday theatre," creating a sense of intimacy by having someone to hide from, something to hide, and enhancing the sense that we are looking into these characters' private space, taking part in their negotiation of intimacy.

I conclude by showing how the use of the curtain in *Rosmersholm* opens a space for meta-theatrical reflection about intimacy and the audience's role in the theatre, demonstrating how Ibsen's seemingly dull domestic realist settings can be reconsidered as skilful illustrations of contemporary problems of human relationships.

I. The rhetoric of telling the truth in Ibsen's *Ghosts*

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, as illustrated in Chapter 1, truth became a mantra for supporters of Ibsen's work amongst an emerging avant-garde. From the very first reviews of the *Wohltätigkeitsmatinee* onwards, critics agree that Ibsen confronts an audience with the truth, and that this confrontation is a major aspect of his work. The verbal act of exposing the truth re-appears throughout Ibsen's realist plays, particularly those of the 1880s. These plays make truth a specific subject of stage presentation, as the battle for truth is fought out on a stage by characters who discuss, publish, and reveal both the notion of truth and a version of their own truth in that specific context. Examples range from the argument between truth and ideals in *Ghosts* to the public declaration of truth by Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*.

Ibsen embeds these various truths into his theatrical language in a variety of ways. While he maintains a specific rhetoric of telling the truth as the central action of his plays, he also underlines this message with a range of stage devices, thereby drawing attention to the complex nature of telling the truth. Thus, characters may *perform* a revelation of truth, giving the impression of revealing some objective evidence while actually merely offering an extremely subjective narrative of personal development. Ibsen thus reveals how telling the truth (or the illusion thereof) can be understood as a language game with the aim of establishing a more honest and authentic connection.

Ghosts is arguably Ibsen's most prominent investigation of the nature of truth. Debates about the truth encompass aesthetic and social conflict to a greater extent than in any other Ibsen play, and served the naturalist movement as a key weapon in the fight for authenticity and artistic integrity.

Furthermore, the play itself makes the conflict between truth and ideals an explicit theme, mirroring its socio-cultural impact. Yet even though confronting an audience with the truth represents a central aim of this play (as is acknowledged in theatre criticism as well as by Ibsen himself), looking at the specific scenes where truths are being revealed in this play offers a much more complex picture.

With its unique reception history, *Ghosts* represents a primary case study for the ways in which a play can be placed in the centre of a social battleground. *Ghosts* became the mascot for a more truthful kind of theatre amongst the intelligentsia of late nineteenth-century Europe, who rigorously quoted the infamous confrontation between Pastor Manders and Helene Alving as evidence of the play's mission:

> MANDERS Is there not a voice in your mother's heart that forbids you to break down your son's ideals?
> MRS ALVING But what about the truth?
> MANDERS What about his ideals?[9]

The quotation comes from act 2 of the play, when Pastor Manders warns Mrs Alving against confronting Osvald with the truth because it would destroy his ideals about his father, while Mrs Alving views a confrontation with the truth as a way to free herself from the past. With "truth" and "ideals" thus presented as opposite ideologies, this exchange appears more of a staged contemporary social debate than a personal conversation, particularly looking at Ibsen's original wording or the contemporary Archer translation:

> Original:
> FRU ALVING Ja men sandheden da?
> PASTOR MANDERS Ja men idealerne da?[10]

[9] *Ghosts*, 124.
[10] Henrik Ibsen, *Gengangere Et Familjedrama I tre akter* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1881), in Henrik Ibsens skrifter, Universitetet i Oslo 2005, http://www.nb.no/nbsok/nb/URN:NBN:no-nb_digibok_2012033024034.

Archer's translation:

MRS ALVING	Yes, but what about the truth?
MANDERS	Yes, but what about the ideals?[11]

McFarlane's translation marks the distinction between truth as a general concept ("*the* truth") and ideals as a subjective narrative ("*his* ideals"), which represents a slight deviation from the original text. In the original version, Manders opposes "the truth" with "the ideals" and thereby converts the argument into a general discussion, while McFarlane's interpretation emphasises Manders' personal appeal to a mother to value her son's happiness over general principles. This slight adaptation is indicative of the conflict between using a play to promote a clear and unambiguous message, namely "honesty over false pretences," and presenting a meaningful and believable connection between two characters. By using the expressions "the truth" and "the ideals," Ibsen seems to use this conversation to stage a general argument in a way that is quite distinct from the subtle illustrations of character and relationships he later develops in *Rosmersholm* or *Hedda Gabler*.[12] It therefore seems that Ibsen wrote this conversation to promote a clear message at the expense of subtle character study.

In his essay "Ibsen and the realistic problem drama," Bjørn Hemmer argues that *Ghosts* sometimes struggles to maintain the balancing act between "over-explicitness" and a "realistic" portrayal of human characters, despite the fact that Ibsen would clearly distance himself from any claim that his voice and opinions are present in *Ghosts*.[13] Hence, we might argue that McFarlane's translation takes a step towards considering the personal dimension of this scene and move away from a

[11] Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House; Ghosts*, trans. and ed. William Archer, vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen* (New York: Scribner, 1906), 222.
[12] Irving Deer, "Ibsen's aim and achievement in *Ghosts*," *Speech Monographs*24 no. 4 (1957): 271. Deer criticizes Ibsen for staging principles over character.
[13] Bjørn Hemmer, "Ibsen and the realistic problem drama," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, ed. James McFarlane, 68-88. (Cambridge University Press: 2006), 72. Hemmer quotes a letter by Ibsen where the latter claims to have taken special care in leaving his own voice out of *Ghosts*.

restrictive theoretical interpretation. But following the example of Stanley Cavell in his readings of Shakespeare, there might be no need to adjust this scene to a more personal level. Instead, we could consider the concrete situation of this scene (the concrete language game) to regard this dialogue as an expression of the characters' communication and their relationship with each other in the moment.

A Cavellian interpretation of this exchange would not differentiate between two exclusive interpretations. As he illustrates in "The Avoidance of Love," a scene can be understood as an encounter between two human beings and nonetheless also convey a general message. [14] Due to the very explicit formulation of this exchange, it appears difficult not to read this conversation as explicit social criticism at the expense of a perhaps more nuanced character development. Nonetheless, we could ask what this general exchange means for the characters in that concrete situation. Here is a philosophical argument between "the truth" and "the ideals" held by two people for whom these terms have a very concrete meaning specifically in respect of their own relationship. We witness an intimate conversation between two people with a strong connection who, due to existing social norms, were never able to express their mutual affection. Ibsen thus adds an additional layer to this conversation, as Pastor Manders and Helene Alving are discussing the concept of truth, and even revealing truths to each other, while actually denying the truth of their relationship.

An interesting rhetorical device illustrates this slightly absurd relationship between revelation and concealment of truth. At several points during their conversation Mrs Alving and Pastor Manders interrupt each other's sentences, signalling a mutual understanding of the matter. While these interruptions highlight

[14] Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," 267-271.

the truthfulness of the subject, they lead to the truth never actually being spoken. Here are two examples:

> MANDERS Good God! Do you seriously believe that most people…?
> MRS ALVING Yes, I do.[15]

> MRS ALVING But as far as you are concerned, my dear Pastor, you know perfectly well yourself…
> MANDERS Yes, I know, I know…[16]

These moments signal a mutual understanding between Pastor Manders and Mrs Alving, showing an intimate connection between them and at the same time, highlighting that there is something that cannot be said, that remains hidden. In the process, the truth becomes an idea that is understood but never actually spoken. This conversational structure, which reappears throughout the play, uses ellipses to replace what at that point would be a direct verbalisation of the truth. The dots signal that though specific words do exist for the truth in that context, they are never made explicit. With this dramatic device Ibsen highlights a conversational structure of speaking the truth, which hints at the importance of verbalising the truth without directly expressing it. In fact, in this concrete situation, not explicitly speaking the truth actually hints at a more profound connection.

There are many ways in which Ibsen comments on the idealised narrative of revealing the truth, but I would like to demonstrate that Ibsen places at least as much importance on his characters' performance of truth as he does on his actual subject matter. I have to start by asking how the characters' specific verbalisation of the subject affects the human relationship presented on stage, and how Ibsen's stage language adds another layer to this very explicit, literal meaning. Looking at these

[15] *Ghosts*, 101.
[16] Ibid., 104.

conversations between Pastor Manders and Mrs Alving, it is clear that they employ a rhetoric of speaking the truth that emphasises the importance and meaningfulness of a matter by not actually saying it. These interactions also highlight the paradoxical nature of the conversation with two characters speaking the truth but concealing the truth of the moment.

Toril Moi argues that Ibsen creates a moment of meta-theatricality by commenting on the different ways in which people avoid genuine human intimacy:

> Ibsen's modernism is based on the sense that we need theatre – I mean the actual art form – to reveal to us the games of concealment and theatricalisation in which we inevitably engage in everyday life.[17]

Moi argues that the notions of concealment and theatricalisation are integral parts of performing authenticity and Ibsen's portrayal of relationships mirrors this conflicted desire to connect and withdraw at the same time. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, such themes reflect contemporary issues of negotiating intimacy in the public space of Berlin as a modern city, and they also show how the plays and their reception are related to that era's narrative of social change and a re-orientation of artistic values towards authenticity.

Looking back at *Ghosts*, it seems evident why this particular play would come to function as a mantra for truth for Brahm and others. *Ghosts* consists of a series of truth revelations in one-on-one conversations that often contain realisations about the past and concomitant new stages of self-awareness. These truths are predominantly products of memory and self-realisation, as opposed to objective truths or traceable facts. The way Ibsen alternates between evidence-based truth and *truthful* narratives of self-awareness and realisation draws attention to the performance of revealing the truth. He underlines his rhetoric of telling the truth by juxtaposing this subjective,

[17] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 214.

personalised version of the truth with one that is concrete, factual, and scientific. When Mrs Alving demonstratively unravels "the truth" to Pastor Manders and insists on convincing him of the fatal consequences of her husband's promiscuous lifestyle, she does so because of the medical evidence certified by the family doctor:

> MRS ALVING But now, Pastor Manders, now I'm going to tell you the truth. I swore to myself that one day you should know. You and you alone!
>
> MANDERS And what is the truth, then?
>
> MRS ALVING The truth is this: my husband was just as debauched when he died as he had been all his life.
>
> MANDERS [*fumbling for a chair*]. What did you say?
>
> MRS ALVING After nineteen years of marriage, just as debauched – in his pleasures, at any rate – as he was before you married us.
>
> MANDERS Those youthful indiscretions … those irregularities … excesses, if you like … you call that a debauched life!
>
> MRS ALVING That was the expression our doctor used.[18]

In order to convince Pastor Manders of the truth of her statement, Mrs Alving refers to the diagnosis of a certified professional. She provides Pastor Manders with a medical certificate, a doctor's note, for her claims in order to get to the bottom of the truth about the past. Syphilis, of course, is never mentioned, instead couched in nineteenth-century speech about "debauched life" and "the inheritance of the father." Nonetheless, the implicit medical condition of syphilis serves as important evidence supporting the truth about the past, as it can be medically certified and turns claims apparently based on subjective perception and selective memory into fact. This particular moment of revealing the truth is as explicit as it can be, a direct question ("What is the truth?") followed by an answer ("The truth is"). Presented as a moment of truth, it is also theatrically heightened.

[18] *Ghosts*, 116.

"The truth" is condensed in one statement: her husband was debauched until his death and his frivolous lifestyle had consequences. There are two dimensions to this specific statement performed as "the truth." One tells us that Mr Alving had been involved in a debauched lifestyle all his life and his wife silently suffered for their entire marriage. The other is the very concrete truth, the medical result of this debauched life, namely the medical condition of syphilis. But which of the two contains the actual relevance of the statement: the personal meaning of Alving's lifestyle for his family or the scientifically certifiable medical condition? And dramaturgically speaking, what is the purpose of this medical evidence in this particular moment and how is it dramatically justified? Why do the characters need it in this particular moment and why do we need it as an audience?

First of all, Alving's medical condition serves as proof of the severity of Helene Alving's statement, proof that her husband was in fact "debauched" (*ryggesløs*). Syphilis itself may thus be less important than its implications. In "Pandemic and Performance: Ibsen and the Outbreak of Modernism," Katherine Kelly reads *Ghosts*, just like *A Doll's House*, as a confrontation with an uncomfortable social reality of the time and with syphilis as its signifier.[19] Ibsen criticises the middle-class marriage of conformity and pretence, and diagnoses a social disease and its consequences.[20] This interpretation includes both the pathological element of clinical diagnosis, namely the claim for an objective truth, and its underlying meaning. Syphilis becomes a symbol for the disease that infects the middle-class family, between shame and repression, the pathological outcome transmitted from one generation to the next.[21] Today, one might also read the play in psychoanalytic terms of inheritance, Osvald's mental condition

[19] Katherine E. Kelly, "Pandemic and Performance: Ibsen and the Outbreak of Modernism," *South Central Review* 25, no. 1 (2008), 12-35.
[20] Kelly, "Pandemic and Performance," 19.
[21] Ibid.

becoming the result of his parentage. But this interpretation does not sufficiently explain why Ibsen repeatedly uses the rhetorical convention of providing objective evidence in conversation, nor does it explain why Ibsen keeps coming back to these heightened dramatic scenes in which the truth is being revealed. Compared to the number of truths revealed throughout the play, Ibsen does not actually reveal many more "facts" after the initial confrontation between Pastor Manders and Mrs Alving in act 1.[22] Instead, Ibsen highlights the need for objective evidence as a need for certainty and a desire to make oneself understood. Melodramatic declarations of truth would make sense if Ibsen used them to reveal appropriately shocking new information, but by doing exactly the opposite and exaggerating the declarations of truth though relatively little more objective information is being revealed, Ibsen presents these confrontations as mere attempts to affirm these characters' existence.

The rhetorical structure illustrated above re-appears throughout the play, highlighting both the struggle of trying to authentically represent the truth and the absurdity of an external authority being required to do so. When Osvald declares the truth to his mother in act 2, he uses the same argumentative structure, providing a verbal doctor's note:

> OSWALD […] In the end I sent for the doctor and then I learnt the truth from him. […].
>
> MRS ALVING What did he say?
>
> OSWALD He said: the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children.[23]

Just as in the conversation between Mrs Alving and Pastor Manders, the doctor appears as the authority on truth. It seems that, with his scientific knowledge, he is the only person who can declare the truth. But when Osvald explains to his mother that he

[22] Of course, revelations such as Regine being Osvald's half-sister should not be underplayed but in comparison with the length of exposition, there is relatively little factual evidence.
[23] *Ghosts*, 138.

convinced the doctor of his father's innocence by showing him her letters, the characters persistently trying to prove things becomes increasingly absurd:

> OSWALD And it wasn't until I'd produced your letters and translated for him all those bits about Father….
>
> MRS ALVING What then…?
>
> OSWALD Well, then he had to naturally admit that he was on the wrong track.[24]

Ibsen draws attention to the absurdity of this moment when Osvald provides evidence against the doctor's clinical diagnosis by using the same rhetorical device. Osvald validates the truth of his statement through the doctor's certificate, but then deploys the same rhetoric to prove his father's innocence by using his mother as another external authority. He "proves" his father's lack of syphilis on the basis of his mother's letters, not knowing they were written in an attempt to conceal the truth. Interestingly, both Osvald and Mrs Alving present and prove the truth using a third objective authority, turning the narrative of self-realisation into one of presenting a fact. Ibsen questions their persistent need for objective proof, but also emphasises the drama of (dis-) connection playing out amidst all this proving.

Within the play, the endless revelations of truth are staged as moments of self-realisation and heightened melodrama. The characters connect the word "truth" with a confessional narrative about their own behaviour and thus attempt to open up to the person in front of them. For Osvald, the moment he speaks about "the truth" is one of dramatised self-loathing and regret. He concludes that he himself must have contracted the disease in Paris and refers to his own guilt as "the incredible truth":

> OSWALD Then I learnt the truth, the incredible truth! This blissfully happy life I'd been living with my friends, I should never have indulged in. It had been too much for my strength. So it was my own fault, you see![25]

[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

Osvald repeats the expression "then I learned the truth from him" twice in this conversation, first when he tells his mother about discovering his illness and then when he comes to the realisation about his own behaviour.[26] Ibsen uses exactly the same wording for two very distinct ways of looking at the truth, and thus exposes the theatricality of this expression and the way it is used.

Ghosts' characters dramatically present "the truth" as something with a meaning, as messages of realisation and consequences. In addition, Ibsen demonstrates ways people rhetorically "prove" truth, whether through scientific facts or an absent third authority, and simultaneously exposes the absurdity of this convention.

In conclusion, *Ghosts* certainly centres on the idea of fighting hypocrisy and false social pretences through the revelation of truth. Ibsen theatrically translates this message into a series of intimate one-on-one conversations that reveal truths about the past through narratives of honesty and self-realisation. "The truth" itself is presented as scientific proof, while the use of the term creates heightened moments of melodrama that expose truth revelation as a poignant example of the difficulties of being truthful with one another. Facts become very useful devices to create a concrete sense of truthfulness that cannot be argued with, while the presentation of the truth to an audience remains a theatrical staging of personal principles.

II. Performing her *true* self: Nora's final moment in *A Doll's House*

Another famous example of declaring the truth on stage appears in Ibsen's early realist play *A Doll's House*, according to Moi the "first full-blown example of Ibsen's

[26] Ibid.

modernism."[27] Though the play centres around motifs of concealment and revelation, "the truth" is never explicitly theatrically demonstrated, unlike in *Ghosts*. In *A Doll's House*, Nora is hiding the secret of forging her father's signature, a secret the character of Krogstad threatens to reveal. The entire play is built on whether this secret shall be discovered or not. Yet it uses familiar dramatic devices, such as building dramatic suspense, only to break with the audience's expectation and reveal that the *actual* truth lies somewhere else.

Nora's final monologue, during which she prepares Helmer for her departure, represents an extended performance of revealing her *true* self without mentioning the fact of the forgery. She confronts Helmer with what she perceives as the truth of their relationship, namely that their marriage was never "real."[28] As I will demonstrate, this final monologue specifically highlights the complex tension between authenticity and theatricality, as it draws attention to the *performance* of revealing the truth and simultaneously highlights the meaningfulness of the everyday. Though the theatrical devices in this play are perhaps less emphatic, Nora's words and actions do underscore a familiar kind of theatricality through which we can recognise ourselves and our own everyday life.

As Julie Holledge points out, Nora sits down for the first time in the entire play when she is about to confront Helmer.[29] This physical, everyday action emphasises her act of revelation and personal transformation.[30] Moi locates this internal transformation just earlier, when Nora puts on the "everyday dress"

[27] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 227.
[28] *A Doll's House*, 86.
[29] Julie Holledge mentioned this aspect at a round-table discussion of "The Ibsen Phenomenon" conference held on 10 June 2013 at The Oxford Research Centre for the Humanities.
[30] The motif of sitting down for the first time to have an honest conversation also appears in *The Lady from the Sea*. Compare Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 296.

(*hvertagskjole*) offstage before she sits down.[31] This moment fulfils all the criteria of a rounded performance, changing into costume, a distinct physical action, and a specific verbal introduction: "Sit down, Torvald. We two have a lot to talk about."[32] Even though she performs an act of truth, Nora never names an objective, verifiable truth. During her entire monologue, Nora does not admit to the factual evidence against her, namely falsifying her father's signature and being in debt to Krogstad. Though it comes out beforehand, this evidence is never staged as part of revealing the truth. Nora's forgery is what she has been hiding from Helmer throughout the play, but when Krogstad insists she realise that she is an adult and individual whose actions have (legal) consequences, Nora remains in her childish, flirtatious denial, and it is only Krogstad's letter that confronts Helmer with the legal situation.[33]

However, the act of telling the truth is staged through Nora's re-appearance in her everyday dress and her sitting down for the first time. The scene starts when Nora leaves the stage and Helmer asks what she is doing, to which a reply is heard offstage: "taking off this fancy dress."[34] While Helmer performs his monologue at the door, the audience imagines Nora removing her costume. Her presence offstage gives Helmer's monologue a different quality, as she begins her transformation while he still claims to have a connection with her. Since we don't see her reactions, it remains ambiguous whether Nora is actually listening or completely absorbed in her own thoughts of preparing her departure. In either case, the audience is made aware that the character is occupied with another action. Nora's re-appearance in her everyday dress introduces a new dimension of physicality, revealing both the way she wears the dress

[31] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 234.
[32] *A Doll's House*, 79.
[33] Ibid., 29 and 75.
[34] Ibid., 78.

and the way it dresses her. Nora conveys the truth by performing her "transformed" self as a confident individual who demands a serious talk with her husband:[35]

> NORA Isn't there anything that strikes you about the way we two are sitting here?
> HELMER What's that?
> NORA Hasn't it struck you this is the first time you and I, man and wife, have had a serious talk together?[36]

The conversation is marked by Nora's sharp and precise answers that clearly express her transformed self. Nora confronts the truth by presenting herself as a self-aware individual who has overcome denial and is willing to face reality. Her narrative about her own happiness, her personal history, and her decision to leave husband and children in order to "think things out" for herself, is one in which she presents the truth.[37] Nora finalises the act of telling Helmer the truth by reverting to the practical organisation of her departure, clarifying the legal ramifications of annulling the marriage and returning her wedding ring.[38] Interestingly, she makes her exit official by law, the kind of absent third authority that medical diagnosis provides in *Ghosts*:

> NORA Listen, Torvald, from what I have heard, when a wife leaves her husband's house as I am doing now, he is absolved by law of any responsibility for her. […]. Look, here's your ring back. Give me mine. […]. Well, that's the end of that.[39]

The gesture of returning the ring marks the approaching finale of her performance, which Nora proceeds to call: "the end." She demonstratively returns the keys and arranges for her belongings to be sent on. Even though her exit may not seem particularly theatrical, gestures like returning the key and words like "the end" are expressive and highly meaningful. Nora's exit represents a performance of herself as

[35] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 225.
[36] *A Doll's House*, 79.
[37] Ibid., 82.
[38] Ibid., 85.
[39] Ibid.

an honest individual. She includes the law and facts into her subjective narrative of self-reflection in order to provide an objective assessment of the situation and to reinforce the notion that she is conveying the truth. Nora affirms her confidence by finalising her statement with very concrete, practical evidence. The presentation of legal evidence serves as a rhetorical device to conclude her performance, which she finalises with a meaningful line and, more importantly, a meaningful action:

> NORA Where we could make a real marriage of our lives together. Good bye!
> […]
> [*The heavy sound of a door being slammed is heard from below*.][40]

The real end, the slamming of the door, constitutes a response to Helmer from offstage that is stronger than any monologue. It underlines Nora's last words and literally transforms them into an act. The stage action, the use of doors, and the stage space form as much a part of her narrative as the truth she is verbally conveying. The performed moment of truth ends with the sound of a physical action offstage. The space and the domestic setting become part of this performance and mark its conclusion. The specific action of slamming doors is in itself very theatrical, a common way of emphasising one's exit. It stands in contrast to Nora's rather quiet and practical departure and is also necessary in that it signals to the audience that Nora has actually left. Though Nora's actions, in contrast to the severity of her decision, are part of her everyday environment and seem perfectly ordinary, Ibsen shows how these actions can be highly meaningful.

In *A Doll's House*, costume, physicality, doors, and the offstage space all enhance the portrayal of the everyday just as they highlight the drama on stage. As in *Ghosts*, factual evidence serves as a rhetorical device to confirm that a character is conveying the truth. Ibsen thus highlights how the performance of revealing the truth

[40] Ibid., 86.

manifests in everyday life, including the rhetoric of providing objective evidence. Furthermore, he draws attention to the situated process of telling the truth by leaving the concrete evidence out of his character's narrative.

III. Games of concealment and revelation: "the truth" in *The Wild Duck, Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler*

The performative revelation of truth is a recurring theme in all of Ibsen's realist plays from the 1880s. Furthermore, Brandes and later McFarlane regard the plays following *Ghosts*, particularly *An Enemy of the People, The Wild Duck*, and *Rosmersholm*, as a critical response to the hostile reception of *Ghosts*, a play that directly deals with the subject of revealing the truth.[41] Toril Moi situates Ibsen's transition regarding the subject matter of truth after *An Enemy of the People*, namely in *The Wild Duck*.[42] She argues that themes like scientific evidence in *Ghosts* and *An Enemy of the People* mark these plays as Ibsen's "high naturalist phase," after which he began to create characters whose righteous quest for truth marks their downfall.[43] It is with *The Wild Duck*, she claims, that Ibsen abandoned the truth as an ideal and started questioning it.[44]

James McFarlane similarly suggests that, from *The Wild Duck* onwards, Ibsen actually shows characters that make us question whether "it does actually add to the total sum of human happiness to put the average person in the possession of the truth."[45] Meanwhile, McFarlane adds, Ibsen began to develop nuanced character studies whose individuality mattered more than the general message they conveyed:

[41] Brandes, *Henrik Ibsen: Critical Studies*, 99; McFarlane, ed., *An Enemy of the People; The Wild Duck; Rosmersholm*, 1.
[42] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 95.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] McFarlane, ed., *An Enemy of the People; The Wild Duck; Rosmersholm*, 1.

The characters "cease to be object lessons and become in themselves objects of study."[46] In *Rosmersholm*, he then claims, Ibsen reached a point where truth is "no more than what anybody at any point believes to be the case."[47]

In the introduction to his *Rosmersholm* translation from 1907, William Archer similarly observed a trajectory in Ibsen's plays from the proclamation of general principles to profound individual character study.[48] Nonetheless, he regards *Rosmersholm* as the transition and *The Lady from the Sea* as the first play where Ibsen completely focuses on individual character study.[49] With *Hedda Gabler*, he claims, Ibsen fully accomplished this task.[50]

All these different approaches suggest that Ibsen's naturalism began with a promotion of truth and general principles, after which he started to find these ideals increasingly questionable and then finally turned to individual character study. Yet I would argue that these interpretations undermine the fact that – as I demonstrated for the case of *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* – Ibsen's views on truth may have shifted, but he had always already represented the revelation of truth as the key challenge of human intimacy. I argue that the plays following *The Wild Duck*, particularly *Rosmersholm*, are simply more refined in showing how intrinsically complicated the idea of being truthful with each other can be and how all those traps of disconnection and self-destruction can be embedded in human interaction.

Looking at the ways Ibsen's plays thematise interpersonal connection and highlight the difficulties of doing so, *The Wild Duck* and particularly *Rosmersholm* stand out due to their nuanced portrayal of relationships. Furthermore, by carefully

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[46] Ibid. 17.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Henrik Ibsen, *Rosmersholm; The Lady from the Sea,* trans. and ed. William Archer, vol. 9 of *The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen* (New York: Scribner, 1907), xv.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler; The Master Builder,* ed. William Archer, trans. Edmund Gosse and William Archer, vol. 10 of *The Collected Works of Henrik Ibsen* (New York: Scribner, 1907), xviii.

revealing the characters' relationship with the truth, Ibsen manages to comment on the complexity of revealing oneself. Within these plays, he creates characters, such as Gregers or Rosmer, for whom exposing the truth represents an aim in itself. Toril Moi observes how skepticism and theatricalisation are embedded in these fervent beliefs in truth, making it impossible for them to establish meaningful relationships.[51] She illustrates how Ibsen constantly juxtaposes the themes of exposing and hiding oneself, and draws attention to the complexity of establishing a connection with one another. The performance of revealing the truth becomes very interesting from this perspective. First of all, it highlights the fact that hiding represents an integral part of this performance: if there is a reason to reveal the truth, there is also a reason to conceal it. Furthermore, I would argue that Ibsen uses the dramatic device of exposing the truth to highlight the complexity of the relationships he presents.

Ibsen's work shows how the truth can actually be performed in a very manipulative manner, which is why I would like to add the case of *Hedda Gabler* to my discussion. *Hedda Gabler* manages to portray the complexity of human intimacy by completely dismissing the revelation of truth as an act of personal gain. In *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm,* and *Hedda Gaber*, truth and secrecy play an essential role in the dynamics on stage and the climax of the story. In all three plays, the revelation of truth becomes a complex game of concealment and theatricalisation that hides behind an idealised narrative of honesty.

Rosmersholm is one of Ibsen's plays that most poignantly illustrates the complexity of human intimacy, as it combines refined and multi-layered character study with subtle and refined commentary on the absurdity of expecting an absolute truth. For William Archer, *Rosmersholm* marks Ibsen's transition from political

[51] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 248-293.

message to psychological nuance.[52] Accordingly, the play posits public concerns of revealing the truth, as represented by Johannes Rosmer and his fluctuating views of religion, social emancipation, and tradition, opposite the complex relationship between Johannes Rosmer and Rebekka West.[53] Overshadowed by the suicide of Rosmer's former wife, Beata, the play builds up suspense about this incident and creates a complex triangular relationship in which concealment and revelation play out simultaneously. Throughout acts 3 and 4, Rebekka repeatedly performs revelations of truth. Staged as an admission of guilt – her active involvement in Beata's suicide – these confessions become increasingly subjective and by the end reveal themselves as attempts to make Rosmer *recognise* her.

Rebekka's first confession concerns the truth about the manipulative move which eventually led to Beata's suicide. Rebekka confesses that she "gave her to understand" something that required Beata's immediate departure: Rebekka's alleged pregnancy:

> REBECCA I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay here where I was. But I told her it would be best for us all … if I left before it was too late. I gave her to understand that if I stayed on … certain things might happen.[54]

Again, this confession appears very vague to a twenty-first century audience, while it may have been very explicit in the late nineteenth century. Yet the play seems to be structured around the building suspense that Rebekka may have actually pushed Beata into the millstream, the site where she drowned. From the first scene, when Rebekka observes from the window which of the visitors could actually pass the millstream, there is an uncanny suspense about her involvement in the matter.[55] Ibsen breaks with these expectations the audience will have by making Rebekka confess in very vague

[52] *Rosmersholm; The Lady from the Sea,* trans. and ed. Archer, xv-xvi.
[53] Ibid.
[54] *Rosmersholm*, 361.
[55] *Rosmersholm*, 243-294.

terms of cause and effect. She uses expressions such as "I gave her to understand," a speculative assumption about what effect she may have had on another person's mind and how that may have led to the fatal result. She performs this act of confession with such a certainty that it is presented as fact, as if she had actually pushed Beata down the millstream. At this point Ibsen turns the narrative of presenting the truth by revealing concrete evidence into a very subjective narrative. Furthermore, Rebekka performs this moment as her own transformation, sitting down "so unnaturally calm," as Rosmer describes it.[56] As in *A Doll's House*, the *actual* truth is revealed at the end, when Rebekka launches into a story about her personal development, about how her "wild passions" have been restrained by her encounter with Rosmer.

In the end, Rebekka sits down – just like Nora – to reveal that what she was really hiding was herself. Once again, she performs the act of revealing the truth, yet specifically without revealing any facts:

> REBECCA Listen to me Johannes, we must get things straight. It will be our last chance. [*Sits on a chair near the sofa.*][…].
> ROSMER Is there still more to tell?
> REBECCA You still haven't heard the main thing.
> ROSMER The main thing?
> REBECCA Something you've never even suspected. Something that puts everything else in its true light.[57]

The "main thing" is what "puts everything else in its true light" (another meta-theatrical commentary, as lighting is an integral part of Ibsen's staging). Rebekka reveals that the actual truth is her honesty about her own "wild and uncontrollable passion" and her perception of their relationship:

> REBECCA I think I could have achieved any mortal thing – then. For I still had the courage of a free mind. I felt no scruples; I wasn't prepared to give

[56] *Rosmersholm*, 359.
[57] Ibid., 368.

> way for anything. But then came the start of something that finally broke my will – and turned me from then on into a poor frightened thing.[58]

These narratives of truth and confession about someone's personal development, about the true meaning behind interpersonal relationships, are staged as the final truth. Though Ibsen rhetorically suggests Rebekka will provide concrete evidence, he counters the audience's expectation by reverting back to an individual, personal narrative. Ibsen thus exposes truth as a subjective, individual narrative and questions the idealised notion of objective truth.

At the same time, Ibsen involves the audience in this "game of concealment" by enhancing the play's suspense and secrecy. Like what happens in *Ghosts*, Rebekka continues to reveal the truth again and again, never adding any verifiable new information to the matter, but increasingly attempting to reveal herself and thereby establishing a connection with Rosmer. Her increasingly heightened revelations of truth are contrasted by the subjectivity of the revelations she actually offers, exposing her revelations of truth as attempts to establish a meaningful relationship. Like in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*, Rebekka's final revelation does not involve facts but a level of honesty that requires self-understanding and an ability to express it in a coherent narrative. When she delivers her series of confessions towards the end of the play – first revealing how she manipulated Beata and then how Rosmer "ennobled" her at the expense of her passion – Rebekka almost crosses the line of what can be *honestly* expressed and what cannot.[59] Though Rebekka opens up to Rosmer and reaches a level of self-understanding, Rosmer tragically cannot reciprocate. His response (addressed to Rebekka as well as a reminder to the audience) comes in the form of expressions like "Is this really you…you…sitting here telling me all this?" or "But I

[58] *Rosmersholm*, 368-369.
[59] As Moi points out, Rebekka uses the distinctly untranslatable term "det" (it) when she hints at an unspeakable reality she cannot bring herself to name. In Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 332.

don't understand you, Rebecca."[60] Still, similarly to Nora's monologue in *A Doll's House*, Rebekka's revelations do allow the audience to understand her better and recognise her as a human being. *Rosmersholm* portrays the revelation of truth in a way that is theatrically similar to those in *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House,* but here Ibsen more directly shows revealing the truth to involve a complex struggle between one's desire and one's reluctance to expose oneself.

In *The Wild Duck* and *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen directly attacks idealised notions of truth, exposing these idealisations as forms of narcissism that often are destructive. The first example that vividly illustrates this idealisation of the truth can be found in *The Wild Duck.* In its fourth act, Gregers (who is clearly identified as an idealist) idealises the action of telling the truth, and enforces his views onto Gina and Hjalmar by exposing Gina's secret previous relationship with Håkon Werle. In an absurd moment, he interrupts Gina and Hjalmar to congratulate them on successfully revealing the truth, childishly priding himself on having laid the foundation of a "true marriage":

> GREGERS Now that you have laid bare your souls – this exchange on which you can now build a completely new mode of life – a way of living together in truth, free of all deception…
> HJALMAR Yes, I know; I know all that.
> GREGERS I was absolutely convinced when I came through that door that I should be greeted by the light of radiant understanding on the faces of husband and wife alike. And all I see is this dull, gloomy, miserable…
> GINA Very well then. [*She takes the shade off the lamp*.][61]

Gregers is conducting a perverse experiment when he creates this ideal marriage based on pure honesty. He destructively intervenes in other people's lives in the name of truth. Gregers sharing the truth is contrasted with his complete disregard for the people he is conveying it to and the harm he causes them. By sarcastically removing

[60] *Rosmersholm*, 370.
[61] *The Wild Duck*, 206.

the lampshade, Gina choses a simple everyday action over a verbal response, and her action contrasts with Gregers' theatrical demonstration. Moi reads Gina's engagement with housework and everyday objects as a form of connecting with the everyday.[62] Her simple action ridicules Gregers, as it seems a much more direct statement than Gregers' extensive narrative about the meaning of life and truth. But in this scene, taking off the lampshade does a lot more than contrasting Gregers' hyperbolic narrative with a simple "everyday" action. When Gina takes off the lampshade, she turns away from Gregers to perform a physical action that will change the lighting of this scene, and at the same time light her face. He draws attention to Gina, who may not have a voice, but whose action is more real and more significant than Gregers' absurd idealisation of truth.

Thereby, Ibsen skilfully embeds a meaningful physical action as well as a meta-theatrical commentary into this very simple stage direction. He builds in a lighting cue, highlighting the significance of Gina's action and reminding the audience that her action is real and takes place in a theatre.

The final example illustrating this idealisation of the truth, from *Hedda Gabler*, shows how using the word "truth" on stage can reveal the *real* effects manipulative revelations of the truth can have. Hedda spends her time having conversations behind other people's backs in the very place where she burns Løvborg's manuscript, her living-room fireplace. Towards the end of act 2, Hedda stages a revelation in a highly manipulative, destructive manner. Sitting down with Mrs Elvsted and Løvborg, she subtly reveals Mrs Elvsted's "secret" worries to Løvborg in order to get him to drink:

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[62] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 142. Even though Moi does not mention it, the theme of conducting housework also comes out in Rosmersholm, when the intimacy between Rebekka and Mrs Helseth is revealed by them conducting housework that needs to be hidden from Rosmer. *Rosmersholm*, 347.

HEDDA […] There, wasn't that what I said this morning when you came to me in such a state of desperation….
LÖVBORG [*pulled up*]. Desperation?
MRS ELVSTED [*in a panic*]. Hedda…oh but Hedda…!
HEDDA Just look at him! There isn't the slightest need for you to go about in mortal terror…[*She breaks off.*] There! Now we can all be lively![63]

Hedda's reaction in this scene is very similar to that of Gregers. She uses her knowledge about the other characters to destructively intervene in a relationship, all the while celebrating it as a moment of truth and honesty. Unlike Gregers, Hedda does not act in the name of truth, but out of a deliberate intent to destroy the relationship between Løvborg and Mrs Elvsted. In this case, the exposure of the truth is not just theatrical but explicitly artificial. Hedda doesn't actually lie, but she portrays herself as a person for whom honesty is a given and who is completely unaware of the harm she is causing. Her performance gains an almost macabre quality when she urges Løvborg and Mrs Elvsted to conceal their reaction from Brack, who is in the room next door:

HEDDA Hush now! That odious Mr Brack has got his eye on you.[64]

From the very beginning, this scene is very theatrically staged: when Mrs Elvsted and Løvborg join Hedda on the sofa, Mrs Elvsted takes a chair in an attempt to sit down next to Løvborg. Hedda provocatively redirects her and assumes her own position as the puppet master:

HEDDA No you don't, Thea my pet! Not there! You come over here like a good girl. I want to be in the middle.[65]

Mrs Elvsted is made to go round the table and sit on the sofa on Hedda's right while Løvborg resumes his chair on her left. With this little choreography Hedda starts the game, manipulatively revealing the truth to Løvborg about Mrs Elvsted's worries and

[63] *Hedda Gabler*, 223.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.

thereby driving him to drink. Hedda's sadistic direction makes Mrs Elvsted perform the physical action of going around the table and sitting down twice. Even though the action of sitting down together initiates a moment of sharing the truth, Hedda uses it to humiliate Mrs Elvsted. In contrast to the theatricality of the moment, the effect on Løvborg is very real. He finally gives in to drink and joins the other men for what is to become a fatal night of debauchery in which he loses his manuscript. The turning point comes as he finally lifts the glass and says:

> LÖVBORG And yours too, Mrs Tesman! Thanks for the truth. Here's to it! *He drinks and makes to refill the glass.* [66]

Løvborg sarcastically comments on Hedda's mendacity by offering a theatrical toast to "the truth." His action of drinking marks the twist towards the tragic ending and is therefore very real. Brack and Tesman – as well as the audience – bear witness to this crucial moment. The champagne motif also occurs in *Ghosts*, when Osvald almost manically drinks champagne in a "joyous" celebration and Regine is directed to join in and repeatedly asked to change seats.[67] In this scene from *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen brings together all the different aspects discussed above: the dichotomy of revealing and concealing the truth, and the juxtaposition between theatrically staging a moment of truth in contrast to a very real, physical everyday action. The moment when Løvborg raises his champagne glass to "the truth" and then (the actor) *really* drinks it subtly exposes the complex layers of revealing truth in performance.

[66] Ibid., 224.
[67] *Ghosts*, 153-154.

IV. *Behind you!* Physicalising concealment and revelation in everyday settings

As I have demonstrated in the previous section, concealing and revealing truth(s) is a central subject of the stage presentation in Ibsen's plays of the 1880s. In this section, I would like to illustrate how Ibsen uses the physical stage space to highlight these dynamics. Thereby, I aim to show how Ibsen uses the domestic setting and familiar theatrical devices, such as hiding behind the curtain, to convey his characters' desire and reluctance to reveal themselves.

I have already mentioned how different characters, such as Rebekka or Helmer, play to an offstage space marked by a window or a door on stage. In another example from *Hedda Gabler*, I showed how eavesdropping and hiding are recurring motifs. In fact, Ibsen integrates all of these elements into the physical stage space. His use of the hidden spaces behind doors, curtains, and windows highlights his tension between secrecy and openness. The performative rhetoric behind concealing and discovering the truth is staged through an extensive exploration of on- and offstage spaces connected through windows and doors, light and sound.

The relationship between the on- and the offstage has been explored by a number of scholars, such as Beliz Güçbilmez, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Marvin Carlson. According to both Güçbilmez and Lyotard, the offstage ought to remain "hidden" or "secret" as it is "too real."[68] Güçbilmez argues that the offstage space contains that which ought to have remained secret and excluded from the stage, creating an uncanny effect by which the offstage represents "the real" behind the performance.[69] Lyotard's division of the stage into representable and hidden spaces

[68] Beliz Güçbilmez, "An Uncanny Theatricality: the Representation of the Offstage," *New Theatre Quarterly* 23 (2007): 154.
[69] Ibid.

distinguishes the perceivable performance from those elements that constitute it but should remain hidden, with regards to both the content and the creation of the performance.[70] Marvin Carlson applies both these approaches to the concept of ghosts in his key work, *The Haunted Stage,* in which he refers to *ghosts* as setting the conceptual pattern for not just *Ghosts*, but all of Ibsen's plays; in fact, the first sentence of his book reads: "All of Ibsen's plays are ghosts."[71] Carlson uses the concept of ghosts to describe the elements from other times and spaces informing ("haunting") that which is being presented on stage, which includes the "performance memory" embedded in the stage presentation and the audience's perception.[72] These theories all draw attention to the fact that the dynamics of concealing and revealing are essential to the theatre space.

Furthermore, as Freddie Rokem points out in his essay "Witnessing Woyzeck," theatre often embeds a witness in a personal moment that functions as a mirror of how the scene ought to be perceived and also reflects back to the audience on a meta-theatrical level:

> Situations of looking, witnessing as well as different forms of eavesdropping that are included in dramatic texts and the manner in which they can be realised in performance on the stage are thus meta-theatrically self-reflexive, showing on the stage what, at the same time, the spectators in the auditorium are doing.[73]

Ibsen incorporates this theatrical witnessing device by constantly evoking the presence of a third party who is present and absent at the same time. As the scene

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[70] Jean-François Lyotard, "The Unconscious as Mise-en-scène," trans. Joseph Maier in *Mimesis, Masochism, and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. Timothy Murray (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997) 172.
[71] Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003): 1.
[72] On performance and memory compare Freddie Rokem, *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press, 2000).
[73] Freddie Rokem, "Witnessing Woyzeck: Theatricality and the Empowerment of the Spectator," *Sub-Stance,* 31 (2002), 169.

from *Hedda Gabler* shows, it is constantly ambiguous whether someone else might be listening in on the sharing of secrets, the revelation of truths.

In *Ghosts*, which rarely has more than two people on stage throughout, Ibsen enhances the notion of intimacy on stage. The relationship between the characters on stage and their interaction in the stage space both highlight the dynamic between secrecy and revelation, between intimacy and alienation. Through a smooth, cleverly choreographed exchange of conversation partners, the play turns into a series of intimate one-on-one moments, while a third person is often hiding or being hidden. Often, these moments are very intimate because of the nature of the relationship portrayed. Starting with Regine and Engstrand, the audience witnesses a personal moment between father and daughter, foreshadowing the later confrontation between mother and son. The fact that these "couples" are of different genders has a slightly Oedipal connotation, creating an uncanny feeling of intimacy. At the same time, these parent-child relationships are haunted by concealment and deceit. The largest part of the play is taken up by the conversation between Pastor Manders and Helene Alving, a pair unable to express their mutual affection.

Like in *Hedda Gabler,* Ibsen uses a similar stage tool to create a third person on- or offstage, who invades an intimate conversation. Thereby, Ibsen highlights the complex tension between concealment and revelation. In act 2, Mrs Alving discovers Osvald had been sitting in the dining room all through her confession to Pastor Manders, the confession contained precisely the story she had been trying to hide from her son his entire life:

> [He [MANDERS] *takes his hat and goes through the hall door*. MRS ALVING *sighs, looks for a moment out of the window, tidies up the room a little and is about to go into the dining-room but stops with a stifled cry in the doorway*.]

MRS ALVING Oswald, are you still in the dining-room![74]

OSWALD *In the dining-room*. I'm just finishing my cigar.

MRS ALVING I thought you'd gone for a little walk up the road.

OSWALD In *this* weather?

[*A glass clinks.* MRS ALVING *lets the door stand open and sits down with her knitting on the sofa by the window*.][75]

The ambiguity whether Osvald actually heard something or not looms over the rest of the play. During this short conversation Mrs Alving addresses the kitchen door, while Osvald remains ghost-like, offstage, and only his voice is heard.[76] It is that same door from where she hears the "ghosts" of the past at the end of act 1, namely Osvald approaching Regine behind the kitchen door, thus reminding her of Osvald's father approaching Regine's mother. The truth is being revealed and concealed at the same time, intimacy and honesty are placed alongside secrecy and distrust. Arguably, sharing a secret creates another level of intimacy, and the presence of a third party who cannot learn of the secret thus enhances the notion of intimacy for an audience.

Overall, these complex relationships layered with underlying secrets maintain an uncanny sensation all the way to the final moment of desperation between Helene Alving and her son. Within this uncanny pretext the conversations remain very personal: secrets are shared between Engstrand and Regine, Pastor Manders and Mrs Alving, Regine and Pastor Manders, or Osvald and Mrs Alving. Ibsen ensures these moments of truth constantly juxtapose intimacy and alienation, enhancing the sense of concealment and revelation.

[74] In the original she asks whether Osvald is still sitting at the table: "Osvald, sidder du endnu ved bordet!"
[75] *Ghosts,*134.
[76] Ibid., 120.

In *The Wild Duck*, this dramatic suspense is deployed at the most tragic moment of the play, Hedvig's suicide. In the scene, a shot is fired from the shielded loft space right after Hjalmar says:

> HJALMAR If I then asked her: "Hedvig, are you willing to give up life for me?" [*Laughs scornfully.*] Oh yes, you'd soon hear her answer alright.
> *A pistol shot is heard within the loft.* [77]

While Moi interprets this moment as clear evidence that Hedvig must have heard the conversation, I believe that Ibsen specifically leaves it ambiguous whether she heard it or not.[78] More than at any other point, the attention is focused on the door, from behind which the shot echoes. Ibsen integrates the complex dynamics of concealment and revelation into the domestic everyday space by constantly highlighting the line between on- and offstage through a careful arrangement of doors and windows within the space.

In *Rosmersholm*, the dynamic between concealment and revelation is conveyed by the use of a curtain, through which Ibsen also meta-theatrically draws attention to the fact that we are in a theatre. From the very beginning of the play, the curtain functions as a device illustrating the complex tension between secrecy and revelation that permeates the play. This is evident from the very first moment when Rebekka and Mrs Helseth observe Rosmer's reaction when passing the site of Beata's suicide (the millrace):

> MRS HELSETH [*about to shut the window, looks out*]. But isn't that the Pastor coming over there?
> REBECCA [*quickly*]. Where? [*Rises*.] Yes, that's him. [*Behind the curtain*.] Come away from here. Don't let him see us.
> MRS HELSETH [*away from the window*]. Well, fancy that, miss! He is starting to use the path by the mill again.

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[77] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 258. I am using Moi's literal translation, as the formulation of the question is particularly relevant. McFarlane translates this sentence into "giving up this life for my sake." *The Wild Duck*, 237.
[78] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 258.

REBECCA He came by the mill-path a couple of days ago, too. [*Peeping from behind the curtain*.] But now we'll see whether…[79]

When Rebekka does not want the Pastor to see her, she has a distinct motive: to find out how he really feels about Beata's suicide. This first moment sets the tone for the entire play, as it precisely illustrates the dynamics of concealment in the relationship between Rebekka and Rosmer. She observes him to find out his real intentions while simultaneously not wanting to be seen. In act 2, Rebekka hides behind the curtain in Rosmer's study and secretly listens to his conversations with Mortensgaard and Kroll, although Kroll clearly instructed her to remain outside. Her presence behind the curtain not only enhances the strange sense of secrecy and betrayal throughout the play, but it also exposes the relationship between Rebekka and Rosmer as one where secrecy and trust play alongside each other. We see this in the scene between Rebekka and Rosmer in act 2 when Rebekka suddenly appears from behind the curtain of Rosmer's study, revealing that she had been listening the conversation between Rosmer and Kroll, and then Rosmer and Mortensgaard:

[*The curtain at the back of the room is drawn back*. REBECCA *appears in the doorway*.]
REBECCA Johannes!
ROSMER [*turns*]. Were you in my bedroom! My dear, what were you doing there?
REBECCA [*goes up to him*]. I was listening
ROSMER Oh, Rebecca, how could you!
[…]
I would have told you.
REBECCA You would have hardly told me everything. And certainly not in his own words.[80]

Rebekka betrays Rosmer's trust by listening in on his private conversation. But in the way she naturally steps out of the curtain and admits to her listening and Rosmer

[79] *Rosmersholm*, 4.
[80] *Rosmersholm*, 337.

responds that “he would have told her,” we learn that there is also a relationship somehow based on trust and honesty with an implicit agreement of always telling each other the truth. Once again, the idealised notion of complete honesty gets questioned as the story unravels and shows the complete lack of honesty between two characters. This depiction of their relationship shows a complex mix of trust and deceit. While he presents himself as completely open to her, she does not trust his second-hand narrative. And Rebekka’s honesty about her lack of trust in his narrative turns this betrayal into an almost absurd proof of trust. In this play, Ibsen fully explores the simultaneous desire to hide from, and connect with, each other through recurring performances of revealing and concealing the truth. He draws attention to the illusion of truthfulness contained in certain narratives and ideas about being truthful with each other.

Ibsen’s use of the curtain in this play consistently enhances the audience’s expectation that Rebekka has something to hide. But as analysed earlier, instead of hiding a criminal deed, her hiding means she is actually reluctant to expose herself to Rosmer as the human being she is. Thus, the curtain represents the physical stage device that captures the Cavellian dichotomy between seeing and being seen. It may be part of the domestic setting, but it serves the purpose of highlighting the complex dynamics of human intimacy. The very first scene of Rebekka hiding behind the curtain prepares the audience for the interesting triangle dynamic that will infiltrate the play all the way through. Throughout, there are almost always three people present in an interplay between the on- and offstage. This creates a tension between the absent and the present, or the past and the present. And the complex Rebekka-Rosmer-Beate triangle resembles that of Mr Alving-Mrs Alving-Osvald in *Ghosts*. The poignant last moment in which Mrs Helseth looks out the window as she narrates

the offstage suicides of Rebekka and Rosmer ("The dead woman has taken them"[81]) concludes this triangle dynamic, as she evokes the presence of the third woman, the absent character that the entire play revolves around. Consequently, the interplay between on- and offstage allows us to experience the complexity of human intimacy as poised between concealment and revelation.

As Wittgenstein's "everyday theatre" illustrates, the curtain veils and unveils an insight into another person's intimate space – as if looking at them in their living room. On Ibsen's stage, the audience actually looks into other people's living rooms and thus becomes the secret observer behind the curtain who can *see* other people's lives without being seen. In Ibsen's plays we witness an interplay between the on- and the offstage, with two people present and one absent on stage, which creates a peculiar sense of witnessing things, people hiding and being hidden, seeing and being seen. Using the familiar theatre device of the curtain, Ibsen remains within his domestic stage setting but also reminds us that we are behind the theatre curtain observing these people's lives. In the theatre, we look at others but also want to remain unseen, and by creating this visual association, Ibsen opens up a space for self-reflection.

Conclusion

In the course of this chapter I have aimed to illustrate that between his "high-naturalist phase" and his abandonment of truth, Ibsen has consistently shown the revelation of truth to be a performance reflecting the complexity of human intimacy and interpersonal relationships. Ibsen thus did not only respond to a desire for truth, but

[81] *Rosmersholm*, 381.

his work also shows that revelations of truth function as a tool to develop interpersonal relationships.

As I suggested in the first chapter, the importance of truth in *Ghosts* mirrors its importance to Berlin's avant-garde, I devoted the first part of the chapter to an extensive analysis of the complexity of truth and of revealing the truth in *Ghosts*. Just as the subject of truth was at the centre of debates as the avant-garde began to emerge, "truth" is explicitly introduced in the play itself as being in opposition to "ideals," thus making this conflict a distinct subject matter of the play. *Ghosts* thus allows us to illustrate that in these fervent discussions about how to present the truth on stage one decisive element of this encounter is often overlooked: the fact that when Ibsen opposes "truth" and "ideals," he actually shows the dynamics of a complex relationship, that between Pastor Manders and Helene Alving. By showing how these characters speak about "truth" and "ideals" in ways that admit or deny their mutual affection, I showed how speaking of "the truth" always has a concrete meaning for the characters on stage.

In the next step, I illustrated how Ibsen consistently highlights the performative elements of revealing the truth as he repeatedly places subjective narratives of revealing the truth opposite demonstrations of fact. By presenting objective evidence – such as the medical diagnosis in *Ghosts* – as a mere tool to enhance the sense of truthfulness, even this flagship play of truth and naturalism proves to illustrate the complexities of interpersonal relationships.

In order to show that such themes are not unique to *Ghosts*, I followed with the example of *A Doll's House*, specifically Nora's final scene, in which she performs the truth as a series of meaningful stage actions rather than simply admit to the concrete factual evidence against her. Nora's infamous monologue is also, it appears,

an act of affirming her existence and getting closer to herself. And thus, even in a play that does not specifically address the subject of truth, the revelation of truth comes out as an act of self-affirmation.

The next part of the chapter transitioned to the plays in which Ibsen developed a more critical stance on the subject of truth: *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm*, and *Hedda Gabler*. Of these, I argue that *Rosmersholm* offers the most comprehensive and nuanced demonstration of the complexity of human intimacy. The relationship between the characters Rebekka West and Johannes Rosmer brings together all the different elements constituting the complexity of revealing the truth I observed earlier in *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. Though the main subject of this play is the figure of Beata and her suicide by drowning in the millrace, her character, as well as all the events surrounding her, take place offstage, thus highlighting the hidden space Beliz Gücbilmez identifies as the theatre's uncanny "actual" home. Through a study of Rebekka's relationship with the truth and a careful analysis of her revelations of this truth, we discover that her main "secret" is herself and her main difficulty exposing herself to Rosmer.

In order to emphasise how Ibsen has shifted in his ideas about truth, but at the same time maintained the stance that truth is a tool for negotiating interpersonal relationships, the chapter moved on to illustrate how Ibsen contrasts heightened declarations of truth and concrete everyday stage effects in *The Wild Duck* and *Hedda Gabler*. After examining the two examples of Gregers Werle and Hedda Gabler, I concluded that whenever Ibsen creates a third character who destructively intervenes in a relationship in the name of truth, he also uses a concrete stage device to contrast these melodramatic digressions. Ibsen thus discredits melodramatic declarations of truth and, through meta-theatrical comments on the scene, reminds us that we are in a

theatre with a concrete physical stage and that there are human beings performing these characters. Moi's suggestion that domesticity shows the everyday as a contrast to skepticism thus does not go quite far enough, and I suggest that Ibsen also uses concrete domestic stage settings such as doors, windows and curtains to create a sort of "everyday theatre," a space for meta-theatrical self-reflection.

To strengthen this hypothesis, it was necessary to go on a brief detour to theatre studies, drawing on theories of both witnessing and the on- and offstage. This helped me demonstrate that Ibsen's plays essentially encompass a core but in Ibsen scholarship often overlooked element of the theatre, the relationship between audience and stage. Drawing on theories of the offstage by Beliz Gücbilmez, Jean-Francois Lyotard and Marvin Carlson, it is clear that Ibsen's relationship with the offstage can be said to reflect Wittgenstein's "everyday theatre," that vulnerable space of human intimacy that Cavell regards as the "uncanny homeliness" of the everyday.

Ibsen highlights these dynamics in the relationships he portrays and uses classical theatre devices to highlight the complexity of human intimacy. To look more closely at these devices, I referred to Freddie Rokem's model of "witnessing," which argues that the motif of eavesdropping offers the audience a space for self-reflections – they too are eavesdroppers, after all. Therefore, stage devices such as the curtain in *Rosmersholm* or the kitchen-door in *Ghosts* work on several levels, integrating the audience into the complexity of human intimacy shown on stage.

On stage, the everyday is a space that encompasses complex dynamics that confront the audience and the characters on stage, with the repressed sense of "home" that renders us vulnerable, which is why we (characters, performers, audience) usually exile it offstage. The chapter's final section concludes by showing how, in all the plays we have been looking at, stage devices that enable eavesdropping, creating a

triangle between absent and present characters through doors, windows, and curtains are in fact creating an “everyday theatre” that brings us to the borders of our vulnerabilities and facilitates a unique communal experience.

Chapter 4 – Go home: the everyday as a space for (dis-) connection in Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei*

Introduction

Arthur Schnitzler and Otto Brahm began their working relationship after Schnitzler wrote Brahm a letter in 1894 urging him to consider *Das Märchen* for performance at the Deutsches Theater.[1] The play, recognised as Schnitzler's homage to Ibsen, had failed to charm the audience at the Volkstheater in Vienna, but Schnitzler saw a potentially more open recipient of his work in Otto Brahm.[2] Brahm declined *Das Märchen*, writing to Schnitzler that its psychological profundity read more like a case study than a piece of drama fit for the stage.[3] The next year, however, Schnitzler's play *Liebelei* premiered at the Burgtheater (9 October 1895) and became such an unexpected success that Brahm immediately resumed their communication, urging Schnitzler to grant him the performance rights.[4] From then on, Brahm became Schnitzler's principal director in Berlin, with several of his plays even premiering in Berlin instead of Vienna.[5] Though Schnitzler might have been right in assuming that Brahm and his ensemble at the Deutsches Theater would be more open to his naturalism than an audience in Vienna, *Liebelei*'s overwhelming success at the Burgtheater suggests that the play also captured quintessentially modern themes that appealed to the Viennese Bildungsbürgertum as much as to audiences in Berlin. Despite his anti-naturalist stance, Max Reinhardt also found the play suitable for the

[1] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzler – Otto Brahm*, 1
[2] Ibid.; Christa Melchinger, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit im dramatischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1968), 24-25.
[3] Ibid., 3.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Weigel, "Das Berliner Theater und seine Wiener Einflüsse", 66.

intimacy of his Kammerspiele in 1907, opening his second season there with a *Liebelei* production directed by Rudolf Bernauer that has since been recognised as a remarkable success.[6]

So what is it that made this play so suitable for audiences as varied as those of the Viennese Burgtheater and Reinhardt's Kammerspiele? The answer, I would argue, lies in the ways in which Schnitzler continued Ibsen's tradition of confronting audiences with their social reality while simultaneously exposing the complexity of establishing meaningful relationships, all the while creating a space for meta-theatrical self-reflection through the use of familiar theatrical devices.

Liebelei is a play about Christine, a young woman from Vienna's suburbs who falls in love with Fritz, a young gentleman, who for his part is infatuated with a mysterious married woman. During a night of decadence at Fritz's apartment, he learns that he is about to participate in a duel, after which he displays a more profound interest in Christine. Though the pair seems to eventually encounter one another more closely in the second act, it all ends in tragedy as Fritz dies in the duel and Christine subsequently leaves the house to presumably commit suicide.

Above all, *Liebelei* captures a quintessential reality of fin-de-siècle Vienna: the story of a "süßes Mädel" from the suburbs falling in love with a wealthy Viennese gentleman who solely regards her as a temporary "Erholung" from his decadent life of coffee houses, theatres, and arduous love affairs. Schnitzler specifically intended to write a "Volksstück," and his use of dialect and constant references to Viennese city life allowed the Burgtheater audience – from the stalls to the gallery – to recognise

[6] Rühle, *Theater in Deutschland 1887-1945*, 1109.

themselves.[7] Yet the play moved beyond Vienna and, as Oskar Seidlin notes, beyond the fin-de-siècle, which makes its modernist credentials worth analysing.[8]

This chapter thus reads *Liebelei* as exploring a key struggle of modernism as identified by Toril Moi, namely the difficulty of establishing meaningful relationships in the modern world. Specifically looking at the characters' relationship with the everyday, this chapter aims to demonstrate how even this very Viennese play centres around the crucial question of how to connect. Furthermore, I argue, Schnitzler's naturalism achieves a surprisingly accurate version of Wittgenstein's "everyday theatre" by carefully exploring the powerful analogy between spying in on people's personal spaces and the theatre.

My reading of *Liebelei* acknowledges the play's importance as the reflection of a specific era and society, but it also argues that its significance reaches further, specifically resonating with Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene. As with Ibsen, Schnitzler captured core problems of interpersonal relationships by raising questions of voice, personal space, concealment, and revelation.

This chapter begins with an analysis of Christine's disconnection with the everyday, as manifested in her proneness to melodramatic self-sacrifice and her inability to accept human finitude. Analysing the recurring theme of Christine's limited singing skills, I further conclude that Schnitzler presents Christine as a character who is not able to assert herself in any other way than by committing suicide. But this analysis does not aim to "place the blame" on Christine, as Fritz, with his addiction to drama, seems to suffer a similar disconnection with the everyday, preferring a fantasy of closeness over a genuine relationship. Yet Schnitzler makes

[7] As noted by Melchinger, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit im dramatischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, 26.
[8] Oskar Seidlin, "Arthur Schnitzlers 'Liebelei': Zum hundertsten Geburtstag des Dichters am 15. Mai 1962," *The German Quarterly* 35 no. 3 (1962): 250, accessed 13 April 2016, doi: 10.2307/401876..

both these differently delusional characters relatable, I will show, as the playwright clearly shows his protagonists' desire to connect with each other and their failed attempts to so. Studying their relationship in contrast to that of their friends Mizi and Theodor, I argue that Schnitzler uses the second pair to present the audience with a more sustainable alternative, since their concrete interactions on stage and their mutual understanding about the nature of their relationship both show them to be more closely tied to the everyday than their "tragic" friends.

Finally, echoing my analysis of Ibsen's social dramas, I argue that Schnitzler juxtaposes the domestic setting on stage and the world of the theatre offstage to highlight the dynamics of concealment and revelation inherent to the complexity of human intimacy. By using the theatre as a constant reference point throughout the play, which entirely takes place in Christine's and Fritz's own rooms, Schnitzler thus achieves a multi-layered meta-theatrical commentary and makes the audience part of this intimate encounter.

I. More than naturalistic sentimentality: re-establishing *Liebelei* as a modernist play

When it comes to Schnitzler's *Liebelei*, several scholars have commented on its surprising success, despite its by that time outdated naturalism. Christa Melchinger explains this success as due to its socio-cultural criticism, arguing that the play confronts Viennese society with both itself and the types it created, like the "süße Mädel" or the adolescent gentleman.[9] W.E. Yates surveys a number of contemporary Viennese theatre reviews to conclude that *Liebelei*'s success was due to its "capturing

[9] A type that John Neubauer has analysed at length for Schnitzler's novel *Der Weg ins Freie*, published in 1908. John Neubauer, The Overaged Adolescents of Schnitzler's Der Weg ins Freie," in *A Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, ed. Dagmar C. G. Lorenz (Rochester: Camden House, 2003), 265-276.

a recognisable Viennese reality."[10] Andrew Barker even writes that "a masterpiece such as Schnitzler's *Liebelei* (1895) is not so very far removed from the world of Ibsen."[11] He thus implies that the social impact of *Liebelei* can be compared to that of Ibsen for Berlin during the 1880s.

But the play does not just tell us something about the era in which it was first staged, as its influence has reached far beyond. Going beyond a mere context-specific socio-cultural analysis, Oskar Seidlin argues that Schnitzler created a play that reaches into the depth of human nature, exposing "wie fremd sich Menschen sind."[12] He believes that *Liebelei* appeals to contemporary audiences so much because Schnitzler did more than confront Viennese society with duels and "süße Mädels"; he captured the difficulties of establishing relationships.[13] And indeed, the unusual success of this play suggests that its appeal goes beyond fin-de-siècle Viennese society, beyond its naturalism. As we have already seen, it riveted its Viennese Burgtheater audience, as well as Otto Brahm and the audience at the Deutsches Theater, while also entertaining literary-matinee audiences at the Residenztheater.[14] The play also opened the second season of Max Reinhardt's Kammerspiele and became a well-documented success.[15] At that point, the play had been thoroughly adjusted to fit the German stage, as audiences complained at a guest performance in Budapest that this production had lost the play's quintessential "Vienneseness."[16] In

[10] Yates, W. E., *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theatre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 131.
[11] Andrew W. Barker, "'Der grosse Überwinder': Hermann Bahr and the Rejection of Naturalism," *The Modern Language Review* 78, no. 3 (1983): 623.
[12] Seidlin, "Arthur Schnitzlers 'Liebelei' Zum hundertsten Geburtstag des Dichters am 15. Mai 1962," 251.
[13] Ibid., 250-253.
[14] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 176.
[15] *Der Briefwechsel Arthur Schnitzlers mit Max Reinhardt und dessen Mitarbeitern*, 26-27.
[16] Ibid., 27.

short, *Liebelei* found an audience beyond naturalism and beyond Viennese society, which makes Seidlin's suggestion worth investigating in more detail.

Given the play's historical significance, it is also interesting to mention the relatively small critical interest in *Liebelei* in twentieth-century scholarship. As Michael Ossar pointed out in 1997, surprisingly little research has been conducted on *Liebelei*.[17] And indeed, even Dagmar Lorenz's *A Companion to the works of Arthur Schnitzler* does not grant *Liebelei* a prominent place in her pages. Yates' book *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Theatre*, published in 1992, represents an exception as he does note the play's significance in his nonetheless brief reading of *Liebelei* but predominantly focuses of Schnitzler's portrayal of a "typically Viennese" love affair between a *Vorstadtmädel* and a wealthy gentleman around the fin-de-siècle.[18]

Ossar attributes this lack of critical interest to a possible conception of the play as being a bit too "obvious," lacking in underlying complexities or interesting character development.[19] And Hunter Hannum explains that the play has often been dismissed for its sentimentality by twentieth-century scholars and therefore has not been taken seriously enough.[20] Yet Seidlin's suggestion that the play captures a core sense of human estrangement strikes a very different note. Far from undermining the play's historical significance in confronting Viennese society, I will similarly argue that Schnitzler skilfully integrates a profound portrayal of the complexity of human relationships into an image of contemporary Viennese society. In the previous chapter I have illustrated how the domesticity of naturalism can both highlight the complexity

[17] Michael Ossar, "Individual and Type in Arthur Schnitzler's 'Liebelei'," *Modern Austrian Literature* 30 no.2 (1997): 19.
[18] Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theatre*, 126-132.
[19] Ossar, "Individual and Type in Arthur Schnitzler's 'Liebelei',"19
[20] Hannum, Hunter G., "Review of *Liebelei, Leutnant Gustl, Die letzten Masken* by Arthur Schnitzler, ed. J. P. Stern," *The German Quarterly* 41 no.2 (1968): 272.

of interpersonal dynamics in the theatre space, as well as enhance a sense of reality. In this chapter, I will show that in *Liebelei* Schnitzler intertwines naturalistic domesticity on stage and Viennese city life offstage – an arena constantly referenced by the characters – thereby achieving a poignant meta-theatrical commentary on the familiar relationship between concealment and revelation.

Liebelei illustrates this complexity precisely through what it has been dismissed for: its sentimentality. In his thorough introduction to *Liebelei*, J.P. Stern calls for a differentiation between the sentimentality of the characters and that of the author.[21] He argues that it is characters such as Fritz who are sentimental, not Schnitzler, an observation with which Hunter Hannum concurs.[22] Similarly, the character of Christine and its melodramatic aspects pose an interesting problem that has not been addressed in that much detail. Dagmar Lorenz observes that there is an odd anachronistic discrepancy between Christine's melodramatic self-sacrifice and the play's realism.[23] Lorenz suggests that juxtaposing the realistic staging with anachronistic melodrama makes this tragedy feel almost misplaced:

> Christine is out of step with the society represented in Schnitzler's dramatic works. Modernity has many different options available and does not sustain tragedy. Rather than tragic, Christine's demise is misguided and unfortunate. Through characters such as Christine, Schnitzler reveals the problems inherent in melodramatic presentations of personal relationships and society on stage and in literature and criticises the effects such representations may have on impressionable minds.[24]

According to Lorenz, the actual tragedy of the play lies in Christine's "flair for the heroic and melodramatic," an observation remarkably close to Moi's reading of

[21] Arthur Schnitzler, *Liebelei, Leutnant Gustl, Die letzten Masken*, ed. J. P. Stern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 10.
[22] Hannum, review of *Liebelei, Leutnant Gustl, Die letzten Masken*, 272.
[23] Lorenz, *Companion to the Works of Arthur Schnitzler*, 133.
[24] Ibid.

Ibsen's skeptics.[25] Here too, communications that appear to be declarations of truth or love are actually preventing people from establishing meaningful relationships. Yates classifies Christine's behaviour as a product of the idealism suggested by the influences on her bookshelf – Schiller and Schubert – and thus confirms Moi's belief that anti-idealism is a core theme of modernism in drama.[26] In this context it is clear that *Liebelei* deserves further attention, specifically, as some scholars have tentatively hinted at, an analysis of the ways Schnitzler presents the complexity of interpersonal connection. This would not only re-establish the play's significance for modernism in theatre, but also help explain why this play so strongly appealed to the avant-garde theatre scene in Berlin.

Re-interpreting what different scholars have referred to as sentimentality and melodrama as instead a sign of "wie fremd sich die Menschen sind," the following sections takes a look at the relationships between Christine and Fritz, and the delightfully contrasting couple of Mizi and Theodor, to investigate how Schnitzler's portrayal of fleeting Viennese love affairs approaches the essential problem of how to establish a genuine connection.

II. Christine's skepticism

At first glance, *Liebelei* may seem like a tragic love story: An innocent girl falls for an experienced seducer, who becomes the victim of his own insatiable desire for adventure. Christine is hopelessly in love with Fritz and willing to sacrifice her life for him. Fritz, meanwhile, devotes all his attention to a mysterious married woman in a black dress and consequently dies in a duel with her husband. Against the

[25] Ibid., 132.
[26] Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theatre*, 128.

background of a realistic setting, Schnitzler skilfully ironises the melodramatic content of his play by drawing attention to its distinct theatricality. After all, the play tells the story of a *Liebelei,* a supposedly light-hearted, fleeting love affair.

As Christine's overly dramatic speech is contrasted against the others' nonchalant interactions, her relationship with Fritz appears strange and dissonant from the very beginning, showing her "idealism" to simply be outdated.[27] Their first encounter on stage, when Christine enters Fritz's apartment after Theodor and Mizi had already arrived, sets the tone for their relationship, as she immediately launches into a mode of exaggerated self-deprecation that she maintains throughout:

> CHRISTINE *grüßt mit ganz leichter Befangenheit* Guten Abend. *Begrüßung. Zu Fritz* Freut's dich, dass wir gekommen sind? Bist nicht bös?[28]

As Christine hesitantly enters the flat and raises the question whether Fritz might be angry at her arrival, she emphasises their disparity in social status (and possibly attempts to elicit Fritz's approval, hoping he will say that of course he is happy to welcome her). Schnitzler thus immediately establishes Christine as the submissive "süße Mädel" who regards Fritz to be out of her league. She continues in the same tone as she deprecates her present for Fritz as: "Ein paar Blumen hab' ich dir mitgebracht."[29] Throughout her conversation with Fritz, Christine not only maintains this humbleness, but brings it to an exaggerated level, never ceasing to emphasise how unworthy of Fritz she feels and how little she believes that Fritz might actually care about her. Thereby she actually furthers their disconnection; Christine has cast herself in the role of suffering heroine and encourages Fritz to confirm that role.

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[27] Several of these aspects appear in Moi's reading of *Hedda Gabler.* Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 316-324.
[28] Arthur Schnitzler, *Liebelei*, vol. 1 of *Die Dramatischen Werke*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1962), 223.
[29] Ibid.

Schnitzler emphasises the "mismatch" between Christine and Fritz by contrasting Christine's melodramatic narrative against Fritz's small talk in their first conversation:

FRITZ	Wie geht's dir denn, mein Schatz?
CHRISTINE	Jetzt geht's mir gut.
FRITZ	Na, und sonst?
CHRISTINE	Ich hab' mich so nach dir gesehnt.
FRITZ	Wir haben uns ja gestern erst gesehen.[30]

With this first small exchange, Schnitzler not only illustrates their diverging points of view, but their difference in tone suggests just to what extent these characters do not speak the same language. Fritz's emphatic nonchalance ("Na, und sonst?") is rendered comic by Christine's insistence on melodrama. He begins the conversation with simple small talk, upon which Christine immediately and almost forcefully directs the conversation to a melodramatic declaration of love. When Fritz encourages her to tell him about her wellbeing – perhaps just out of simple courtesy – she avoids talking about herself, claiming that she only exists for him. While Christine launches straight into her melodramatic narrative, Fritz's slightly comical replies immediately direct the audience to understand her reactions as out of place, especially when he puts things into perspective by stating that they just saw each other the day before.

These exchanges reveal Christine's character to be someone who does not want to be acknowledged as a separate person with her own needs – an observation which chimes with Moi's characterisation of the skeptic as someone who does not want to accept "human finitude."[31] By that expression, Moi and Cavell refer to the skeptic's inability to acknowledge the other as a separate human being, and therefore,

[30] Ibid. 224.
[31] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 206.

to see them for who they are. Moi deploys the term when explaining why characters, such as Nora and Helmer, have yet to grow up or when classifying Rosmer's asexuality as a reluctance to accept his own body (and that of others) as separate and finite.[32] In Christine's case, this "skepticism" means that she does not accept that, in order for them to establish a meaningful relationship, she has to allow Fritz to recognise her as the human being she is. Instead, her absolutist demand for eternal love and her yearning for complete symbiosis with Fritz indicate her avoidance to be seen as a person in her own right and, as Cavell might put it, to be loved as one. This is especially clear in moments when Fritz does actually express some form of affection:

> FRITZ Ich hab' dich ja auch sehr lieb.
>
> CHRISTINE Du bist aber mein Alles, Fritz, für dich könnt' ich... *Sie unterbricht sich* Nein, ich kann mir nicht denken, daß je eine Stunde käm', wo ich dich nicht sehen wollte. Solang ich leb', Fritz – [33]

As Christine can only accept love as an eternal self-abandonment, she rejects Fritz's display of affection by emphasising that their love is not the same. In the process, she implies that, as their affection is not truly mutual, they can never enter an actual relationship. With her narrative of complete self-sacrifice, she thus denies Fritz the possibility of *recognising* her as a human being.

Schnitzler illustrates Christine's reluctance to be seen by using a conversational pattern of rejection. As the following exchange reveals, even though Christine supposedly reveals her unconditional love for Fritz, she does not actually respond to his signs of affection with agreement:

> CHRISTINE Ja... Du denkst doch manchmal an mich.

[32] Ibid., 234.
[33] *Liebelei,* 225.

FRITZ Ziemlich häufig, mein Kind...

CHRISTINE Nicht so oft, wie ich an dich. Ich denke immer an dich... den ganzen Tag... und froh kann ich doch nur sein, wenn ich dich seh'![34]

Schnitzler uses contradiction ("Du bist *aber*...", "*Nicht so oft* wie...", emphasis added) to evoke rejection, as every display of affection is met with a disagreement.

Fritz actually draws attention to Christine's exaggerated melodrama when he encourages her to refrain from using "big words" and to instead acknowledge themselves as actual "human beings":

FRITZ *unterbricht* Kind, ich bitt' dich... so was sag lieber nicht... die großen Worte, die hab' ich nicht gern. Von der Ewigkeit reden wir nicht...

CHRISTINE *traurig lächelnd* Hab keine Angst, Fritz... ich weiß ja, daß es nicht für immer ist...

FRITZ Du verstehst mich falsch, Kind. Es ist ja möglich, *Lachend* daß wir einmal überhaupt nicht ohne einander leben können, aber wissen können wir's ja nicht, nicht wahr? Wir sind ja nur Menschen.[35]

With this conversation Schnitzler masterfully unveils the complexity of this relationship. When Fritz carefully introduces the possibility that they may (or may not) end up together, her forceful demand for a symbiotic togetherness exposes her reluctance to establish an actual relationship. Fritz asking her to refrain from "große Worte" and to accept that they are both human beings actually reads as a considerate and thoughtful attempt to accept each other's finitude. His sudden burst of laughter, on the other hand, carries a slight sense of unease, ridiculing the discussion even more and suggesting a degree of sympathy for Christine. After all, the audience has been made aware of Fritz's intentions – to use Christine as "Erholung" and an escape from

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

his dangerous affair – in the previous scene and they remain dubious.[36] Christine's sudden display of awareness of Fritz's intentions adds another layer of unease; though she is convinced that there is no chance for a meaningful lasting relationship between Fritz and herself, she nonetheless chooses to dedicate her life to him.

With her desire for self-sacrifice and her reluctance to establish a "meaningful" relationship, Christine becomes an exemplary case study of Toril Moi's and Stanley Cavell's version of the skeptic. When Fritz draws attention to the impossibility of absolute knowledge ("aber wissen können wir's ja nicht") and encourages Christine to accept each other's finitude as human beings, his lines could have almost been written as the meta-theatrical voice of Toril Moi's argument. Though Fritz actually raises the possibility of a connection as human beings ("Es ist ja möglich…."), Christine rejects it for its lack of absolute certainty. Instead, she engages in self–theatricalisation reverting to the familiar, outdated image of female self-sacrifice.[37]

Christine's reluctance to *be seen* comes out even more strongly, once Fritz displays more interest in her. Immediately after the interruption by "der Herr" in act 1, during which Fritz has learned that he will most likely die in a duel, he suddenly begins to show a surprising interest in Christine's life. But when he asks her to *reveal* herself, she answers with an air of resignation:

> FRITZ Und *noch* eins möcht' ich: Daß du mir einmal viel von dir erzählst... recht viel... ich weiß eigentlich so wenig von dir.
>
> CHRISTINE Ist wenig zu erzählen. – Ich hab' auch keine Geheimnisse – wie wer anderer...[38]

When Fritz attempts to get to know Christine, she immediately directs the attention back to Fritz. By – albeit correctly – suggesting he is hiding something from her, she

[36] Ibid., 219.
[37] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 79 and 186.
[38] *Liebelei,* 236-237.

places all the responsibility of "getting to know each other" on his shoulders. While she does not display any willingness to talk about herself, she constantly probes him to reveal something about himself:

> CHRISTINE Nein, es ist gar nicht schön, daß du mir nie was von dir erzählst... Schau, mich interessiert ja alles, was dich angeht, ach ja... alles – ich möcht' mehr von dir haben als die eine Stunde am Abend, die wir manchmal beisammen sind.

Christine's insistence on knowing absolutely *everything* about Fritz is ironic in light of the fact that she is so reluctant to tell him anything about herself. In fact, these lines show exactly how she regards togetherness: Getting information about Fritz's life allows her to keep up the fantasy about him when they are not together.

Interestingly, the information she most seems to be interested in, is not about Fritz's secret love life but his daily routine, as demonstrated in this scene of act 2:

> CHRISTINE Du selbst bist schuld daran. Weil du immer Geheimnisse vor mir hast!... Weil du mir gar nichts von dir erzählst. – Was tust du so den ganzen Tag?
>
> FRITZ Aber Schatz, das ist ja sehr einfach. Ich geh' in Vorlesungen – zuweilen – dann geh' ich ins Kaffeehaus... dann les' ich... manchmal spiel' ich auch Klavier – dann plauder' ich mit dem oder jenem – dann mach' ich Besuche... das ist doch alles ganz belanglos. Es ist ja langweilig, davon zu reden. – Jetzt muß ich übrigens gehn, Kind...[39]

Through this quick glimpse into Fritz's daily routine – again a well-known Viennese lifestyle, strikingly similar to the routine of Georg von Wergenthin in Schnitzler's novel *Der Weg ins Freie*[40] – the audience gains an insight into what "getting to know" Fritz might look like. Following him around would enable us to read "ein Kapitel der Biographie," as Wittgenstein suggested in his thought experiment of watching someone perform an "alltägliche Tätigkeit" in a theatre. Though both Christine and

[39] *Liebelei,* 251.
[40] Arthur Schnitzler, *Der Weg ins Freie*, vol. 1 of *Die Erzählenden Schriften*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1961).

the audience gain a quick insight to Fritz's space, he quickly dismisses it as "boring" and leaves. Here, Fritz reveals his own disconnection with the everyday, as it shows he cannot accept the simplicity of what he does every day, but requires something more, some extraordinary drama that goes beyond the everyday, the drama of the dark evening hours. Schnitzler thus shows the audience the two-fold complexity of this relationship, of two people not able to engage with the simplicity of getting to know each other by daring to see the other and exposing themselves in their "alltägliche Tätigkeit."

But does all this mean that an audience should sympathise less with Christine, or even hold her responsible for her actions and her tragic demise? Perhaps the very question is misplaced, as we can still regard Christine's story as an unhappy one while not necessarily casting her as a victim of a tragic fate. Instead, we can see how Christine finds herself reverting to an anachronistic brand of idealism for reasons that may stem from her social or her family situation.[41] As Yates suggests, her lower social status and her role as a *Vorstadtmädel* in fin-de-siècle Vienna certainly play a significant role in the impossibility of this relationship, but, as Stern confirms, Schnitzler integrates a complex individual psychology into this socio-cultural commentary.[42]

Schnitzler thus shows the multifaceted complexity of people trying to affirm their existence, all the while taking into account all the intersecting factors at play, such as social background, gender roles, and family situation. As delusional as Christine might seen, Schnitzler does suggest she is relatively clear-eyed about the

[41] Given Schnitzler's psychoanalytic influences, Christine's inability to leave her father's place could certainly open up much more room for interpretation, especially since the theme also repeatedly appears in Ibsen for characters such as Nora, Rebekka or Hedda. However, this theme would move the discussion into a different direction.
[42] Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theatre*, 128; Stern, ed., *Liebelei, Leutnant Gustl, Die letzten Masken*, 15

reality of her situation. When she tells Fritz that things are not forever, she seems to be clear about their different social status and realistic about the situation and Fritz's intentions towards her. The audience cannot cast her off as completely delusional; we can relate to her character, which is as interesting as it is infuriating.

III. Christine's lack of voice

In his 1913 work *Arthur Schnitzler als Psycholog*, Theodor Reik briefly mentions the character of Christine in his psychoanalytic reading of Schnitzler's characters.[43] In a footnote to his reading of Anna Rosner in *Der Weg ins Freie,* Reik mentions Christine's lack of voice as a recurring feature of Schnitzler's female characters.[44] Given the psychoanalytical nature of his reading, Reik inevitably raises the subject of sexual repression, but he also shows how Christine's lack of voice is a constant theme throughout the play. Like Anna, she sings, but her voice does not reach "beyond the room," as Weiring explains to Katharina Binder: "Fürs Zimmer reicht die Stimme ja aus, […]."[45] And when Christine herself is encouraged to sing by Mizi and Fritz, she explains, "aber – ich hab' nicht viel Stimme."[46]

These repeated references to Christine's lack of voice indicate her inability to affirm herself outside of her own space. When Nora leaves Helmer in *A Doll's House*, she realises that she needs to learn how to be herself, the way she was not able to in her father's space or as Helmer's wife. Christine's voice not reaching beyond her own domestic space chimes with this idea of her being trapped in the social norms

[43] Theodor Reik, *Arthur Schnitzler als Psycholog* (Minden, J.C.C. Bruns, 1913), 168, accessed 12 April 2016, https://archive.org/details/Reik_1913_Schnitzler
[44] Ibid.
[45] *Liebelei,* 243.
[46] Ibid., 228.

available to her, trapped in the house with her – albeit very loving and liberal – father. In act 1, when Fritz feels a sudden urge to get to know Christine, she gives him a frustratingly banal reason why this is not possible, claiming that there is simply not much to tell ("Gibts nicht viel zu erzählen."). His immediate response: "Du hast noch keinen lieb gehabt?" implies that the only story worth telling is one of past romantic encounters, and by that standard Christine indeed cannot be *seen*. Christine's own father takes a similar line when he claims that love affairs become memories, and memories are worth living for. Where Katherina urges Christine to marry an honest man and settle for a married life, he argues for the value of memories: "die Erinnerungen sind doch das Beste, was Sie von Ihrem Leben haben."[47] He continues to explain why without memories, Christine would not have much to live, and he does not want her to end up like his own sister who he kept too overprotected:

> WEIRING Na, und was bleibt denn übrig – wenn sie – nicht einmal was zum Erinnern hat –? Wenn das ganze Leben nur so vorbeigegangen ist *Sehr einfach, nicht pathetisch* ein Tag wie der andere, ohne Glück und ohne Liebe – dann ist's vielleicht besser?[48]

The subtext to these scenes is that, in order to tell Fritz something about herself, for him to get to know her, Christine needs to present some form of experience, a story, of a romantic encounter. Accordingly, since she is not able to do that, she does not have much to share, so they cannot establish a connection. This paradoxical narrative of Christine needing a history of romantic encounters in order to live a fulfilled life or genuinely connect with someone becomes part of her tragic story, particularly given the time and the social situation she finds herself in. Schnitzler is able to leave the audience with a sense of resignation that there simply cannot be a connection between these characters, yet he simultaneously raises the question of how to create a self, a

[47] Ibid., 244.
[48] Ibid.

home, to present a personal narrative. What is Christine's life lacking? What would she (and therefore, anyone) need to do before she can develop her own person? And if Christine does not have such a story to tell, can she really not be loved or establish a connection?

While the men in her life are effectively telling Christine that she has no "life story," the moment during which she enquires about Fritz's everyday offers the audience an insight into what truly "getting to know" someone might look like: to observe someone in their "alltägliche Tätigkeit" and thereby "ein Kapitel der Biographie mit eigenen Augen sehen." In other words, recognise them as they really are.

The first (and last) moment when Christine appears to have found her voice is in the final scene, when she finds out about Fritz's death. Besides the exaggerated drama of her final despairing monologue, she does seem to have also gained some ability to express herself, which Theodor acknowledges, saying: "Ich hab' das nicht geahnt."[49] Christine leaves her father and goes off her own but cannot find a way out other than committing suicide. Schnitzler raises the same questions we found in Ibsen in a way that is reminiscent of Moi's reading of Rebekka in *Rosmersholm*. Why do these characters not achieve a connection with the everyday? Is death the only way out? As Dieter Martin and Christa Melchinger point out, Christine's repeatedly asking "Was bin denn ich?" in this last scene becomes an existential question, arguably providing meta-commentary on Christine's inability to affirm herself in life.[50]

[49] Ibid., 263.
[50] Dieter Martin, "'Liebelei': Das Scheitern des arrangierten Lebens," in *Arthur Schnitzler: Dramen und Erzählunge*n, ed. Hee-Ju Kim and Günter Saße (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2007), 51; Melchinger, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit im dramatischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, 38.

Against the background of a typically Viennese encounter between a girl from the suburbs and a wealthy gentleman looking for "Erholung" from a strenuous affair, *Liebelei* can be read as socio-cultural commentary. Yet Schnitzler also embeds fundamental questions about how to connect in this commentary, and, by constantly referencing voice and the theme of creating a personal narrative to share, he raises a topic that seems to have struck a chord beyond Vienna's Bildungsbürgertum circles.[51]

IV. Fritz's non-everyday everyday

Schnitzler achieves a degree of sympathy for Christine not only through the complexity of her character and the way her moments of clarity are interspersed with moments of naiveté, but also through his portrayal of Fritz. Though Fritz's voice at times may function as an important antithesis to Christine's melodrama, Fritz is by no means "in touch with the everyday" either. Contrasted with the down-to-earth Theodor, who calls an affair an affair and simply enjoys it, Fritz is often as self-absorbed as Gregers Werle with his delusional demands for truth in *The Wild Duck*. Fritz is attracted to danger, addicted to experiencing dramatic love stories, and apt to sink into narcissistic self-contemplation. As Theodor points out, Fritz cannot acknowledge women as human beings, but needs to see them as either angels or demons, hence confirming his delusional idealism and his disconnection with the everyday:

> THEODOR Schau Fritz, wenn du eines Tages »jenes Weib« nicht mehr anbetest, da wirst du dich wundern, wie sympathisch sie dir sein wird. Da wirst du erst drauf kommen, daß sie gar nichts Dämonisches an sich hat, sondern daß sie ein

[51] Christa Melchinger points out how this play was the first to reach beyond Vienna. Melchinger, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit im dramatischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, 25.

> sehr liebes Frauerl ist, mit dem man sich sehr gut amüsieren kann, wie mit allen Weibern, die jung und hübsch sind und ein bißchen Temperament haben.[52]

While, as Melchinger and others suggest, Theodor exhibits a certain Viennese laissez-faire of not taking anything seriously, he does provide the voice of clarity against Fritz's sentimental overindulgence.[53] As their conversation continues, Fritz reveals himself to be someone who enjoys *playing* that he is caring and serious more than actually taking the women around him seriously:

> THEODOR Die Weiber sind ja so glücklich in ihrer gesunden Menschlichkeit – was zwingt uns denn, sie um jeden Preis zu Dämonen oder zu Engeln zu machen?
>
> FRITZ Sie ist wirklich ein Schatz. So anhänglich, so lieb. Manchmal scheint mir fast, zu lieb für mich.
>
> THEODOR Du bist unverbesserlich; scheint es. Wenn du die Absicht hast, auch *die* Sache wieder ernst zu nehmen –[54]

Theodor's last comment points out how Fritz does not seem to be able to see the women around him as "mere" human beings but must see them as part of a more melodramatic story, thereby exposing Fritz to be a skeptic too. "Taking something seriously" emerges as in fact a strategy of avoidance. Theodor, on the other hand, appears as the voice of reason, even though his extremely non-committal attitude recognisably reflects the problematic careless lifestyle of a Viennese bourgeois gentleman.[55]

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[52] *Liebelei*, 217.
[53] Melchinger, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit im dramatischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, 29.
[54] *Liebelei,* 219.
[55] Rania el Wardy, *Liebe spielen - spielend lieben. Arthur Schnitzler und seine Verwandlung der Liebe zum Spiel* (Marburg: Tectum, 2008), 69.

Fritz's narcissistic sentimentality has been noted and classified as a typical personality trait of someone afflicted with "decadence" and "melancholy."[56] Comparing Fritz to the titular character in Schnitzler's *Anatol*, Melchinger writes:

> Die ständige Bereitschaft, die eigene Melancholie als einen die Banalität der Wirklichkeit überspielenden Reiz zu genießen, gehört zu diesem Typ wie die Melancholie selbst.[57]

Rania El Wardy claims that Fritz's character displays some sort of addiction to intense feelings without wanting to accept the actual commitment that such feelings require:

> Die Liebe, wonach Fritz sucht, ist die Liebe, die seine gefühlshaften Bedürfnisse befriedigt unter Berücksichtigung dessen, dass dies nicht zur Bindung führt.[58]

Fritz's addiction to drama strongly chimes with Moi's analysis of characters in *The Wild Duck*: Gregers but also Hjalmar Ekdal. Fritz fits into the modern-drama character type who engages in a form of self-indulgence that cannot simply be cast off as villainy or carelessness. This self-indulgence instead is a key trait of a complex character who somehow cannot manage to find a way to genuinely connect with another person. His "boring" everyday as a half-hearted student wandering around between coffee houses and theatres has also been interpreted as a sign of his inability to live a meaningful life.[59] Fritz lives the classic lifestyle of fin-de-siècle Vienna, and this account of his everyday can be read as Schnitzler's socio-cultural commentary. Nonetheless, Fritz's unwillingness to talk about it does hint at his inability to engage with the everyday.

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[56] El Wardy, *Liebe spielen - spielend lieben*, 66-69; Melchinger, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit im dramatischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, 29.
[57] Melchinger, *Illusion und Wirklichkeit im dramatischen Werk Arthur Schnitzlers*, 29.
[58] El Wardy, *Liebe spielen - spielend lieben,* 67.
[59] Ibid., 66.

Schnitzler highlights the complexity of this character from the moment Fritz finds out about the duel. In light of his imminent fate, he desperately seeks to connect with Christine, which is subtly portrayed in act 2. In what appears to be an impulsive burst of desire, he decides to show up at her apartment unannounced:

> FRITZ Jetzt bin ich im Garten gewesen und hab' dich nicht gefunden – und hab' wieder nach Haus gehen wollen. Aber plötzlich hat mich eine solche Sehnsucht gepackt, eine solche Sehnsucht nach diesem lieben süßen Gesichtel...
>
> CHRISTINE *glücklich* Is' wahr?
>
> FRITZ Und dann hab' ich auch plötzlich eine so unbeschreibliche Lust bekommen zu sehen, wo du eigentlich wohnst – ja im Ernst – ich hab' das einmal sehen *müssen* – und da hab' ich's nicht ausgehalten und bin da herauf... es ist dir also nicht unangenehm?[60]

Visibly overwhelmed by his sudden burst of interest – as noted in the stage directions – Christine struggles to respond. As their quiet encounter occurs, Fritz slowly gets to know Christine's space but towards the end launches into a dramatic outburst, which he soon retreats from:

> FRITZ Komm daher, zu mir *Sie ist bei ihm* Du weißt ja doch nur eins, wie ich – daß du mich in *diesem* Augenblicke liebst ... *Wie sie reden will* Sprich nicht von Ewigkeit. *Mehr für sich* Es gibt ja vielleicht Augenblicke, die einen Duft von Ewigkeit um sich sprühen. – ... Das ist die einzige, die wir verstehen können, die einzige, die uns gehört ... *Er küßt sie. – Pause. – Er steht auf. – Ausbrechend* O, wie schön ist es bei dir, wie schön! ... *Er steht beim Fenster* So weltfern ist man da, mitten unter den vielen Häusern ... so einsam komm' ich mir vor, so mit dir allein ... *Leise* so geborgen…[61]

This sequence has elicited conflicting critical responses. Oskar Seidlin sees it as Fritz's ultimate willingness to get to know Christine and connect with her.[62] Yet this is problematic, as his desire to finally connect with her is more of a sign of his

[60] *Liebelei,* 249.
[61] Ibid., 252.
[62] Seidlin, "Arthur Schnitzlers 'Liebelei' Zum hundertsten Geburtstag des Dichters am 15. Mai 1962," 252.

desperate need for a saviour as he faces his imminent fate. This perspective is confirmed by the moment in act 1, when Fritz displays a sudden interest in Christine, directly after finding out about the duel. Though he starts to tell Christine about his daily routine during this scene, he soon seeks to escape the situation. This leads Yates, by contrast, to challenge that Fritz is beginning to commit to Christine, and to argue instead that his actions should be regarded as "an enjoyment of the moment – an aesthetic experience, not a moral commitment."[63] Nonetheless, Fritz's contradictory actions expose his need for "Geborgenheit," which, despite the inherent narcissism, still renders him human.

Another aspect that confuses audiences and thereby also makes Fritz a more complex character, and arguably easier to relate to, is his dubious need for Christine when she is not there, which contradicts his looking at her as sheer "Erholung." When Mizi enters Fritz's flat in act 1, he immediately asks for Christine:

> *THEODOR, FRITZ, MIZI tritt ein, trägt ein Paket in der Hand.*
>
> FRITZ Und wo ist denn die Christin'? –[64]

This motif repeats itself when Fritz interrupts the conversation between Mizi and Theodor:

> FRITZ Ja, aber sagen Sie, warum ist denn die Christin' nicht gleich mitgekommen? –[65]

When the doorbell finally rings, the stage direction states that Fritz's rushes outside to greet her:

> *Es klingelt.*
>
> MIZI Das ist die Christin'.
>
> FRITZ *eilt hinaus*[66]

[63] Yates, *Schnitzler, Hofmannsthal, and the Austrian Theatre*, 130.
[64] *Liebelei,* 220.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., 223.

Schnitzler makes the character of Fritz a combination of two extremes: seemingly more sensitive and open to love than Theodor, but also completely absorbed in his own dramatic world. The audience recognises his longing to connect with Christine, but also that this longing is ultimately not followed through. Thereby, Schnitzler explores the multi-layered and confusing dynamics that take place when people encounter each other.

In act 2, Fritz comes to Christine knowing he will likely be facing his death. His almost nostalgic and desperate attempt to grasp an ordinary sort of everyday and to escape the inevitable makes his entering Christine's space not so much an attempt to connect with her, but to establish a kind of normality while internally disconnecting. Schnitzler refuses to cast judgment on either character, placing no blame on either one. Instead, he simply demonstrates people's inability to connect with the everyday in its multi-faceted, complex, but above all, very human form.

V. At home: the domestic as a place to encounter the other

As *Liebelei* takes place in the homes of Fritz and Christine, it echoes the domestic setting of Ibsen's realist plays. Act 1 takes place in Fritz's room, and acts 2 and 3 are set in Christine's space. In contrast to Ibsen's plays, where the domestic setting represents the central space of marriage and family life, however, Schnitzler uses the two spaces differently, and I will argue that Schnitzler uses these spaces to highlight the encounter between the two characters and portray the difficulty in establishing a connection between them.

Fritz and Christine both enter the other's home as a guest, thereby getting to know the other person through their personal space. When Fritz enters Christine's

room in act 2, he repeatedly emphasises wanting to see how she lives ("Ich hab' das einmal sehen *müssen*.") and praises her home for its simplicity:

> FRITZ Also da –? *Sieht sich im Zimmer um* Das also ist dein Zimmer? Sehr hübsch...
> CHRISTINE Du siehst ja gar nichts. *Will den Schirm von der Lampe nehmen.*
> FRITZ Nein, laß nur, das blendet mich, ist besser so... Also da? Das ist das Fenster, von dem du mir erzählt hast, an dem du immer arbeitest, was? – Und die schöne Aussicht! *Lächelnd* Über wieviel Dächer man da sieht...[67]

Fritz is visibly enchanted by the escape that this space provides, far across Vienna's rooftops. Finally able to experience the place for himself and see the window she has told him about, Fritz can piece together the things Christine has told him about her day-to-day life in act 1, namely that she regularly performs household chores and transcribes musical scores.[68] Even though the shadow of his imminent duel lurks over this intimate encounter, this scene offers a glimpse into his desire to connect with and get to know her.

Another interesting moment occurs when Christine prepares to remove the lampshade, and, as with Ibsen's naturalistic staging of Gina's taking off the lampshade in *The Wild Duck*, there is a deeper significance to Christine's attempt. When Christine suggests she is simply trying to make sure he can see better, Fritz says it would dazzle him. It seems that he would prefer to maintain the fantasy of this temporary escape and not actually *see* her in the sense of establishing a genuine relationship. This interpretation is supported by the slightly ironic scene when Fritz shines a light on Christine's pictures:

> FRITZ Ah, die möcht' ich mir ansehn. *Er nimmt die Lampe und beleuchtet die Bilder.*
> CHRISTINE ... Abschied – und Heimkehr!
> FRITZ Richtig – Abschied und Heimkehr!
> CHRISTINE Ich weiß schon, daß die Bilder nicht schön sind. – Beim Vater drin hängt eins, das ist viel besser.

[67] Ibid., 249.
[68] Ibid., 228.

FRITZ Was ist das für ein Bild?
CHRISTINE Das ist ein Mädel, die schaut zum Fenster hinaus, und draußen, weißt, ist der Winter – und das heißt »Verlassen«. –[69]

When Fritz takes the lamp into his hand, he literally highlights the words "Abschied," "Heimkehr," and finally "Verlassen," which makes for a poignant ironic meta-theatrical commentary. These hints are so obvious that they mock the tragedy that is about to develop, ridiculing the melodrama inherent to these encounters. When Fritz actually chooses to *see*, Schnitzler makes him highlight the melodrama.

People's homes serve an entryway to their private space, to themselves. And in a sense, *how* they encounter each other's space can serve as a mirror for how they encounter each other. This couple's mutual visits to each other's spaces poignantly reflect their inability to establish a true connection. Introducing the settings at the beginning of each act, Schnitzler directly relates Fritz's and Christine's homes to their personalities:

Act 1: *Zimmer Fritzens. Elegant und behaglich.*
Act 2: *Zimmer Christinens. Bescheiden und nett.*[70]

The stage directions function simultaneously as characterisations of Fritz and Christine and thus pose an interesting challenge for a theatre director. Instead of minutely detailing these domestic settings, Schnitzler prioritises the mood and the atmosphere these characters' personal spaces should evoke. The stage directions not only highlight their differences in social standing, but also include specifically personal attributes.

Schnitzler uses the change to Christine's room to decisively break with the heightened atmosphere of act 1. Christine's modest, pleasant home sets the stage for the quiet second act. As Schnitzler shifts from Fritz's point of view at the beginning

[69] Ibid., 250.
[70] *Liebelei,* 216 and 240.

of act 1 to Christine's, he leads the audience through their relationship, not only offering glimpses into the characters' worlds, but also showing their attempts to enter each other's worlds – and their difficulty in doing so.

VI. Domesticated non-commitment: Mizi and Theodor's alternative model for connecting with the everyday

From the beginning of the play, the characters of Theodor and Mizi provide a contrast to Christine and Fritz, enjoying a fleeting, temporary relationship. With her a girl from the lower social classes and him a wealthy gentleman, Mizi and Theodor's relationship is symptomatic of the faster-moving lifestyles of fin-de-siècle Vienna, but their mutual honesty and ability to create a home within this temporary state presents the audience with an alternative model of what such a relationship can look like. As Oskar Seidlin notices: "Freilich, es gibt andere, die Mizis und Theodors, die sich in der Vergänglichkeit häuslich und bequem einzurichten verstehen."[71] Since Theodor and Mizi both survive at the end of the play, Schnitzler demonstrates that their connection with the everyday represents a more viable option when trying to survive in the fin-de-siècle world of impossible relationships.

These two characters provide a down-to-earth contrast to the grand narratives of Christine and Fritz, and their mutual connection comes out through their interaction on stage. In act 1, when Christine enters Fritz's flat, launching into her melodramatic mode while he insists on small talk, Mizi and Theodor are creating a festive setting in the background. Their breezy nonchalance stands in contrast to the loaded conversation between Christine and Fritz:

[71] Seidlin, "Arthur Schnitzlers 'Liebelei' Zum hundertsten Geburtstag des Dichters am 15. Mai 1962," 252.

Er und Mizi zünden die Lichter an; die Kerzen in den zwei Armleuchtern auf dem Trumeau, eine Kerze auf dem Schreibtisch, dann zwei Kerzen auf der Kredenz.
Unterdessen sprechen Fritz und Christine miteinander.[72]

Mizi and Theodor are occupied with a very concrete everyday activity on stage, moving around and lighting the stage (an action Mizi completes on their exit when she extinguishes the lights).[73] As already demonstrated in relation to Ibsen's use of the domestic setting, lighting meta-theatrically enhances the sense of reality by visibly affecting the atmosphere on stage. And in this particular scene, the lighting draws attention to the inherent theatricality of the conversation between Christine and Fritz.

Throughout act 1, Theodor and Mizi consistently provide the entertainment and set up the space. Theodor is the *Festarrangeur*,[74] decorating the space to make it more festive and performing little sketches such as the "English clown".[75] Mizi brings the snacks and persistently lightens the mood by encouraging Fritz to play music or suggesting they should drink "Bruderschaft."[76] Whether they are setting up the coffee or drinking, Theodor and Mizi's interaction is constantly accompanied by drinks or food (like the "Mokkacremetorte").[77] It enhances the play's sense of indulgence, but also physically situates their interaction. As I noted for the scenes in *Hedda Gabler* or *Ghosts* – and the same applies to *The Wild Duck* – having food and drinks on stage enhances the sense of there being something *real*, a concreteness that evokes a sensual experience for the audience.

Theodor and Mizi display their connection through their teamwork. Like Gina in *The Wild Duck*, Theodor and Mizi engage in "housework" and evoke a concrete sensual experience of physical consumption, but they also simultaneously display

[72] Ibid., 224.
[73] Ibid., 224 and 239.
[74] Ibid., 223 and 225.
[75] Ibid., 226.
[76] Ibid., 221, 230 and 231.
[77] Ibid., 220.

their light-hearted and down-to-earth relationship, as the following scene illustrates. When Mizi enters Fritz's apartment she carries a package with all the evening's snacks, and the audience finds out what's in the package when Mizi reveals she also brought a mocha-cream cake:

> MIZI Ich hab noch was gekauft, was du nicht aufgeschrieben hast, Dori.
> THEODOR *mißtrauisch* Was denn?
> MIZI Eine Mokkacremetorte.
> THEODOR Naschkatz'![78]

As Mizi admits to her guilty pleasure of bringing the cake, the audience gets a sense of the playful relationship between Mizi and Theodor. Unlike Christine, Mizi is introduced as a character who knows how to assert herself and follow her own desire and love for indulgence. She puts Theodor in his place when he – though fully aware of the temporary nature of the relationship – dreams of the future:

> THEODOR Im August hab' ich sowieso Waffenübung.
> MIZI Gott, bis zum August –
> THEODOR Ja, richtig – so lange währt die ewige Liebe nicht.[79]

Theodor does enjoy the illusion of something deeper, longer, or more meaningful but light-heartedly accepts Mizi's reminder. When Mizi expresses her preference for men in uniform, he ironically claims: "Ich will um meiner selbst geliebt werden."[80] The statement may be ironic but there is a truth to it: Theodor and Mizi recognise each other as they really are.

With this sense of playfulness, Mizi and Theodor offer an alternative model of dealing with the reality of their difference in class. Even though their relationship has critically mostly been regarded as exemplary of the carefree, non-committal world of

[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid., 222.
[80] Ibid.

superficial relationships in fin-de-siècle Vienna,[81] we have seen that, if we pay attention to the details of Schnitzler's stagecraft, it actually represents an important contrast to Fritz and Christine; their close connection with the everyday indicates, by its very contrast, that Fritz and Christine's tragedy was not inevitable, but a result of their inability to establish a genuine connection.

VI. Revealing and concealing in Schnitzler's *Liebelei* via the theatre offstage

While *Liebelei* takes place in the characters' homes, Viennese city life maintains an important offstage presence throughout the play. What is more, the play features another important offstage space: the theatre, which not only helps evoke a sense of Viennese city life but also becomes a relevant meta-theatrical commentary. The opening scene of the play refers back to a trip to the theatre the previous day, a visit during which all the decisive relationship dynamics were set in motion. Mizi and Christine observed Fritz, who in turn observed the "lady in black."[82] Through this offstage scene, in which all the characters spy on each other, the audience is introduced to a world of secrets. Schnitzler thus establishes early on that this is a play where hiding from, and spying on, others represent integral elements of the story. These dynamics continue throughout, not just as Fritz continues to hide his secret from Christine until the end; eavesdropping and spying are present all the way through. When the evening is interrupted by "der Herr" in act 1, the party hides in the room next door, and the dynamics of hiding, and of hearing or not hearing, infiltrate

[81] Seidlin, "Arthur Schnitzlers 'Liebelei' Zum hundertsten Geburtstag des Dichters am 15. Mai 1962," 250; El Wardy, *Liebe spielen - spielend lieben*, 71-72
[82] *Liebelei,* 222.

the atmosphere of the play.[83] This is established at the very start, when Fritz tells Theodor the story about how the lady in black and he himself may or may not have been observed by a man standing outside the window: "Sie sieht hier durch den Ritz des Vorhanges irgendeinen Menschen, der dort an der Straßenecke steht, und glaubt […]."[84] Schnitzler is thus able to embed the dynamics of concealment and revelation into his play and these elements become a key theme, both with regards to concrete secrets and to the interpersonal dynamic on stage.

Schnitzler also achieves a meta-theatrical commentary on the dynamics of concealment by relating it to the theatre setting in which this story is set. While the play itself takes place in the domestic spaces of the characters, the theatre becomes a significant offstage space. Schnitzler not only includes elements of self-referential performance and theatricality in his stage presentation, but the entire play moves between people's homes onstage and the theatre offstage. In the first act, the characters discuss their theatre trip the day before, and Christine arrives late to the gathering at Fritz's place because she accompanied her father to his workplace, the Josefstädter Theater.[85] In act 2, Katharina visits the Weiring household to ask for theatre tickets, which her daughter Lina picks up at the beginning of act 3.[86] Mizi suggests that Christine's voice should be heard in a theatre ("Wenn ich so viel Stimme hätte wie du, wär' ich längst beim Theater."[87]), and Weiring claims that her voice could not gain her more than a spot in the theatre's chorus.[88]

The theatre also functions as a forum for establishing the differences in social class between Christine and Fritz. Mizi and Christine sit in the "Galerie" while Fritz

[83] Ibid., 232 and 234.
[84] Ibid., 218.
[85] Ibid., 220-221.
[86] Ibid., 240 and 255.
[87] Ibid., 228.
[88] Ibid., 243.

sits in the "Loge."[89] Moreover, as Yates suggests, when Schnitzler mentions Weiring's work at the Theater in der Josefstadt it is intended as a distinct sign of his lower social status.[90] Yet Schnitzler integrates this social commentary into the dynamics of spying and concealment he portrays: since Mizi and Christine sit in the gallery above the box, they are able to observe the Viennese upper class and thus spy on Fritz.[91] Furthermore, Schnitzler uses the theatre as part of the metaphor for Christine's voice not reaching beyond her own space or that of the chorus. As she cannot assert herself as an individual in the public space of the theatre, she cannot be *heard* in the space that allows people, according to Wittgenstein, to be seen as they really are.

In all of Schnitzler's work from the fin-de-siècle – both prose and drama – the theatre, and cultural venues in general, often represent a key setting where decisive plot points take place.[92] This may have partly to do with the prominence of theatre for the Viennese Bildungsbürgertum, from Karl Kraus to Ludwig Wittgenstein, for whom the theatre represents an important vehicle for thought and cultural understanding. And, as pictured on Gustav Klimt's painting "Das alte Burgtheater" from 1888, the theatre was a central gathering spot that lent itself to private gatherings and public spying between galleries. In *Liebelei*, these elements come together most powerfully, as the theatre becomes an offstage space highlighting the interpersonal dynamics on stage and also reminding the audience that they too are observers and spies. Dieter Martin describes the effect of *Liebelei* following the classic naturalistic model of the "fourth wall" as an act of witnessing:

[89] Ibid., 222.
[90] Yates, *Theatre in Vienna*, 159.
[91] *Liebelei*, 222.
[92] For instance, the concert hall in *Leutnant Gustl* or the art gallery in *Die Frau mit dem Dolche.*

> Streng befolgt ist die im Naturalismus perfektionierte Doktrin der "Vierten Wand," die den Zuschauer in Privatsphären blicken last und zum Zeugen eines nicht an ihn adressierten Geschehens macht.[93]

Recognising this naturalistic stage device as enabling the audience to witness, and spy into, a private space, Martin would agree that Schnitzler's choice of the "outdated" naturalism served a purpose, highlighting a particular kind of eavesdropping. But Schnitzler brings this effect to another level, as the theme appears on stage in a variety of forms, revealing the complex dynamics of human intimacy in all its multi-faceted splendor.

As noted in the previous chapter, Ibsen's naturalistic staging functioned as an illustration of the interpersonal dynamics on stage, but also created a meta-theatrical commentary on the relationship between audience and performer through constant references to theatricality on stage. Around a decade later, Schnitzler uses dramatic devices astonishingly reminiscent of Wittgenstein's thought experiment, creating a more concrete version of Wittgenstein's "everyday theatre." In Wittgenstein's model, we are to imagine a theatre, in which we observe someone in their own space. But *Liebelei* does not just allows us to observe people in their own space and be reminded of the role this space occupies, the play further creates the strong presence of an external public theatre world, thus reminding us that we are an audience watching people in their intimate space and occupying an intimate space with other audience members watching us.

[93] Martin, "'Liebelei': Das Scheitern des arrangierten Lebens," 49.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to demonstrate how Schnitzler's *Liebelei* tackles the fundamental question of how to establish a connection with the everyday. I argued that, even though this play presents specific socio-cultural commentary on a specific society, it nonetheless – or perhaps especially – also addresses the typically modern difficulties of how people can establish meaningful relationships. Following Toril Moi's model of using the everyday in an analysis of drama, and focusing in particular on how dynamics of concealment and revelation manifest themselves in dialogue and stage presentation, I studied at the same themes I noted in Ibsen's social dramas. Though this chapter looks at an entirely different playwright, I hope to have shown that *Liebelei* is another example of modern theatre addressing the challenges of the modernising world. This explains how this play in particular may have mattered just as much to Berlin's avant-garde as Ibsen's classics. In the course of my argument, I have revealed the striking thematic parallels between this culture of theatre making and the plays that made intimacy and interpersonal connection key themes of modern theatre.

As this chapter demonstrates, Schnitzler's *Liebelei* – a play that was successful at both the Viennese Burgtheater and Max Reinhardt's Kammerspiele – addresses the dynamics of human intimacy on a variety of levels. To begin with, the play creates a sense of intimacy by being set in the character's own living spaces. And by making characters encounter each other through their living spaces, Schnitzler showed just how tricky that can be. To gain a more differentiated understanding of Christine and Fritz's "skepticism," I conducted a close reading of their conversational patterns based on Moi and Cavell's parameters of being in touch with the everyday. Looking at Christine and Fritz's different perspectives reveals that these characters exhibit

exactly those habits and attitudes – such as an inclination to melodrama and female self-sacrifice, a non-acceptance of human finitude, and difficulty in establishing a voice – that indicate a disconnection with the everyday.

I showed how Schnitzler's depiction of the characters' domestic spaces already indicates the complexity of their encounter, as it reveals their complex desire to both hide from, and get to know, each other. To do this, Schnitzler uses his domestic setting in a variety of ways. Mizi and Theodor use a domestic space – which is not even their own – to create a temporary home using the tools available to them, emphasising that it is not the space itself so much as the practices undertaken in the space that are of primary importance. Their arrangement of the stage, through lighting the room and arranging food and drinks, performatively establishes a concrete sense of homeliness. Their characters thus serve as a pointed alternative to Christine and Fritz; though they do not seem to have what people might conventionally consider a deep and meaningful relationship, they are nonetheless able to form a connection which seems much more sustainable than Christine and Fritz's, and also, through the irony, a more authentic form of mutual acknowledgment.

In the final section, I then returned to the question I posed initially, which is does *Liebelei* transcend the specific socio-cultural criticism of Viennese life around the fin-de-siècle that the play is known for? I concluded that Schnitzler tackles fundamental questions of human intimacy through a very specific use of domesticity, theatricality, concealment and revelation, all the while also addressing the era's social issues. By consistently referencing Viennese city life and Viennese theatres in particular, Schnitzler illustrates the social divide between Christine and Fritz but also provides a meta-theatrical commentary on the dynamics of spying and concealment that underlie their inability to connect. In *Liebelei*, the theatre thus functions as a

persistent offstage space constantly reminding the audience that, while these characters enter each other's intimate spaces, we too are entering this intimate space and are henceforth confronted with the responsibility and implications that this act of witnessing entails.

Chapter 5 – The Drama of Everyday Life: Rainer Maria Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben*

Introduction

One of the key indicators that naturalism was finally "over," was a shift in emphasis from the replication of reality to the pursuit of truthfulness about people's psychological states and their relationships with each other. Max Reinhardt's direction of Ibsen did not aim to faithfully copy a person's living room, but instead used the domestic setting on stage to make an audience feel like they were entering someone's intimate space. Around the fin-de-siècle, truthfulness was starting to be understood as psychological truthfulness, and the question of how to understand another person became a central question of modern drama.

Another prominent figure of the German literary canon whose work investigates the motif of experiencing togetherness is Rainer Maria Rilke. His novel *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* has been classified as a quintessential work of European modernism, encompassing the struggle of a writer finding his own voice through an original writing style that challenges previous linear narratives.[1] As Robert Vilain notes, *seeing* and *recognising* are central themes of this novel ("Ich lerne sehen."[2]), depicting the protagonist's struggle to connect with his environment, and the people around him.[3]

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[1] Karen Leeder and Robert Vilain, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Rilke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2 and 5; Andreas Huyssen, "The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rilke*, 74 – 79; Andreas Kramer, "Rilke and Modernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Rilke*, 122; Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. and ed. Robert Vilain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), xv-xxix, especially xxviii on the role of finding a voice.

[2] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, in *Prosa und Dramen*, vol.3 of *Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe*, ed. August Stahl (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag 1996), 456-457.

[3] *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, xxvi -xxix.

Interestingly, much of Rilke's writing process for this novel – written between 1904 and 1910 – was accompanied by his experience of the theatre, more specifically, the Ibsen-effect. Upon witnessing the actress Eleonora Duse, the protagonist Malte says: "Laßt uns doch aufrichtig sein, wir haben kein Theater, […]: dazu gehört Gemeinsamkeit."[4] Here, Malte not only reiterates a central question of theatre at the time, namely how it can generate a sense of togetherness, he also shows to what extent the Ibsen-effect had a lasting impact on the question of interpersonal connection in modern literature. Eleonora Duse was a famous Ibsen actress, known as one of the few able to fully grasp his heroines' psychological profundity.[5] Her production of *Rosmersholm* played at various European theatres between 1905 and 1909 – the time when Rilke was writing the novel and saw the production in Berlin in November 1906.[6] Together with Reinhardt's production of *Ghosts* at the Kammerspiele and Meyerhold's production of *Hedda Gabler* in Moscow, these three productions can be classified as milestones of the European Ibsen reception, as they went beyond social realism and captured the full atmosphere and intimacy of Ibsen's plays.[7] Rilke also attended Reinhardt's Kammerspiele production of *Ghosts* and further saw a performance of *The Wild Duck* at the Théâtre Antoine (the theatre directed by André Antoine after he had left the Théâtre Libre) in Paris – all in 1906, the year of Ibsen's death.[8]

Rilke's admiration of Ibsen and his general affinity for Nordic culture has been well documented.[9] With his knowledge of Danish and Swedish, Rilke was

[4] *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, 617 and 1024-1026.
[5] George, *Henrik Ibsen in Deutschland*, 59-60.
[6] George C. Schoolfield, "Rilke's Ibsen," *Scandinavian Studies* 51 no. 4 (1979): 470; Judith Ryan, *Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 12.
[7] Frederick J. Marker and Lise-Lone Marker, "Ibsen and the twentieth-century stage," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, ed. James McFarlane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 183.
[8] Schoolfield, "Rilke's Ibsen," 468-470.
[9] For an overview Schoolfield, "Rilke's Ibsen," 460-501; *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, xxix-xxxvi.

particularly taken with Ibsen's work, an influence apparent throughout his work.[10] Rilke's stories *Einig* (1897) and *Die Letzten* (1901), for example, bear clear traces of Ibsen's *Ghosts*.[11] Meanwhile, Rilke's relationship with Lou Andreas-Salomé – who published *Henrik Ibsens Frauengestalten* in 1892 – serves as another indicator of Ibsen's influence on Rilke at an early stage.[12]

In *Malte Laurids Brigge*, Rilke devotes an extensive section to both Eleonora Duse and Ibsen, critically reflecting on their relationship to the theatre audience.[13] It Rilke laments the audience's unwillingness to create a true artistic experience based on a communal connection of "Gemeinsamkeit."

Rilke's references to Ibsen and Ibsen performances show that his work was affected by the cultural debates of his time. Furthermore, Berlin's Ibsen-effect had a significant impact on his development as an artist and his understanding of human relationships, which his profound admiration for Arthur Schnitzler's *Liebelei* confirms.[14]

But Rilke not only thought about the role of modern theatre and what it means for human togetherness. He also experimented with the medium of theatre himself during a brief and largely unsuccessful career as a playwright. In the early stages of his literary career, Rilke discovered the medium of the theatre and believed the genre of naturalism to be a suitable form for expressing his thoughts and sense of social justice. Just as Otto Brahm and his contemporaries had done in the previous decades, Rilke tried to address social injustice by writing naturalistic plays and making them more accessible. He initiated the free publication *Wegwarten*, for instance, through

[10] Ibid.
[11] Schoolfield, "Rilke's Ibsen," 461-462; *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, xxx.
[12] Schoolfield, "Rilke's Ibsen," 461; *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, xxx.
[13] Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, 510-513 and 617-618.
[14] "R.M. Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler: Ihr Briefwechsel," 283 and 186.

which he publicised his first play, *Jetzt und in der Stunde unseres Absterbens*.[15] Following that brief period of deterministic social realism in the spirit of Gerhart Hauptmann or Max Halbe, Rilke's naturalistic search for truthfulness led him to the question of how to establish meaningful relationships. And thus he created his own dramatic exploration of the topic in a play suitably named *Das tägliche Leben*.[16]

Das tägliche Leben does what the title promises: it is a play about the importance of everyday life, and it believes the secret to establishing meaningful relationships can be found by successfully managing your everyday life. The play tells the story of Georg, a painter who finds himself unable to paint and thus spends his days avoiding the daylight hours, ironically the hours during which a painter can best work, and escaping his large lonely studio. During an evening escape from his unfulfilling everyday life, Georg meets Helene and engages in an intense two-hour conversation, during which he later claims to have established complete intimacy and thus "fast-forwarded" past all the conventional obstacles normally in the way of establishing a meaningful relationship. As Helene comes by his studio the next day, she explains to him that by accelerating intimacy this way and telling each other "everything," they have actually destroyed any potential for a life together. She encourages him to turn towards someone who is already part of his everyday life, and that's when Georg realises his faithful model Mascha has been by his side all along, so now he can find fulfilment in his daily life.

Rilke's central message, to find fulfilment in the everyday, does not just represent an acute illustration of a pressing socio-cultural concern towards the fin-de-siècle, to Rilke, it was also a personal matter. During the writing of *Das tägliche Leben*, he himself was confronted with the problem of establishing a meaningful

[15] Ursula Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," in *Rilke-Studien: Zu Werk und Wirkungsgeschichte,* ed. Edda Bauer (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1976), 10.
[16] Rilke, Rainer Maria, *Das tägliche Leben*, in *Prosa und Dramen,* vol.3 of *Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe,* ed. August Stahl (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1996), 744-776.

relationship, as he went from a formative affair with the older Lou Andreas-Salomé to the domesticity of married life with the sculptor Clara Westhoff.[17] His play thus serves as an interesting example of how concrete real-life experience collided with socio-cultural debates, showing just how close these issues on stage were to their creators in real life. Furthermore, as these Rilke works have been academically underserved, an analysis of Rilke's play – and moreover, his dramatic work in general – provides an insightful addition to understanding his literary work.

Finally, this chapter establishes a connection between Rilke and Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene, revealing the extent to which his work became part of this socio-cultural development. *Das tägliche Leben* was performed at one of the literary matinees at the Residenztheater, famous for its public protest culture, under the direction of Schall und Rauch co-founder Martin Zickel.[18] Though the play was publicly ridiculed and any further performances were cancelled, it represents another historical document of this unique cultural environment.

In contrast to previous chapters, my reading of *Das tägliche Leben* is less about intricate dramatic devices and poignant meta-theatrical commentary. Instead I regard Rilke's play as an interesting historical case study of a fin-de-siècle artist exploring the question of interpersonal connection and how he thought the medium of the theatre would help him accomplish this task.

Hence, this chapter begins with an overview of Rilke's relationships to naturalism and the avant-garde theatre scene, and then transitions to an analysis of Rilke's correspondence with regards to the issues of relationships and the everyday. Closing with a section of how Rilke translated these ideas into dramatic language, I aim to illustrate how his dramatic search for truthfulness corresponded to his own

[17] Joachim W. Storck, "Leben und Persönlichkeit," in *Rilke-Handbuch*, ed. Manfred Engel (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), 2-5.
[18] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 46.

increasingly complicated search for a genuine connection.

I. Rilke's dramatic phase: a (hitherto unnoticed) document of its time

Though he is a central figure in the German literary canon, one would not usually associate the name Rainer Maria Rilke with drama. That is predominantly due to the fact that Rilke's career as a dramatist was short-lived. Between 1894 and 1904 he wrote eight plays, three of which – *Jetzt und in der Stunde unseres Absterbens* (1896 at the Deutsches Volkstheater, Prague), *Im Frühfrost* (1897 at the Deutsches Volkstheater, Prague), *Das tägliche Leben* (1901 at the Residenztheater in Berlin) – were performed with varying degrees of success.[19] Looking back over his own life's work, Rilke regarded his early attempts at drama as a sort of trial-and-error phase when he was still finding his artistic voice, and therefore did not consider them representative of his artistic work.[20] And indeed, even in academic discourse on Rilke's work the plays have been recognisably neglected, as was recently noted by scholars such as Monika Ritzer and Thorsten Stegemann.[21] Ritzer adds that, apart from the notable lack of research about the plays, the existing research mostly focuses on specific aspects of the plays, such as Rilke's understanding of Ibsen or Maeterlinck.[22] She argues that, despite Rilke's own disregard of the plays, they deserve much more attention, especially because they offer insights into Rilke's coming of age as an artist.[23] Stegemann similarly argues that Rilke's plays deserve further attention, as they do not just provide an insight into Rilke's artistic development, but they also represent an important document of nineteenth-century

[19] Monika Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," in *Rilke-Handbuch*, 264-282.
[20] Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 264.
[21] Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 282; Thorsten Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits: Studien zu ausgewählten Werken von Rainer Maria Rilke, Hermann Sudermann, Max Halbe, Gottfried Benn und Erich Kästner* (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2000), 9.
[22] Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 282.
[23] Ibid.

literary currents, and thus deserve a place in cultural history as well.[24] Rilke choosing to write plays despite his ambivalent relationship with this external and conventional art form is symptomatic of the overall late nineteenth-century trend of exploring social issues and burning existential questions about truth and authenticity through drama.[25] Stegemann suggests that Rilke picked drama because it was the most prevalent artistic language at the time to explore social issues, and an important means of distributing these ideas.[26]

Parallel to the cultural currents at the time, Rilke's dramatic work transitioned from naturalistic determinism (in *Im Frühfrost* or *Jetzt und in der Stunde unseres Absterbens*, for example) to "Problemstücke," as Ritzer calls them, plays that focus on the difficulties of establishing a meaningful life.[27] Rilke's turn towards naturalism in the early 1890s is indicative of his own identification with a cultural movement that gave a voice to the poor and neglected.[28] In line with the developments of the avant-garde theatre scene, Rilke also promoted the accessibility of plays and literary works through the publication *Wegwarten*, a free magazine he subtitled "Lieder dem Volk geschenkt."[29] His play *Jetzt und in der Stunde unseres Absterbens* featured in the second issue.[30] Rilke's connections with the avant-garde theatre scene are manifold. His play *Im Frühfrost* has the subtitle "Ein Stück Dämmerung," at title most likely referring to the play *Dämmerung* by Ernst Rosmer, which was published in *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben* and performed at the Freie Bühne.[31] Ernst Rosmer was a

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[24] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 31.
[25] Irina Frowen, "Die Szenerie war Abschied: Theater und Schauspiel im Kontext des Rilkeschen Werkes," in *Patterns of Change: German Drama and the European Tradition: Essays in honour of Ronald Peacock*, ed. Dorothy James and Silvia Ranawake (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 207-213.
[26] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 31; Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 264.
[27] Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 268-270.
[28] Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," 10-11.
[29] "R.M. Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler: Ihr Briefwechsel," in *Wort und Wahrheit Monatsschrift für Religion und Kultur* 13 no.4 (1958): 293.
[30] Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," 10.
[31] Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 265. Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," 13.

pseudonym of Elsa Bernstein, the host of a popular literary salon Rilke frequented.[32] After the success of Lautenburg's infamous literary matinee of Max Halbe's play *Jugend* at the Residenztheater, Rilke saw the play in 1895 and was profoundly inspired by this event.[33] Furthermore, Rilke's increasing admiration for Maurice Maeterlinck can be traced to Martin Zickel, co-founder of Reinhardt's *Die Brille* and *Schall und Rauch* cabarets, who directed Maeterlinck at the Residenztheater.[34] In a letter to Gustav Pauli from 7 September 1901, Rilke specifically suggests they try to make Zickel, "der Maeterlinck unvergleichlich gut versteht," available for Maeterlinck evenings in Bremen.[35]

But aside from Rilke's own immersion in the cultural currents that facilitated the performance of naturalistic plays and beyond, the three plays of his that made it to performances carry clear traces of the avant-garde theatre scene as well. The one Rilke play that could actually be described as a moderate success was *Im Frühfrost*. Despite its only brief run at the Deutsches Volkstheater in Prague, the play received favourable reviews that particularly attributed the play's success to that summer's guest performance of Max Reinhardt as Girding.[36] And finally, *Das tägliche Leben* was accepted for, and performed during, one of Lautenburg's literary matinees at the Residenztheater, where it was directed by Martin Zickel.[37] In 1896, Rilke initiated a correspondence with Arthur Schnitzler, sending him the *Wegwarten* booklet with the draft of *Jetzt und in der Stunde unseres Ablebens* and saying: "Es liegt mir viel daran,

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[32] Ibid.
[33] George C. Schoolfield, *Young Rilke and His Time* (Rochester: Camden House, 2009), 37.
[34] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 45.
[35] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 bis 1904*, vol.1 of *Gesammelte Briefe,* ed. Ruth Sieber Rilke and Carl Sieber (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1939), 167.
[36] Henry F. Fullenwider, *Rilke and His Reviewers:* An Annotated Bibliography, (Lawrence: University of Kansas Libraries, 1978), 14.
[37] Hirschmann, "Das Berliner Residenztheater und das Neue Theater unter der Leitung von Sigmund Lautenburg," 46.

das Urteil des von mir hochgeschätzten Dichters der *Liebelei* zu vernehmen."[38] In the feuilletons, Schnitzler and Rilke would also be placed alongside each other. Directly below the reviews of *Das tägliche Leben* follow (much more favourable) reviews of *Lebendige Stunden*, the Schnitzler premiere presented by Otto Brahm at the Deutsches Theater.[39]

This parallel development of the avant-garde theatre scene and Rilke's own experimental stage as a dramatist already suggest that his dramatic works emerged as a response to the ideas of the time. Furthermore, both Rilke's socio-cultural engagement to make theatre and literature more accessible to the "Volk" by circulating plays more freely and his strict use of naturalism to draw attention to the miseries of underprivileged classes indicate that his dramatic works should be read and understood as documents of the socio-cultural currents investigated in this thesis. Conceived, written, and performed at the very turn of the fin-de-siècle, *Das tägliche Leben* thus represents an interesting case study to investigate how these ideas developed as naturalism's legacy entered the twentieth century.

In 1898, Rilke describes his artistic journey as a trajectory from external to internal naturalism: "Realist and Naturalist den intimeren, inneren Sensationen wie vorher den äußeren Ereignissen gegenüber."[40] With this statement, Rilke shows how the legacy he took from working through naturalism was to present a form of truthfulness. However, now he searched for truthfulness in the spheres of psychology and human intimacy. Just like Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene, Rilke also lived through a phase of naturalism that nurtured his desire to confront truth and authenticity, though he would later replace harsh external realities with a focus on interpersonal matters. In *Im Frühfrost*, for instance, Rilke creates his own

[38] "R.M. Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler: Ihr Briefwechsel," 283. Letter from 14 January 1902.
[39] E. Karlschmidt, "Von den Berliner Bühnen" *Kunstwart* 15 no.2 (1902), 395 and Philip Julius, "Theater" in *Stimmen der Gegenwart* 3 no.1 (1902).
[40] Rainer Maria Rilke, in *Worpswede. Rodin. Aufsätze*, 369.

"Milieustudie" of the harsh reality of the underprivileged classes. In a naturalistic style reminiscent of Ibsen's social dramas, the play begins with the revelation of a secret about theft and debt and a moral dilemma, namely whether to trade a daughter's virginity for a total forgiveness of debt.[41] As his plays progressed, Rilke moved away from the deterministic elements of naturalism but maintained several others, such the domestic setting or the *Alltagssprache*. With *Ohne Gegenwart*, written in 1897, Rilke began to focus on a sort of internal realism; instead of presenting external realities, he attempted to show a sort of inner truth – a project that would remain his artistic motto. *Ohne Gegenwart* presents the story of a married couple that is constantly threatened by the wife's sister, who is driven to suicide by her passionate, unfulfilled love for her sister's husband. As Irina Frowen suggests, this plot already indicates that Rilke moved the action to the characters internal lives, illustrating the failure "aus dem Nebeneinander der jungen Partner ein Miteinander zu schaffen."[42] This focus on the tension between "Nebeneinander" and "Miteinander" is regarded as the result of a central shift in Rilke's artistic work following *Ohne Gegenwart* – a play that also coincided with his artistically significant encounter with Lou Andreas-Salomé the same year.[43] Ursula Münchow adds that writing this play was what turned Rilke to the subject matter of the "Herausbildung zwischenmenschlicher Beziehungen."[44]

Ohne Gegenwart, however, does maintain familiar elements of Ibsen's "naturalistic" presentation of human relationships, which becomes apparent when we realise that, in a use of the offstage strikingly similar to *Rosmersholm*, though the main character is never on stage, her presence is constantly evoked in letters and the

[41] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Im Frühfrost*, in *Prosa und Dramen*, 669-723.
[42] Irina Frowen, "Die Szenerie war Abschied," 207.
[43] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 17; Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," 31.
[44] Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," 31.

way she affects the relationship on stage.[45] A few years later, Rilke comments on this theatre device in *Malte Laurids Brigge*, when he has Malte - who has just written a play named "Ehe" - reflect on modern theatre's typical tendency for a third person to evoke the destruction of a relationship, noting that this device unnecessarily distracts from exposing the difficulties within the relationship itself:[46] "War ich ein Nachahmer und Narr, daß ich eines Dritten bedurfte, um von dem Schicksal zweier Menschen zu erzählen, die es einander schwer machten."[47]

As I will illustrate in greater detail, *Das tägliche Leben*, while containing traces of naturalism such as extensive stage directions and a domestic setting, similarly focuses on the question of how to establish a meaningful relationship. Rilke's phase as a young dramatist thus illustrates to what extent his artistic development followed a very similar journey to that of the avant-garde theatre scene and clearly indicates the strong impact those cultural currents had on forming Rilke's artistic and intellectual identity.[48]

II. *Das tägliche Leben*: a typically avant-garde failure

In *Das tägliche Leben* Rilke makes an attempt to show that the key to a fulfilled life is to share an everyday life with someone else, in the form of work and sharing a household. The painter Georg realises that he should be with the woman who was working with him all along, instead of the romanticised fantasy of his two-hour evening adventure.

More than any of Rilke's other staged plays, the premiere performance of *Das tägliche Leben* was a grandiose failure, to the extent that the scheduled performance at

[45] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 17-19, Schoofield, "Rilke's Ibsen," 463.
[46] Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, 466-468.
[47] Ibid., 467.
[48] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 31.

the Hamburger Schauspielhaus was cancelled by director Baron Berger in response.[49] Entirely in tune with the avant-garde theatre scene's protest culture, the audience vocally rejected the play, and the play's "Lacherfolg" was documented in reviews as well as painfully described in Rilke's letters. In a letter to Pol du Mont on 10 January 1902, he describes the play as: das Drama *Das tägliche Leben* (welche bei der Erstaufführung in Berlin [20 December 1901] im Hohngelächter des Publikums unterging).[50]

To Arthur Schnitzler, he wrote:

> Nach dem Berliner Lacherfolg haben mir Direktor Lautenburg und der Regissseur Doktor Zickel sehr liebe Briefe geschrieben voll Vertrauen und Freude an meiner Arbeit.[51]

And in a letter to Carl Mönckeberg he describes the sensation of *Das tägliche Leben* as a familiar feeling of being misunderstood:

> Das Drama, das in Berlin großes Gelächter hervorrief, dessen Nuance ich aus meiner einsamen Knabenzeit her kenne; es ist mir nicht neu und tritt überall dort auf, wo eine Menge einem Einsamen begegnet, der zu reden beginnt.[52]

Though some reviewers tried to relativise their criticism by acknowledging the play's literary merit, claiming that Rilke's poetic language is simply not fit for the stage, there was a general consensus about the play's failure.[53] A succinct paragraph in *Stimmen der Gegenwart* summed up the Residenztheater matinee as follows:

> Am letzten literarischen Abend des Residenztheaters wurde Rainer Maria Rilke's feinsinniges Drama "Das tägliche Leben" abfällig aufgenommen […]. Streng genommen ist der Misserfolg Rilke's gerecht. Der subtile Stoff seines Dramas gehört nicht auf die Bühne.[54]

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[49] "R.M. Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler: Ihr Briefwechsel," 298.
[50] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe und Tagebücher aus der Frühzeit 1899–1902*, ed. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1931), 152.
[51] "R.M. Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler: Ihr Briefwechsel," 292. Letter from 19 January 1902.
[52] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892-1904*, 200-202.
[53] Fullenwider, *Rilke and His Reviewers*, 32-34.
[54] Philip Julius, "Theater" in *Stimmen der Gegenwart* 3 no.1 (1902).

In *Der Kunstwart*, Eugen Kaltschmidt repeats this critique in more blunt terms:

> *Das tägliche Leben*, dramatische Skizze in zwei Akten, verrät ein sehr kleines, feines Talent, dem freilich jeder dramatische Nerv ebensosehr abgeht, wie ein objektives Erfassen des Wesens der Dinge.[55]

As *Rilke and his Reviewers*, the collection edited by Henry F. Fullenwider, also conveys, cultural critics at the time agreed that Rilke's "fragile, intimate art is not suitable for the stage."[56] This captures an important aspect of Rilke's difficulties as a playwright; *Das tägliche Leben* reads more like an *Abhandlung* interspersed with poetic finesse than a text written for performance. This was Rilke's last play to be performed and – apart from an attempt to rewrite *Die weiße Fürstin* in 1902 – the last play he would ever write.[57]

But the criticism of *Das tägliche Leben* went beyond a mere criticism of Rilke's abilities as a playwright. After all, his other plays, despite their moderate success, were not as distinctly classified as failures. People not only dismissed the play's dramatic quality, they also disapproved of how Rilke explored the theme of the artist's struggle to find fulfilment in everyday life. In *Die Zeit*, Ernst Heilbronn describes Rilke's intended, but failed message:

> Im täglichen Leben den Feiertag der Seele suchen, und wiederum, den Feiertagsklang herabstimmen, dass er alltägliche Bedürfnisse und Gewohnungen nicht übertöne. – das zu gestalten, hat Rainer Maria Rilke in seiner dramatischen Skizze "Das tägliche Leben" vorgeschwebt.[58]

Heibronn then argues that Rilke's attempt failed due to his inability to illustrate the appropriate "Alltäglichkeit" and Wirklichkeit":

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[55] E. Karlschmidt, "Von den Berliner Bühnen" *Kunstwart* 15 no.2 (1902), 395.
[56] Fullenwider, *Rilke and His Reviewers*, 33.
[57] Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 264.
[58] Ernst Heilbronn, "Kunst und Leben" in *Die Zeit*, 28 December 1901, 205

> Rilke sucht hinter dem Alltäglichen das seelische Geheimnis, in den Gleichgültigkeiten des Werktags die Feiertagsstimmung zu offenbaren: aber er vermag noch nicht die Alltäglichkeit, die Wirklichkeit darzustellen; sie spottet seiner und seines hohen Fluges.[59]

Heilbronn seems to suggest that Rilke does not achieve an actual confrontation with reality. Interestingly, this specific criticism also appears in Karlschmidt's review:

> Hätte der Verfasser diesen stilisierten Herren in die Wirklichkeit hinauszustellen vermocht, und uns den Zwiespalt gezeigt, in den die feierlich in sich selbst verwickelte, überzeugte Unnatur dann schlechterdings hätte geraten müssen – etwas Tragikomisches wäre es vielleicht geworden. So aber hat er die Umwelt des Selben auf dessen Schnitt zugerichtet, die Unnatur als das Natürliche aufgefaßt, und da musste den im Ganzen wohl eine unfreiwillige Karikatur des "täglichen Lebens", ein künstliche Häufung mehr oder weniger "tiefer" Ausnahmezustände entstehen.[60]

These reviews suggest that, in addition to Rilke's inability to write for the stage, he also failed to truthfully confront reality. Karlschmidt's criticism is directed against Rilke as the author, arguing that Rilke specifically forced something natural, namely finding fulfilment in everyday life, onto a self-absorbed character for whom this clearly is not natural. Accordingly, he claims, instead of achieving a connection with the everyday, Rilke forcefully tries to convince the audience that there is a simple solution to a very complex dichotomy.

Rilke's personal investment in the subject matter has been regarded as the weakest aspect of the play. Monika Ritzer retrospectively explains the audience reaction to Rilke's play as due both to the author's lack of distance from the subject matter and to his own wishful thinking:

> Das "Drama in zwei Akten" […] sucht nun speziell dem Künstler einen Platz im Leben zu verschaffen. Dass das Publikum diesen Versuch nun endgültig nicht mehr akzeptiert mag an der Autornähe

[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.

> des Themas wie an der Diskrepanz zwischen Wunschvorstellung und evozierter Wirklichkeit liegen.[61]

Howard Roman suggests that Rilke's urgency in promoting a particular idea about finding fulfilment in everyday life actually weakened his creativity and dramatic ability: "The play suffers from only having been written completely around an idea […] which evidently meant much to Rilke at the time."[62]

These perspectives from Rilke's and our own time both suggest that Rilke's specific aim was to prove that an artist can easily achieve a successful "tägliches Leben." But somehow, his lack of distance to the subject matter may have failed him in this attempt. To what extent this interpretation explains the "Lacherfolg" is another question, but with regards to the question underlying this thesis—namely, that of how the everyday on stage mattered in late nineteenth-century Berlin—Rilke's play surely represents a rich document – precisely because the play promotes its idea so unsubtly and because it was a subject so central to Rilke's own life.

In the play, the character Georg is told by Helene that he should look for a woman who is "eigentlich immer um dich" to find fulfilment in life.[63] At that point he realises that Masha – who had been around him all along, cleaning his studio and acting as his model – is the solution to his struggle of establishing a meaningful relationship and living a meaningful life. Rilke's drama thus tries to show what Ibsen and Schnitzler did much more successfully beforehand: that a meaningful connection between two human beings needs to be found in their connection with the everyday. Rilke's title even declares "everyday life" the subject matter of his play. Furthermore, Rilke uses the same dramatic devices Moi has found to be an indicator of being in touch with the everyday, such as housework, to announce this meaningful relationship.

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[61] Ritzer, "Dramatische Dichtungen," 269.
[62] Howard Roman, "Rilke's Dramas – An Annotated List," *Germanic Review* 18 no.3 (1943): 206.
[63] *Das tägliche Leben*, 774.

Above all, Rilke presents the audience with a concrete conflict he was struggling with while writing the play, namely how to combine his inner creative urges as an artist with the "bürgerliche Alltag," as Stegemann calls it, the day-to-day struggles of work, marriage, and other forms of functioning in the community.[64] His play explores the ways in which an artist can connect with the outside world and thus find a form of living a meaningful life. In other words, how can art become work and how can love become marriage and still be meaningful? These questions offer an additional insight into how the subject matter of the everyday was conceived of from an artist's own life, and thus, show how by the fin-de-siècle these questions had become central to conceiving of the self and one's environment. Since Rilke seems to have been so personally involved in the subject matter, it is interesting to contextualise the timeframe in which he wrote the play with his own personal and artistic development.

III. Rilke's own struggle with the everyday

Around 1900, Rilke's life took several key turns. After his meaningful encounter with Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke decided that marriage would help him gain some external structure for the troubled internal life of a young poet. He married the sculptor Clara Westhoff on 28 April 1901 and bought a house in idyllic Westerwede.[65] On 12 December of the same year, eight days before the performance of *Das tägliche Leben*, their daughter Ruth was born.[66] In a letter to Gustav Pauli, Rilke explains why getting married was necessary to ease his internal struggle:

> Mir war die Heirat, die vom üblichen Standpunkt ein großer Leichtsinn war, eine Notwendigkeit. Meine, mit dem zeitlichen

[64] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 27.
[65] Storck, "Leben und Persönlichkeit," 5.
[66] Ibid.

> Leben so wenig zusammenhängende Welt war in der Junggesellenstube so vielen Winden preisgegeben, unumschützt, und bedurfte zu ihrer Entwicklung des stillen eigenen Hauses unter dem weiten Himmel der Einsamkeit.[67]

To Rilke, the conventional framework of marriage thus provided the necessary structure and support for managing an everyday routine in order to work. It provided a real-life frame for his internal journey and structured his creative output according to an external schedule.

Before he decided to get married, this desire for structure and routine manifested itself as a longing for a domestic environment in which to work. A year earlier, between October and December 1900, Rilke's letters were full of detailed descriptions of small objects – for example in a letter to Clara Westhoff, whom he had just met, discussing furniture and food, and ending with a recipe that included a list of ingredients.[68] In several letters to different people he describes the interior of the house he is about to move into.[69] Those same letters discuss his desire for structured days ("weil ungeordnete Tage wie schwere Gefäße auf ihren Deckeln stehen")[70] and a quiet setting ("um mich der ruhigen, nüchternen, täglichen Arbeit nicht zu entfremden"),[71] imbuing his quotidian routine with new meaning as he set about creating an ideal everyday setting and designing the ideal physical and mental framework for his creative output. A regulated daily life thus appears as a romanticised fantasy precisely at the time Rilke was writing *Das tägliche Leben*.

Nonetheless, getting married proved to be a particular challenge for Rilke, as he experienced conventional life as a threat to his artistic individuality. In order to preserve his artistic uniqueness, Rilke and Westhoff thus agreed on a "contract" to maintain their

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[67] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 bis 1904*, 187. Letter from 8 January 1902.
[68] Ibid.,111-113. Letter from 23 October 1900.
[69] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 bis 1904,* 119-124. Letters to Paula Becker, 25 October 1900 and 05 November 1900.
[70] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 bis 1904,*113-116. Letter to Otto Moderson, 23 October 1900.
[71] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 bis 1904,* 116-118. Letter to Frieda von Bülow, 24 October 1900.

artistic solitude.[72] In a letter to Emanuel von Bodman from 17 August 1901, Rilke expands on his complex views on marriage and how he struggles with the concept to make a "Nebeneinander" into a "Miteinander":

> Es handelt sich in der Ehe für mein Gefühl nicht darum, durch Niederreißung und Umstürzung aller Grenzen eine rasche Gemeinsamkeit zu schaffen, vielmehr ist die gute Ehe die, in welcher jeder den anderen zum Wächter seiner Einsamkeit bestellt und ihm dieses größte Vertrauen beweist, das er zu verleihen hat. Ein *Miteinander* zweier Menschen ist eine Unmöglichkeit und, wo es doch vorhanden scheint, eine Beschränkung, eine gegenseitige Übereinkunft, welchen einen Teil oder beide Teile ihrer vollsten Freiheit und Entwicklung beraubt. Aber, das Bewußtsein vorausgesetzt, dass auch zwischen den nächsten Menschen unendliche Fernen bestehen bleiben, kann ihnen ein wundervolles Nebeneinanderwohnen erwachsen[73]

On the one hand, Rilke desired the external structure that marriage seems to promise so he can work. But on the other, his true creative output can only happen in a "Nebeneinander" instead of a "Miteinander." Either way, the main problem of marriage and domesticity for Rilke seems to be finding a form that can integrate an artist's life into a bourgeois framework.

The few scholars that have taken a marginally closer look at Rilke's dramatic oeuvre regard the conflict he was experiencing in his own life as a central theme of his plays. They argue that between *Ohne Gegenwart* and *Das tägliche Leben*, Rilke constantly questioned how to overcome the inner alienation he perceived as a disconnection from the people around him. Stegeman writes:

> Diese sich aus der wachsenden Entfremdung des bürgerlichen Künstlers ergebende Konstellation äußert sich in dem dramatischen Werk Rilkes zunächst als Manifestation der Kontaktlosigkeit, zugleich aber auch in dem Bemühen, Wege zu ihrer Überwindung aufzuweisen.[74]

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[72] Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," 38.
[73] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 -1904*, 166.
[74] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 29.

What Stegemann describes as "Kontaktlosigkeit" also manifests in Rilke's complex relationship with the institution of marriage, simultaneously as a desire to connect with his environment and to maintain his artistic solitude. Ursula Münchow further explains why Rilke's artistic work around 1900 thus can be said to struggle to connect with the "tägliche Leben."[75] Rilke wrote *Das tägliche Leben*, she argues, in an attempt to create a model for co-existence that found togetherness in joint artistic work and domesticity:

> Der junge Rilke hat hier seine These vom einsamen Nebeneinander der Menschen durchbrochen und, wenn auch noch unsicher, die Vorstellung von einem Miteinander in gemeinsamer Arbeit entworfen.[76]

From then on, she claims, Rilke would struggle with managing the tasks that daily life presents while at the same time maintaining his solitude in order to create:

> Es geht ihm in der Folgezeit permanent um die Überwindung des von ihm bei allem Solipsismus seiner Ideenwelt schmerzlich empfundenen Gegensatz zwischen Einsamkeit des Künstlers und den Aufgaben des täglichen Lebens.[77]

In *Das tägliche Leben*, the tasks of daily life, the everyday, represent the answer to the main characters' search for a genuine connection, and an escape from his solitude. The theme of disconnection with the outside world is inherent to Moi's concept of modernism, as is a thematic focus on skepticism and the portrayal of the everyday as an antidote to skepticism. Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben* represents an urgent appeal to find a form of togetherness in the everyday based on his own, possibly idealised, notion of that everyday. Cavell's descriptions of skepticism as a "world-consuming doubt" also chimes with Rilke's struggle with this artistic solitude. Avoiding relationships and the community, and believing that "truth" is a solo endeavour, are

[75] Münchow, "Das 'tägliche Leben'': Die dramatischen Experimente des jungen Rilke," 29.
[76] Ibid., 35.
[77] Ibid., 29.

vivid examples of just what artists seem to be struggling with. *Das tägliche Leben* thus precisely fits the modernist struggle, Moi points out in relation to Ibsen, as it is all about trying to overcome the sense of disconnection that seems to permeate artists' perceptions towards the fin-de-siècle.

In Rilke's case, his carefully constructed model of meaningful co-habitation as mutually accepted solitudes proved unsuccessful, as his marriage with Clara Westhoff already ends in 1902. [78] But around the time *Das tägliche Leben* was performed, Rilke was confronted with an additional challenge to uniting his artistic integrity with the tasks of daily existence. While faced with the new responsibility of providing for his family, Rilke suddenly found himself about to lose his financial support network, as his father, Josef Rilke, threatened to cease his regular allowance.[79] On 14 January 1902, three weeks after the performance of *Das tägliche Leben* and about a month after the birth of his daughter, Rilke writes a letter to Arthur Schnitzler, seeking help to find a paid writing position in Vienna:

> Denken Sie meine Bestürzung: Der Zusammenhang mit der Zeit fehlt mir ganz, den fast jede Beschäftigung, die Geld einbringt, von mir verlangt und ich weiß, daß es für meine Kunst keine größere Feindschaft gibt als die Zeit, Das Tägliche…das Allzutägliche! Trotzdem muss etwas gefunden werden, bald, besser heute als morgen, und ich kann froh sein, wenn es etwas ist, was mir ermöglicht, meinen Weg nicht ganz aufzugeben, ihn wenigstens mit den Augen festzuhalten, wenn auch die Hände eine Weile von ihm lassen müssen.[80]

Rilke writes about the practical concerns of supporting his family and considers the sacrifices, such as moving to a city and working as a journalist, that would affect his art. In addition to struggling with turning a marriage into a meaningful and artistically productive relationship, Rilke was thus also confronted with the ("adult") reality of making a living. What is more, Rilke considered it a particular sacrifice to leave his

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[78] Ibid. 38.
[79] "R.M. Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler: Ihr Briefwechsel," 297.
[80] "R.M. Rilke und Arthur Schnitzler: Ihr Briefwechsel," 290. Letter from 14 January 1902.

home, the domestic idyll he had created for himself in order to fulfil his calling as an artist. He called Westerwede a "Heim in dieser Einsamkeit" and he had hoped it would finally allow him to attain a sort of truthful experience in the "durch ihre Geschlossenheit wahrhaften Welt."[81]

At this point, Rilke's "tägliche Leben" transitions to what Moi calls the "bad everyday" (as opposed to the "good everyday").[82] For Rilke, the "Tägliche," the well-ordered dimension he desperately strived for, thus becomes the "Allzutägliche," the enemy of his artistic integrity. Above all, Rilke considered the time any economically viable *Handwerk* would require to be a crucial danger to his artistic fulfilment. In a letter to Gustav Pauli from 8 January 1901, he describes such a daily working life as using his carefully developed talents for other people's needs:

> Und schließlich wäre es doch auch unverantwortlich, im Augenblick da die Notwendigkeit des eigenen Verdienstes an mich herantritt, den Weg zu verlassen, den ich seit Knabenjahren, eigenen Trieben und Sehnsüchten horchend, gegangen bin, und die behauenden Bausteine eines Lebens, die nur die Spuren meines Meißels tragen, auf dem alten Bauplatz liegen zu lassen, – um nebenan mit Fabrikziegeln an einem fremden, gleichgültigen Hause herzlos mitzubauen, im Tagelohn eines kleinen Mannes.[83]

When Rilke describes using his talents to build someone else's home, he is actually talking about working in journalism, something he would have extreme difficulties with:

> Dieses schriftstellerische Kunstgewerbe könnte der Journalismus sein, ist es aber nicht. Die Wege zu ihm sind mir durch meine eigene Abneigung verschlossen oder doch sehr erschwert.[84]

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[81] Ibid.
[82] Moi, *Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism*, 316-320.
[83] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 bis 1904*, vol.1 of *Gesammelte Briefe,* ed. Ruth Sieber Rilke and Carl Sieber (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1939), 190. Letter to Gustav Pauli, 8 January 1902.
[84] Ibid.

Six days later, however, Rilke seems to have overcome this reluctance for journalism and asks Schnitzler for a possible recommendation to the Viennese press circles. The four reviews he published in the *Bremer Tagesblatt* in 1902 would document Rilke's introduction into this conventional real-life setting.[85]

Rilke's concern with the "tägliche Leben" and the "Allzutägliche" illustrates the complexity of any artist's relationship with their environment, caring for the people around them while following an artistic calling. On the one hand, Rilke requires a form of connection and fulfilment, which he attempts to attain through creating his own domestic space and by getting married. On the other hand, he perceives the external demands of "real life" as a threat to his artistic integrity.

Interestingly, it would be precisely his so loathed activity of journalism that would create an important document of Rilke's growing sense of disconnection. One of his reviews, from 16 April 1902, is of Thomas Mann's novel *Buddenbrooks,* which Rilke reads as a meditation on the struggle between internal and external realities:

> Besonders fein beobachtet ist, wie der Niedergang des Geschlechtes sich vor allem darin zeigt, dass die einzelnen gleichsam ihre Lebensrichtung geändert haben, dass es ihnen nicht mehr natürlich ist, nach außen hin zu leben, dass sich vielmehr eine Wendung nach Innen immer deutlicher bemerkbar macht.[86]

As Rilke read the struggle presented in *Buddenbrooks* – particularly the tragic destiny of little Hanno, who is unable to integrate his internal artistic self into the harsh realities of the outside world – he ironically found a form of expressing his own inner conflict. Rilke views Mann's novel as an expression of the era's key problem: as art and culture's search for truthfulness transitioned to a focus on the inner world, people were increasingly struggling with living their daily lives, while feeling increasingly

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[85] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Frühe Erzählungen und Dramen*, ed. Horst Nalewski, vol. 4 of *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Ernst Zinn and Ruth Sieber-Rilke (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1966), 875.

[86] Rainer Maria Rilke, "Thomas Mann's 'Buddenbrooks'," in *Worpswede. Rodin. Aufsätze*., vol. 5 of *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Ernst Zinn and Ruth Sieber-Rilke (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1966), 580.

disconnected from each other. In other words, this particular moment in Rilke's life serves as a document of how, by the end of the nineteenth century, the longing for truthfulness and authenticity had turned to a desire to connect the inner self with the outside world that was simultaneously an acknowledgment of the difficulty of this undertaking. While the naturalism of the 1880s required external realities to be confronted with the truth, its legacy was to highlight the struggle of how to turn the "Nebeneinander" into a "Miteinander," whether by learning how to establish meaningful individual relationships or how to function in a larger community.

Like its title, the genesis of *Das tägliche Leben* thus also reflects Rilke's essential question of how to be true to oneself in relation to others. And the major point of criticism that the play does not manage to achieve a form of "Wirklichkeit" or "Alltäglichkeit" echoes Rilke's own desperate desire to convince himself (and the audience) that a stronger connection with the everyday would be the answer to his struggle.

Rilke does not thrive in the art form of theatre. Perhaps his particular poet's soul is unfit for this "external" art form, which comes to life through a community (actors and audience) and is directly set in community life. And the avant-garde theatre scene in particular was not just promoting artistic integrity, but trying to make artistic integrity function in a community. Rilke's struggle surrounding this play – including the criticism it received – illustrates the multi-layered complexity of his attempts to establish a truthful connection with his environment. And the play's direct question of how to establish a meaningful relationship presents itself as resonating with Moi's central question of how to connect with the everyday. The key question seems to be how to overcome detachment while staying true to oneself, with others. Hence, my reading of the play will illustrate how Rilke saw these themes translated

into dramatic language, but also how conceptions of the everyday evolved at the beginning of the twentieth century.

IV. *Das tägliche Leben*: Rilke's exploration of the everyday

1) Act 1: to marry or not to marry?

In *Das tägliche Leben*, Rilke studies the issues that arise when people seek to define relationships once they start questioning conventions such as marriage and other forms of co-existence. Furthermore, Rilke presents us with the striking question of how much revealing is too much.

The play starts with extended stage directions – which, as Stegemann has noted, altogether make up 1/6 of the play.[87] The stage directions introduce Georg's creative block by showing us a painter wandering around his studio, looking at his watch.[88] The detailed interior of the space not only shows a painter surrounded by unfinished artwork, but also reveals the painter's longing for companionship. Two empty chairs face each other, evoking, as decreed in the stage directions, the sense of a conversation:

> *Dabei ein ganz tiefer Lehnstuhl mit sehr solider Lehne und breiten Armstützen, und zu ihm gewendet, wie im Gespräch, ein rotlackierter Strohstuhl.*[89]

As the play begins and Georg's day goes on, different characters enter his space, and through a series of conversations the painter reveals his struggle to create, his longing for a meaningful relationship, and his distinct distaste for any convention – be it marriage or anything else – that regulates such a relationship. The first person to enter is his model Mascha (at first referred to in the play as "Modell"), and as she tells the story of her father's bankruptcy the audience is soon made aware of her difference in

[87] Stegemann, *Literatur im Abseits,* 31.
[88] *Das tägliche Leben*, 746.
[89] Ibid., 745.

social status from Georg.[90] As he continues to dwell on his inability to motivate himself, she does what she can to ease his struggle. He plans to finally begin drawing again the next day, but then complains that he would first have to remove all the dust.[91] Straight away, Mascha looks for cleaning supplies and begins dusting the studio.[92] It is then that Georg finally finds the inspiration to draw her face, but she suddenly bursts into tears, and his reaction emphasises his complete disregard for her feelings:

> GEORG *wütend* Ja freilich so . . . Warum, zum Teufel, kannst du nicht stille halten?
> MODELL *ganz verlegen* Entschuldigen Sie . . . . ich . . . .
> GEORG Entschuldigen! Jetzt ists aus . . du bist ganz verweint . . . Schluß.
> […]
> GEORG Was denn?
> MODELL *verlegen* Ihr Rock, Herr . . . . er ist ganz staubig jetzt . . . .
> GEORG Na, so putz mich ab. [93]

These scenes almost comically portray Georg's complete lack of sensitivity and his total self-absorption, which also comes out in the second act, when he sends Mascha out to buy flowers for another woman.[94] He becomes a caricature of disconnection with the everyday, unable to engage in hands-on work and completely reluctant to see the person in front of him. Instead, he complains about her display of genuine emotions, as her face now no longer corresponds to the ideal he aimed to capture. If we compare Mascha to Ibsen and Schnitzler's characters, she thus becomes a kind of Gina, engaging in housework without a voice, and in some ways replicates the relationship between Christine and Fritz in *Liebelei* with regards to her lower social status.

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[90] Ibid.,748.
[91] Ibid., 749.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid., 749-750.
[94] Ibid., 765.

When Sophie, Georg's sister, meets Mascha, she recounts how she had imagined her based on Georg's stories, specifically noting her "silence" twice:

> SOPHIE *lächeld* Nein. Aber ich hab mir sie immer so vorgestellt. Mit einem ernsten, stillen Gesicht, etwas bleich, einem schönen, schweigsamen Mund, einer stolzen Stirn und Augen . . . . Die Augen sind fast wie die, die ich ihr gegeben habe in meiner Erzählung.
> GEORG *rasch* Ja, nicht wahr, die Augen! Die sind mir heute auch aufgefallen! *Pause* Vielleicht hast du aber auch sonst nicht unrecht . . .
> SOPHIE *sieht ihn fragend an.*
> GEORG Na ja, vielleicht ist das Gesicht ihrer Seele so. *Pause*.[95]

By recounting Georg's earlier narrative, Sophie also offers the audience an idea of how Georg views Mascha. And by evoking those familiar images of "eyes" and "seeing" in relation to the soul, Rilke prepares the audience for the final scene, in which Georg finally sees that he is meant to be with Mascha.

Sophie's appearance in the first act introduces the audience to Georg's complex views on relationships. Her character shows the audience an interesting alternative model of relationships, as she chose to leave her fiancé, Dr. Leuthold, with whom she now aims to maintain a friendship – a "real relationship." As their conversation continues, the characters question the complexities of what constitutes a meaningful relationship, and how "real relationships" ought to be regarded in contrast to the convention of marriage:

> SOPHIE Es ist ja auch tatsächlich keine Verkehrsform festgesetzt für solche, die man mal nicht geheiratet hat. Aber gerade deshalb wäre es also möglich, da eine Beziehung zu begründen, für welche keine Maßregeln vorgesehen sind, einer Verhältnis außer aller Konvention. Nicht?
> GEORG Bravo! Das ist eine Idee! Ja, das ist sogar meine Idee. Meine Lebensaufgabe sozusagen.
> SOPHIE Ist das auch nicht ein zu kleines Ziel für ein ganzes Leben?
> GEORG Wie meinst du das?
> SOPHIE Ja, sind nicht alle wirklichen Beziehungen so, außerhalb der Konvention.[96]

[95] Ibid., 753-754.

The main question arising in this conversation, which is repeated with the arrival of Dr. Leuthold, is whether rejecting a convention such as marriage necessarily makes a relationship more real. In posing this question, Sophie exactly hints at Georg's problem, namely that instead of turning a relationship – marriage or no – into something *real*, he focuses on rejecting all conventions first and foremost. Even though Georg clearly longs for companionship ("Ja, ich bin sehr allein."[97]), he is extremely reluctant about the convention of marriage. He even avoids attending the wedding ceremony of a close friend because of his aversion: "Zur Trauung geh ich nicht, weil ich diese Zeremonien nicht liebe."[98] As Dr. Leuthold arrives, he also reiterates that same reluctance to marriage ("Ich kann niemanden heiraten sehen." [99]), but doubts whether rejecting marriage is the solution to finding a meaningful relationship ("Ich glaube nicht, dass das zerstörte Alte schon etwas Neues ist."[100])

Throughout this first act, Rilke introduces the essential question of this play, namely what could constitute a meaningful relationships beyond the confinements of marriage. By presenting the characters of Sophie and Dr. Leuthold, Rilke sets up a key related question, whether rejecting conventions necessarily allows for something more meaningful.

2) Act 2: things take time

Act 2 shows us the morning after Georg went on a spiritual adventure and seemingly discovered the solution to his problem. His encounter with Helene promises a relationship based on complete mutual understanding without words and without conventions, as he tells the visibly disappointed Mascha:

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[96] Ibid., 754.
[97] Ibid., 754.
[98] Ibid., 752.
[99] Ibid., 758.
[100] Ibid., 756.

> GEORG Ja, die Überraschung. Sie verstand mich. Ich meine: sie verstand mich wirklich, so über die Worte weg . . . . verstehst du? Wir sahen einander zum ersten Male und gleich ohne Einladung, ohne alle Konvention. Mensch zu Mensch. […] Wir holten gleichsam einzelne Details nach, denn im Grunde wußten wir Alles voneinander. Alles Wesentliche. Ist das nicht seltsam?

Georg's fantasy of complete mutual understanding will soon reveal itself as an illusion – again presenting a suitable case study for a skeptic's disconnection from the everyday – but what is also interesting in this moment is Georg's view of forcefully entering someone's intimate space. He claims that only by capturing a person – in this case Helene – in their most vulnerable self and bringing them to completely expose themselves, only then can you see them as they really are:

> GEORG Was muss sonst alles geschehen, damit man zu einem Menschen kommt. […] Einbrechen muss man bei jemandem, überfallen muss man ihn in einer Stunde, wo er sich nicht verteidigt.[101]
> […]
> GEORG Und weißt du, welchen Vorzug das hat, so zu jemandem zu gelangen […] Man sieht ihn, wie er wirklich ist.
> MASCHA[102] Wie er wirklich ist?
> GEORG Ja, man kann sich also nicht getäuscht haben.
> MASCHA *zertreut* Oh freilich . . . . *rasch* Sie glauben also ein Irrtum ist ganz ausgeschlossen – unter solchen Umständen?
> GEORG Ja, ausgeschlossen. Wir würden es ebenso selbstverständlich finden zusammen zu leben, wie wir es gestern selbstverständlich fanden, uns voneinander zu erzählen.[103]

Georg seems convinced that engaging in an intense moment and telling each other "everything" will naturally convert itself into a relationship. He does not differentiate between the concrete challenges of living together and the fantasy. And thus, he tries to convince Mascha that this intimacy is real, that sharing *all* secrets and childhood memories inevitably creates the same intimacy as spending years in a relationship:

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[101] Ibid., 761-761.
[102] In act 2, Rilke changes from Modell to Mascha. While that appears to be a very obvious device to show that Georg will soon begin drawing attention to her (after he thanks her for cleaning the studio), it did not seem thought through enough for me to build a theory on it.
[103] Ibid., 762.

MASCHA *ünterdrückt ihr Erschrecken, dann rasch* Und sie, ich meine, die Dame hat Ihnen also auch von sich erzählt?
GEORG Ja. Später, zum Schluß. Erst ich und dann hernach, als ich schon Alles gesagt hatte, auch sie, – ganz intim, wie vor einem alten Bekannten. Von ihrer Kindheit, von ihren Eltern.[104]

As the previous night's woman, Helene, enters Georg's studio, she confronts him with the paradox of his fantasy, and Rilke immediately disarms Georg's narrative by showing how little these characters know each other:

HELENE Nun, erkennen Sie mich nicht?
GEORG *außer sich* Helene, ich habe Sie erwartet, aber . . .
HELENE *streift den rechten Handschuh ab, ehe sie ihm die feine, unberingte Hand reicht*. Ich habe Sie gleich erkannt.
GEORG *legt seine Hand in die ihre. Immer noch verlegen.* Erkannt?
HELENE Nun ja, gewissermaßen. Wir haben uns ja noch nie bei Tage gesehen. [105]

Rilke uses the contrast between day and night to show how little these characters know of each other. Here, the key devices of seeing and recognising are interwoven with the distinction between day and night, to show how knowing someone actually means seeing and recognising them in their daily lives. Helene, however, does not as though Georg and her connected, precisely because they told each other "everything":

HELENE Als Sie nicht Halt machten. Als Sie mich mitnahmen in dieses fliegende Leben, in dem Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft nicht mehr zu unterscheiden war […] Als Sie unsere ganze Gemeinsamkeit verbrauchten, auch die, die uns noch bevorstand […] Sie rissen mich mit. Sie, Sie wollten Alles – Alles haben . . . . *Langsam, traurig* Und da hab ich dir Alles gegeben.[106]

Helene reveals to Georg that by completely opening up to each other, both of them have violated what she considers a fundamental rule of establishing a connection. They have prematurely used up all the "material" that fuels an interpersonal connection and thus have nothing left but to part. Otherwise, all that is left is to revert

[104] Ibid., 762- 763.
[105] Ibid., 766.
[106] Ibid., 768.

to convention, whether that would be an artistic concubinage ("dafür gibt es ja längst eine Konvention."[107]) or marriage. Helene argues that those who seem to find fulfilment in a life outside of conventions, inevitably will return to one once their foundations start shaking and cannot stand the test of time:

> GEORG Aber gibt es nicht schon viele Menschen, die – wie soll man sagen – ohne Vorbild leben, ohne die Überlieferung auf sich anzuwenden, wie erste: die müssen den doch ganz unwillkürlich den einzelnen Erlebnissen die richtigen Maße unterlegen?
> HELENE Ja, das tun sie unbewusst bei einem, bei zwei oder drei Ereignissen. Aber sie sind doch alle Anfänger, im Notfall lernen sie fünf bis sechs Taktmaße kennen, die sie dann anwenden auf alles . . . . Aber das Leben hat Tausende. Und ist einmal ein Fehler gemacht, geraten sie in Verwirrung und greifen schnell nach derjenigen Konvention, die ihrer momentanen Lage am ähnlichsten sieht . . . . *Pause.* Du zum Beispiel hättest mich geheiratet . . . .
> GEORG *aufrichtig, erstaunt* Nein. [108]

According to Helene, Georg committed a beginner's mistake, making a fantasy, an artwork or an opera,[109] out of their encounter, instead of making an effort to actually get to know her. His "Wir" is but a "Werk" instead of a concrete human relationship:

> HELENE Mit dem Maße eines Kunstwerks tratest du an mich heran . . . Machtest aus dem "Wir" ein "Werk", ein Ewiges . . .[110]

But the material for togetherness, which they have already used up, should fill the everyday with meaning, rather than create an artificial bubble of meaningfulness outside of the everyday:

> HELENE […] Wenn sie schwindlich sind von irgend einer raschen Melodie, dann versuchen sie diese nochmal auf den Alltag zu spielen. Aber was gedacht ist, einen Tanz zu begleiten, lässt sich schwer auf Schritte spannen.[111]

Through Helene's long explanation, Rilke presents the audience with the relationship model he aims to establish, one in which personal encounters and moments of truth

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[107] Ibid., 773.
[108] Ibid., 772.
[109] Ibid., 770.
[110] Ibid., 772.
[111] Ibid., 770.

are there to (re-) connect within the everyday. The way Helene presents it is that, in order to connect, one needs to share a limited amount of meaningful information or material. And being "good" at relationships is to know how to space out this material over a lifetime. While this relationship model may seem a little peculiar, Helene's explanation raises some interesting questions. What would be an ideal schedule for establishing human intimacy? What would even be the appropriate "dosage" for revealing oneself, for sharing one's life story? And finally, what kind of information would pass muster as "connection material", and how is it meant to be delivered?

These questions lead us back to, as we saw in Chapter 2, an essential element of Wittgenstein's everyday, namely creating a balance between rupture and regularity, between actually *living* a relationship and including moments of truth that enable us to connect. In other words, what is the relationship between daily life and exceptional revelations of truth? In this play, Rilke's answer comes in the form of a rather hasty presentation, suggesting the solution is sharing an everyday, in this case a working everyday and a domestic space, instead of establishing intimacy via a sudden complete revelation.

Through showing Mascha's housework, Rilke reveals Georg's realisation that a meaningful relationship can only be found in the everyday. As Mascha secretly cleans Georg's studio while he is out, so they can begin working the next day, Georg has never noticed Mascha cleaning until she calls it to his attention at the beginning of act 2.[112] As Helene looks around Georg's studio, she notices traces of someone else, of someone taking care of him, and thus suggest he look for someone who was "there all along": [113]

> HELENE *entfernt sich leise von ihm* Denk nach, ob es jemanden gibt, den du fast noch nie bemerkt hast, und der doch eigentlich immer um dich ist.

[112] Ibid., 760.
[113] Ibid., 773.

> Jemanden, den du vom Leben gar nicht unterscheiden kannst, Georg – vielleicht . . . . Denk nach, Georg . . . . *Geht leise zur Tür, öffnet sie leise.* Denk nach! *Ab.*[114]

Finally, Georg begins to think and realises that he only need to turn to Mascha to find fulfilment, and in a very short final moment he forgets all about Helene and kneels in front of Mascha.[115]

In contrast to Rilke's extended discussion of his relationship theory, Georg's final realisation seems rushed and happens without any follow-up. It is unsurprising that Rilke's reviewers were not quite convinced by Georg's transformation. Mascha also never gains a voice at the end, but simply, gratefully accepts Georg's sudden belief that she could be the solution to his problems. What is more, the other female characters in the play, Helene and Sophie, both are much more self-assured women, thus highlighting Mascha's distinct lack of voice.

The suddenness of Georg's realisation – not even his own, but Helene's – makes this moment seem like another idealisation, an idealisation of the everyday. Rilke does not offer his audience much more than an idea. Considering his own longing for a regulated everyday at the time, he surely intended to show how a new relationship with the everyday can ease the struggle of creating something meaningful between convention and solitude.

Also much on Rilke's mind was the question of time – and how to make the most fulfilling use of one's time – which fed into his relationship model. In a letter to Carl Mönckeberg on 18 January 1902 lamenting the hostile reception of *Das tägliche Leben*, Rilke imagines an ideal review of the play:

> Mir ist es lieb, auch um seiner Weisheit Willen, die ich mir wohl erwerben möchte: „Jedes Erlebnis hat ein besonderes Tempo, indem

[114] Ibid., 774.
[115] Ibid., 776.

> es gelebt werden muss, wenn es neu, tief und fruchtbar sein soll, und Weisheit ist, dieses Tempo für jeden Einzelfall zu finden."[116]

Though Rilke shifts his attention to making his own everyday more meaningful, he still focuses on the thorny issue of how to turn the "Nebeneinander" into a "Miteinander." In the process, Rilke achieves a complex portrayal of the questions how to establish meaningful relationships in the modern world and how to integrate meaningfulness into the available conventional models for togetherness. *Das tägliche Leben* may not be a dramatic masterpiece, but both its subject matter as well as the events surrounding its performance history surely establish it as an important document of an artist and an artistic movement grappling with the question of how to "make it work."

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I aimed to demonstrate how Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben* serves as an interesting case study for interpreting the legacy of Berlin's avant-garde theatre scene as a specifically modern search for truthful interpersonal connection. In the process, I hope to have also shown how the play functions as another example of how both theatre making and theatre criticism have addressed the issue of togetherness.

As the avant-garde infiltrated late nineteenth-century thinking, moving beyond Berlin and the 1880s, its influence appears clearly in the works of an important literary figure of the early twentieth century, Rainer Maria Rilke, an avid theatregoer. Looking at his early attempts as a dramatist, it becomes apparent that Rilke fell back on patterns he had witnessed and admired in plays such as Halbe's *Jugend* or Schnitzler's *Liebelei* to address the questions that mattered to him at the time. For

[116] *Briefe aus den Jahren 1892 bis 1904,* 201. Letter to Carl Mönckeberg, 18 January 1902.

Rilke, drama was an important experimental stage as he tried to find a literary expression for the challenges of growing up not only as an artist, but also as a man entering in the realm of interpersonal relationships. Faced with the challenges of creating an everyday life that allowed him to be true to himself, grow as an artist, and still somehow function in society, he tried to figure out his own stance on the convention of marriage by dramatically exploring the tension between "Nebeneinander" and "Miteinander."

Even though Rilke, born in 1875, was too young and far away to experience the upheaval of Berlin in the 1880s at first hand, his work does serve as a document of the lasting legacy of these cultural currents, also revealing how far the stage's confrontation with naturalism in the 1880s spread beyond the medium of drama.

The first part of this chapter provided an overview of Rilke's relationship with naturalism and his involvement in the avant-garde theatre scene. It showed that Rilke discovered naturalism as an urgent form of addressing social injustice, which he attempted to do by writing naturalistic plays and, following the example of his idols, making plays accessible to a wider audience through affordable publications. At the same time, Rilke was going through a transition from regarding truth as a crucial instrument of social determinism to looking for the role of truthfulness in the question of interpersonal relationships. Even though his career as a playwright was spectacularly unsuccessful and already over before he produced major works such as *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge*, a reading of his plays' themes and their critical reception allowed us to gain a deeper understanding of Rilke's coming of age as an artist.

With these developments in mind, I turned to Rilke's own life and his correspondence with different cultural figures in order to investigate where his urgent interest in these issues may have come from. At the time he was writing *Das tägliche*

Leben, Rilke was also confronting reality (and convention) himself, trying to establish a home that would provide an external framework in which he could create, and thus attempting to design a way to successfully manage his daily life. Showing how the concept of marriage was central to his contemplations, I demonstrated that Rilke sought to make his everyday life more meaningful by questioning the conventional role of marriage and companionship. The second part of this chapter examined the ways in which the everyday had thus become a prism through which artists like Rilke could explore different ways of relating to their environment and integrating their art into the practical requirements of their day-to-day life and their relationships.

With that in mind, I turned to the final part of the chapter, which studied the play as an interesting study of human intimacy, specifically in the way it deployed the concept of a *shared* everyday as a measure of successful relationships. By (admittedly rather heavy-handedly) arguing that one cannot simply share all of oneself in one go, that real, meaningful relationships space out such revelations, Rilke's dramatic exploration thus leads us back to what we discussed in Chapter 2 about the everyday's powerful and tricky dialectic between regular and exceptional experiences, between reality and escape, between meaningful moments of truth and simply getting on with things.

Ultimately, this final chapter has hoped to demonstrate how Moi's argument – that Ibsen's use of the everyday functions as a forum for establishing meaningful relationships – can also be applied to other works from his socio-cultural environment, works written by authors with whom Ibsen had struck a resounding chord and who recognised themselves in his approach to a rapidly modernising world.

Conclusion

When Hermann Bahr famously declared the end of naturalism in 1891, he claimed that it was time to turn away from replicating reality and focus on psychology instead:

> Das moderne Bedürfnis verlangt Psychologie, gegen die Einseitigkeit des bisherigen Naturalismus; aber es verlangt eine Psychologie, welche der langen Gewohnheit des Naturalismus Rechnung trägt.[1]

Over the course of this thesis, I have aimed to show that this change towards "psychology" in theatre that Bahr considered necessary was in fact a continuation of naturalism.[2] Limiting any consideration of naturalism solely to its social realism, I argue, undermines a much more important legacy that this search for truth entailed, namely the facilitation of more honest and dynamic forms of human interaction.

My aim was to show that what the record of cultural and critical engagement with naturalism in late nineteenth-century Berlin reveals is that wanting to confront the truth on stage was about finding a way to be more authentic, more genuine with one another. Looking at this avant-garde theatre scene, this concern for the community, for the lives of others, is readily apparent at several levels, from the plays' subject matter, to their setting, staging, and even ticketing. Certainly, naturalism began as a form of confronting social issues and creating a forum for people who needed to be heard. While the staging of subject matter such as disease and incest may not have fulfilled this specific desire for very long, the legacy of promoting naturalism still deserves special attention, particularly considering it as a policy to strengthen the community and implement a more egalitarian and inclusive spirit in Berlin's theatre landscape.

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[2] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.

Similarly, Otto Brahm should not only be celebrated as an exceptional ensemble director who resisted the temptation to create stars and supported even the weaker members of his cast, he – and many he inspired, or who inspired him – was actually dedicated to showing how theatre can help people understand each other.

Tracing Berlin's Ibsen-effect has revealed the profound impact that staging Ibsen had on these developments, from the history of Reclam to the literary matinees at the Residenztheater. I hope to have shown just how much this atmosphere, and people's devotion to being truthful, contributed to creating a more pluralistic theatre landscape. By showing to what extent Max Reinhardt's work actually represents an extension of Brahm's that may have lost naturalism's social realism but actually translated it into a more refined conceptualisation of togetherness, I demonstrated how the lasting impact of Brahm's culture of theatre making is using theatre to bring people together (both on stage and off).

Following Toril Moi's argument that Ibsen's social dramas represent the beginning of modernism, an analysis of the theatre-going culture that developed in response to Ibsen's works was overdue. Moi specifically highlights the concept of "the everyday" in these plays, showing how Ibsen's naturalistic stage devices translate into signifiers of being "in touch with the everyday," and her *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism* thus provided an ideal basis for studying the dynamics of human interaction that seemed so relevant for this time. In further developing her theoretical framework of the everyday for theatre, I aimed to reconsider the desire for the ordinary, for the authentic, in which the naturalistic concern with truth is rooted.

In order to develop a model of the everyday that would apply to theatre and capture the dynamics of human interaction I wanted to investigate, I looked into Moi's own theoretical framework, namely Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophische*

Untersuchungen and Stanley Cavell's interpretation thereof, concluding that Wittgenstein's ideas provide a conceptualisation of the everyday as a guideline for how communication can further more honest forms of human interaction, and regard language as a shared set of habits, making truth together.

To develop a model for the everyday that can be specifically applied to an analysis of theatre, however, I added an analogy found in Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* which relates the theatre to his concept of the everyday. The analogy suggests that seeing someone as they really are is like entering their intimate space, specifically like witnessing them unawares and in their everyday state as though from a seat in a theatre. Adding key insights gained from Stanley Cavell's reading of *King Lear* in "The Avoidance of Love," I thus used Moi's and Wittgenstein's ideas to develop a theatre criticism that focuses on communication and interpersonal connection on stage, particularly in terms of the following facets of the struggle to establish a more truthful human interaction: the domestic; the home; seeing versus not seeing; how to reconcile "truth" and "art" with ordinary existence; how to make a relationship a meaningful part of one's everyday life.

With that in mind, I turned to my reading of the plays, starting with Ibsen's plays from *A Doll's House* to *Hedda Gabler* in Chapter 3. By looking at the play's rhetoric of revealing the truth, I argued that Ibsen used the subject of truth in his plays – from those considered as flagships of naturalism, such as *Ghosts*, to *Hedda Gabler* – to illustrate the dynamics of communication. By showing how Ibsen always plays with his audiences' expectations by juxtaposing statements of objective facts with increasingly personal narratives of affirming oneself and coming closer to another person, I conclude that Ibsen, from his most typically naturalistic plays to those that more directly focus on nuanced psychological profundity, used characters' revelations

of truth to show how they wanted to engage more truthfully with themselves and others. Furthermore, I argued, Ibsen actually embeds a meta-theatrical commentary that facilitates a space for self-reflection, hence also facilitating the audience to explore their relationship with the characters (and the human beings) on stage.

In Chapter 4, I turned to *Liebelei* with a similar strategy in mind, reconsidering a play that has generally been regarded as historically important but only insofar as it can serve as a typical representation of fin-de-siècle Vienna. Yet, analysing *Liebelei* according to how much its characters – Christine and Fritz, Mizi, and Theodor – are "in touch with the everyday," I discovered that *Liebelei* thematises human interaction in ways very similar to Ibsen, emphasising the characters' estrangement and their difficulties to establish intimacy in their forms of communications and their relationship with the domestic. Schnitzler's naturalism in *Liebelei* also thematises how people can establish genuine and meaningful relationships, and the play thus functions as a useful example to show how a domestic setting and other naturalistic stage devices can serve as means of showing characters' intimate spaces and their willingness to expose those spaces to each other.

Chapter 5 presented a case study of Rilke's *Das tägliche Leben* that showed how Rilke, another prominent figure of the twentieth-century literary canon, also used naturalism to think through the question of how to establish a meaningful relationship. A quick overview of Rilke's history of engaging with naturalism and his relationship with the avant-garde theatre scene revealed that, though his brief and unsuccessful phase as a dramatist was first prompted by his interest in social justice, it ultimately allowed him to explore the question how to integrate being an artist into satisfactory relationships with others. To ground these suggestions further, I looked into Rilke's own record of thinking through these issues on a more personal level, discussing how

he deliberated about turning his own relationship's "Nebeneinander" into a "Miteinander" as he was conceiving *Das tägliche Leben*.

Through these case studies, I aimed to show how truth was turned into a matter of the *inner* as much as the outer world. And in theatre a turn towards the "inner" meant exploring the complexities of human relationships, a quest that was started during the reception of Ibsen in late nineteenth-century Berlin. The questions these artists were grappling with are still very current, and even though they may require new artistic forms in the twentieth century, this legacy of Ibsen's should be recognised for the powerful reverberating effect it had.

This thesis studied a specific section of Berlin's theatre history to show how engagement with theatre can make important contributions to exploring the dynamics of human interaction on several levels, and ultimately create a more egalitarian and open-minded engagement with culture. What is more, these cultural developments provide a powerful insight into how human relationships were being explored at the time, explaining how, by the twentieth century, the ordinary could become "unheimlich und wunderbar zugleich."

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