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Abstract:

Henrik **Ibsen's** plays often associated the male family name with patriarchical authority. Bernick in 'Pillars of Society' is trapped by his past lies, Nora in 'A **Doll's** House' has to steal her husband's name, and Helene Alving in 'Ghosts' cannot escape the presence evoked by her absent husband. Memorials to absent males always carried with them the burdens of the past in **Ibsen's** drama.

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In the final scene of Samfundets stotter [Pillars of Society], Bernick, the town's leading citizen and ideal father, learns the dangers of having his name in lights. In Et dukkehjem [A **Doll** House], Nora forges the name of her father and risks damaging her husband's good name, and in Gengangere [Ghosts], Helene Alving builds an orphanage in her husband's name in order to rid herself of his legacy. In these plays, Henrik **Ibsen** offers remarkable insight into the nineteenth-century preoccupation with the family and the role of the father. Equally impressive, however, is **Ibsen's** correlation of the male family name with the rise and fall of the patriarch's authority. Jacques Lacan uses the phrase "Name-of-the-Father" ("nom-du-pere") to clarify the authority of the father and the power of the word, and he offers an unusual way for modern readers to gain new insight into **Ibsen** and his singular awareness of what might be called a nineteenth-century crisis of authority.

After the French revolution in 1789, questioning the role of patriarchal father-figures, in all of their various manifestations, became a familiar European preoccupation. Another challenge to the father took a new, perhaps less political, but still equally powerful form in the work of Charles Darwin, whose theory of evolution by natural selection could not be put into place without challenging creationism and the traditional Christian belief in a divine Father. During the late eighteenth and most of the nineteenth century, challenges

to traditional patriarchal authority ranged from various social, political, and scientific developments to the Women's Movement.

Ibsen's social plays consistency dramatize some of the conflicts chat arose during this century within the nuclear or bourgeois family.(1) A prominent theme within a number of his social dramas is the weakening or displacement of the male protagonist, usually a husband and father whose awareness of his role as a "father figure" shapes his behavior. In Sanfundets stotter (1877), Et dukkehjem (1879), and Gengangere (1881), one discovers an intense questioning or resistance to the role of husband and fadher.(2) Significantly, this questioning is directed not only at the individual male characters (Bernick, Torvald, and Captain Alving) but at the society and the patriarchy which they represent.

In each of **Ibsen's** first three social dramas, supposedly dominant males turn out to be weak, and each one of these men represents some significant aspect of the local patriarchy. Bernick in Samfundets stotter is a consul and the town's leading citizen; Torvald in Et dukkehjem is a banker and a respected citizen, and in Gengangere Captain Alving, before his death, was a member of a powerful family chat symbolized prestige and wealth in his community; Pastor Manders, the living male protagonist in Gengangere, as irritating as he is, represents the church. In each of these plays, in quintessentially **Ibsen** fashion, dhe or a name of dhe husband/fadher symbolically represents familial and social authority.

When dhe female protagonists challenge patriarchal authority, they do so by undermining in one form or another both dhe dominant male and his family name. One could try to analyze the significance of this rebellion in Freudian terms, but since to some extent Freud can be viewed as one of the last great attempts to preserve the authority of the male and his emblematic phallus, it seems more useful to use Jacques Lacan, the philosopher and teacher who revised and illuminated some of Freud's ideas within the context of modern critical theory.(3)

The following analysis, focusing narrowly on the specific theme of the father, briefly identifies the relevant thematic elements in the plots of Samfundets stotter and Et dukkehjem, then turns to Lacan to suggest the complex significance of the "Name-of-the-Father" in those plays, and, finally, in Gengangere. One sees the first trace of **Ibsen's** use of the name of the husband/father as a symbol for the destructive elements of the current patriarchal society in Samfundets stotter. Et dukkehjem extends and clarifies this use of the father's name, and through Lacan we see how subtly **Ibsen**

unravels the family as a trope for a male-dominated society almost fatally preoccupied with its own masculine image. Gengangere utilizes the name of the father as a complex metaphor for a larger social problematic, which constrains both men and women.

BERNICK'S NAME IN LIGHTS

Samfundets stotter dramatizes the story of Consul Karsten Bernick, the owner of a shipyard, who must face his own lies about his past when a sister-in-law, Lona Hessel, and brother-in-law, Johan Tonnesen, return from America to expose the deceit upon which Karsten built his marriage and his business.(4) Much of the play focuses on Consul Bernick's patriarchal status in the town. We learn that he rose to prominence by having his brother-in-hw take responsibility for a scandalous relationship in which he himself was involved as a young man. Now, however, Bernick is seen as one of the town's most reputable citizens, although he secretly manipulates real-estate deals to enrich himself when the railroad comes to the town.

Regular, if perhaps ironic, references to Bernick's happy family and its importance to the town, as well as his preoccupation with his family's image, reinforce the family's significance. The town itself has become an extension of Bernick's family; it looks up to him for guidance, and he claims and exercises a godlike protector's role over the childlike townspeople.

The play reaches its climax when Bernick's dual family destinies, as leader of the town and as husband and father, come together. At a ceremony in honor of Bernick, Rorlund, the hypocritical spokesman who represents God's word in this play, eulogizes Bernick's virtues. But Bernick, forced by Lona to recognize that he has not been an honest father to the town nor a loving father to his own son, manages to admit the truth to the townspeople.

What particularly interests me in this play is **Ibsen's** use of Bernick's "name in lights" as a symbol for his patriarchal authority. As the play concludes Bernick seems to recognize the relation between a positive, legitimate sense of personal identity and a negative, corrupted public identity committed to upholding the family name. Bernick must decide between being a deceptive but seemingly superior God's man or becoming an honest, more human person. After this decision he admits two things: the deceptive importance of having his name glorified, and his own previous blindness to women.

Fru Bernick. Nu er de alle borte.

Konsul Bernick. Og vi er alene. Mitt navn lyser ikke i ildskrift longer;

alle lys er slukket i vinduene.

Froken Hessel. Vilde du onske dem tondt igjen?

Konsul Bernick. Ikke for nogen pris i verden. Hvor har jeg voeret henne!

I vil

forfordes, nar I far vice det. Nu er det som jeg var kommen til sans og

samling efter en forgiftelse. Men jeg foler det,--jeg ken bliue ung og sund

igjen. O, kom nermere,--tottere omkring meg. Kom, Betty! Kom, Olaf, min

gutt! Og du Marta;--jeg har ikke set dig i alle disse ar, synes jeg.

Froken Hessel. Nej, det tror jeg gerne; jert samfund er et samfund av

pebersvend-sjok; I ser ikke kvinden. (Samlede Verker 8: 147)(5)

(Mrs. Bernick. Now they've all left.

Bernick. And we're alone. My name isn't up in lights anymore. All the

windows are dark.

Lona. Would you want them lit again?

Bernick. Not for anything on earth. Where have I been, You'd be

petrified if you knew. It's as if I were coming bade to my senses

after being poisoned. But I feel sure--I can be young and strong

again. Oh, come closer--come closer in around me. Betty, come! Olaf, my boy,

come! And you, Martha--it seems as if all these years I've never really

seen you.

Lona. I can well believe it. This society of yours is a bachelors'

club. You don't see women. [Fjelde 177])(6)

The loss of his name in lights suggests Bernick's awareness of the significance of the public recognition of his name. The line itself is highly suggestive. "Mitt navn lyser ikke i ildskrift lenger; alle lys er slukket i vinduene" (SV 8: 147) literally translated means "My name does not shine in letters of fire anymore; all the lights are out in the windows." In the stage directions **Ibsen** describes a sign that appears on a house outside Bernick's

window with the words "Leve Karsten Bernick, vart samfunns stotte!" (SV8: 135) ["Long Live Consul Bernick, Pillar of Our Society." (Fjelde 106)]

Ibsen's use of the image of the name in lights has, for me, a touch of the biblical about it, like a prophet whose name has been written in flaming letters. More modestly, the image could also be related to electioneering pamphlets or portraits, a context which seems appropriate for the play. Finally, however, one could go back to **Ibsen's** active life in the theater, a life still close to him when he wrote this play.(7) Although the line was written before the bright lights of Broadway and an actor or a playwright could literally have his or her name in lights on the theater marquee, the young **Ibsen** almost certainly dreamed of seeing his name in lights, on the notices outside the theater, or indeed, pasted on windows around town.(8)

The crucial point of the line and the scene, however, is that Bernick distinguishes between himself and his name; he recognizes that the privileging of his name was part of the contagion that poisoned and blinded him, driving him to try to live up to the illusions surrounding that name. When Bernick admits that he had not really seen his sister, that he had been blind to her, Lona expands his admission to a much larger truth: in his patriarchy, his "bachelors club," women were invisible.(9) Bygiving up the desire to see his name in every window--to be an idealized savior and father to the town--he gains the power to see the other half of the human species.(10)

While the phenomenon of sons and daughters trying to live up to their father's name has been a commonplace for centuries, that fact nevertheless symbolizes the vitality of patriarchally structured societies. **Ibsen** turns that commonplace upside down; the effort to be patriarchal, to live up to one's name becomes destructive. Throughout the play **Ibsen** uses the family name to symbolize the destructiveness of the patriarchal desire, and the final putting out of the name in lights suggests Bernick's change or rebirth.(11) **Ibsen**, then, seems to avail himself of an array of associations when he has Bernick invoke his "name in lights" and admit the vanity in its appeal.

Perhaps having discovered in this play the dramatic symbolism of the father's or dominant male's name, **Ibsen** makes a more powerful and subtle use of this trope in his next work.

NORA'S FATHER-FIGURES

The opening scenes of Et dukkehjem focus on Torvald and Nora Helmer preparing for Christmas with the children. The family's economic problems establish the play's

conflict, along with Torvald's position of authority, which comes both from his economic dominance and from his and Nora's joint belief in his superiority. He rules Nora and his children like a parody of a Creationist God; he creates and subjugates through the animal names, "lark," and "squirrel," by which he designates her. But the kingdom quickly begins to disintegrate: Torvald's self-righteous vision of a structured, organized, and fair world, in which he is the master of his house, conflicts with the reality around him.

Through the visit of Nora's friend Mrs. Linde, we discover that Nora had to save a very sick Torvald by borrowing money and by working--two exclusively masculine activities usually forbidden to women in a bourgeois home. Nora's assumption of these tasks automatically undermines Torvald's authority. **Ibsen** offers us a similar juxtaposition of traditional male-female roles by contrasting the independent Mrs. Linde, who supports herself, and the weaker and morally corrupt Krogstad who wants to work but resorts to devious conniving to keep his position.

The plot, therefore, unfolds two parallel stories, both of them hinging on strong or "masculine" women and weak, i.e., "feminine," men. Paradoxically, the only potentially strong male is Dr. Rank, family friend and secret admirer of Nora, who is dying. The plays conflict comes from Torvald's vision of a fixed universe premised on a patriarchal Christian tradition and Nora's gradual recognition of a real world that privileges neither the divine nor the family father. For instance, Nora fantasizes that a rich man will come to save her but, failing that, she keeps her secret dream of being saved by Torvald. Finally, she realizes that in this fatherless world she must create her own identity In sum, the play destroys Nora's fantasies of the saving and protecting male, the father-figure.

Et dukkehjem shocked its nineteenth-century audiences by undermining the very notion of family that they were struggling to create and maintain. While ideas of individual "love," rather than extended-family necessity or common good, were now becoming crucial to the nineteenth-century bourgeois family, **Ibsen** dramatizes a marriage based on economic need and authoritarian relationships.(12) The flaw within this patriarchal socioeconomic framework becomes apparent when Nora discovers, first, that she has no legitimate name of her own, i.e., she can use neither her married name nor her maiden name to borrow money, and, second, that she cannot appropriate her (the) father's name. In other words, as a married woman she has neither authority nor identity. Torvald's authority rests on his Western and Christian assumption of his natural and presumably divinely bestowed superiority. Once Nora realizes the shallowness of

Torvald's position, she rejects him as patriarch and herself as the narrowly-defined wife. When she leaves, Nora understands that she has lived her life as though an arm or a leg on the body of an "other" That other is, first, the father who has literally died, and, second, the husband who has proved to be so weak that he has died for her as an authority figure. Nora, in other words, finds herself embodying a series of dead or weak men. When she doses the door behind her, she leaves a house filled with dying or dead patriarchal figures, a house in which the "father" as an image of strength and of salvation has already died.(13)

THE-NAME-OF-THE-FATHER

Within this gallery of wax males, the signature of Nora's dead father becomes the first of several crucial texts or signifiers. Although my analysis has an historical bias that tends to reject a traditional Freudian position, Lacan's phrase "nom-du-pere" offers a useful perspective.(14) Lacan has formulated the notion of the Name-of-the-Father to expand upon Freud's Oedipal complex and to identify the linguistic nature of the complex. For Lacan the name of the Father is associated with the symbolic order, with law:

. . . [Freud's] reflexion led him to link the appearance of the

signifier of the Father, as the author of the Law, with death, even

to the murder of the Father--thus showing that if this murder is

the fruitful moment of debt through which the subject binds

himself for life to the Law, the symbolic Father is, in so far as he

signifies this Law, the dead Father (Ecrits 199, emphasis added).

The connection drawn by Lacan corresponds with my own perception of the father's signature as a post-Darwinian sign of the dead (F)ather. Although the Freudian connotations inescapably remain associated with the Name-of-the-Father, I use the phrase to emphasize the relation between God the Father, the Word (of) God, fathers, and words, i.e., language itself. Apart from its Lacanian and Oedipal associations, the phrase may also be connected with the Christian and patriarchal systems that have shaped virtually every aspect of Western culture. In this sense, **Ibsen's** plays become even more impressive as they participate in bringing forth the hidden powers of fathers end their names.

Nora is the most prominent nineteenth-century literary character to realize that the name of the (F)ather may be all that remains of (H)im. Nora arrives at a basic Lacanian

realization, that the Law to which she turns, that is, her father's name, represents something from which she always has been and always will be separated. One might suggest that this realization leads her into/through language to her own identity.

By forging her father's name, Nora tried to appropriate the name of the father, but as a married woman she cannot legally assume her father's name, since a woman changes her name when she marries. Ironically, her father's name possesses little real or symbolic authority. According to Torvald, Nora's father lacked those paternal qualities of uprightness morality, and strength that characterize a Lutheran father and God. In other words, the name Nora wrote signified little or nothing more than itself. Yet even in its near meaninglessness, the father's name, and the taking of it in vain, suffices to threaten the already weakened family with ruin. Nora, it should be remembered, uses the name because of her sick husband and the poverty of her dying father. But her forgery lacks validity; she cannot invoke the symbolic law/father.

Nora's action becomes more meaningful when seen as a suggestive illustration of Saussure's breakdown of the Sign. The signifier, the sound/image part of the sign is the father's signature; the signified, the concept, is the name of the (dead) father (Saussure 65-7). Nora attempts to connect the signified, the father's name, with the signifier, the signature. Had she truly gotten her father's signature, the document would have been legal, because the father's name serves as guarantor. But since the signature is false, that is, it is written by a woman, it signifies nothing but the absence of the father. In other words, by taking her (F)ather's name in vain (a violation of Moses's fifth commandment), Nora has committed a kind of heresy. Her subterfuge makes her guilty of having challenged the Father, i.e. symbolism and law, so she must be condemned and driven away.

Ibsen sustains the motif of Nora's exclusion from the weakening patriarchy throughout the play, and a series of letters and cards reinforces the death of the father. First, Nora's forged signature does in fact allow her to borrow money and save her sick husband, but, although she publicly tries to build up Torvald's image as a banker, a husband, and a man, she cannot reinstate or reinvest in him the mythological authority that he lacks. The Name-of-the-Father is all there is.

Second, Dr. Rank, the only "strong" or nearly godlike male in the play, has inherited a fatal illness from his father and announces his withdrawal from life by leaving a card marked with an X. This letter, symbolizing Rank's good-bye, has no meaning, yet to Nora and to Rank it means death. In contrast to Torvald, the Doctor rejects the trappings

of authority, and he becomes Nora's best friend. Yet by expressing his love for her, implicitly making a claim on her, Rank prevents Nora from asking for his help. As the only father figure in the play who is not a father, Rank withdraws from competition. As a Doctor he committed himself to life, and by erasing, xing out, his own name, he accepts his death.

Third, Krogstad's letter revealing Nora's crime functions as a kind of ultimate masculine threat, the tool of both retribution and forgiveness. (One need not exaggerate its phallic connotations, but to function as a threat it must be inserted into the waiting mail box.) Ironically, Nora's weakness and Krogstad's strength lie in the same dead father. For Krogstad, the presence of the signature proves the absence of the father; it signifies, as precisely as Lacan could have wished, the dead father. One could argue that for Nora, the need to forge the signature and Krogstrad's recognition and malicious use of it verify the absence of a protecting or "fair" God. Nora's only hope for salvation, for rescuing her belief in the patriarchy, lies in being forgiven and/or rescued by her living, earthly father-figure, Torvald.

Nora expects that Krogstad's letter to Torvald will bring about the miracle, the sacrifice that will lead to her salvation. She assumes in her own biblical fashion that, just as she has secretly sacrificed herself for him, Torvald, like God's son, will even more nobly sacrifice himself for her. With this Christian assumption, Nora resembles Mrs. Linde, who, as Bjorn Hemmer emphasizes, wants to subordinate herself to someone and therefore returns, though still insisting on her right to work, to Krogstad and the patriarchy.(15)

Torvald, however, fails to perceive Nora's call to his privileged masculinity and, instead of helping her, attacks her heredity. "Ti! Alle din fars letsindige grundsaetninger har du taget i arv. Ingen religion, ingen moral, ingen pligtfolelse--" (SV 8: 352) ["All your father's flimsy values--Be still! All your father's flimsy values have come out in you. No religion, no morals, no sense of duty--" (Fjelde 187)]. In Torvald's eyes Nora has inherited the sins of her father. For Lacan,

The father, the Name-of-the-father, sustains the structure of

desire with the structure of the law--but the inheritance of the

father is that which Kierkegaard designates for us, namely, his

sin. (The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis 34).

At this moment, Nora seems to perceive her own correlation between her desire and the symbolic Father to whom she has constantly turned for salvation. Once she learns the truth, that her own father's name is her sin not her salvation, and that Torvald has no intention of sacrificing himself for her, her belief in the divinely sponsored patriarchy dies.

Not surprisingly, when Torvald attacks her father, he strips her of her patriarchal heritage as a child-wife-mother, and Nora wakes up to become a model of Georg Brandes's "new woman" and a source for the later "New Woman"(16) In the final twist of the plot, however, Krogstad and Torvald unite in the wish to destroy the significance of Nora's taking of her father's name. They are, after all, both preoccupied with saving or regaining the value of their own names, the only symbol that either man has of some idealized sense of masculinity.

When Krogstad returns the letter, the symbol of both the life and the death of the male authority principle, Nora's female signature will no longer exist and, in essence, the original father's name, however meaningless it was, will be reinstated.(17) In its absence, the (F)ather's name/ authority will be privileged once again. On the basis of this return to the norm, to the original and now supposedly untouched father's name, Torvald tries to rekindle Nora's slave-spirit.

Du har elsket mig som en hustru bor elske sin mand. Det var kun midlerne

som ikke havde indsigt nok til at domme om. Men tror du, at du er mig

mindre kor, fordi du ikke forstar at handle pa egen hand? Nej, nej; stet du

dig bare til mig; jeg skal rade dig; jeg skal vejlede dig. Jeg matte ikke

vore en mand, hvis ikke netop denne kvindelige hjolpeloshed gjorde dig

dobbelt tiltrokkende i mine ojne. (SV8: 354)

(You loved me the way a wife ought to love her husband. It's simply the

means that you couldn't judge. But you think I love you any the less for

not knowing how to handle your affairs? No, no-just lean on me; I'll

guide you and teach you. I wouldn't be a man if this feminine helplessness

didn't make you twice as attractive to me. [Fjelde 189])

Unconsciously, Torvald admits in the last line that he would not be a "man" if he could not believe in feminine helplessness. Aroused by his vision of Nora's "weak" femininity, he again invokes his male strength and authority by returning to his masculine Creator's vocabulary. Nora becomes a "songbird" beneath his wide wings and a "hunted dove" whom he has rescued. Revealing a Victorian male's vision of his divine and biological birthright, Torvald's speech assumes a Godlike role by claiming both motherhood and fatherhood. But the play itself has now undermined Torvald's masculine powers. He is impotent as a god and dead as a male authority figure, and the audience and Nora realize it; only Torvald does not.

In their dosing dialogue, Nora makes it clear that she does not blame only Torvald, but the entire patriarchal system that passed her like a child from her father's house to Torvald's. Nora has already tried to assert her own identity, her authority, to Krogstad when she denied or challenged the significance of the name of the father. In one sense, at the play's end Nora refuses to succumb to the masculine author(ial) identity and insists on her own ability to write, to become a person who names, whose signature signifies.(18)

One additional note might be made here. In this play, Henrik **Ibsen** seems to have been willing to undermine his own patriarchal heritage as masculine author(ity), as sole proprietor of signatory power. By giving Nora the right to walk toward her own identity, he has given her the right to find her own language, to sign her own name.

Within a Foucauldian context, Nora's final and famous gesture declares her separation from the fixed representation of a wife. In describing the transition from eighteenth-century or Classical to the nineteenth-century or modern epistemology, Foucault says:

The end of Classical thought -- and of the episteme that made

general grammar, natural history, and the science of wealth

possible -- will coincide with the decline of representation, or

rather with the emancipation of language, of the living being, and of

need, with regard to representation. (209)

Although I may be twisting Foucault's notion of "representation;Nora seems to stand as one of the nineteenth century's most dominant personifications of that "emancipation" proposed by Foucault for the fields of biology, economy, and language. Nora insists on projecting herself away from Torvald's representational view of her as a stereotypical

wife. She chooses instead to see herself as someone in process, in a state of becoming rather than of defined being. **Ibsen's** dramatization of this emancipation simply puts into literature, and thus renders visible to public perception, the portents of change that were everywhere apparent in society. They were, however, inextricably related to the questioning of patriarchal social structures.

THE ORPHANAGE: THE SIGN OF THE ABSENT FATHER

If dukkehjem enacted publicly the displacement of the husband, the rejection of the father, and the rise of the woman, Gengangere confronts the confusing, even deadly inheritance left behind by that absent/present husband/father. **Ibsen** dramatizes the heritage of a language that prevents humans, and specifically women, from consciously creating their own identities. A dead and decadent father, a prodigal son, and a rebellious wife and mother stand at the center of the play, with an illegitimate daughter and two other variations of "fathers" rounding out the cast.

In the opening scene between the servant Regina and her supposed father Engstrand, the play raises one of its primary questions: the relationship between child and parent and the obligation of one to the other. Regina challenges the father (who is not her father), and that challenge reverberates throughout the play.

On one level, both Engstrand's misrepresentation of himself as Regina's father and Captain Alving's drunken lechery undermine parental status and traditional attitudes toward fatherhood and authority. On another level, the play dramatizes the potentially poisonous ideal of the nuclear family, while reminding the audience through the pompous Pastor Manders of the religious premises upon which that family is based.(19) On a third level, the play is not so much about the real father, the long dead Captain Alving, as it is about the discovery of the difference between the real, but dead father -- with all of his related symbols, such as the orphanage or the pipe -- and the patriarchal heritage that Mrs. Alving tries to overcome.

The signifier of the absent father in this play, written larger than Nora's forged signature, is the orphanage itself. The Captain Alving Memorial orphanage is in a sense a forgery of the Captain's life, and the first trace of that forgery occurred in Mrs. Alving's letters to her son. As Bjorn Hemmer says, "The building of the Children's Home In memoriam Captain Alving has its dear parallel in the false idealization of the father figure which Mrs. Alving undertook in the letters to her son Osvald" (Cambridge Companion 84). Through the memorial to her dead husband, Mrs. Alving attempts to dissociate herself from the Name-of-the-Father, from the Symbolic Order of the Dead Father. She does

this, first, by appropriating in her guise as devoted wife the Captain's name and legacy and, second, by trying to rid herself of the legacy by containing and displacing it.

Mrs. Alving realizes finally that even though she has built an orphanage in Captain Alving's name, she cannot escape him, for he is, quite literally, inside of her. Captain Alving's presence in the blood and body of Mrs. Alving constitutes a much deeper and darker heredity than even Osvald's venereal disease suggests. The disease and the ghosts within and around her are the discourse, the inheritance of a language and a reality created by the patriarchy. Ultimately, the play portrays Mrs. Alving's struggle with this unwanted presence in herself. Lacan again may be adapted to offer us some insight into Mrs. Alving and her ghosts.

... we should concern ourselves not only with the way in which

the mother accommodates herself to the person of the father, but

also with the way she takes his speech the word (mot), let us say, of

his authority, in other words, of the place that she reserves for the

Name-of-the-Father in the promulgation of the law. (Ecrits 218,

emphasis added)

This taking of his speech, as we shall see, poses Mrs. Alving's dilemma. "Captain Alving's Memorial Orphan's Home" figures both the heritage of which she wishes to divest herself and the misrepresentation of the man for whom it serves as a memorial. The orphanage takes on heightened significance because of Pastor Manders, who in his bumbling supervisory role acts, as it were, like a god-father to the orphanage.

In Mrs. Alving's attempt to create an edifice in her husband's name, she discovers, then, that she cannot escape his text, his language, for it, like his disease, lives within her. Sandra M. Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's figure of a mad woman as the one who escapes, who creates her own literary identity, is in some sense applicable to Mrs. Alving, who finds herself trapped within a patriarchal text that no one in her family could escape (The Madwoman in the Attic 82-3).

Just as Nora in Et dukkehjem discovered that because her own signature had no value she had to take the name of the dead/absent father, so Helene Alving eventually realizes that she cannot escape the ghost or the name of the absent husband/father. She tried to uphold the "name" of her husband when he was alive, and she protected it even after his death without understanding the significance of her decision. Like Nora,

Mrs. Alving, during her years of lonely labor, finds no way to reach her own identity except through a male guise, the illusion of the ideal father. When she builds a monument, a home for parentless children, in her husband's name, she constructs what might be called a church in the name of the (absent) Father, a place that will offer shelter to orphans and absolution to her.

Near the play's conclusion we hear that Captain Alving himself was a victim of the oppressive religious environment so visibly manifested in Pastor Manders. Alving's "livsglede," "joy of life," led him to the drink and carousing that destroyed his family and killed him. In essence, just as the noble and patriarchal image of the Captain fabricated by Mrs. Alving did not designate the actual Captain, so the corrupt vision of him which she experienced may not define him either. In contrast to Joan Templeton who sees Alving in thoroughly dark terms ("Of this Time" 60-1), I think **Ibsen** slightly redeems the Captain through the extensive "livsglede" dialogue. Because of it, the real father, the true Captain Alving, glides into an indefinable mist of past and future images. One or two of these images are glimpsed briefly and uncertainly at the play's conclusion.

The first image is Engstrand's ironic "Captain Alving" dancing hall which, by combining Engstrand and Alving, continues the decadent portrait of Alving, but adds a touch of the comic and pathetic to it. This image, however, may no more accurately designate the Captain than the orphanage would have, for he is, to some degree, a victim of the same discourse and phallocentric tradition that imprisons Helene Alving; now his identity passes from one illusion, the noble father, to another, the corrupt male, neither of which fully identifies him.

One could argue that there has been no real patriarch in the house at all, but rather a failing tradition, a series of differing and imaginary portraits (a name always referring to another name, a home that becomes another), held up by the townspeople, by Pastor Manders, by Mrs. Alving, and by Osvald. Like the patriarchal portraits hanging on the walls when the curtain of Rosmersholm opens, or like the portrait of General Gabler that hangs in the Tesman living room of Hedda Gabler,(20) images of the father and a ghostly discourse of "old dead doctrines" shaped Captain Alving's image of himself as a man and Mrs. Alving's almost literary recreation of her dead husband. Both husband and wife were snared by the contradiction between their natural desires and the cultural discourse in which they lived.

Ironically, Osvald's final call to the sun invokes emblematically whet I think may be the second evanescent image of the father, the "livsglede " In the horrible tragedy of the

play's final scene, the sun still echoes with the joy of life that once characterized the father, the son, and now the illegitimate daughter Regina.(21) This joy is invoked, if in a profoundly dark fashion, in Oswald's call to an absent/present sun (absent for him, present for Mrs. Alving), the sun-god, yet another name for a mythological father. But of course the sun is also the mother of life. Adding to the horror and the richness of this final cry is our remembrance that Regina, too, claims the joy of life as her heritage, but from her mother rather than her father, and her future remains open.

Joan Templeton says of her, "As much Alving's true heir as her half brother, she will perpetuate the line in a succeeding generation and perhaps, like her father before her, `blight with plagues the marriage hearse'" ("Of this Time" 64). This may well be true, yet that "livsglede" was clearly as positive for Osvald and his Parisian friends in art as it was negative for Alving in his drunken carnality. Regina, for me, may have a chance: the "joy of life" does not always have to be destructive, though the irony of Regina's potential (re)turn to her (non-)father's house weighs against her. She has, however, another home to go to. Keeping in mind Regina's flirtatious comments to the Pastor in the first act (SV 9: 61-2; Fjelde 210-1), her first effort at a new life will be towards Pastor Manders ("Pastoren er sa snill a komme tilrette med" [SV 9: 124] ["The pastor's so nice to deal with" (Fjelde 268)]); there seems as much chance that she will become Mrs. Manders as that she will end up in the dance hall.

Thus, I can hope that **Ibsen** in this dark tragedy may subtly, almost invisibly hint at the possibility of a gynocentric tradition, a new discourse, in which the body, gendered however it may be, is allowed to write itself, rather than to inscribe memorials in the name of the absent father.

In conclusion, we see that **Ibsen** recognized the complex attraction and danger of putting the father's, the patriarch's, name in lights, on loans, or on orphanage facades. If in Samfundets stotter, Bernick partially realizes his own entrapment in a masculine myth, in Et dukkehjem Nora discovers herself disenfranchised and disembodied by her father's/husband's name. She finally rejects that name and discourse to write her own destiny. However, if Helene Alving in Gengangere represents a continuation of Nora, then escape from the Name-of-the-Father in **Ibsen's** time may have been impossible; even though we might see some hope in the ambiguously suggested future of Regina. Claiming her mother's heritage rather than her father's, Regina sets off to see if Pastor Manders may be weaker now than he was when, twenty-six or so years ago, he sent Mrs. Alving home. If he gives in, he will find himself with a very strong new wife, but still one who seeks him for his home and name.

(1) Bjorn Hemmer provides a similar background to the plays and refers to **Ibsen's** and Brandes's criticism of their society and its "Victorian family facade." "They found in their age a dear dichotomy between ideology and practice, a contradiction between the official and the private life of the bourgeois individual. Behind the splendour of the Victorian family facade there was to be found a much murkier reality. It was precisely these contradictions, this problematical element, in the bourgeois world that **Ibsen** made his special field as a realistic commentator on contemporary life" (Cambridge Companion 70).

(2) Charles Lyons makes a statement that relates to the questioning of the familial and divine father which underlies this article. Lyons says: "On an external level, **Ibsen's** plays imitate the failure of the Christian myth, what J. Hillis Miller discusses in other nineteenth-century writers as The Disappearance of God" (xix). As for related criticism, Joan Templeton's articles in PMLA (1986 and 1989) offer persuasive feminist discussions of **Ibsen**, while Gail Finney offers an overview of feminism in **Ibsen** in ha chapter in The Cambridge Companion to **Ibsen**. Declan Kiberd's book Men and Feminism in Modern Literature takes up the theme of strong women and weak men, and his statement, "Every major play by **Ibsen** foretells the death of the family as an institution based on a false specialism of roles, man for work, woman for the home" (65-6) relates to my thesis, but fundamentally we have very different themes--indeed even antithetical theses--and reach very different conclusions.

(3) I am side-stepping Freud here, but I recognize that, although I disagree with many of his conclusions, his insight and his influence have obviously played a major role in the development of twentieth-century Western thought. Within the limits of my understanding of Lacan, I also have serious disagreements with him, but, like Freud's, his theories lead to some fascinating textual analyses (see Anne Marie Rekdal's reading of Hedda Gabler), but it still preserves a phallocentrism which my work attempts to undermine.

(4) My article, "Darwin, Weak Men, Strong Women and **Ibsen's** Pillarsof Society" discusses this play from a Darwinist and feminist perspective.

(5) All further references will be designated as SV.

(6) All future references will be to Henrik **Ibsen**: The Complete Major Prose translated by Rolf Fjelde and designated as Fjelde.

(7) **Ibsen** biographies that I have relied upon include Halvdan Koht's Henrik **Ibsen**: ett diktarliv, Michael Meyer's **Ibsen**: A biography, and Edvard Beyer's **Ibsen** the Man and his Work.

(8) Gosta Bergman studies the transition in theater lighting during the nineteenth-century from gaslight to limelight an the electric arc lamp (233-300). I am grateful to both Mary Kay Norseng and Jorunn Hareide for their assistance and comments on this line.

(9) Joan Templeton persuasively argues for the feminist nature of this play as well as Et dukkehjem ("Backlash" 36-7).

(10) I find Bernick still very dense at the play's conclusion, not really understanding the significance of what has happened to him. James McFarlane comes to a similar conclusion and argues that Bernick "may have advanced less than critics in the past have generally assumed" (McFarlane, **Ibsen** and Meaning 235). Bjorn Hemmer continues this discussion and suggests that the final family tableau "is flooded with what Northrop Frye calls `sophisticated irony'" (Cambridge Companion 81).

(11) In "The Lacanian Imaginary in **Ibsen's** Pillars of Society and The Wild Duck," Oliver Gerland argues that the play "traces Karsten's Bernick's shift from identification with a paternal figure to identification with a maternal figure" (343). However, while I find his argument persuasive, I remain skeptical at the play's conclusion of Bernick's "conversion, since, for me, his final lines suggest that he does not quite understand what has happened. My article in Comparative Literature Studies discusses this in greater detail.

(12) Numerous books discuss the development of the nuclear or bourgeois family in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As part of this development, Edward Shorter in The Making of the Modern Family, identifies a "surge of sentiment" in courtship, the mother-child relationship, and the boundary between family and community. This new emotional interaction dislodged an older kinship and economically-based family structure and replaced it with variants of the modern family (5).

(13) James McFarlane comments on the theme of children as extensions of fathers in Samfundets stotter and Et dukkehjem. "For a child to be treated by its father as Nora was, for example, or Olaf--as a mere extension of the father's own life, a repository for his own ideas, and perhaps as the ultimate heir to his own life's work--is to suffer a

complete eclipse of personality" (Oxford **Ibsen** 5: 9). In my reading, Nora discovers that she was eclipsed by what modem horror-film goers might describe as the living-dead.

(14) Lacan's example of this "nom-du-pere" occurs in a discussion about Ernest Jones who claims that Australian natives would recognize that coitus produces pregnancy. For Lacan, however, this makes no difference. "For, if the symbolic context requires it, paternity will nonetheless be attributed to the fact that the woman met a spirit.... It is certainly this that demonstrates that the attribution of procreation to the father can only be the effect of a pure signifier, of a recognition, not of a real father, but of what religion has taught us to refer to as the Name-of-the-Father" (Ecrits 199).

(15) Bjorn Hemmer interprets Mrs. Linde's actions here in a positive light. "She has never enjoyed the liberty for which Nora is reaching, and has subordinated her own needs to those of others. But she leaves the `**doll's** house' happy, on her way to her much more modest workaday home" ("**Ibsen** and the crisis of Individual Freedom" 178). For Hemmer, Nora's "conquest of her own individual freedom is not to her an end in itself. It is an essential step in and a prerequisite for her development into someone who can be something for another person," (177). Brian Johnston describes Mrs. Linde's union with Krogstad as a "Christian or Galilean one of self-sacrifice and mutual forgiveneness" (Text and Supertext 157). James McFarlane discusses Krogstad as the involuntary agent of emancipation in the play, but notes the distant comparison between Lona Hessel and Mrs. Linde, since "she dissuades Krogstad from asking for his letter back and thus deliberately precipitates the dash" (**Ibsen** and Meaning 8).

(16) Michael Meyer in his biography of **Ibsen** quotes Georg Brandes's description of a new woman. "This young girl is no longer ignorant of life and the world. She walks forth into it self-possessed and sceptical. She does not throw herself at the first man who asks her. Even in extreme youth, she has a character of her own. She has a man's seriousness, power of decision, and will" (363). Although the official English version of this New Woman does not emerge dearly until the 1890S, various configurations of her play an important role in **Ibsen** and Strindberg. Let me use Gail Cunningham's description of the New Woman's behavior as a means of comparing the two: "She could now elect to put her energies into professional rather than matrimonial achievement, and could justify her decision by pointing out that marriage, as conventionally defined, was a state little better than slavery. She could make her own choice about having children, either with or without the authority of a marriage licence, and she could demand complete freedom from either parental or legal control in selecting her sexual partner" (10).

(17) The return of the damning letter apparently results from Mrs. Linde's intervention, but one might well argue chat she has decided to return to the patriarchy which Nora has rejected. She does, of course, insist on understanding, on openness, between Helmer and Nora.

(18) In her famous dosing lines, "Da matte bade du og jeg forvandle os ..." (SV 8: 364) Nora rejects the patriarchal bourgeois family structure that denies her an independent identity. She demands a transformation, an evolution of the patriarchal family into one based on equality. However, as he sinks down into his chair, Torvald aware that his patriarchal tradition has failed him makes one last plaintive appeal to it. He dreams of a miracle, but miracles have always been performed by God, and Nora has rejected God. By rejecting Torvald, by denying the absent and dead father whose name she invoked with the forged signature, Nora has stopped believing in miracles. Yet Torvald still believes in them. Is his last speech a momentary belief in his own capacity to change, to evolve, or is it a hope that the divine authority, which in his moral righteousness he has represented throughout the play, will appear and save him?

(19) Not surprisingly, no complete bourgeois family -- father, mother, and child -- exists in the play, and the only apparently happy families mentioned in it are Osvald's unmarried friends in Paris.

(20) Anne Marie Rekdal in "Noe skjont -- lokkende -- og modig: En lacaniansk analyse av Hedda Gabler" presents a lucid and persuasive Lacanian anaysis of this play.

(21) Among others, Ronald Gray discusses the ambiguous power of the sun in this scene (81-2). John Northam also refers to the sun in the context of its rising at this moment (72-3). In a brief discussion with hints of similarities to my own analysis, Linn B. Konrad refers to the sun as "standing for love, vitality and creativity" (141) Bjorn Hemmer offers a persuasive discussion of Gengangere, but for him Osvald's final cry "is a declaration that all hope is lost" (Cambridge Companion 87).

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