

WOODY ALLEN – HENRIK IBSEN HEDDA AND HER SISTERS – ON WOMEN AND SPACE

Astrid Sæther

Henrik Ibsen and Woody Allen have in common their position as observers of the western bourgeoisie in times of transition; likewise, they are both pre-occupied with existential problems related to (in)authenticity, mortality, emptiness and lack of meaning. They are both attentive spectators and profound analysts of the position of women in male-dominated society. They both relate their themes to class and gender – and, in Allen’s case, also to ethnicity. Their personae are vulnerable, artistically oriented and fragile. Women are particularly vulnerable when they find themselves in marginal situations, as they are in Ibsen’s work—for example, Helene Alving, Rebecca West or Ellida Wangel. They also find themselves in geographical “outposts”, and they have been party to destructive relationships. Freud bridges the two. His studies of the feminine psyche were ground-breaking, and many have claimed that Ibsen provided him with material in his artistic treatment of women’s psychology. He produced penetrating analyses of Ibsen characters,¹ and Allen states his legacy to Freudian theory, philosophy, and method. He also employs the retrospective method which Ibsen developed and which Freud made use of in a therapeutic setting. A heavily laden system of symbols can also be recognized in both artists. The contrast between Eros as a positive energy and the death drive, Thanatos, represents a conflicting impulse in their work. Both the dramatic texts and the films are frequently subjects for psychoanalytical studies. They often present themes related to artistic preoccupations, disguised as a personal struggle for self-expression. The artist who is investigating his artistic “afterlife” is also present in their works. Moreover, a life of routine is presented as a nightmarish vision in Allen’s work, just as conventionality in Ibsen’s text is a counterpoint to a life of freedom. These are some of the factors that link the two dramatists and support a comparison of their artistic works, even though they represent different centuries and media.

Woody Allen has written a number of essays, articles, and books – among them *Without Feathers*, which contains the short essay called “Lovborg’s [Løvborg’s] Women Considered.” (1976, 26-32) The title caught my eye and, expecting to find an Allenian approach to Ibsen’s masterwork *Hedda Gabler* (1890), I realized that the text was a burlesque *jeu de mots* or pun on a variety of Ibsenesque topics, intricately woven together, filled with associations and neologisms, as the filmmaker takes one big sweep through Ibsen’s oeuvre, using irony and parody. The opening line states, “No writer has created more fascinating and complex females than the great Scandinavian playwright Jorgen Lovborg, known to his contemporaries as Jorgen Lovborg (!)” (ibid.) The essay demonstrates Allen’s keen knowledge of Ibsen’s dramatic characters, although their names have been twisted

¹ See S. Freud, “Einige Charaktertypen aus der psychoanalytischen Arbeit”, in *Imago*. Band 4 (1916), 317-336.

and turned: Moltvick, Siri Brackman, Mrs. Sanstad, Dorf, Berte, Eowolf – etc.² Why should Woody Allen choose Eilert Løvborg as his “Scandinavian playwright”? An answer to this may be found in the specifically Jewish sense of humour (see R. Freadman 1993). Løvborg can be looked upon as a “Schlemiel”, an antihero, yet a hero; an awkward and unlucky person for whom things never turn out right. Another reason for his choice is Eilert Løvborg’s role as the artist—the gifted, creative man who lives boldly and takes risks, and who dies tragically. This artist figure can be found in many of Allen’s films, more or less disguised as Allen himself.

By titling my article “Hedda and Her Sisters”, I allude to Allen’s film, *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986), which is considered a continuation of *Interiors* (1978). Both films deal, in the main, with women’s problems—their fragile identities, their search for self-fulfillment, their relations to husbands, lovers, and parents, and their struggle for creativity and artistic mediation. The artistic preoccupation with the interrelations between attraction, need, rejection, appeal and disaffection is dominant. Both films have female protagonists who follow patterns of dysfunction similar to those of Ibsen’s woman characters, and who are perplexed about meaning, many of them highly discontent or rebellious. Both the Ibsen- and the Allen- “woman” represent the modern woman, torn by conflicts and subject to inauthentic impulses. The portrayal of men often amounts to weak, hybrid masculinities, which have resulted from their upbringing in broken families, their lack of male father figures, and their inability to communicate or act responsibly. Also, as mentioned above, the artist is frequently portrayed by both authors. The artist has a unique vision; he is the observer who sees, interprets, and tries to set change in motion. He is often depicted as a lonely outsider in conflict with himself and his environment, not to mention that his love life is problematic.

The woman question is—according to contemporary critics of Ibsen’s prose plays—most eminently treated in *Hedda Gabler*.³ The purpose of this article is to show how a particular Allen film, *Interiors*, relates to this play, with special reference to their inquiry into the matter of the relationship of women to power and art.⁴ A further argument for comparing this play with Allen’s film *Interiors* will be given subsequently. First, however, the methodological concerns involved in a comparison between a film and a drama text will be briefly discussed.

Women and Space

In order to limit the scope of the comparison, the focus will be on one particular aspect, as important in theatre as in film: the use of *space*. I will not treat Ibsen’s drama as theatre, but as drama text.⁵ That is, rather than considering space in

² Moltvick=Molvik, Siri Brackman= Gunhild Borkmann, Mrs. Sanstad= Mrs. Elvsted, Dorf= Dina Dorf, Berte=Berte, Eowolf= Eyolf

³ See, for example, Ellen Mortensen’s article, “Ibsen and the Scandalous: *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler*”, 2007, 169-187, and Toril Moi’s article (in Norwegian), “Narcissisme som forsvar: Ibsens *Hedda Gabler*”, 1983, 43-61.

⁴ I also refer to an article by Roumiana Deltcheva and Eduard Vlasov on Allen’s *Interiors* and Chechov’s play *Tree Sisters*, “Back to the House: On the Transformation of Spatial Forms in Screening Chechov”, 1997, 1-16. They see Allen’s *Interiors* as “an intertextual paraphrase of selected Chechov (and also Bergman) motifs and situations.” (2)

⁵ I refer to *The Oxford Ibsen*, Vol. VII, 1966, edited by J.W. McFarlane.

reference to any particular staging of the play, I will examine Ibsen's use of space as it is stipulated in his stage directions. Ibsen uses descriptions of space (in accurate scenographic comments) to initiate and mark the development of the plot, and the changes of the setting support and frame this development.⁶ Likewise, I shall refer to space in Allen's film *also* via his writing—that is, the screenplay.⁷ Space has been chosen as the object of my attention because its use in both media is closely linked with my main concern; that is, both artists depict the present-day psychological conditions of women by means of their positions in space. Space usually refers to exterior and interior areas, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional expanses; here—due to the drama genre—the interior space is most relevant. Spatial forms establish the setting for both the dialogue and the plot. Space (both outside and inside) also has a symbolic function that is manifested in the juxtaposition of open and closed spaces. The protagonists' movements constitute the play they act within. In theatre, the scenography and movements in space “narrate”, as well as the dialogue. The French feminist critic Claudine Hermann has pointed out that “space for the woman, is by definition a place of frustration, whether physical, moral, or cultural. It is also the place of systematization and hierarchization” (Hermann 1976, 150). The subordination of women is apparent in the use of cinematic and theatrical space. Their lack of mobility is obvious in theatre. In *Hedda Gabler* the main location is the drawing room in the manor house, including a partial view of the garden. The protagonist's confinement to secluded room(s) and restricted zones in *Hedda Gabler* is strikingly dramatic: she is caged, or caught in a maze. Film can employ “point-of-view” shots and has a camera as a narrator. In cinema, Hermann says, the actress can be visually enhanced through the *mise-en-scene* (e.g., make up, lighting, the placing of the character in exotic and ornamental settings, the use of close ups). The camera in film constitutes the narrative “power”; in theatre the communicative means are fewer, yet, through the presence of life, the concentration and “loadedness” of the medium, theatre is equally striking. Theatre and film have spectators, a listening and viewing *Other*, representing unvoiced thoughts. The camera defines or emphasizes the separation between the female inner and the male outer world. The house versus the street polarity is often a metaphor for the different modes of being that characterize men and women in contemporary society (Hermann, 1976, 100). This question is relevant for *Interiors*, as we shall see, but even more so for the play: As the men are coming and going, women have to stay indoors (as is the case for Hedda) or, if they go out, they must be accompanied by men (as Thea Elvsted is).

In *Interiors* the main locations are more dispersed—the seaside residence, the city apartments, the hospital park, the beach, etc. The locations are conditioned by the cause-and-effect relation within the plot. Regardless, the most important hallmark of the film is the dichotomy between interiors and exteriors. The characters are placed in Allen's favourite New York setting or on the New Hampshire coast. Both are refined and artistic interiors in pale hues that connote coldness and insensitivity.

Cinema is a series of spaces which constitute a place where signification intrudes, according to Mary Ann Doane (1980, 151, note 14). And sound can be

⁶ See Jørgen Dines Johansen study of Ibsen's late dramas. (2002,133)

⁷ I refer to Allen's *Complete Prose*, 1997.

viewed as a “place” where alternative modes of representation might be explored: “The exploration of performative space is often mediated by sound; for sound, if used as an additional source of information and not just as a repetition of the image track, can do much to liberate the viewer’s experience of the film space from the strictest classical narrative (Doane, 1980, 100). The women’s space is frequently defined by sounds: In *Hedda Gabler*, the sound of the piano serves as a parallel for the interior, ludic space, which the women know how to control. The presentation of space is also “invaded” by male voices that do much to underscore the female identity of the person who has arranged the interior space. When the men physically enter the space, their discourse is contrasted with the mute indifference of the women.⁸

In Ibsen’s as well as Allen’s work, women are conventionally positioned in the diegetic space in a manner that makes them more passive than the male characters. In films one can observe that most point-of-view shots are “authorized” by the gaze of male characters. Women characters are less likely to initiate action. This means, according to Inez Hedges, “that they function like two-dimensional figures, similar to the landscapes against which they are photographed” (1991, 88). This is a limited portrayal of women, she continues, and points out that, for male directors like Ingmar Bergman and Woody Allen, “the woman often comes to stand for their own artistic personae” (ibid.). In *Interiors*, Allen explores the artist’s mind through female characters and makes statements about femininity, according to many critics.⁹ The film medium uses point-of-view shots to distinguish between the object and the subject matter. When the “look” is authorized by a woman character, this helps the spectator to identify with her. When information about the diegetic space is given via the eyes of a woman, that character is perceived as much more developed. Diegetic space can become a site of resistance on the part of the women characters. This use of point-of-view and its relationship to gender domination is an interesting issue, and here the filmmaker has more sophisticated tools than the theatre director.

Generally, the arrangement of space in film and theatre (through direction, stage notes, set design, camera angles, etc.) makes a statement about the inner life – the interior. The interior reflects the conflicts of the personae. The description of the exterior likewise mirrors problematic and stressed human conditions. When barren landscapes are shown, whether called for by Ibsen’s stage direction or Allen’s screenplay, as well as signs of decay such as rotten trees, or badly maintained, abandoned houses, these signify and underline the inner emptiness of the personae. I will now turn to the way in which the power relations and psychic conditions in *Hedda Gabler* are visualized spatially.

Hedda Gabler

Ibsen meticulously describes the spatial arrangement between the protagonists in *Hedda Gabler*. The use of space is defined by the character’s movements. Usually,

⁸ A study of Allen’s use of sound is found in Richard A. Blake, 1995.

⁹ Hedges discusses Allen’s possible use of female personae as foils for personal investigations into the matter of art. Allen manages to tell us a lot about himself as an artist but very little about women, she says. (94) Several critics have focused on Allen’s use of female protagonists to thematize the relationship between artist and art; see also Freadman (1993, 110-111).

men are entering and leaving the house or moving between rooms. These movements signify power relations, as the men are free to change positions. Some scenes are confrontational: woman (Hedda) to woman (Thea), woman (Hedda, Thea) to man (Brack, Løvborg). In the last scene, when Judge Brack warns Hedda, she is seated as if being judged by him. Woman and man are placed in equal positions in the scene when Hedda and Løvborg are looking at photos and recalling their past. What are men's spatial positions in the play? Are they equivalent, subordinate or superior to women's? A closer study reveals that the woman – man relations can be “read” from their way of standing or moving towards or away from each other. Men gain entrance to the house via the back door, unnoticed, not in the role of spies, but in order to create uncertainty and disturbance. Men invade the space of women, not vice versa. Aunt Julle seems to be an exception, as she controls the space by appearing unexpectedly (early morning), thereby invading the privacy of the house. This can be explained as a sign that she represents the paternal life order. Equally significant is Judge Brack's way of appearing from back entrances as well as via the hall. Hedda has no authority to stop him from entering, other than threatening him with the pistol, even shooting into the air. Her only way of asserting herself is by acting in the margins of—and beyond—law and order.

In *Hedda Gabler*, the action takes place in a villa belonging to the former Minister Falk in the western, fashionable part of Christiania, a property more suited to the aristocracy that Hedda emerged from than the petty bourgeoisie to which the Tesman family belongs. The multiple rooms in the villa are an indication of former wealth and splendour, but the space is filled with newly acquired objects, which are more than strictly necessary. Old charm and class signals are gone. Ibsen's stage direction reads:

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully appointed reception room, decorated in dark colours. In the back wall there is a wide doorway with the hangings pulled back. This opening leads to a smaller room in the same style as the reception room. In the wall to the right of the outer room is a folding door leading to the hall. In the opposite wall, to the left, is a glass door, also with the curtains drawn aside. Through the window we see part of a covered veranda outside, and the trees in autumn colours. In the foreground stands an oval table, covered with a heavy cloth, and with chairs around it. Downstage by the right wall are a large, dark porcelain stove, a high-backed armchair, an upholstered footrest, and two stools. (...) All around the reception room there are numerous bunches of flowers arranged in vases and glasses. More lie on the tables. (172)

How does Hedda Gabler relate to this space she inhabits? From the very beginning she is uncomfortable. She paces the rooms, opens and shuts windows and doors, closing and opening drapes and complaining about the smell (lavender and salted roses), as she is producing lies and behaving falsely. The physical presence and the odour of the flowers remind her of times when she was outside riding in open landscapes, free—not of beautifying her home. The flowers also function as representations of characters who gradually take over Hedda's territory, as does Thea

Elvsted, who sends flowers to announce her arrival. Hedda moves around as if she is caught in a maze: Aunt Julle walks in to visit them before they get up in the morning, Judge Brack enters unnoticed, trivial Tesman slippers and Tesman hats occupy chairs. A closer look at the drawing room reveals a dark, brown porcelain fireplace, with a large high-back chair, in the corner stands a sofa. Here Løvborg and Hedda rekindle the relationship in full view of her husband. This demonstrates the thematic bridge between the fireplace and the corner sofa: While the fireplace is the space for sharing secrets, and later destroying thoughts, the corner sofa is the place for creating new secrets and schemes.

The house is decorated in a style that could be suitable for a woman of high society. As the mistress of the house, it would have been appropriate if Hedda herself had decorated and arranged it, but she did not. During the six-month long honeymoon, his aunts and Judge Brack took care of this. Hedda is not connected to the space, she merely exists in it. She is trying to keep up a façade that is being forced upon her from two angles: The necessity that a home and a person exert authority through an obvious display of wealth is ingrained in her from childhood, while, on the other hand, the Tesmans are pushing a different facet, the bourgeois ideal—the woman who lives for raising children and making the home a pleasant space to come home to. Thus her father's aristocratic sovereignty has been replaced by petty bourgeois familiarity.

The audience will soon find out that the apparent financial freedom represented by the huge property is not what it seems. It is revealed that it is *not* Hedda and her husband who have procured it, but their friend Judge Brack and Tesman's old aunts. Consequently, the house soon becomes more like a prison, which is illustrated by her pacing the rooms, opening and closing doors and windows, circling around the tables, chairs and the huge lit oven, until she gradually moves into the inner room where her father's portrait dominates. This room is her sanctuary.

There are only four objects in the villa to which Hedda feels a personal attachment: the pistols, the piano, her writing desk, and her father's portrait. These are objects she inherited from her father's home.¹⁰ The new furniture, flowers and the scents in the rooms represent a marriage into a family she loathes. As the petty bourgeois lifestyle encroaches upon her, Hedda experiences space as more and more constricted. The desperate movements she performs reflect her mental state, her isolation, her desperation and her gradual alienation into a homeless woman. When she peeps through the windows, she sees falling autumn leaves signifying the inevitable: decay and death. She lifts the curtains aside, but outside there is only darkness (183). She cuts it short. Caught in a web of lies, crimes, debt, unwanted maternity and complete inauthenticity, she shoots herself, "beautifully" (268), through the temple. But not before she has played, outrageously, "a wild dance melody on the piano" (267). Her performance is a replica of Nora's tarantella dance and, even more so, an expression of utter hopelessness.

¹⁰ I cannot recall any critic who has questioned why the only daughter of a general in the 1880-90s in Norway had been left with only a small or even insignificant inheritance. There is no comment in the play on the general's lifestyle, but he would most likely have left her a fortune, enabling her to live a grand life of her own.

Interiors

Why compare *Hedda Gabler* with *Interiors*? The question was posed initially, and the connection proposed was the depiction of womanhood. The great playwright and analyst of womanhood in the 1880s and the great filmmaker a hundred years later both show insistent concern for the issue. Allen invades modern thought and life with his movies just as Ibsen was described as a comet that altered ways of thinking during his time.

Eve is the main character in the film. She, her three daughters and her husband's mistress, who becomes his second wife, represent various sides of western, female life conditions. Eve is portrayed as an interior designer, who is, seemingly, successful. She has married an insensitive, self-indulgent man and is utterly bored. The existential emptiness of her situation causes her to turn to vicarious ways of seeking fulfillment. Eve is incapable of expressing love directly; instead she converts her desire into a fetish for art objects and their spatial arrangement. This conveys the shape and limitations of her love. She is emotionally cut off from her daughters, dissociated from her feelings, "a woman with dignity who created an environment resembling an ice palace", according to her husband (Feldstein, 1989, 81). Eve has a non-maternal relation to her daughters. Nevertheless, she is excessively concerned about their material status. She meticulously buys and arranges objects d'art for their homes in accordance with her ideas. The mother's search for beauty and harmony has been channelled into a neurotic need for power and control. Her preferences seem constricted to grand design. Eve's vulnerability is massive, and the need to compensate for her emotional sensitivity drives her to desperation. She feels superfluous, neglected, and out of control. In the end, Eve, like Hedda, commits suicide.

The "interiors" of the title refer primarily to the interiors of the house, which serves as habitat and prison for the family. The setting is like an outpost of Ibsenism. The New England seaside house is secluded and beautifully located and decorated. *Interiors* shows "the living room of a beach house, a tasteful room illuminated by the bright sun outside" (113). The ocean can be seen beyond the French doors and double windows. There is no music or other sounds as the film opens, nor any people. But movements, colours, light, and sound are described in detail. Allen had originally planned to call his film "Windows". Windows can be sealed up, as Eve does, or looked out from, as the sisters do at the end of the film: "The three sisters stare out at the window as the film FADES OUT -" (175-176). The doors and window panes of the rooms function as screens from the exterior. For example, in one scene, Eve's three young daughters are walking around in the dining room. In a flashback, the three are seen playing outside, on the lawn. Eve raises her hand and presses the glass pane with her fingers. There is still no sound. (114) When the camera is directed to the interiors of their home in New York, the glass panes, doors and views of the skyline are noticeably underscored (121). The camera movements often catch window scenes as the family is being observed. Or, Eve is portrayed sitting in a taxi, looking through the car window, without taking part in life.

Women walk the rooms, during the day as well as late at night; they are framed in the doorways or in front of mirrors, looking through windows, opening and closing doors, and pulling curtains. There is a remarkable parallel to the scenes in

Ibsen's play in which Hedda paces the rooms, feeling constricted and estranged. Allen's characters continually gaze through windows at a foreign, outside universe. They smart at the separation, but at times eagerly seal them to shut out the exterior even more completely.¹¹ This is a solemn drama, without jokes and without the Woody hero, but clearly the architectural interiors may be looked upon as a metaphor for Allen's own artistic and spiritual life in its self-enclosure as he looks outward to a world that threatens and fascinates him (Feldstein, 1989, 71-72). The atmosphere and the characters are austere. Both could fit comfortably within an Ingmar Bergman movie. The problem both filmmakers delve into is the problem of modern life: people have no "interiors"—they only have interiors.¹²

Interiors is about a family and, in particular, the effect on the family of the matriarch, Eve, who incessantly tries to rearrange the interior spaces of her life, her own homes and those of her children, but nothing satisfies her. Like any artist, she attempts to reach a standard of artistic perfection that is unattainable. As with Hedda, her pursuit of controlled order and her quest for perfection are expressions of an obsessive, neurotic character that leads her to suicide. The use of colours also defines the space. This is significant in *Interiors*, as well as in *Hedda Gabler*. Allen expresses Eve's depressive state of mind through her use of pale pastels, whites, and greys in her interior decorating. She preferred neutral colours, ties her brown hair in a tight bun, and wears a suit referred to as ice blue. She arranges white flowers, moving them from vase to vase, and walks around discussing shades and subtle nuances in the interior, until her son-in-law exclaims, mockingly: "My beige and my earth tones - " (118) Nothing; no odour, colour or sound may intrude upon the placid, perfect world she strives to create.

Eve, like Hedda, is unable to deal with the world that exists outside her "interior". Her self-destructive impulse involves others. Since she never attains her ideal of artistic perfection, personal "demons" torment her, and her husband finally decides to leave, remarry, and start a new life. Her depression can be understood as a reaction to a life in marital disharmony and an inability to connect with a world outside the domestic sphere. This is, however, a limited view. She is—like her daughters—a victim of a society that underestimates female skill. Woman's locus has traditionally been the house. Her skills as a decorator suggest an occupation that is limited to providing décor to private houses, without interfering with the people who inhabit them or the surrounding world. Eve arranges interiors to exclude the external world with its motion and life. Both Eve and her daughters (like Hedda) retreat to the domestic sphere with which they have traditionally been identified. By using that reclaimed space to mount an attack on men who seek to dominate them, they develop their own means of power. Or they commit suicide.

The effect of Eve's neurosis on her three daughters is apparent. They look out from their respective interiors, not as pure artist-perfectionists like their mother Eve, but as young women of limited talent struggling for authenticity and craving

¹¹ The numerous window shots "offer a correlative image to his [Allen's] spectacles," writes Feldstein (1989, 81).

¹² Bert Cardullo's article (2000, 387-398) on *Interiors* and the *Autumn sonata* point out the many parallels between the Bergman film and Allen's, see "Autumn Interiors, or The Ladies Eve: Woody Allen's Ingmar Bergman-Complex."

recognition. One daughter, Renata, isolates herself from others in order to create. She struggles with writer's block. She looks out the window of her studio, terrified by a tree which seems to grow larger and more menacing as she contemplates it. Joey is restless as an art photographer and understands the limits of her mediocre talent. Her need for self-expression is matched by confusion about what it is she wants to express. She is bored, and her fear of routine is reinforced when she discovers that she is pregnant. Motherhood will limit her career aspirations, and she wants an abortion. Joey wears glasses with oversized frames, as if her myopia insulates her and keeps her from any commitment to the outside world. Flynn is an actress, whose sensual good looks keep her constantly involved in making (cheap) television films; she has no illusions of artistic achievement, and she risks artistic sterility. She never becomes engaged with the family tragedies around her. Her sexuality is limited to her appearance, and the illusion of availability she creates in others is only fooling herself and her partners.

Many of the central characters in Allen's movies are artists or pursue careers related to art. This establishes another parallel to Ibsen's late works in general. Like Hedda, the three daughters want to express themselves in art, but feel paralyzed or impeded in their pursuit of artistic fulfillment.¹³ Boredom, unreleased artistic talents, isolation, unwanted pregnancy, unfulfilled married life—the bridges to Hedda's situation are numerous. The women experience or share a notion of life's emptiness and boredom. They are all Hedda's sisters.

Pearl, the new wife, is the antitype of Eve, a woman of the senses and of simple pleasures. She is seen *out* of the confined spaces of the family's apartments, which she breaks into with her energy, demonstrativeness and openness. She wears red, dances, does card tricks, and she prefers to lie in the sun instead of browsing galleries. She smashes a vase that Eve had purchased as an absolute "necessity" for the apartment. Pearl radiates a healthy animal vitality in contrast to Eve's spiritual morbidity. She represents life and enjoyment, while Eve represents death. When her ex-husband marries Pearl, Eve, sure enough, walks into the sea. The loyal daughter, Joey, tries in vain to rescue her mother, but she is instead resuscitated by the unrefined stepmother. Pearl is a stereotypical figure, according to many critics. Cardullo sees her as "this name-flashing tourist [who] may be an ox in the drawing room, but when it comes to fundamentals she is the pragmatist who saves the day" (Cardullo 2000, 392).

The opening and closing of the film are tied together by the shots of the sisters, who after the funeral are lodged in the beach house with its carefully decorated interiors. They seem encased, as they look through the windows onto the beach, the only site which had been impervious to Eve's design. They seem frustrated and hurt, victimized by a mother who was dedicated to aestheticism and arranging their worlds. Her death now forces them to rearrange their "ethical" furniture. The questions are sharpened, but the answers remain just as elusive. The three sisters' psychological isolation from one another is conveyed by their separation on opposite sides of the window screen. The lack of emphatic connection between the sisters is

¹³ I have argued that Hedda's artistic potential is never realized; see my article (2000) on "Hedda Gabler – a modern woman: on melancholy and creativity."

also echoed in the lack of colour, which replicates the type of interior that Eve had continually forced them to adapt.

Allen's metaphorical use of the landscape resembles Ibsen's depiction of desolate seaside houses, deserted places, and barren and rough seashores. There are many examples of this, from passive identification with the landscape to suggestive metaphorical use of outdoor scenery, as in the contrast between the house and the beach. The three young women's walk on the beach can be read as a signal of change. It suggests that they might be able to re-establish and re-organize their lives in another space or area unaffected by their mother's (or anyone else's) dominance. The polarity between the house and the street is also a metaphor for different modes of being that characterize men and women in contemporary society. The pattern of men's dynamic movements in contrast to women's static, domestic life may seem like a simplification; nevertheless, this behavioral style still characterizes modern life, as shown in Ibsen's plays and illustrated in Allen's screenplay. The "fascinating and complex females" that Allen found in Ibsen's oeuvre are emulated in his films. Both artists present the dilemma of women in a menacing world, seeking love and life, and able to find neither. According to both writers, art offers a way to deal with life, but it offers no guarantee of happiness.

Ibsen's protagonist Hedda Gabler retreats into the inner parlor, her father's dominion, closing her life in desperation. She uses his pistol, a weapon that belonged in the former family dwelling, as a way of liberating herself from the new house, getting out of the house. This is a typical Ibsenian dilemma that particularly afflicts his women characters, whose entrapment or imprisonment within their own lives is represented in the concrete form of a house.¹⁴

Allen's Eve, named after the (eternal) woman prototype, wades into the sea. The house and the ocean are oppositional spaces.¹⁵ Eve's second suicide attempt can be understood as a wish to reach out, to walk into the boundless ocean and, in that way, leave her restricted, limited world. Her daughters walk in the city park and on the shore; they have moved out, although not far.

Do they represent more than different death modes and sites in this context? One chooses a solitary, private withdrawal into a sanctuary; the other proceeds into an extension (or expansion) of her space which is public and universal and represents a submission to Nature, just as it represents an escape from the burdens of social living. Yet, hope is attached to the young women who may escape the reproduction of these solutions. They are about to understand that space can work as a mental extension of *sight*. It can represent a seductive space, a space of illusion, or a new perspective and another consciousness. Jean Baudrillard asked, "What happens if I escape those limits? What if I say that the building isn't between the horizon and the observer but is part of that horizon?" (Baudrillard 2002, 7) These are radical questions, reminding us that there are multiple possibilities of using space.

¹⁴ On this subject see R. Deltcheva and E. Vlasov. (op.cit., 8) With reference to Chechov's *Three Sisters*, this leitmotif defines the whole plot. The heroines can never leave their house; they will never move to Moscow.

¹⁵ Drowning as a method of death is presented in another Ibsen play, *Rosmersholm*, as an offstage event.

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Biographical note

Astrid Margrethe Sæther. Associate Professor, Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo. Director of the Ibsen Centre, 1992-2000, lecturer at the University of Copenhagen, and at the University of Odense, 1978-1990. Visiting Professor and Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, 2012-2014. Has edited a number of anthologies, articles, and the biography *Suzannah. Fru Ibsen* (2008). Co-editor of *Ibsen Studies*, Editor-in-chief of *Ibsen and the Arts* (2002), *Ibsen, Tragedy, and the Tragic* (2003), *Den biografiske Ibsen* (2010).

Summary

The purpose of this article is to relate Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* to Woody Allen's *Interiors* with respect to their inquiry into women's relation to power and art. Both artists are close watchers and profound analysts of women's positions in times of transition, and both relate their themes to class and gender. The subordination of women is apparent in the use of cinematic and theatrical space. In order to compare the screenplay and the drama text I have studied how the artists allow women to use space, building on C. Hermann's theory (1976) about spatial systematization and hierarchization.

Keywords

Henrik Ibsen, Woody Allen, Femininity, Gender, Space.